GANGES MAXIMUM: FROM THE BUDDHA TO THE RAJ

UPSTREAM ITINERARY | 11 NIGHTS/12 DAYS | KOLKATA-FARAKKA-VIKRAMSILA-FARAKKA

Day 1

You are collected from your hotel late morning. Embark midday on your ship and sail up past the old Danish colony of Serampore to Barrackpore, land and take a walk through the cantonment past the Semaphore Tower, Government House, the Temple of Fame, and Flagstaff House, its garden housing many of the British statues removed from central Calcutta.

Day 2

Sail up to Chandernagore, a French possession until 1950, and visit the 18th century church and Dupleix's House containing a small museum. Sail on past the old Dutch settlement of Chinsura. Land to visit the imposing Imambara at Hooghly then re-board your ship and cruise upstream leaving urban sprawl behind. Sail into the night to a mooring near Kalna.

Day 3

Land at the country town of Kalna and take rickshaws to see a group of some of Bengal's most attractive terracotta temples, as well as the unique Shiva temple with concentric rings made up of 108 shrinelets. Continue on through the countryside to Mayapur, its skyline dominated by the vast new ISKCON temple. Sail on through the night to a mooring near Matiari.

Day 4

This morning visit the brassworking village of Matiari where you can see the whole primitive process of beating out brass water pots and other vessels. Later cruise on and visit the battlefield of Plassey where in 1757 Clive's defeat of Siraj-ud-Daulah changed the course of Indian history, finally mooring at Murshidabad.

Day 5

Land and walk to the Khushbagh, a peaceful Moghul-style garden enclosing the tombs of Siraj-ud-Daulah and his family. Continue a little way upstream to where the Nawab's great Hazarduari Palace, built by an English architect in 1837, dominates the waterfront. Inside are an extensive collection of pictures, china, weapons and other objects. Visit also the great Katra Mosque and drive out to two amazing buildings of the late 18th century, the Nashipara Palace and the Katgola Palace. Both were built in classical Georgian style by rich local merchants and represent the other side of the coin of the "White Moghul" period when English and Indian cultures came close to fusion. Overnight on the riverbank across from town.

Day 6

Moor at the delightful sleepy village of Baranagar with three gorgeous miniature terracotta temples to which you walk through the fields. This is rural India at its most idyllic. Continue up the Hooghly, here a charming waterway twisting and turning between banks lined with mustard fields and mango orchards. Carry on up a long canal section to a mooring close to the Farakka Barrage.

Day 7

During breakfast we cruise to a mooring by the Farakka lock. Disembark and take a full day excursion by road to Gaur, near the town of Malda, or English Bazar. This quiet, deserted place was once one of India's great cities, first under the Hindus in 12th century, then as the muslim capital of Eastern India from the 14th to the 16th century. There are plentiful remains of

mosques, palaces and gateways and you visit a number of the most interesting before re-joining the ship in the evening at Farakka.

Day 8

During the day, our ship will pass through the lock which raises it up to the course of the Ganges proper. You are taken to visit a nearby market, and to visit a delightful rural village. Alternatively, at extra cost a full day itinerary can be made by road to Pandua and its Sultanate-period mosque.

Day 9

This morning we leave Farakka and sail out into the main stream of the River Ganges, almost sea-like here just above the Barrage. We sail upstream much of the morning, before anchoring at Rajmahal, beneath the Rajmahal Hills. Rajmahal is one of those places, so common in India, which feature in no guidebook and yet offer both interest and atmosphere; once known as Akbarnagar, the town was founded by the Mughal Emperor Akbar as his eastern capital. Shah Jehan, builder of the Taj Mahal, spent much of his youth here. There are remains of palaces, forts and mosques submerged in vegetation which we shall explore. We sail on as far as Manihari Ghat.

Day 10

This morning continue cruising upriver, passing the confluence with the Kosi, coming down from Nepal and keeping a lookout for Gangetic dolphin, often seen here. We arrive at idyllic Bateshwar, with fine 6th century rock carvings, and from here we drive a short distance to the impressive ruins of the 8th century Buddhist monastery of Vikramshila, Reboarding, we sail down to anchor near the port of Sahibganj in the state of Jharkand. The impressive silhouette of the Rajmahal Hills, the only significant uplands anywhere along the course of the river between Kolkata and Varanasi, rises up outlined against the sunset.

Day 11

We land and drive up into the Rajmahal Hills to see the impressive Moti Jharna waterfall, plunging 50m from an unspoilt glen to a pool which is only a little diminished by the concrete menagerie of Indian wildlife assembled around it. We also visit a village of the Santals, tribals who have long survived in these remote hills before returning to the ship to cruise down towards the Farakka Barrage again.

Day 12

Transfer to Farakka station for a 4 hour (approx.) train journey to Kolkata. Our representatives will meet on arrival and transfer you to a city hotel.

This itinerary, including the cruise and approximate driving durations, is subject to river and weather conditions.