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Tour Notes

Bangladesh Discovery

Tour Duration – 15 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●○○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●●● | Culture ●●●●● | History ●●●●○ | Wildlife ●●●○○

Tour Pace

Busy

Tour Highlights

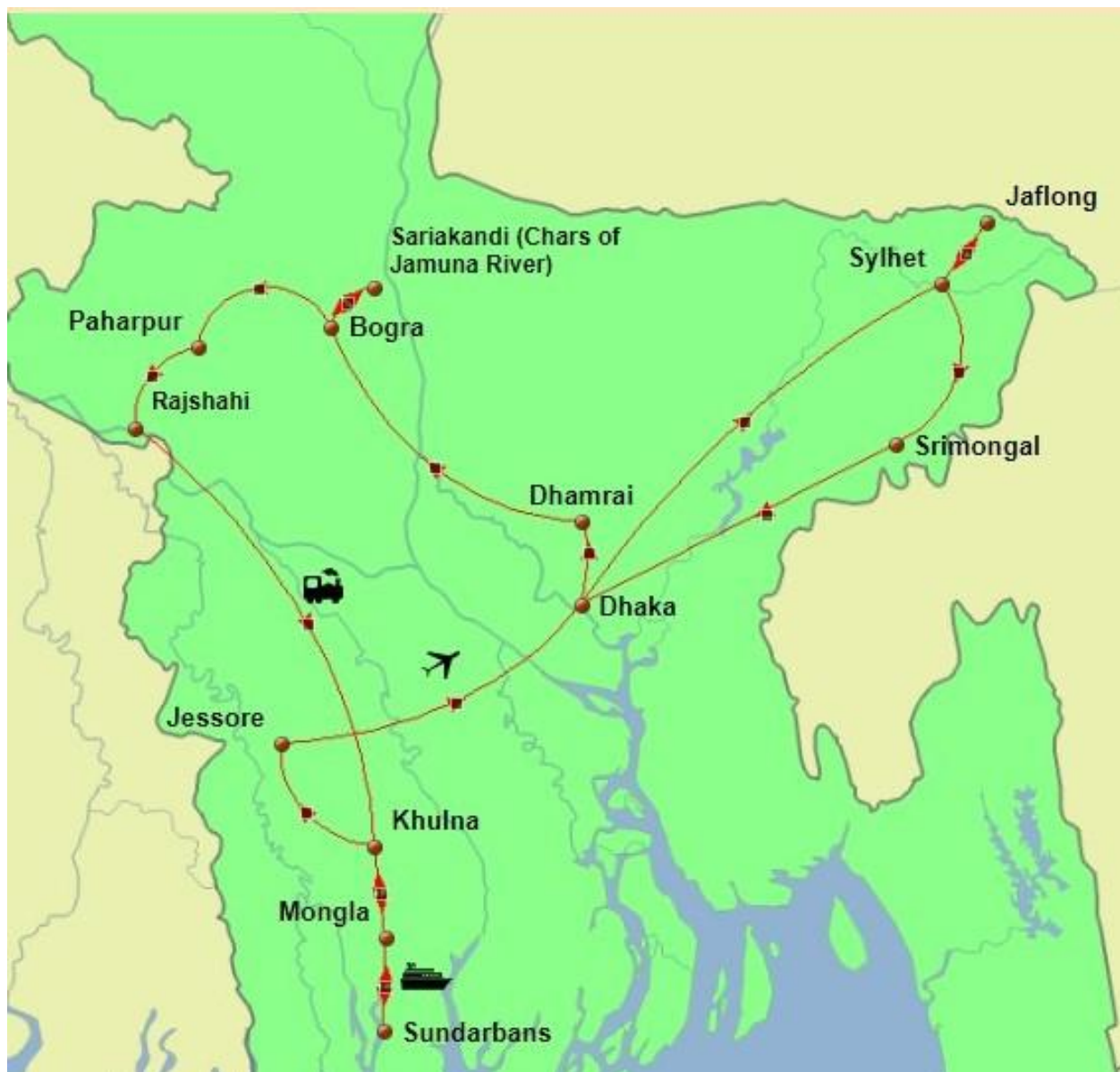
- ✓ Meeting the tribes who live in the sand banks of the Jamuna River
- ✓ A train journey from Rajshahi to Khulna
- ✓ Two nights exploring the Sundarbans by boat
- ✓ Srimongal, perhaps the most beautiful region of the country
- ✓ Visit to the Otter Fishermen





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Tour Map



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Mix of comfortable hotels and overnight on boat
Included Meals: Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
Group Size: Maximum of 12
Start Point: Dhaka – you can arrive any time on day 1
End Point: Dhaka – you can depart any time on day 15
Transport: Private cars/buses, trains, domestic flight & river boat
Country Visited: Bangladesh





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Bangladesh Discovery

Dwarfed by its enormous neighbour, Bangladesh is an exciting nation where the food is fantastic and the welcome always warm. We explore the delights of this charming country on this two-week trip, starting in the bustling capital Dhaka – a great snapshot of Bangladeshi life. We take a leisurely trip through timeless landscapes and explore the magnificent Sundarbans National Park, home to tigers, monkeys and crocodiles, entering into the primeval and mystical world of the mangrove forests. We also visit tea estates and delve into tribal culture at Srimongal, explore the unique landscapes of the chars, and discover a wealth of stunning temples, shrines and monuments around Rajshahi. But without a doubt, your overwhelming memory will be of the hospitality of the local people themselves, pleased that you have come to visit and eager to show you their culture. Bangladesh is too often ignored, but those who visit come away enchanted with this vibrant and beautiful country.

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation of a similar standard to that named below will be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Dhaka

On arrival in Dhaka transfer to the hotel. Time permitting, explore Dhaka and get to grips with this vibrant city. No meals or guided arrangements are included today. Overnight at Sky City Hotel or similar.

Day 2: Dhaka - City Tour

Today we have a Dhaka city sightseeing tour. Places of interest include the Ahsan Manzil (the pink palace), Shakari Bazar (Hindu Street), Dhakeshwari Temple, Armenian church and the Star Mosque. Overnight at Sky City Hotel or similar. (BL)

Dhaka

To some, Bangladesh's capital is overwhelming. For others it is exhilarating. No-one can deny that Dhaka leaves an indelible impression on you. A chaotic mass of humanity, Dhaka is Bangladesh's most vibrant city and with a population of around 15 million, one of the largest in South Asia. Formerly ruled by the Moghuls and known as Jahangir Nagar, Dhaka is packed full of caravanserais, forts, palaces, mosques and churches, all bearing witness to the many cultures that have left their mark on the city. The Buriganga River runs through the city, a great place for observing the many faces of Dhaka and getting a feel for life in the world's most densely populated city. With its colourful thriving markets, fascinating monuments, numerous rickshaws and, most of all, its engaging people, Dhaka is an experience not to be missed.



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Day 3: Dhaka – Bogra (overall approx. driving time 6hrs, 210 kms)

Early this morning we travel out of Dhaka through rural Bangladesh, to the Bogra district. On the way we visit the small market town of Dhamrai, famous for fine pottery, brass casting and other traditional crafts still practiced today. We visit a family involved in casting brass, through several generations, for over 200 years. We expect to arrive in Bogra in the afternoon, and will visit the archaeological site of Mahastangarh, a significant Buddhist monastery dating from the 3rd century BC. Overnight at Momo Inn or similar. (BL)

Day 4: Bogra – Excursion to Sariankandi - The Chars of the Jamuna River (overall approx. driving time 1.5hrs, 45 kms)

After breakfast we drive to Sariakandi to visit the Chars of the Jamuna River. We take a boat along the Jamuna River and see how river erosion and flooding affect the lives of local people. In the late afternoon, we drive back to Bogra. Overnight at Momo Inn or similar. (BL)

The Chars

Chars are sand islands found in a number of the main rivers of Bangladesh, home to remote communities that live very much outside of the mainstream. Only accessible by boat they have rudimentary facilities, lacking basic services such as electricity, and they are very vulnerable to flooding during the rainy seasons, something exacerbated by climate change. The chars throughout the country are home to over half a million people who eke out a living on the sands, creating tiny farms for themselves by virtue of the silt brought down the rivers from the Himalayas. These are among the most fascinating environments in Bangladesh and will be one of the most memorable parts of your trip.

Day 5: Bogra - Paharpur – Rajshahi (overall approx. driving time 2.75hrs, 120 kms)

Today we will drive to Paharpur to visit this famous Buddhist world heritage site. This is the most impressive archaeological site in Bangladesh and it dates from the 8th century AD. Later in the day we will visit the Hindu Terracotta temples in Rajshahi. Overnight at Parjatan Motel or similar. (BL)

Paharpur

The enormous complex of Paharpur was constructed by the Pala ruler Dharmapala in the 8th century, built in the middle of what was once jungle. The main site is the huge monastery of Somapura, consisting of a number terraces, plinths and staircases centred around a huge shrine, although now only the lower part remains. What is left seems almost organic, with grass growing over ancient brickwork and the temple seemingly being reclaimed by the earth. The temple itself is in the shape of a cross and stands 22 metres high, hinting at previous glory and an impressive site. Many walls are covered in elaborate terracotta plaques depicting scenes of everyday life 1200 years ago. Covering 22 acres in size, Paharpur is without a doubt the finest set of archaeological remains in the country.

Day 6: Rajshahi to Jessore, Visit Otter fishing village

Early morning travel to Jessore by train. This is a very nice journey that lets you experience the different geography of Bangladesh, Arrive Jessore around 11:30 Am then drive to Otter fishing village to Narail. Meet the local Otter Fishermen and see how the local people are catching fishes with otters. Late afternoon drive to Khulna. Overnight at City Inn or similar, Khulna (BL)

Days 7-8: Explore Sundarbans

After breakfast we drive to Mongla, en route visit the famous sixty domed Mosque in Bagerhat. In the early afternoon we will disembark our Sundarban boat in Mongla. Spend a full day exploring the Sundarbans by boat. This is the planet's largest mangrove forest, the home of the Royal Bengal Tiger and many other mammals and birds. You cruise both the larger rivers and are able to enter smaller canals for maximum opportunities to see wildlife. You will also be able to go ashore to walk through and experience the forest first-hand. Overnight on board. (BLD)



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**Please note that accommodation on the river boat is very basic. Facilities are shared and cabins are small. The boat is safe and functional with a local crew to prepare meals, often in a small open area on the boat.*

Sundarbans

The Sundarbans are spread across Bangladesh and India, with the majority being in Bangladesh. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997, it is one of the most important habitats for wildlife on the India subcontinent, with a wide variety of species being represented here. It also acts as a flood barrier for inland towns and villages when cyclones hit the coast. Two different ecosystems are represented here, freshwater swamp forest and mangrove forest, prowled by tigers in search of deer and other prey. The Sundarbans is home to the highest density of tigers in the world, with an estimated 500 individuals stalking through the trees, although it is difficult to see them. Local villagers are however often less lucky – man-eating tigers are well known here and many villagers have taken to wearing masks on the back of their heads to give the impression of eyes, as it is said that tigers are less likely to approach their prey head on. Even without seeing tigers, the sheer pristine beauty of the Sundarbans, and the wealth of other wildlife to be seen here, make this a very special experience.

Day 9: Sundarbans & Fly Dhaka

A morning in the Sundarbans and we proceed north to the Pashur river and arrive back at the port in Mongla. After lunch we will disembark our boat and drive to Jessore airport to fly Dhaka. Overnight at Marino Royal Hotel or similar (BL)

Day 10: Dhaka - Sylhet (overall approx. driving time 6hrs, 250 kms)

Early this morning we drive to Sylhet, north east of Dhaka, which has a much more relaxed atmosphere than the capital. We will take a short city tour to explore this afternoon. Overnight at Hotel Grand Mostafa or similar. (BL)

Day 11: Sylhet – Excursion to Jaflong (overall approx. driving time 1.25hrs, 60 kms)

Today drive to Jaflong, one of the most scenic areas in Bangladesh, close to the Indian border. Here we can see how the local people are collecting stone, with great opportunities to see a different side of Bangladeshi life and superb chances for photography. Visit the village across the river to meet Khasia tribal people and see their daily lifestyle. Return to Sylhet and visit the shrine of the great saint Hazrat Shah Jalal. Return to Sylhet for the night. Overnight at Hotel Grand Mostafa or similar. (BL)

Days 12 and 13: Srimongal (overall approx. driving time 2.5hrs, 100 kms)

A morning drive to Srimongal. We spend two days exploring the area around Srimongal, perhaps the most beautiful region of the country. We hike in the Lawachara Forest Reserve, with its numerous species of birds and primates including the extremely rare Hoolock gibbon, which we hope to spot. We also take a boat trip in the Hail Haor wetland sanctuary, locally renowned for its water birds. Other visits include the charming tea plantations and villages of the Monipuri tribal people for an insight into their daily lives. Overnights at Balishira Resort or similar. (BL)

Please note that the walk in the Lawachara Forest Reserve requires strong sturdy walking shoes/boots and it is advisable to also wear long socks and long trousers for this walk.

Day 14: Srimongal – Dhamrai - Dhaka (overall approx. driving time 4.5hrs, 175 kms)

Today we drive to Dhaka. If time permits, we can stop to see Zamdani Sharee Palli (Sharee is traditional woman's clothing in Bangladesh), and see how this is made. Upon arrival in Dhaka we transfer you to your hotel. The afternoon is at leisure. Overnight at Sky City Hotel or similar. (B)

We can book excursions in Dhaka for you – please get in touch for more information.



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Day 15: Dhaka Departure

Time at leisure until your transfer to the airport for your onward flight. (B)

Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers
All accommodation
Internal flight to Dhaka
Transport throughout the tour
Services of English-speaking guide / tour leader
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded:

International flights
Any airport taxes
Travel Insurance
Other expenses of personal nature
Visa, if required
Drinks
Covid-19 test/s and related procedures, as required
Tips (Discretionary)

Important Information

Foreign Travel Advice Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to the parts of Bangladesh that we visit on our main Bangladesh Discovery tour.

If you are taking our Chittagong Hill Tracts extension post tour, then this is subject to a travel advisory. Please check the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office advice before making your booking - <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/bangladesh>

Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident. It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will





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guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

Please note that this is a 'Pioneer' classed tour and accommodation and room types will reflect this. Rooms and hotels can be very basic. With a few exceptions you can expect rooms to be en-suite, with private bathroom and when necessary air-conditioning will be provided. In general you will find your hotel has a restaurant and/or bar.

The two nights on board the boat in the Sundarbans will be in small cabins with shared facilities. This is very basic. Bangladesh is majority Muslim country and most hotels do not serve alcohol.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements, you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more. Bangladeshi cuisine is quite similar to Indian cuisine, although without the vast variety of dishes. A typical meal consists of curry, with rice, vegetables and lentils. Meat tends to be either chicken, beef or mutton, and is eaten here to a greater extent than in India. Bangladeshis are great fish lovers as well.

Lunch £5.00 / Dinner £7.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive. Alcohol is not widely available, generally it can be found in government owned shops, although they may be tucked away, out of sight.



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Bottle of Beer £3.00 (usually only available in international hotels) / Water £0.50

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is common practise in Asia. In Bangladesh, most workers will expect a small tip, anything from 20 Taka upwards depending on the service provided. Your guide will be able to suggest the appropriate amount. At the end of the tour, if your principle guide, together with the driver have been helpful then you could think about tipping them. The amount can obviously be left to you.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: Although Bangladesh has many ATMs, some of these do not accept foreign cards – your guide can give advice on which ATM's to use but we do not advise relying on ATM's alone for money
Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards are generally only accepted in the more expensive shops and restaurants

Local Currency: Taka

Recommended Currency for Exchange: US Dollar

Where to Exchange: There are a number of exchange booths in larger towns and cities

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a free airport transfer, both on arrival and departure. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

At the time of writing British, US and Australian nationals require a visa for a tourist visit to Bangladesh. For further details please visit the applicable website shown below.

British Nationals - www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

US Nationals - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Australian Nationals - www.smartraveller.gov.au/

Other nationals should check the latest requirements with the authorities in their home country, or with the destination's nearest embassy or consulate.



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Should you require any documentation to support a visa application, such as a letter of invitation, upon request this will be provided by Undiscovered Destinations after receipt of your balance payment.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to your country.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate.

Vaccinations & Protection

As with travel to most parts of Asia, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis. The use of a DEET-containing insect repellent is highly recommended.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on best practice when travelling with medicines. For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

Preparing for your tour

Climate

Of course, Bangladesh is more than just a land of flooded rivers, which is the perception many would be travellers may understandably have. For the informed, it can be a year-round destination, although the most comfortable time to visit is winter. It is hottest from April to mid-June, the pre-monsoon spring. By mid-June the monsoon begins to cool things off slightly, though it remains muggy. Nonetheless it is a fascinating time to visit, as the whole country seems to fill up with water although this can affect transport and flexibility must be built into any carefully laid plans.

Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun. It can become cold in the early mornings and evenings and you will need appropriate warm clothing.



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You should bear in mind that Bangladesh tends to have a conservative attitude towards dress. Women, and also to a certain extent men, will find that the way they dress will often determine the degree of respect they receive from both men and women.

Mosques, temples, churches and synagogues are places of worship and visitors should be modestly dressed. Admission might be denied to men and women wearing short pants/skirts, sleeveless t-shirts/blouses. Bare shoulders and mid-riffs are not permitted and should be covered with shawls.

Wildlife Expectations in the Sundarbans

On this tour you have the opportunity to see some amazing biodiversity. However these animals are wild and it is often difficult to see the tigers. We cannot guarantee sightings. So please enjoy what nature has to offer and keep expectations realistic.

Driving Times and Distances

All driving times and distances stated in this itinerary are given in good faith, and are approximate distances and times only. They are dependent on the traffic and driving conditions of that day.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared and to be adequately immunized. A good insect repellent and bite cream is advisable. Suncream/sunblock is a must – please ensure you bring enough as it may not be available locally. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. Accommodation in Bangladesh can be basic, and on one or two occasions bedding may be limited to a bottom sheet and blanket. A torch or head lamp may come in useful in certain areas.

If you are a light sleeper, we would advise ear plugs. Bangladesh is not a quiet country and traffic noise, dogs howling and even the neighbours talking can keep you awake at night.

Footwear

For most of this tour, sandals or flip-flop style footwear is adequate. We would recommend that you also bring something sturdier such as trainers or comfortable walking boots/shoes. In addition, long socks and trousers should be worn in the Lowachara Forest Reserve.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Generally electrical supply is 230V/50 Hz and plugs have two round prongs. Many places also have the English 3 pin sockets. Our advice is travel with an adaptor and to check the voltage locally.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated 6 July 2023.