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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 – Bangladesh Discovery



### 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  
**End Point:** Dhaka  
**Transport:** Private cars/buses, trains, domestic flight & river boat  
**Countries:** Bangladesh



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## Bangladesh Discovery

Bangladesh is a young country, independent since 1971, and a place that generally only makes the headlines through an apparent affinity for natural disaster. That said, behind the easy preconceptions lies a fascinating south Asian state whose people, landscapes and wildlife provide a perhaps unexpectedly rich experience for visitors. Certainly, it's intense, and there's no doubt that sights, sounds and smells... can be overpowering. If Center Parcs was your last trip, you'll be in for a shock. However, as visitor numbers remain low, Bangladesh maintains an honest authenticity that's often hard to find. It's incredible. Go now.

## 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 - Dhaka

On arrival in Dhaka, transfer to hotel accommodation. Time permitting, attempt to get to grips with this seething, populous south Asian capital. It's a tall order. Overnight at Asia Hotel or similar.

## 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.

## Day 2 - Dhaka

Today we spend time in the city. Dhaka doesn't have the obvious headline sights found in other regional capitals. However, the country's low level of tourism adds an unaffected aspect to any sightseeing exploration, and indeed you may end up becoming 'the sight' yourself. Highlights include the Ahsan Manzil (the Pink Palace), the intestinal alleys of 400-year-old Shakhari Bazar (Hindu Street), Dhakeshwari Temple, the historic Armenian church and the Star Mosque. Overnight at Asia Hotel or similar. (BL)

## Day 3 – Dhaka – Bogra (Approximate driving time: six-hours)

Early this morning we travel out of Dhaka, through rural Bangladesh, to the Bogra district. We expect to arrive in the afternoon, and will visit the archaeological site of Mahastangarh, a significant Buddhist monastery dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. Overnight at Hotel Naz Garden or similar. (BL)



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#### **Day 4 – The Chars of the Jamuna River** (*Approximate driving time: one-and-a-half-hours*)

After breakfast we drive to Sariakandi and visit the chars (low-lying islands) of the Jamuna River. We take a boat along the river to see how erosion and flooding affect the lives of local people. In the late afternoon we will drive back to Bogra. Overnight at Hotel Naz Garden 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 – Paharpur – Rajshahi** (*Approximate driving time: two-and-three-quarter-hours*)

After breakfast we drive to Paharpur and visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Somapura Mahavihara. This famous Buddhist complex, dating from the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD, is the most impressive archaeological site in Bangladesh. Later, we visit the Hindu terracotta temples in Rajshahi. Overnight at Hotel Nice 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 – Train to Khulna** (*Approximate journey time: six-hours*) - **Khulna - Mongla** (*Approximate driving time: one-and-a-half-hours*)

Train travel makes a welcome change from Bangladesh's unpredictable road conditions, and generally offers a comfortable and relaxed way to travel, and to interact with other passengers. The early morning express to Khulna arrives mid-afternoon, allowing time to transfer by road the remaining few kilometres to Mongla where you'll meet your Sundarban boat. Overnight on board. (BLD)

**Please note:** *Accommodation on the boat is very basic. Facilities are shared and cabins are small. However, the boat is clean, safe and functional, and local crew to prepare meals delicious meals on an open area of the deck.*

#### **Day 7 - Sundarbans**

The Sundarbans are the planet's largest mangrove forest, home to Royal Bengal tigers, many other mammals and a rich birdlife. You'll explore both larger rivers and enter smaller canals for maximum wildlife viewing opportunities. The Sundarbans are very difficult to negotiate on land. However, there are some areas where you'll tie up and walk through the mangroves to experience the forest first-hand. Overnight on board. (BLD)

#### **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



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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 8 – Sundarbans and Mongla – Khulna** (*Approximate driving time: one-and-a-half-hours*)

This morning is spent in the Sundarbans as you proceed north to the Pashur river, arriving back at the port in Mongla. After lunch we will disembark and drive to Khulna, stopping off to visit Shat Gombuj Masjid, the famous '60 dome mosque' (which actually has 77 domes) forming part of Bagerhat's UNESCO World Heritage Site. Overnight at the City Inn, Khulna. (BL)

**Day 9 - Otter fishing village – Jessore** (*Approximate driving time: three-and-a-half-hours*) – **Dhaka**  
(*Approximate flight time: one hour*)

In the morning we aim to witness the remarkable practice of otter fishing. At a nearby village we meet the local otter fishermen. This is one of the last places in Bangladesh where otters are trained to round-up fish, much as shepherds use dogs to round-up sheep. We'll talk with the fishermen, learn about the challenges they face, and observe the otters in action. In the afternoon we'll continue by road to Jessore, later catching a short domestic flight to Dhaka. Overnight at Afford Inn or similar. (BL)

**Day 10 – Dhaka - Sylhet** (*Approximate driving time: six-hours*)

Early this morning we drive to Sylhet, north east of Dhaka, and endowed with a much more relaxed atmosphere than the capital. We'll take a short tour of the city in the afternoon. Overnight at Hotel Metro International or similar. (BL)

**Day 11 – Sylhet - Jaflong** (*Approximate driving time: one-and-a-half-hours*)

Today we drive to Jaflong, close to the Indian border and one of the most scenic areas in Bangladesh. Here we see how local people collect stone, a rare commodity in Bangladesh. We visit a village on the river's far shore and meet Khasia tribal people, observing their daily lives. It's a great chance to see a different side of Bangladeshi life, and a superb opportunity for photography. Later, we return to Sylhet and visit the shrine of the revered Sufi Muslim saint, Hazrat Shah Jalal. Overnight at Hotel Metro International or similar. (BL)

**Days 12-13 – Jaflong - Srimongal** (*Approximate driving time: two-and-a-half-hours*)

After a morning drive to Srimongal we spend two days exploring the surrounding area, perhaps the country's most beautiful region. We hike in the Lawachara Forest Reserve where wildlife highlights include the extremely rare Hoolock gibbon, and a rich avian population. Later we take a boat trip in Hail Haor wetland sanctuary, renowned for its water birds. Other visits include nearby tea plantations, and the villages of the Monipuri tribal people. Overnight at Nishorgo Eco Resort or similar. (BL)

**Please note:** *Walking in the Lawachara Forest Reserve requires sturdy footwear and it's advisable to wear long socks and long trousers.*

Nishorgo Eco Resort is locally owned and managed accommodation on the edge of the Lawachara Forest. The rooms are simple, either bamboo huts on stilts or mud-walled rooms, with bathrooms and a fan but no air-conditioning. The accommodation is basic but full of character. However, if you wish to upgrade, nearby The Grand Sultan Tea Resort provides 4-star international standard hotel rooms. Upgrades start from £170 per room, per night. Contact us for details.



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#### **Day 14 – Srimongal - Dhaka** (*Approximate driving time: four-and-a-half-hours*)

Today we drive to Dhaka, stopping at 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. Finally, we return to Dhaka and check-in to our hotel. Overnight at Rosewood Hotel or similar. (B)

#### **Day 15 - Dhaka**

After breakfast we transfer to the airport for onward flights. (B)

## *Tour Inclusions / Exclusions*

#### **Inclusions:**

Arrival and departure transfers  
All accommodation  
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  
Visas  
Drinks

## *Important Information*

#### **Foreign Government Travel Warnings**

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). 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 Bangladesh Discovery tour. 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 guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.



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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 £3.00

Dinner £5.00

### **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**

Most nationals including UK, EU and US visitors require a visa for entry to Bangladesh. UK passport holders can get a visa from the Bangladesh High Commission in London or a visa on arrival for the purpose of official duty, business, investment and tourism. Visa extensions are available at the Department of Immigrations and Passport of Bangladesh. To apply for Bangladesh visa in London, applications must be submitted to the High Commission in a prescribed visa application form in duplicate along with 2 recent passport size photographs and the original passport. An invitation letter from Bangladesh may be required which we can provide by request. Please note that visas are usually only valid for 3 months from the date of issue.



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We strongly recommend that travellers obtain their visa in advance of travel at the High Commission in London.

### 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 the UK.

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. Alternatively UK citizens can visit [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

### 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. Of course 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.

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.



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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.

### **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 updated 14 November 2019