

Assam & Tripura

Friday, February 9 – Sunday, February 18, 2018



The Northeast of India, situated between Bhutan and Bangladesh, is connected to the rest of the country by a narrow stretch of land. We shall visit two of these seven states, Assam in the Brahmaputra River valley and Tripura, an extension of Bengal. Assam is known for its wildlife, archeological sites, tea plantations, and is famous for its Muga and Eri silk weaving. Tripura is a hilly state bordered on three sides by Bangladesh, and has palaces, Buddhist and Hindu archaeological sites including remarkable rock sculpture on the banks of the Gomati River and a diverse mix of tribal cultures.

Agartala is Tripura's capital where the impressive Ujjayanta Palace is located, as well as temples and museums. The Neermahal Palace south of Agartala, striking with its white and red exterior, literally means water palace and is located in the Rudra Sagar (lake), built by Bengali royalty and inaugurated by the Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore. Udaipur to the south is a small town where several temples that are typical to the region are found. Not far, at Debtamura in Chabimura are the 37 imposing rock sculptures on the bank of Gomati River, some quite large, that can be reached by boat for a closer view. The stone images mark the revival of Brahmanism during the 15-16th century when influence of Buddhism waned in India. Also in the southern region lies Pilak, a large archaeological site with 8th- 9th century Hindu and Buddhist sculpture reflecting the Pala art style of Bengal, as well of the earlier Gupta and influence from Arakan in western Myanmar. Tripura was a princely state where Tagore visited numerous times basing two of his plays on the Bhuvneswari Temple in Udaipur. The history and culture of this colorful and vibrant state spans the eras of early archaeology, religious temples as well as villages of varied tribal groups.



Assam is in the valley of the mighty Brahmaputra River, a place where much of the world's tea is grown, and which is rich in wildlife. We'll take a short safari to see the animals of this region, in particular the one-horned rhino. There are temples, pilgrimage and archaeological sites, some located on islands in the river, others on hilltops, as well as a village famous for Assamese silk weaving on the banks of the Brahmaputra. Guwahati is Assam's capital, and is the largest city in northeast India with numerous silk bazaars.



Bhubaneswari Temple in Udaipur



Rock sculpture in Deotamura

Proposed Itinerary

Friday Feb. 9th – Depart Bangkok to Calcutta by IndiGo 6E 076 at 3:45 pm arrive in Calcutta at 4:55 (about 2 1/2 hours). Night in Calcutta at Novotel Hotel

TRIPURA

Saturday Feb. 10th – Morning flight from Calcutta to Agartala in Tripura by IndiGo 6E 861 Depart 8:50 am arrive at 9:50 am (1:00 hours). Proceed to Udaipur (58 km) south of Agartala. On the way we'll visit the Neermahal Palace built in the Rudra Sagar (lake) and reached by boat. In Udaipur we'll see the Gunabati Group of Temples including Bhubaneswari Temple (17thc.) on the Gomati River, immortalized in 2 Tagore plays, Rajbari Temple, Sundari or Maata Temple (mother) and the newer Jagannath Temple situated in the tank (pond). Night in Udaipur in Hotel Royal Inn.

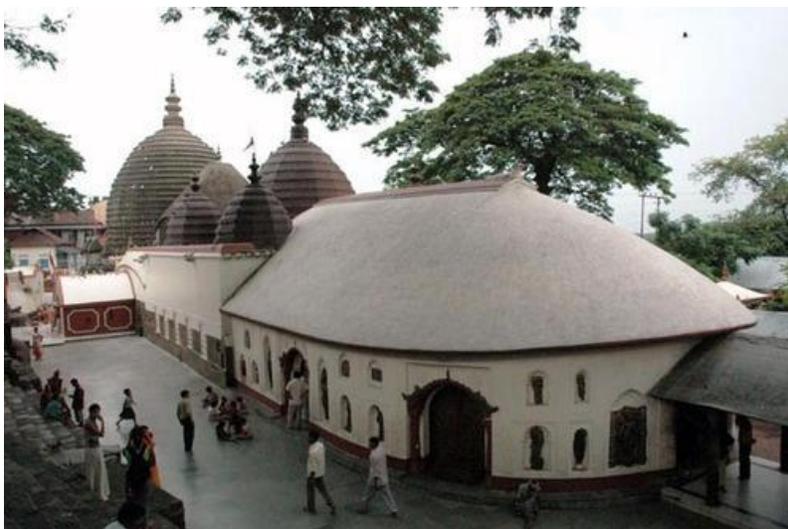
Sunday Feb. 11th - Tour 8th-9th century large archeological site in Pilak (52 km from Udaipur) where Hinduism and Buddhism co-existed peacefully, and where ruins and statues are spread over wide terrain. Visit 15th -16th century Deotamura in rock carvings on the Gomati River bank (28 km from Udaipur). Drive to Agartala. Night in Ginger Hotel or Sonar Tori Hotel

Monday Feb. 12th – Visit the Ujjayanta Palace (1901), the city's centerpiece, from where the Manikya kings of Tripura ruled. Within the superstructure is the well preserved Tripura Government Museum. Nearby are the temples of Jagannath Mandir that faces the Ummaneshwar Mandir, and Laxminarayan and Durga Bari temples near the southern gate of the palace. 1km north of the palace is Venuban Buddha Vihar housing Burmese images. Chaturdasha Temple (Temple of 14 Deities) in Old Agartala; shopping. Night in Ginger Hotel or Sonar Tori Hotel



Hindu and Buddhist Sculpture from 8th-9th centuries in Pilak

ASSAM



Tuesday Feb. 13th – Morning visit the ethnographic museum at the Tribal Research Institute in Agartala. Afternoon flight by IndiGo 6E 316 depart Agartala 4:00 pm arrive Guwahati, Assam at 4:40 (40 minutes) city by the Brahmaputra River. Shopping in Guwahati. Night in Radisson Blu Hotel.

Wednesday Feb. 14th – Morning a 2-hour jeep safari at Pobitura Wildlife Sanctuary (50km) with the highest density of the Indian one horned rhinoceros, as well Asiatic buffalo, leopard, wild bear, birds and more. After lunch we'll visit Basistha, an ashram and pilgrimage place set on an ancient Vedic site with the Basistha River running through it. Brahmaputra. River cruise, subject to river conditions and availability.



Basistha Pilgrimage site



Mada Kamdev Tantric Temple Site

Thursday, Feb. 15th – Morning visit to Sualkuchi (35km) on the banks of the Brahmaputra, popularly known as the silk village of Assam where the entire population is engaged in weaving the exquisite silk. Proceed to Hajo, ancient pilgrimage place (32 km) sacred to three religions: Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, with the Hayagriva Madhav Mandir, Kedareswara Temple a Shiva temple, Ganesh temple and Pau Mecca. 9th-10th century Pala period Madan Kamdev Tantric Temple (34 km).



Buddhist structure in Hajo

Friday, Feb. 16th – Sightseeing Guwahati: Umananda Mandir on Peacock Island in the Brahmaputra River, Navagrah Mandir (temple of the Nine Planets), Sukeswar Devalaya a Siva temple with a large lingam, on the Sonai River, Kamakhya Mandir on Nimachal Hill (8 km out of the city) a Tantric Hinduism site where Sati's yoni is located and sacrifices are made, and 9 other mandirs showing the 10 aspects of the mother goddess, with Bhubneswari Temple 200 feet above it on the hill. Assam State Museum. In Old Guwahati the Urra Tara Temple 2nd holiest in the city. Srimanata Sankaradeva Kalakshetra cultural center, Nehru Park with its many sculptures, Fancy Bazaar for shopping.



Saturday, Feb. 17th – Flight Guwahati to Calcutta - IndiGo 6E6204 depart Guwahati 12:25 noon arrive in Calcutta at 1:40 (1hr. 20 min). Drive to see some of Calcutta's highlights then visit Rabindranath Tagore's Home and Museum, and Kumortuli, the potter's quarter where figures of Hindu gods are made for various puja events. Flight to Bangkok by IndoGo fight 6E 077 depart Calcutta at 8:45pm arrive Bangkok 12:45 midnight (Sunday, Feb. 18th)

LIMIT: 15 persons (spouses welcome)

COST: Baht 78,500 for double room occupancy, Baht 13,000 single room supplement, includes all expenses (5 flights, hotels, all meals, transportation, tours, entrance fees, all tips). Not included: Indian visa and personal expenses.

DEADLINE for deposit is December 15, 2017. Final payment due in January.

Your passport will be needed for flight arrangements.

CONTACT AND LEADER: Ruth Gerson <ruthgerson.bkk@gmail.com>