



# BANGLADESH

## THE HIDDEN LAND AND ITS NATURAL WONDERS

November 26 - December 09, 2024  
Led by Professor Norman Jones, Utah State University



Welcome to an unspoiled destination: Bangladesh. A fascinating country outside the radar of mass tourism. Within it are unseen relics of long-forgotten Buddhist kingdoms, lush tea plantations, primeval swamps with tigers, tribal clans in the Chittagong Hill Tracts area with indigenous tribes with hidden cultures and stretches of beautiful beaches, as well as freshwater dolphins, and most importantly, some of the most hospitable people you will ever meet. Being one of the world's least traveled destinations, you will be delighted at the absence of tourists, and locals are delighted to have you take their pictures and never ask for money. Our tour will be the perfect amalgam of highlights offered by this fascinating country.

Explore ancient architecture, ruined medieval cities, religious sites, grand mosques and haunting Hindu temples, beautiful lakes and rivers and shrines of Muslim saints, colorful bazaars, mega shipyards, and soothing rolling green hills. This country is a photographer's paradise.

**Ihab Zaki**  
Managing Director

**Tuesday, November 26**

**Arrive in Dhaka (BANGLADESH)**



Upon arrival to **Dhaka**, meet, assist, and transfer to *Sky City Hotel* or similar for check-in and overnight.

*Notes: Standard check-in time is 3:00 pm. If you arrive on November 25 or the early morning of November 26, an extra hotel night needs to be booked.*

**Wednesday, November 27**

**Dhaka**



**Dhaka** has a fascinating historical background that goes back to the first millennium BC, whereas, nowadays, Dhaka goes back to the 17th century AD when it was established as the capital of the **Muslim Mughal dynasty**. Begin the day with a visit to the **Liberation War Museum**, built to commemorate the heroic struggle of the Bengali nation for their democratic and national rights. Continue to **Ahsan Manzil** (the pink palace), which was Nawab's official residential palace and seat in the late 19 century. It was restored in the 80s and became one of Bangladesh's most significant architectural monuments. Continue to **Dhaka Shakari Bazar**, where the early settlers of Dhaka established this Bazar three hundred years ago, and it has been functioning since. The Craftsmen are so proud of the artisanship that they inherited from generation to generation. Enjoy lunch, then head to visit **Dhakeshwari Temple**, which means the **goddess of Dhaka**. This temple is one of the most important Hindu Temples in Bangladesh. Continue to the **Armenian church of the Holy Resurrection**, which is constructed in the late 18th century by the Armenian community, who played a significant role in the Bengal trade and established many settlements in the region. End the city tour by visiting the **Star Mosque**, which has a unique architectural design with remarkable mosaics decorating it, based on the **Chinitikri technique** that uses broken shards of china porcelain. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Thursday, November 28**

**Dhaka - Rajshahi**



After breakfast, transfer to the airport for our flight to Rajshahi, and upon arrival meet and head to have lunch then continue to visit the **Hindu Terra cotta temples in Puthia**. This complex consists of 14 structures surrounded by rectangular shape water canals with four entrances with a variety of architectural styles. In the afternoon return to Rajshahi, known for its silk

production, and visit some of the local display centers. Transfer to *Hotel X Rajshahi* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Friday, November 29**

**Rajshai (Paharpu) - Bogra**



After breakfast, begin the drive to visit **Kusumba Mosque**, the Black Gem of Bangladesh, built-in 1558. Continue to **Paharpur** to visit the famous **Buddhist UNESCO world heritage site**, Bangladesh's most spectacular and impressive **archaeological** site. It dates back to the 8th century AD. This temple was built by **King Dharma Pala Deva** in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century. Since then, the temple has become the gathering place for Buddhist monks to discuss the most profound questions of life and humanity. After enjoying this magical experience, continue the drive to **Bogra** and upon arrival, transfer to *Momo Inn* or similar for check in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Saturday, November 30**

**Rajshahi - Bogra**



Begin the day with one of our exquisite adventures with an early morning drive to **Sariakandi** to visit the **Chars of the Jamuna River**. The chars are large sandbank islands that are isolated from the mainland. Take a **boat ride** to visit the **chars of Bogra** district along the Jamuna river and see how the river's constant flooding, eroding, and re-depositing affect local people's life, destiny, and economy. Get the chance to meet the locals, interact with them, find out how the rainy seasons affect their lives and what they are doing for living. After lunch, head back to the other side of the river and then transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

*NOTE: Please be aware that due to fluctuating water levels in the river, after the boat trip, there is a possibility that we may need to utilize horse-drawn carts to transfer you safely to the central part of the char.*

**Sunday, December 01**

**Bogra - Mahastangarh - Bofra - Dhaka**



After breakfast, head to visit **Mahastangarh**, another UNESCO world site. This archeological site that dates back to the 4th century BC reveals several historical sites, such as a mausoleum, a temple, and an ancient palace. After the visit, continue to **Sonargaon** town which was the capital of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Bengal ruler Isa Khan, and once an

important trading and political center. Sonargaon boasts architecture of the Sultanate, Mughal, and colonial periods. The Sonargaon historic city, located near the present-day capital of Dhaka, includes several **Mughal monuments**, among them the **Sonakanda River Fort**, the **Panch Pir Mazar Shrine**, and **Ibrahim's and Abdul Hamid's Mosque**. British colonial architecture preserved in Sonargaon includes the Ananda Mohan Piddar House, and other street-front houses. For travelers making their way along the 2,500-miles Grand Trunk Road from Peshawar in the Hindu Kush, Sonargaon marked the end of the line. After the visit, drive to **Dhaka** and upon arrival, transfer to *Sky City Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Monday, December 02**

**Dhaka - Sonargaon - Srimongal**



After breakfast, begin the drive to **Srimongal**, the tea garden of Bangladesh where rain constantly falls, which give the area its charming atmosphere with stunning greenery scenes all around. If time permits, we may visit the **local brick factory** to see one of the old ways of making bricks and one of the **rice mills**. Rice plays a big significant role in the population's food, and Bangladesh is considered one of the top rice consuming in the world. Upon arrival in **Srimongal**, head to visit the charming **tea plantations** and have the chance to visit the tea gardens to see how the local tea workers live and work. Enjoy a cup of famous multi-layer tea at **Nilkanta Tea cabin**, the most popular tea stall in town. Later, transfer to *paragon resort* or Similar for check-in, dinner & overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Tuesday, December 03**

**Srimongal**



The day is dedicated to exploring the area around Srimongal, one of the country's most beautiful regions. Begin with a morning hike, at the **Lowacheera National Park** to experience the mysterious rain forest that has more than 460 different species of birds and, primates, mammals, including the extremely rare **Hoolock gibbon**, which we hope to spot. Enjoy lunch, then head to visit the villages of the **Monipuri tribal** people for an insight into their daily lives, then return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Wednesday, December 04**

**Srimongal - Chittagong**



After breakfast, begin the day with a drive to **Chittagong**, the chief Indian Ocean port of Bangladesh, visiting en route the **Second World War memorial** in **Comilla** if time allows. Chittagong was home to the largest population of British in Bengal, next to Kolkata (Calcutta) during colonial times. Upon arrival in the early evening, transfer to *Well Park Residence* or similar for check-in and overnight. **(B,L)**

**Thursday, December 05**

**Chittagong - Rangamati**



Begin the day with a visit the port city of Chittagong called **Porto Grande** by Portuguese & Venetian voyagers. Continue to the **ship breaking yards**, where large ships are scrapped by hundreds of men by hand in such a

challenging process to remove all the gear and equipment on the boats to recycle them. After lunch, continue the drive to the foothills of **Rangamati**, the capital of the hill tracks on the Kaptai Lake. Upon arrival, transfer to *Parjatan Holiday Complex* for check-in. If time permits, explore the local market and window shopping at its local handicraft shops. Return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Friday, December 06**

**Rangamati (Kaptai - Lake Cruise & Parjatan)**



After breakfast, take an exciting **boat** cruise to enjoy the breathtaking view of the serene **Kaptai lake**. Travel through the gorge to see **Subalong** and visit some tribal families on the islands, where we can see them making Handloom fabrics and experience their daily lifestyle. After lunch, return to **Rangamati** in the late afternoon, and have the chance to meet the local people, then return to the *Hotel* for dinner & overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Saturday, December 07**

**Rangamati - Bandarban**



Begin the day with a visit to the weekly **market**, where many farmers and wholesalers gather to trade. Continue the drive to the south along the Arakan highway and into the hills to the small tribal market town of **Bandarban**. The city is considered the remotest and least populated district in Bangladesh. Transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in, then head to explore **Buddhist temples** and **Stupas**. These temples belong to the **Theravada Buddhism order**, which the ethnic group of Bandarban practices. Get the opportunity to enjoy a short walk in **Hatibandha** to get familiar with the Lifestyle of the **Tripura tribe** then return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Sunday, December 08**

**Bandarban - Dhaka**



After breakfast, get the chance to experience another weekly day **market**. This market has its unique atmosphere since it belongs to different tribals. Take a cruise by a small wooden boat on the Sangu river to visit **Marma tribal village** and get the opportunity to interact with villagers (Meet Karbari, Headman) and see their daily lifestyle. In the early afternoon, drive back to **Chittagong** and transfer to the airport for our flight to **Dhaka**, and upon arrival, transfer to *Zabeer Hotel* or similar for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Monday, December 09**

**Dhaka - USA**



After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight back to the US. **(B)**

*"We reserve the right to change the order of activities/visits or sites due to unexpected events such as flight cancellations or changes of schedule, or any other reasons beyond our control. We will do our best to ensure that any necessary changes when/if needed to meet the needs of our clients".*

**Tour Cost (Land Only): \$4,995.00**  
*Per person sharing in double occupancy*

**Single Supplement: \$595.00**

*Price is based on group size minimum of 6 participants and maximum of 12 participants*

**Trip Grade: II Lodging Level: \*\*\*\_\*\*\*\***

through religious allegiances, as in the Balkans. He teaches the history of Christianity, and his publications, focusing on the early modern world, include work on the relations between Christianity and Islam. He has been a visiting professor at Harvard, Oxford, the University of Geneva, the University of Hong Kong, and Cambridge, as well as the Huntington Library and the Folger Library. His expertise will deepen your understanding and enrich your experience.

*About your lecturer...Professor Norman Jones, Professor Jones is Professor of History of Religious Studies at Utah State University. Holding a doctorate from Cambridge University, he specializes in the interplay of religion and culture, especially on the cultural fault lines where religions meet and national identities are shaped*



**Tour Includes:**

- Airport / Hotel / Airport transfers.
- Accommodation at 4\* hotels mentioned or similar.
- Travel by modern A/C vehicles.
- Meals as mentioned in the itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch;& D: Dinner).
- All tours as per itinerary & entrance fees to the sites and museums mentioned.
- Dhaka- Rajshahi and Bandarban - Dhaka flights.
- English Speaking local guide throughout the tour.
- Bottled water while on tours.
- Escort of Tour Lecturer (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).
- Gratuities to guide, drivers, and porters (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).

**Tour does not include:**

- International airfare USA - Dhaka - USA.
- Bangladesh Visa (obtainable on arrival for \$60.00 - Subject to change).
- Beverages & alcoholic drinks with or without meals and meals not mentioned.
- Items of a personal nature (camera fees, laundry, excess luggage, etc.).
- Transfers if not arriving/departing on tour dates.
- Dayroom/overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules or misconnections.
- Trip surcharge to operate below required minimum participants.
- Travel protection insurance (HIGHLY RECOMMENDED).

**Trip Grade:**

**II Active-** Some hikes, slightly more demanding walks at or to sites, few elevations, comfortable but busy schedule and some long rides and extensive drives. Traffic in Dhaka is notorious and very chaotic, so be prepared for long commutes or sometimes delays.

**Lodging Level:**

**\*\*\* Superior:** Lodges and hotels with additional amenities, refined service, and comfort level acceptable to the western standards. (3 or 4 stars).

**\*\*\*\* Luxury:** Regular style- usually large- hotels, typical western standard with ample venues, and full amenities. (4 or 5 stars).

