

BRAHMAPUTRA

Jane Archer reports from a river cruise on India's Brahmaputra aboard the *Mahabaahu*, a vessel operated by Far Horizon Tours

THE CRUISE: This was a one-week voyage on the Brahmaputra from Jorhat to Guwahati in Assam, India, that called at remote villages along the river bank and included wildlife safaris in and around Kaziranga National Park by boat or jeep.

WHAT YOU SEE: A unique combination of historical monuments from the Ahom dynasty, which ruled this part of India between 1228 and 1826. Wildlife is another big draw, with chances to spot rhinos, elephants and, if you are really lucky, tigers. You also visit villages where Westerners are a novelty, see neo-Vaishnavite monks at prayer (this sect worships Vishnu instead of Shiva) and learn yoga on a sandbank.

WHY GO? This is a very different India to the familiar Golden Triangle (Delhi, Agra and Jaipur) because tourism is so undeveloped. Instead of being with hordes of tourists, clients visiting Assam will discover a land away from souvenir shops, where life goes on much as it has for the past 100 years or more. As hotel infrastructure is poor and roads are not great, a cruise is the best, and certainly most comfortable, way to see a lot.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS: A morning nature walk along the river bank as a local village was coming to life; spotting tiger paw prints on one of the sandbanks (but sadly no sign of the tiger); watching local actors perform an episode from the epic tale Ramayana in a clearing by the river; spotting Ganges dolphins on a boat safari; getting close to rhinos on a safari in Kaziranga National Park.

KEY SELLING POINTS: This holiday would suit all clients whether or not they have been on a river cruise, provided they have a sense of adventure and understand the itinerary might change to suit the vagaries of the river, which flows very fast and makes navigation quite challenging. Bear in mind that all customers booking with Saga must be aged 50 or over.

SAMPLE PRICE: Saga's 11-night Passage through Assam combines a one-week cruise with two nights in Kolkata from £2,349 departing October 12, including flights, UK and overseas transfers, gratuities, Indian visa and travel insurance.

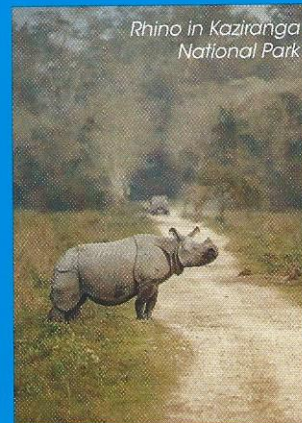
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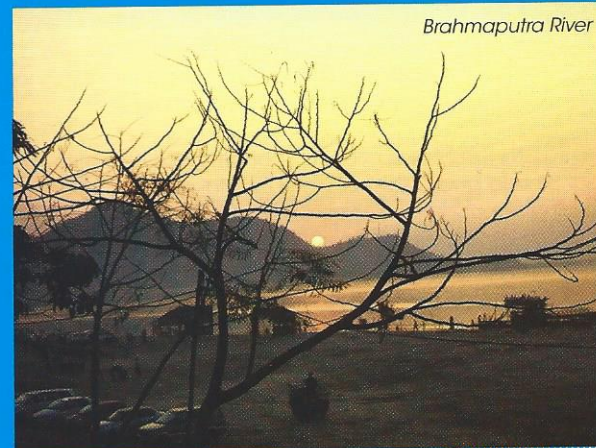
Mahabaahu



Dining room



Rhino in Kaziranga National Park



Brahmaputra River

MAHABAABU IN DETAIL

CAPACITY: Passengers: 46; crew: 27.

CABINS AND SUITES: 23

ON-BOARD CURRENCY: Indian rupees.

DINING: There is one restaurant. Breakfast and lunch is a buffet. In the evening there is waiter service.