

World's longest river cruise Varanasi- Bangladesh-Assam starts

A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : The 50-days long world's longest river cruise of 4000 km on Varanasi-Bangladesh-Assam route was flagged off by the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi on January 13. This is the first time an inland cruise is covering such a distance.

The luxury boat Ganga Vilas will travel along 27 river systems in India and Bangladesh, including the Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly, Brahmaputra, Padma Meghna, Jamuna and West Coast Canal.

Taufiq Rahman, CEO of Journey Plus, the official ground handling and shore excursion agent of the tour in Bangladesh, said, 32 Swiss senior tourists are travelling in this river cruise. Of the 27 rivers it will sail on, 17-18 rivers are in our country.

In Bangladesh, the trip will cover over 1,100 kilometres. The cruise run by a private player would be a regular fixture.

Tourism potential

The cruise project is expected to boost the tourism potential and relations between the two neighbouring countries while promoting tourist attractions to foreigners out of Asia.

50 significant tourist destinations, including architecturally important places, historical monuments, and world heritage sites, will be visited throughout the journey.

The cruise will also pass through the iconic Varanasi Ganga Aarti as well as national parks and sanctuaries, including the Sundarbans Delta and the Kaziranga National Park.

Guests onboard the Ganga Vilas Cruise will visit spectacular Indian landmarks ranging from Varanasi - one of the oldest cities on earth and an important site within the Hindu faith - to the abandoned Buddhist monastery Vikramshila.

The Bangladesh leg of the trip will give them a chance to soak in the beauty of the ghost city of Sonargaon and the ornate 1400s-era Sixty Dome Mosque, among other historically and culturally significant places.

Taufiq Rahman, mentioned, travellers will visit Barishal's floating market in backwater tour amid the river cruise. Then, they will visit Chandpur.

The cruise will also visit the Sundarbans, added Taufiq, noting, during their trip to the Sundarbans, a guide will accompany them.

Then they will visit Dhaka, Mawa, Sirajganj, and Tangail where they will enjoy Atiya Mosque and community based tourism that boasts handloom, weaving, glassware etc.

Finally, the guests onboard will visit Sirajganj, Bahadurabad, Chilmari, and Rangpur and enjoy touring historical and archaeological sites there.

Route

According to the timetable released earlier, Ganga Vilas Cruise started its journey from Varanasi on January 13 and will reach Patna on the 8th day, passing through Buxar, Ramnagar and Ghazipur.

From Patna, the cruise will set sail for Kolkata and will reach the West Bengal capital on the 20th day via Farakka and Murshidabad.

The next day, it will set off for Dhaka and enter the Bangladesh border. It will remain in the country waters for the next 15 days.

Finally, it will come back to India through Guwahati before sailing through Sibsagar and reaching its final destination at Dibrugarh.

Immigration and customs facility will be made available at the Varanasi airport.

Indian passengers will have to testify their travel credentials at the Hemnagar checkpoint in the Sunderbans area of West Bengal before the cruise enters Bangladesh waters.

The initial immigration checking in Bangladesh is set to happen at

Antiharabanki.

After 15 days of the trip completion, a reverse tour will sail off with another set of foreign tourists, mentioned Taufiq.

Cruise

According to the official website, Ganga Vilas - with a capacity of 80 passengers - is a luxury river cruise vessel with 18 suites and all other associated facilities.

To make the experience on the cruise enjoyable, there are facilities like music, cultural programs, a bar, a gym, a spa, an open-air observation deck, personalised butler service, etc.