

BANGLADESH ITINERARY 2009

Saturday 10th Jan

Checked into the Pacific Hotel, basic rooms - 750 Taka (£7.50). Taxi from airport (pre-booked at the office just inside airport) - 550 Taka (£5.50).

Sunday 11th Jan

Purchased ticket for the Rocket at the BIWTC office, near the Pacific hotel. Ticket price - 1200 Taka for first class (roughly £12).

10am: Hired a rickshaw and driver (Abdul) to take me on a crazy tour of the capital.

6.30pm: Boarded the 'Rocket', the overnight paddleboat that takes the 30-hour journey from Dhaka to Khulna, and back if you so require. What an experience! Most, if not all, foreigners choose first class - and first class it certainly is. The cabins are small but very clean and with waiter service every step of the way it is a wonderful way to see rural Bangladesh.

Monday 12th Jan

Still on board The Rocket watching the countryside go by – heaven!

Arrived Khulna, at 1 am, on Tuesday morning; negotiated some Rickshaws that took us to the Western Hotel in Khulna, a lovely hotel with excellent service.

Tuesday 13th Jan

Hired a car & driver and visited Bagarhat (2100 Taka [£21.00] for the day). Met Joshim who showed us around. Mazhar Khna Jahan, Ali Mosque, and Shait Gumbad Mosque. Played cricket with the local kids at the 60-dome mosque.

Wednesday 14th Jan

Chill out day.

Thursday 15th Jan

Took the 08.15 bus to Dhaka (650 Taka), a 12-hour journey from hell! Delays, due to fog the previous day, meant that the ferries could not travel – this led to huge tailbacks. On arrival in Dhaka we boarded the O/N sleeper train to Chittagong, which took around 12 hours. First class sleeper cost 756 Taka (£7.50).

Friday 16th Jan

Checked into Asia SR hotel at around 7am. Spent Friday in Chittagong and had an amazing time 'experiencing' the city, including a visit to the football stadium (watching a music concert) where we spent 2 hours and received more attention than the acts themselves (and yes more photos).

Saturday 17th Jan

Tried to get a permit for the Bandarban but the office was closed so instead took the local bus to Cox's Bazar (170 Taka – 4 hours) then a mini bus to Tecnaf (100 Taka - 3 hours) and had an O/N stay in Diwi Plaza hotel.

Sunday 18th Jan

07.30 took a baby taxi to the boat terminal and the ferry to St. Martins Island.

Monday 19th Jan

Departed on the 3 pm boat back to Tecnaf. Jumped straight onto a bus to Cox's Bazar.

Tuesday 20th Jan

Headed back to Chittagong, checked into hotel Asia SR. Waded through the relevant paperwork, in the Chittagong Divisional Commissioners office, and finally got the permit for the Bandarbands. The CDC office can be found along Chatterwari Road (opposite Finlays office).

Wednesday 21st Jan

Trecking in the Bandarbands

Thursday 22nd Jan

Trecking in the Bandarbands

Friday 23rd Jan

Took the 08.00 bus back to Chittagong then the 3pm train back to Dhaka, arriving 10pm. Checked into The Pacific Hotel.

Saturday 24th Jan

Departed Dhaka headed for Dubai.

It has been one hell of a trip, so much the better for meeting loads of lovely and interesting people along the way.

Places of outstanding historic value and nature Bangladesh has not, the pollution can be overpowering at times, and so can the filth, but the people here have carried me through their wonderful country on top of a Mexican wave - I could not speak more highly of them or their country.

As one of my fellow travellers put it:

“The people here have been absolutely amazing ... I am constantly surprised by their friendliness, politeness, enthusiastic curiosity, etc ... some of the warmest people I have ever met .. and genuine in their sentiments” Mercedes Perez.