

Rickshaw Bells by Day, Tiger Pugmarks at Dawn — A 7-Day Bangladesh Itinerary

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries on Earth and one of the least visited by Western travelers — a river-delta nation of 170 million people wedged between India and Myanmar, home to the world's largest mangrove forest and the planet's longest unbroken sea beach. This seven-day route starts in the rickshaw-choked lanes of Old Dhaka, climbs into the tea-covered hills of Sylhet division, and ends with two nights aboard a wooden cruise launch deep in the Sundarbans, tracking the pugmarks of the Bengal tiger with an armed forest guard. Real guesthouses, a real government-licensed cruise operator, and 2026 prices for every stop.

DURATION
7 Days

BEST TIME TO GO
November – February

Bangladesh's cool, dry winter brings mild temperatures, minimal rainfall, and the clearest conditions for Sundarbans boat travel; March–May turns hot and humid ahead of the monsoon, and June–October brings heavy rain and swollen rivers that can disrupt river and coastal travel.

FROM
\$480 USD / person

for 2 people, incl. 2 nights in Dhaka, 2 nights at a Sreemangal tea resort, a domestic flight to Sylhet, 2 nights aboard a Sundarbans cruise launch with all meals and forest fees included, and entry fees for Old Dhaka's monuments (excl. international flights and most meals outside the Sundarbans cruise)

Day 1

Arrival in Dhaka

Land at Bangladesh's main international gateway and settle into the capital's diplomatic quarter before a first taste of the city after dark.

Airport Transfer — Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport

~12 km, ~45 min (traffic-dependent) · hotel car or ride-share

Dhaka's only international airport sits in the north of the city; a pre-booked hotel car or a ride-share app is the easiest way into Gulshan or Kawran Bazar, especially after an overnight flight.

Hotel Check-In — Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka

from \$130 USD/night, for 2 people

A longstanding five-star hotel in Kawran Bazar with easy access to both the diplomatic zone and Old Dhaka, popular with business and leisure travelers alike for its reliable service and central location.

Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka · +880291 28008 · www.panpacific.com/en/hotels-resorts/pan-pacific/dhaka.html

Dinner on Your Own — Gulshan/Banani

~1.5 hrs · ~\$10–20 USD/person

Dhaka's Gulshan and Banani neighborhoods hold the city's densest cluster of restaurants, from Bengali curry houses to international kitchens — an easy, low-key first night after a long journey.

Day 2

Old Dhaka by Rickshaw

A full day on foot and by cycle-rickshaw through the oldest, densest, and loudest part of the capital.

Cycle-Rickshaw Ride — Old Dhaka & Shankharia Bazaar

~2.5 hrs, guided · from \$15 USD/person

A local guide and rickshaw driver thread through Shankharia Bazaar's centuries-old conch-shell and sari workshops and the narrow lanes around Sadarghat — Dhaka is the rickshaw capital of the world, with hundreds of thousands plying its streets.

Lalbagh Fort

~1.5 hrs, self-guided · Tk 200 (~\$1.80 USD) foreign entry

An unfinished 17th-century Mughal fort complex with a mosque, a tomb built for a governor's daughter, and formal gardens — one of the few surviving pieces of Mughal-era Dhaka.

Ahsan Manzil (Pink Palace)

~1 hr, self-guided · Tk 100 (~\$0.90 USD) entry

The pink-washed former residence of the Nawab of Dhaka on the bank of the Buriganga River, now a museum of 19th-century Dhaka life, with a domed hall and a river-view terrace.

Sadarghat River Terminal at Sunset

~45 min, self-guided · free to walk the ghat

One of the world's busiest river terminals, where multi-deck launches depart for southern Bangladesh in a chaos of horns, cargo porters, and tea stalls — best seen as the light goes gold over the Buriganga.

Day 3

Fly to Sylhet's Tea Country

A short domestic flight trades the capital's density for the rolling green hills of Bangladesh's tea-growing northeast.

Domestic Flight — Dhaka to Sylhet

~45 min flight · from \$65 USD/person one-way

US-Bangla Airlines and Novoair both run multiple daily flights between Hazrat Shahjalal International and Osmani International Airport in Sylhet — by far the fastest way to reach the tea country.

Transfer — Sylhet Airport to Sreemangal

~90 km, ~2 hrs · private car or CNG auto-rickshaw

The road south from Sylhet city winds past pineapple groves and betel-leaf farms before climbing into the tea estates around Sreemangal, Bangladesh's self-styled 'tea capital.'

Resort Check-In — Grand Sultan Tea Resort & Golf

from \$145 USD/night, for 2 people

A large resort set inside a working tea estate in Kamalganj, with rooms looking directly over manicured tea rows, a golf course, and a spa — the most comfortable base in the Sreemangal area.

Grand Sultan Tea Resort & Golf · +8801730081000 · grandsultan.com.bd

Sunset Walk Through the Tea Gardens

~1 hr, self-guided · free for resort guests

The estate's own tea rows are open for an evening walk among the pickers' last rounds of the day — Sreemangal's gardens produce a large share of the country's tea, including a distinctive seven-layer tea served at local stalls.

Day 4

Ratargul Swamp Forest & Jaflong

A day trip north to a freshwater swamp forest that floods every monsoon, then on to the stone-collecting village on the Indian border.

Transfer — Sreemangal to Ratargul

~95 km, ~2.5 hrs · private car

An early start north toward Sylhet city and on to Ratargul, one of very few freshwater swamp forests in the world, sometimes called the 'Amazon of Bangladesh' for the way its trees stand waist-deep in water for much of the year.

Ratargul Swamp Forest Boat Ride

~1.5 hrs, guided · from Tk 800 (~\$7.30 USD) per boat

A small wooden boat poled by a local boatman glides between half-submerged tree canopies — at the height of the summer flood the water can reach the lower branches, turning the forest into a green tunnel.

Jaflong & the Dawki Border Hills

~2 hrs, self-guided · free to visit

A riverside village where the Piyain River runs turquoise out of the hills of Meghalaya, India, and local families still hand-collect stones from the riverbed for the construction trade — the Khasia betel-leaf villages nearby welcome visitors.

Dinner — Grand Sultan Tea Resort & Golf

~1.5 hrs · ~\$15 USD/person

Back at the resort after a long day on unpaved roads, with a Bengali and continental buffet overlooking the tea estate.

Day 5

To the Edge of the Sundarbans

A long travel day from the hills to the river delta, boarding a wooden cruise launch for two nights in the world's largest mangrove forest.

Domestic Flight — Sylhet to Dhaka

~45 min flight · from \$65 USD/person one-way

A short hop back to the capital to connect toward the southwest — Bangladesh's small size makes same-day, three-leg travel days like this one workable.

Road Transfer — Dhaka to Mongla

~270 km, ~6 hrs · private car via the Padma Bridge

The drive southwest crosses the Padma River on Bangladesh's longest bridge and continues to Mongla, the river port that serves as the main gateway to the Sundarbans.

Board the M.V. Bonosampan

3 days / 2 nights, all-inclusive · Tk 14,000 (~\$127 USD) per person

A government-registered tourist launch with twin and shared cabins, run through the Bangladesh Forest Department's official Sundarbans tourism program — the fare covers every meal, forest permits, a licensed guide, and an armed forest guard for the full three days.

The Bengal Tours Ltd. · +880248812776 · www.bengaltours.com

Evening Mangrove Channel Cruise

~2 hrs, guided · included in the package

The launch eases out of Mongla into the Pashur River and the first narrow mangrove channels as the light fades — spotted deer and crab-eating macaques are common along the banks even on the first evening.

Day 6

Tiger Country

A full day of small-boat excursions into the Sundarbans' core zone, tracking the signs of the forest's most famous resident.

Country-Boat Canal Cruise

~2 hrs, guided · included in the package

A smaller country boat peels off from the main launch to push into canals too narrow for the Bonosampan — the best chance to see kingfishers, otters, and the delta's famous tree-climbing mudskippers up close.

Kotka & Kochikhali Watchtower Walk

~3 hrs, guided, armed forest guard required · included in the package

A forest-floor walk to a raised watchtower overlooking a waterhole, with a licensed guide and an armed Forest Department guard scanning the mud for fresh Bengal tiger pugmarks — sightings are rare, but the tracks and deer alarm calls are not.

Kotka Sea Beach

~1 hr, guided · included in the package

A quiet, driftwood-strewn beach where the Sundarbans meets the Bay of Bengal directly, reachable only by the tour's own boats — one of the least visited stretches of coastline in the country.

BBQ Dinner Aboard the Launch

~2 hrs · included in the package

A barbecue dinner on the open top deck as the launch anchors for the night in the forest's main river channel, with the generator cut for an hour so the sounds of the mangroves take over.

Day 7

Return to Dhaka & Departure

A last look at the mangroves before the long road back to the capital for an international departure.

Sunrise on the Pashur River

~1 hr, self-guided · included in the package

A final early start on the top deck as the launch motors back toward Mongla, with a last chance to spot the Irrawaddy dolphins that surface in the wider river channels at dawn.

Disembark at Mongla

~30 min · included in the package

The Bonosampan docks back at Mongla by mid-morning on the third day, closing out the cruise package.

Road Transfer — Mongla to Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport

~270 km, ~6 hrs · private car via the Padma Bridge

The same Padma Bridge route runs back to Dhaka; building in the full six hours leaves a comfortable margin for an evening international departure.

Download the latest version of this itinerary anytime at i-journey.com