

Far Horizon Tours of India Highlights

By Maria Harding, Cruise Critic contributor

- Knowledgeable India specialist with more than 25 years' experience
- River cruises can be combined with eco-lodge stays and 'Golden Triangle' tours
- Emphasis on soft adventure and wildlife spotting in "India's Serengeti"
- Cruises allow you to safari by boat, jeep -- and elephant
- Tours and onboard talks included in the cruise price
- An authentic but very comfortable Indian experience

Far Horizon Tours of India Fleet (1)

The 46-passenger MV Mahabaahu operates Brahmaputra River cruises through Assam, between Jorhat and Guwahati. It's one of the few ships on the river and is often used by other tour operators such as Saga, Fred. Olsen, International Expeditions and Pandaw.

Two air-conditioned houseboats, the nine-passenger Vaikundam and the two-cabin Sauver Nigam offer cruises around the backwaters of Kerala. Both vessels have solar-powered hot water; in 1998, their operation was voted 'the most eco-friendly tourism project in Kerala.'

A new Far Horizon river cruise operation on the Ganges river is planned for 2018.

- [MV Mahabaahu](#)

About Far Horizon Tours of India

Far Horizon Tours is a Delhi-based travel company founded 25 years ago by Sanjay Basu, a mountaineer and adventure trip specialist. He built up his experience in tourism by organizing rock climbing camps and jeep and camel safaris in the Himalayas and the deserts of Rajasthan, as well as rafting trips along the Indus, Beas, Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers.

He formed Far Horizon in 1992 to offer soft adventure and safari travel, focusing on what he calls 'both the living and natural history of India,' with an emphasis on exploring wildlife sanctuaries and discovering local tribal cultures, as well as seeing the subcontinent's more famous historic monuments.

Far Horizon now employs 60 staff in Delhi, Kerala, Rajasthan and Assam; has sales offices in the U.K. and U.S.; and works with tour operators in Germany, France, Scandinavia and Australia. As well as its Brahmaputra riverboat and Kerala-based

houseboats, the company owns and operates the Dera Dune Retreat, a luxury eco lodge set atop a 100-foot-high sand dune at Jamba in Rajasthan.

Comprising a collection of 18 cottages and a swimming pool, the Retreat is a base for camel safaris, hikes and visits to local villages. Stays here can be combined with 'Golden Triangle' tours of Delhi, Agra (home of the Taj Mahal) and Jaipur, or added on to a longer itinerary featuring the Brahmaputra cruise.

Far Horizon has won a variety of awards from Kerala Tourism and the Indian Government, and Basu is now senior vice president of the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India, as well as a member of the Government of India's National Task Force for the Development of Cruise Tourism.

Onboard

MV Mahabaahu offers an upmarket but authentic Indian experience, including daily yoga sessions and Ayurvedic spa treatments.

Cabins are clean and comfortable, with powerful showers, tea and coffee facilities, mini-bars, TVs, hairdryers and safes, and feature traditional Assamese decor, rich in embroidered silks.

Food at lunch and dinner is a mix of Indian/Asian and European dishes, while breakfasts -- featuring fresh milk for cereals and made-to-order omelettes alongside Indian specialities -- is a taste of home.

All shore excursions are included in the fare. Wi-Fi is erratic, but when it's available, it's also included in the fare. Two alcoholic drinks per person are complimentary at the welcome and farewell dinners; otherwise, passengers pay about 300 rupees for a glass of wine or beer. Bottled drinking water is included -- and required to use for brushing teeth and other tasks as drinking tap water in India is not recommended.

The ship includes a small spa with a single massage room for regular and Ayurvedic treatments. There's also a steam room and sauna, as well as a Jacuzzi with a shower and changing room. The ship has a salon for hair and beauty treatments. The Indian rupee is the ship's currency.

One big selling point of Brahmaputra cruises is the chance to go off the beaten track and meet some of India's fascinating rural tribes and communities. The other is that you'll see a fabulous array of wildlife, including water buffalo, elephants, white rhino, wild deer, a huge variety of exotic birds and even -- if you're sharp eyed and very lucky -- the occasional tiger.

Fellow Passengers

Represented in the U.K. by Saga Holidays, and used by U.S. operators such as Road Scholar and International Expeditions, MV Mahabaahu attracts a fair number of well-heeled, older, English-speaking guests as well as a smattering of Europeans and middle-class Indians