

Sojourns in the Sundarbans

An Exploratory Study
of Community-based
River Tourism between
India and Bangladesh



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Abbreviations

AD:	Anno Domini
AC:	Air Conditioner
ASI:	Archaeological Survey of India
BC:	Before Christ
BEDS:	Bangladesh Environment and Development Society
BIWTA:	Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority
CBO:	Community Based Organisation
EU:	European Union
E-rickshaw:	Electronic rickshaw
Ft:	Feet
IWAI:	Inland Waterways Authority of India
MoU:	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
PIWTT:	Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade
SANDEE:	South Asian Network for Development and Environmental Economics
SAWI:	South Asia Water Initiative
SIZ:	Sundarbans Impact Zone
SOP:	Standard Operating Procedure
UNESCO:	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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Project Team
CUTS International

Preface



Bipul Chatterjee
Executive Director
CUTS International

Spanning across Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat districts of Bangladesh and South and North 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal in India, the Sundarbans – literally translated as ‘the beautiful forest’ in Bengali – is the world’s largest mangrove forest. The habitat supports a incredible variety of aquatic, terrestrial and amphibian species and has been designated as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site.

The entire region is home to some of the most impoverished human populations in the world. These people depend mostly on low yielding agriculture, fishery, honey and wax collection for their livelihood and wage a relentless battle against nature for their survival. Identification of alternative and supplementary sources of livelihood can go a long way in bailing out these people from the clutches of poverty that define their existence.

The geographical topography of the Sundarbans is well suited to river-based tourism in the region. Apart from its diverse flora and fauna, the area has been inhabited by settlers from various parts of India and Bangladesh over the years, resulting in a melting pot of diverse cultures and religions. Endowed with such attractions, both natural and human-made, the appeal of the Sundarbans as a tourist haven, can hardly be exaggerated.

South Asia Water Initiative (SAWI): Sundarbans Focus Area Programme of the World Bank Group seeks to promote joint management of the Sundarbans by the governments of India and Bangladesh for sustainable development of the region. Community-based river cruise tourism between the two countries is a crucial component of this project.

Under this programme, the India Office of World Bank Group has involved CUTS in the preparation of a conceptual plan for community-based river cruise tourism from India to Bangladesh via the Sundarbans. The plan is based on a primary survey and seeks to indicate the different routes that connect the Sundarbans across the border along with places of interest. The framework also seeks to capture relevant details of infrastructure, security and other regulatory issues along the routes. This plan also offers recommendations regarding interventions that may be required to make the initiative successful.

A well developed and sustainable plan for community-based river cruise tourism is a source of hope for the impoverished populations of the Sundarbans on both sides of the border. This may well reduce the reliance of the local communities on forest resources, which has been a major causal factor behind the bio-degradation in the Sundarbans.

One can, in this regard, draw inspiration from the successful model of the Bojo -Aloguinsan project near Cebu, Philippines, where the association of the service providers is run by the local fishermen and housewives. Apart from facilitating river cruise, these people deliver occasional lectures on ecology, conservation, mangroves and birds and also market handicrafts made by the locals. It has provided an alternative livelihood to the locals and has considerably boosted the local economy.

For us at CUTS, working on this project has been a pleasure. I take this opportunity to sincerely thank the World Bank for taking this initiative and providing support. I also thank Unnayan Shamannay, our Bangladesh partner for their support and contribution towards the success of this project. Finally, I thank my colleagues who have executed the project on the ground.

We look forward to making further contributions to the future policy discourse on this subject.

Executive Summary

Background

Covering an area of almost 10,000 square km across the coastal region of Bay of Bengal, the Sundarbans is a vast tract of forest and saltwater swamp in the lower part of the Ganga-Brahmaputra and Meghna river deltas.

The delta extending across Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat districts of Bangladesh and South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal in India is also the largest mangrove forest in the world supporting diverse habitats for various aquatic, terrestrial and amphibian species.

The entire mangrove region of both India and Bangladesh is densely populated harbouring some of the most impoverished populations in the world mainly dependent on low yielding agriculture, fishery, honey and wax collection.

It is believed that adequately regulated tourism can provide alternate livelihood opportunities to the local population and act as a tool for regional development. Thus there is a need for development of sustainable tourism in the Sundarbans area.

Rationale

Given this backdrop, CUTS International with support from the World Bank has conducted a study entitled *Integrating community-based tourism along the India-Bangladesh protocol route for inland navigation*.

The initiative to develop and promote community-based river cruise tourism between India and Bangladesh, especially in and near the Sundarbans, has the potential to not only popularise some of the existing tourism routes and locations, but also to identify new destinations and routes for tourism that can help capture the ecological, cultural and historical uniqueness of the Sundarbans.

Apart from the existing flora and fauna of the mangrove forest, pilgrimage and heritage sites, local cultural events including fairs, festivals and many other traditional practices of the local communities of Sundarbans can hold popular attractions for tourists.

Appropriate promotion of community-based river cruise tourism can generate new and sustainable livelihoods for local inhabitants, a majority of whom belong to the poor and marginalised sections of the society.

Additionally, it may help preserve the delicate ecological balance of this biosphere through global attention, exposure, involvement and promotion of sustainable and responsible tourism. This will further encourage governments on both sides of the border to frame policies appropriate to sustainable use and preservation of the Sundarbans biospheres.

The objectives of the study were to:

- identify the possible and most feasible routes connecting Sundarbans on both sides of the border.
- pinpoint the locations of interest for tourism along and near the identified routes with the specification of all such places, seasons, activities, festivals, etc. that may be of interest to tourists.
- identify and documenting existing and required infrastructure at such potential locations for tourism development, with emphasis on community-based tourism.
- identify opportunities and challenges for the operation of river cruises along the identified routes.
- understand the impact of river cruise tourism on the political economy at the local level, including developing local livelihood opportunities linked to such tourism along the identified routes.
- recommend necessary and desired policy interventions.

The key routes examined in this study are:

- a) Route A: India-Bangladesh protocol route
- b) Route B: Alternate existing route in Bangladesh: Dhaka-Khulna-Burigoalini-Kolkata
- c) Route C: Existing alternative route 1 in India: Kolkata-Godkhali-Hemnagar-Angtihara-Mongla-Dhaka
- d) Route D: Existing Alternative route 2 in India: Kolkata-Jharkhali-Hemnagar-Angtihara-Mongla-Dhaka
- e) Route E: Alternative route in Kolkata: Kolkata-Hasnabad-Hemnagar-Angtihara-Mongla-Dhaka

The key findings are:

1) Tourism Infrastructure in India and Bangladesh

- The infrastructure needs to be developed on both sides.
- The boat cruises are often privately operated and do not follow government-mandated regulations or standards in terms of safety norms and hygiene conditions.
- There is a lack of holistic government regulations to monitor services provided by the local boat cruises.
- At several places especially in Bangladesh, permanent *ghats* are absent for disembarkation of tourists.
- Intermittent supply of electricity and mobile connectivity at several places need to be addressed by governments of India and Bangladesh.
- In Bangladesh, the cruise covers more time and distance on the river as compared to the Indian side. Hence, accommodations and meals have to be arranged on the cruise vessel.

Recommendations

- Capacity building and financial assistance to the local communities to develop eco-friendly accommodations.
- Assistance to the local boatmen to improve infrastructure and safety measures in the local boats.
- Regulation of activities of the boat associations in the Sundarbans on both sides of the border.
- Increasing the quantity of restrooms and waste disposal facilities along the way and near the tourist spots.
- The governments must integrate local development plans to provide uninterrupted supply of electricity in the Sundarbans area.
- More permanent *ghats* and jetties need to be developed for ease of movement of the tourists who are not accustomed to makeshift infrastructure.

2) Tourism Orientation of the Local Communities

There is a considerable lack of tourism orientation among the local communities on both sides of the border. Communication skills and service quality of the local population must be strengthened keeping in mind the diverse clientele to be catered to, particularly international tourists.

Recommendations

- Proper training and capacity building of the local boatmen such that they can cater to international clientele.
- Capacity building and vocational training of local communities involved in hotels and restaurants can help address the needs of international tourists.

3) Operation of the Tourist Cruises

- There is a lack of adequate depth along several stretches of the Sundarbans rivers, which affects the navigability of vessels.
- There is only one immigration checkpoint at Hemnagar, which serves both cargo and passenger vehicles.
- Piracy through boat-borne anti-social elements remains a problem along some stretches of the Sundarbans rivers and security needs to be strengthened.

Recommendations

- The government on both sides needs to identify stretches along the Sundarbans rivers, which lack the least available depth and undertake regular dredging and desilting to maintain navigability of the channels.

- Additionally, to facilitate international cruise tourism, IWAI and BIWTA need to chalk out additional routes and disembarkation points based on anchoring facility and proximity of places of tourist attraction. New routes may also reduce the pressure on the existing routes.
- There needs to be separate immigration posts for passenger and cargo vehicles.
- Joint training for the guides of both countries. This can be done by the forest departments of the two countries along with NGOs. It would facilitate the exchange of relevant knowledge and best practices.
- Cooperation in the domain of boat designing by bringing in boat designers and manufacturers of both the countries for a knowledge exchange programme.
- The Bhomra-Gojadanga land post can be improved to accommodate tourists who may be interested in transiting through land ports.
- Deployment of more floating police units is required to address the sporadic issues of piracy and theft along the concerned routes.

4) Environmental Impact

- There is an apprehension among the forest department officials that cruise tourism may negatively impact the ecology of the Sundarbans given its sensitive ecosystem.
- Usage of contaminated chemical fuel by local boats and their disposal in the water causes serious damage to the ecosystem of the Sundarbans.
- Solid waste management on the vessels is also a critical issue since the boatmen, and even the tourists have a tendency to dispose off solid wastes into the rivers of the Sundarbans.

Recommendations

- Capacity building of locals can help develop eco-tourism models including environmentally sustainable home-stays, restaurants and village tours. Coupled with the river cruise, these can engender more sustainable livelihood opportunities in the area with minimal damage to the environment.
- Capacity building of boatmen could equip them to observe improved mandates of fuel and waste management.
- The cruise crew and management should also adopt international operation standards to minimise damage to the Sundarbans ecosystem.

1. Background

SAWI Sundarbans Focus Area Programme

Covering an area of almost 10,000 square kms across the coastal region of Bay of Bengal, the Sundarbans is a vast tract of forest and saltwater swamp in the lower part of the Ganga-Brahmaputra and Meghna river deltas.¹ The delta extending across Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat districts of Bangladesh and South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal in India is also the largest mangrove forest in the world and home to various aquatic, terrestrial and amphibian species, including 260 species of birds and some globally endangered species including the estuarine crocodile, the Ganges and Irrawaddy dolphins and the Indian Python. Moreover, it is the only mangrove habitat in the world for the *Panthera tigris* (Royal Bengal Tiger). Given its geographical uniqueness, the region has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984.

Writing about the Sundarbans, Amitav Ghosh in his popular fiction ‘The Hungry Tide’ observes, “There are no borders here to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea. The tides reach as far as three hundred kilometres inland and every day thousands of acres of forest disappear under water only to re-emerge hours later. ... When the tides create new land, overnight mangroves begin to gestate, and if the conditions are right they can spread so fast as to cover a new island within a few short years.”

The entire mangrove region covering both India and Bangladesh harbour some of the most impoverished communities in the world. The Indian Sundarbans, comprising 40 per cent of the total Sundarbans region, consists of about 102 islands, of which almost 54 are populated by about 4 million people.² On the Bangladesh side, according to the 2011 Bangladesh Census, the Sundarbans Impact Zone (SIZ) has a population of 7.8 million.³ A considerable section of this population works as agricultural labourers. Agriculture, unfortunately, is not high yielding due to pronounced salinity of soil and water. Other major sources of livelihood include fishery, honey and wax collection. In this context, it is evident that tourism can provide alternative livelihood opportunities to the local communities and act as a tool for regional development. However, if tourism is not regulated, it may inflict irreparable damage on the biodiversity of the region. There is, thus, a need for the development of sustainable tourism in the Sundarbans.

The South Asia Water Initiative (SAWI) Sundarbans Focus Area Programme seeks to promote joint management of the Sundarbans by the governments of both India and Bangladesh for sustainable development of the region. The two specific goals of this endeavour are to enhance:

- 1 The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), The Sundarbans (1997). <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/798>
- 2 Livelihoods today and tomorrow, *E-course*.<http://livelihoods.net.in/e-course/sundarbans>
- 3 Mondal Haque, Sanaul (2017), “Population and Land Cover Dynamics of Sundarbans Impact Zone in Bangladesh.” East West University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Box 1.1: The SAWI Initiative

The World Bank's SAWI is a five year programme that envisages increasing regional cooperation for sustainable and inclusive management of the Himalayan river systems in South Asia. SAWI aims to facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue and policy deliberation; enhance knowledge and capacity on issues of regional, and in particular transboundary water resources management and climate adaptation; and promote cooperative action by way of policy reforms, institutional development, and investment in water resources management. The programme focuses on five key areas which include (i) Ganges basin, (ii) Brahmaputra basin, (iii) Indus basin, (iv) Sundarbans landscape, and (v) Regional cooperation.

(i) bilateral cooperation to implement the agreements between India and Bangladesh on the Sundarbans; (ii) technical cooperation between India and Bangladesh for joint water resources management in the Sundarbans.

Potential of Developing River Cruise Tourism between India and Bangladesh

The initiative to develop and promote community-based river cruise tourism between India and Bangladesh, especially in and around the Sundarbans, aspires not only to popularise some of the existing tourism routes and locations in this part of the world, but also to identify new destinations and routes for tourism that can help capture the ecological, cultural and historical uniqueness of the Sundarbans. There has been intermittent interest among domestic and foreign tourists to explore this nonpareil land of mangroves, tigers, estuarine crocodiles and Olive Ridley turtles. A comprehensive plan based on a detailed study of prospects for tourism can promote the Sundarbans as a destination for tourists from around the world.

The lure of the exquisite flora and fauna of the mangrove forests apart; pilgrimage and heritage sites, local cultural events including fairs, festivals and other traditional practices of the local communities of Sundarbans can also draw tourists from near and far. *Bono Bibi Puja*, traditional worship revered by both the Muslim and the Hindu communities of the delta to protect them from the attacks of tigers, bears testimony to the harmony prevailing amongst the two major communities in this region.

Promotion of community-based river cruise tourism also has the potential for generation of new and sustainable livelihoods for local inhabitants, a majority of whom are poor and marginalised. The dearth of employment opportunities results in widespread migration of the male population, to other parts of the state and nation leaving the women to manage households, agriculture and other small-time economic engagements like fishing. Tourism with appropriate capacity enhancement can fill this lacuna and also help promote local cuisines, art and culture, with the promise of good economic returns. Promotion of sustainable and responsible tourism in the Sundarbans will not only showcase the uniqueness of the mangroves but also help preserve the delicate ecological balance of this biosphere through global attention, exposure and involvement. This will encourage governments on both sides of the border to frame policies appropriate to sustainable use and preservation of the Sundarbans ecosystem.

In this backdrop, CUTS with support from the World Bank has conducted the study entitled '*Integrating community-based tourism along the India-Bangladesh protocol route for inland navigation*'.

Status of Legal Framework

The Protocol on Inland Water Trade and Transit (PIWTT) has been operational since 1972. In June 2015, the protocol on inland water transit between India and Bangladesh was signed. The 2015 protocol specified the ‘Ports of Calls’ in India (i.e. Kolkata, Haldia, Karimganj, Pandu, Shilghat) and Bangladesh (Narayanganj, Khulna, Mongla, Sirajganj, Ashuganj).⁴

The protocol also specified the following routes for inland water transit:

1. Kolkata – Haldia – Raimongal – Chalna – Khulna – Mongla – Kawkhali – Barisal – Hizla – Chandpur – Narayanganj – Aricha – Sirajganj – Bahadurabad – Chilmari – Dhubri – Pandu – Shilghat.
2. Shilghat – Pandu – Dhubri – Chilmari – Bahadurabad – Sirajganj – Aricha – Narayanganj – Chandpur – Hizla – Barisal – Kawkhali – Mongla – Khulna – Chalna – Raimongal – Haldia – Kolkata.
3. Kolkata – Haldia – Raimongal – Mongla – Kawkhali – Barisal – Hizla – Chandpur – Narayanganj – Bhairab Bazar – Ashuganj – Ajmiriganj – Markuli – Sherpur – Fenchuganj – Zakiganj – Karimganj.
4. Karimganj – Zakiganj – Fenchuganj – Sherpur – Markuli – Ajmiriganj – Ashuganj – Bhairab Bazar – Narayanganj – Chandpur – Hizla – Bansal – Kawkhali – Mongla – Raimongal – Haldia – Kolkata.
5. Rajshahi – Godagari – Dhulian.
6. Dhulian – Godagari – Rajshahi.
7. Karimganj – Zakiganj – Fenchuganj – Sherpur – Markuli – Ajmiriganj – Ashuganj – Bhairab Bazar – Narayanganj – Chandpur – Aricha – Sirajganj – Bahadurabad – Chilmari – Dhubri – Pandu – Shilghat.
8. Shilghat – Pandu – Dhubri – Chilmari – Bahadurabad – Sirajganj – Aricha – Chandpur – Narayanganj – Bhairab Bazar – Ashuganj – Ajmiriganj – Markuli – Sherpur – Fenchuganj – Zakiganj – Karimganj.

In April 2017, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Bangladesh on passenger and cruise services on the coastal and protocol routes was also signed.⁵

The MoU specified that the passengers and tourists, after completion of the customs and immigration facilities will be allowed to embark and disembark at identified coastal and inland ports in India and Bangladesh. These ports are set to be decided mutually by the Joint Shipping Committee on Coastal Shipping or the Joint Standing Committee on PIWTT.

Since the signing of the protocol in 2015, India and Bangladesh have also signed an addendum in October, 2018 to the protocol including additional routes.⁶

This addendum enabled the addition of an additional route through ‘Pangaon’ in the Bangladesh part and through ‘Dhubri’ in the Indian part on the original 8 routes. Pangaon and Dhubri were also declared to be treated as ‘Ports of Calls’ through this addendum.

4 More details of the Protocol on June 2015 is available at: <https://www.meaindia.gov.in/TreatyDetail.htm?2421>

5 More details of the MoU on April 2017 is available at: <https://www.meaindia.gov.in/TreatyDetail.htm?3033>

6 More details of the Addendum on October 2018 is available at: <https://www.meaindia.gov.in/TreatyDetail.htm?3445>

The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to the 2017 MoU on passenger and cruise services on the coastal and protocol route between India and Bangladesh was formalized on October 2018.⁷

The SOP was designed to promote and facilitate the day to day passenger and cruise services and operations of the vessels plying between the two countries across the 8 routes as revised in the Addendum of 2018.

Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were as follows:

- Identify and study the possible and most feasible route (likely to be the already identified Kolkata – Haldia – Raimongal – Mongla – Kawkhali – Barisal – Hizla – Chandpur – Narayanganj route) along the India-Bangladesh waterways;
- Identify locations of interest (in terms of ecological, cultural, historical, adventure, religious and nostalgic⁸ factors) for tourism along and near this identified route. This will include specification of all such places, seasons, activities, festivals, etc. that may interest tourists;
- Identify and document existing and required infrastructure at such potential locations for tourism development, with emphasis on community-based tourism;
- Look at policies and regulations that govern navigability along the route and understand necessary changes;
- Identify opportunities and challenges for operating river cruises along the identified routes. This will include issues like navigability (to be ascertained through available government data and interaction with local knowledge resources particularly boatmen and *sareng*⁹, embarkation points and their existing infrastructure, links from river-side to places of interest nearby;
- Briefly understand the impact of river cruise tourism on political-economy factors at the local level, including developing local livelihood opportunities linked to such tourism along the identified route;
- Prepare a conceptual plan of the possible tourist circuits possible (with emphasis on night-stay among the communities) using a combination of several themes for each circuit;
- Recommend additional studies that will be required either before any public investment or after extending the proposal to the private sector for attracting investment.

7 More details of the SoP on October 2018 is available at: <https://www.mea.gov.in/TreatyDetail.htm?3446>

8 People residing in West Bengal, India and Bangladesh share a common history because this region comprised the undivided province of Bengal prior to partition by British Colonialists in 1905, a segregation that was reinforced in 1947 when India and Pakistan were partitioned

9 A *Sareng* is the main boatman of the vessel. He also acts as an informal guide of the locale, listening to bush sounds and hoarding the vessel safely to destination. The word originates from the Indo-Aryan language, namely Bangla

Methodology

The project has been implemented through a combination of desk and field research with various aims:

- identifying locations of interest along and near the proposed Indo-Bangla protocol route;
- generating and/or strengthening available information about the identified locations;
- highlighting existing and required infrastructure for tourism promotion; and
- gathering preliminary information and evidence on local socio-economic factors that may be impacted by such tourism.

The desk research has been undertaken on the basis of available secondary literature pertaining to the existing tourism routes, information available on existing infrastructure and the policies and regulations that govern tourism in and around the Sundarbans. A list of such locations/festivals/cultural events preliminarily identified is attached as an annexure (Annex-1) to this report.

CUTS had partnered with the organisation – Unnayan Shamannay from Bangladesh as a strategic partner to complement this study on the Bangladesh side. The Unnayan Shamannay team has worked on this assignment with support and guidance from the CUTS team.

Key informant interviews were conducted by CUTS and Unnayan Shamannay to substantiate secondary and available information. This primarily involved interviews with government officials, people's representatives, experts and known champions of the Sundarbans. The idea was to validate secondary information and also identify new locations with potential for tourism.

Comprehensive fieldwork has been undertaken to gauge the feasibility and potential of developing community-based river cruise tourism along the Indo-Bangla protocol route through the Sundarbans. This involved multi-stakeholder perception analysis through a structured questionnaire survey of stakeholders including government officials, entrepreneurs, people's representatives, opinion leaders, subject experts, civil society organisations and media. Key informant interviews of relevant stakeholders also helped to understand the possible impact of tourism development on the generation of livelihood opportunities at the local level.

Focused interviews with stakeholders were also undertaken to understand experts' opinions and people's perceptions about how tourism can impact the local biosphere and its flora and fauna.

Challenges

CUTS and Unnayan Shamannay teams faced certain challenges in undertaking this study given the difficult terrain and remoteness of major parts of the study location. Following are the challenges that delayed the process of gathering of primary evidence:

Geographical: Some of the locations in both India and Bangladesh, particularly those nearer to the estuaries of the rivers on both sides of the border, can only be accessed during winter months given the high tidal waves that are encountered from mid-March onwards. This includes locations like Bonnie Camp and Kalas Camp on the Indian side and Dublar Char, Pokkhir Char, etc. on the Bangladesh side. The other way to reach these places is by hiring bigger vessels that can negotiate heavy tides, but even then, docking of the vessel is difficult. Establishments on both sides of the border advise against travelling to these locations during certain periods (mid-March to end-August or mid-September) and are reluctant to issue the necessary permission. This is

mainly in view of the unpredictable nature of the rivers and tides during nor' westers¹⁰ and monsoons. As such the survey team was not able to visit these locations and the information and evidence about these locations are based on inputs received from local tour and cruise operators.

Political: *Panchayat* elections in West Bengal, India were declared on March 31, 2018. The elections were conducted on May 14 and the results were declared on May 17, 2018. Given the incidents of violence as reported in popular media across the state in the build-up to the elections, undertaking the field research was difficult. First, because block and panchayat level officials did not have time to meet CUTS till the elections were over; second, because other relevant local entities and respondents (local people's representatives, opinion leaders, knowledgeable persons, etc.) were directly or indirectly engaged in the election process. This delayed the overall work in all the identified blocks of West Bengal by around 45-50 days.

10 Nor' westers (*Kal Baisakhi*) is a local rainfall accompanied by thunder storm which occurs in India and Bangladesh from March till monsoon establishes over Northeast India

2. Heritage, Nature and Tourist Attractions across the Sundarbans Landscape

The ancient history of Sundarbans can be traced from various archaeological evidence including artefacts, scriptures and maps. However, studies highlight that due to the ever-changing landscape, physiography and dense population, old relics have not always survived. Under the circumstances, very few scientific investigations have been carried out. Following is a brief outline of the history of human settlements in the region along with a history of efforts at conservation of the region. It also briefly describe the major places of attraction in the region.

Brief History of Human Settlement in the Sundarbans¹¹

Early to middle ages: Around 500 antiquities discovered in the course of explorations by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of West Bengal, in Govardhanpur and its adjacent Uttar Surendraganj (located near the mouth of the Ganga in the interiors of the Sundarbans in South 24 Parganas district) suggest that this area was inhabited since early ages. The artefacts found indicate the following periods:

Mauryan era - 4th to 2nd Century BC

Pala era – 750 to 1200 AD

Indo Turkish Islamic rule: 1204 to 1575 AD

Mughal rule: After 1575 AD

British colonial period: Recent human settlements in the area date back to 1757 when a treaty was signed between Mir Jafar, the then Nawab of Bengal, and British East India Company, through which lands of undivided 24 Parganas were ceded to the East India Company. The present settlements specifically originated in 1771 when the forest land was divided into plots to be leased out to prospective landlords.

Post-independence: After independence, between 1951 and 1971, the area witnessed a huge influx of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. The region also witnessed an influx of tribal populations from central India who were lured by the upper caste Hindu leaseholders keen on clearing their forest lands. Poor people from the coastal districts of both India and Bangladesh also migrated to this region.

The continuous influx of people from various parts of the world and India rendered Sundarbans a melting pot of cultures. Since living in Sundarbans was fraught with challenges including animal attacks and frequent cyclones, the culture and literature of the region were also influenced by

¹¹ The World Bank (2014), Building Resilience for Sustainable Development of the Sundarbans, The World Bank, New Delhi, India. <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/Building%20Resilience%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20of%20the%20Sundarbans.pdf>

the relentless struggle between man and nature. The unique folk religion of a number of Sundarbans dwellers including fishermen, honey gatherers, woodcutters, boat builders and cultivators is neither Hinduism nor Islam but reveals aspects of both the religions. Two deities worshipped by them include:

Bono Bibi: She is the deity of the forest and protector of human beings and is revered by both Hindus and Muslims. This shared worship is a result of a shared dependence on the forest. The inhabitants of the Sundarbans consider *Bono Bibi* as an inextricable part of their lives where religious differences become less important in comparison to the rigours of their incessant struggle for survival.¹²

Dakshin Rai: He is termed as the lord of the tigers and is worshipped by all the dwellers of Sundarbans. While some mythologies describe him as the demon king of the forest, others describe him as a son of the Hindu deity, Lord Shiva.

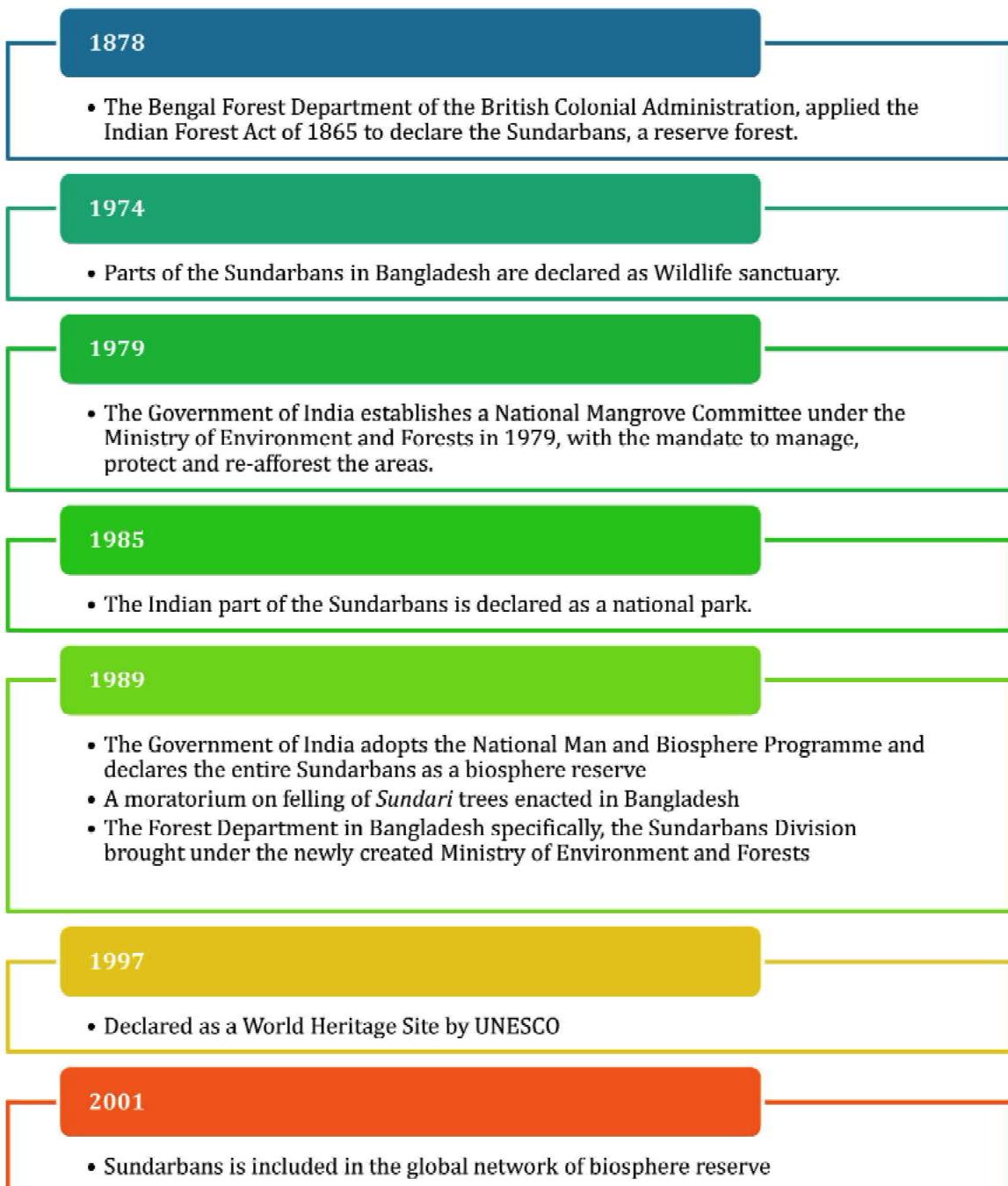
The Sundarbans is dotted with several small temples dedicated to both *Bono Bibi* and *Dakshin Rai*.



Popular deities of the Sundarbans dwellers

12 Karmakar, Subarna (2018), 'Ethnic Identity and Forest Preservation: A sociological Enquiry on Sundarbans, West Bengal.' Quest Journals, (6)1, pp 20-25. <http://www.questjournals.org/jrhss/papers/vol6-issue1/D612025.pdf>

History of Conservation in the Sundarbans^{13, 14}



13 Ghosh, Priyanka (2015), Conservation and Conflicts in the Sundarban Biosphere Reserve, India. Geographical Review,105. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Priyanka_Ghosh/publication/281576871_Conservation_And_Conflicts_In_The_Sundarban_Biosphere_Reserve_India/links/58ca2c7392851c4b5e6ca592/Conservation-And-Conflicts-In-The-Sundarban-Biosphere-Reserve-India.pdf

14 Sen, G. Soham (2010), 'Conservation of the Sundarbans in Bangladesh through Sustainable Shrimp Aquaculture.' Harvard Kennedy School.<https://www.innovations.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/1227364.pdf>

Places of Historical and Religious Importance

- **Bagerhat (Bangladesh)**

Shaat Gombuj Mosque

During the 15th Century, a muslim colony was founded in Bagerhat known as Khalifabad. Khan Jahan Ali built several mosques around Khalifabad thus making it the 'Mosque City'. The name of the Shaat Gombuj mosque comes from sixty pillars or shaat gombuj that support the structure. It is considered as an architectural spectacle.



Shaat Gombuj Mosque of Bagerhat

Kodla Math

This math or temple is located at a distance of 10 kms from Bagerhat city, on the Eastern bank of river Bhairab. It was built in the 17th century. It gets its name from the name of the village where it is located. The math represents a wondrous example of terracotta craftsmanship in Bangladesh.

Best time to visit: November to March

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: While Bagerhat city has the potential to attract a sizeable number of tourists, the tourism infrastructure is not well developed. For instance, there are no proper accommodations in the vicinity of both the sites. Popular tourism websites such as TripAdvisor and Lonely Planet locate the nearest hotels at a distance of 30 to 40 kms from the Mosque city near Khulna.

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: Bagerhat has huge opportunity to be developed as a site for history-based tourism; it also acts as a gateway to the Bangladesh Sundarbans. Given this, the government should incentivise locals to invest in home stays and restaurants to attract more tourists.

- **Sagar (India)**

Ganga Sagar and Kapil Munir Ashram

The region is named after the mythological King Sagar who meditated to bring Ganga down from heavens to Earth. According to mythology, Kapil Muni, a reincarnation of Vishnu turned King Sagar's sons to ashes on being falsely accused of stealing their sacrificial horse. Later at the king's pleading and out of compassion for the young princes, he agreed to their resurrection on condition that King Sagar would persuade Ganga to descend on Earth. To commemorate this event festival of Ganga Sagar Mela is celebrated on Makar Sankranti (January 14th to 16th), which is believed to be the date when Ganga



Ganga Sagar: Where religious minds meet



Kapil Munir Ashram: A pilgrim's delight

descended on the Earth. Worshippers also visit Kapil Muni's ashram although it is believed that the original ashram got submerged during the 1897 Bengal earthquake.

Best time to visit: The Ganga Sagar Mela is sponsored by the West Bengal Government and is organised every year in January (14th to 16th).

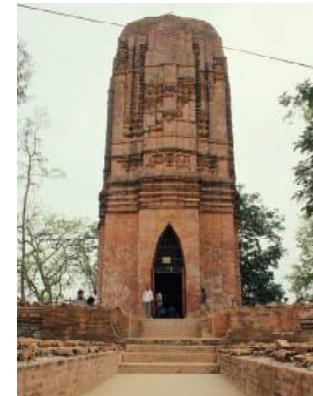
Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: It is already a popular tourist destination due to its cultural and religious significance. Ganga Sagar Mela is the second largest congregation in India after the Maha Kumbh. This area is well connected with Namkhana by waterway. The condition of the jetty at Sagar is better than other such locations. However, the tourism infrastructure needs improvement in keeping with the steady increase in the number of visitors. While there is one tourist bungalow and one youth hostel available in the vicinity, they may not be sufficient to house an increasing tourist population. Additionally, local eateries may not be able to cater to a wide range of preferences.

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: The local communities around the temple are already involved in tourism. However, more hotels and restaurants will create more jobs for the local residents.

- [Mathurapur II, Raidighi \(India\)](#)

Jatar Deul

Located in the village PurbaJata, this monument is preserved as an archaeological monument by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), according to which the monument was constructed in 975 BC by one Jayanta Chandra in a unique architectural style. Presently it is considered as a Shiv Temple by the local community.



Jatar Deul

Best time to visit: Although this spot can be visited throughout the year if one wants a taste of the local flavour, the best time to visit would be during Charak Mela, held on Chaitra Sankranti for eight days, which falls in the month of April.

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: While it has immense potential to draw tourists, this monument has not gained sufficient popularity due to lack of awareness. Its location is also in such a way that this monument is better accessed by road and may not be suitable for cruise tourism. There are no accommodations in the vicinity and some basic budget accommodations are available in Raidighi.

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: There is immense potential for developing weekend tourism in this area. Local communities could be encouraged to invest in home stays and eateries to attract more tourists.

- **Gosaba (India)**

Netidhopani

The name of this village features in Bengali Folklore (Manasamangal) and has been associated with Manasa (the Hindu goddess of snakes). There is a watchtower in this village, which offers glimpses of the ruins of a 400-year-old Shiva temple.

Best time to visit: Since it is located near Bay of Bengal, this spot is best visited during winter (November to February). Boat operators avoid taking tourists to this spot between April and August due to frequent nor'westers and monsoon showers.

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: The spot is a popular tourist destination. Since there are no accommodations or eateries in the adjoining village, tourists generally prefer going back to Pakhiralay, which takes 3 hours to reach by boat.

There are not many opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism around this area.

Places of Natural Beauty and Wildlife

- **Bagerhat (Bangladesh)**

Koromjol Eco-tourism Centre

This centre under the Chadpai Range is on the eastern side of the Bangladesh Sundarbans. There is a government managed deer and crocodile breeding centre at this location.



Koromjol Eco-tourism Centre

Katka

It is the eastern sanctuary under Sharankhola Forest Range with a watchtower. It is almost 152 km to the south of Khulna. Wildlife sighted here includes tiger, spotted deer, wild boar and saltwater crocodile.



Breathing roots - Lifeline of mangroves

Kachikhali

This place is located near Sarankhola Range, 14 km to the east of Katka coastal beach. Tourists can sight tiger, deer, crocodile, monitor lizard and many other mammals around this spot.

Jamtala Coastal Beach

Jamtala is almost 3 km from Katka on the eastern side of the Sundarbans. There is a watchtower on the beach.

Dublar Char, Dimer Char, Pakhhir Char, Tiar Char, Selar Char, Tinkona Island

These small islands (sandbars) are found at the confluence of Sundarbans rivers and the Bay of Bengal. The beaches on these islands are popular tourist destinations, particularly for bird watching. Dublar char is also being developed as a seafood processing centre.



A Birdwatcher's Paradise

Dolphin Sanctuary

Three canals have been declared as safe havens for Dolphins by the Bangladesh government. They include (i) one around 12 km from Ghagmari check-post of Chandpai Range to Karamjal check-post through Dhangmari canal and Pashur River; (ii) another 15 km from Jongra check-post to Andharmari check-post through Mrigamari check-post and (iii) a third, five km from Dudhkhali check-post to Supati canal through Bemara canal. These canals can be developed into potential tourist spots.

Best time to visit: November to March

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: The tourism in Bangladesh Sundarbans, unlike in India, is significantly spent on river. Therefore, in most cases, boarding and lodging have to be arranged by the cruise on the vessel. Of all the spots mentioned here, only Kachikhali offers a forest rest house.

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: There is a need to develop better accommodations in Mongla.

- **Satkhira (Bangladesh)**

Kolagachia Eco-tourism Centre

This centre is on the western side of Bangladesh Sundarbans near the Burigoalini range. It provides tourists with an opportunity to go inside the forest. Goran and Khoilsha trees are abundant in this region. Among wild animals, deer is common.

Dobeki

This spot is famous for forest activities such as nature walks, guided village and honey collection tours and is accessible by boat.

Mandarbaria

It is difficult to access from both Khulna and Mongla. Tourists can reach it from Dublar char or Nilkamal. Wildlife sighting includes that of Dolphin, King Crab, Horseshoe crab, etc.

Kalir Char and Putney Island

These are small flat islands (sandbars). These areas are popular among tourists for their beaches and for bird watching. Both the spots are located along the estuary of Malancha River.

Best time to visit: November to March

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: The tourism in Bangladesh Sundarbans unlike in the Indian part, is much more river-based. Therefore, in most cases, boarding and lodging have to be arranged by the cruise on the vessel. There are some accommodations available in Burigoalini, which are largely maintained by NGOs.

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: Burigoalini has significant capability to develop village-based eco-tourism.

- **Khulna (Bangladesh)**

Harbaria Eco-tourism Centre

It is an eco-park with a jetty, which provides glimpses of the Bangladesh Sundarbans and can be accessed only by boat



Sundarbans Mangroves



A Journey into the wild

Hiron Point

Located in the Nilkomol range this place is popular for sighting animals including tigers, deer, monkeys and crocodile. It is also popular with bird watchers.

Patkoshta Forest Camp

This spot is famous for nature walks and guided tours into the forest. The spot is accessible by boat, but accommodations are not available.

Best time to visit: November to March

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: There is a forest rest house in Hiron Point to avail for which prior permission is required.

There are hardly any opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism in the region.

- Sagar (India)

Jambudweep

Located 8 kms South West of Bakkhali and Frazerganj, Jambudweep offers serene beaches and freshwater reservoirs. This spot is being developed by the Fisheries Department of the Government of West Bengal as an eco-tourism spot.



Jambudweep: Far from the madding crowd

Mousuni Island

A small island near Namkhana, this spot has recently become popular among bird lovers.



Mousuni: An ideal locale for a lazy afternoon

Best time to visit: November to March is the best time. One can also visit Jambudweep during fishing season to witness the fishermen in action.

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: Both spots are well connected. Tourists can opt for a boat ride from Bakkhali to reach Jambudweep. However, there has been no development in terms of tourism infrastructure including accommodations, eateries and even roadways. Mousuni can be reached from Namkhana and offers accommodations in tents on the beach which hold an added attraction.

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: Jambudweep remains largely uninhabited except during fishing season that is from October to February. It is largely untouched and there is scope for developing eco-tourism especially during the fishing season.

Mousuni is already gaining attraction as a weekend destination for tourists from Kolkata. There is scope for development of tourism infrastructure.

- Namkhana (India)

Bakkhali and Frazerganj

Many deltaic islands spread across the Bay of Bengal, Bakkhali and Frazerganj are popular for their pristine beaches



Bakkhali Beach

Henry's Island

Located near Bakkhali, this island has a tower, which allows tourists a panoramic view of the island and the sea. The place is also home to millions of red crabs that are visible on the beach. Government run accommodation facilities are available here.



Henry's Island: Paradise Regained

Best time to visit: November to March.

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: These places have shaped up as popular weekend destinations for tourists from Kolkata. There are accommodations and eateries in both places. The jetties that serve Bakkhali, Frazerganj and Henry's Island are well structured and are well connected to the beach.

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: Identification of spots at Namkhana for development of village-based tourism is possible. Additionally, capacity building of locals to build more homestays and restaurants can be addressed.

- **Patharpratima (India)**

Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project

Patharpratima is famous not only for its scenic beauty but also for being host to India's only crocodile project. There are estuarine species of crocodile and Batagur Baska species of Tortoise.



Crocodile Project at Patharpratima

Lothian Island

It is a wildlife sanctuary, which is home to various species like estuarine crocodiles, olive Ridley sea turtles, spotted deers, jungle cats and Rhesus Macaques. Tourists are not allowed to embark on this island, but they can take a trip around the island in a boat.

Kalas Forest Camp

Lying in the estuary of river Matla, this island is a breeding ground for Olive Ridley turtles during the winter season. It is also popular among bird watchers.

Best time to visit: November to March. Kalas can be visited only during winter months.

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: Patharpratima does not have good accommodation or eateries. Otherwise the block is well connected by both roadways and waterways. The Ramganga jetty, which is used by bigger ships and cruises is also well developed. Trips to the Kalas Camp do not usually commence from Patharpratima.

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: Local communities can be encouraged and capacitated to offer home stays and open eateries so that the spot can draw more tourists.

Lying in the estuary of river Matla, this island is a breeding ground for Olive Ridley turtles during the winter season. It is also popular among bird watchers.

- **Kultali (India)**

Kaikhali and Kantamari

Kaikhali dwells on the bank of the river Matla. The location is an ideal weekend destination for tourists and is well connected to Kolkata by road.



Piyali Island

Piyali Closure Site

This spot has gained popularity as a location for family gatherings and picnics. It is located close to Kolkata and is best reached by road. There is not much scope for cruise tourism, but it can be ideal for day-long outings.

Bonnie Forest Camp

It is an island located in close proximity to the Bay of Bengal. There is a watchtower 50 feet in height and offers a spectacular view of the Sundarbans.

Best time to visit: Anytime, preferably winter. Bonnie Camp can be visited only in winter

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: Kaikhali has only one government holiday home, which is maintained by the Ramkrishna Ashram at Nimpith and reservations can be made only through the Nimpith Ashram situated in Joynagar. There are no other accommodation facilities in Kultali. It needs to be mentioned that although Bonnie Camp belongs to Kultali block it is generally visited by tourists from Pakhiralay or Jharkhali. Boat associations inform that the stretch of Matla connecting Jharkhali to Kaikhali has on occasions faced the menace of piracy.

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: Local communities can be encouraged and supported to build home stays and eateries around Kaikhali to attract more weekend tourists from Kolkata.

- [Basanti \(India\)](#)

Jharkhali Tiger Rescue Centre

This is the first tiger rescue centre of India. It was established in 2012. Our team witnessed one tiger in captivity at the centre.



Tiger Rescue Centre, Jharkhali

Nafarganj Island

This island has remained largely untouched by tourists.

Best time to visit: Anytime, preferably winter.

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: Jharkhali is already well established as a tourist spot. No other spot is as well developed for tourism in Basanti.

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: There is scope for village-based tourism. Additionally, Basanti can be promoted as a gateway to Sundarbans. Nafarganj Island can be developed for weekend tourism by engaging communities in the development of home stays and eateries. There is also a mangrove interpretation centre.

- [Gosaba \(India\)](#)

Sajnekhali

Sajnekhali is one of the most popular spots in Indian Sundarbans. There is a watchtower, a mangrove interpretation centre, a *Bono Bibi* temple and a crocodile park. It is located close to Pakhiralay and is easily accessible from Godkhali (Canning). The watchtower has the capacity to host 20 people at a time.



Sudhanyakhali Watchtower



Sudhanyakhali: Where tigers roam

Dobanki

There is an attractive canopy walk at Dobanki, which leads to a watchtower with a height of 20ft. There is a sweet water pond nearby, which is a haven for thirsty animals making the watchtower an ideal location for wildlife sightings.



Canopy walk in Dobanki

Netidhopani

Apart from a watchtower, which can accommodate 20 persons at a time, this place also has a 400-year-old Shiv temple, which is associated with the traditional Bengali legend of Behula Lakhhindar. There is also a sweet water pond near this location making it ideal for sighting animals.

Best time to visit: November to March.

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: This is the most developed tourist circuit in Indian Sundarbans. The tourist spots are all located close to Pakhiralay, which has the maximum number of accommodation facilities in the entire Indian Sundarbans. Moreover, Sajnekhali also has a government guest house offering accommodation facilities.

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: Although the place is developed in terms of tourism, more village-based options can be explored.

- [Hingalganj\(India\)](#)

Jhingekhali Watchtower

This watchtower is located on the easternmost side of the Indian Sundarbans near the border with Bangladesh. Situated in close proximity of sweet water ponds, this watchtower can host 20 people at a time and is ideal for nature lovers desiring a glimpse of the animals in the wild. The watchtower complex also houses a temple dedicated to *Bono Bibi*.



Entrance to Jhingekhali Watchtower

Burirdabri Watchtower

This watchtower also located on the easternmost side of India Sundarbans on the banks of the river Raimongol. The viewpoint is called Raimongol viewpoint and offers tourists glimpses of Bangladesh Sundarbans. This watchtower is also famous for a mud walk and a mangrove cage trail. The watchtower has the capacity to host ten people at a time.

Best time to visit: November to March.

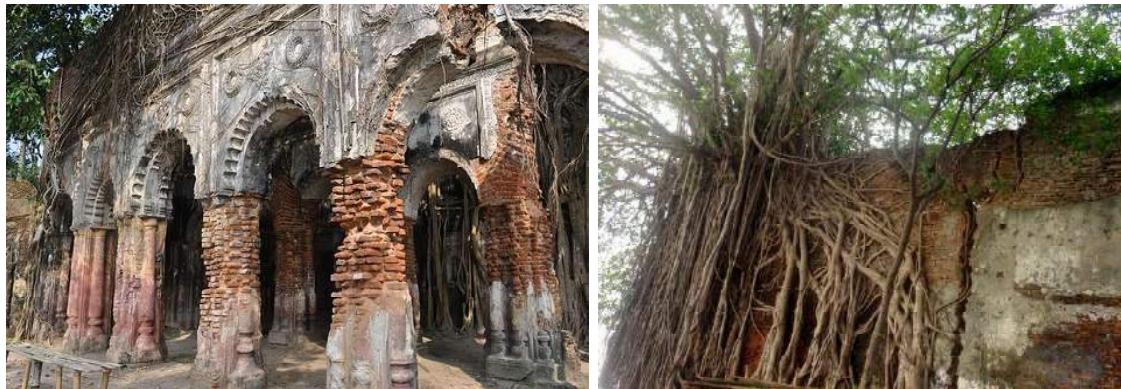
Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: Though well connected, tourism infrastructure is not developed here, which is why these two watchtowers fail to attract sufficient number of tourists compared to Sajnekhali.

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: Village based eco-tourism and home stays could be developed in Hemnagar, which is in close proximity of both the watchtowers.

- Hasnabad (India)

Taki Ghat

Lying on the banks of river Icchamati, this old town offers glimpses of Bangladesh to tourists from its numerous ghats. One can also avail boat rides along the river. During Dusserah (Bijoya Dashami), one can witness numerous immersions (Visarjans) in the river Icchamati from both India and Bangladesh. The site is spectacular and attracts a sizeable number of tourists from all over India and even abroad. Recently this has been covered by international channels including The National Geographic.



What was once the Taki Royal Household

Best time to visit: November to March.

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: Taki has a number of standard and affordable hotels and guest houses

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: There is opportunity for weekend tourism especially along the river Icchamati. Machhranga Island located on the river and near Hasnabad, can be developed into a picnic spot.

Festivals of Cultural Significance in the Sundarbans

Bono Bibi Puja and Mela: Inspired by folklore and mythology down the ages, the population of Sundarbans in both India and Bangladesh sides observe a number of pujas and melas (fairs). Perhaps the most significant among these is the *Bono Bibi* Utsav. This festival resonates with the traditional dwellers of Sundarbans on both sides of the border. *Bono Bibi* is the deity of the forest, its guardian angel and is believed to protect human beings from animal attacks. The deity is revered by all the inhabitants of Sundarbans who are largely dependent on forests for their livelihood. They believe that praying to goddess *Bono Bibi* would protect them from tiger and crocodile attacks and snake bites. The most significant aspect of the deity is that she is revered by both Hindus and Muslims alike in Sundarbans. Indeed, religious divisions pale in the face of natural challenges that the dwellers of this forest have to cope with in ensuring their survival.

The worship of the goddess is celebrated during the month of March throughout several locations in both India and Bangladesh Sundarbans. The puja is accompanied by fairs, which witness large congregations of the local populace.

Tourists, both local and international, can get a real taste of the folk culture of Sundarbans at this festival. Hence tourism can be promoted around the time of this festival. The government can also take initiatives to popularise this festival as an important component of tours to the Sundarbans.

3. Field Insights on the Tourist Circuits

This chapter outlines all the possible routes for cruise tourism between the Sundarbans of India and Bangladesh including those that currently exist as well as other potential ones. Under each of the routes, possible trip plans along with places of attraction and availability of infrastructure are mentioned (please see Annexure 1). The chapter talks about the routes referred in the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT). This is an existing route, through which transit and trade is conducted between India and Bangladesh. The routes discussed below include.

- **Route A (Kolkata-Dhaka): The Protocol Route: Kolkata – Namkhana – Hemnagar – Angtihara – Mongla-Dhaka**
- **Route B (Khulna-Kolkata): Existing Alternative Route (Bangladesh): Dhaka – Khulna – Burigoalini – Angtihara-Kolkata**
- **Route C (Godkhali-Dhaka): Existing Alternative Route 1 (India): Kolkata – Canning – Godkhali -Hemnagar – Angtihara – Mongla-Dhaka**
- **Route D (Jharkhali-Dhaka): Existing Alternative Route 2 (India): Kolkata – Canning – Jharkhali – Hemnagar – Angtihara – Mongla-Dhaka**
- **Route E (Hasnabad-Dhaka): Suggested Alternative Route (India): Kolkata – Hasnabad – Hemnagar – Angtihara – Mongla-Dhaka**

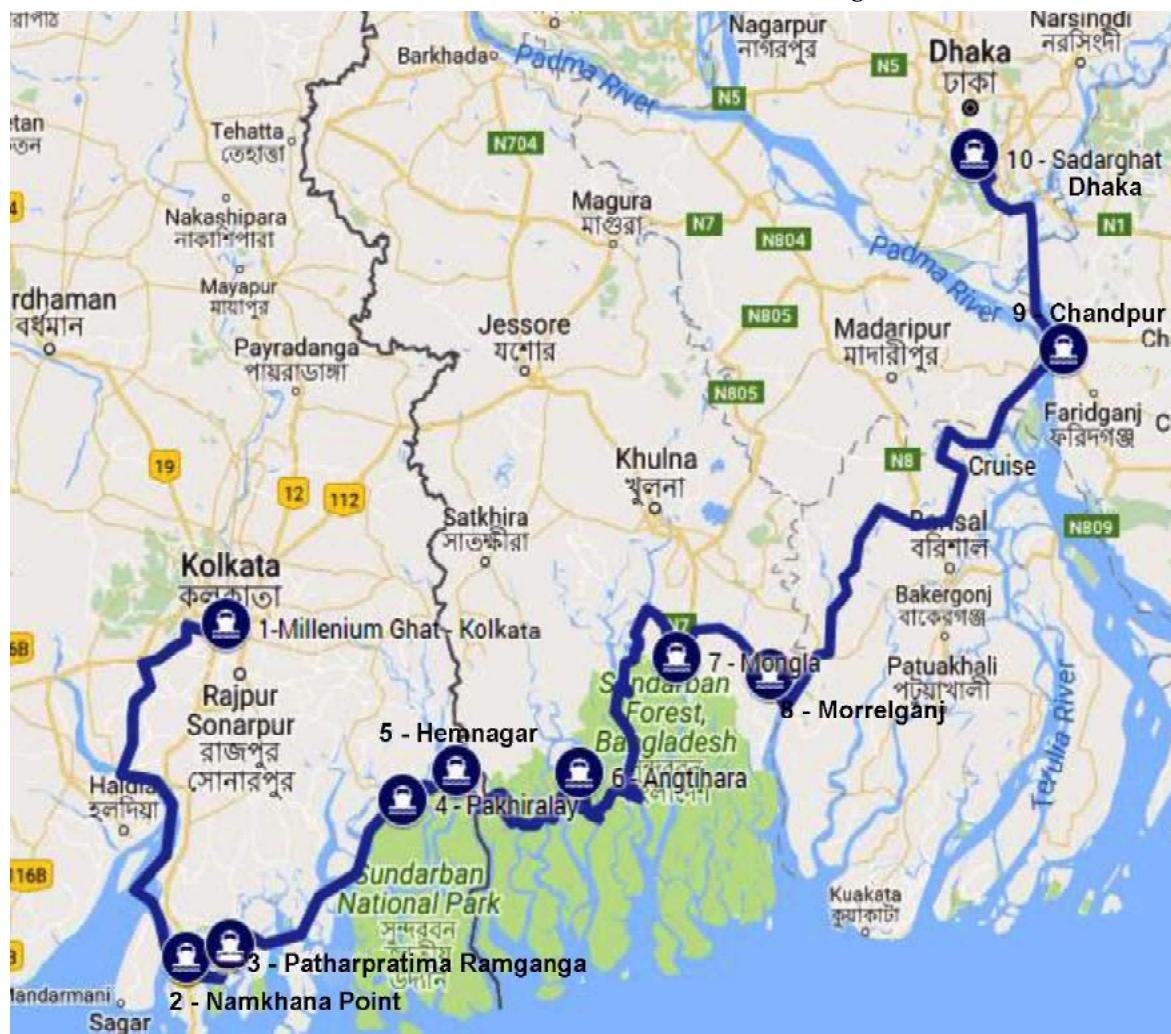
Route A: Kolkata-Dhaka; Dhaka-Kolkata

A cruise ship may take five to six days to cross over to Bangladesh along the protocol route. The total number of days that may be required to complete the cross-country trip is around two weeks. A tentative day-to-day itinerary is given below along with two schematic diagrams that show all the possible attractions in the Indian Sundarbans and Bangladesh Sundarbans that can be covered by this cruise. **It needs to be mentioned here that while the schematic diagram shows the commencement of the route from Kolkata, the route may commence from Dhaka as well.**

Day 1: The cruise starts at Chandannagar or Millenium Ghat in Kolkata and travels till Namkhana via river Hooghly. The cruise can be anchored at Namkhana jetty for the night. It is to be noted here that since the sailing of the cruise significantly depends on the tidal wave timings, which vary every day, it may not be possible to arrange for sightseeing at Namkhana on the same day.

Day 2: Tourists can be taken for sightseeing at Namkhana to spots such as Bakkhali, Frazerganj, Ben Fish island, Mousuni island, Henry's island and Jambudweep. For this purpose, local boats can be hired. Thereafter, the tourists would come back to the cruise at Namkhana jetty for the night.

Route 1: Protocol Route between India and Bangladesh



- 1 - Millenium Ghat - Kolkata
- 2 - Namkhana Point
- 3 - Patharpratima Ramganga
- 4 - Pakhiralay
- 5 - Hemnagar
- 6 - Angtihara
- 7 - Mongla
- 8 - Morrelganj
- 9 - Chandpur
- 10 - Sadarghat, Dhaka

Figure 3.1: Schematic Diagram of Route A on the Indian Side

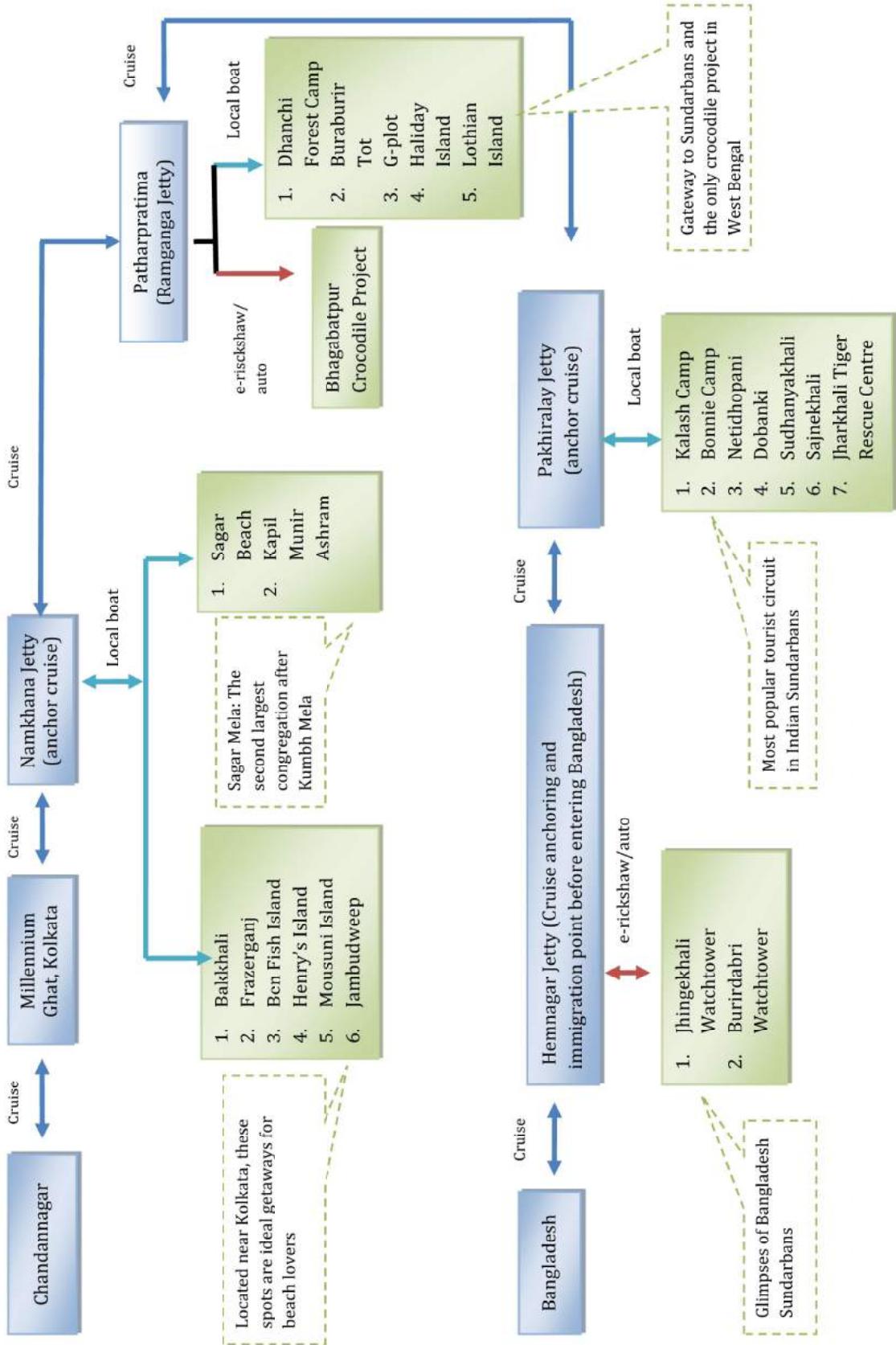
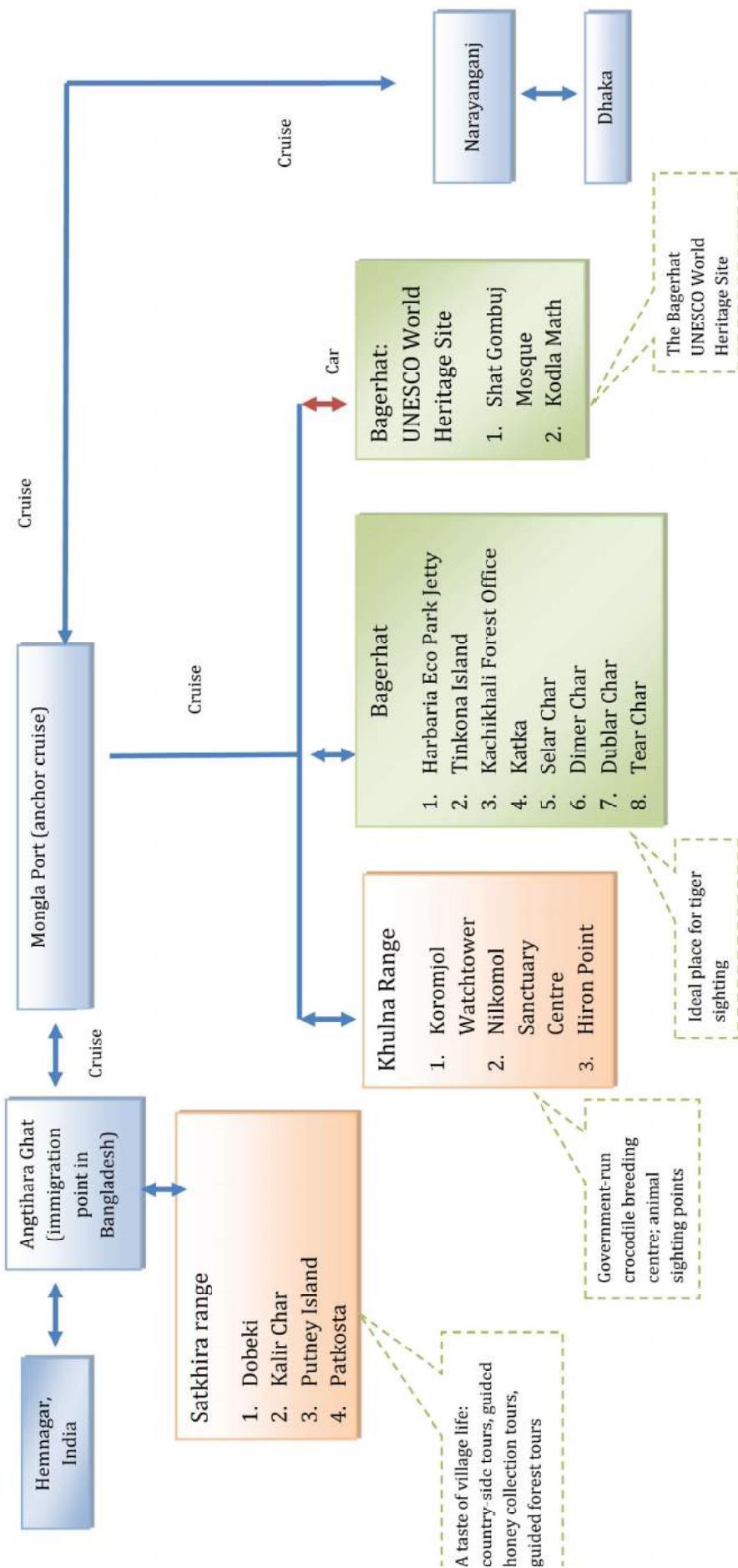


Figure 3.2: Schematic Diagram of Route A on the Bangladesh Side



Day 3: Early morning, cruise starts for Sagar jetty. From there e-rickshaws or autos can be hired to take the tourists to Kapil Muni's ashram and Ganga Sagar beach. Local sightseeing in Sagar can be done in two hours, following which the tourists can come back to the cruise. Afterwards, the cruise moves to Ramganga jetty. From Ramganga jetty local boats can be hired to take the tourists to Patharpratima. From Patharpratima, local e-rickshaws can be hired to take the tourists to Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project. Local boats can also be hired for visits to Lothian Island, Haliday Island and Buraburir tot. The cruise anchors at Ramganga jetty for the night.

Day 4: On the fourth day, the cruise moves towards Bonnie Island. It can be anchored there for the night. Local boats can be hired to travel to Kalash island, Netidhopani, Dobanki, Sudhanyakhali and Sajnekhali.

Day 5: The cruise moves towards Hemnagar. Hemnagar is a Land Customs Station (LCS) at the Bangladesh border and is also used for immigration checks. From Hemnagar, local houseboats may be hired to visit Jhingekhali and Burirdabri watchtowers. The cruise can be anchored at Hemnagar for the night.

Day 6: The cruise completes immigration formalities at Hemnagar, and crosses over to Bangladesh.

Day 7: The cruise enters Bangladesh via Hemnagar in India and stops at Angtihara where it can complete immigration formalities before moving inland.

Day 8: From Angtihara, local houseboats can be availed to take a tour of Satkhira range including spots such as Dobeki, Kalir char, Putney island and Patkosta forest. It is a day-long trip, after which tourists come back to the cruise for a night halt. The cruise moves towards Mongla port overnight.

Day 9: From Mongla port local houseboats are availed to take the tourists to spots such as Koromjol Watchtower and Horin Point. One the way back, tourists can be given a boat tour of *chars* including Tiar Char, Dimer Char, Dublar Char, etc. The tourists come back to the cruise for the night.

Day 10: Local houseboats can be hired to take the tourists to the Katka and Kachikhali forests. It is a day-long tour, after which tourists can come back to the cruise to retire for the night.

Day 11: Local houseboats can be hired to take the tourists to the Kachikhali Wildlife Sanctuary for a day-long trip, after which the tourists can come back to the cruise for the night. The cruise moves towards Khulna overnight.

Day 12: From Khulna transfers can be arranged towards Jessore. Flights can be arranged from Jessore to Dhaka.

Day 13: Sightseeing and shopping tour in Dhaka. Flights are available from Dhaka for onward connections.

Tourism Circuits along the Route in Bangladesh

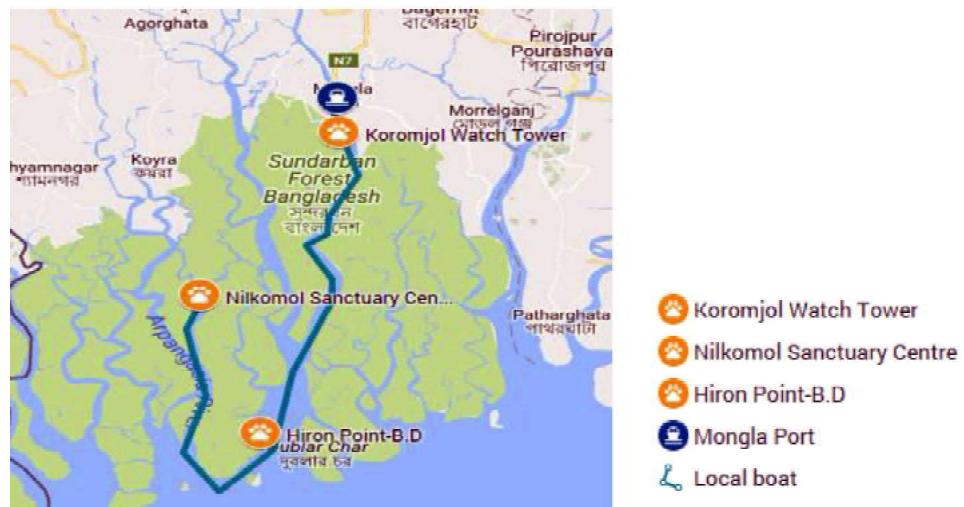
Bagerhat Circuit



Major places of attraction

1. *Shaat Gambuj Mosque*
2. *Kodla Math*
3. *Harbaria Eco Park Jetty*
4. *Katka-Kachikhali Forest*
5. *Dublar Char, Tiar Char and Selar Char, Tinkona Island*

Khulna Circuit



Major places of attraction

1. Koromjol Watchtower
2. Nilkomol Sanctuary Centre
3. Hiron Point

Satkhira Circuit



Major places of attraction

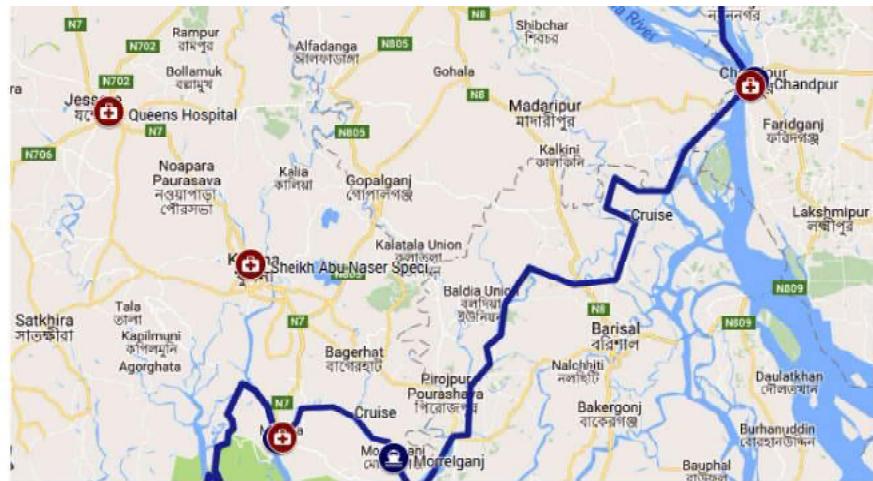
1. Dobeki
2. Patkoshta Forest Camp
3. Kalagachhia Forest Office
4. Putney Island and Kalir Char
5. Dolphin Sanctuary

Accommodations and Restaurants

The nature of Sundarbans tourism in Bangladesh is different from India as the former is entirely river based. Accommodations and food arrangements are, therefore, done on the boat. There are some guest houses at Satkhira maintained by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Bangladesh Environment and Development Society (BEDS). There is also one government guest house in Burigoalini just outside Bangladesh Sundarbans.

Hospitals

Available at Jessore, Khulna, Mongla and Dhaka



Permits Required

Permits are required for entering almost all the spots inside the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve. These are issued by the Divisional Forest Office in Khulna. The forest tours need to be compulsorily accompanied by armed guards, provided by the forest office.¹⁵

Tourism Circuits along the Route in India

Namkhana and Sagar Circuits

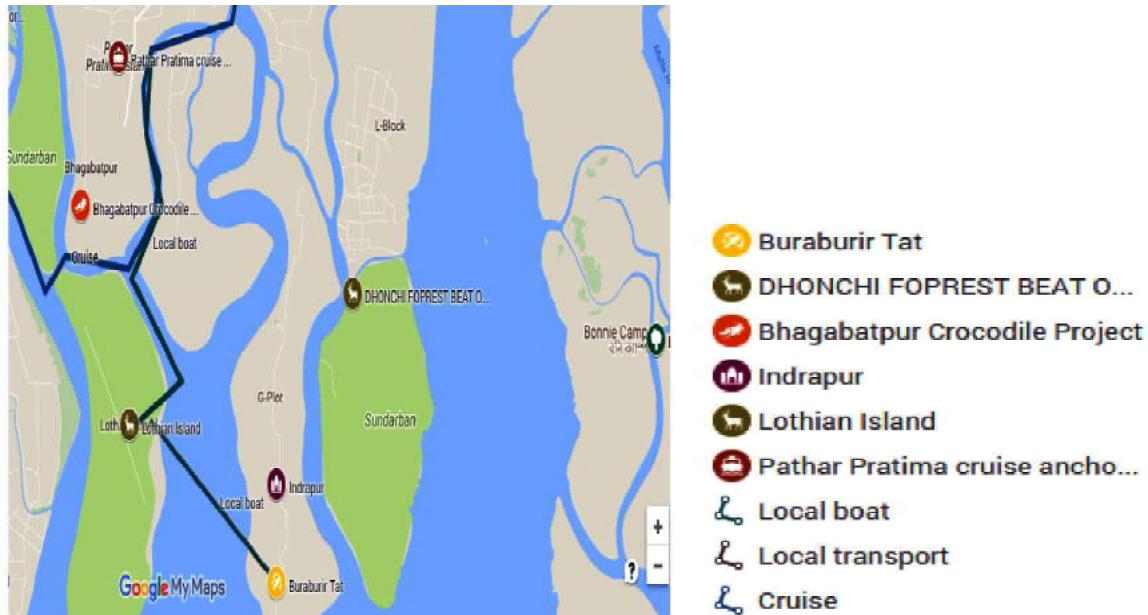


¹⁵ Chakrabortty, Partha, and Andrew Eagle (2017), 'Sundarbans tourism in disarray' The Daily Star(December 12), Bangladesh. <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/sundarbans-tourism-disarray-1503697>

Major places of attraction

1. *Gangasagar and Kapil Muni Ashram*
2. *Bakkhali and Frazerganj*
3. *Henry's Island*
4. *Mousuni Island*
5. *Jambudwip*

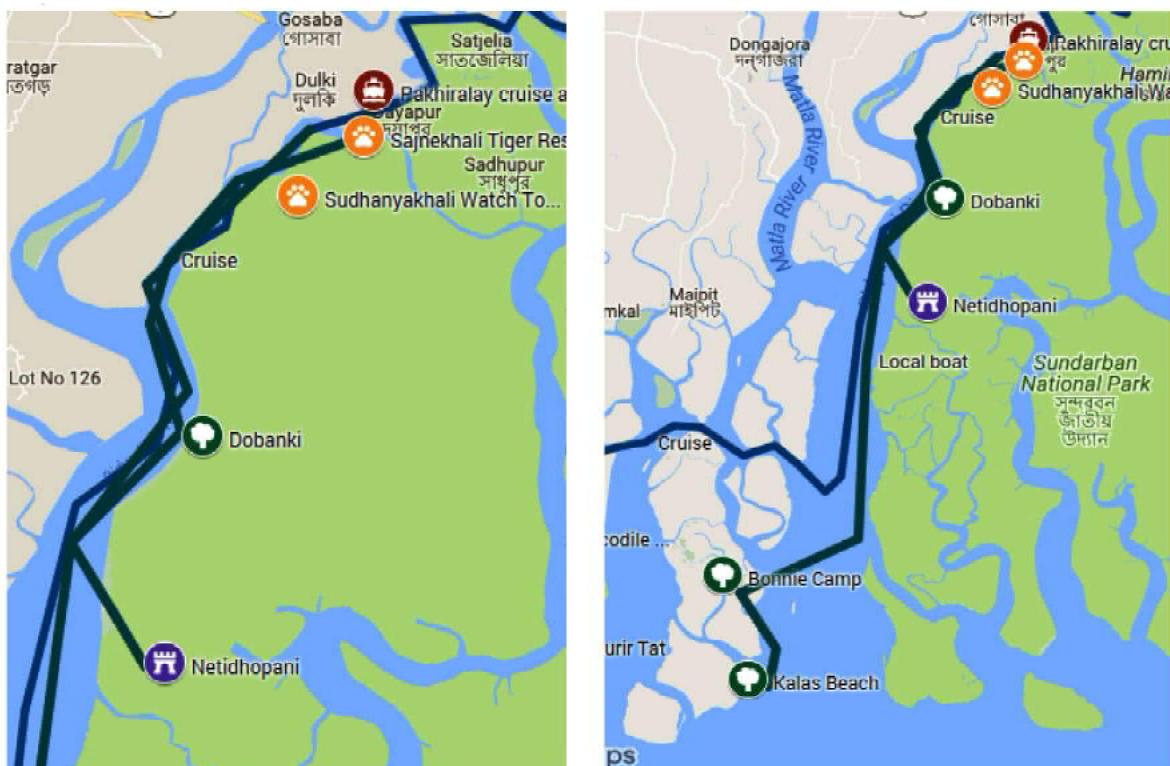
Patharpratima Circuit



Major places of attraction

1. *Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project*
2. *Lothian Island*
3. *Buraburir Tot*

Sajnekhali Circuit

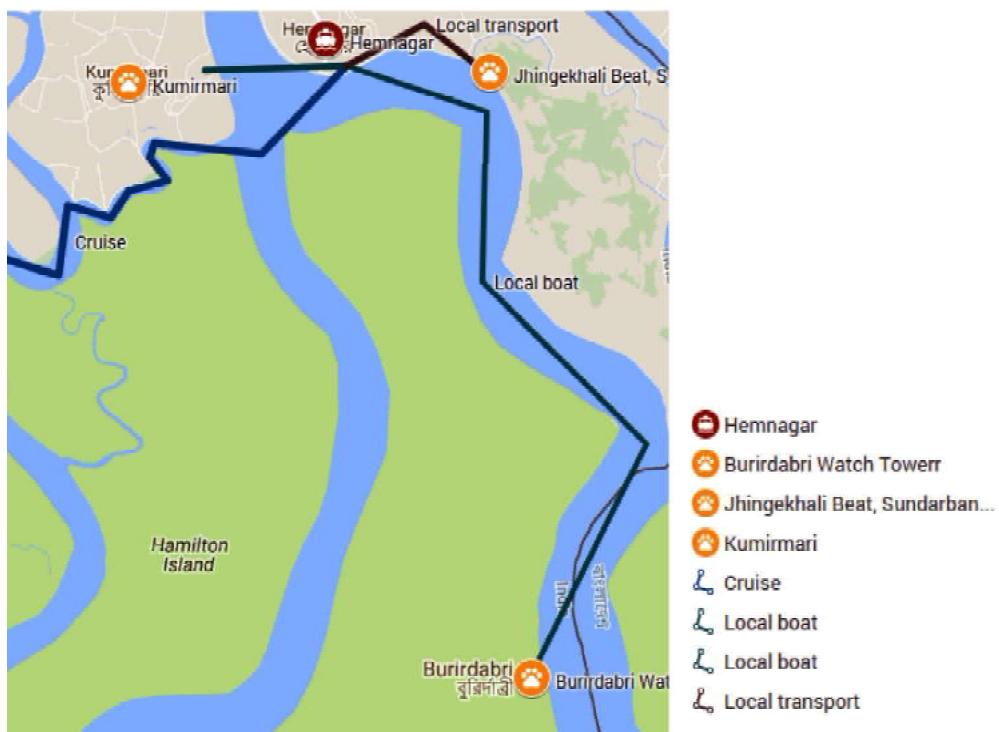


- Pakhiralay cruise anchoring
- Sajnekhali Tiger Reserve
- Sudhanyakhali Watch Tower
- Netidhopani
- Dobanki
- Bonnie Camp
- Kalas Beach
- Cruise
- Local boat

Major places of attraction:

1. *Sajnekhali Tiger Reserve*
2. *Sudhanyakhali Watchtower*
3. *Dobanki*
4. *Netidhopani*
5. *Kalas Beach*
6. *Bonnie Camp*

Hemnagar Circuit



Major places of attraction:

1. *Jhingekhali Watchtower*
2. *Burirdabri Watchtower*

Accommodations

Patharpratima-Namkhana-Sagar Circuit

Diamond Harbour: Both private and government accommodations are available

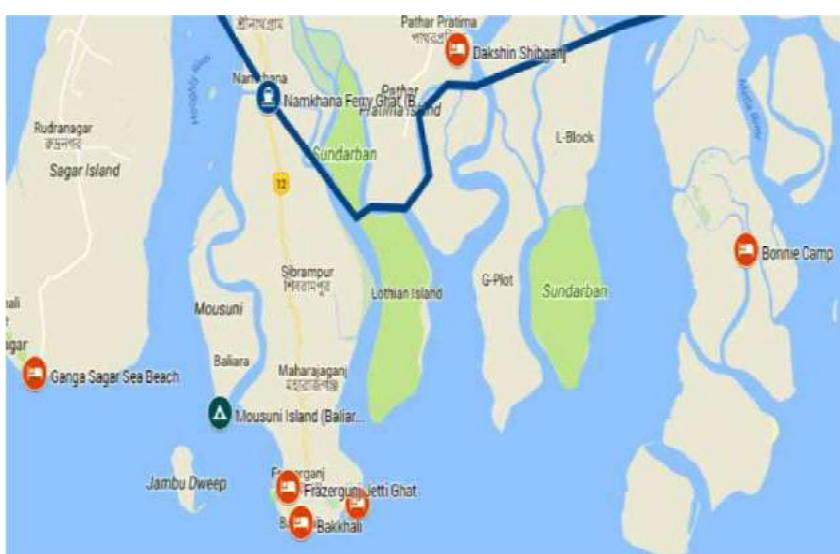
Sagar: One government tourist bungalow and one youth hostel available

Bakkhali: Private guest houses available

Frazerganj: Government tourist bungalows are available

Mousuni Island: There are tents on the beach, which can accommodate upto 20 persons

Dakshin Shibganj, Patharpratima: Private budget accommodations near Bhagabatpur

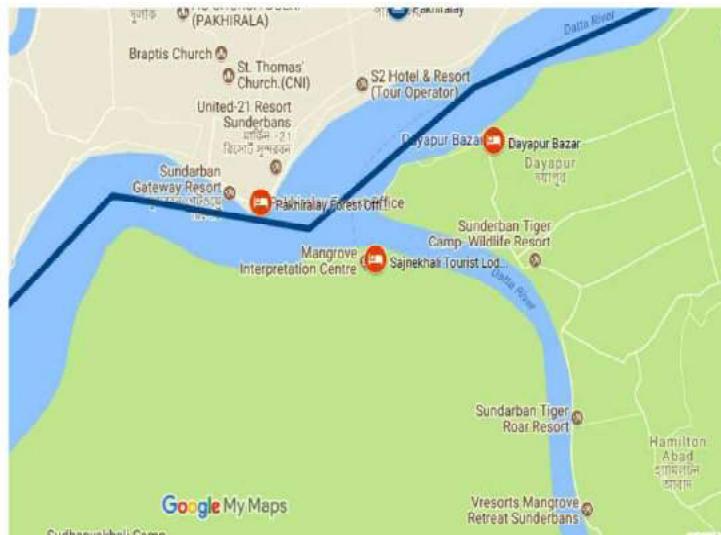


Sajnekhali Circuit

Pakhiralay: Several accommodations are available at Pakhiralay

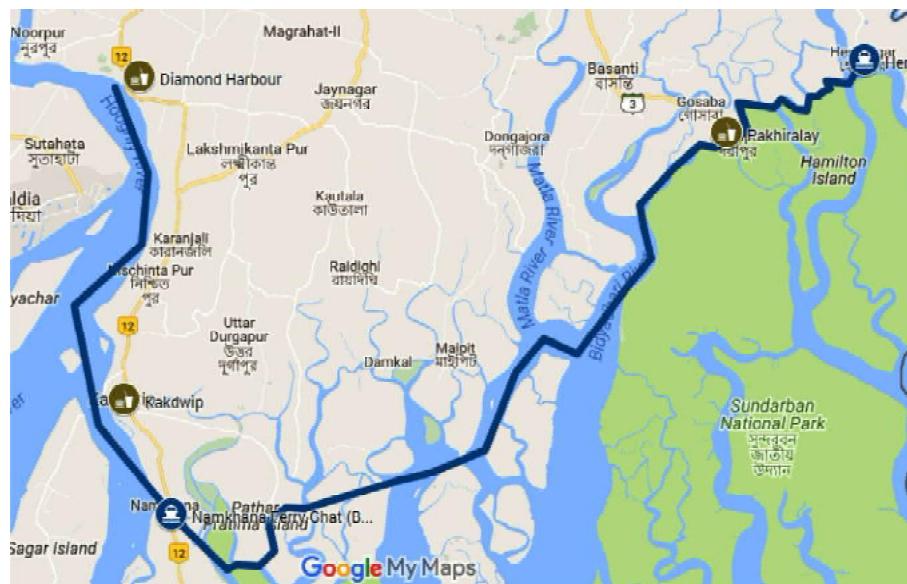
Sajnekhali: Only one forest guest house, which can be availed with prior permission.

Bonnie Camp: There is a tourist rest house for night stay. However, it is not supported by electricity and can be availed with prior permission.



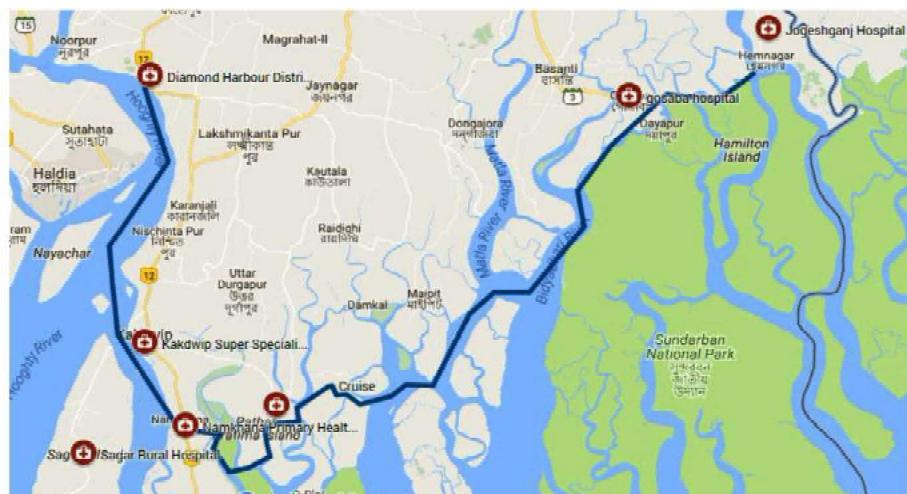
Restaurants

Restaurants are available at Diamond Harbour, Kakdwip and Pakhiralay



Hospitals

Government hospitals and healthcare centres are available at Diamond Harbour, Sagar, Kakdwip, Namkhana, Patharpratima, Gosaba and Hemnagar



Permits required:

Table 3.1: List of Offices Providing Permits for Spots in Indian Sundarbans

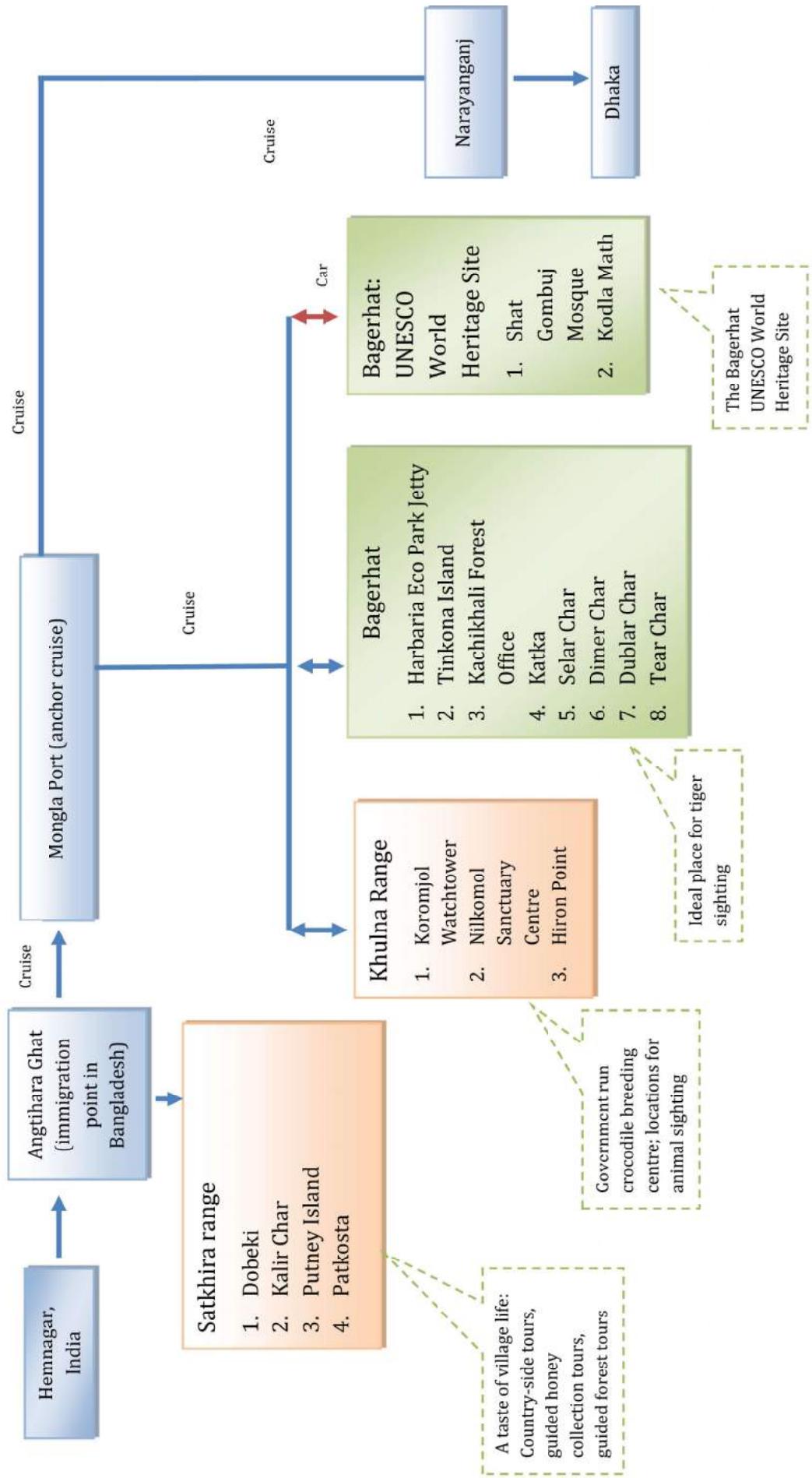
Name of the office	Spots
Office of Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, West Bengal Forest Department, located in Aranya Bhawan, Salt Lake, Kolkata	All spots (North and South 24 Parganas)
Directorate of Forest office at Canning I	Sajnekhali, Sudhanyakali, Netidhopani, Dobanki, Bonnie and Kalash camp, Dhanchi forest camp, Bhagabatpur crocodile project, Jhingekhali, Burirdabri, Harikhali, Buraburir Tot
Sajnekhali forest office	Sajnekhali, Sudhanyakali, Netidhopani, Dobanki, Bonnie camp
Jharkhali forest office	Only South 24 Parganas including Sajnekhali, Sudhanyakali, Netidhopani, Dobanki, Bonnie camp and Kalash camp
Bagna beat office	All North 24 Parganas including Jhingekhali, Burirdabri, Harikhali

The following sections present popular routes in Bangladesh Sundarbans and the number of trips that can be conducted within those routes.

Route A: Existing Protocol Route on Bangladesh Side



Figure 3.3: Schematic Diagram of Route A (Hemnagar-Dhaka)



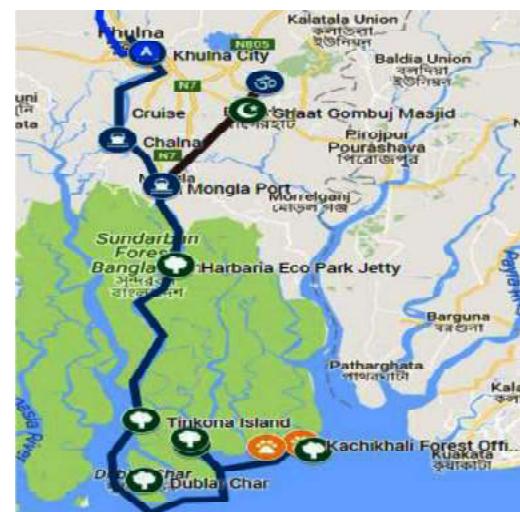
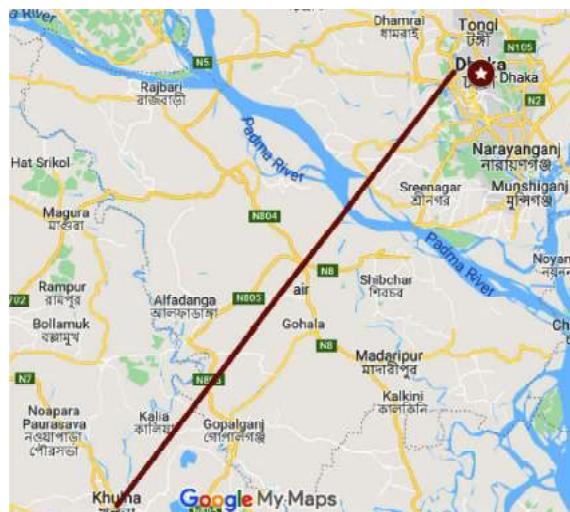
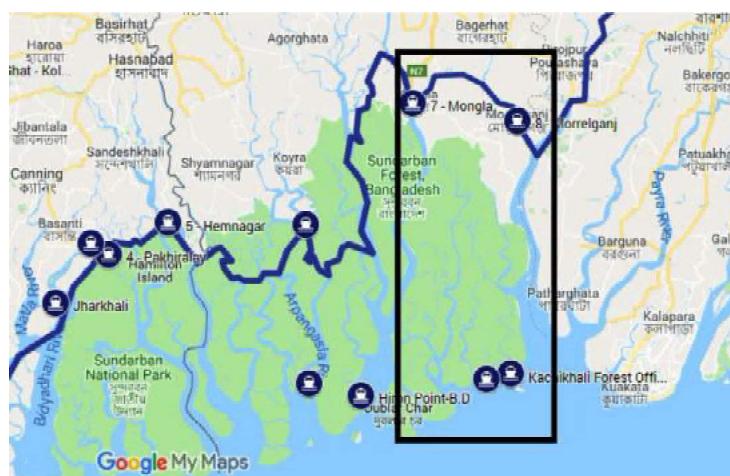
Infrastructure on the Bangladesh Side

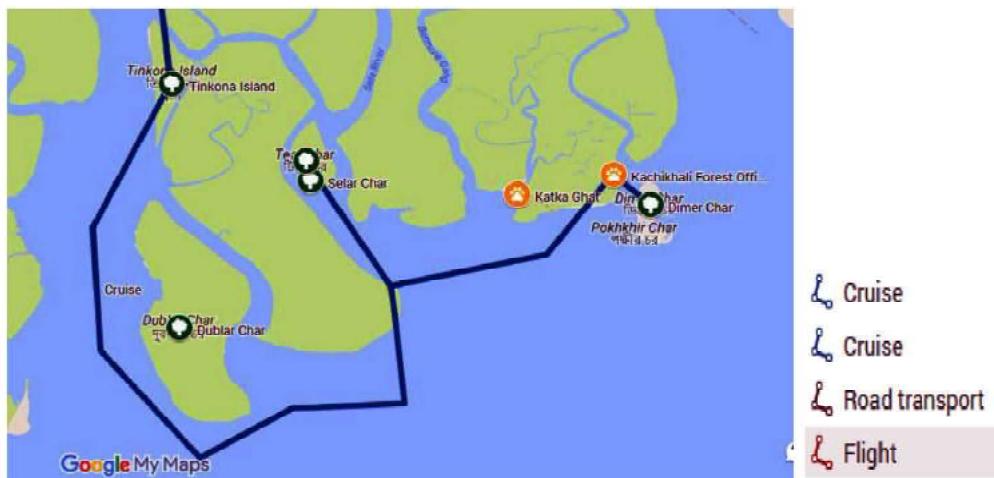
Infrastructure remains a significant issue on the Bangladesh side of Sundarbans. While some private companies provide houseboats, which are of a standard quality, most of the local boats available in the area are very large in size and can accommodate almost 60 to 100 people. These boats seldom follow regulations or standards. The government does not prescribe any regulation for them to abide by. On several occasions, they also do not carry proper permits for taking tourists inside the tiger reserve. These boats also lack adequate safety measures, which may be a requirement for international tourists. Additionally, the facilities inside the boat are not clean and hygienic.

With very few government accommodations in select areas such as Katka and Hiron Point, night stays have to be arranged inside the boats or cruises. It is also advisable to have on-boat food and water arrangements.

At many places, there are no permanent ghats for embarkation. Intermittent supply of electricity and mobile connectivity is an issue at many of the spots. Due to lack of tourism-based infrastructure, this part of the Sundarbans has witnessed a decrease in the number of national and international tourists over the past few years.

Dhaka-Mongla-Bagerhat Trip: 3 nights/4 days





Day 1: From Dhaka, tourists can fly to Khulna from where they can board the cruise. Before starting the cruise, trips can be arranged to the Shat Gambuj Mosque and Kodla Moth by road. The tourists come back to the cruise for the night. The cruise moves towards Mongla at night.

Day 2: Local houseboats are hired to take the tourists to the Bagerhat World Heritage site including spots such as Dublar Char, Tiar Char, Selar Char, etc. Thereafter, the tourists come back to the cruise for the night.

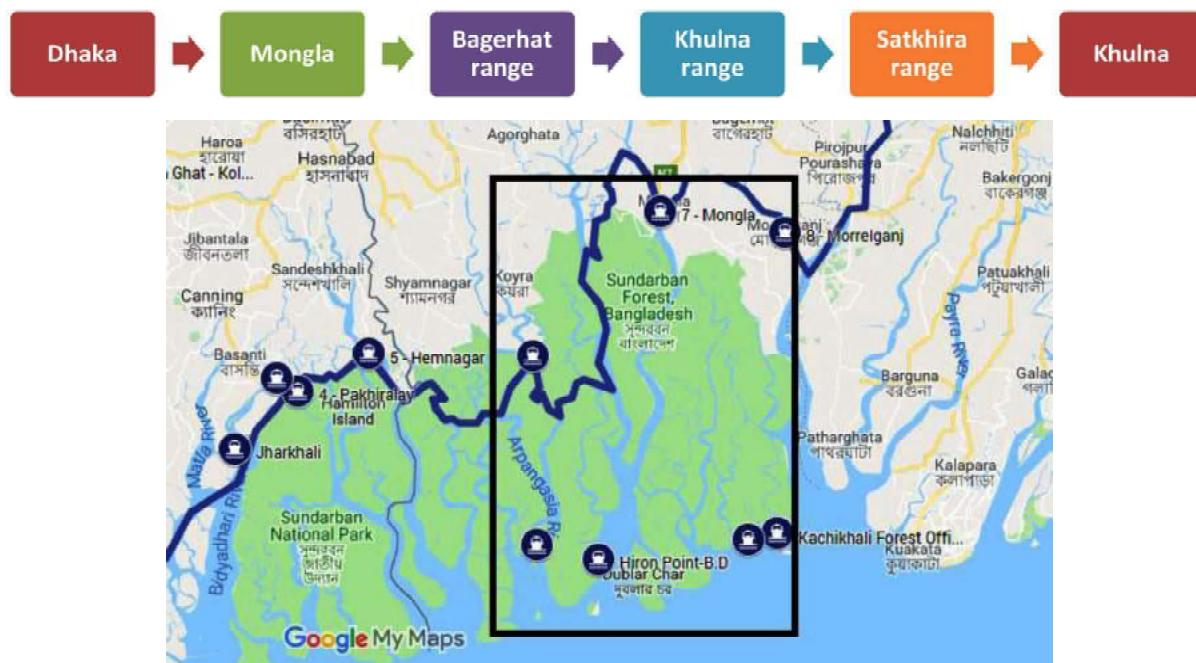
Day 3: Local houseboats can be hired to take the tourists to the Katka forest office, which is the gateway to the Sundarban National Park. It is a day-long tour, after which tourists can come back to the cruise and retire for the night.

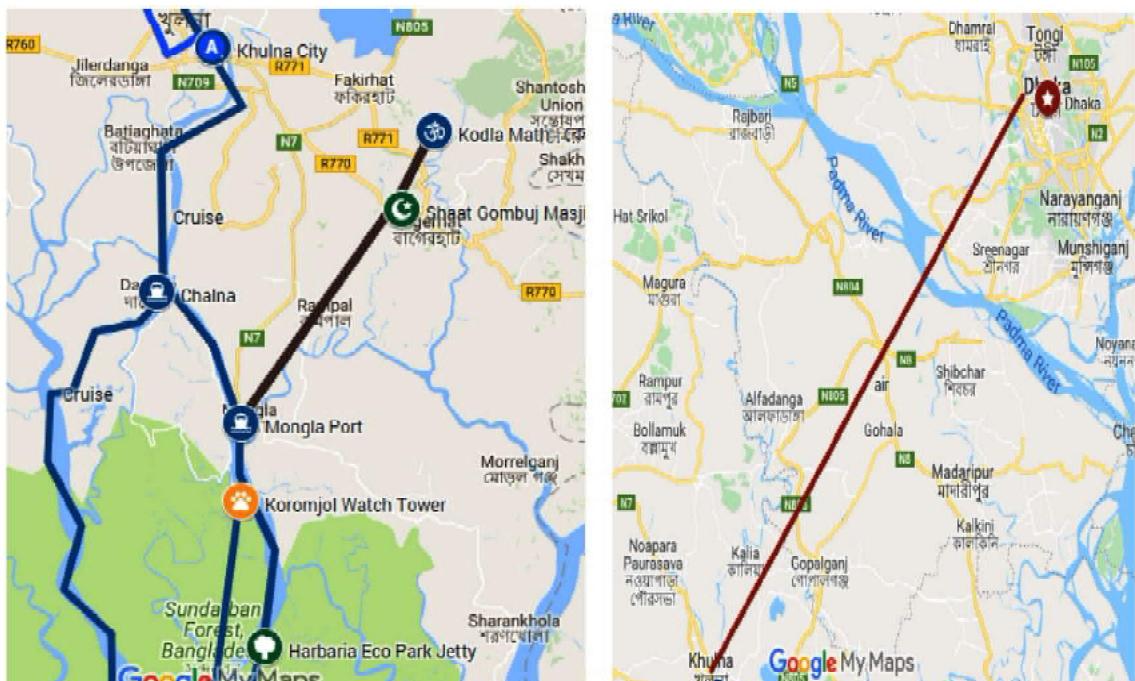
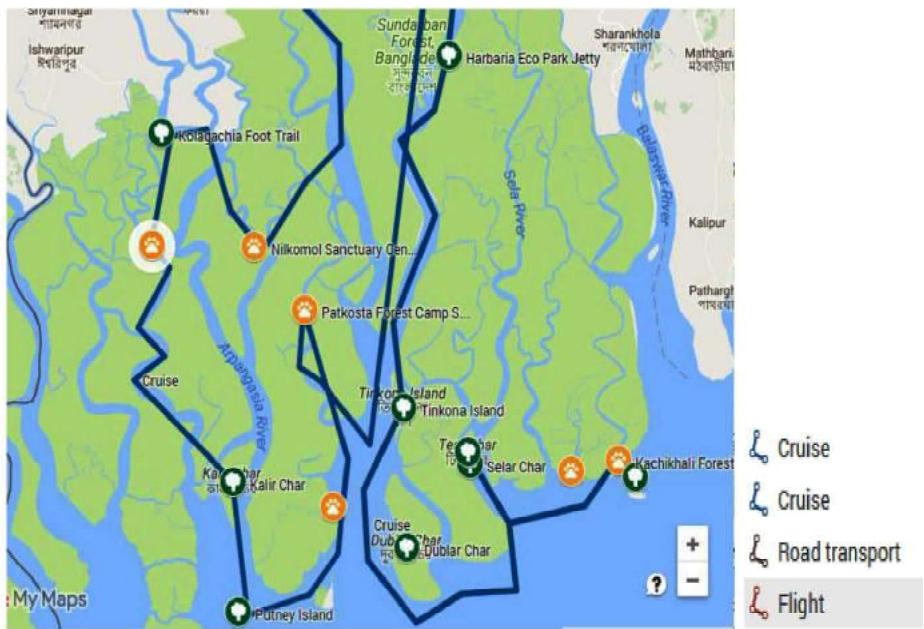
Day 4: Local houseboats can be hired to take the tourists to the Kachikhali Wildlife Sanctuary for a day-long trip, after which the tourists can come back to the cruise for the night.

Day 5: From Mongla port the cruise moves towards Khulna.

Day 6: Overnight Volvo buses or early morning flights to Dhaka can be availed.

Dhaka-Mongla-Bagerhat-Khulna Trip from Dhaka: 5 nights/6 days





Day 1: From Dhaka, tourists can fly to Khulna from where they can board the cruise. Before starting the cruise, trips can be arranged to the Shat Gambuj Mosque and Kodla Moth by road. The tourists come back to the cruise for a night halt. The cruise moves towards Mongla at night.

Day 2: Local houseboats are hired to take the tourists to the Bagerhat World Heritage site including spots such as Dublar Char, Tiar Char, Selar Char, etc. Thereafter, the tourists come back to the cruise for the night.

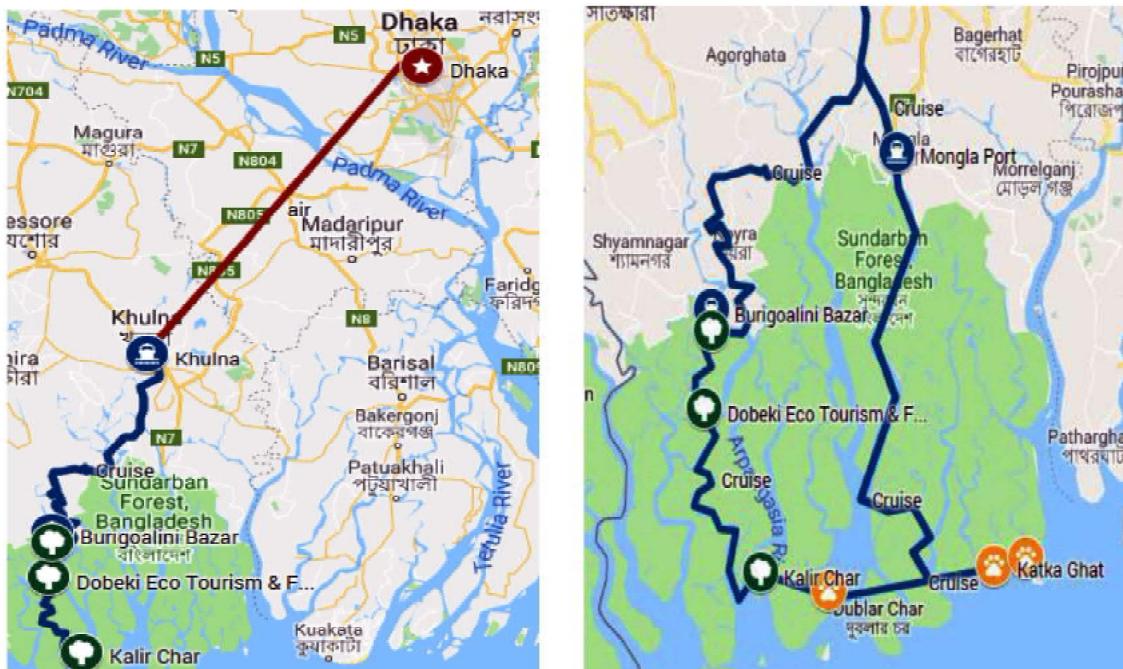
Day 3: Local houseboats can be hired to take the tourists to the Katka and Kachikhali forests. It is a day-long tour, after which tourists can come back to the cruise to retire for the night. The cruise comes back to Mongla overnight.

Day 4: From Mongla port local houseboats are availed to take the tourists to spots such as Koromjol Watchtower and Hiron Point. The tourists return to the cruise for a night halt. The cruise moves towards Dobeki overnight.

Day 5: From Dobeki local houseboats are availed to take the tourists to spots such as Kalir Char and Patkoshta. The tourists come back to the cruise for night halt. The cruise moves towards Khulna.

Day 6: Tourists can either opt for overnight Volvo AC buses or flights to reach Dhaka from Khulna.

Route B: Existing Alternative Route: Khulna-Burigoalini-Kolkata



Khulna-Burigoalini-Dobeki Trip: 3 nights/4 days

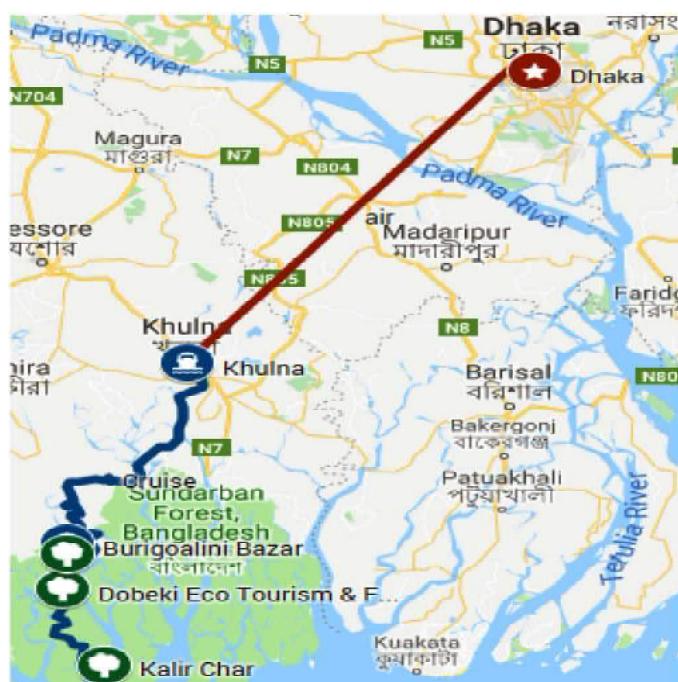
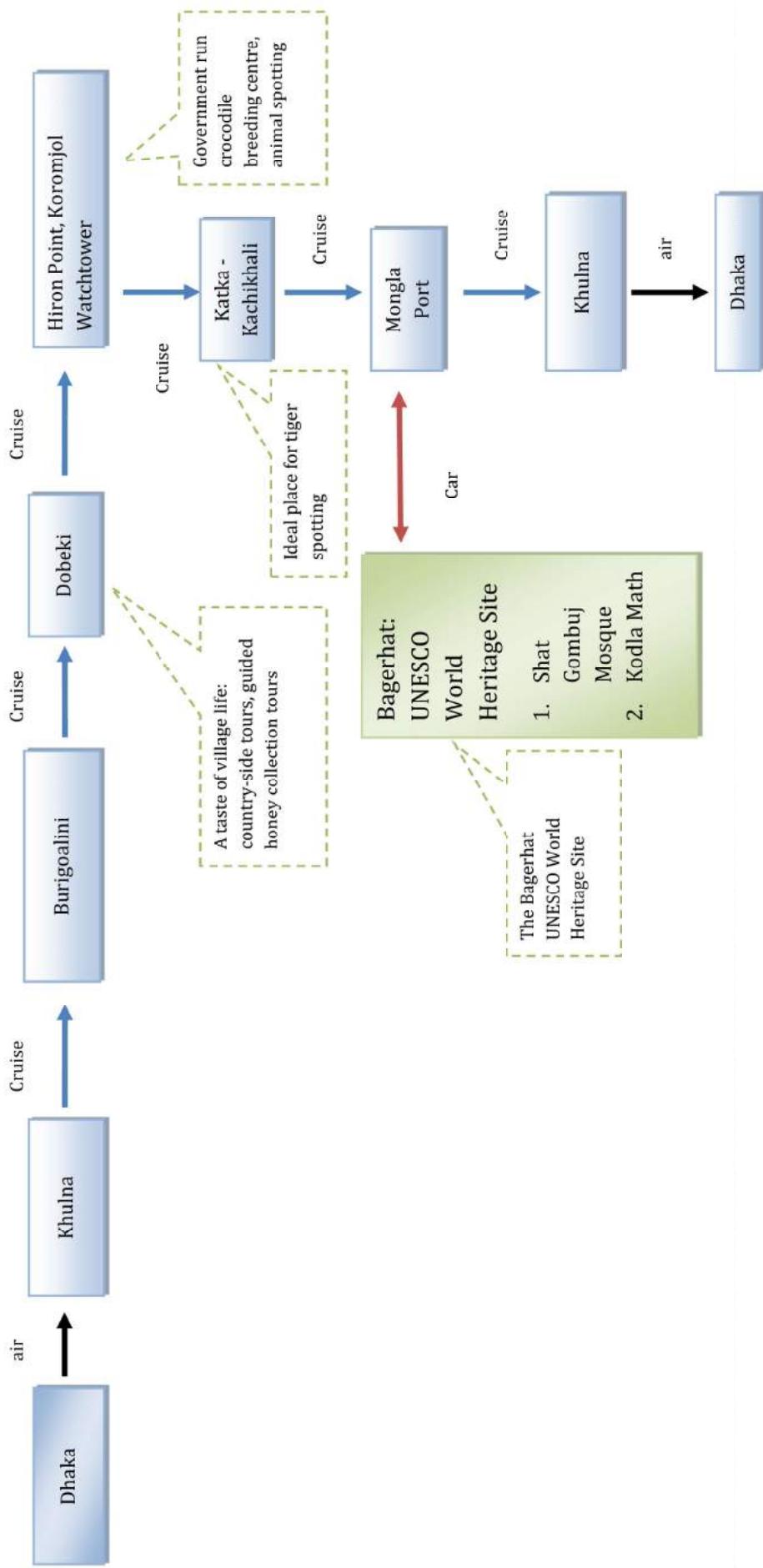


Figure 3.4: Schematic Diagram of Route B (Khulna-Burigoalini-Kolkata)



Day 1: Take an early morning flight to Khulna from Dhaka. Tourists may also opt for overnight Volvo AC buses, which take approximately seven hours to reach Khulna. Embark on the cruise at Khulna and travel upto Burigoalini. Village tours can be arranged at Burigoalini. Night halt is arranged on the cruise. Cruise moves towards Dobeki at night.

Day 2: Guided honey collection and forest tour in Dobeki during the day. The cruise may also visit Kalir char. Night halt is arranged on the cruise.

Day 3: Early in the morning, the cruise starts moving towards Khulna. Tourists may opt for overnight Volvo AC buses to reach Dhaka. Else they may be accommodated in hotels at Khulna

Day 4: Early morning flights to Dhaka from Khulna

Khulna-Burigoalini-Dobeki-Katka-Kachikhali Trip: 4 nights/5 days



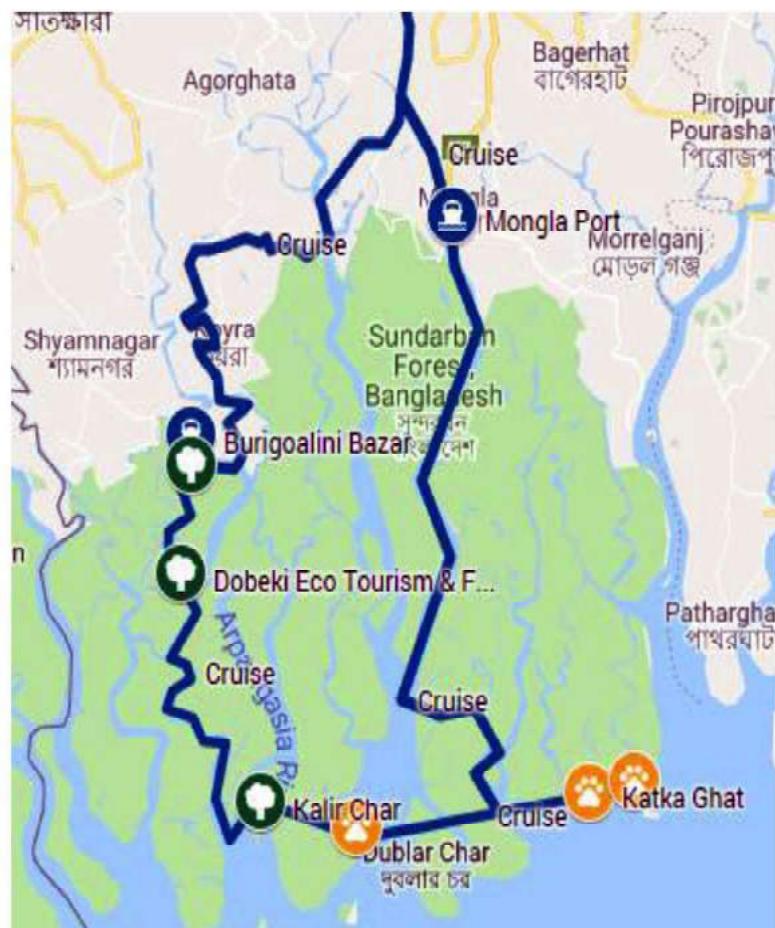
Day 1: Take an early morning flight to Khulna from Dhaka. Tourists may also opt for overnight Volvo AC buses, which take approximately seven hours to reach Khulna. Embark on the cruise at Khulna and travel upto Burigoalini. Village tours can be arranged in Burigoalini. Night halt is arranged on the cruise. Cruise moves towards Dobeki at night.

Day 2: Guided honey collection and forest tour in Dobeki during the day. The cruise may also take a round of Kalir char. Night halt is arranged on the cruise. The cruise moves towards Hiron point.

Day 3: Day long activity at Hiron point. Local boats can be availed to take the tourists to nearby islands including Tiar Char, Dublar Char and Selar Char. Night halt in the cruise. The cruise moves towards Katka-Kachikhali at night.

Day 4: The day is spent at the Katka-Kachikhali forest. After this, tourists come back to the cruise for a night halt, cruise starts moving towards Khulna via Mongla.

Day 5: Reach Khulna by afternoon. Tourists may opt for either Volvo-buses or flights to return to Dhaka.



The following sections present popular routes in Indian Sundarbans and the number of trips that can be conducted within those routes.

Route A: The Protocol Route on the Indian Side

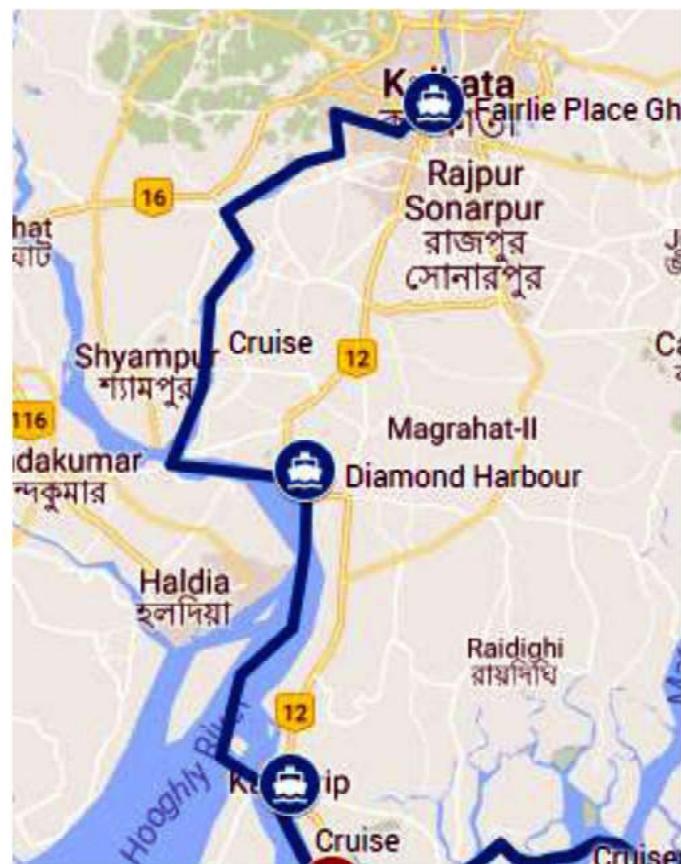
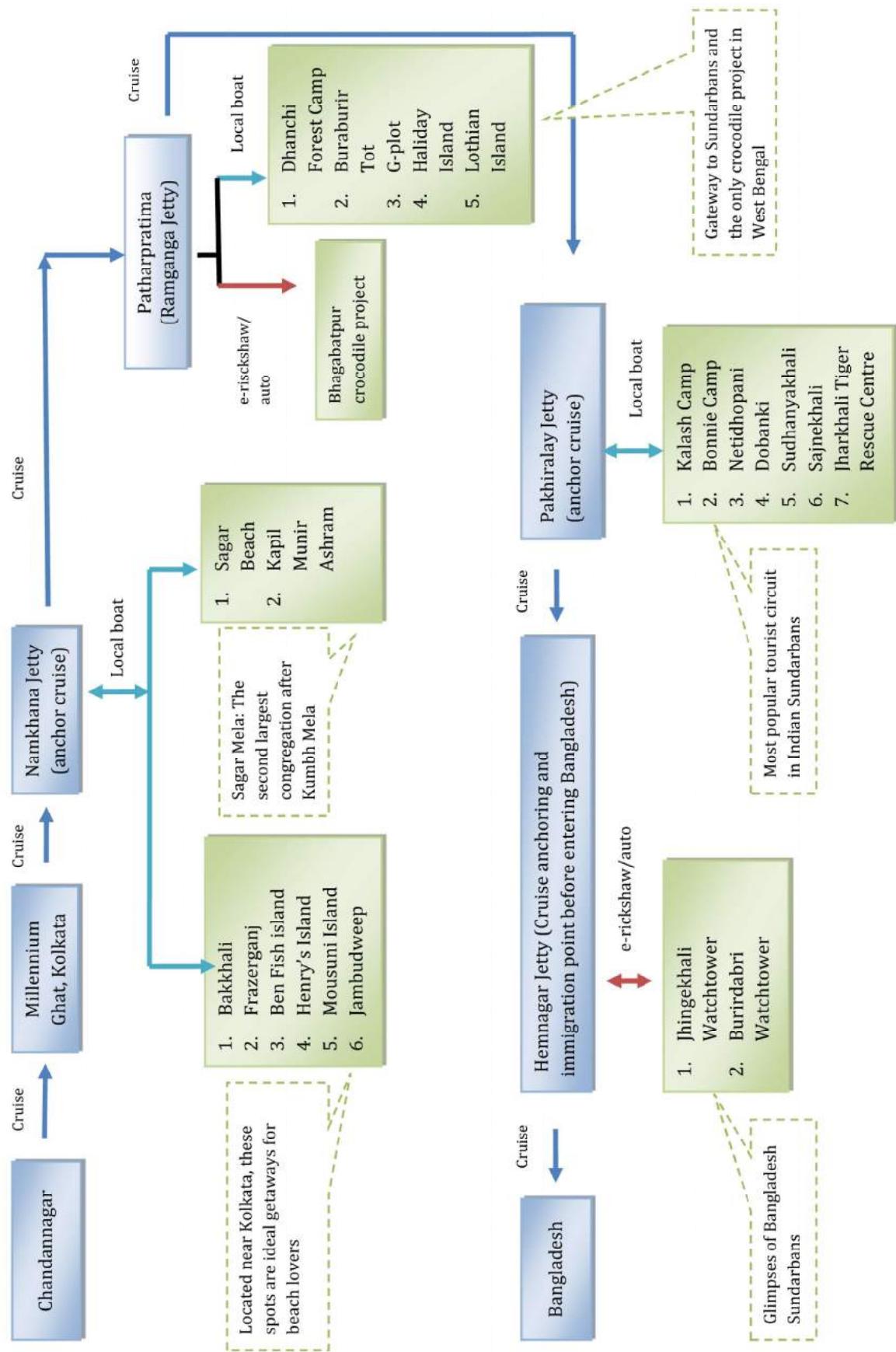
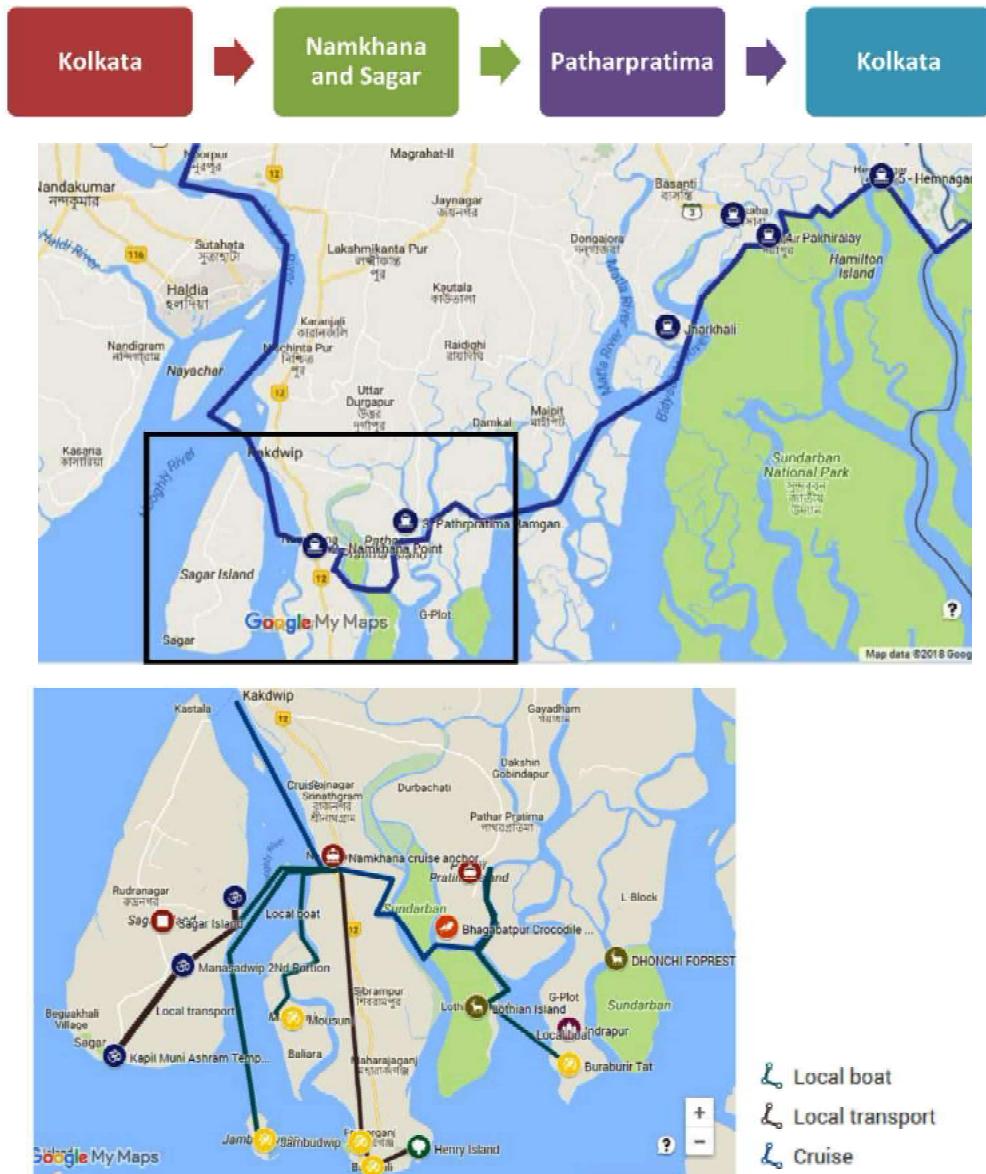


Figure 3.5: Schematic Diagram of Chandannagar-Hemnagar-Bangladesh Route



Kolkata-Sagar-Patharpratima Trip: 3 nights/4 days



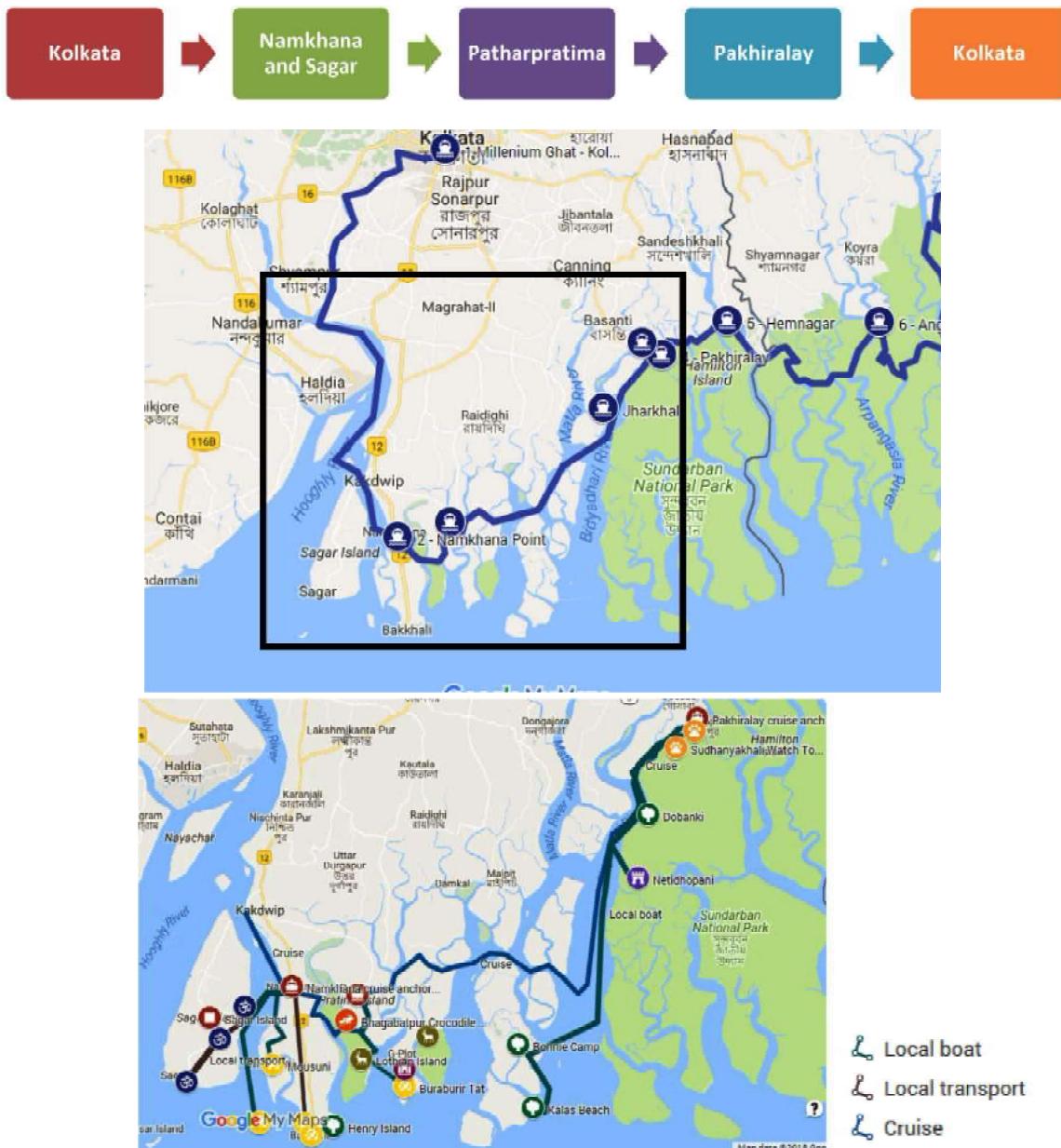
Day 1: The cruise starts at Chandannagar or Millenium Ghat in Kolkata and travels till Namkhana via river Hooghly. The cruise can be anchored at Namkhana jetty for the night. It is to be noted here that since the sailing of the cruise depends on the tidal wave timings, sightseeing at Namkhana may not be possible on the same day.

Day 2: Tourists can be taken for sightseeing at Namkhana to spots such as Bakkhali, Frazerganj, Ben Fish island, Mousuni island, Henry's island and Jambudweep. For this purpose, local boats can be hired. Once completed, the tourists would come back to the cruise at Namkhana jetty for the night. The cruise moves towards Ramganga jetty in Patharpratima at night.

Day 3: From Ramganga jetty local boats can be hired to take the tourists to Patharpratima. From Patharpratima, local e-rickshaws can be hired to take the tourists to Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project. Local boats can also be hired to visit Lothian Island, Haliday Island and Buraburir tot. The cruise comes to Sagar jetty at night.

Day 4: Early morning, from Sagar jetty e-rickshaws or autos can be hired to take the tourists to Kapil Muni's ashram and Ganga Sagar beach. Local sightseeing in Sagar can be done in two hours, following which the tourists can come back to the cruise. After this, the cruise heads back and reaches Kolkata by night.

Kolkata-Sagar-Patharpratima-Pakhiralay Trip: 4 nights/5 days



Day 1: The cruise starts at Chandannagar or Millenium Ghat in Kolkata and travels till Namkhana via river Hooghly. The cruise can be anchored at Namkhana jetty for the night. Since the sailing of the cruise depends on the tidal wave timings, sightseeing at Namkhana on the same day may not be possible.

Day 2: Tourists can be taken for sightseeing at Namkhana to spots such as Bakkhali, Frazerganj, Ben Fish island, Mousuni island, Henry's island and Jambudweep. For this purpose, local boats can be hired. Once completed, the tourists would come back to the cruise at Namkhana jetty for the night. The cruise moves towards Ramganga jetty in Patharpratima at night.

Day 3: From Ramganga jetty, local boats can be hired to take the tourists to Patharpratima. From Patharpratima, local e-rickshaws can be hired to take the tourists to Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project. Local boats can also be hired to visit Lothian Island, Haliday Island and Buraburir Tot. The cruise moves back to Namkhana jetty at night.

Day 4: From Pakhiralay, local boats can be hired to travel to Kalash Island, Bonnie Island Netidhopani, Dobanki, Sudhanyakhali and Sajnekhali. The trip starts early in the morning. The tourists come back to the cruise for the night. The cruise moves back towards Sagar at night.

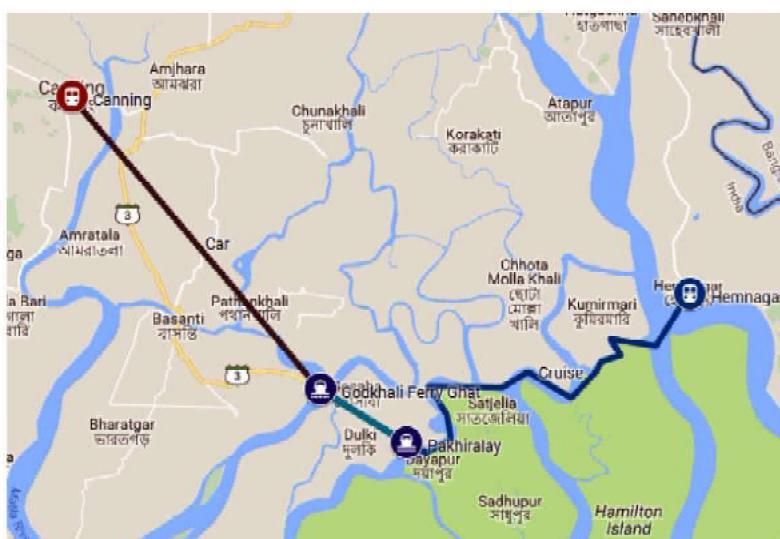
Day 5: Early morning, from Sagar jetty e-rickshaws or autos can be hired to take the tourists to Kapil Muni's ashram and Ganga Sagar beach. Local sightseeing in Sagar can be done in two hours, following which the tourists can come back to the cruise. After this, the cruise returns to Kolkata the same night.

Route C: Existing Alternative Route 1: Godkhali-Hemnagar-Bangladesh

India-Bangladesh: Kolkata – Canning – Godkhali – Pakhiralay – Hemnagar (Immigration India) – Angtihara (immigration Bangladesh) – Chalna – Khulna – Mongla

Indian Sundarban: Godkhali – Pakhiralay (For Sajnekhali circuit) – Patharpratima (For Patharpratima circuit)

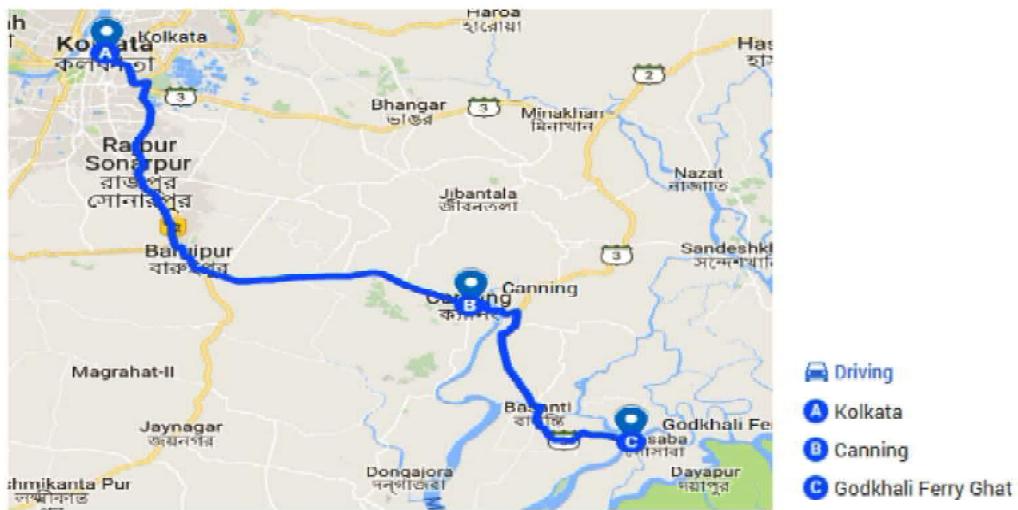
Godkhali Jetty



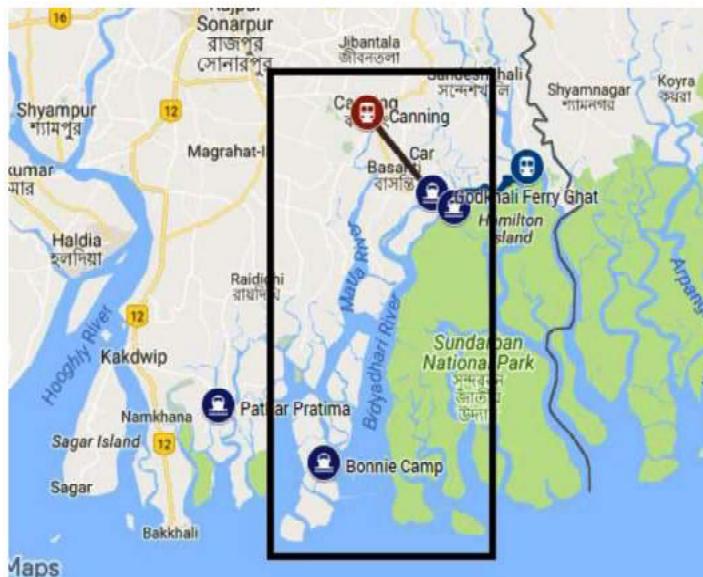
Local boat

Local transport

Cruise



Godakhali-Pakhiralay Trip: 2 nights/3 days

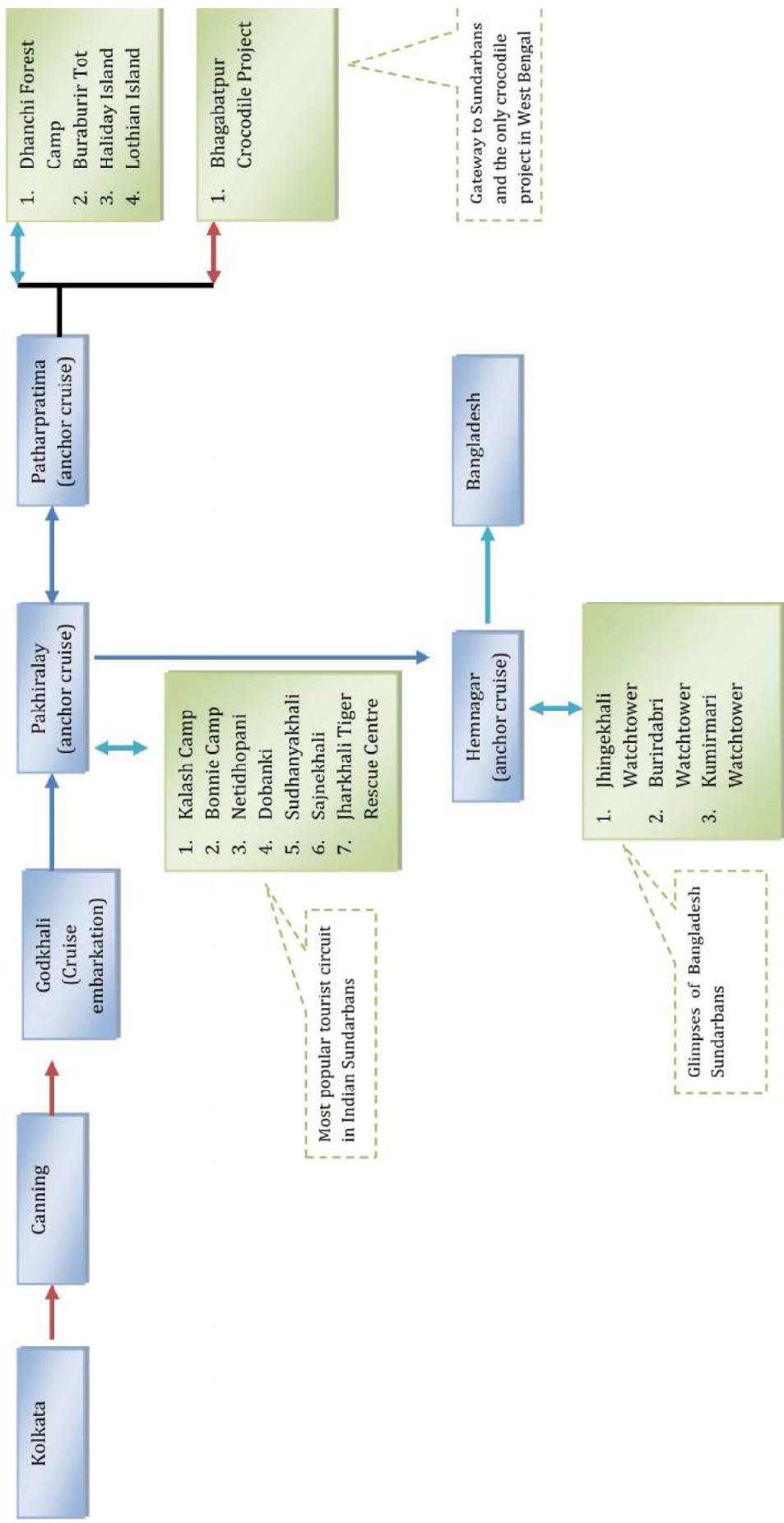


Day 1: From Kolkata, one can reach Godkhali by road and then avail various accommodations at Pakhiralay.

Day 2: From Pakhiralay, local boats are arranged to take the tourists to Dobanki, Netidhophani, Kalas and Bonnie camps. The tourists come back to Pakhiralay for a night halt.

Day 3: Early in the morning tourists can be taken to Sajnekhali and Sudhanyakali watchtowers. Thereafter, the tourists can come back to Pakhiralay for lunch. After lunch, boats can be arranged to take the tourists to Godkhali from where tourists can move towards Kolkata by road.

Figure 3.6: Schematic Diagram of Route C (Godkhali-Dhaka)



Godkhali-Pakhiralay-Patharpratima Trip: 3 nights/4 days

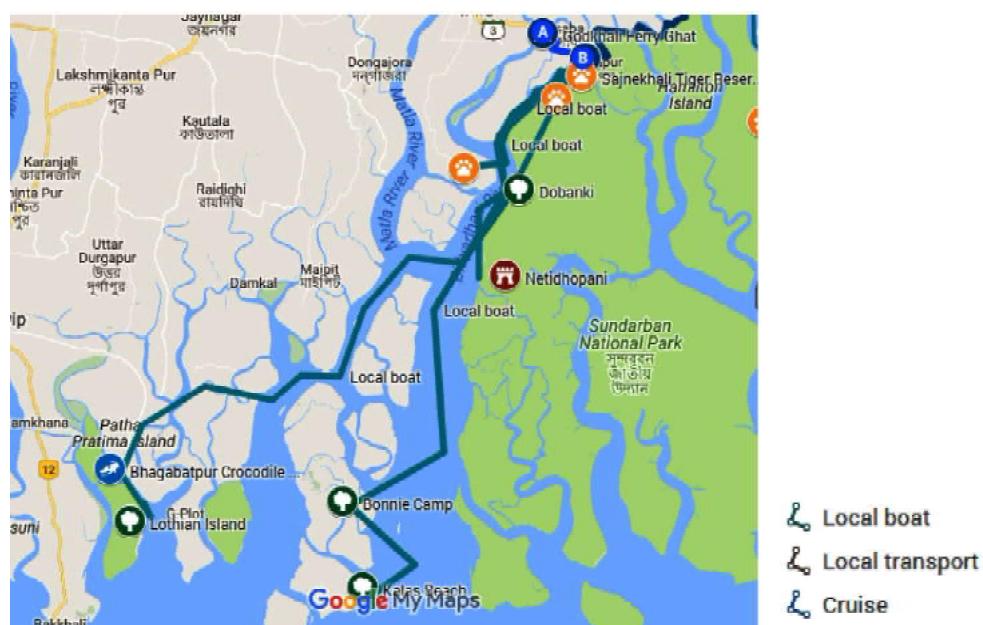
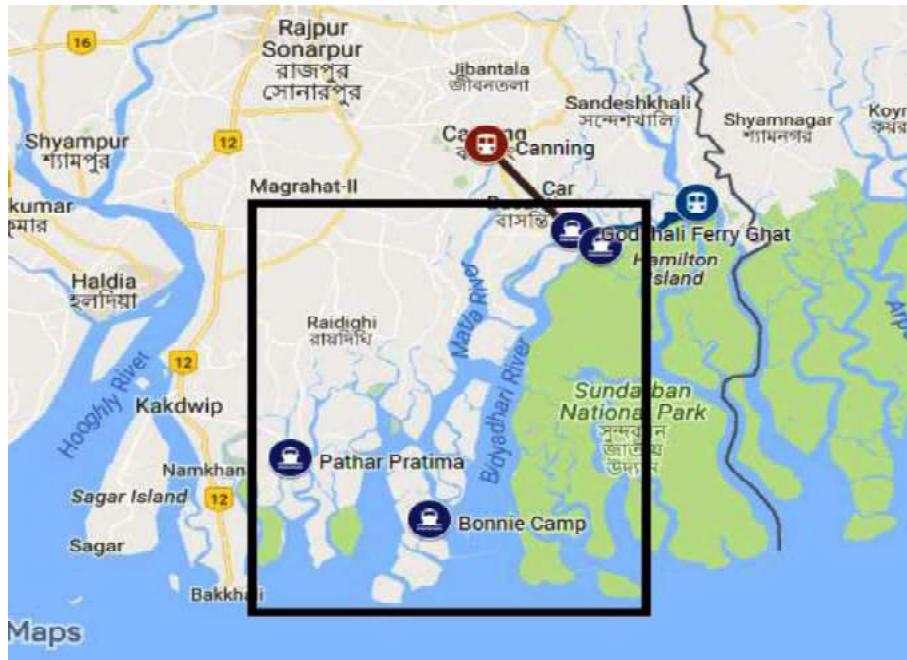


Day 1: From Kolkata, one can reach Godkhali by road. From Godkhali tourists can be taken to Pakhiralay by local boats. At Pakhiralay tourists can stay at the various accommodations available.

Day 2: From Pakhiralay, local boats are arranged to take the tourists to Dobanki, Netidhopani, Kalas and Bonnie camps. The tourists come back to Pakhiralay for night halt.

Day 3: From Pakhiralay, local boats are arranged to take the tourists to Patharpratima for a trip to the Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project. While travelling tourists can be shown around the Haliday Island, Lothian Island and Buraburir Tot. The tourists come back to Pakhiralay for a night halt.

Day 4: Early morning tourists can be taken to Sajnekhali and Sudhanyakali watchtowers. Once completed, the tourists can come back to Pakhiralay for lunch. Boats can be arranged thereafter to take the tourists to Godkhali from where tourists can move towards Kolkata by road.



Godkhali-Pakhiralay-Patharpratima-Hemnagar Trip: 4 nights/5 days



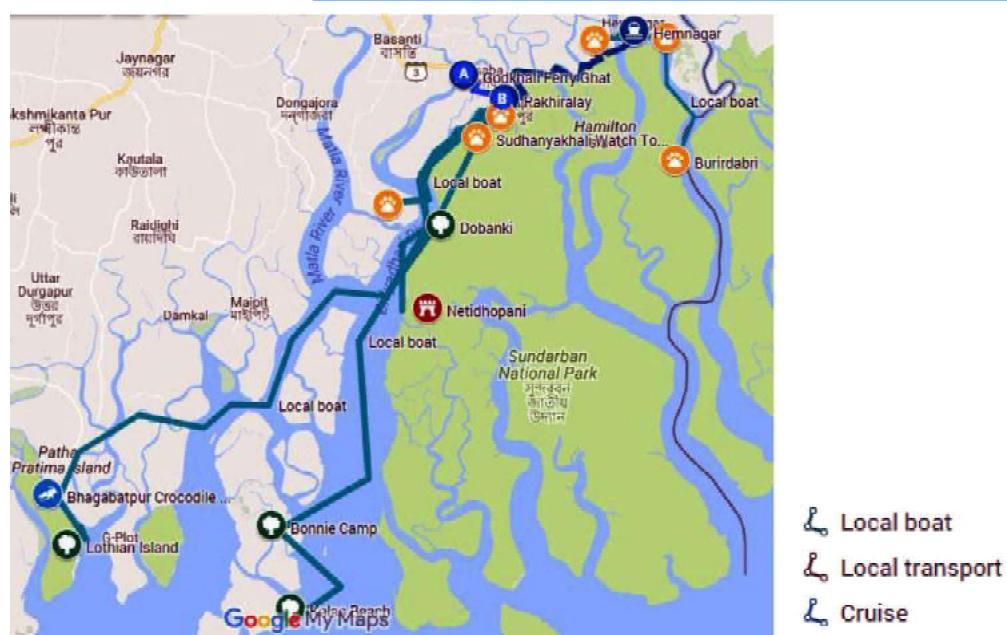
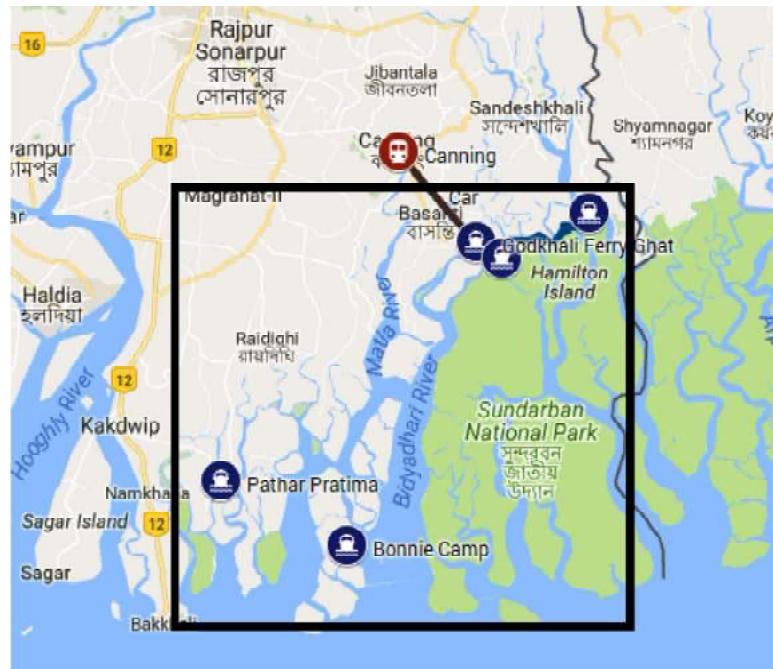
Day 1: From Kolkata one can reach Godkhali by road. From Godkhali tourists can be taken to Pakhiralay by local boats. At Pakhiralay tourists can stay at the various accommodations available.

Day 2: From Pakhiralay, local boats are arranged to take the tourists to Dobanki, Netidhopani, Kalas and Bonnie camps. The tourists come back to Pakhiralay for a night halt.

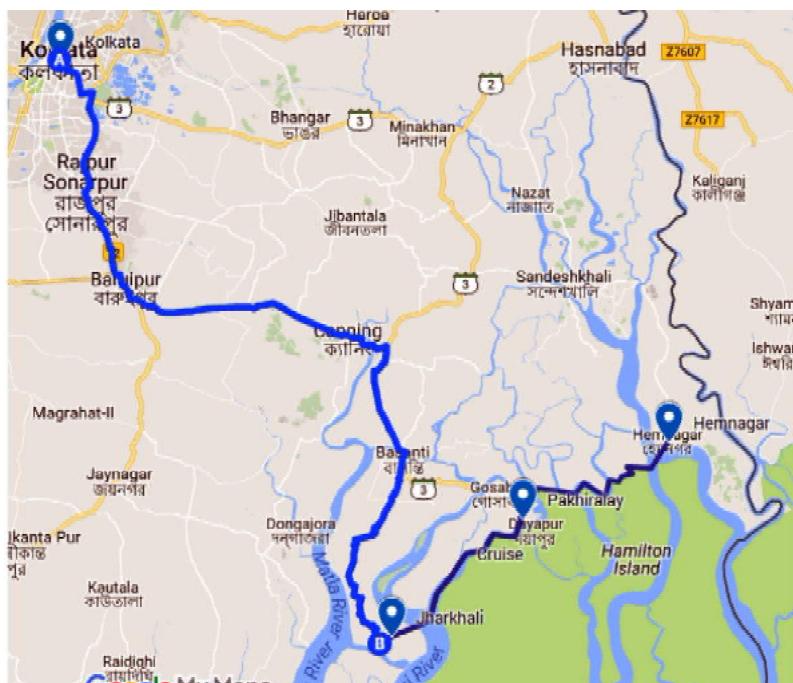
Day 3: From Pakhiralay, local boats are arranged to take the tourists to Patharpratima for a trip to the Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project. On the way, tourists can be shown around the Haliday Island, Lothian Island and Buraburir Tot. The tourists come back to Pakhiralay for the night.

Day 4: From Pakhiralay, local boats are arranged to take the tourists to Jhingekhali and Burirdabri watchtower. The tourists come back to Pakhiralay and retire for the night.

Day 5: Early in the morning tourists can be taken to Sajnekhali and Sudhanyakhali watchtowers. The tourists then come back to Pakhiralay for lunch. After lunch boats can be arranged to take the tourists to Godkhali from where tourists can move towards Kolkata by road.



Route D: Existing Alternative Route 2: Jharkhali-Hemnagar-Bangladesh



Jharkhali Ghat

Jharkhali-Pakhiralay Trip: 2 nights/3 days

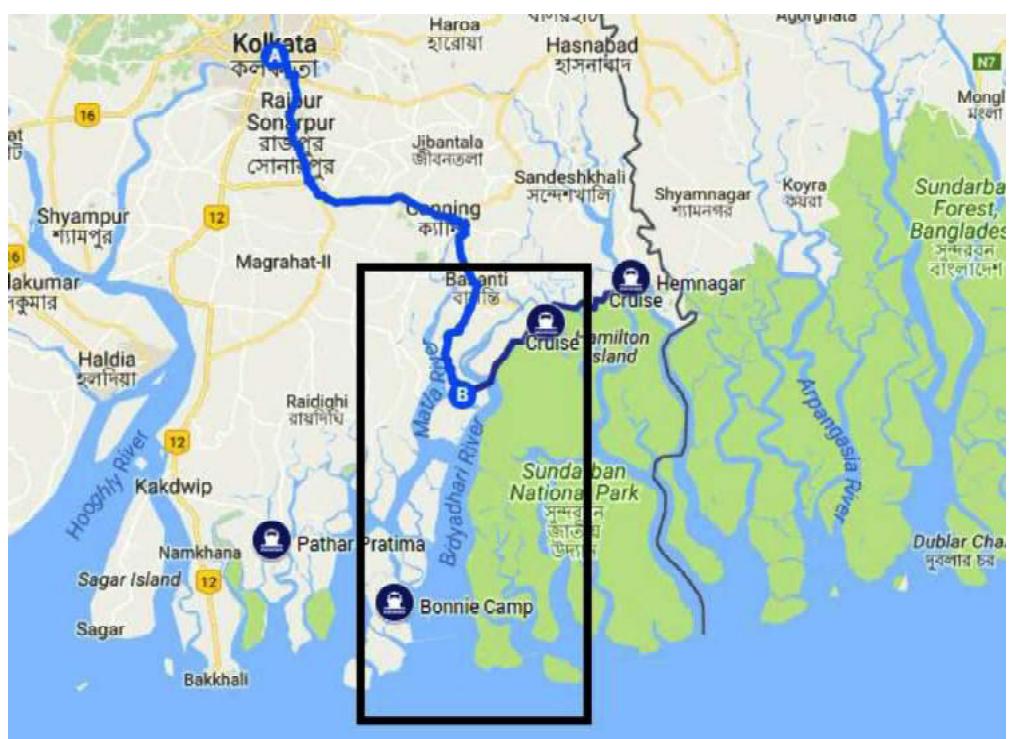
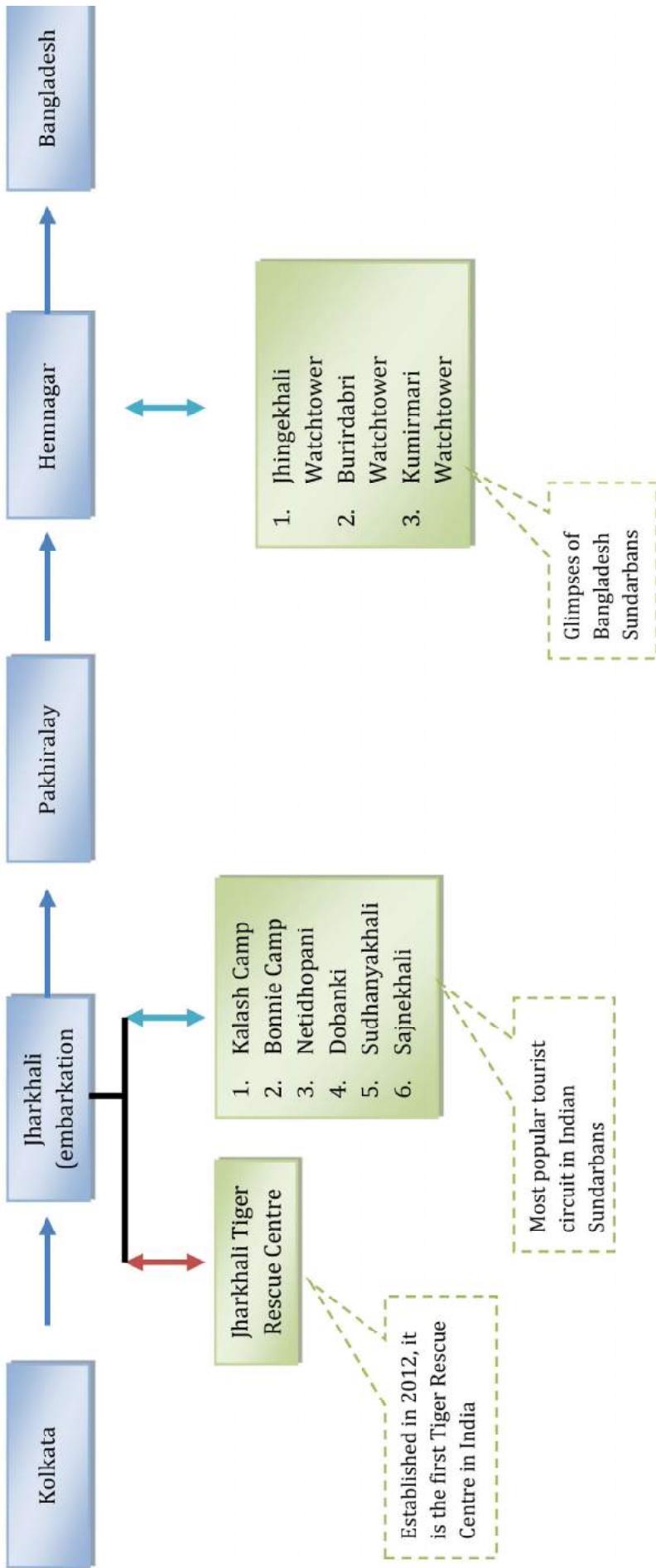


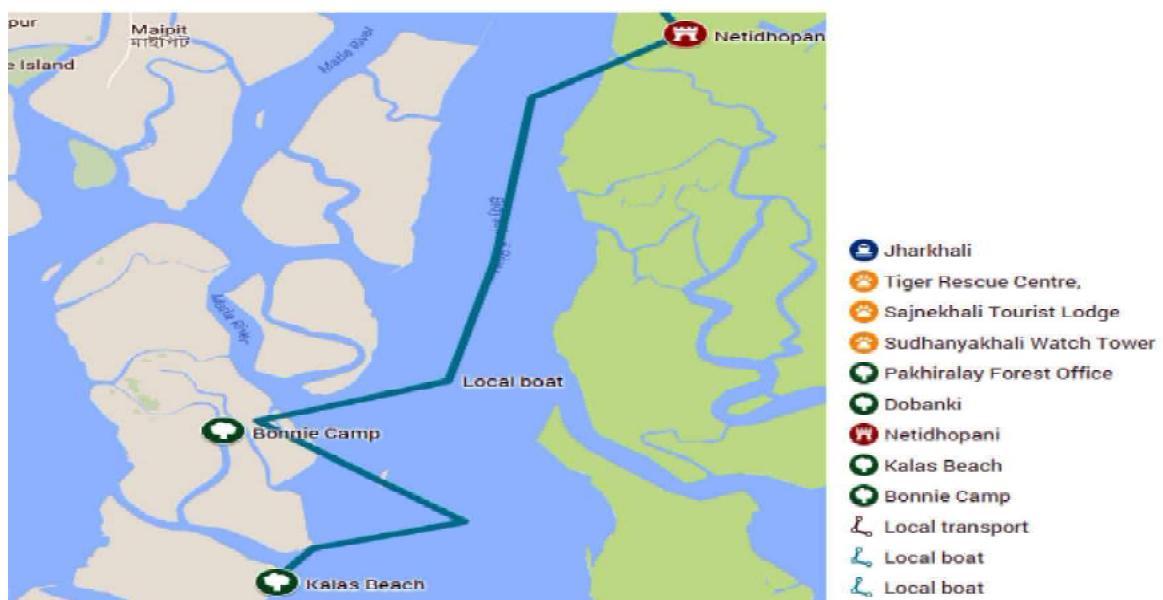
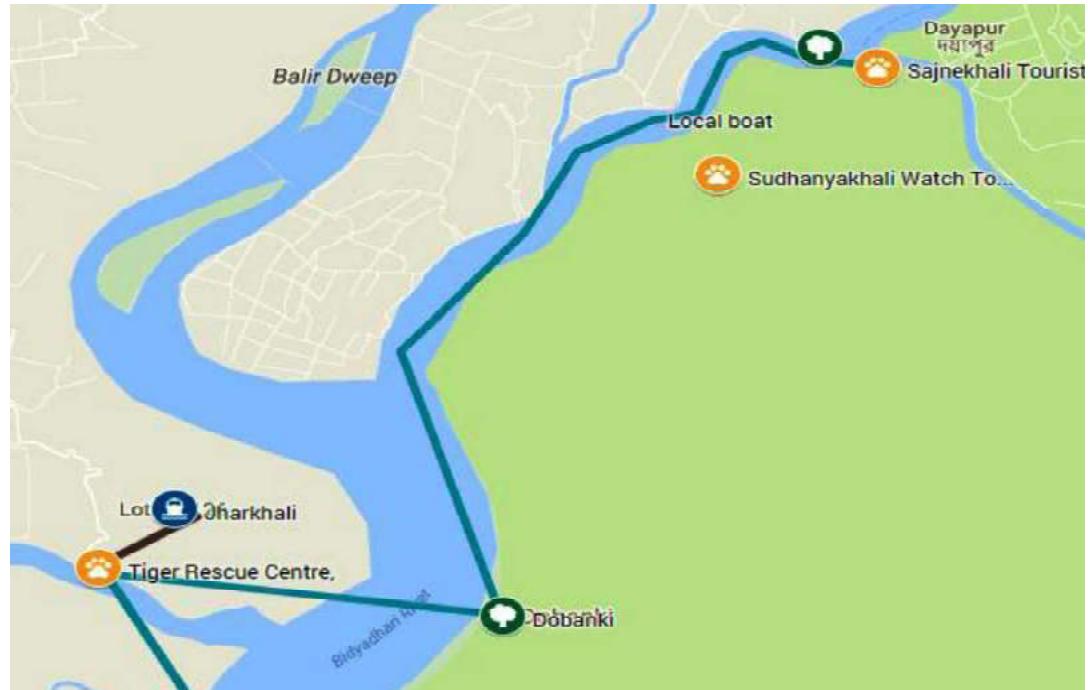
Figure 3.7: Schematic Diagram of Route D (Jharkhali-Dhaka)



Day 1: Tourists can travel to Jharkhali from Kolkata by car. After reaching Jharkhali, they can be given a tour of the Jharkhali Tiger Rescue centre. For the night they can be accommodated in the various private accommodations in Jharkhali.

Day 2: Local houseboats can be arranged to take the tourists to Kalas Camp, Bonnie Camp, Dobanki and Netidhopani. Tourists go to Pakhiralay for a night halt.

Day 3: Local houseboats are arranged to take the tourists to Sajnekhali and Sudhanyakhali watchtowers early in the morning. Tourists may be taken to Godkhali post-lunch in local boats from where they can travel towards Kolkata by road.



Jharkhali-Pakhiralay-Hemnagar Trip: 3 nights/4 days

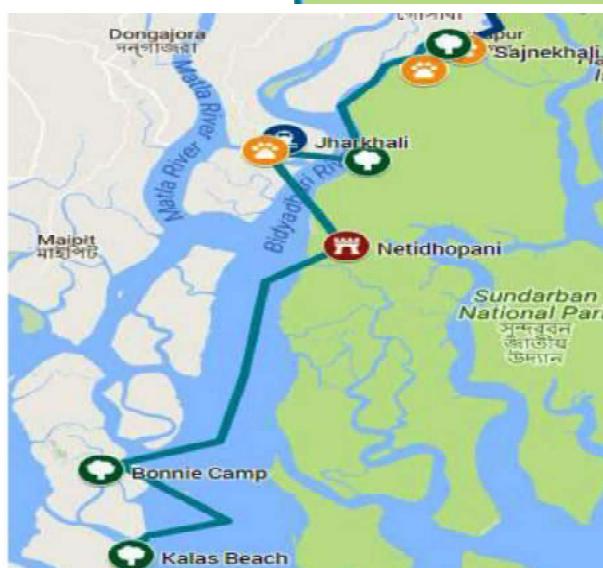
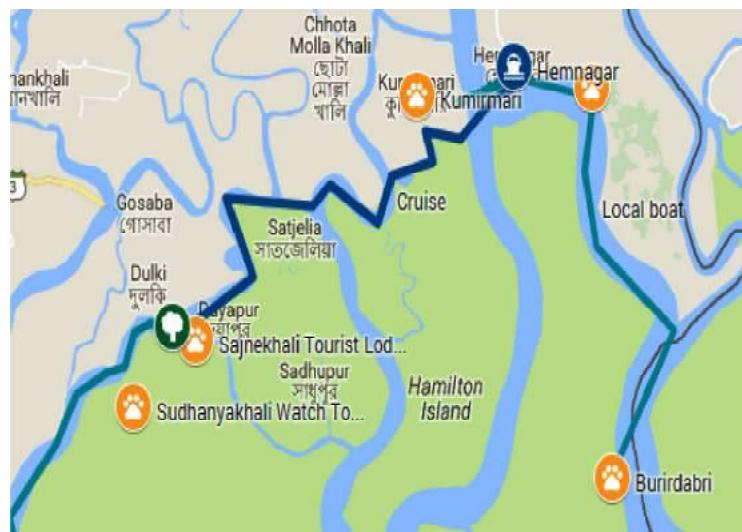
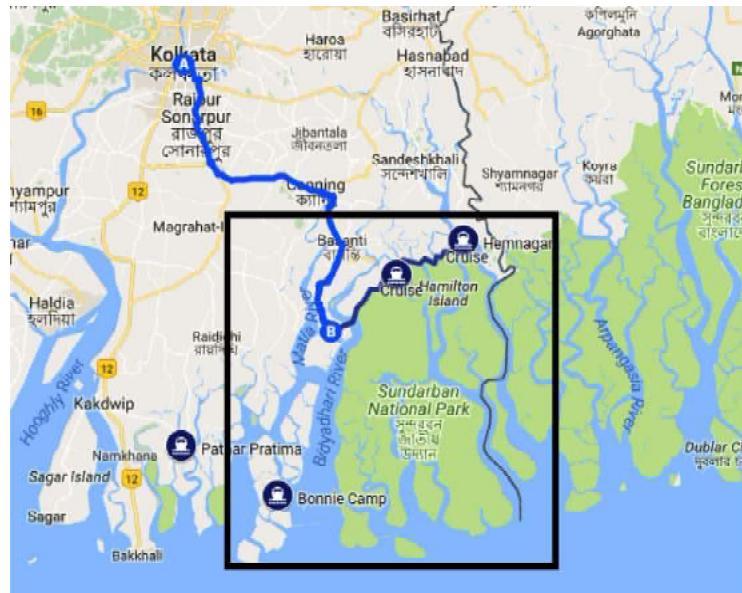


Day 1: Tourists can travel to Jharkhali from Kolkata by car. At Jharkhali they can be given a tour of the Tiger Rescue centre. For the night they can be accommodated in the various private accommodations in Jharkhali.

Day 2: Local houseboats are arranged to take the tourists to Kalas Camp, Bonnie Camp, Dobanki and Netidhopani. Tourists then go to Pakhiralay for a night halt.

Day 3: Local houseboats are arranged to take the tourists towards Hemnagar for a trip to Jhingekhali and Burirdabri watchtowers. Thereafter, tourists may be taken back to Pakhiralay.

Day 4: Local houseboats are arranged to take the tourists to Sajnekhali and Sudhanyakhali watchtowers early in the morning. Tourists may be taken to Godkhali post-lunch in local boats from where they can travel towards Kolkata by road.



Local boat

Local transport

Cruise

Route E: Alternative Route: Kolkata-Hasnabad-Hemnagar-Bangladesh

Infrastructure

Basanti Highway, the most preferred road connecting Kolkata to Hasnabad is in a conducive condition. The road is dotted with several small eateries. At Malancha, which is mid-way along the route, the tourists can stop at PathaSathi, a state government initiative and provides clean toilets, waiting rooms, night shelter and restaurant under one roof. During the survey, CUTS team visited the Malancha facility, which is managed by the local women self-help groups and found it to be clean and well-maintained.

Hasnabad is a community development block in Basirhat sub-division in North 24 Parganas. Although the block has electricity, water supply and mobile connectivity, power supply and mobile connectivity may be intermittent particularly in the villages under this block. During the survey, the CUTS team did not witness any law and order problem in the area. However, since Hasnabad is located on the India-Bangladesh border, the possibility of occasional disturbances cannot be precluded.

The Hasnabad Vessel Ghat, which can be used for embarkation is in good condition. Taki ghat, which is located in close proximity can also be used as an alternative embarkation point (Refer Figure 3.9).

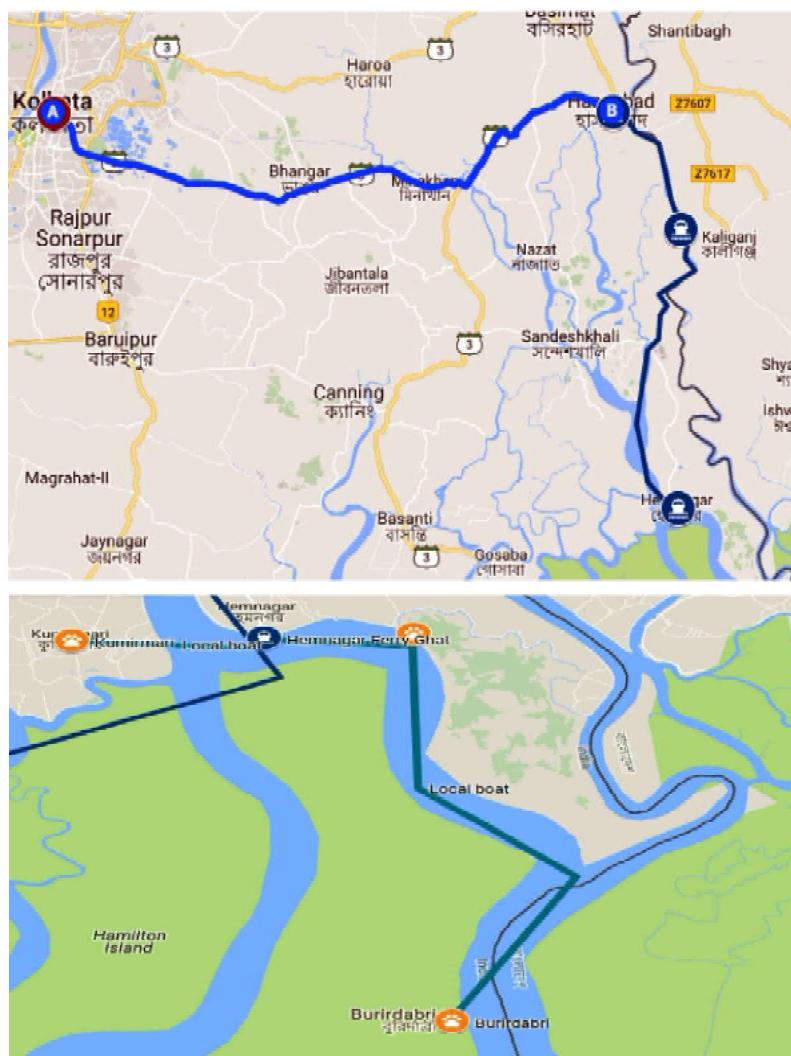
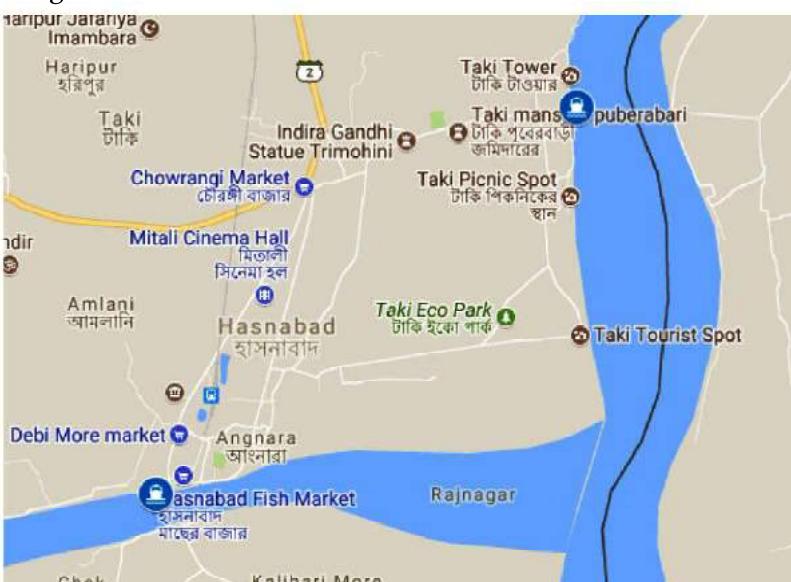
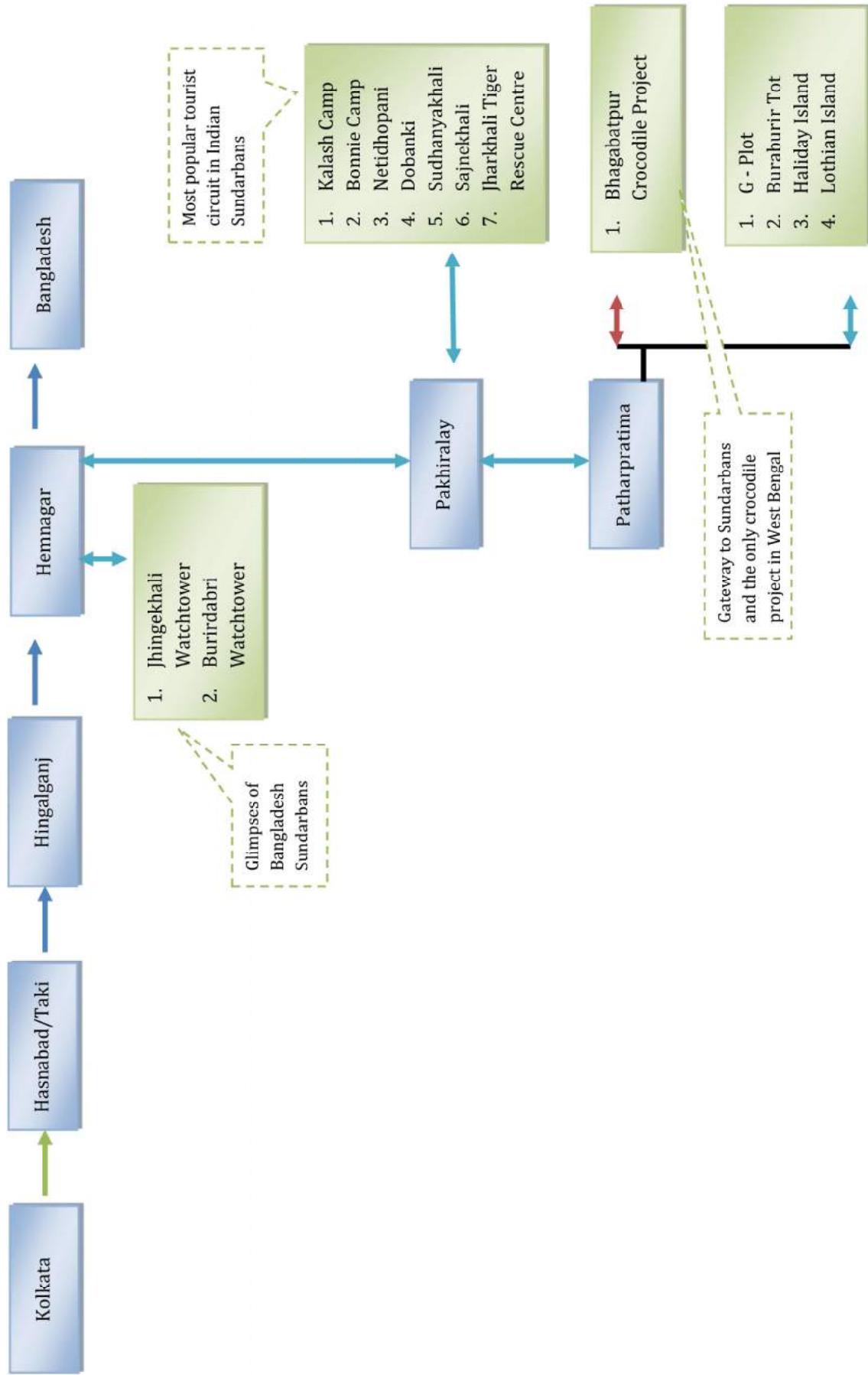


Figure 3.9: Locations of Vessel Ghats at Hasnabad and Taki



Source: Compiled by CUTS team from Google My Maps

Figure 3.8: Schematic Diagram of Route E (Hasnabad-Dhaka)



There are four to five private guest houses on the bank of river Ichhamati in Taki. These facilities are well-maintained and can accommodate 20 to 30 guests each. There are no other accommodations on the way, hence accommodation arrangements have to be made on the boat. Similarly, while local eateries are available at Hasnabad, Hingalganj and Hemnagar, it is advisable to make on-boat food arrangements.

While the cruise can operate through river Ichhamati, for entering the creeks of Sundarbans, the tour operators need to involve local boat associations at Hasnabad, Hingalganj and Hemnagar. These associations can provide two, three- or four-cylinder boats that can navigate through the narrow creeks of Sundarbans while the cruise can be stationed at Hemnagar. However, as already mentioned, safety arrangements in these boats may not be adequate.

The watchtowers though well-maintained lack amenities such as clean toilets. The accompaniment of Government-registered local guides is mandatory for visiting the watchtowers, and they can be availed at the Jhingekhali forest office. Since the area lies close to the international border, it is guarded by the Border Security Force (BSF) in India and Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) in Bangladesh.

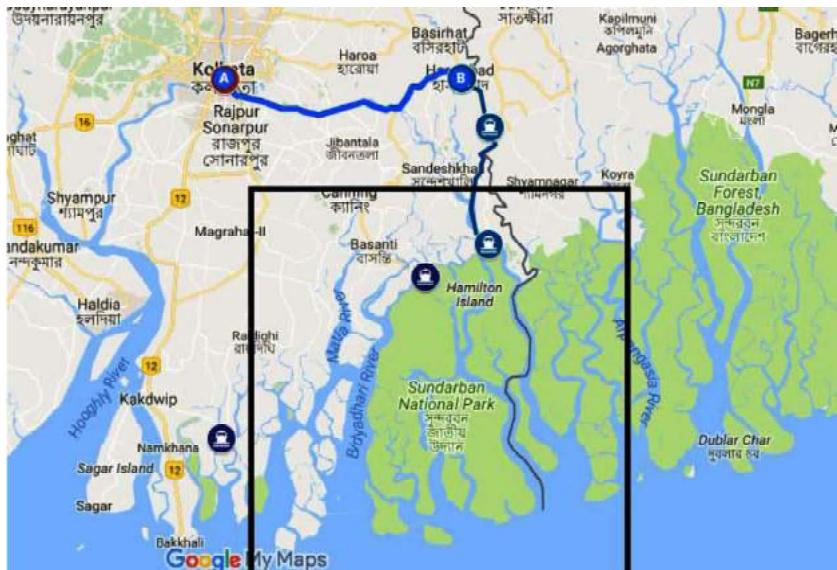
Hasnabad-Hemnagar-Pakhirlay-Godkhali Trip: 3 nights/4 days



Day 1: The tourists reach Hasnabad from Kolkata airport in approximately two-and-a-half hours. A day-long sightseeing trip can be arranged at Hasnabad and Taki. Taki is a town in Hasnabad district. We have already highlighted its historical significance and its attraction for weekend tourists from Kolkata. Additionally, the entire stretch of river Ichhamati between Hasnabad and Hingaganj witnesses a number of Durga idol immersions during Dusserah (Bijoya Dashami) from both India and Bangladesh. This event attracts a sizeable number of tourists from India as well as abroad and is being covered by international channels such as National Geographic.



Guest houses at Taki





Tourists can also be taken to Machhranga island (Kingfisher Island) on river Ichhamati for bird watching. This island can be reached within 30 minutes from Hasnabad in a mechanised boat. Spread across 129 acres, the island offers a magnificent view of the river and the Bangladesh border. There are a number of picnic spots on the island maintained by the Hasnabad municipal committee.

The tourists can stay back at Taki for the night.

Day 2: Local boats can be arranged to take the tourists to Hemnagar to reach the Jhingekhali and Burirdabri watchtowers.

Day 3: Local boats can be hired from Hemnagar to reach Netidhopani, Dobanki, Kalash and Bonnie islands. For the night, tourists can be accommodated in the hotels in Pakhiralay opposite Sajnekhali.

Day 4: Local houseboats are arranged to take the tourists to Sajnekhali and Sudhanyakhali watchtowers early in the morning. Tourists may be taken to Godkhali post-lunch in local boats from where they can travel to Kolkata by road.

4. Cruise Operations: Impacts and Challenges

Impacts on Livelihood Generation

While the majority of the communities on both sides of the Sundarbans are employed as agricultural labourers, agriculture in the area is not a high-income source due to pronounced salinity of the soil. Therefore, people have to depend on a range of forest-based activities such as collection of forest produce, i.e. honey, wood, leaves and fruit, for their survival. This increases the human-wildlife conflict in the region and leads to human casualties. The alternative source of income in the region is fishery, which engages both men and women. However, in most cases, people are involved in collecting prawn and fish seedlings from the rivers, which is a high-risk engagement, and yields low returns.

Tourism being labour-intensive has the potential to create immense livelihood opportunities for both men and women and improve the quality of living. Previous studies have shown that increasing tourism in the Sundarbans improved the quality of employment and lives of the local populace. One study on the Indian part revealed that those employed in tourism activities spent 19 per cent more on food items and 38 per cent more on non-food items than those associated with other livelihoods.¹⁶

Additionally, tourism may also reduce dependency on forest resources, which can contribute towards conservation and reduce the human-wildlife conflicts. Studies have shown that the income levels in blocks such as Gosaba increased after the increase in tourism in the region. Similar developments have been observed in Namkhana and Jharkhali over the years.

Despite such advantages, *tourism has not been able to create large scale livelihood opportunities in the region*. This is due to a lack of proper training and capacity building of the local populace. During the survey, CUTS team observed that in many of the existing hotels, staff lacks professional training; they need to be trained in terms of hospitality attitude, language, presentation, etc. to enable them to cater to international tourists. The West Bengal Government is working on skill development of the local inhabitants to improve their livelihoods. To build trust between the Forest Department and the local populace in the Indian Sundarbans' various eco-development activities are implemented by the Joint Forest Management Committees of Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve. These activities may include the establishment of self-help groups, piggery, goat rearing and poultry.

Such skill development programmes can be organised in tandem with the tourism sector. Additionally, in areas on both the sides, which have the potential to attract a significant number

¹⁶ Guha, Indrila and Santadas Ghosh (2007), 'Does Tourism Contribute to Local Livelihoods? A Case Study of Tourism, Poverty and Conservation in the Indian Sundarbans', South Asian Network for Development and Environmental Economics (SANDEE), Kathmandu, Nepal. https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/4368/750_PUB_working_paper_26.pdf;jsessionid=DDBA4338FD4B400567DC175ED7FC5246?sequence=1

of tourists but lack the necessary infrastructure, governments must be proactive and assist locals to develop viable and environment-friendly accommodations. Furthermore, the local motorised boats, which form the lifeline of Sundarbans tourism needs to be redesigned keeping in mind international safety and hygiene standards. The boats must be registered and regulated by the state government. These boats often use contaminated oil, which impacts the ecosystem of the Sundarbans adversely. Therefore, they need to be sensitised about waste management and fuel usage and disposal. Table 4.1 presents a cruise tourism value-chain matrix, which identifies the major stakeholders in this sector, their influence area and the key issues faced by them. Some recommendations such that their participation yields the desired result have also been listed.

The cruise tourism value-chain matrix consists of the following players:

1. Passengers
2. Cruise operators
3. Cruise crew
4. Jetty or barge operators
5. Local boat operators
6. Homestays
7. Local eateries
8. Village tourism

There is considerable scope for local employment generation in several domains such as cruise crew, jetty operators, local boat operators, etc. There is also significant scope for generating women employment in domains such as homestays, local eateries and village tourism, etc. With increasing numbers of tourists, demand for food and non-food items may increase in the local markets, which would indirectly benefit their sellers. Table 4.1 mentions the key entities of the cruise tourism value chain and also offers corresponding suggestions:

Table 4.1: Cruise Tourism Value Chain Matrix

Entity	Role in cruise tourism	Entity scope/scope of local women employment	Key issues	Suggestions
Passengers	They represent the demand for cruise tourism	Global or local	Lack of knowledge on local culture and sentiments; and Lack of understanding of local language.	A brief introduction on the culture, ecology and tradition of Sundarbans
Cruise operators	They provide cruise services to the interested passengers	Global or regional companies	Preservation of the wildlife and marine environment; Usage of fuel; and Waste management	Capacity building programmes for lessening the impact on marine and wildlife; and Benchmarking their waste management and fuel usage standards with international cruises
Cruise ship crew	They provide services within the cruise	Mostly local or regional	Lack of knowledge on local culture and sentiments; Sensitivity to the tastes and preferences of tourists especially international tourists.	Vocational training to improve their communication and handling of international tourists; and Awareness generation on the local customs and traditions of Sundarbans in case the crew is not local.
Jetty ghat and barge operators	Those operating ticket counters at jetties or providing other assistance to the passengers while embarking or disembarking	Local	Communication skills; Sensitivity to the tastes and preferences of tourists especially international tourists; and Communication skills.	
Local boat operators	Small motor boats taking tourists to the creeks of the Sundarbans	Local	Sensitivity to the tastes and preferences of tourists especially international tourists; Communication skills; Waste management; Usage and disposal of fuel; and Safety issues in the boat.	Training on improving communication skills; Making them aware of the ecological vulnerability of the area and helping them to select proper waste management and fuel disposal systems; Informing them about international safety and hygiene standards for boat-based tourism; and Providing them with some kind of assistance to improve the infrastructure and safety measures in the boat.
Homestays and community-based accommodations	They provide accommodations to the tourists	Local women can participate	Sensitivity to the tastes and preferences of tourists especially international tourists; Communication skills; Waste management; Resources to build home stays; and Hygiene issues.	Capacity building to understand and communicate with international tourists; Providing assistance for developing home stays; and Capacity building programmes to make them better equipped in managing the homestays.
Local eateries and restaurants	They provide food to the tourists	Local women can participate	Quality of food and hygiene of the place; and Service quality.	Capacity building programmes to make them better equipped in managing the restaurants; and Training programmes to communicate with international tourists.
Village tourism	Giving local tourists a guided tour of Sundarbans villages, their cultures and traditions and even unique livelihoods such as bee-keeping, honey collection, etc.	Local women can participate	Sensitivity to the tastes and preferences of tourists especially international tourists; Communication skills; and Safety issues especially in honey collection.	Training programmes to communicate with international tourists

Impacts on the Ecosystem of the Sundarbans

During the survey, it was observed that there is an apprehension among the forest department officials regarding cruise tourism in the Sundarbans. This is mainly due to the fact that the Sundarbans is an ecologically vulnerable area and they feel that cruise tourism may negatively impact the ecology. However, studies have found that increasing dependence of locals on forest resources in Sundarbans is one of the major causes of environmental degradation in the region. In this context, tourism can play a positive role in reducing the local population's dependence on forest resources. Capacity building of locals to develop eco-tourism models including environmentally sustainable home-stays, restaurants and village tours, which when coupled to the river cruise can generate more sustainable livelihood opportunities in the area with minimal environmental damage.

During the survey, local boat operators insisted that they have repeatedly urged the forest department to open new spots in the Sundarbans to attract more tourists in the area. However, the forest department has refused to do so due to its apprehension about environmental damage and negative impact on animals. In this context, one suggestion has been to open new spots inside the core area, for which the forest department can charge a hefty sum. This would restrict mass tourism in those spots. The revenue generated can be utilised by the forest department for funding more conservation activities in the region.

During the survey, it was also observed that usage of contaminated fuel by local boats, and their disposal in the water causes serious damage to the Sundarbans environment. Solid waste management is also a critical issue since the boatmen, and even the tourists have the tendency to dispose of solid wastes in the rivers of Sundarbans. Therefore, capacity building should be done to make them better equipped in terms of fuel and waste management. It is interesting to note that some boat owners have themselves adopted innovative ways to utilise the used fuel. They are using the fuel to lubricate boat parts and machineries instead of draining it into the water. At the same time, the cruise crew and management should also adopt international operation standards to minimise their adverse impact on Sundarbans ecology.

It is to be noted here that the forest department of the Bangladesh government has proposed a ban on tourism in Sundarbans between June and August since the monsoon months experience inclement weather and also because this is breeding time for the animals. There are no such restrictions on the Indian side. However, getting permission during monsoon may be difficult.

Challenges for Cruise Operations

While cruise tourism through the Sundarbans is a novel idea that can generate significant returns, there are certain challenges that need to be resolved prior to implementing this plan. Some of these challenges are listed below.

- Least available depth along several stretches of the Sundarbans rivers

The governments on both sides need to identify these stretches and take proper actions such as dredging and de-silting. To facilitate international cruise tourism IWAI/BIWTA needs to declare additional routes and disembarkation points based on anchoring facility and places of tourist attraction. During the survey, CUTS team was informed that the West Bengal government had started dredging on an alternative river route from Kolkata to Sundarbans. The route started at Chitpur in Kolkata and was connected to Dhamakhali in Sandeshkhali via Adi-Ganga channel. However, the work was aborted due to administrative problems. It is understood that if the channel was made navigable, it could have acted as an alternative route for cruises travelling from Kolkata to the Indian Sundarbans.

- Protocol for operating customised cruises between India and Bangladesh

During the study, CUTS team met representatives from Vivada Cruise, the only company which has conducted one tour from Kolkata to Bangladesh via the Sundarbans. They mentioned that the existing protocol route is for trade and therefore the rules are tailor-made for cargo ships and may not be appropriate for passenger ships. For example, under India Bangladesh trade protocol, a ship from India can only anchor at designated ports in Bangladesh which include Mongla and Narayanganj. However, for conducting tours, the cruise needs to anchor at different places in Bangladesh Sundarbans. Similar rules are applicable for Bangladeshi cruises coming to India via the protocol route.

- Other issues

The immigration checkpoint at Hemnagar mainly caters to cargo vehicles. There need to be separate posts for immigration check of tourists. Also, piracy is a problem in these waters. Hence, there is a need for a protocol to facilitate safe passenger movement.

5. Recommendations

Inter-country cruise tourism through Sundarbans has huge potential to create economic opportunities for both India and Bangladesh. This is more so because the local populations on both sides of Sundarbans are economically marginalised. However, until and unless the above-mentioned issues are addressed, tourism may not yield desired results in the area. Below is the list of most critical issues that were observed during the study and the recommendations for addressing them.

Table 5.1: Issues and Recommendations

Issues	Recommendations
Lack of tourism infrastructure in both India and Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building and financial assistance to local communities to develop eco-friendlier accommodations; Assistance to local boatmen to improve infrastructure and safety measures in local boats; Regulation of boat associations active in the Sundarbans area; Building more restrooms and waste disposal facilities on the way and near the spots; Building more ghats and jetties for embarkation; and Deployment of more floating police to address the sporadic issues of piracy and theft.
Lack of tourism orientation of local population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proper training and capacity building of local boatmen such that they can handle international tourists; and Capacity building and vocational training of locals involved in hotels and restaurants to manage international tourists.
Difficulties in cruise operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular dredging of the riverways to keep them navigable; Establishment of new routes connecting the Sundarbans to Kolkata in India and Bangladesh in Dhaka; and Need for separate immigration checkpoints for tourists crossing over to Bangladesh in boats.
Environmental impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for an environmental impact analysis before making the cruise operational; and Capacity building of cruise crew and boatmen for proper disposal of wastes and used fuel.

Both Indian and Bangladeshi governments are well aware of these difficulties and have had close talks to mitigate these challenges. As the two countries signed the MoU on passenger and cruise services in both coastal and protocol routes in April 2017, the SOP for passenger and cruise services has also been signed. However, the progress in this aspect has been slow. While preparing the SOP may take some time the two countries can work on the following terms of engagement

- a. Joint training for the guides of both countries. This can be done by the forest departments of the two countries along with NGOs. It would help in exchanging knowledge and best practices
- b. Cooperation in boat design by bringing in boat designers and manufacturers of both the countries
- c. The Bhomra-Gojadanga land post can be improved to accommodate tourists who may be interested in moving through land ports

It is recommended that both the governments should work towards adopting a seamless traffic pact between the two countries in the lines of the European Union (EU) to make cruise tourism successful in this region.

Alongside cruise tourism, other types of tourism can be explored in the Sundarbans area. Due to the region's proximity to cities in both India (Kolkata) and Bangladesh (Khulna and Jessore), it is ideal for weekend tourism. In fact during the survey CUTS team observed that Block Development Officers in many of the Indian Sundarbans blocks are keen to develop weekend tourism in their areas. While this study has been constrained by time and has looked only into the prospects of cruise tourism in the Sundarbans, more detailed studies can be done to explore other types of tourism that can be developed in this area and their implications for the local population. Such studies can also offer insights into the lives of the local population and the ways, in which tourism can bring positive changes in their lives.

Table 5.2: Namkhana-Sagar Circuit: Cruise Anchoring at Namkhana

Name of the spot	Block	Nature of the spot	Permits required (issuing authority)	Nearest jetty	Means of commutation	Infrastructural amenities at the spot	Opportunities of the block	Issues and recommendations
Kapil Munir Ashram	Sagar	Religious	No	Sagar jetty or Namkhana jetty	From Sagar jetty, this spot can be reached by road (e-rickshaws and autos)	Hotel: One government tourist bungalow and one youth hostel available Restaurants: Available Hospitals: At Sagar and Namkhana	1. This tourism block is already popular due to the Ganga Sagar Mela. 2. While it is not proper Sundarbans, Bakkhali, Fazerganj and Henry's island are already popular amongst weekenders and beach lovers	1. Sagar island does not have many eateries, which pose problems for tourists. Hence assistance to local communities can be given to develop clean eateries specialising in local food. 2. Identification of spots at Namkhana for development of village-based tourism and capacity building of locals to build more homestays and restaurants.
Manasadwip	Sagar	Cultural	No	Sagar jetty or Namkhana jetty	From Sagar jetty, this spot can be reached by road (e-rickshaws and autos)	Hotel: One government tourist bungalow and one youth hostel available Restaurants: Available Hospitals: At Sagar and Namkhana	3. There are a number of staying options at Bakkhali, Fazerganj and Henry's Island. Accommodations are also available at Sagar.	3. Identification of spots at Namkhana for development of village-based tourism and capacity building of locals to build more homestays and restaurants.
Miryunjainagar	Sagar	Cultural	No	Sagar jetty or Namkhana jetty	From Sagar jetty, this spot can be availed by road (e-rickshaws and autos)	Hotel: One government tourist bungalow and one youth hostel available Restaurants: Available Hospitals: At Sagar and Namkhana	4. Since the area already caters to a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners, the local service providers are tourism-oriented.	4. Need for more safety measures such as life jackets, first aid medicines etc.
Jambudwip	Sagar	Natural	No	Can be accessed from Namkhana or Sagar jetty however tourists are not allowed to disembark	Local boats can be hired to reach this spot	Hotels: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospital is at Sagar	5. The boat association is fairly large and boats are available easily.	5. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe, hygienic and tourist-friendly.
Mousuni Island	Namkhana	Natural/ Sea beach	No	The local ghat can be accessed from Namkhana or Sagar jetty	From the local ghat, e-rickshaws need to be availed to reach the beach	Hotels: There are tents on the beach, which can accommodate up to 20 persons Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospital is at Namkhana	6. This area can be marketed as the gateway to Sundarbans.	6. This area can be marketed as the gateway to Sundarbans.
Bakkhali	Namkhana	Natural/ Sea beach	No	Namkhana jetty	Local transports like e-rickshaws or autos can be availed at Namkhana jetty to reach this spot	Hotels: Private guest houses Restaurants: Available Hospitals: Available at Namkhana	7. Jambudwip can be developed to give tourists a feel of the forest.	7. Jambudwip can be developed to give tourists a feel of the forest.
Henry's Island	Namkhana	Natural/ Sea beach	No	Namkhana jetty	Local transports like e-rickshaws or autos can be availed at Namkhana jetty to reach this spot	Hotels: Government tourist bungalows Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Available at Namkhana	8. Government tourist bungalows available at Namkhana.	8. Government tourist bungalows available at Namkhana.
Fazerganj	Namkhana	Natural/ Sea beach	No	Namkhana jetty	Local transports like e-rickshaws or autos can be availed at Namkhana jetty to reach this spot	Hotels: Government tourist bungalows Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Available at Namkhana	9. Government tourist bungalows available at Namkhana.	9. Government tourist bungalows available at Namkhana.

Table 5.3: Patharpratima Circuit: Cruise Anchoring at Ramganga

Name of the spot	Block	Nature of the spot	Permits required (issuing authority)	Nearest jetty	Means of commutation	Infrastructural amenities at the spot	Opportunities of the circuit	Issues and recommendations
Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project	Patharpratima	Wildlife	No	Ramganga jetty	Local transport including autos and e-rickshaws can be availed at Ramganga jetty to reach this spot	Hotel: Nearest hotel available is at Dakshin Shibganj in Patharpratima. Two private budget guest houses available there Restaurants: Only small local eateries Hospitals: Primary healthcare centre available at Patharpratima. Nearest big hospital at Kakdwip	1. While Patharpratima is the starting of Indian Sundarbans, this block is gradually gaining popularity with tourists due to the Bhagabatpur crocodile project 2. Buraburir Tot is a beach destination, which is now being developed for tourists. The location has high tourism potential due to its uniqueness of having a beach inside the Sundarbans	1. This tourist block does not have many good accommodation options. Since it has a high potential for Sundarbans based tourism, local communities can be engaged to develop more accommodation and dining options in the area 2. Infrastructural improvement of the local boats. 3. Need for more safety measures, such as life jackets, first aid medicines, etc. in the boats
Buraburir Tot (Watchtower)	Patharpratima	Natural	Yes	Local jetty for small boats	Local 3- or 6-cylinder boats from Ramganga jetty.	Hotels: Not available. Nearest options at Patharpratima Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest primary healthcare centre at Patharpratima and a Super Specialty Hospital at Kakdwip	2. Buraburir Tot is a beach destination, which is now being developed for tourists. The location has high tourism potential due to its uniqueness of having a beach inside the Sundarbans 3. Buraburir tot also has a watchtower	4. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe, hygienic and tourist-friendly.
Lothian Island	Patharpratima	Natural	No	Tourists are not allowed to disembark	Local 3- or 6-cylinder boats are available at Ramganga jetty on which one can sail around the island	Hotels: Not available. Nearest options at Patharpratima Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest primary healthcare centre at Patharpratima and a Super Specialty Hospital at Kakdwip		
G-Plot	Patharpratima	Natural	No		Local 3- or 6-cylinder boats are available at Ramganga jetty that can be availed for sailing around the island	Hotels: Not available. Nearest options at Patharpratima Restaurants: 2Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest primary healthcare centre at Patharpratima and a Super Specialty Hospital at Kakdwip		
Haliday Island	Patharpratima	Natural	No	Tourists are not allowed to disembark	Local 3- or 6-cylinder boats are available at Ramganga jetty that can be availed for sailing around the island	Hotels: Not available. Nearest options at Patharpratima Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest primary healthcare centre at Patharpratima and a Super Specialty Hospital at Kakdwip		

Table 5.4: Sajnekhali Circuit: Cruise Anchoring at Pakhiralay

Name of the spot	Block	Nature of the spot	Permits required	Nearest jetty	Means of commutation	Infrastructural amenities at the spot	Opportunities of the circuit	Issues and recommendations
Sajnekhali	Gosaba	Wildlife	Yes	Pakhiralay in Goshaba Block and Jharkhali Jetty in Basanti block	Local 2- or 3-cylinder boats required to commute to this spot	Hotel: Only one forest guest house, which can be availed with prior permission. Accommodations are available at Pakhiralay, which is at the opposite bank of the river. Restaurants: Available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospital at Gosaba	1. This is the most popular tourism block in Indian Sundarbans. 2. It is also popular amongst weekend tourists from Kolkata. 3. There are a number of decent accommodations at Pakhiralay. 4. Since the area already caters to a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners, the local service providers are tourism-oriented.	1. Infrastructural improvement of the local boats. 2. Need for more safety measures such as life jackets, first aid medicines, etc. in the boats 3. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe and hygienic and tourist friendly 4. Selection of areas which can be developed for local tourism and capacity building of the local communities to increase their participation in tourism.
Sudhanyakhali	Gosaba	Wildlife	Yes	Pakhiralay in Goshaba Block and Jharkhali Jetty in Basanti block	Local 2- or 3-cylinder boats Sajnekhali or Pakhiralay	Hotels: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospital at Gosaba	5. The boat association is fairly large and boats are available easily. There is also transparency in terms of rates.	
Dobanki	Gosaba	Wildlife	Yes	Pakhiralay in Goshaba Block and Jharkhali Jetty in Basanti block	Local 3- or 6-cylinder boats can be hired at Sajnekhali or Pakhiralay	Hotels: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospital at Gosaba	6. There is considerable scope of developing village-based tourism in this area to experience the daily life in Sundarbans. There is a nearby island called Bali.	
Neridhopani	Gosaba	Historical	Yes	Pakhiralay in Goshaba Block and Jharkhali Jetty in Basanti block	Local 3- or 6-cylinder boats can be hired at Sajnekhali or Pakhiralay	Hotels: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospital at Gosaba		
Bonnie Camp	Kultali	Wildlife	Yes	Pakhiralay in Goshaba Block and Jharkhali Jetty in Basanti block; can be accessed from Namkhana or Ramganga Jetty in Patharpratima	Local six-cylinder boats can be booked at the nearby jetties to reach this spot	Hotels: There is a government tourist bungalow. However, the permission to avail this facility depends on the forest department. Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospitals are at Gosaba and Jharkhali		
Kalash Camp	Patharpratima	Wildlife	Yes	Pakhiralay in Goshaba Block and Jharkhali Jetty in Basanti block. Also, can be accessed from Namkhana or Ramganga Jetty in Patharpratima	Local six-cylinder boats can be booked from the nearby jetties to reach this spot	Hotels: Not available. Not allowed disembarking from the boat as of now. Prior permission required Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospital at Gosaba and Jharkhali		
Jharkhali	Basanti	Wildlife	No	Jharkhali Jetty	Small boats need to be used to reach this spot	Hotels: Both private and government accommodations available Restaurants: Small local shops available which provide basic Bengali meal Hospitals: Available		
Tiger Rescue Centre								

Table 5.5: Hemnagar Circuit: Cruise Anchoring at Hemnagar

Name of the spot	Block	Nature of the spot	Permits required	Nearest jetty	Means of commutation	Infrastructural amenities at the spot	Opportunities of the circuit	Issues and recommendations
Ihingekhali Watchtower	Hingalganj	Wildlife	Yes	Nearest jetty at Hemnagar	Local transport like auto and e-rickshaws can be availed at Hemnagar to access this spot.	Hotel: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Jogeshganj hospital at Hemnagar	1. While this block has potential it is yet to be fully developed into a tourism circuit. 2. The main potential lies in the fact that it also gives a view of India-Bangladesh international border. 3. The watchtowers located in this tourism block gives view of Sundarbans across the border.	1. Barring a few options in Taki there are no accommodations in this tourism block. 2. Even restaurants are scarce. 3. The boat associations are also not very tourism oriented as is the case in other Sundarbans tourism circuits in India. Hence capacity building is required.
Burirdabri	Hingalganj	Wildlife	Yes	Nearest big jetty at Hemnagar. Local jetty for small boats available	Local small boats from Hemnagar	Hotels: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Jogeshganj hospital at Hemnagar	4. Taki and Hasnabad are already famous for Durga Idol Immersion from both sides of the border at Ichhamati. Both the spots attract a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners. The events have been covered by international channels including National Geographic.	4. Due to the presence of international border, spots can be identified in this block to develop weekend or short term tourism plans.
Kumirmari Watchtower	Gosaba	Wildlife	Yes	Nearest big jetty at Hemnagar. Local jetty for small boats available	Local small boats from Hemnagar	Hotels: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Jogeshganj hospital at Hemnagar	5. Hemnagar serves as an immigration point between India and Bangladesh. Hence cruises definitely stop here before crossing over.	
Taki	Hasnabad	Historical and Cultural	No	At Taki ghat	Can be reached by cruise; One can take a car from Kolkata too to reach this spot	Hotels: Available Restaurants: Available Hospitals: Available		

Table 5.6: Bagerhat Circuit: Cruise Anchoring at Mongla Port

Name of the spot	Block	Nature of the spot	Permits required	Nearest jetty	Means of commutation	Infrastructural amenities at the spot	Opportunities of the circuit	Issues and recommendations
Harbaria Eco-park	Bagerhat	Natural	Yes	Local jetty for small boats and houseboats	Local boats have to be availed at Mongla port	Hotels: Not available. One has to stay at Mongla Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla	1. This is a UNESCO World Heritage site. 2. Several tidal flats including dimer char, tier char which are birdwatcher's paradise.	1. While the area is a popular tourism circuit, not many accommodations and eateries are available. Lot needs to be done to improve tourism infrastructure in this circuit. 2. The boats also need to be developed to support international tourists. Currently, the local boats are very big in size and used for local transportation, which makes hygiene and safety an issue. Houseboats although are in better condition.
Kachikhalii Forest	Bagerhat	Wildlife	Yes	Local jetty for small boats and houseboats	Local boats have to be availed at Mongla port	Hotels: Forest rest house available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla	3. Already popular among both local and international tourists. 4. Dublar Char is being developed for dry fish processing	
Tinkona Island	Bagerhat	Natural	Yes	May not be allowed to disembark	Tourists may take local boats from Mongla to reach this spot	Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla		
Katka Ghat	Bagerhat	Natural and Wildlife	Yes	Local jetty for small boats and houseboats	Local boats have to be availed at Mongla port	Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla		
Dimer Char	Bagerhat	Natural and Wildlife	Yes	Local jetty for small boats and houseboats	Tourists may take local boats from Mongla to reach this spot	Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla		
Dublar Char	Bagerhat	Natural and Wildlife	Yes	Island underwater for five months in a year. Apart from those months local houseboats or small boats can reach the jetty	Tourists may take local boats from Mongla to reach this spot	Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla		
Tiar Char	Bagerhat	Natural and Wildlife	Yes	Local houseboats or small boats can reach the jetty	Tourists may take local boats from Mongla to reach this spot	Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla		
Selar Char	Bagerhat	Natural and Wildlife	Yes	Local houseboats or small boats can reach the jetty	Tourists may take local boats at Mongla to reach this spot	Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla		
Shaat Gambuj Mosque	Bagerhat	Religious	No	Best reached by road from Mongla	Local transport including autos and e-rickshaws at Mongla	Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla		
Kolda Math	Bagerhat	Religious	No	Best reached by road from Mongla	Local transport including autos and e-rickshaws at Mongla	Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla		

Table 5.7: Khulna Circuit: Cruise Anchoring at Mongla Port

Name of the spot	Block	Nature of the spot	Permits required	Nearest jetty	Means of commutation	Infrastructural amenities at the spot	Opportunities of the circuit	Issues and recommendations
Koromjol Watchtower	Khulna	Wildlife	Yes	Local jetty for small boats and houseboats	Local boats have to be availed at Mongla port	Hotel: Not available. One has to stay at Mongla Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla	1. This circuit is also popular among local and international tourists 2. Good view of wildlife. 3. Heron point is a fisherman's island 4. Crocodile breeding ground developed at Koromjol	1. Very poor tourism infrastructure. 2. Lot of work needs to be done in terms of building accommodations, eateries and improving the conditions of local boats.
Hiron point	Khulna	Wildlife	Yes	Local jetty for small boats and houseboats	Local boats have to be availed at Mongla port	Hotel: Forest rest house available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla		
Nilkomol Sanctuary Centre	Khulna	Wildlife	Yes	Local jetty for small boats and houseboats	Local boats have to be availed at Mongla port	Hotel: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla		

Table 5.8: Satkhira Circuit: Cruise Anchoring at Angtihara

Name of the spot	Unnayan Parishad	Nature of the spot	Permits required	Nearest jetty	Means of commutation	Infrastructural amenities at the spot	Opportunities of the circuit	Issues and recommendations
Dobeki	Satkhira	Wildlife and Natural	Yes	Local jetty for small boats and houseboats	Local boats can be availed at Angtihara or Mongla port	Hotel: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla	1. Already popular among local tourists for bird watching, guided fishery and honey collection tours, etc.	1. Poor tourism infrastructure. 2. Lot of work needs to be done in terms of building accommodations, eateries and improving the conditions of local boats.
Putney Island	Satkhira	Wildlife and Natural	Yes	Local jetty for small boats and houseboats	Local boats can be availed at Angtihara or Mongla port	Hotel: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla		
Kalir Char	Satkhira	Wildlife and Natural	Yes	Local jetty for small boats and houseboats	Local boats can be availed at Angtihara or Mongla port	Hotel: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla and Khulna		
Patkosta	Satkhira	Wildlife and Natural	Yes	Local jetty for small boats and houseboats	Local boats can be availed at Angtihara or Mongla port	Hotel: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla and Khulna		

Annexure 1

Information on the Sundarbans

Tourist Spots in India

Pilgrimage sites in Sundarbans (19 Blocks) and in Kolkata

Sl No.	Blocks	Pilgrimage Sites	Remarks
1	Sagar	Kapil Muni Temple at Gangasagar confluence point	State Fair, 3 days
2	Mathurapur -II	Ambulinga Shib Mela at Chatratirtha, Kashinagar in Chaitra	
		Andhamuni Mela at Chatratirtha	
		Nanda Snan Mela at Kashinagar on Pous Sankranti	
		Charak Mela at Jatar Deul on Chaitra Sankranti	
3	Patharpratima	Gobindeswar Shib Mela at Gobindapur in RamgangaGP	15 days
4	Joynagar -I	Jaychandi Mela near Jaynagar – Majilpur Rly Station	15 days
5	Canning-II	Bara Khan Gazi at GhutiaryShariff : Mela in Asharh, Special event on 17th Shravan, Pilgrimage arrival every Thursday evening for prayer & offerings all the year round	Mela in Asharh for 7 days
6	Haroa	Pir Gorachand Mela in Falgun	Sometime in the Indian month of Falgun

Historical Heritage Sites

Sl No.	Blocks	Heritage Sites	Remarks
1	Mathurapur -II	Jatar Deul in village Purbajata- preserved as Archeological Monument by the ASI. According to the ASI, the Monument was constructed in 975 BC by one Jayanta Chandra in a unique architectural style.	Route direction: From Sealdaha South Rly to Mathurapur Rd. Station then Roydighi on road and then from Roydighi to Jatar Deul by road. It is about 100 km from Kolkata
		Presently it is treated as Shiv Temple by the local community, and an idol of Lord Shive is placed in its inner sanctum or Garvagriha. Melas and festivals are organised on various occasions especially Charak Mela on Chaitra Sankranti	

1.2. Cultural Events: Mela, Haat, Folk Culture like *Bono Bibi* Puja

Sl. No.	Blocks	Mouza	Cultural Events: Mela, Festivals, Puja etc.	Remarks
1	Sagar	Gangasagar	Ganga Snan Mela near Kapil Muni Temple at Gangasagar	State Fair, 3 days 14 th to 16 th Jan, every year
		Silpara	Charak Mela	7 days
		Mrityunjaynagar	Shivratri Mela	4 days
		Manasadwip	Chodda Madal Sangkirtan	5 days
		Do-	Nag Mela (Snake Goddess)	5 days in November
		Mandirtala	Shivratri Mela	3 days in Falgun
2	Namkhana	Amarabati	Ganga Mela	Pous Sankranti 3 days
		Lalpur	Rashjatra	Falgun – 1 day
		Iswaripur	Ganga Mela	Pous Sankranti-2 days
3	Patharpratima	Dk. Shibganj	Shibratri Mela	Falgun – 5 days
		- Do -	Rathajatra	Asarh – 2 days
		Dk. Gobindapur	Do -	15 days
		Kamdevnagar	Maghi Purnima Rathjatra	February – 7 days
		Do -	Chandi Mela	Baisakh – 3 days
		Durbachati	Rashjatra	Kartik – 4 days
		Brajaballavpur	Chodda Madal Sangkirtan	3 days
		Kamdevpur	Chandi Mela	Baisakh -3-4 days
		Indrapur/ G-Plot	Bishalakshmi Mela	Magh – 3 days
		Digambarpur	Narayani Mela	Falgun- 3 days
4	Kakdwip	Jogindrapur	Rathajatra	Asarh – 2 days
		Sitarampur	Mahostab Narayan Puja	Falgun-3/4 days
		Madhabnagar	Gosthahjatra	Baisakh -7 days
		Uttar Durgapur	Gorachand Mela	Falgun- 7 days
		Manirampur	Ganga Mela	Pous Sankranti-7 days
		Kakdwip	-Do -	-Do- 3 days
		Harendranagar	-Do -	-Do- 7 days
5	Mathurapur-I	Shrinagar	Gostha Mela	Baisakh -3 days
		Nalua	Shri Panchami Mela	Magh – 6 days
		Nalua	Jantal Gazi Mela	Magh – 1 day
		Krishnachandrapur	Nam Sangkirtan Mela	Pous – 6 days
		Nayabad/Tajpur	Barakhan Gazi Mela	3 days
		Gobindapur	Gostha Mela	3 days
6	Mathurapur-II	South Bishnupur	Ganga Mela	Pous – 3 days
		Chatrabho/ Kashinagar	Nandasnan	Chaitra-1 day
		-Do -	Charak – Gazan	Chaitra – 1 day
		Barashi	Shivratri	Falgun – 3 days
		-Do -	Hindumela	Chaitra=-15 days
		-Do -	SnanJatra	Pous -3 days
		Khari	Sabamangala Puja	Chaitra – 7 days
		Gilarchat	NababarshaMela	Baisakh – 5 days
		Purbajata	Charak /Gazan Mela	Chaitra- 5 days
		Kashinagar	<i>Bono Bibi</i> Mela	Agrahayan-2 days

Sl. No.	Blocks	Mouza	Cultural Events: Mela, Festivals, Puja etc.	Remarks
7	Joynagar-I	Joynagar	Dhanwantari Kali Puja	Baisakh-15 days
		Do-	GosthaJatra	Baisakh- 1 day
		Do -	Ratha Jatra	Asarh- 1 day
		Do -	Joychandi Mela	Jaistha- 15 days
		Do -	Pancham Dole	Falgun – 15 days
		Do -	Rash Mela	Kartik- 1 day
		Mayda	Charak Mela	Chaitra- 1 day
		Do -	Kali Puja	Kartik – 1 day
		Ramrudrapur	Harinkhali <i>Bono Bibi</i> Mela	Magh -1 day
		Dk. Barasat	Charak / Gajan Mela	Chaitra-4 days
		Do -	Rakta Khan Jantal Gazi	Magh – 1 day
		Do -	Dharma Thakur Mela	3 days
8	Joynagar-II	Baharu	Makar Sangkranti Mela	Pous -1 day
		Natunhat	Ied	2 days
		Nimpith	Krishi Mela	Jan-February-7 days
		Nalgora	Charak Mela	Chaitra- 2 days
		Do -	Gostha Mela	Baisakh – 2 days
		Sonatikari	Ganga Mela	Pous-1 day
		Do -	Gajan Mela	Chaitra- 1 day
		Do -	Gostha Jatra	Baisakh -4-10 days
		Do-	Dole Jatra	Falgun-8 days
9	Kultali	Maipith	Bana Bibi Mela	Chaitra- 1 day
		Chituri Forest Office	Bishalakshmi Mela	Baisakh- 1 day
10	Canning-I	Devisabad	Dole Jatra	Falgun- 1 day
		Do -	Gajan Mela	Chaitra- 7 days
		Roybaghini	Charak / Gajan Mela	Chaitra- 3 days
		Do -	Gostha Mela	Baisakh-3 days
		Canning	Sundarbans Gramin Mela	Jan/ Feb – 7 days
		Canning	Bramha Puja & Mela	Falgun- 8-12 days
		Tangrakhali	Basanti Mela	Falguni- 7 days
11	Canning-II	Kalikatala	<i>Bono Bibi</i> Mela	Magh – 4 days
		Matherdighi	Basanti and Charak Mela	Falgun& Chaitra-8ds
		GhutiaryShariff	Bara Khan Gazi Mela	Asarh – 7 days
		Taldi	Gostha Jatra	Baisakh – 3 days
		Taldi	Sitala Mela	Jaistha- 2 days
		BhabenerHaat	Adibashi Mela	Four days
12	Basant	Amjhara	Nababarsha Mela	Baisakh-1 day
		Charabidya	Tusu Parab/Adibasi Mela	Magh – 2/3 days
		Bharatgarh	Sitala Mela	Falgun-1 day
		Basanti	Krishi Mela	February-7 days
		Kultali	Sundarbans Kristi Mela	February- 7 days
		Joygopalpur	Sundarbans Mela	Feb.- 5 days
		Chatrakhali	Tusu Mela	Pous-1 day
		Dk. Mokamberia	Bara Kachari Mela	Chaitra- 3 days
		Baria	Birsha Munda Mela	January-7 days

Sl. No.	Blocks	Mouza	Cultural Events: Mela, Festivals, Puja etc.	Remarks
13	Gosaba	Amtali	Kurukshtera Mela	30 days
		Amtali	Tusu Parab	Pous- 1 day
		Kachukhali	Pachai Utsab/ Morag Lorai	February-1 day
		Kachukhali	Manasa Mela	September- 7 days
		Beltoli	Do -	February – 1 day
		Gosaba	Tusu Parab for women	Pous-1 day
		Radhanagar	Do —	Pous-1 day
		Rangabelia	Do -	Pous- 1 day
		Rangabelia	Ras Mela	Kartik- 3 days
		Rangabelia	Livelihood Fair	Jan / Feb. – 7 days
		Bijaynagar	Basanti Mela	Falgun – 7 days
14	Hasnabad	Rameswarpur	Dole Jatra	Falgun-3 days
		Hasnabad	Dole Mela	7 days
		Hasnabad	Durga Idol Immersion	October-1 day
		Kumarpukur	Kali Puja & Mela	Magh-7 days
		Taki	Kalibari Mela	Kartik-1 day
		Taki	Book Fair	Jan/Feb. – 7-10 days
15	Sandeskhal-I	Sahebkhali	Dole Utsab	Falgun-3 days
		Haripur	Charak Mela	Chaitra-2 days
		Bayarmari	Charak – Gajan Mela	Chaitra-3days
		Nezat	Tusu Parab	Pous-3 days
16	Sandeskhal-II	Tongtala	Kali Puja & Mela	Chaitra-15 days
		Sitalia	Baruni Mela	Falgun-3 days
		Charankhali	Hari Thakur Mela	Maghi Purnima-3ds
		Manipur	Makar Sangkranti	Pous-1 day
		Jeliakhali	Basanti Mela	Falgun-3 days
17	Hingalganj	Bankra	Charak Mela	Chaitra- 3 days
		Bhandarkhali	Rash Mela	Kartik-3 days
		Hemnagar	Kalpa Ganga Mela	Pous-3 days
		Hingalganj	Dole Jatra	Falgun-3 days
17	Hingalganj	Chanralkhali	Hari Thakur Mela	3 days
		Bhawanipur	Bhurkunda Tusu Mela	Pous-3 days
		Bhurkunda	Bono Bibi Mela	Magh- 3 days
18	Haroa	Haroa	Pir Gorachand Mela	Falgun-7 days
		Khasbalanda	Rash Mela	Kartik- 7 days
19	Minakhan	Bamanpukur	Pir Gorachand Mela	Baisakh-7 days
		Jaygram	Sitala Mela	Falgun-3 days
		Mohanpur	Basanti Mela	Falgun-5 days

Notes:

- 1) In every Block: State-sponsored YUBA Utsav celebration with the cultural programme on 12th January every year
- 2) In every Block: State-sponsored Sundarbans Dibas celebration for environment awareness on 11th December every year.

- 3) In every Block: State-sponsored Krishi-o-Prani Sampad Utsav in December/ January every year
- 4) NGOs/ CBOs organise different rural fairs for environmental awareness, agricultural awareness – Matsya Mela, livelihoods development fair, health & nutrition fair, Sundarbans Development fair, book fair, baby show and other themes of local interest in different blocks
- 5) Mythological festivals, pujas and celebrations viz Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Saraswati Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Biswakarma Puja, Mansa Puja, Ganga Puja, Eid, Muharram, Christmas, etc. are organised by different castes and religious groups and some of these continue to this day.

1.2 Established Natural Attractions

Sagar – Jambudwip

Namkhana – Frazerganj and Bakkhali

Namkhana & Patharpratima – Lothian, Prentice Island, Watchtower

Patharpratima – Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project

Patharpratima – Dhanchi Forest Camp

Patharpratima – Kalas Forest Camp

Kultali – Kaikhali and Kantamari

Kultali – Bonnie Forest Camp in Ajmalmari Forest Block

Kultali – Piyali Closure Site

Canning-I – Dabu Tourist Spot

Basanti – Jharkhali Tiger Rescue Centre and Herobhanga Forest

Basanti – Nafarganj Island

Gosaba – Pakhiralay – Rangabelia

Gosaba – Sajnekhali Mangrove Interpretation Centre/Watchtower

Gosaba – Sudhanyakali Camp and Watchtower

Gosaba – Do- Banki Cat Walk and Watchtower

Gosaba – Neti Dhopani Forest Camp and Watchtower

Gosaba – Haliday Island and Watchtower

Hingalganj – Jhingakhali Watchtower

Hingalganj – Burirdabri Watchtower

Khatuajhuri – Forest Camp

Annexure 2

Information on the Sundarbans Tourist Spots in Bangladesh

2.1 Established Natural Tourist Attractions

Sl No.	Tourist Spots	Location	Remarks
1	Koromjol Eco-tourism Centre	Bagerhat	This centre under the Chadpai Range is on the east side of Bangladesh Sundarbans. There is a Deer and Crocodile breeding centre here.
2	Tetulbaria khal	Bagerhat	It is under the Chadpai forest station and Andharmanik. It is a natural sanctuary of wild animals, birds, reptiles and otters. It is almost an hour's distance from Mongla Port.
3	Harbaria Eco-Tourism Centre	Harbaria, Khulna	<p>It is in the deep forest. There is a wooden watchtower in this area, which enables a scenic view.</p> <p>Special Attraction: Tiger (sighted most of the time)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is an hour's distance from Mongla Port.
4	Kolagachia Eco-tourism Centre	Satkhira	This centre is on the west side of Bangladesh Sundarbans near the Burigoalini range. It provides the tourists with an opportunity to go inside the forest. Goran and Khoilsha trees are abundant in this region. Among wild animals, deer is common here.
5	Katka	Bagerhat	<p>It is the eastern sanctuary under Sharankhola Forest Range. There is a watchtower. It is almost 152 km to the South of Khulna</p> <p>Wildlife is in abundance: Tiger, Spotted deer, Wild Boar, saline water crocodile.</p>
6	Dobeki	Satkhira	Dobeki is at a distance of two hours from Mandarbaria, Satkhira. A watchtower provides facilities to the tourists.
7	Kachikhali	Bagerhat	Near Sarankhola Range and 14 km east of Katka sea beach. Tourists can see tiger, deer, crocodile, monitor lizard and many other mammals.
8	Nilkomol or Hiron Point	Southside of Khulna	<p>130 km from Khulna and 80 km from Mongla.</p> <p>Wildlife is in abundance: Raj Gokhra snake (King Cobra), otter, spotted deer and Tiger</p>
9	Mandarbaria	Southwest region of Sundarban, Satkhira Coastal Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Western sanctuary of Sundarbans. - Difficult to reach from Khulna or Mongla. One can reach from Dublar char or Nilkamal. <p>Wildlife is abundant: Dolphin, King Crab, Horseshoe crab, etc.</p>
10	The Sundarban Museum	Mongla town, Bagerhat	<p>Subash Biswas established this museum. He started collecting specimens for this museum in 1986.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - photographs and specimens of wild and aquatic animals, trees, algae, orchids and many other objects of interest. - artefacts of the local and folk culture and tradition

2.2 Sea Beaches, Chars and Islands

Sl No.	Sea Beaches and Island	Location	Remarks
1	Jamtala Sea Beach	Bagerhat	Jamtala is almost 3 km distance from Katka on the east side of Sundarbans. There is a Watchtower on the beach.
2	Kachikhali Sea Beach	Bagerhat	Kochikhali Sea Beach is half an hour walking distance to the south of Kochikhali Jetty.
3	Kotka Sea Beach	Bagerhat	It is under Sarankhola range and almost 152 km from Khulna and one of the familiar tourist spots. There is a Watchtower here.
4	Mandarbaria Sea Beach	Satkhira	It is a local tourist spot almost 170 km from Khulna and 100 km to the southwest of Satkhira
5	Dimer Char	Bagerhat	Its shape resembles an egg
6	Pokkhir Char	Bagerhat	This char is near to the Dimer Char
7	Tiar Char	Bagerhat	This char is a 2-hour distance from Kapil Muni Island by boat. Attraction: deer, wild bird
8	Dublar Char	Bagerhat	It is considered as a tourist spot under Chadpai range. It is 90 km to the south of Mongla port
9	Kalir Char	Satkhira	It is in the estuary of Malancha river. It is 70 km to the south of Mongla port.
10	Shelar Char	Bagerhat	This char is mainly a natural shelter centre for fisherman in the coastal region. It is 90 km to the South of Mongla port.
11	Kopilmuni Island	Bagerhat	This island is in the estuary of Pashur and Sibsha river. It is 75 km to the south of Mongla port.
12	Tinkona Island	Bagerhat	This island is in the estuary of Pashur and Sibsha river. It is 70 km to the south of Mongla port.
13	Putney Island	Satkhira	This island is in the estuary of Malancha river. It is 106 km to the south of Mongla port.

2.3 Pilgrimage and Historical Sites

Sl No.	Tourist Spot	Location	Remarks
1	Shaat Gambuj Mosque	Bagerhat	Shaat Gambuj Mosque was built by Khan Jahan Ali between 1400 A.D and 1500 A.D. It is 5 km from the Mongla port
2	Shekher Barir Mondir	Khulna	Temple of Kali, which is approximately 200-300 old. It is beside Shibsha river. It is almost 30 km to the south of Khulna Noliyan Forest Range.
3	Relics of an ancient civilisation	Khulna	There are relics of an ancient civilisation 1.5 kms from Shekher Bari. Locally it is known as the civilisation under Raja Protapditto (1500 A.D.-1700 A.D)
4	Chedonkhali	Satkhira	Several relics are found in this area. It is near the Buri Goalini forest range, Satkhira
5	Relics of the salt industry	Khulna, Satkhira	The relics are found in several places on the banks of Shabsa, Malancha, Pashur and Alki rivers in the area between Tinkona Island and Dublar Char.

2.4 Cultural Events

Sl No.	Cultural Events: Mela, Festival, Pujaetc	Location	Remarks
1	Raash Purnima Mela	Dublar Char	3 days programme every year at Alarkole in Dublar Char. It starts on the full moon night of the Bangla month of Kartik (in the middle of November month). Though it is a Hindu festival, people from other communities also participate.
2	Dashkin Rai Puja	Munshiganj, Mandarbaria, Dublar Char	Duration: Poush Shonkranti to Magh Shonkranti (30 days) (December-January)
3	Banadevi Naraiani Puja	Satkhira	Duration: 30 days of Magh month according to Bengali Calendar (Mid-January-Mid February)
4	Bono Bibi Puja	Satkhira, Khulna	Among the local communities living near the Sundarbans areas
5	Kalu Rai Puja (God of Crocodile)	Satkhira, Khulna, Bagerhat	Fishermen of Bouali and Mouali normally show their respect before going to work.

About the Study

Spread across the coastal region of Bay of Bengal and considered as one of the natural wonders of the world, the Sundarbans is a huge forest located in the delta region of Padma, Meghna and Brahmaputra river basins. The world's largest coastal mangrove forest extends across Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat districts of Bangladesh and South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal in India.

The initiative to develop and promote community-based river cruise tourism between India and Bangladesh, especially in and near the Sundarbans, has the potential to not only popularise some of the existing tourism routes and locations in this part of the world, but also identify new destinations and routes for tourism that can-do justice to the unique experience that Sundarbans can offer from an ecological, cultural and historical perspective. Hence, CUTS conducted a study entitled 'Conceptual plan for integrating community-based tourism along the India-Bangladesh protocol route for inland navigation'.

For more information, please visit:
<https://cuts-crc.org/conceptual-plan-for-integrating-community-based-tourism-along-the-bangladesh-india-protocol-route-for-inland-navigation/>

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Established in 1983, CUTS International (Consumer Unity & Trust Society) is a non-governmental organisation, engaged in consumer sovereignty in the framework of social justice and economic equality and environmental balance, within and across borders. More information about the organisation and its centres can be accessed here: <http://www.cuts-international.org>.

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