

Travel Itinerary

Few places on earth reward photographers the way West Bengal does. This expedition moves through three completely different worlds: ancient village rituals that outsiders almost never witness, lost empires whose crumbling palaces still carry the weight of unimaginable wealth, and one of the greatest festivals on the planet.

Gomira mask dancers in Kushmundi. The **ruins of Gaur**, once one of the five most populous cities on earth, where the ancient **Silk Road** still passes through medieval gateways. **Rajbaris in Murshidabad** where you feel transported to another century. And **Kolkata at Durga Puja**, when the goddess comes home and the entire city becomes a work of art. And at dawn on the final morning, the ancient **mud wrestling tradition (Kushti)** on the banks of the Hooghly – a last image you will not forget.

DAY 1

Arrival Bagdogra & Gomria Masks Dance

DAY 2

Gomria Mask Makers & Dance

DAY 3

Silk Route / Gaur

DAY 4

Street Photography Murshidabad

DAY 5

Durga Puja Murshidabad & Kolkata

DAY 6

Durga Puja Kolkata

DAY 7

Mud Wrestling Kolkata

14th - 20th October 2026



BEYOND TAJ TOURS · WESTBENGAL · PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR

Tribes, Masks & Durga Puja

Photography Tour & Workshop

7 DAYS · OCTOBER 2025 · KUSHMUNDI & MURSHIDABAD & KOLKATA

DESTINATION

West Bengal, India

LANGUAGE

English · German

DEPARTURE

14 October 2025

GROUP SIZE

Max. 6 Participants

DURATION

7 Days / 6 Nights

PHYSICALITY

Moderate

GOMIRA MASK
DANCE

ANCIENT CITY OF
GAUR

COSSIMBAZAR
RAJBARI

DURGA PUJA

KOLKATA STREET
PHOTOGRAPHY

KUSHTI AT DAWN

2 PHOTOGRAPHY
MENTORS

MURSHIDABAD STREET
PHOTOGRAPHY

SILK ROUTE

HERITAGE HOTELS

ABOUT THIS TOUR

When the Goddess returns to earth...

Every photographer comes to Kolkata for Durga Puja. Almost none of them know that the festival begins in the villages of West Bengal, weeks before the city wakes up - in masks carved by hand, in rituals performed by dancers who have inherited their roles across generations.

This tour starts where the story starts. We fly into Bagdogra and drive directly to Kushmundi in South Dinajpur, home of the Gomira tradition - one of Bengal's most ancient mask-dance rituals

where painted wooden masks representing gods and demons are worn by village dancers, in ceremonies that predate recorded history. For two days we work alongside a local mask maker in two villages and photograph a world that very few outsiders have ever seen.

From there we drive to Gaur, once one of the largest cities on earth, now a string of ruins on the Bangladesh border. We cross the border itself without a visa. The old Silk Route still runs through here. Hand-painted trucks move between Kolkata and Dhaka in a constant, colourful stream.

We continue to Murshidabad. In the 18th century this was the wealthiest city on earth. Robert Clive himself wrote that it surpassed London. We stay at the Cossimbazar Rajbari, a royal heritage home. Our host Mr. Roy opens private rooms and family temples that stay closed to ordinary visitors.

Then Kolkata, as Durga Puja reaches its peak. Pandals the size of aircraft hangars rise across the city. We photograph the festival at its most intense. On the final morning, at dawn, we watch kushti, ancient mud wrestling on the riverbank, as it has been practised for centuries.

COMPLETE ITINERARY

7 Days, Day By Day

DAY

1

14 October | Delhi to Bagdogra to Kushmundi



Into the Villages

EARLY FLIGHT - VILLAGE ARRIVAL - FIRST WORKSHOP SESSION

The tour begins before sunrise with an early flight from Delhi to Bagdogra.



We drive on to Kushmundi in South Dinajpur. The rice paddies are green in October. Festival preparations have already begun in the villages. By afternoon our local mask maker welcomes us into his workshop. He is part of a family that has carved Gomira masks for generations. We learn the wood, the tools, and the natural pigments. We shoot until the light fades.

Highlights:

- Early flight from Delhi to Bagdogra
- Drive through the Bengal countryside
- First Gomira mask workshop
- Golden hour shoot in the village

DAY

2

15 October | Kushmundi - Village 1 & Village 2

The Mask Makers of Kushmundi

GOMIRA WORKSHOP DAY 2 RITUALS & DANCE



A full day in the Gomira world. We visit two villages, each with its own mask style. The masks are hand carved from gamhar wood and painted with natural dyes. The dances are real rituals, not staged for cameras. Our mask maker translates language and meaning. In the evening we may see the first Durga Puja preparations in the village.

Highlights:

- Two villages, two mask traditions
- Hand carved masks up to three kilograms
- Real ceremonies, not tourist shows
- Possible early Durga Puja preparations

DAY

3

16 October | Kushmundi to Gaur to Murshidabad

The Road Through Gaur

ANCIENT CITY AT BANGLADESH BORDER – SILK ROUTE

ARRIVAL AT COSSIMBAZAR RAJBARI

We leave Kushmundi and drive toward Murshidabad.



On the way we stop at Gaur, once the capital of the Bengal Sultanate. The ruins sit right on the Bangladesh border. We cross the border briefly, without a visa. The old Silk Route still runs through here, busy with painted trucks. We spend the morning among mosques, mango groves, and fish ponds. By late afternoon we reach the Cossimbazar Rajbari, a royal heritage home. Our host Mr. Roy is a historian of the city. He opens private rooms and family temples that are normally closed to visitors. The evening is free to walk the riverbank and the bazaar.

Highlights:

- Ruins of Gaur on the Bangladesh border
- Living Silk Route with painted trucks
- Arrival at the Cossimbazar Rajbari
- Private history tour with host Mr. Roy

DAY

4

17 October | Murshidabad & Cossimbazar



The Nawab's Capital

STREET PHOTOGRAPHY - HERITAGE ARCHITECTURE - PANDAL HOPPING

Murshidabad was once one of the wealthiest cities on earth.



We spend the morning on foot through the old city. Almost no traffic here, only pedestrians and the traditional tanga cart. We visit the Hazarduari Palace, the Katra Mosque, and old rajbaris. Silk weavers still work at handlooms in open doorways. Durga Puja has reached Murshidabad too. In the private temples of the Cossimbazar Rajbari, Mr. Roy shows us a family puja performed for generations.

Highlights:

- Hazarduari Palace, Katra Mosque, Imambara
- Tanga rides and silk weavers at work
- Private family Durga Puja
- Guided by host Mr. Roy

DAY

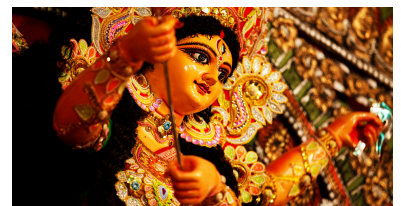
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18 October | Murshidabad to Kolkata



A Roadtrip Through Rural West Bengal

DRIVE TO KOLKATA - CHECK-IN - FIRST PANDAL HOPPING SESSION



We drive four to five hours to Kolkata. The festival is at its peak. Every neighbourhood has built its own pandal. We check in at Raajkutir, a heritage hotel built like a 19th-century zamindari mansion. The evening starts right away with pandal hopping. Night is the best time to shoot, when the lights and the crowds come alive.

Highlights:

- Arrival at the height of Durga Puja
- Check in at the heritage hotel Raajkutir
- First night of pandal hopping
- Iconic and hidden pandals

DAY

6

19 October | Kolkata



Deep Kolkata

STREET PHOTOGRAPHY - KUMARTULI - PANDAL HOPPING



A full day in the City of Joy. We start in Kumartuli, the potters district on the Hooghly. Two festivals overlap here this year. The last Durga statues leave for the pandals while the first Kali statues take shape. The afternoon is free. Kolkata rewards wandering, from the flower market to the old book stalls. In the evening we continue pandal hopping, from grand spectacles to quiet neighbourhood pujas.

Highlights:

- Kumartuli idol makers at work
- Durga and Kali festivals overlap
- Free time at Mullik Ghat and College Street
- Evening pandal hopping

DAY

7

20 October | Kolkata - Departure



Kushti at Dawn

KUSHTI MUD WRESTLING AT THE AKHARA - FINAL MORNING - FAREWELL



The last morning begins before sunrise. At the akhara on the riverbank we watch Kushti, traditional mud wrestling. Wrestlers have trained here since the Mughal period. The light is low and golden. After breakfast and final image reviews, we say goodbye. The tour ends at Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport.

Highlights:

- Kushti mud wrestling at dawn
- A centuries old training tradition
- Final breakfast and image review
- Departure from Kolkata airport

TOUR AT A GLANCE

ROUTE	Bagdogra (arrival) - Kushmundi - Gaur - Murshidabad - Kolkata (departure)
DATES	14 - 20 October 2026
DURATION	7 Days / 6 Nights
GROUP SIZE	Maximum 6 Participants
LANGUAGE	English - German
ACCOMMODATION	Heritage properties throughout*
PHYSICALITY	Moderate - walking 3-5 km per day
EXPERIENCE LEVEL	Basic camera operation required - all levels welcome
HIGHLIGHTS	Gomira mask - Gaur - Cossimbazar Rajbari - Street Photography in Murshidabad and Kolkata - Durga Puja - Kushti

WHAT'S COVERED

Tour Inclusions:

INCLUDED ▸ 6 nights in heritage properties ▸ Private driver throughout the entire tour ▸ 2 expert photography guides ▸ All entrance fees ▸ Daily breakfast ▸ Daily photography coaching and feedback sessions	NOT INCLUDED ▸ International flights to/from India ▸ Travel insurance (required) ▸ Lunch and dinner ▸ Alcoholic beverages ▸ Personal expenses and gratuities
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WHERE YOU STAY

Hotels

Golden Park, Balurghat

2 nights

Cossimbazar Rajbari, Murshidabad

2 nights

Raajkutir, Kolkata

2 nights

KUSHMANDI

For Kushmandi we stay at Golden Park Hotel & Resort in Balurghat, the district town. It is old but well kept, with spacious rooms and a swimming pool. No heritage hotels exist directly in Kushmandi, so this is the best base for the mask villages.



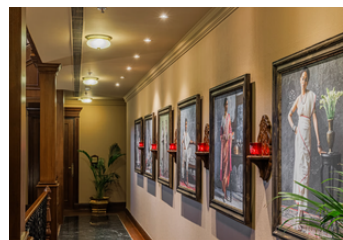
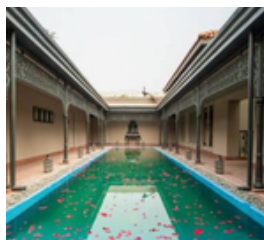
COSSIMBAZAR RAJBARI, MURSHIDABAD

The Cossimbazar Rajbari has been in the Roy family for generations. It is not a hotel in the conventional sense : it is a royal residence that happens to welcome guests, and the difference is immediately felt. Our host Mr. Roy is a historian of Murshidabad who opens doors that remain closed to ordinary visitors: private sections of the palace, family temples, and a personal guided walk through a city whose history he carries in his blood. Staying here is not an accommodation. It is an experience that cannot be replicated anywhere else in Bengal.



RAAJKUTIR, KOLKATA

Raajkutir, Kolkata, is a heritage hotel built in the style of a 19th-century zamindari mansion. It sits on 14 acres of green grounds in the heart of the city. Guests can enjoy a luxury spa, an outdoor pool, and heritage-inspired dining. During Durga Puja, when Kolkata transforms around it, there is no better base.



INVESTMENT

Pricing:

7 Day Tour - Double Room	3200,- Euro
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Single Room Supplement	528,- Euro
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Early Bird Discount*	10%
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Group Size*	Maximum 6 Participants
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*A 10% early bird discount applies to bookings confirmed and paid in full by 14 August 2025.

*Accommodation is provided in heritage properties in Murshidabad and Kolkata. In Kushmandi, guests stay at Golden Park Hotel & Resort in Balurghat, the best available property in the area.

* The domestic flight Delhi to Bagdogra is included in the tour price. International flights to and from Delhi are not included and are the sole responsibility of the participant.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Booking Informations:

PAll ground operations for this tour are managed by Orange DMC, an award-winning destination management company specialising in India and Asia (orangedmc.com). International flights are not included in the tour price. We recommend that all participants arrange comprehensive travel insurance prior to departure. Beyond Taj Tours reserves the right to cancel the tour in cases of unforeseen events such as natural disasters, political unrest, or force majeure. Full terms and conditions are available at the link below or by scanning the QR code.



Beyond Taj Tours is powered by Orange DMC - your award-winning destination management partner for India and Asia.



READ BEFORE YOU GO

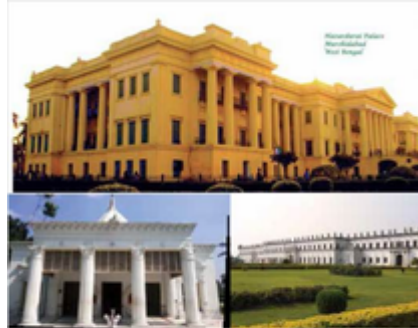
Explore the stories behind the tour:



The Lost City Of Gaur: Explore The Marvels Of Ancient Bengal's Abandoned Capital

The Lost City Of Gaur: Ancient Bengal's Forgotten Capital Known variously as Gauda, Lakshmanavati, Lakshnauti and Gaur, this ancient city served as the seat of many powerful dynasties who ruled over Bengal for between 8th and 16th century...

Homegrown / Jan 21, 2025



Historical and Cultural heritage of the Murshidabad region

Murshidabad: Bengal's Forgotten Crown Jewel Nestled on the eastern banks of the Bhagirathi River, Murshidabad was once the wealthiest capital of Bengal, contributing to 20% of India's GDP and 5% of the global economy.

MDI Murshidabad



128774037.cms

Gomia, Bengal's masked dance that was once considered an intensely local expression of faith, has been gaining popularity on social media, especially.

The Times of India



Durga Puja in Kolkata: A complete guide to pandals, tours, food and more

Everything to see, eat, and experience during the 91 hours from shoshti to bishyas

Conda Next Traveller India - Sep 26, 2025



Cossimbazar: The other colonial town near Murshidabad

Between Murshidabad and Berhampore, is a historic port town with sprawling 'rajbaris', vintage cemeteries and a colonial-era heritage stay

TT Telegraph India / Apr 12, 2022



The Last Great Silk Route trader of India

Image and Narrative contributed by Muzammil Hussain Munshi, Kargil, Ladakh
This photograph is of my great...

indianmemoryproject.com

