

This newsletter sees us heading strongly into 2009 – and

we are working harder than ever to use our long standing relationships with suppliers around the world to bring you the kind of value-for-money travelling you will appreciate in these testing times. Our strategy seems to be paying off as bookings are well up on last year despite the tough economic climate. In this issue we showcase a variety of exceptional value holidays which may just tempt you to enjoy a last minute break. Our advice would be to take these offers while they are still available as the world of finance, foreign and currency and overseas travel is a fast-changing and uncertain one.

Inside you can read about a very special trip down the Brahmaputra River in India's eastern province of Assam which Richard took in January. I've had an incredibly full start to the year with visits to India for a late winter break, and Norway where I donned my Arcturus hat to try my hand at dog sledging. I'm literally just back from a spellbinding visit to Bolivia – more of which in our autumn newsletter. In summer I'll be joining an Arctic-bound expedition ship for a voyage from Scotland to Spitsbergen, so I'm looking forward to dusting off my binoculars as the wildlife and scenery promise to be spectacular.

Despite all this travel, rest assured that looking after my clients personally is still my number one priority and I really look forward to hearing from you with your plans or wish-lists for travel this year and beyond.

Fiona Brijnath

Fiona Brijnath
Far Frontiers Travel

telephone & fax

01837 840640

email

fiona@farfrontiers.com

website

www.farfrontiers.com

brochure

Call us for a copy of our 'show-case' brochure

Far Frontiers Travel Limited
Ninestone, South Zeal
Devon EX20 2PZ

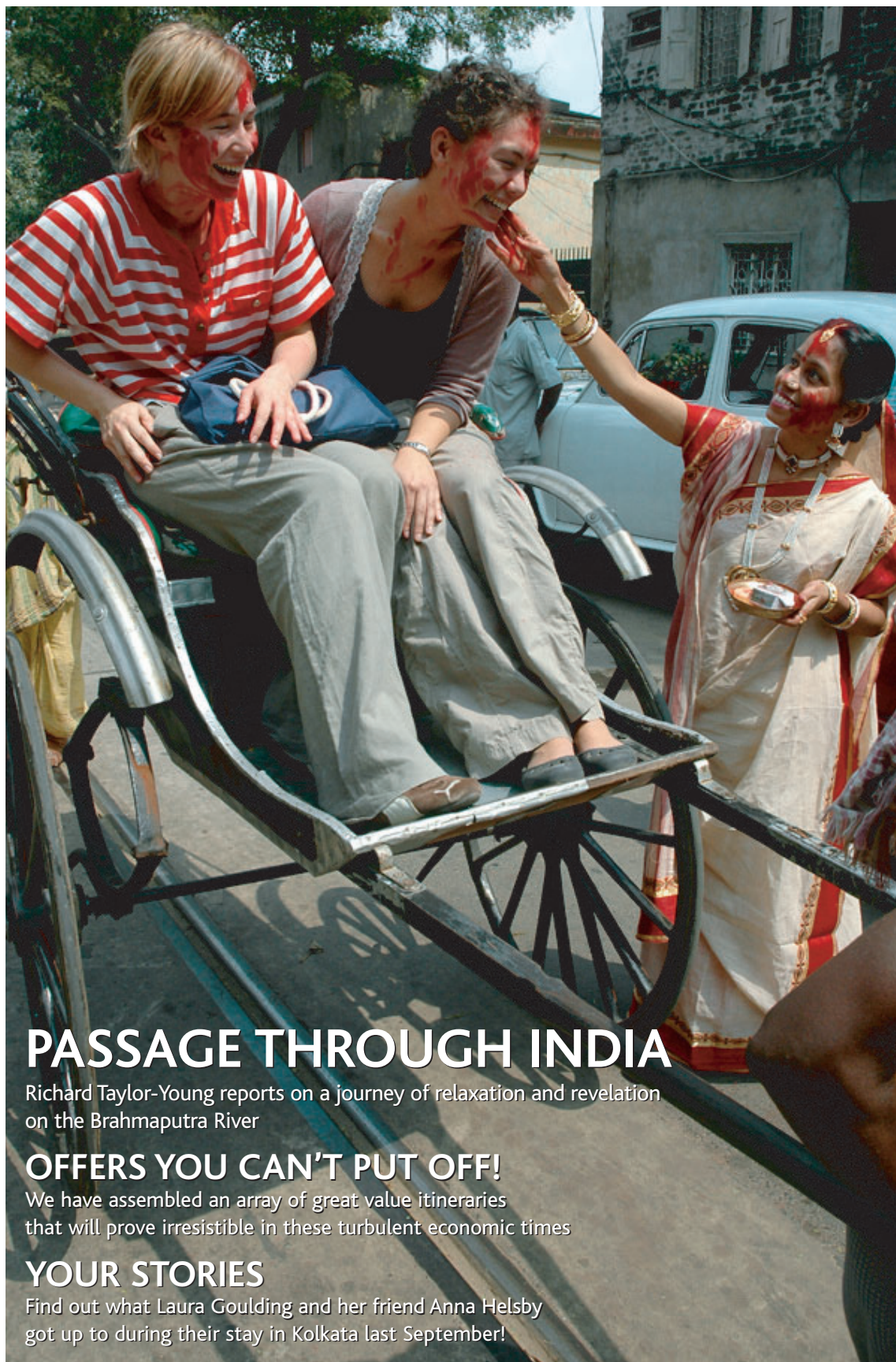
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far frontiers

tailored travel for today's explorer.



PASSAGE THROUGH INDIA

Richard Taylor-Young reports on a journey of relaxation and revelation on the Brahmaputra River

OFFERS YOU CAN'T PUT OFF!

We have assembled an array of great value itineraries that will prove irresistible in these turbulent economic times

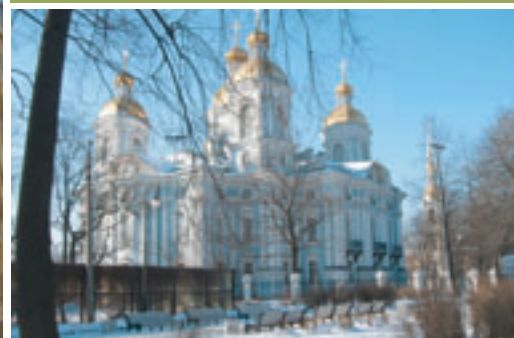
YOUR STORIES

Find out what Laura Goulding and her friend Anna Helsby got up to during their stay in Kolkata last September!



Spring SPECIALS

This spring we are launching a portfolio of 'special offer' itineraries – designed so that you can still take a holiday you imagined you might have to put off this year.



Each of these itineraries takes advantage of off-peak rates, current price reductions and seasonal discounts and bookings are for a limited period only. As with all our trips, the itinerary can be altered and individually tailored to suit, incorporating additional days and sights as well as hotel or flight upgrades or regional airport travel, so please do contact us to discuss options. Flight prices vary, in some cases weekly, due to a continuous stream of offers and changing availability so the prices quoted here are a guide and we will obtain the best deal available at the time of booking. All trips are based on two people travelling together and sharing a room and include international flights from London, accommodation with some meals, all transfers, internal transport and some private guided sightseeing.

RUSSIA

Classic **St Petersburg** is a long weekend for the culture vulture and a visit you won't forget in a hurry. Discover the art and treasures of the **Hermitage** with its nearly three million exhibits and the majestic lines and glorious fountains of **Peterhof**, all in the company of your truly superb English-speaking Russian guide whose knowledge knows no bounds!

» when « 1 September – 30 November 2009
» prices from « £1,085 per person for five days

INDIA

Golden Triangle

Experience the thrill of Indian train travel and the classic golden triangle in a week of easy travelling. See **Delhi's** old and new cities, the **Taj Mahal** in all its pale perfection and **Jaipur, Rajasthan's** colourful capital. Guided sightseeing in each city is included. Without doubt this is a trip to whet your appetite for more Indian adventures in years to come.

» travel before « 30 September 2009
» prices from « £1,160 per person for eight days



Ganges Cruises

We call them **Hugli/Hooghly** cruises since that's what the river at **Calcutta** is known as, the **Hugli** being the first of many channels by which the **Ganges** reaches the sea. These tried and tested seven night cruises through rural **West Bengal** visit some outstanding Hindu, Muslim and Colonial monuments, as well as untouched villages way-off the tourist track.

» when « Weekly departures from mid-July to late September
» special offer « 25 per cent off the cruise selling price for cruise departures on 18 July, 25 July and 15 August 2009
» prices from « £1,780 per person to include flights, cruise and en route arrangements



SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka has suffered badly from negative press reports, so much so that you'll find uncrowded temples and beaches, easy availability in hotels and a plethora of staff eager and waiting to serve you. We have great feedback from all our clients who visit and can offer a special low season itinerary to include four nights of touring and three nights at the beach. From **Colombo** you will be driven north to **Sigiriya** to see its stupendous 5th Century rock temple and to **Polonnaruwa**, the capital of Sri Lanka from the 11th to the 13th Century. A relaxed drive south brings you to **Kandy**, home of the **Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha** and the lush **Royal Botanical Gardens** – with over 5,000 species of trees and plants in 147 acres. Before heading west to your beach resort you visit the **Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage** and the lush green tea gardens of **Nuwara Eliya**.

» when « 1 May – 31 October 2009
» prices from « £1,190 per person





MOROCCO

Combine the rich colourful souqs, gardens and architecture of **Marrakech** with the delights of the quaint fishing port of **Essaouira**, where the cool sea breezes and a dip in the Atlantic provide a refreshing contrast with the relentless sunshine of the Moroccan summer. This is a trip for those looking for heat and lots of it!

» travel before « 31 August 2009
» prices from « £935 per person for a week



OMAN

A new direct non-stop service from London Heathrow to **Muscat** with Oman Air offers a superb way to reach the pristine beaches, bustling souqs and the mauve and green mountains that form the backdrop to Oman. We'll base you in Muscat where you can easily head off to a nearby wadi or fort by 4WD or take two steps from your sun lounger over pure white sand for a dip into the cooling sea.

» when « 1 June - 31 August 2009
» prices from « £1,395 per person for eight days



NEPAL

Don't miss out on this perfect introductory visit to **Nepal** which embraces all the obvious highlights blended with some wonderful surprises. Our nine day holiday includes some superb sightseeing in colourful **Kathmandu** – most importantly, the atmospheric temple of **Pashupatinath** which is situated on the banks of the holy **Bagmati River** from where you can see the funeral pyres which are a feature of daily life. A scenic drive west through delightful villages and breathtaking scenery brings you to **Pokhara**. Here you can marvel at the beauty of the Himalayan landscape and the reflection of the **Annapurna** massif, including the towering majestic peak of **Mt. Machhapuchare** on its beautiful lakes. Sightseeing here includes dramatic falls and gorges as well as a boating trip on **Lake Phewa**. There is plenty of time for shopping or you can extend the trip to include gentle trekking, thrilling wildlife viewing by elephant or a heart-stopping mountain flight to see the major peaks.

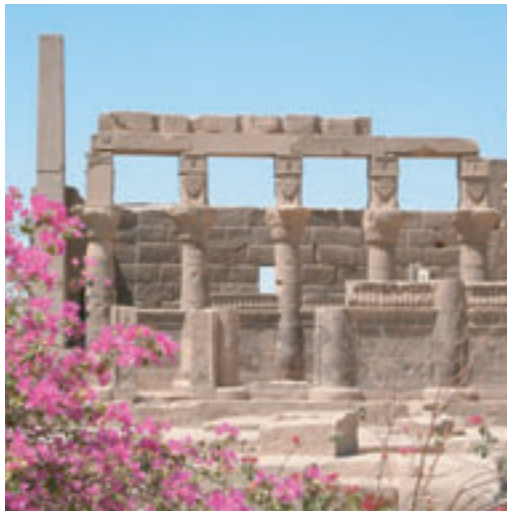
» when « 1 May - 31 August 2009 » prices from « £1,065 per person for nine days



THAILAND

Treat yourself to an unashamed week's beach holiday on **Koh Samui** combined with a day in Thailand's frenetic capital, **Bangkok**, where the grandeur of the spectacular **King's Palace** will leave you eager to explore more.

» when « 1 May - 15 July and
1 September - 31 October 2009
» prices from « £1,790 per person for 11 days



EGYPT

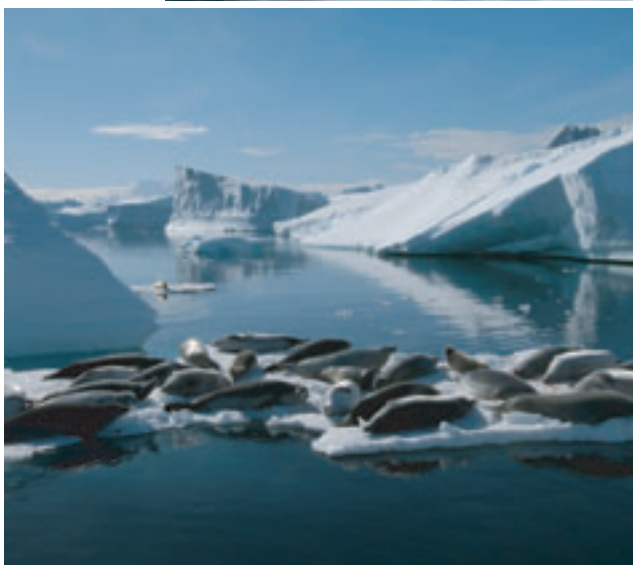
We've negotiated a really special rate for a three night **Nile** cruise which you can combine with a classic tour of **Cairo**, the **Egyptian Museum**, the **Pyramids**, **Memphis** and **Sakkara**, where archaeologists have just discovered an important new tomb. Why not take your extended family on this holiday of discovery? It's great value for money and there's something to intrigue and please all ages.

» when « 1 May - 30 June and
24 August - 22 September 2009
» prices from « £1,145 per person
for a week

ARCTIC

Our *Around Spitsbergen* voyage takes you right around the island on the comfortable 84 passenger ship **Antarctic Dream**, taking in **Laagøya**, a low island where walrus tend to congregate and the **Hinlopen Strait** where we'll navigate the ice floes of **Lomfjordshalvøya** by zodiacs and explore the bird cliffs. You will see the polar desert of **Nordautlandet**, land on the island of **Barentsøya** to visit an old trapper's hut and much more, ending the voyage with the fjords of the spectacular **Hornsund** area.

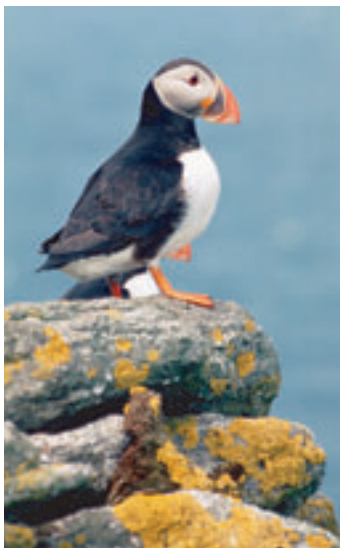
» when « Selected dates in June, July and August
» special offer « 10 per cent reduction saving
£395 per person
» prices from « £3,600 per person for 12 days
including all travel from UK



ANTARCTICA

Our **Weddell Sea** voyage *In Search of the Emperor Penguin* on board the 52 berth **Professor Molchanov** not only provides the best opportunity to see emperor penguins without courting bankruptcy but also the chance for hiking easy, moderate or more challenging walks in the vicinity of the landing sites. South of **Snow Hill Island** is an emperor penguin rookery and we will aim to sail between **Snow Hill** and **James Ross** islands close to the ice-edge to observe the young penguins on their way to the open water, as well as visiting the historic hut of the Swedish **Nordensköjld Expedition**.

» when « 1 - 16 December 2009
» special offer « 10 per cent reduction for
bookings made before 30 May 2009 saving
£680 per person
» prices from « £5,970 per person including all
travel from UK



SCOTTISH ISLANDS AND ARCTIC NORWAY

Starting in **Oban**, this unusual voyage travels to the **Faroes**, the volcanic island of **Jan Mayen** and **Bear Island** (situated half way between Norway and Spitsbergen) before heading north to **Longyearbyen**. This journey will give superb opportunities to see the bird life of the North Atlantic including fulmars, kittiwakes, little auks, black guillemots and puffins from the intimate comfort of the **Professor Molchanov**.

» when « 12 - 23 June 2009
» special offer « 10 per cent reduction for
bookings made before 15 May 2009 saving
£290 per person
» prices from « £2,640 per person including all
travel from UK

Trip report: Assam diary



In January Richard Taylor-Young took a ten day cruise down the Brahmaputra River. Below he shares some of the highlights in these excerpts from his diary:

"Wildlife, wilderness and the spirit of exploration were the main features of our Brahmaputra cruise – it was an absolute delight, with attentive and welcoming hosts, excellent food and conversation with our fellow passengers, dramatic scenery and fascinating shore excursions. The pace of life in Assam, a lesser known part of North-East India, is slower than elsewhere and there was barely a tourist to be seen!"

10th January

We flew into Dibrugarh from Delhi to be met by Babu Das, one of our charming hosts and the ornithologist on board, for the minibus drive to Neamati. The boarding place can vary, depending on the river level. We are on board the spacious RV Charaidew, which has 12 excellent double cabins with all the facilities you would expect, a large sundeck with shaded and open seating areas, a pleasant dining room and a saloon and bar. The food is delicious – a mixture of Assamese (milder than most Indian cuisine) and European, and the staff delightful – the manager employs local people and trains them from scratch, rather than bring in trained staff from elsewhere.

11th January

Off on our first excursion this morning, to Sibsagar, one-time capital of the Ahom kings of Assam, to see the large complex of temple buildings and the largest hand-excavated lake in the world. Back to the ship and lunch while we cruised downstream to moor against the bank on Majuli Island, supposedly the world's largest river island, and a busy, bustling community. At any time we are welcome on the bridge to meet the pilot and ship's officers and hear something of the difficulties navigating the river, where the sandbanks are constantly shifting. Our 'country boat' is alongside and is used to ferry us to the bank for shore excursions. The river bed is often 20 or 30km across, an empty world of water and sand banks as far as the eye can see. There's marvelous bird life to see and also the occasional gangetic dolphin.

13th January

The days begin and end early, with a cup of tea at 6.30am, and then breakfast before our departure for the first excursion ashore or watching the ship get under way. Yesterday we saw something of Majuli Island and its unique Hindu monasteries famous for their dance drama performances, where a spectacular show was put on for us. We visited a monastery with a modern museum alongside which had a superb display of items. Today has been spent mostly on the river

enjoying the scenery from the sundeck, with ever more sandbanks and many new birds. This afternoon we visited the tribal village of Jamuguri.

15th January

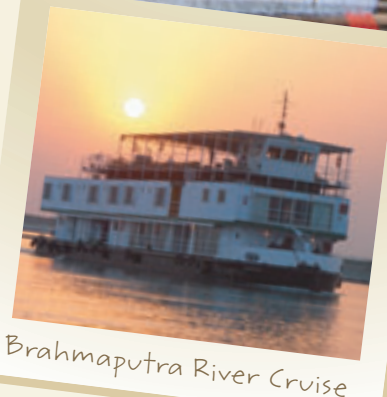
Up at 4.30 am to be back in Kaziranga National Park for a truly magical early morning elephant ride. In the misty dawn light we set off through the long grasses, around lakes and trees, seeing many different animals. Breakfast was at a nearby small hotel before going on to a house where an enterprising lady has established a weaving school for local girls. We then lunched in style at the Diphlu River Lodge on the bank of the river and watched a huge 70-year old elephant being washed and scrubbed by its mahout – clearly thoroughly enjoying itself! On our two park safaris we have seen wild elephant, 49 rhinos (best ever for our naturalist!) swamp deer, hog deer, wild pig and just one big sambar deer to name a few. Sadly, no tigers, but marvelous all the same!

Back home, as Charaidew has become, for a welcome gin and tonic and a grand barbecue set up on our sandbank with a roaring bonfire and a terrific performance by a local music and dance troupe! By the end of the evening all the guests and half the crew had been dragged into the fun!

19th January

Our last day started with a visit to Sualkuchi, a village devoted to the production of beautiful silks. The skills of the people and the complexity of the looms – all wood and string! – was amazing, with the most beautiful things being made, some of which we were able to buy.

Back for lunch and off on our final short leg of the journey to moor at Pandu, on the outskirts of Guwahati. Lots of interest here, women washing clothes at the edge of the river, a huge bridge across it carrying both vehicles and immensely long trains. Some of the huge rafts made up of about 70,000 bamboos, which we had seen days before floating steadily down the river, caught us up at last! Then into town, first visiting the huge Kamakhya Temple on the Nilachal Hill – it was



Brahmaputra River Cruise

crowded and animal sacrifices are carried out there, but that is part of life in India! Afterwards we had a moving visit to the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in a tranquil part of the town.

20th January

Another surprise last evening – a special farewell dinner with our splendid hosts and we all felt very sad to say goodbye today.

A bonus, sitting on the right hand side of the aircraft back to Delhi, was seeing the Himalayan Mountains in the distance, gleaming in the

sunshine. A fitting and uplifting farewell to Assam, its mighty Brahmaputra River and a trip of a lifetime.

Please call us for details of 2009/10 cruise schedules and prices.



NEW 'WILD ASSAM' ITINERARY

We are delighted to launch a brand new wildlife-watching itinerary which combines elephant and jeep safaris based at Diphlu River Lodge at Kaziranga National Park and Bansbari Lodge at Manas with a three night cruise on the River Brahmaputra.

We will also shortly be launching a good value summer package for stays from May to September (when the park itself is closed) featuring dolphin spotting, elephant treks, walks and excursions.

- » when « Eight departures scheduled over winter 2009/10
- » prices from « £1,995 per person for seven nights full board accommodation and international flights to Kolkata



KAMCHATKA

2009 could be your year to visit fascinating **Kamchatka**. We still have some places left on our Arcturus-led itinerary – Late summer in Kamchatka from 28 August to 15 September. Over two weeks you will see extraordinary sights and encounter brown bear, spawning salmon, steaming volcanoes and prolific birdlife, all set against the majestic backdrop of this rugged peninsula. Three time zones from Moscow, Kamchatka really is Russia's wild 'east'. The trip is led by Dr Lorraine Craig and costs **£4,295** per person.



SOLOVETSKI ISLANDS 14-26 June 2009

Set aside two weeks this summer to visit one of Russia's last true undiscovered frontiers and you will never regret it. The magical Solovetski Islands sit on Russia's northern coastline. Here you will find 300 year old monasteries set in glorious landscapes, ancient buildings and peoples whose traditions have remained untarnished over hundreds of years. A fully detailed trip dossier is available. Prices vary according to group size so please ask us for details.



Local colour in Kolkata

Laura Goulding and Anna Helsby travelled to Bhutan and India in September last year. In Kolkata they took part in the festival of Durga Puja which takes place after monsoon. As the photo and newspaper cutting here show, they certainly got into the spirit of things! Here is an excerpt from a letter they received from their guide on their return.

Dear Laura and Anna,

Greetings from Incredible India! Hope you have reached home safely and are now united with parents and friends. During the Kolkata sight-seeing I was your guide, and I had tried to honour the trust and expectations your parents have from India. I came to know that you had removed the sindur – the red powder. This celebration was originally among married women but the unmarried cannot avoid the temptation – so they also take part, but I won't like it on the face on men.Both of you were well-covered in the print and electronic media. Please have a look at the Telegraph Kolkata.

Regards Amitava

OUR NEWS...

Pushing the boundaries

True to our name, we continue to cross far-flung frontiers with an ever widening breadth of destinations. In the past couple of years we have put together some fascinating itineraries in a marvellous diversity of countries including Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Madagascar.

Please call us if you have a yearning to visit any of these destinations.

ARCTURUS – the polar arm of Far Frontiers Travel

Look out for the new Arcturus brochure which should be published in early July. Our range of icebreaker and adventure ship voyages to the Arctic and Antarctic is quite expansive, and with an ever growing portfolio of truly unique small group departures, we really do recommend you ask for a copy of our 'polar' brochure.



NEW NILE BOAT

New for this summer is the deluxe sailing boat **Dahabiyas** on which you can experience the romance of the **River Nile** in an intimate setting. With just eight deluxe suites, on-deck Jacuzzi and outdoor dining and BBQ facilities, it offers a unique cruise between **Luxor** and **Aswan**. It is ideal for families, small groups or a private party so do call us for more details, availability or for a tailor-made itinerary on this vessel. Prices start at **£1,595** per person for a seven night cruise and international flights to Cairo.



The Telegraph

Kolkata, India

[Saturday, October 11, 2008]

Right:

Web page

from The

Telegraph in India.

The picture caption reads

'Foreigners take part in

sindoor khela at a puja pandal in

Bagbazar on Friday'. During the ritual of

sindur khela, women smear vermillion on one another – signifying the triumphant return of the goddess Durga, wife of renegade Lord Shiva and daughter of the Himalayas, to her marital abode.

TRAVEL SNIPPETS

Your feedback

Here is a selection of comments we have received recently from clients about their trip.

"Thank you for arranging our trip to Oman. It was very successful. You delivered what we requested, namely a different experience, away from tourists and off the beaten track".

Mr and Mrs Roger Murray,
Oman, November 2009

"Extremely good holiday – with excellent pre departure information. Syria and Syrian people were a delight".

Mr and Mrs Paul Varney, Jordan and
Syria, November 2008

"Many thanks for your help in organizing the trip, we had a superb time and will be in touch for our next travel extravaganza".

Mark Mills and Kerstin Dias, Sri Lanka, Maldives,
Chile and Ecuador, November 2008

"Trip was really wonderful."

Mr and Mrs Robert Mabon and family,
Argentina, December 2008

"Thank you so much. Our trip was totally divine and all plans went very smoothly. Your help was greatly appreciated".

Mr and Mrs Walter Looney,
Argentina, December 2008

"Fiona has once again proved beyond doubt she can send us anywhere and we will love it. The combination of diving and sea fishing in Mozambique followed by safari and fly camping in Tanzania was ingenious and very enjoyable. We just wish we could book everything!"

Mr and Mrs Charles Godfrey,
Mozambique and Tanzania January 2009

"We are now back with plenty of stories to tell. Very exciting trip. All the best and thanks for the organization".

Mr and Mrs Ralph Carver,
Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, February 2009

The air holiday packages in this brochure are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 9270. Please see our booking conditions for more information.

