

## This week's dream: tea and tigers in India's sleepy northeast

Caught between Bangladesh and Burma at India's eastern tip, the "remote" state of Assam is deeply traditional and little known to outsiders. But with its tea plantations and tiger forests, its ancient temples and "peach-and-blue twilights", the Land of Lahe Lahe ("slowly slowly") is enchanting, says Horatio Clare in Condé Nast Traveller. Winding across it is the "vast, braided and silverish" stream of the Brahmaputra, a river older than the Himalayas from which it now flows. Stretching across most of the state, its "jewel-green" floodplain has a largely agrarian population which suffers little of the poverty seen elsewhere in India. An unusual range of forebears – Tibetans, Bhutanese and Burmese among them – has given the Assamese an "astonishing physical beauty", as well as "a natural elegance and courtesy".

The MV Charaideo is "a river cruiser built in the colonial style", wide and flat-bottomed, with cabins done out in bamboo and hardwoods. Sailing down the Brahmaputra, you'll feel "like a



*A fisherman at work off Majuli Island*

successful tea planter from the 1940s". In the "apricot" air of late afternoon, great white egrets and water buffalo patrol the banks, and the bird calls are so profuse it's as if the mists are singing. Around the city of Jorhat, there are ancient monuments to visit, such as the Rang Ghar, an elegant 18th century pleasure pavilion of terracotta stone crowned by two carved crocodiles, and the monasteries of Majuli, the world's second-largest river island – where the monks study dance and music as "ways of worshipping God".

The forests and savannahs of the Kaziranga National Park are spotted with one-horned rhinos and elephants, and have the world's densest tiger

population. Riding out with a mahout across this "dreamlike" landscape, you might not see the reclusive cats – but studying "the world of an elephant from the back of an elephant" is a "deeply immersive" experience. *Greaves India* (020-7487 9111, [www.greavesindia.com](http://www.greavesindia.com)) has a 10-night trip from £3,750pp, incl. flights.