



Package Tour: A New Dimension of Tourism in Bangladesh

by SMS Joya

At points in our lives we get tired of the factory life, our train of thoughts come to a halt, we start throwing tantrums at work. These are all signs of depression. The only solution to this trauma is listening to your heart. Your heart says that you need the touch of nature. With the view of making this possible, package tour programmes are now available here in Bangladesh.

Md Rafiq Ullah, the managing director of Bangladesh Tourist Company, an ex-journalist and now a full-time businessman believes that a man can grow to be a complete man by exploring the world travelling through places gives a better opportunity to live and learn. The idea of commencing the package tour programme struck him and his partners Shahadat Hossain, Firos Alam and Zakir Hossain when they felt the need to manifest tourism particularly within the country.

The first programmes of the package tour are Dhaka-Maynamoti, Dhaka-Gazipur, Dhaka-Savar and Dhaka-Sonargaon. These tours are one-day programmes and provide food, games, music and magazine as extra entertainment over the hours.

The second programme is a dawn-to-dusk cruise on the river Buriganga. With the inclusion of catering, birthday parties, anniversaries and important meetings can also be arranged in the river cruise.

The next programme Dhaka-Cox's Bazar-Teknaf takes you to Himchori, Ramu, Godhuli Saikat, Mathin Loop, the open market zone, Pared-deep — the last frontier of Bangladesh and Samudra Saikat. On this trip, Ullah intends to reveal the wonderment of Kuakata, specially to the foreigners. This is the only spot in Bangladesh from where both the sunrise and sunset can be witnessed. He believes that it properly exposed and invested on,

Kuakata can become the next Goa in five years time. Another interesting arrangement of this programme is the 'Honey-moon tour'. This one specifically arranges for couples to sun-set-bathe (Beware, you can sink or swim in the ocean of love but do not sink with the sun).

This does not sum it all up, the package tour programmes take you to neighbouring countries as well. The Dhaka-Azmir tour is a week-long programme, the journey starts from Dhaka in a luxury coach to Jessore, from Jessore to Bon-ga by auto-rickshaw, from Bon-ga to Calcutta by train. In Calcutta you can visit the Victoria Memorial, Tara Mandal, the zoo, Vidyasagar bridge, Haora bridge, Akashbani Bhanvan, Eden Garden etc. From Calcutta the group then moves to Azmir by bus where the company provides special arrangements for pilgrims to pay their tributes to the Azmir-Sharif. This whole trip costs only Taka 4,200 which includes continental housing, Indian cuisine and a stand-by guide. The group then returns home by the same route.

If you are willing to travel even further, then you could call upon the Dhaka-Nepal-Tibet tour. This trip is arranged group-wise for people, 24 people and 32 people. The trip starts from Dhaka to Jessore by coach, from Jessore to Calcutta by micro-bus, Calcutta to Patna by train (you are allowed to spend a night at Patna on your way back), then from Patna to Rexol by Rajdhani Express, from Rexol to Birganj by tourist-bus. Next a jolly ride on Tom-tom from Birganj takes you all the way to Kathmandu. Finally at Kathmandu you can visit the Golden Temple, the Waterfall Garden, Nath Mandir, the Parliament House, go to down-town, visit the univer-



Selling sea-shells on the sea shore of Cox's-Bazar

sity and Juma Mosque. The next day you can go on a two-hour trip to Tibet by coach and come back to Kathmandu. Finally, the tantalizing return to sweet home but you are allowed to spend a night at Patna on route. The whole trip costs only Taka 5,800.

When asked about the preparations of travel fax, dollar endorsements, visa, catering and hotel booking for the entire trip, Ullah assured that the company facilitates the arrangements.

But what if a passenger tries to smuggle illegal goods in and out of the country? As an answer to that he said that the company bears no responsibility in such cases.

How strong is the security? Well Ullah was a bit reluctant to answer to that on accounts of this side of the borders. But he believes that it is increasing and he pointed out that he himself turned down a 17 year old girl who was willing to travel on her own (with her parents consent) because he could not ascertain her safety. He also said that it is much safer on the other side.

What type of people usually go for these trips? He said, "Mainly businessmen teachers and students". Does the company provide for any medical facilities? He answered by saying — "A first aid kit always remained at hand". What if one of the passengers seriously falls ill and has to be taken to the hospital, will you arrange the formalities? "Yes, till he assured."

Well, you have good food, captivating sights, health care, guidance, a half-way security assurance and that is about all to make these package-tour programmes interesting to fun-fill your life-style but do not forget about the customs.

There are other companies who have taken similar initiatives and are doing an accountable job on promoting tourism within and out of the country.

Travel Briefs

Northwest briefs Japanese traffic controllers:

Northwest held its fourth annual seminar for Narita-based air traffic controllers at the company's Narita training centre. Northwest flight operations officials briefed about 60 Japanese air traffic controllers on the latest trends and techniques in managing the air traffic control system.

— Passages

KLM represents Northwest:

Northwest's behalf in Israel, Northwest had been represented in Israel by Arnon Efferman Ltd as General Sales Agent (GSA) since 1983.

The joint representation by KLM further strengthens the global alliance between both airlines and ensures that passengers receive the consistent high quality customer service.

— Passages

Airbus A330/340s maintain lead:

Airbus Industries A330 and A340 aircraft continues to maintain its lead in the high profile 250 to 350 seat aircraft category market.

Industry figures show that as of July this year has claimed 44 per cent of the wide body market with 261 orders.

— BD Shipping Times

Lufthansa cargo flying:

Although yields are likely to sink still further, Wilhelm Althen, head of Lufthansa Cargo AG (LCAG) expresses optimism.

This optimism is based on the supposition that LCAG can continue to reduce its unit costs by 2 per cent to 3 per cent a year to keep pace with the falling yields.

— BD Shipping Times

Container ports fight for cargo:

New carrier alliances have been formed in international container shipping during the past months. This will lead to major shifts in ports' market shares, especially on the US coast.

It is assumed that the carrier alliances will result in a concentration of ports of call and this consolidation and concentration will lead to expansion of feeder links and overland intermodal services.

— BD Shipping Times

Airline News:

Korean Air introduced a new nonstop Seoul-Washington DC service with three B747-400 frequencies a week. The US capital is the carrier's seventh destination on the US mainland after Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago etc.

China Eastern Airlines launched new twice-weekly flight linking Qingdao in Shandong Province with Osaka-KIA and a weekly service between Beijing and Osaka.

Vietnam Airlines expanded its Asian regional route network with new services from Hanoi to Singapore and Seoul.

— Asian Aviation

LOCATED on the scenic Main river, the natural beauty of Frankfurt's environs obviously impressed the traveller, though no more than the city itself which he remarked was large enough to testify to its importance as an economic and cultural metropolis, but also small enough not to detract from the grandeur of the surrounding countryside.

Since this traveller's visit to Frankfurt, the town has increased dramatically in magnitude, both geographically and in terms of its importance as a financial centre. However, the observations made at the turn of the eighteenth century still hold true. Rising urbanization together with the problems it generates, has led to the coining of new expressions for Frankfurt, evocative of these changes: Bankfurt or Junkfurt, Krank ("ill") furt or even Punkfurt.

Take, for instance, Bankfurt. The city harbours around 300 credit institutions with a total of nearly 300 foreign banks alone, accounting for Frankfurt's status as Germany's capital of finance and commerce. On the other hand, you have 'Junkfurt', a name calling to mind the grass-root street culture — the city abounds with snack-bars famous for fast foods like the frankfurter, also known as 'hot dog'. Frankfurters have done a lot to popularize the name of the city in many parts of the globe. This sausage, which is normally boiled and relished with mustard sauce and sauerkraut, won wide acclaim in Chicago's World Food Fair in 1893. Originally made of beef, lending it its characteristic dark brown colour, the pork versions are known as *weisswurst* (white sausage) or as *bratwurst*, fried and eaten with a roll or french fries.

Often this kind of 'junk food' — though hardly deserving this name — can be found in one of the numerous kiosks called *trinkhallen* (drinking halls) or 'water houses', due to their origin as water supply centres, accounting for their diminutive size. These 'water houses' have become a Frankfurter institution as they offer an opportunity for people from all walks of life to meet for a chat over a glass of beer in the late evening or even early in the morning. Many open at six am, serving crispy rolls, *bratwurst* and excellent strong coffee. The euphemism 'Frankfurt' is undoubtedly

linked to the over indulgence at least some customers are prone to, since the drinks are the cheapest on offer in the city and the conversation can be lively, so it is easy to lose track of the volume consumed.

Punkfurt refers to the city's creative avant garde scenario, as it is home to many writers, artists and those pursuing unusual life styles, like the proverbial punk rockers. This also accounts for Frankfurt's pulsating popular music scene and night life, testifying to its reputation as a world renowned hot spot, catering both to the young and the young-at-heart.

Nicknames aside, the metropolis of Frankfurt is in fact a cake with many ingredients, each of which can be found in other cities of Germany, but their combination exists only in Frankfurt. This accounts for the many contrasts characterising the city, ranging from its *Gemuetlichkeit* or cosy hospitality normally found only in a village setting to its panorama of breathtaking skyscrapers — still surrounded, astonishingly enough, by a healthy green belt. Culturally speaking, the town prides itself in having been home to Germany's most famous poet, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and more recently, to the renowned social philosopher and critic of post-modernism, Professor Habermas.

On a more mundane level, the city combines an extensive trade fair agenda with Europe's largest and best serviced airport. In terms of its social composition, American soldiers are to be found alongside cosmopolitan yuppies and bankers rubbing shoulders with philosophers.

Encompassing a total space of nearly 23 kilometres and about 800,000 inhabitants, Frankfurt is a mosaic composed of a wide range of peoples including the native Frankfurters. The various ethnic groups and nationalities encompassing Turks, Eastern Europeans, North Africans, South and South East Asians, make up approximately one quarter of the city's population and contribute substantially to the multifarious and exciting cultural and culinary scenarios. There is even a city council of multi-cultural affairs which manages the already extraordinary cultural tableau for which Frankfurt is famous — incredibly rich and varied assembly of museums, art

galleries and auction houses for potential art buyers. The city's huge array of outdoor and indoor entertainment ranges from theatre, concerts, night clubs, cabarets and opera, surprisingly perhaps, jazz clubs. Their presence is explained by the fact that in the early postwar years Frankfurt was the headquarters for the American Army in occupied Germany, particularly the Black American jazz enthusiasts, whose haunts are located primarily on the Kleenex Bockenheimer Strasse, a small street located near Goethestrasse.



Mathildenhoehe is notable amongst other monuments, for an exquisite Russian orthodox chapel

— Degonto

The visitor arriving in Frankfurt by air is confronted with what is probably the most startling contrast of them all, the green with the grey. Prior to touchdown, the plane wings its way through kilometres of thick forest — as the airport itself is smack in the middle of the city forest occupying about 10,000 acres of land and bordering both banks of the Main river. In line with a nationwide pol-

Frankfurt -- the Beauty on Main

by Angela Dietrich

A famous world traveller who once visited Frankfurt in the early eighteenth century wrote in his travel journal about the city's 'festive appearance ... because the eye can discover the way natural and cultural splendour that characterises the city. The entire area gives the feeling of rejoicing in its own existence.'

icy of forest and greenery conservation, which has become the envy of the rest of Europe, even such a prominent urban centre as Frankfurt has reserved a total of one-third of its municipal area for the parks, green

was totally restored. As a result, Frankfurt's city centre has emerged as a successful amalgam of ornate, late nineteenth century traditional sandstone facades, juxtaposed with the new glass and concrete office

meat with sauerkraut or cheese with onion dressing, lives on in restaurants and pubs. A cider pitcher with crossed pine twigs gracing a restaurant door figures as a sign that this drink, termed 'apple wine' in German, is being served in that establishment. These kind of old-world restaurants are particularly prevalent in the city districts of Old Sachsenhausen, Bornheim and Schwanheim.

The trade fairs, for which Frankfurt has rightly become internationally reputed, are open to the enthusiastic shopper. Particularly note-

Frankfurt abounds in festivals and fairs all year round. At the end of November, for instance, there is an international art and antique fair in which collectors and exhibitors from the whole of Germany and its neighbouring countries converge to buy and sell items ranging from genuine antiques to locally and foreign-made art and craft items, many of which are unavailable in normal shops.

On the entertainment front, summer is the best time to enjoy music festivals *à la fresco*. From June to September various venues throughout the city including parks, museums and castles offer open air entertainment. June, too, sees the celebration of the famous Rose Festival sponsored by the city and held every year in the Palmengarten which presents illuminations, concerts and dance music. The strains of classical music intermingle with those of the more lively pop and jazz beats. Other annual summer festivals include the Mainfest which takes place in the first week of August. Amateur sailors try to capsize each other's rafts by pushing long poles against the sides of their boats, providing a hilarious backdrop for the breathtaking fireworks set off in celebration of this unique event.

It would be an understatement to say that the metropolis, despite its urban character, is actually bursting with natural attractions including wood patches and formally landscaped gardens, and dotted with reservoirs and small lakes. It is particularly on the banks of the River Main that one can view couples strolling arm in arm, children playing in one of the numerous play grounds, and old people watching the sun set on benches provided by the municipality.

Whatever your fancy, a trip outside the perimeters of the city is always a welcome change. Extra-tours can be taken by the adventurous, particularly those desiring a better exposure to the delights of art nouveau, renaissance, and classical art and architectural styles. A site worth seeing, and not requiring more than a day trip, is the Mathildenhoehe, a hill harbouring an artist's colony. In the north east of the neighbouring town of Darmstadt. It is notable, amongst other monuments, for an exquisite Russian orthodox chapel complete with gold-painted domes and golden

patches and gardens comprising the 'green lungs' of the city's heavy urban concentration.

During the second World War Frankfurt's Altstadt, its old city, was completely destroyed by the British Royal Air Force. From 1950 to 1960, in accordance with a country-wide program of large-scale restoration and rebuilding, the old city, together with the inner city,

buildings which pervade Frankfurt's financial district.

There is still a place where one can feel the spirit and atmosphere of the old Frankfurt. Sachsenhausen, on the opposite river side from its financial district, features quaint cobblestone streets and Fachwerk paneled houses. The tradition of sweet hard cider consumption, washing down Frankfurter specialties like cured

worthy are the annual book fair held every October and the international automobile exhibition every other year. Since they are amongst the best of their kind globally, these fairs are well worth a visit. Even when these fairs are not being held, there is ample opportunity to explore the city's extensive and clean pedestrian zone, known for its numerous malls, shopping arcades, cafes and bistros.

roof decoration. Another venue well worth a visit is Friedrichshof, the palace of the late English Queen Victoria's eldest daughter. It traces the forest landscape near Frankfurt, the Taunus. The palace is located in Kronberg, a health spa known for its rustic-feudal mixture of narrow allies and nautical residences.

Further south but still within the scope of a day trip is the historic and scenic city of Heidelberg which should be on the agenda of anyone on a stopover tour of Frankfurt. Located eighty kilometres to the south of Klammfurt, only an hour's distance by train or car, this smaller city of approximately 120,000 inhabitants is nestled in the Neckar Valley-known by the name of the river winding its way through the town. Rolling, wooded hills, which also serve as vine yards that produce the grapes utilized in Germany's famous wine production, surround the valley and account for its lyrical, romantic atmosphere. Heidelberg has preserved a markedly medieval atmosphere. Having served as the US headquarters during World War II, it was spared from bombing, and the old town was left intact. This part of the city houses a famous 15th century Schloss or castle, one of the best-preserved examples of its kind in the whole of Europe.

A trip to Frankfurt, then, is a total experience for the visitor. Awe by a twentieth century skyline, the traveller is simultaneously transported into earlier centuries by virtue of the olde-world cobblestone streets and quaint inns offering local or more exotic specialties. Having one's fill of the cultural pleasures of museums, concerts or operas, one can then always duck into a green patch opening up into a fully landscaped garden or even an amusement park having year-round, ultramodern swimming facilities. Having explored the bazaars, flea markets, fairs and shopping areas, one can then embark upon a mini-trip to one of the tourist spots either on the outskirts of Frankfurt or to a nearby town. What more can one ask in the way of contrasts, variety of experiences and insight into the mysteries of past ages and complexities of modern life? All this, and more, is offered by the total experience which is embodied by the 'beauty on the Main.'

Source — Degonto