"I was really surprised," said Peter Zakrzewski, who works for Australia-based Intrepid Travel. "There are a lot of countries that have organised tours and Bangladesh seems to be on the forefront of that but there is not a lot of that here. It's a place that I'd heard a lot about in the news before, and usually places you hear about are places that have a beaten tourist track. Bangladesh, surprisingly, isn't. It's really refreshing to come here, get excited about it, but it's very untapped and real in that sense."

Fortunately, the world's misconception of the country means that people generally have low expectations before coming, and so the result is that they are often pleasantly surprised by something they didn't expect: the kindness of Bangladeshi people. It is inspiring to know that the so-called "poor people" on Earth would possess a culture of infinite small kindnesses.

"This country doesn't have massive stone monuments, but what they do have is a rich and deep culture, and amazing people that open up to you," Peter added. "They're inquisitive but they really give back in a real way. They'll ask about your country and then they'll share everything about their experience. It's more gratifying than seeing any stone monuments that any single person has erected to themselves, it's better to see a country full of people with pride in themselves and pride in their culture and country, and they're willing to take the time to show you that."

Without tourists or tour groups, what could be used to sell the Bangladesh travel experience to a well-travelled audience? For one of my visiting writers, it is that very fact that Bangladesh doesn't try to sell itself -- these touts often outnumber the tourists at India's famous attractions -- and that makes it attractive.

"My biggest impression is that there are actually no tourists here," added UK-based travel writer Jack Barker. "I mean, you've got a country of 140 million plus and probably only a few hundred tourists. It's really refreshing, it means you get here and people are pleased to see you. They're not yet familiar with the ways to relieve you of all your cash, and they're not quite sure who you are or what to do with you. That's quite refreshing."

And what about the floods? Just because a place is full of water, it doesn't become unattractive.

"The river transport has been a joy," said Nick. "I can think that Bangladesh would be a marvelous destination for anybody wanting to travel on waterways. This would be the place people could indulge their watery fantasies of travelling by launch or by the Rocket."

Bangladesh is the kind of place that demands travellers who have a genuine cultural interest and curiosity about Bengali culture.

Jack came to Bangladesh specifically to experience the Rocket.

"I wanted to go on this paddle steamer that's been hammering around the delta for 80 years," he said. "That's much longer than I've been around which is already a long time. I've travelled to quite a few places in my time and Bangladesh, well, I don't know anybody else who has been here and it's very much a new and emerging destination. I wanted to see what it had to offer."

Jack was also an avid photographer. He commented that being able to photograph easily is a bonus in Bangladesh.

"There are places you can go where you point cameras around and taking photographs is actually a fairly intrusive thing," he said. "But in Bangladesh people seem to like it and welcome it. And the reception is really genuine and really welcoming."

Peter presented a warning. Yes, we all want an expansion in the number of visitors coming to Bangladesh, but tourists don't always bring positive influence to the places they visit. If people want the kinds of boozed-out, drug-fuelled beach holidays of Thailand or Goa, then they can simply go there. Bangladesh is the kind of place that demands travellers who have a genuine cultural interest and curiosity about Bengali culture.

"The danger is in the potential is to ruin it," Peter cautioned. "You don't want to flood tourists in here like anywhere else. Right now, there's a niche market of people who have travelled places before and are sick of the tourist track, perhaps people that have been to India a couple of times and are into the history and culture but want to experience a less mainstream destination would come to Bangladesh."

And, naturally, like every country, there are some things that visitors find very hard to get used to in Bangladesh.

During the course of this guidebook work, I've discovered times when it can be really hard going. Certainly, the high points come in the interactions with people you get in this country -- their casual curiosity is fascinating and very rewarding. But by that same token, moments of peaceful