



STORIES OF YOUR HOME

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This region is famous for guavas, more popularly known in Bangladesh as 'Bengal's Apple'. You will find the guava market in Jhalokathi Sadar Upazila and at



Swarupkathi of the district. The south-central region of Bangladesh also has an array of islands, quiet, secluded from the mainland there is Nijhum Dweep

and Hatiya Island among others. Deer roam around the grass of the islands and black and white Pied Avocets feed on the tiny shrimps and crabs that wash up on the shore.

SOUTH BANGLADESH

The longest stretch of unbroken beach has been widely publicised. While many Bangladeshis flock to the beach town of Cox's Bazaar, the city is still charming. The long sandy beaches, hundreds of people, the waft of fish being fried in deep oil, together make this city. You can take a ride through the marine drive, small hills on one side and the Bay of Bengal crashing in on the other. Or you can take a speed boat ride to Moheshkhali Island, visit the Adinath temple, walk up the steps and take in the view of the planted mangroves and the ocean stretching out.

Almost 500 km away from the concrete jungle that is Dhaka and 10 km away from the mainland, across the blue waters of the Bay of Bengal lies the only coral island of Bangladesh - Saint Martin's Island.

This 8-km mass of island is fringed with coconut trees, boasts lush sandy white beaches and a very quiet, almost lethargic, village life. A cruise from Teknaf via Eagle-1, Kutubdia or Keri Sindhbad will bring you to this small island. The Milky Way shines bright and clear in the

night sky as the sun sets on the coral island.

Here you can go for a walk to the Chhera Dweep, a small island a little farther off Saint Martin's Island, indulge in the sweet prawns and the crispy fried Rupchanda fish freshly caught from the bay. The island is an excellent excuse to head out of busy Dhaka and soaks your feet in the crashing blue waves, relax in the sun's beating rays and enjoy the calm tranquillity this place epitomises.

If you have had enough of the sea, head over to the Chittagong Hill Tracts. One of the last places in Bangladesh that still boasts of old-growth forests, the Chittagong Hill tracts are home to the indigenous community of Bangladesh, Chakma, Mro, Marma communities call this place home.

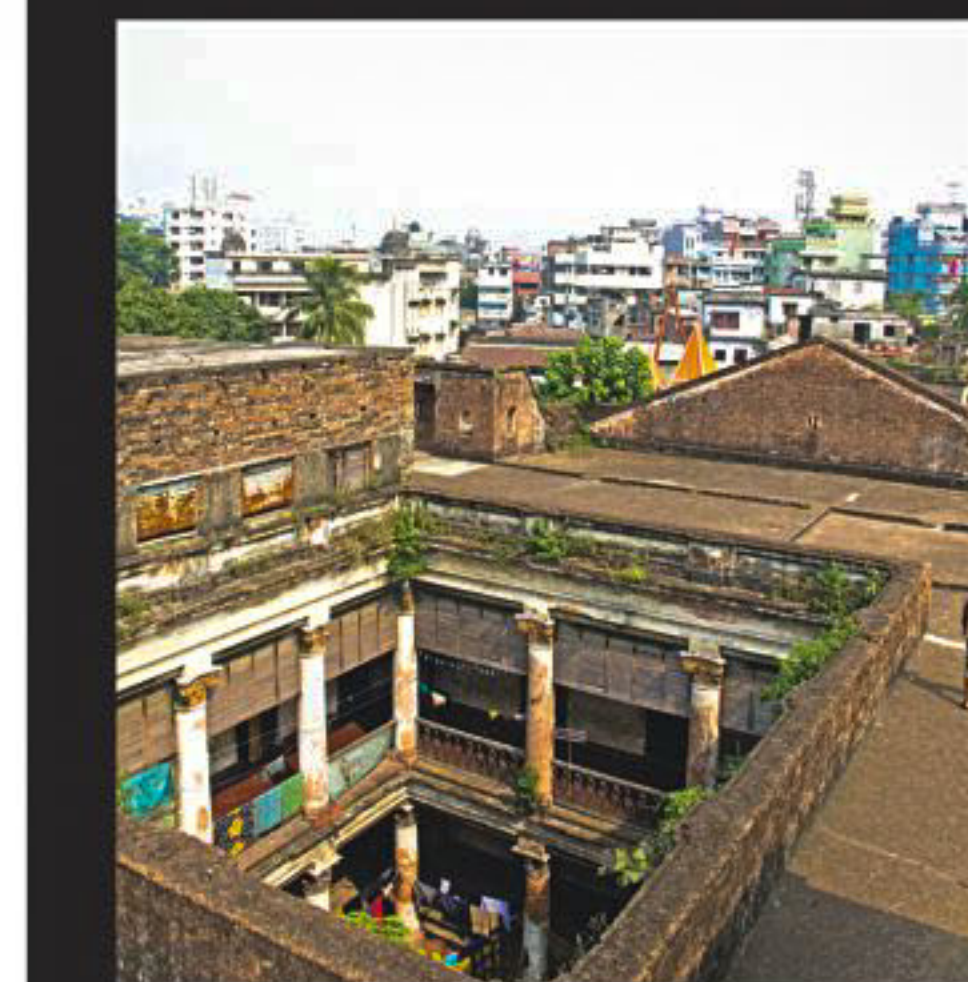
You can go for a trek and scale the highest peak in Bangladesh—Keokradong. Bandarban, Rangamati and Khagrachhari districts make up the Chittagong Hill tracts. You can cruise through Kassalong River, and go sightseeing around Kaptai Lake. Decidedly atypical of Bangladesh, both in topography and culture, this largely Buddhist stronghold is the homeland of the Jumma people. It is a stunning region of hills, ravines and cliffs covered with dense jungles of bamboo, creepers and shrubs, and

dotted with tall, slender waterfalls. "Travelling in other countries is an eye-opening experience but when I travel in my own country I feel a sense of ownership, a sense of belonging, as though all this is mine," says a traveller who just returned from a tour of Myanmar, Vietnam and India. It has more than 50 Islamic monuments which have been found after removing the vegetation that had obscured them from view for many centuries. The site has been recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983 under criteria "as an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble which illustrates a significant stage in human history."

Moving a little farther from Bagerhat towards the south-central coast, we have the city of Barisal. Seeped in history, the backwaters of this district is the one that holds the most allure. Stagnant water, slow pace of the village life and the never ending hues of green give the backwaters its bewitching appeal.

In Barisal you will also find the largest floating guava market in the country. Country boats laden with guavas make their way in and out of the waters of the Kirtipasha creek.

The writer is an online journalist at the Digital Media Section of The Daily Star. She also works in various conservation projects in Bangladesh.



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Tel : + 88 - 031 - 720228, 710610
E-Mail : info@mostafahakim.com, mssalu@yahoo.com

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