

#TRAVEL

Bay One – the first luxury liner to cruise from Chattogram to St. Martin's

On the road by the river, over a bridge right before the approach to the BIWTA jetty no 15, the glimmering lights around the typical silhouette of a ship comes into view. This is the MV Bay One, the first luxury cruise ship of its kind in Bangladesh, the only direct marine vessel to cruise from Chattogram's Karnaphuli River to the Bay of Bengal, and further south into the deep sea, all the way to the coral island of St. Martin's.



Although the entire southern border of Bangladesh is next to the Bay of Bengal, a lot of people never think to go beyond Cox's Bazar, or avoid travelling to St. Martin's Island simply because of the hassle of the multiple stages of time-consuming travel. But what if you could start tasting the sea air and enjoying a vacation on the deep sea a few minutes outside the comfort of a big city like Chattogram?

The Bay One cruise service, offers just that. It docks at the inland water terminal just outside Chattogram airport, and leaves port for its island destination at 10 PM every Thursday, for which passengers have to check in at 9 PM, a perfectly comfortable time to hop off a domestic flight at the airport and get on the cruise ship in a matter of minutes. Once settled in, passengers are in for an experience unparalleled by any other Bangladeshi service.

The ship is multi-storeyed, with more than six floors, with an elongated layout and low roofs instantly reminiscent of the ships and ocean liners shown in films. The friendly staff welcomes passengers and shows them around, to their own booked places as well as the location of the necessities like the wash areas, passages, and of course the restaurant.

The different floors of the ships are called decks, and designated alphabetically. The ship is also equipped to create a memorable experience for a number of different kinds of tourists — those who like their privacy and luxury, those travelling with a number of friends, and those who like the hustle and bustle of a common seating abuzz with merry holiday makers. The accommodation types on offer range from chairs to bunks to beds. The entire ship except the VIP section is open for all to access and roam around throughout the night as the ship sails smoothly over the Bay of Bengal.

There are restaurants and a café on board the ship. The restaurants offer buffet spreads as well as set menus, and the café has various types of *deshi* snacks, fruit juices, coffee and ice cream. The buffet does not have a fixed menu, but includes a variety of items from the local cuisine, pasta and noodle items, as well as some

items of Bangla-Chinese style. There is of course dessert.

"This cruise is a result of Engr M A Rashid's vision, as our MD at Karnafuly Shipbuilders Ltd. He intends to pioneer the cruise ship industry in Bangladesh, and make it equivalent to international standards," said Asif Arafat Islam, Chief Strategy and Business Officer at Karnafuly Shipbuilders Ltd, MV Bay One, and Karnafuly Express.

The ship has a capacity of more than 1200 passengers easily, and accommodations for such numbers as well. The idea is for people to have travel to the tropical island in luxury, enjoy food, live concert, and the ambience throughout the night, culminating in a wonderful experience of a sunrise on a ship in the middle of the Bay.

The cruise times are such that a person can experience the whole 24-hour experience of staying on a ship, but spread out over the whole weekend. While staying on the ship, people can also experience



the sunset and sunrise over the waves, snuggled in the comfort of the cushy couches set up alongside the railings on the outer passageways of the ship.

Once the Bay One reaches St. Martin's, it docks a bit away from the shore for its size, and a dedicated barge takes on the responsibility of ferrying passengers from the ship to the island. The same barge also carries them back time to time, and smaller boats are also available for the same purpose.

The ship's operations and management are done in a very responsible and environment friendly manner, adhering to all guidelines and regulations, informed Asif Arafat Islam.

As head of operations on the ship, Mohammed Anowarul Azim, General Manager of Food and Beverage at Bay One cruise, says they have a crew of about 120 people serving guests numbering between 1000 and 1200. This allows the team to provide good service, keeping in mind all

safety and hygiene protocols, ensuring a good and safe experience for everyone.

After enjoying a fun-filled Friday on the island, where tourists can choose to stay on the island or come back to the ship, it sails for Chattogram at 10 AM on Saturday. This allows tourists to enjoy the full magnificence of the Bay of Bengal's blue waters, crashing waves and lovely sea breeze throughout the seven or more hours, until reaching Chattogram.

Interestingly, the ship is also available for use as an out of the box venue for



destination weddings, corporate events, and any kind of celebrations while it is docked in Chattogram throughout the week, except on the weekend. It is also possible to fully charter the ship for any kind of celebrations, and single day excursions on the Bay of Bengal. Furthermore, there is a special discount offer going on at the moment for International Mother Language Day, for



travel until 21st February, 2022.

The ship's schedule for February is already up on their website, <https://mvbayonecruise.com/> along with all the necessary booking details and seat plans, or call the hotlines 09610849970 or 01870732596. Visit the facebook page www.facebook.com/MVBAYONECruise for further information.

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Photo: Intisab Shahriyar**

