

Top 5 tourist attractions in Mymensingh

From the Brahmaputra River and hand-crafted Nakshikantha to the eponymous Maimansingha Gitika, Mymensingh has a rich history and magnificent heritage. In its more than two centuries of existence as a district, this area has been home to numerous historical figures. With its convenient rail and bus connections to Dhaka, Mymensingh has all the makings of a bustling tourism hub. So, here is a list of places you can visit in Mymensingh on your next trip.

Muktagacha Zamindar Bari

Found right in the middle of the town of Muktagacha, this is a great place to see a site frozen in time. Even though the majority of the buildings are in a deteriorating state, it covers a relatively large area. It is a widely held belief that the zamindar originally came from North Bengal.

From Mymensingh's town hall, you can take an auto-rickshaw or a local bus for Tk 30 and reach Muktagacha in 30 minutes.

Muktagacha monda sweet shop

The most incredible monda, a traditional dessert, can be found in Muktagacha. The original sweet was created by Ram Gopal Pal in 1824, who presented it to Jamindar

Surya Kanta. The current owner, a member of the local Pal family, is the fifth generation to work in the family business, so rest assured the quality of the monda will leave your tastebuds singing!

Birishiri

The hills of Garo and Meghalaya surround Birishiri, and the Someshwari and Kangsho rivers flow through the area. In winter, Birishiri's white sands and shallow blue water provide a picturesque setting among the river's sandstone banks and verdant hills. Birishiri also has friendly Garo people and a rich cultural history.

If you can rent a car in Mymensingh, the drive to Birishiri will take around 2 hours, as you pass through endless greenery along the way.



Alexander Castle

Lohar Kuthi, established by Maharaja Surya Kanta Acharya Chowdhury, is the historical name for Alexander Castle since it was once primarily an iron structure. The whole castle is remarkably raised on a tall pedestal to protect it from the great Brahmaputra River, which flows nearby. Gardens surround the castle, which was formerly flanked by two shattered Greek sculptures. It is presently serving as the Teacher's College library, and eight rooms on the lower-level store around 15,000 books.

Moyna Dip

With its beautiful scenery and the sounds of nature, Moyna Dip is bound to leave people captivated. Calmness encompasses the island as does the Brahmaputra River's crystal-clear waters. The surrounding lemon grove is also a visually and aromatically stunning addition to the landscape. It is said that an anti-British movement activist Moyna Mia formerly lived here and enjoyed spending time playing the flute in the shade of a tree. Riverside communities,

boat rides, and local fauna will provide a gorgeous backdrop to spend your time in this peaceful place.

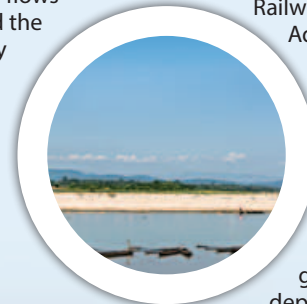
How to get there...

Mymensingh is accessible in numerous ways. It has rail and transport links to Dhaka. Direct trains from Kamalapur Railway Station can take 3-4 hours. Additionally, trains to Jamalpur also travel through this area so you could take one of those as well. The trains include Jamuna, Brahmaputra, Teesta, and Agnibina Express. Buses go from the Mohakhali Station to Mymensingh; the road journey generally takes 4-5 hours, depending on the traffic.

You may take a day trip from Dhaka if you leave first thing in the morning and come back late at night. For those staying more than a day though, the city has plenty of accommodation options. Several well-known hotels in the area include the Hotel Silver Castle, Hotel Le Marian, Hotel Amir International, etc.

By Samayla Mahjabin Koishy

Photo: LS Archive. Sazzad Ibne Sayed



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THUNDER VLOG

Mirza Abidur Rahman's motorcycle chronicles

#TRAVEL

Exploring Bangladesh's rich history

Eliza Binte Elahi's extraordinary story

Eliza Binte Elahi is a woman with many monikers and identities. She is a travel vlogger with over 28,000 followers on Facebook. She is a travelogue writer who contributes to major news outlets in Bangladesh and has also published two books. She is also an educator working as an assistant professor at the University of South East Asia. But more than anything else, she is a traveller who loves to explore Bangladesh and indeed the world to uncover all of its history, indulge in different cultures, and learn about its heritage.

Since her early years, Eliza often found herself gravitating towards anything and everything related to heritage and history. However, this fascination started to slowly manifest itself into a full-blown passion while she was pursuing her degree in English literature.

"I was doing a course on Greek and Roman Literature. Being someone who was naturally drawn towards history, this course had a huge impact on me and I found myself wanting to explore the world and learn all about it. It also motivated me to learn more about the history of my own land," Eliza answered, when asked about what kickstarted her journey.

Travelling, however, is not as easy as it sounds and Eliza's quest saw her having to overcome an array of obstacles. "Obviously, being a woman, getting permission from family for travelling is never easy. Society does not encourage women to travel, and even if you overcome that, there can be housing trouble, transport trouble, and social stigma towards travel attire which do not exactly align with many societies, particularly in Bangladesh districts," she lamented.

These obstacles have not been able to stop Eliza though. She travelled across international borders for the first time in 1999, with Nepal being her first country and since then, she has accumulated 53 countries under her belt. However, the journey is far from over.

"I want to visit all the countries in the world. I love travelling and continue writing books,

making travel documentaries, and creating digital content. I want to continue fuelling my love for it until the day I die," Elizabeth stated. When asked about her most favourite destinations so far, she mentioned the likes of Greece, Morocco, Egypt, Turkiye, Jordan, and Cambodia. She will be embarking on a new journey soon as she hopes to start travelling across Africa later this year.

As impressive as her international travel resume is, it is her adventures across Bangladesh and the change in the tourism landscape she is trying to bring about that really makes Eliza an iconic figure.

Eliza has come a very long way but she regretfully conceded that there is a lot that she still needs to achieve before realising the vision she has for Bangladesh's tourism sector. She provided us with insight into the numerous gaps that exist in our infrastructure, which include information inadequacy, lack of guides or a central travel agency, communication issues to name a few and the urgent need to mitigate these.

However, with that being said, she also shared with us her desire to bring about necessary changes through her work and platform.

"I want to use my platform to inspire and create young entrepreneurs who are invested in the tourism sector. I want to use my platform to empower more women through the tourism industry. Many countries use their tourism industry to bring economic prosperity and I want to help Bangladesh channel all of its untapped potential," she professed, when asked about her future plans.

By Irfan Aziz
Photo: Eliza Binte Elahi



To see the world and travel spontaneously is a pleasure few would resist. And if it is done on a motorcycle, what fun it will be! In recent years, motovlogging has become a very popular form of self-expression. Mirza Abidur Rahman, the creative force behind the YouTube channel THUNDER VLOG, has emerged as an aspiring motovlogger in Bangladesh, taking viewers on mesmerising journeys through his road trips and lens.

In an age where armchair exploration has become the norm, Mirza's travel vlogs stand out, providing immersive travel experiences that make you feel you are right there with him. Mirza Abidur Rahman, whose YouTube channel boasts more than 45,000 subscribers, shares his story with Star Lifestyle — detailing how he started as a motovlogger and where his next destination would be.

Mirza began motovlogging in 2016, capturing stunning visuals with insightful commentary. "I started travel vlogging about eight years ago, but I had a liking for bikes since I was very young.

I grew up watching motorcycle races, particularly MotoGP, and just like everyone else, I have always been fond of travelling. In 2016, I made a motorcycle trip to Cox's Bazar, and this was where the story of my motovlogging started," reminisces Mirza.

He informs us that his primary focus has been to make his vlogs as informative and relevant as possible. "Before making and uploading videos, I try to ensure that their quality is up to the mark. You have to be professional if you want to win the trust of your audience," asserts Mirza.

Mirza's passion for exploration shines through his content, and he has a special penchant for showcasing the beauty of Bangladesh.

His enthusiasm for adventure is reflected in the videos he creates. Whether it is exploring the wilderness of Thanchi in Bandarban, going on a thrilling journey to conquer the Dim Pahar in Ali Kadam, or embarking on a 28-day trip through Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia — Mirza has completed these ventures on a motorcycle, while capturing the essence of each destination.

"The Cliffhanger in Leh Ladakh is considered to be one of the most dangerous passes to cross in the world. But we successfully made a trip to this place and crossed the Cliffhanger in 2022," recalls Mirza with pride.

As Mirza continues to explore, one can only anticipate the wonderful adventures to come on THUNDER VLOG. His journey will be an inspiration for many in Bangladesh to pursue their own passion for exploration.

His success story underscores the possibilities that digital platforms offer to those with a genuine love for travelling. So, what advice would Mirza give to aspiring travellers?

"Please travel! We all have problems in life. Travelling may not eliminate them, but it will offer you a fresh perspective and many good memories to live with," Mirza said, smiling.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Mirza Abidur Rahman





TRAVELLO

Your trusted companion for hassle-free travel

High-quality luggage can last years or even decades and offer reliable service. So, it is important to choose a product that is durable, functional, and improves your travel experience. Travello, a Bangladeshi luggage brand manufactured by RFL, provides luggage designed with durability and functionality in mind, making it suitable for travellers of all kinds.

Packing can often be a headache. From choosing the right outfits to fitting everything into your suitcase — without exceeding weight limits — the struggles are real. With Travello's ultra-lightweight suitcases, you pack without worrying about the weight.

The suitcases are made with Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene (ABS) and Polycarbonate (PC) materials, which make them both sleek and durable. As people nowadays look for both soft-sided and hard-shell luggage, Travello is manufacturing both to cater to growing customers' needs.

Travello's suitcases are designed with your comfort in mind. Ergonomically placed handles and 360-degree dual-wheel casters make navigation through crowded terminals a breeze! No one wants luggage that falls apart after a few trips. Travello's luggage is built to withstand the rigours of travel, ensuring your investment lasts for years.

To make your journey more relaxed and



stress-free, Travello has introduced TSA combination locks. You can travel with peace of mind, knowing that your belongings are secured with a TSA-approved lock and double-layer anti-

theft zippers.

One of the biggest challenges in packing is optimising space. Travello's designs aim to maximise packing capacity. Hence, say goodbye to the stress of fitting everything in! Options are available for different preferences, including size and style.

Travello offers different sizes of

suitcases in the City, Luxury, Luxury Plus, and Royal categories to suit your travel needs. You get to choose from suitcases — measuring 20, 24, and 28 inches — having different shades of colours — red, blue, and black, which can be used as a regular suitcase or a carry-on.

Truly, each piece of Travello luggage tells a story through its intricate patterns and vibrant colours. This fusion of fashion and innovation will impress fashion-conscious travellers, who seek both functionality and style.

And no matter whether you are travelling to a faraway country or taking a trip nearby, you do not have to worry about water spillage ruining the suitcase as every Travello luggage is built with water-resistant material.

What sets Travello luggage apart is the meticulous approach to selecting materials and ensuring durability. The luggage is subjected to rigorous testing, making it capable of withstanding even the most demanding journeys.

So, when it comes to choosing luggage that is both functional and fashionable, Travello ticks all the boxes for zealous travellers!

While manufactured in Bangladesh, Travello has expanded its reach beyond the borders of our country, namely India, Germany, and Canada. The presence of Travello suitcases in international markets speaks volumes of its quality and demand.

In a world where travelling has become a way of life, luggage is no longer just a practical necessity — it is a reflection of style and convenience. Travello luggage seamlessly incorporates both of these features while providing travellers with a pleasant travel experience.

From the heavy trunks of the past to the sleek and high-tech wonders of today, the luggage industry has come a long way. Travello's cutting-edge suitcase designs combine style and functionality to create luggage that truly makes your journey more enjoyable.

Recognising the multifaceted needs of modern travellers and professionals, Travello is proud to introduce a new dimension to its offerings: backpacks and laptop bags. This strategic expansion aligns with Travello's mission to provide a holistic and all-encompassing solution for every aspect of your journey and daily life.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Travello



When going for outings, one essential necessity to carry with us every time is a good snack because you never know when hunger strikes! While the perfect snack needs to be delicious, it must also be travel-friendly. Packaged snacks with a long shelf life and that can endure unfavourable weather conditions should be the right way to go about it.



Healthy and delicious All Time Family Cake for your outings!

All Time Family Cake is the perfect snack solution here! It is tasty, delicious, and healthy, all at the same time. Apart from the large packet, it is also available as single serve cake that costs Tk 30 only. You can easily carry it in your bag, slip it in your pocket, or stuff it with other travel necessities and eat whenever you feel like it.

While going on a vacation can be fun, it may also be rushed with last-moment packing, last-minute changes in decisions, and getting done with all the preparation that goes into it. At times like these, we often tend to neglect our health or even carry sufficient food. You can simply set your woes aside by carrying All Time Family Cake.

Whether you are waiting in the train station or bus station waiting for your ride to arrive, All Time Family Cake gives you the option to avoid unhealthy snacks such as fried food and go for a healthier option, through its strong chain of availability of this flagship product under the trusted house of All Time. Not only that, if you are travelling to areas that are far away and remote, carrying this with you will not let hunger ruin your adventures.

The melt-in-your-mouth texture of this cake and the delicious aroma along with the delectable taste will remind you of a homemade cake, baked with most wholesome ingredients and automated latest technology. While All Time Family Cake tastes great as it is, you can also pair it with other food for better taste, like dipping in tea or milk.



All Time Family Cake does not have to be a snack only to be carried and consumed during waiting time, it can be a great item in your outings too, such as in gatherings with friends and family, or be the perfect addition to your picnic basket. Being ready to eat and serve makes it very versatile to make it a part of every occasion.

If you want to test your cooking skills, you can easily pull off some beginner recipes with All Time Family Cake. It makes a great base for a trifle where you can layer other ingredients on top such as custard and cream. It can also make for a great peanut butter and jam sandwich – just

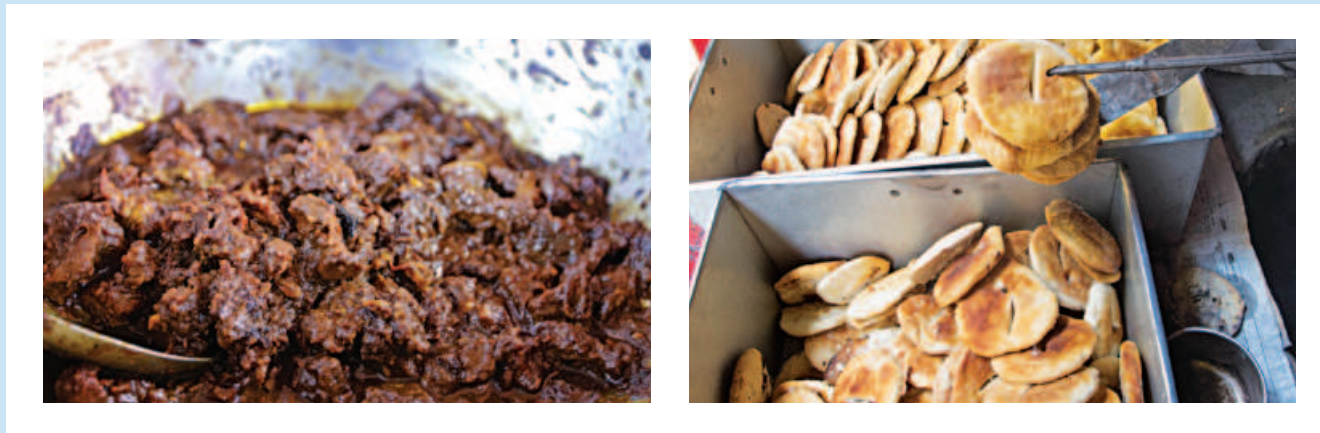
swap your regular bread for the cake. Some chocolate spread smothered smoothly with sprinkles on top can make for little and easy snacks or desserts. Or, just pair it with fruits for a delicious and refreshing taste.

All Time Family Cake is an all-in-one package; apart from being healthy and delicious, it is also easy to carry and can be used to prepare other simple desserts. This cake is also available in chocolate, mixed fruit, ghee, and orange flavours under the house of All Time.

By Fariha Amber
Photo: All Time



With its rich history and culture, most places in Bangladesh offer something of interest. Not only is there plenty to see, but also there's plenty to taste. Here is a short list (and in no way comprehensive) of places you can travel while treating your palate.



TASTE THE BEST OF BANGLADESH

Must-try dishes and destinations



RAJSHAHI

There are a number of tourist spots in Rajshahi like Choto Sona Masjid, Darasbari Masjid, Bagha Masjid, and Varendra Research Museum. Some are located in the centre while others are scattered around the city or its outskirts. Rajshahi is historically rich and local cuisine is not far behind either.

The best time to visit Rajshahi is in the summer when the mangoes are ready to harvest. Do you want Himsagar? Of the fabled Langra? How about Fazlee? Ask and you shall receive.

Another delicacy of Rajshahi is the kalai ruti, which is found in Chapainawabganj. Kalai ruti with beef is quite the dish but if you try it with smashed aubergine, you will remember it for the rest of your life. There are also mango pickles, bot parota, and one may

try kachagolla from Natore which is not far from the city.

KHULNA

The Sixty Dome Mosque at Bagerhat can be quite the spectacle. If you prefer natural beauty, Padmabeel of Bhutia, Hiran Point, and Putney Island are waiting for you. One may go to Khulna by train, which itself can be a fun experience with the clickety-clack and the constant swaying.

All these jaunts are bound to make you hungry, and Khulna will not disappoint. The signature dish of this region is chuijhal gost. Chuijhal is a spice that comes from a vine-like plant and parts of the stem, roots, and even the skin may be used for cooking. It adds a noticeable boost to the dish, one that you will certainly remember.

Chuknagar's Abbas Hotel is well known for their chuijhal mutton. Kamrul Hotel at Zero Point is another chuijhal destination for the travellers. Apart from chuijhal dishes, there are a number of other options that are memorable. For example, chingri bharta or mashed shrimp, malaikari, and hilsa head with mung beans can be a treat for those who prefer savoury dishes. And the locally produced date molasses will appease the sweet tooth for sure.

CHATTOGRAM

Travelling to Chattogram can be tricky to plan because there are so many great places to visit. Just gazing at the sea while sitting on the beach could be the highlight of your travel if you want it to be. From Patenga Beach to Khoiyachora Waterfall or Chandranath Temple, it's a place that takes your breath away.





Whichever your destination is, just do not forget to try mezban, which is an old tradition of Chattogram.

All parts of beef are used in this dish. In essence, mezban is a feast which is held on occasions such as birth anniversary, marriage, or death anniversary. So, if you want true authentic mezban, you will have to accept (or ask for) an invitation to any event in Chattogram.

However, travellers may try 'Mezzan Haile Aiyun,' a restaurant where this traditional dish is available. There's also kala bhuna which has become quite popular all over the country lately. The combination of kala bhuna with khichuri is something to look forward to, especially if it's a rainy day. There's also akhni, an iteration of tehari that is popular in this region. And of course, shutki or dried fish.

SYLHET

There are multiple waterfalls and vegetation you can visit. Ratargul Swamp Forest is a freshwater swamp forest and can be one of your destinations. Jaflong, Bisanakandi, Sadapathor and Shapla Bill will appease your eyes. There are also numerous tea gardens, lakes, and the city itself; all of them can be your stoppage.

Now off to the question of cuisine. Beef satkora is arguably the most popular dish in this region. Satkora is a citrus fruit that is used in the curry. Mutton can be cooked with satkora as well. The flavour of it really makes sure that you know the difference between the regular curry and this particular dish. One should also try 'duck with bamboo shoots', which is a mildly spicy curry with a refreshing taste on the tongue. And of course, if you are in Sylhet, do not forget tea. If nothing else, at least keep the seven-layer tea on your list.

BARISHAL

Barishal can be a busy tour. There's Kuakata sea beach where you can just idly sit by watching the tides. Or take a walk through the Jhau forest. For historical interest, one may visit any of the numerous Zamindar baris. The floating guava market on Kirtipasha Canal is a spectacle.

The place is bustling and offers a lasting experience.

Nothing here is as famous as the Hilsa fish. We Bengalis sure love our share of the delectable fish and Barishal is the place to

be for Hilsa. 'Shorshe Ilish' in Barishal is

truly something to treat your tastebuds. The colours alone are vibrant with the mustard paste adding characters to it. One can only imagine the soothing caress of the tastebuds at the bite of 'shorshe ilish'.

Coconut shrimp is another dish of Barishal that is quite appealing. There's also a pitha you may try called Shirgoja. It is fried and sweet to taste. The cake is quite common in the greater Barishal region.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Mymensingh comes to mind because there are tourist spots like Shoshi Lodge, a number of Zamindar baris, Botanical Garden, and Moyna Island. Mymensingh is famous for Muktagachar monda, a traditional sweet that is not perhaps much to look at but it sure makes up for it with its originality and taste.

Old Dhaka should always make any list that speaks about food. Old Dhaka itself is a place to be roamed. It's not only historical, it also offers you an experience that only old Dhaka can offer. As for food, bakharkhani and kachchi biriyani are two of the most famous items in the country. There are also different kinds of kebabs and iconic beverages like Beauty Lassi.

Old Dhaka's restaurants are quite busy at midnight, as is Mawa Ghat, which can be another destination to try out shrimp, freshly fried hilsa, and fried aubergine; all of which taste great with warm rice.

As mentioned at the beginning, this list is not comprehensive because Bangladesh is culturally rich. Of course, there are many other places you can visit in the country and a hundred other dishes you can try, but taste is subjective and may change from person to person. What are your picks for memorable dishes in Bangladesh?



By Ashif Ahmed Rudro
Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed



#INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL VLOGGERS

Several foreign travel vloggers have visited our country, entertaining Bangladeshis and the rest of the world with their videos on our food, culture, sights and sounds, and people. Their vlogs never fail to create a buzz on YouTube and social media. In the spirit of World Tourism Day tomorrow, we decided to speak to three such vloggers — Mark Wiens, Doug Barnard, and Brent Timm — to find out their experiences and thoughts on tourism in Bangladesh.

Star **LIFE** Style

THE BANGLADESH EXPERIENCE

3 global travel vloggers reveal their stories

They have bragworthy numbers of subscribers and followers; they have those staggering numbers of likes and views — now, for their insights...

TRAVELLING THROUGH BANGLADESH: MEMORIES AND HIGHLIGHTS

First of all, if you watch their videos, you would become pleasantly surprised by the extent of their journeys. From rural escapades to bustling areas, our three vloggers covered quite a lot of Bangladesh.

To illustrate, when Doug Barnard came to our country, he attended two weddings, took the steamer to Barishal, and celebrated Valentine's Day and the spring festival at Dhaka University, among other things.

One of his favourites was a trip to Bandarban. "When people think of Bangladesh, they picture crowds and a very busy and hectic place. Many foreigners don't know about the serenity that exists here," he expressed.

Meanwhile, Brent Timm went to a premiere of Barbie, visited a garment factory, haggled in local markets, hiked through Lawachara National Park, and much more.

He also spent an Eid in our country, which is a memory he cherishes. Another is watching a cricket match in Sylhet. "I had never seen a cricket match live before. The excitement was just insane. It was crazy — the experience, the energy!" he exclaimed.

On the other hand, Mark Wiens is a food vlogger travelling around the world. In Bangladesh, his taste buds were surely hard at work — with street food, the bhortas, kachchi biriyani, mezbani beef, and so on.

If he had to pick just one as his favourite, he informed that it would be hilsa curry with mustard oil (perhaps referring to shorshe ilish).

THE BUMPS ALONG THE WAY: ANY CHALLENGES OR FEEDBACK?

"You could always say the traffic!" Mark laughed out loud.

An eerily similar answer came from Brent; it was even that same laughter!

Also, stating that change and progress take time, he shared, "I really wanted to go to the Sundarbans and Sajek. It seemed very difficult to get information to go to those places and to find easy transportation."

He admitted that even as a seasoned

traveller, he had to struggle.

Doug too pointed out about the lack of tourism infrastructure.

PUTTING BANGLADESH ON THE TOURISM MAP

"I think Bangladesh has a big tourism potential," Doug continued. "For now, it may mostly appeal to those who want real, authentic, unfiltered, travel experience; which, in my experience, is the best kind of travel."

"There's a ton of potential to promote ecotourism. Before I went there, I really didn't know much about Bandarban and Sundarban and all these places. If you look at Bangladesh on a map, it's a fairly small country. I was amazed by the diversity of the different areas."

Meanwhile, Mark, the gastronomic

traveller, he had to struggle. did a quick image search on the internet, based off some of the first few results.

FOREIGN VLOGGERS AND THE LOCALS

The final point, which would be grossly unfair to miss out, is the experience of these vloggers with the people.

You must have seen at least one or two of these travel videos. An underlying theme is that the vlogger simply walks down the road, gets greeted by countless people, sometimes asking for selfies or to have a quick chat.

Seeing these videos, one may claim that, generally speaking, Bangladeshi locals are excited and indeed really curious around foreigners, that also with a camera.

All the three vloggers we spoke to were very passionate and positive about it.

"I was very surprised by the kindness of the local people. I was greeted with a tremendous amount of love and compassion. So many people would offer to help me," Brent reflected.

But wasn't it overwhelming at some point? Well, possibly; but the vloggers seem to take it in good spirit.

"I like travelling to places that are more interactive," Doug answered. "For me, travelling is not just about sightseeing: I travel to meet people. I really try to dive deep into culture, and Bangladesh is perfect for that."

And hence, with great food, great people, and diversity of places, Bangladesh had been an amazing experience for them all.

The concluding remark of Mark Wiens — when asked about his favourite memory from our country — would summarise the people experience and to a great extent the Bangladesh experience at large.

Guided by a local friend, when he went to a home at a village, he was astonished to see the huge number of delicacies served: "Yes, I was there to film. But even if we didn't have the cameras, they would have treated us the same way. It wasn't a show for the cameras. It was the gracious hospitality that made them do this."

By M H Haider
Photo: Mark Wiens; Doug Barnard; Brent Timm

Special thanks to Mark Wiens, Doug Barnard, and Brent Timm for sharing their valuable insights. Check out their videos on YouTube/follow them on social media as they travel across the world.

Bangladeshi food is not as well-represented as some other cuisines. So it's harder to learn about Bangladeshi cuisine when you're not in Bangladesh

globetrotter (who lives in Thailand) had tried out a couple of Bangladeshi restaurants in Bangkok. He loved the food there, but visiting our country elevated the whole impression.

"The food was spectacular," he opined. "But, I think still in comparison to some other cuisines, Bangladeshi food is not as well-represented as some other cuisines. So it's harder to learn about Bangladeshi cuisine when you're not in Bangladesh."

Putting our food "very high" on the culinary map, he elaborated, "It should be one of the world's great cuisines. It is very unique: the use of mustard oil in many dishes is so evident, and also, the bhortas are amazing."

And as for Brent, he said that the "real Bangladesh" lies in the tea gardens, paddy fields, and all the beautiful places and people. For him, it is not just about Dhaka, the traffic and the like, which, many might get the impression if they



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#INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

A mother-daughter Euro adventure!

I believe the most beautiful thing in the world is the world itself. I am in love with places I have never been to. The wanderlust in me has grown stronger as the years passed by. The best of my childhood memories are the ones where we travelled to the unknown.

My favourite days of the year are when I travel. I passionately and meticulously plan every detail of all our trips — the destinations, hotels, flights, activities — you name it. In fact, planning is half the fun!

So, this year, my husband could not join us due to work commitments. My daughter Samara and I decided to embark on a mother-daughter Euro trip; something we have never done before.

The thought of being solely responsible for my 9-year-old for almost three weeks in a bunch of unknown non-English speaking countries was a bit daunting. However, a voice inside my head whispered; If I missed this opportunity this would be a lifetime regret. We packed our bags and off we went, away from everything and everyone else, experiencing new cultures and immersing ourselves in some incredible landscapes.

I have always liked the quaint towns/villages in Europe rather than the big bustling cities. Places you can marvel at.

Hallstatt is one such place. It is an alpine village in Austria that is mega cute. It is more than 7,000 years old. After a 3-hour scenic train ride from Vienna, we finally reached Hallstatt. It felt like we walked right into a Disney movie, lined with colourful gingerbread houses.

The whole village was dreamy,

unreal... just like a fairy tale! Usually, people visit Hallstatt for a day trip, but as we wanted to soak in all the magic of Hallstatt, we decided to stay there for two days.

Our hotel was right on the lake, Samara and I enjoyed our hot Milo and morning coffee on our balcony at the crack of dawn before heading out to explore the nooks and crannies of Hallstatt while the place still slept.

The historical town square is really tiny and super cute. Think colourful houses, waterfalls, small cafés, and a picturesque little square with a statue of the Holy Trinity in the centre of the plaza — everything right out of a storybook.

From Hallstatt, we drove south to Lake Bled, the most beautiful lake in Slovenia. Nestled in the foothills of the Julian Alps, Lake Bled is an enchanting place with emerald green waters. In the middle of the lake is an island church.

Our girl trip was totally girly; we got dressed together, coordinated outfits, my 9-year-old would give me fashion advice on what's cool and what's not! My mini-BFF and we listened to each other's favourite music, gorged on hotel breakfast, went bicycling, took the Pletna (the traditional boat) around the lake and soaked in the beauty of Lake Bled, loaded up on gelato and pasta and took tonnes of photos.

Our next destination was Romania. Since my childhood, I have always

been intrigued by the thought of Transylvania; it felt like an eerie make-believe place full of mysterious castles, as well as the legends and the myths of the bloodthirsty Dracula.

Samara loved visiting Bran Castle — the home of the infamous Count Dracula, she was as intrigued as I was as a child. And I marvelled at the stunning Peles Castle — the most beautiful castle in Romania — and Romania has plenty of castles.

Bucharest is a beautiful city with lots of stunning architecture, a testament to their glorious past. While roaming around the charming Old Town of Bucharest, which I found to be quite a labyrinth of cobblestone streets, we stumbled upon Cărturești Carusel — the most Instagramable bookstore in Romania, a renovated Art Nouveau building, dating back to 1903.

It's amazing to see how children evolve every year, how they become a little more themselves. We, as parents influence them in more ways than we are aware of.

Young children are innately curious; my daughter grew up so much, so fast on that trip. From a demure 9-year-old, she transformed into this confident, uninhibited girl.

I involved her in everything, how to search and book flights, hotels, calling a cab, which restaurants to pick, the sightseeing part, and everything you do to reach the airport until you board the flight. And this curious little human

absorbed everything fast. She became more independent, organised, aware, and tolerant than she's ever been. Travelling works wonders for kids.

Next, we flew to Malta, another place that's been on my radar for quite some time. Most of the island of Malta is formed by limestones, with rather steep coastlines against the luminous blue waters.

The Mediterranean gem is an interesting amalgamation of the East and West. This medieval island has a strong Greek and Roman influence along with Arabs, French, and British.

The Upper Barakka and the Lower Barakka Gardens, the narrow alleys with colourful balconies — Valetta is a charming little place that one could cover in a day. Here, I saw one of the most beautiful cathedrals of my life, St John's Co-Cathedral. This baroque cathedral was a dazzling display of gold, ornate architecture, and wondrous art.

The next few days, we travelled to Budapest, Bratislava, and Vienna. It was a whirlwind of amazing places one after the other.

Bratislava was just for a day trip for us, and Vienna and Budapest are two of my favourite European cities that I will never get tired of.

Truth be told, it was not all smooth sailing. Between missed trains and sold-out flights, I soon realised there's a thin line between an adventure and a disaster and it's often overlapping! There were hiccups and mishaps and a whole lot of improvisation. In retrospect would I change any of it? Not one bit.

By Adiba Hussain
Photo: Adiba Hussain



Solo travel: Journey to self-discovery and empowerment



Gone are the days when vacations were solely a family fair; seasoned travellers now advocate wholeheartedly for the benefits of travelling solo. As the number of people holidaying alone increases every year, we cannot help but wonder, if there may be more to the positives of solo travelling than what meets the eye. One of the most compelling perks of travelling solo is that one is able to curate the trip however they want without having to comply with the wishes or needs of another.





Danny Amin, a businessman by profession and a nomad at heart, has now travelled to a number of countries, across various continents. Among his most notable expeditions lie London, Paris, Barcelona, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Istanbul, Kenya, and Malaysia.

"I like to explore the nooks and crannies of places and I frequent locations that are loved by locals; tourist destinations rarely attract me. This may not be everyone's cup of tea, so I usually find myself travelling solo," he confides.

Travelling solo can also be a great way to meet kindred spirits. Chatting with locals can make you more sociable and give you a chance to immerse yourself in a new language and culture.

"I bump into like-minded solo travellers all the time," shares Amin. "It's how I have befriended quite a few of them across the globe!"

One big reason travellers increasingly opt to holiday alone is to get away from the overstimulation of daily life. The entire world is connected through the Internet and this very connectivity can sometimes feel heavy. Travelling alone gives us a chance to slow down and simply be with ourselves. The fact that it is in an entirely new setting can work wonders for those with low self-confidence too. It serves to push you out of your comfort zone and teach you a thing or two about troubleshooting your way out of tricky situations alone.

Maliha, a Bangladeshi solo traveller who has visited a hundred countries and counting expresses, "Solo travelling is one of the most empowering things one can do. Having travelled to about 60 or 70 countries solo, I have a sense of independence that I could have never experienced had I not pushed myself to test my limits."

Perhaps, the most fun way to promote self-growth and discovery, and develop resilience, travelling alone gives one the rare chance for introspection and something akin to self-fulfilment in the long run.

Maliha feels that travelling alone can make one realise just how much power they have. In a world that constantly dictates what one can and cannot do, solo travelling is an act of defiance that helps one find their true potential.

To conclude in Danny's words, "Embrace the journey, for it's not about where you're going; it's about who you're becoming."

By Munira Fidai
Photo: S Yemelin
Model: Mayeasha





Introducing the MG GT: Bangladesh's next staple sedan

A nation moving upwards deserves a car that symbolises and personifies it. The MG GT, also known as the MG 5 in many global markets, is here to do exactly that. For generations, MG has been producing some of the fastest and meanest vehicles in the world. From its earliest days, their cars have been designed to conquer race tracks all over Britain and now, they have translated that racing DNA into a beast fit for everyday usage. The MG GT comes in two variations, the CVT and DCT, both designed to deliver peak performance in the most unforgiving conditions and make you look stylish while doing so.

The MG GT might be classified as a sedan but it reflects every ounce of MG's sporting heritage in all of its glory. Boasting a futuristic outlook, it comes packed with a 1.5L turbo engine capable of producing a maximum torque of 150/4500 RPM (in CVT) and 250/3000-4000 RPM (in the DCT). What all that translates to is you will never be left without power at any point in your drive. It is tailored to perfection for anyone who loves to drive with 17" alloy wheels and has been designed in a way that overcomes every possible barrier or obstacles you might face on the road. The MG GT has three different driving modes — ECO, Normal, and Sport — so you can choose how much fun you want to have with it.



It's not all about looks and performance though. MG wants the GT to become the next staple and has left no stones unturned to ensure that it is an ideal fit for any household. It is packed with safety features such as airbags, automatic locking doors which activate as soon as the vehicle starts moving and 3-point seatbelts in both the front and back. It also has some amazing entertainment options such as a 6-speaker entertainment system with 3D sound effect (only in the DCT) and a 10" multi-function colour touch screen with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. Not just that, but it has an extremely cool and convenient feature in the form of audio controls on the steering wheel which allows you to toggle your playlist with ease while driving.

What's even more amazing is the price point of both vehicles. The CVT is priced at Tk 36 lakhs and DCT at Tk 39 lakhs, making them the best possible option in its price segment. The MG GT also comes in 4 exciting colours for you to choose from. Each vehicle also comes with a 5-year warranty (or 100,000 km mileage, whichever comes first) and also 6 free services. A 10/10 on looks, performance and everything in between.

Truly a vehicle in a league of its own at a very reasonable price point.

By Irfan Aziz
Photo: MG



Exploring the growing tourism ties between Bangladesh and the Philippines

The booming interest in exploring the Philippines is not just a trend amongst Bangladeshis, but a significant testament to the diversified tourism opportunities offered by this archipelago. Today, we delve into the intricacies and opportunities of bilateral tourism and explore the enchanting facets of the Filipino archipelago in a candid conversation with the ambassador of the Philippines in Bangladesh, His Excellency Leo Tito L Ausan, Jr.

“The Philippines and Bangladesh are both tropical countries. What unique experiences can Bangladeshis find in the Philippines that they cannot find at home?”

While both the Philippines and Bangladesh are tropical countries and are surrounded by bodies of water, apart from the climate, the similarities end there, except maybe for traffic in our respective capitals.

Bangladeshi tourists can enjoy a range of outdoor and water-based/beach activities, including diving and snorkelling, hiking, and camping, among others; some are just a few hours’ drive from the country’s capital. Our islands, particularly Palawan, and beaches such as Boracay and El Nido, are always among the top-ranked in the world.

There are also certain surfing spots that are becoming alternative destinations to Bali’s more popular surfing beaches.

For non-outdoorsy tourists, the Philippines, particularly its capital, Manila, is home to museums, each one offering a unique experience as they showcase the country’s rich history and culture; a romantic sunset cruise by Manila Bay; interactive and other indoor activities; and a shopping haven, to name a few.

In the Philippines, there is basically something for everyone: its rich history showcased in museums, its architecture,



culture, and arts in its heritage, and the outdoors (island hopping, beach and surfing destinations, hiking, and spelunking) make for a one-of-a-kind experience that will truly be memorable for tourists.

“Can you recommend a dish that you think would resonate particularly well with the Bangladeshi palate?”

I think our classic adobo and kare-kare, which differ in how they are prepared depending on where you are in the Philippines, are delicious and will resonate with the Bangladeshi palate.

“If you could describe the ideal ‘experience’ for a Bangladeshi tourist in three words, what would they be?”

Fun. Food. Friendship.

“What, in your opinion, would be a ‘hidden gem’ of an experience in the Philippines that Bangladeshis might not

typically consider but should?”

I don’t think we can say that there is just one hidden gem; there are several, and I believe there are more that have yet to be discovered.

While we are known for our beaches, which we, of course, take pride in, hiking at sunrise in Mt Pulag in the north of Luzon, swimming in the clear, turquoise water of Kawasan Falls in the province of Cebu in the Visayas, or camping in Kaputian Beach in Davao in Mindanao are just some of the “hidden gems” that are lesser-known activities that can be done in the Philippines.

Bangladeshi tourists who prefer the “road less travelled,” so to speak, can consider these lesser-known gems for a truly unique Philippine experience.

“What collaborations or projects between Bangladesh and the Philippines

are currently in the pipeline to boost bilateral tourism?”

Discussions among concerned stakeholders in both the Philippines and Bangladesh are currently ongoing to operationalise the existing Air Services Agreement. Once operational, this can facilitate direct flights between Manila and Dhaka, boosting tourism and bilateral trade and investments between our two countries.

For those eager to book their next holiday, Pinoy Travels, led by CEO Anisuzzaman, stands as the only authorised agency assigned by the Philippine Embassy. They are working closely with Philippine Tourism to make your dream vacation come true.

**By K Tanzeel Zaman
Photo: Collected**



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#CHECK IT OUT

How to accessorise your bedroom if you are an avid traveller

Have you travelled to different destinations around the world? If yes, you are probably always eager to bring something from those locations into your home. Imagine looking at your beach pictures of Bali or the textured rugs of Morocco in your bedroom. Whatever the case is, these travel-inspired bedroom design ideas are sure to make your space feel just as amazing as your adventures!

Adding souvenirs, which you have collected on your travels, may be a lovely way to enhance the beauty of your bedroom. You can get a shelf in your bedroom and adorn it with colourful books from various cultures in different languages. You can also buy a minimal wooden bedside table to store your foreign trinkets or jewellery pieces. In addition to sprucing up your room, this will make you feel like you are back on an exciting journey because when you purchase souvenirs in a foreign country, you get something really special that no one else will have!

You might want to put your adventures on display all throughout your bedroom by framing your favourite images and placing them up on walls or bedside tables. Make a statement with a gallery wall of framed photographs by hanging frames of various sizes on the wall above your study table. You could even combine your photographs with other mementoes from your trip,



such as postcards, airline tickets, and maps to construct one massive work of art. This may go on top of your dresser or beside your mirror. To cheer up your mornings while you get ready, this is ideal!

Moreover, incorporating a lovely antique globe map in your bedroom is a great way to get travel ideas and keep a record of where you have visited. You might also frame maps of the areas you

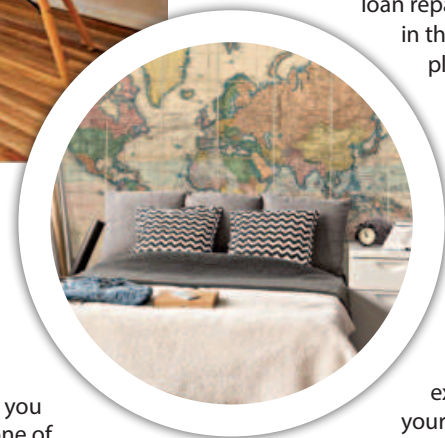
consider to be "home" or your favourite travel destinations! This is a classy and everlasting option for bedroom décor. In fact, scratch maps are also great decorations. When you return from a vacation, one of the best parts is scratching out the

nations you visited on these maps. You will be astounded at how much you have seen over time, and use that knowledge to plan your next journey!

Now, to match your bedroom with your soul for travelling will require you to get some top-notch furniture, which will complement the aura of your bedroom and only set the tone better for all the foreign accessories you possess. These furniture will require money. Putting the purchase of the furniture, which will help you highlight your travel, on EMI (equal monthly payment) may greatly reduce your stress. EMIs, or

interest-only payments, are a kind of loan repayment made monthly in the same amount. EMI plans may help you spread the cost of furniture or home decor purchases across many payments. So, by opting for EMI plans, you can enjoy the elegance and nostalgia of your travels without excessively hampering your wallet!

By Samayla Mahjabin Koishy



অফারটি হ্যাটিল-এর নির্দিষ্ট মডেলের বেড, সোফা ও ডেস্কনিং-এর জন্য প্রযোজ্য

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