



Mystic
Majuli





Majuli

Nestled in the heart of the mighty Brahmaputra, Majuli is the world's largest inhabited river island. While the main channel of the Brahmaputra flows along its southern side, the Kherkatiya channel forms its northern boundary. Acclaimed by UNESCO as one of the wonders of the world, Majuli is a "unique geographical occurrence" with "abodes of rich flora and fauna unique to

this region." Given its rich cultural and ethno-anthropological richness, the Government of India has recommended to UNESCO to declare it as a World Heritage Site. Created by the Brahmaputra – the river that is said to be the son of Brahma, the god of creation – the island's area keeps fluctuating due to the bank-erosion caused by the mighty river. Once measuring 1256 sq kms, the island now has an area of about 800 sq kms.



History- The Vaishnavite culture

With Srimanta Sankaradeva, the great 16th-century saint-reformer of Assam establishing the satra – Vaishnavite monasteries – here, Majuli has become the epicentre of Assamese music, literature, culture and dance forms. Each satra – there are about 30 of them after several had to shift to the mainland due to river-bank erosion – is like a university by itself, imparting general education



as well as cultural and spiritual knowledge and skills to hundreds of monks who have dedicated their lives to these unique institutions. Each satra, headed by a learned scholar, is also a living museum that preserves and propagates the centuries-old art forms alongside spiritualism and bhakti in the manner Srimanta Sankardeva had set rolling.



Biodiversity

Located in the heart of the Brahmaputra, Majuli is a bio-diversity hotspot and ecological landscape. Full of wetlands, Majuli is home to 95 resident bird species and 18 winter migratory bird species, and has been declared as an Important Bird Area (IBA). The people are very possessive of the numerous stork colonies located within the human habitations, while migratory birds find Majuli one of the safest places on earth. It also has a number of reptile species including several snake, lizard and turtle species, while the list of mammals include Gangetic dolphins, fishing cat, jungle cat and civet cat, and of course occasional visits by the great one-horned rhino and herds of elephants from Kaziranga National Park which is not very far away.



Festivals celebrated

Majuli is Assam's own heritage island that is full of colourful festivals. Raas-leela, the three-day festival held in the satra premises during mid-November to celebrate the legendary love of Radha and Krishna, is the biggest attraction.

The colourful Mising community celebrates Ali-Aye-Ligang in February-March to mark the sowing of seeds with dance, songs and music. Tourists can stay in a typical bamboo platform house in the Mising villages to enjoy this festival.

Majuli Festival: It is a state-run festival to showcase the overall culture of the island, with visitors not only enjoying the dance and music of Majuli, but also the various ethnic cuisines. Tourists can also carry home various kinds of handloom and handicraft products, apart from taking back in their hearts the deep warmth and soothing music of the island people.

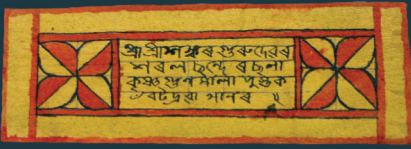


The People and Culture

A walk through the villages of Majuli is highly recommended to savour the warmth of the simple colourful people of this heritage island that can also be called Nature's Silent Paradise. While those people associated with the Vaishnavite satra institutions are experts in various kinds of handloom and handicrafts, the villages inhabited by the Mising tribal people are like living anthropological museums. Assam's only riverine tribal community, they sing the finest songs and dance the most vibrant dances to the accompaniment of the pempa, siphung and gunggang. While a section of the islanders are expert boat-makers, some others are wonderful artisans like wood-carvings, masks and various musical instruments. The Hira potters of Majuli belong to the pre-wheel age.

While the satras are living museums of art, culture, music, dance, theatre and handicrafts, the satriya dance forms have found place alongside other classical dance forms of the country. The bhawona plays – most of which were written by the 16th-century saint-reformer Srimanta Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva – are some of the few plays that are still performed across the globe for over five centuries.





How to reach

Majuli, the world's largest inhabited river island, is located in the heart of the mighty Brahmaputra. About 320 kms from Guwahati, it is most easily accessible from Jorhat. While a bus or taxi ride from Jorhat town to Nimatighat – from where one has to board a ferry – is about 45 minutes, the journey across the river generally takes about 90 minutes. One can also reach Majuli from Lakhimpur on the north bank of the river.

BY AIR: Majuli's nearest airport is Rowrah (Jorhat), which is well-connected to Kolkata and Guwahati. One can also fly from any city of India to Guwahati or Dibrugarh for onward journey to Majuli.

BY RAIL: While Mariani (10 kms from Jorhat) is the main railhead, one can also catch the Jansatabdi Express from Guwahati to directly reach Jorhat.

BY ROAD: One can catch a bus from Guwahati/Dibrugarh to Jorhat, and then a 45-minute drive to Nimatighat to cross the river.

THE FERRY RIDE: The last lap of the journey to Majuli – crossing the mighty river by ferry vessels – is the most exciting. While the ferry vessels leave Nimatighat from different points in Majuli at hourly intervals, one can enjoy a 90-minute ride feel the vastness of the Red River by watching it, listening to its majestic flow, or just looking at the horizon where the river meets the sky. One can also see numerous species of birds on the way. Remember, it is an international river that comes from Tibet (China), flows through India and then meets the Bay of Bengal through Bangladesh.

LOCAL TRANSPORT: Majuli has local taxis and a few buses to travel around, while bicycles too are available on hire.

Best time to visit: October to March is the best time to visit Majuli. Most of the festivals take place during these months.

PLACES TO STAY: While Majuli has a government Circuit House and a Tourist Lodge, visitors can also stay in guest houses of satra institutions (Vaishnavite monasteries) have. The island also has a number of private guest houses. The satra guest houses are strictly vegetarian, but one can get close to the unique life that the inmates of the satras – gosains and bhakats – and even take part in the daily prayers.

FOR INFORMATION: Contact Director of Tourism, Govt of Assam, Guwahati. Phone 0361-2547102. Fax: 0361-2542748.

Assistant Tourist Information Officer, Tourist Information Centre, Kamalabari, Majuli. Contact No- 84867-70913

PUBLISHED BY:

Directorate of Tourism, Govt. of Assam Station Road, Guwahati 781001, Assam, India

Phone: +91-361- 2547102 / 2542748, Fax: +91-361-2547102

Email: directortourism1@gmail.com, Website: www.directortourism.assam.gov.in

Designed By: Exclusive Advertising Pvt. Ltd

Printed at: Aurora Fine Arts, Guwahati-21