

BANGLADESH AT A GLANCE

POPULATION: 159,453,001 (July 2019 est.)

LANGUAGES: Bengali (Bangla), some English

PREDOMINANT RELIGIONS: Islam, Hinduism

TIME ZONE: Ten hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time (New York City)

TELEPHONE CODES: 880, country code; 2, Dhaka city code; 31, Chittagong city code

A visit to Bangladesh offers the opportunity to see a resilient people untouched by mass tourism and unconquered by nature. Averaging at least 78 inches of rainfall per year, Bangladesh is a lush country with mangrove swamps, biodiverse forests and verdant tea estates. Most of the country is made up of low plains, cut by three rivers: the Padma (Ganges), the Jamuna (Brahmaputra) and the Meghna. These great waterways combine to form the largest delta in the world. Constant flooding makes the delta region highly fertile. The eastern part of the country is hilly, with a few peaks rising more than 3,000 feet above sea level.

Nearly every year, Bangladesh, one of the most densely populated countries in the world, is afflicted with catastrophes. Famine and disease visit the land, but flooding is what makes Bangladesh one of the most disaster-prone places on Earth. Storm clouds and hurricanes travel up the Bay of Bengal, hit the Himalayas along the nation's northern border, and stop, pouring water on the land. When the rains come, villagers head for large concrete platforms scattered throughout the coastal areas to wait out the high waters. When the flooding recedes, villagers sometimes find that the local river has changed its course; for example, it now flows around their bridge and



through the center of town. Coping with such changes has become a way of life.

COMPASSION IN BANGLADESH

Compassion's ministry in Bangladesh began in June 2003. Today, more than 37,000 children are served by more than 170 Compassion-assisted child development centers throughout the country. Compassion's church-based child development centers are places of hope for impoverished children in Bangladesh. Under the guidance of competent, caring adults, children's pressing needs for nutrition and medical attention are met. Children also receive tutoring to help with their academics. Health and hygiene lessons teach them to care for their own physical well-being, and positive social skills are modeled and encouraged.

WEATHER

The driest and coolest season is October through March; otherwise, it's almost always hot and humid in Bangladesh. The "cool" season technically runs from mid-November through February (temperatures actually drop below 50 degrees F at night during December and January). The monsoon season

runs from mid-June through October — temperatures are cooler then, but humidity remains high. And while it doesn't rain all the time during the monsoon season, flooding does make overland travel difficult.

CURRENCY

The Bangladeshi *taka* (BDT) is further divided into 100 *paisa*. Bangladesh is behind much of the world when it comes to banking. Don't count on credit cards. It is a good idea to bring U.S. dollars to change into local currency while in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet. Only banks like Standard Chartered and HSBC in the biggest cities change cash. Most banks outside the big cities won't exchange money at all. But don't change more money than you think you'll spend. You can only reconvert up to 500 BDT (about U.S. \$6) or 25% of the total converted, whichever is less.

FOOD

Most of the fare in Bangladesh is similar to Indian food. Local dishes are relatively inexpensive, even in fairly good restaurants. Most hot, freshly cooked food should be safe, but peel fresh fruit and raw vegetables before eating, choose meat that is cooked thoroughly, avoid local dairy products, and assume the water is unsafe (stick with prepackaged or boiled drinks).



SHOPPING

Shop for jute products, embroidery, pottery, silk, pink pearls, shells, inlay woodwork, silver filigree, folk dolls, bamboo products, terracotta toys, muslin (a coarse cotton fabric), brassware and copperware. If you're looking for unusual souvenirs, consider "rickshaw art" — the surrealistic hand-painted strips of metal that decorate the backs of rickshaws.

ELECTRICAL CURRENT

In-country voltage is 220V-240V (U.S. and Canada are 110V-120V), and primary plug and outlet types are A, C, D, G and K. (For up-to-date plug and outlet information, check whatplug.info and click on your destination country.) In Bangladesh you will most likely need a universal travel plug adaptor, available in the luggage/travel sections of most big-box stores.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- **Do** be prepared for *hartals* (protests). These strikes are common, and everything shuts down during them, including public transportation. Hartals are usually announced in local newspapers several days before they occur.
- **Don't** use the thumbs-up sign to show approval. It's a vulgar insult in Bangladesh and other parts of Asia.
- **Don't** be surprised if you draw a crowd of onlookers while doing the simplest of things. Bangladeshis do not share the Western concept of personal space, nor do they regard stares as rude. Although it may be disconcerting to you, the practice is harmless, and just shows that many people, especially in rural areas, don't have much contact with foreigners.
- **Don't** wear shoes into a mosque, and don't be surprised that many mosques forbid women to enter.
- **Do** ask before you take photographs of people, particularly women.

DRESS

Women: Modest, loose-fitting tops (nothing form-fitting) are recommended; sleeveless tops are acceptable, but please cover your shoulders in places of worship; pants, capris, longer skirts and loose-fitting, casual dresses are recommended for women.

Men: Button shirts and polo shirts are recommended. T-shirts are allowed in casual settings. Long, non-denim pants are recommended for center visits and church services.

Both: Shorts are highly discouraged outside of beachside locations. A light jacket is recommended for cool evenings or rainy days.

Shoes: Closed-toe shoes are recommended during the day due to potential unsanitary or uneven terrain.

GENERAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS

Avoid proximity to street demonstrations, which occur frequently in Bangladesh and can turn violent. Petty crime occurs in major cities — be aware of your surroundings and take care with your belongings.

Leave at home all unnecessary credit cards, Social Security card, library cards and similar items you may routinely carry in your wallet. Carry items in front pockets, not back pockets. Do not display large sums of money in public; make visible only the amount of money that approximates your purchase. Never leave items with cash in them (purse, wallet, backpack, etc.) on a bus, car or any other location. Stay alert and be cautious at all times. Don't take safety and security for granted.

U.S. EMBASSY INFORMATION

Website: bd.usembassy.gov

General Phone: (880) (2) 5566-2000

Emergency Phone: Dial main number, press “0” and ask to speak to the Duty Officer.

Email: DhakaACS@state.gov

Address: Madani Avenue, Baridhara, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh

We strongly advise you to contact the CDC (www.cdc.gov) or check with your personal physician for more information about your specific health needs while traveling, including any recommendations for immunizations.

*All information taken from the World Factbook and
Compassion International.*

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

The official language of Bangladesh is Bangla (also known as Bengali). The country's secondary language is English. Some common Bangla greetings include:

Welcome.	ShAgatom
My name is ...	AmAr nAM
How are you?	Kemon Achho?
Thank you	DhonnobAd