

Floating Markets – The Marvels of Asia

Experiencing different cultures in all their diversity is one of the most fascinating aspects of exploring Asia. What all tourists ought to see there are local wondrous floating markets.

Asia is a proper traveler's dream. What many visitors tend to miss out during their stay are local bewitching floating markets. Some open so early in the morning not many travelers have the energy to open their eyes and get out of bed.

Floating markets are using intricate systems of canals. These – often artificial – waterways present a crucial part of local infrastructure, so the markets themselves are held in high esteem luring hundreds of merchants who offer their home-made or home-grown produce.



The markets are mainly found in Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam. They feature long tail boats and wooden boats with a motor and have a long stick as a rudder. In Thailand and Vietnam, there is one such market in every city, large or small.

Among the well-known markets is the **Srinagar** floating market in India. It was during the British occupation of India that the British commissioned lavish house boats in Dal Lake of Srinagar. These houseboats, eventually started trade and transformed into a full-fledged floating market.

Every day from 5 to 7 AM a number of houseboats come together on the lake. They are buyers and sellers of vegetables of all kinds. They come with their canoes all made of wood, enlivened by some floral design. These belong to the sellers of goods, ready to haggle down to the last of their wares, ending with a handshake and a quick exchange of money. The minutes pass, and gradually piles of vegetables fill the empty vessels of buyers who are mostly dealers who resell everything in their shops in the city.



There are also shops offering biscuits and sweets, perhaps accompanied by a cup of tea with saffron and cardamom, typical of Kashmir, prepared on the spot in a corner on a stove in the tiny boat. All sellers and buyers seem accustomed to the stares of the curious, as well as the intrusion of the cameras, and most of them do not seem to disdain posing some shots. A visit to this market will guarantee you a thrilling cultural experience as well as a breathtaking sight of the lake filled with lotuses.

Visitors of Indonesia should explore the **Banjarmasin** floating market. Banjarmasin is the largest city in Kalimantan island of Indonesia. There are no tourists here, so no small backpacker hotel, no terrace to linger in the afternoon with coffee and a book.



There is still something to do in the city: go to the floating market. For this you must get up early. The market starts at five o'clock. At sunrise you can see some boats in front of you, one or two would catch you too, and suddenly you would be in the midst of a group of fifty boats selling lemons, mangoes, sweet potatoes, bananas, salads etc.

A floating market must make a part of every traveler's itinerary. Their uniqueness is one of its own kind and unmatched with any other experience that one might come across on a trip to Asia.

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