2019 VARANASI
3 Days · Post-Cruise/Tour Extension

**DAY CITY TOUR DESCRIPTION**

Day 1 Kolkata Disembark and fly from Kolkata to Varanasi (with a brief stop en route), one of the seven holy cities in the Hindu faith.

Varanasi The faithful believe that dying in Varanasi breaks the cycle of rebirth and frees the soul, and every good deed done here confers special blessings on the doer. It draws an unending stream of Hindu pilgrims, who lend the city a special flavor. A panoramic tour shows you some of the highlights of the city. As befits a city legendary for its place in Hinduism, temples abound. Vishwanath Temple, dedicated to Shiva and built in 1776, has pinnacles sheathed in gold. Whitemarble Tulsi Manas, erected in the 1960s, stands amid lovely gardens; ocher-stained Durga Temple, sacred to the goddess Durga, is sometimes called the monkey temple because of the many monkeys frolicking on the premises. But perhaps the most famous sights of all are the ghats, the broad steps that offer access to the sacred Ganges. Here the faithful come to wash away their sins in the river and to cremate their dead.

FEATURED EXCURSION: Aarti ceremony
You can experience one of Varanasi’s most famous religious observances after you check in to your luxurious hotel. You’ll take a private boat out onto the water just as the sun sets and remain afloat for a marvelous view of an Aarti ceremony. This ritual, an offering to the goddess of the Ganges, takes place every evening on the banks of the river. Hindu priests light heavy brass oil lamps and perform a set of highly stylized and choreographed movements to an accompaniment of meditative chants. Though thousands may gather to watch this ceremony, reverent quiet prevails among the spectators, so the ringing of bells and the sounding of horns carries clearly over the water as flame, smoke and incense drift through the air.

Day 2 Varanasi

FEATURED EXCURSION: Sunrise on the Ganges
Experience a magical moment on Mother Ganga at morning’s first light. Step aboard a rowboat and drift quietly along the serene water as the sun rises, listening to the call of birds and the soft splash of the paddle as it dips into the river. All along the ghats, the faithful bathe in the river, murmur prayers and perform private Aartis. As daylight brightens, more people gather on the ghats, washing clothes, practicing yoga, eating breakfast—gradually the pace of daily life picks up, and the sacred merges into the mundane, showing you how closely the two are linked by the holy river.

OPTIONAL EXCURSION: Silk workshop visit
One of the world’s great silk-weaving traditions has flourished in Varanasi for more than 500 years, ever since Mughal rulers first encountered the development of the craft in the 15th century. Varanasi artisans still use traditional Mughal motifs as they weave featherlight silk scarves and lustrous brocades. It can take as long as six months for an artisan to weave the six meters of fabric required for the finest sari, which is often embroidered with gold or silver threads and embellished with beading; brides in particular seek out these gorgeous and unique—and costly—sari fabrics. Discover a range of lush and colorful silks as you visit a silk workshop, where the clack of the Jacquard loom keeps alive a craft handed down from generation to generation, and learn a little about the traditional processes used to create these work of art.

You’ll return to the hotel for breakfast and then have time to explore a little on your own, before transferring to the airport for your flight to New Delhi.

Day 3 New Delhi
Check into your luxury hotel for your last night in India.

You’ll check out of your hotel and transfer to the New Delhi Airport. Though your Indian adventure has ended, the memories will last you a lifetime.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Itinerary and hotels subject to change. Visit Uniworld.com for the latest information.