

Journey Idea

The Heart of Spiritual India

11 Days



Painting of Indian Lady

Prepared for
Steppes Travel Clients

QUICK REFERENCE ITINERARY

Day 1	Fly UK/Chennai
Day 2	Chennai
Day 3	Chennai/Kanchipuram
Day 4	Kanchipuram/Mahabalipuram/Kanchipuram
Day 5	Kanchipuram/Chennai
Day 6	Chennai/Varanasi
Day 7	Varanasi
Day 8	Varanasi/Delhi
Day 9	Delhi/Haridwar
Day 10	Haridwar
Day 11	Haridwar/Delhi/UK

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DETAILED TRIP ITINERARY

Day 1

UK/Chennai



Depart the UK on a flight to Chennai, a flight time of approximately 10 hours, flying through the day. Please note British Airways do not operate this flight daily.

You will be met upon arrival by the Steppes Travel representative at the airport and transferred to your hotel. All transfers are private (unless stated otherwise) and included in your trip, however it will not detail every transfer on this itinerary.

On arrival you will be transferred to your hotel. Your hotel room will be available for immediate occupancy.

Overnight at the Taj Connemara Hotel in Chennai in a superior room on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 2

Chennai



This morning after breakfast your guide will meet you at your hotel for your half day city tour of Chennai. You will visit Fort St. George, built in 1640 A.D by the British East India Company, under the direct supervision of Francis Day and Andrew Cogon. The fort houses St. Mary's Church. The flag-staff at Fort St. George is the tallest in India. Then visit Kapaleshawara temple - a fine example of Dravidian style architecture dedicated to Lord Shiva.

Lastly visit the Government Museum, a multi-purpose Museum which is located in Egmore, and is spread over an area of 16.25 acres. The six independent buildings in this museum campus are home to 46 galleries.

Overnight at the Taj Connemara Hotel in Chennai in a superior room on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 3

Kanchipuram



After the breakfast you will be driven to Kanchipuram which is an hour's drive. On arrival check in at GRT Residency hotel.

This ultra-modern hotel located in Kanchipuram is bursting with sophistication. GRT Regency features 35 well-equipped contemporary style rooms complete with amenities and in-room facilities that are pleasant and relaxing.

After arrival you will be taken by your guide on a city tour of Kanchipuram. This small town is known for its thriving handloom industry. The weavers of Kanchi settled here more than 400 years ago and have given it an enviable reputation as the producers of the best silk and cotton sarees in the country. Woven from pure mulberry silk, these sarees woven in dazzling colours are embellished with fine gold thread (zari) and are available in every imaginable design and variety. Visit the local handloom centre and see the live demonstration by the local weavers.

In the evening witness the Aarti ceremony at the famous Ekambaraswara Temple.

Overnight at the GRT Regency in Kanchipuram in a superior room on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 4

Kanchipuram/Mahabalipuram/Kanchipuram



This morning after breakfast, you will be driven 1 ½ hrs to visit Mahabalipuram for sightseeing of the Cave monuments.

This group of sanctuaries, founded by the Pallava kings, was carved out of rock along the Coromandel Coast in the 7th and 8th centuries. Also visit the Shore Temple, built during the reign of the Pallava King Rajasimha (700 - 728 AD). As its name suggests, the Shore Temple overlooks the Bay of Bengal (Mamallapuram was the port city of Kanchipuram, the Pallava capital). Its location, so near the sea, has resulted in considerable erosion of the temple's superstructure.



You will be driven back to Kanchipuram for overnight.

Overnight at the GRT Regency in Kanchipuram in a superior room on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 5

Kanchipuram/Chennai

After breakfast, you will be driven back to Chennai.

The rest of the day is at leisure to explore.

Overnight at the Taj Connemara Hotel in Chennai in a superior room on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 6

Chennai/Varanasi

This morning you will be transferred to Chennai Airport to board your flight to Varanasi via Delhi.



Depart Chennai	at 0720 hrs	by SG 312
Arrive Delhi	at 1010 hrs	

Depart Delhi	at 1410 hrs	by SG 114
Arrive Varanasi	at 1545 hrs	

Upon arrival you will be met in the arrivals area and driven to your hotel.

The Gateway Hotel, Ganges Varanasi is set amidst 40 acres of lush green gardens, just 21 kms (45 mins drive) from the airport. Taj Ganges is a veritable haven of peace and tranquility in this crowded and ancient temple city. The hotel is 6 kms away from the city centre of Varanasi also commonly known as The Chowk. The hotel is constructed in the holy Swastik shape (The Swastika is an ancient symbol which re-presents good fortune and blessing).



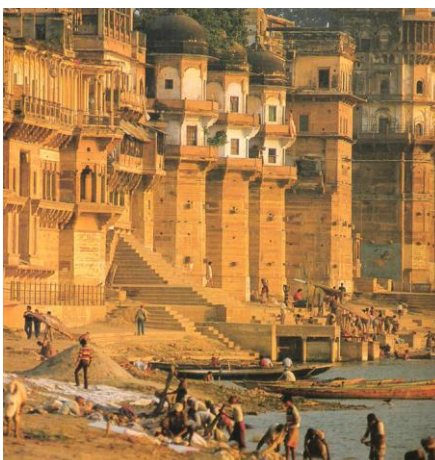
Varanasi, also known as Kashi and Benares, is situated on the north bank of Ganga in the state of Uttar Pradesh in North India. It is one of the oldest living cities of the world with its history dating back to about 3500 hundred years. Varanasi is supposed to be the oldest living city in the world and is epi-centre of Hinduism and Indian culture.

In the evening you will visit the Ganges to witness Aarti (prayer) ceremony. You are taken on a boat on the river from where you can watch masses come to the *Ghats* to offer prayers and float tiny oil lamps on the river.

Overnight at The Gateway Hotel Ganges in Varanasi in an executive room on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 7

Varanasi



Rise early morning today and you will be transferred to Ghats to enjoy a boat ride on the River Ganges. At sunrise the river is centre of many activities. Enjoy this unique experience from your boat and it is said that sunrise on the river in Varanasi is one of the most magical experiences.

After breakfast, your guide will take you on a city tour of Varanasi which includes a visit to some important temples like the Bharat Mata Mandir and the Durga Temple. Take a walk down Vishwanath ji Ki Galli - the ancient alley which is home to some beautiful temples. Here you will find shops that sell every conceivable thing required in a temple. Also visit the Chudi Wali Galli (The Street of Bangles) where bangles of every hue, shape and size are sold.

This afternoon you will visit Sarnath (closed on Monday), the Buddha proclaimed the law of faith. It was here that he taught the keys aspects of Buddhism, the four noble truths, the eightfold path and the middle way philosophy. The Buddha encouraged followers to avoid extremes of austerity or pleasure. The remains of monasteries dating from the third century B.C.E. to the first century C.E. indicate a thriving monastic community.

Overnight at The Gateway Hotel Ganges in Varanasi in an executive room on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 8

Varanasi/Delhi

After breakfast, you will be transferred to the airport to board your flight to Delhi.

Depart Varanasi	at 1340 hrs	by IT 336
Arrive Delhi	at 1500 hrs	

Upon arrival in Delhi you will be met and transferred to Casa Friends hotel for check in.

This luxurious guesthouse is located on a shady avenue in the ever popular Defence Colony. Brilliantly located, Defence Colony is 45 minutes from the airport and just minutes away from the lively shopping malls and boutiques of South Extension and the very chic Khan Market. The colony has a very popular market of its



Day 9

own which boasts several renowned restaurants, shops and galleries. Casa Friends is painted pure white with a Mediterranean facade and large shaded windows in every one of its two suites and five luxury double bedrooms. All the rooms are sumptuously decorated with deep armchairs, comfortable double beds and plush carpets. The house is filled with works of art by contemporary Indian artists. The ground floor of the villa is dominated by a double lounge and a separate dining room all of which open onto a charming paved garden equipped with an outdoor bbq and bar.

The rest of the evening is free to relax.

Overnight at the Casa Friends hotel in Delhi in a luxury room on a bed & breakfast basis.

Delhi/Haridwar

This morning you will be transferred to the railway station to board your train to Haridwar departing at 0650 hrs and arriving at 1125 hrs.

On arrival you are met and assisted at arrival and transferred to the hotel.



The Haveli Hari Ganga is situated on the banks of the river Ganga a mere 300 metres walk through the bazaar from the sacred "Har Ki Pauri" at Haridwar. It stands at the gateway to the Devbhoomi - The abode of Gods and the "Chardham Yatra". The Haveli originally built 90 years ago, is an architectural marvel, where the ancient structure has been restored to blend the old world charm with modern day hospitality. The interior is interestingly reminiscent of old mythological times.

Haridwar or 'The Gateway to the Gods' is one of the seven holiest places according to Hindu mythology, as the Gods are believed to have left their footprints in Haridwar. It is located on the foothills of Shivaliks and is adorned with scenic beauty together with indelible mythology.

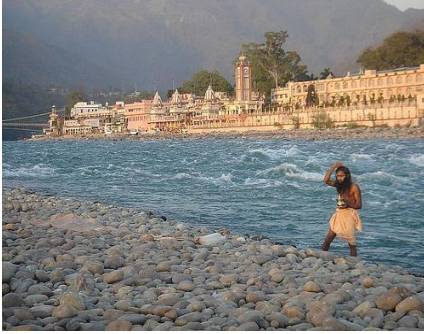
The evening is free to roam around in the markets of Haridwar and to witness the Aarti at the bank of the holy river Ganges.

Overnight at the Haveli Hari Ganga in Haridwar in a standard room on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 10

Haridwar

Today you will visit the fascinating town of Rishikesh and together with your guide you will enjoy this spiritual birthplace of Yoga, Meditation and Ayurveda. Located in the lap of lower Himalayas, Rishikesh is surrounded by scenic beauty of the hills on three sides with Holy Ganga flowing through it. The town is sacred to Hindu pilgrims and is often referred to as the 'Yoga Capital of the World'. Back in the 1960s, Rishikesh gained instant fame as the place where the Beatles came to stay with their guru, the Ma harishi Mahesh Yogi.



After your tour of the town, you will walk down to the bathing ghats for the evening prayer ceremony, “aarti”. In Hindu homes and temples, the “aarti” ceremony, performed at twilight, is one of the most important parts of the day. The lighting of a lamp, as the sun is setting, is supposed to ensure the presence of the god of light and fire in the house. Amid singing and chanting of devotional songs and hymns, the devotees line up along the bank of the river and float lit “diyas” in the Holy Ganga. The sight of the flickering flames of thousands of “diyas” on the river is beautiful.

Overnight at the Haveli Hari Ganga in Haridwar in a standard room on a bed & breakfast basis.

Days 11

Haridwar/Delhi/UK

The day is at leisure, later you will be transferred to railway station to board your train to Delhi, departing at 1813 hrs and arriving at 2245 hrs.

On arrival you will be transferred to the International Airport to board your home bound flight departing the early hours of Day 12 (based on BA departures).

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TRIP PRICE

In each location there is a variety of different category of hotels, lodges and guest houses, therefore the price below is a guide only.

Price from £1,650 per person, based on two sharing

The rates quoted are subject to the availability of all services, currency fluctuations, written confirmation and Steppes Travels terms and conditions.

The price includes internal flights, local transport, airport-hotel transfers and tours, accommodation (twin/double with private facilities where available) and board. Accommodation is on a bed and breakfast basis, unless staying in a remote lodge when normally this will be on a full board basis.

The price excludes international flights, extra local excursions and guided tours, travel insurance, visas, single supplements (if applicable) and items of a personal nature, such as laundry, drinks, etc.

Please note that the above is only a suggested journey, allowing in-depth visits to the highlights of the country and the chance to explore the wide range of possibilities this fascinating country has to offer. We have a separate list of escorted tours and specialise in tailoring individual itineraries to your particular interests and requirements. This journey idea serves more as a general guide on what there is to see and do, as well as a guide on price.

Why Travel with Steppes?

Steppes Travel was founded in 1989 with the objective of creating a travel company where service and knowledge are of the highest priority. We aim to design itineraries and include the highlights of any country, whilst taking travellers off the beaten track to see lesser known, interesting places not frequented by large numbers of tourists. We offer individuals the ability to travel safely in remote areas, with the knowledge that we have travelled there before.

Financial Protection

Steppes Travel is a fully bonded tour operator that complies with the Civil Aviation Authority bonding conditions of the UK. This fully guarantees your money in the unlikely event of us going out of business before you start your holiday. Our ATOL number is 6945 and we have full insurance to cover the financial failure of an airline. In addition, all accommodation-only bookings (such as hotels, lodges and boats) which are not covered by the ATOL regulations are financially protected with all payments being held in a separate trust account until the date of departure. This is in accordance with the Package Travel Regulations Act 1992.

Specialist Knowledge

We demand and employ only a very high calibre of staff. All of our specialists have a wealth of travel experience and have travelled, and continue to travel, extensively throughout their regions of specialisation. You can therefore rely on their first hand knowledge and expertise. Some have been with us for more than ten years. They will tell you about those intimate, friendly hotels and introduce you to our charismatic guides - those little extra qualities that make your holiday both unique and special.

A Tailor-made Journey

After an initial discussion with you, one of our specialists will create a unique itinerary for your trip, designed around your own interests, preferred style of accommodation and the pace at which you like to travel. This will be fine tuned until you are completely satisfied with it. Throughout this whole process, you will be dealt with by the same specialist and you are welcome to call them at any time.

24 hour Emergency Service

We have an emergency service so that we can be contacted 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Recognition

More than 65% of our business is achieved through recommendations, referrals and repeat bookings. This, for us, is the highest endorsement we could have. In addition, our 20 years of experience in this specialist travel sector confirms our expertise.

Please contact the Steppes East team on 01285 651010 or visit our website www.steppestravel.co.uk for further information.

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