

V A R A N A S I

"Older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend, And looks twice as old as all of them put together " - Mark Twain

Varanasi, the holy city of India, is also known by the name of Kashi and Benaras. Kashi, the city of Moksha for Hindus since centuries, is known for its fine-quality silks, 'paan' and Benares Hindu University and Avimukta of the ancient days, Varanasi is the most popular pilgrimage point for the Hindus. One of the seven holiest cities, Varanasi city is also one the Shakti Peethas and one of the twelve Jyotir Linga sites in India. In Hinduism it is believed that those who die and are cremated here get an instant gateway to liberation from the cycle of births and re-births. Varanasi is the oldest city of the world. Varanasi is more than 3000 years old and is famous as the city of temples. The Ganga Ghats (river front) are the most popular pilgrimage spot of Varanasi and are centers of music and learning. Since time immemorial Varanasi is a great center of learning and today houses 5 universities . The holy city has been a symbol of spiritualism, philosophy and mysticism for thousands of years and has produced great saints and personalities like Guatama Buddha, Mahavira, Kabir, Tulsi Das, Shankaracharaya, Ramanuja and Patanjali.

How to reach Varanasi

Varanasi is a easily reachable city by all means and well connected by all the cities through airplane, train and road.

By Train: It is the easiest means to reach Varanasi from any city such as Delhi, Lucknow, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, etc. Almost all the trains of Northern Eastern Railway (NER) pass through Mughal Sarai Junction that is just 17 kilometers from the school. However Varanasi Cantt itself is a huge station and almost all major trains pass through Varanasi Cantt.

By Air: The city has an International Airport (situated 15 kilometers from the school) which makes travelling by plane very convenient. Air India, Indigo, Jet Airways , Vistara and SpiceJet connect Varanasi to all major cities from India .



Varanasi is often referred to as "the city of temples", "the holy city of India", "the religious capital of India", "the city of lights", "the city of learning", and "the oldest living city on earth."

The name Varanasi originates from the names of the two rivers: Varuna, still flowing in Varanasi, and Asi, a small stream near Assi Ghat.

Hindus believe that one who is graced to die on the land of Varanasi would attain salvation and freedom from the cycle of birth and re-birth. Abode of Lord Shiva and Parvati, the origins of Varanasi are yet unknown. Ganges in Varanasi is believed to have the power to wash away the sins of mortals.

Knowledge, philosophy, culture, devotion to Gods, Indian art and craft have all flourished here for centuries. Also a pilgrimage place for Jains, Varanasi is believed to be the birthplace of Parsvanath, the twenty-third Tirthankar.

Vaishnavism and Shaivism have co-existed in Varanasi harmoniously. Mrs. Annie Besant chose Varanasi as the home for her 'Theosophical Society' and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, to institute 'Benares Hindu University, the largest University in Asia. Ayurveda is said to be originated at Varanasi and is believed to be the basis of modern medical sciences such as Plastic surgery, Cataract and Calculus operations. Maharshi Patanjali, the preceptor of Ayurveda and Yoga, was also affiliated with Varanasi, the holy city. Varanasi is also famous for its trade and commerce, especially for the finest silks and gold and silver brocades, since the early days.

Varanasi has also been a great center of learning for ages. Varanasi is associated with promotion of spiritualism, mysticism, Sanskrit, yoga and Hindi language and honored authors such as the ever-famous novelist Prem Chand and Tulsi Das, the famous saint-poet who wrote Ram Charit Manas. Aply called as the cultural capital of India, Varanasi has provided the right platform for all cultural activities to flourish. Many exponents of dance and music have come from Varanasi. Bharat Ratna Ravi Shankar, the internationally renowned Sitar maestro and Bharat Ratna Ustad Bismillah Khan, (the famous Shehnai maestro) are all sons of the blessed city or have lived here for major part of their lives.



Places you visit in Varanasi :

GHATS IN VARANASI : are an integral compliment to the concept of divinity represented in physical, metaphysical and supernatural elements. All the ghats are locations on "the divine cosmic road", indicative of "its manifest transcendental dimension". Varanasi has at least 84 ghats. The extensive stretches of ghats enhance the river front with a multitude of shrines, temples and palaces built "tier on tier above the water's edge".

What you can't miss on GHATS ?

Morning boat ride on the Ganges across the ghats is a popular visitor attraction.

The Dashashwamedh Ghat is the main and probably the oldest ghat of Varanasi located on the Ganges, close to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple. A group of priests perform "Ganga Aarti" daily in the evening at this ghat as a dedication to Shiva, Ganga, Surya (Sun), Agni (Fire), and the whole universe.

KASHI VISHWANATH TEMPLE AND GYANVAPI MOSQUE : Dedicated to Lord Shiva, the temple has earned the name of Golden Temple due to the gold plating done using one ton of gold donated by Maharaja Ranjit Singh on its 15.5-m high spire. Invaders destroyed the original temple and Rani Ahilyabai of Indore rebuilt it in 1776. Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb destroyed the

Vishwanath temple to replace it with the Gyanvapi Mosque. However, one can still see the remnants of the temple in the intricate and fine artwork of the western wall of the mosque. Today, the Kashi Vishwanath Temple and the Gyanvapi mosque lie adjacent to each other.



DURGA TEMPLE : The 8th century Durga temple is built in Nagara Style and is one of the most important temples of the city. The 'shikhara' of the temple consists of several small spires layered one on top of the other.

BHARAT MATA TEMPLE : Dedicated to Mother India, is situated in Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth. It was built by Babu Shiv Prasad Gupta and inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1936. The statue marble of Mother India shows undivided India with mountains, plains and oceans in exact proportions.

TULSI MANAS TEMPLE : Dedicated to Lord Rama, this temple is said to be built on the site where Goswami Tulsidas wrote the epic 'Ramacharitmanas'.

BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY : The Banaras Hindu University or BHU is an internationally reputed University and is situated in Varanasi. The great nationalist leader, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, founded the Banaras Hindu University in the year 1916. Over a period of time, it has developed into one of the greatest centers of learning in India. The BHU has produced many great freedom fighters and Nation builders. It has immensely contributed to the progress of the nation through a large number of renowned scholars, artists and scientists.

BHARAT KALA BHAVAN : Bharat Kala Bhavan, located inside the BHU campus, is an art and architecture museum and houses a vast collection of paintings, Hindu and Buddhist sculptures and other materials of archeological importance. The Bharat Kala Bhavan was established in the year 1920 A.D.

SARNATH : Sarnath, about 10 km from the holy city of Varanasi, is the place where Buddha chose to deliver his first sermon. The celebrated Mantra, 'Buddham Sharanam Gachhami', owes its origin to Sarnath. On the day before his death Buddha included Sarnath along with Lumbini, Bodh Gaya and Kushinagar as the four places he thought to be sacred to his followers.

SARNATH MUSEUM : Sarnath has yielded a rich collection of sculptures, artifacts and edifices comprising numerous Buddha and Bodhisattva images and other ancient remains. To house all the findings and excavations



at Sarnath, the Archaeological Survey of India established a site Museum at Sarnath. Finest specimens of Buddhist art and other important remains have been housed at the museum. The main attraction of the Sarnath Archaeological Museum is the superb Ashokan Pillar. It has four back-to-back lions, which has been adopted as the National symbol of India. Below this are representations of a lion, an elephant, horse and the bull.

RAMNAGAR FORT : The Ramnagar fort lies about 14 km. from Varanasi and is situated on the opposite bank of river Ganga. It is the ancestral home of the Maharaja of Banaras. Maharaja Balwant Singh built this fort-palace in the eighteenth century. The Ramnagar fort has a temple and a museum within the grounds displaying the Royal collection which includes vintage Cars, Royal palkees, an armoury of swords and old guns, ivory work and antique clocks and the temple is dedicated to Ved Vyasa, who wrote Mahabharata.

