

EAST INDIA: KOLKATA, VARANASI, LUCKNOW, HYDERABAD AND HAMPI

22 OCTOBER – 7 NOVEMBER 2027

FROM
£8,230
PER PERSON

Tour Leader: Chris Caldicott


The Ultimate
TRAVEL COMPANY



This delightful tour offers a fascinating introduction to Eastern India, capturing the very essence of the region. It combines culture and tradition with ancient temples, the ever-present colonial history and architecture, and magnificent scenery.

Our journey begins in Kolkata (Calcutta), built by the British some 300 years ago, where we explore their widespread architectural legacy including Dalhousie Square, the Governor's Residence, St. John's Church, the Victoria Memorial, Botanical Gardens and Belvedere House. We travel on to Varanasi, the holiest of the Hindu cities, full of colourful bazaars, temples, mosques and palaces, all centring around the teeming ghats on the banks of the sacred River Ganges. We move on to explore the grand colonial monuments of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh's capital, with wide boulevards, green parks and acclaimed cuisine.

We continue to the vibrant old city of Hyderabad, famous for its quality pearls before finally exploring the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hampi, set amidst the vastness of the Deccan Plateau, and one of India's most spectacular archaeological treasures. Magnificent palaces, temples, watchtowers, and urban ruins, built in distinctive Dravidian style, line the banks of the Tungabhadra River and are a glorious legacy of the mighty 14th century Vijayanagar Empire.



Kumartuli Kolkata artisan clay idol



Babu Ghat Kolkata morning



Victoria Memorial Kolkata

17-DAY ITINERARY, DEPARTING 22 OCTOBER 2027

22 October London / Dubai

Suggested flights (not included in the cost of the tour) Emirates EK2 departing London Heathrow at 14.25 hrs.

23 October Dubai / Kolkata

Arrive in Dubai at 00.25 hrs and connect to EK570 departing Dubai at 02.05 hrs arriving Kolkata at 08.10 hrs. Transfer to the Taj Bengal hotel where three nights are spent. Located in the Alipore district within walking distance of prominent landmarks and surrounded by lush greenery, the Taj Bengal features a five-storied marble and stone atrium and spacious elegant rooms with design influences from the famed designer Bob Fox. There are a variety of excellent restaurants to choose from and a spa and swimming pool. Rooms will be available for immediate occupation. Lunch under own arrangements. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner at the hotel.

24 October Kolkata

Early morning visit to the Babu Ghat, constructed during the British Raj, along the riverbank of the Hooghly, to see the busy commuter ferries and hustle and bustle of daily life. Drive along Strand Road and admire the famed Eden Garden cricket stadium, before arriving at the iconic Dalhousie Square, the heart of British Kolkata taking in the Old Town Hall (1813), the exterior of Government House, seat of the Viceroys, a building based on Kedleston Hall

(1799-1802) and the High Court (1872) by Walter Granville based on a Gothic building by George Gilbert Scott. Move on to St. John's Church (1787) modelled on St. Martin's in the Fields and designed by James Agg stuffed with fascinating tombs both within and without. Next see the classical Post Office (1864-68), site of the notorious Black Hole and the Writers' Building built in 1780 and resurfaced in 1880. Stop for coffee at the legendary Coffee House on College Street which has played an important part in Kolkata's cultural history and known as the hub of intellectual debates. Continue to Kumartuli, a traditional potters' quarter in Kolkata, to view the making of elaborate statues from clay and bamboo by expert artisans, always busy with the numerous religious festivals that fill the annual calendar. Finally visit the magical Marble Palace (1835) built to house an art collection brought from Europe in what can only be described as hypnotic chaos.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Visit the city's two greatest landmarks, St. Paul's Cathedral, which was completed in 1847 in Gothic Revival style to accommodate the ever-growing European community in Bengal, and the Victoria Memorial (1921) by Sir William Emerson which, set in its own gardens, dominates the city centre. This has an excellent display on the history of the city and a gallery of pictures by British artists such as Zoffany who came to India. Dinner at the hotel.

25 October Kolkata

Drive to central Kolkata to enjoy the busy Sir Stuart Hogg Market (1874), better known as New Market. Also pass the Royal Asiatic Society, founded by civil servant Sir William Jones in 1784; the Convent of our Lady of Loreto, established in 1842, and the oldest and first Loreto institution to be established in India; and the Royal Calcutta Turf Club, founded in 1847, which became the premier horse racing organisation in India during the British Raj. It is still an exclusive private club and operates the Kolkata Racecourse. This is followed by a ramble in the surreal Park Street Cemetery, an amazing assembly of neo-classical funerary monuments.

Lunch at the Bengal Club which dates from 1827. Visit the suburb of Alipore to see Belvedere House, once the private home of Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of Bengal during East India Company rule and the scene of the famous duel in 1780 when Hastings shot and wounded his bitter critic Sir Philip Francis. Afterwards visit the Agri-Horticultural Gardens (founded 1820) which adjoins Belvedere House to view the winter flowers which are stunning in February. Also pass the famous racecourse, built in 1820 and the largest horse race venue in India, and the National Library, established in 1836 on the Belvedere Estate and the largest library in India by volume. Dinner under own arrangements.



Chota Imambara, Lucknow



The Residency, Lucknow

26 October Kolkata / Varanasi

Morning transfer (with luggage) to Kolkata airport for a domestic flight to Varanasi. On arrival transfer to the Taj Ganges hotel where two nights are spent. The luxury hotel is set in 12 acres of landscaped gardens with facilities including a spa and swimming pool. Its restaurants rank amongst the best in the city, serving international cuisines as well as sumptuous thalis, inspired by produce from the hotel's own organic garden. Evening boat trip on the Ganges to see the sunset Aarti ceremony, a daily ritual conducted by Hindu priests, worshipping the river goddess with incense, camphor, flowers and earthen lamps. Dinner at a local restaurant.

27 October Varanasi

Early morning boat ride on the Ganges past the ghats to see pilgrims gathering on the steps that lead down to the river to bathe in the misty dawn light. Return to the hotel for breakfast. Morning walk from Assi Ghat north to the Old City past all the ghats.

Boat ride to Gai Ghat which is decorated with a huge statue of a cow symbolising Mother Earth and used to be the marker of the southern-most limit of the city. Walk back to the hotel along the ghats and through the backstreets, stopping to see temples, mosques, and the ancient Jantar Mantar observatory built by Maharaja Jai Singh in 1737. Try a fruit flavoured lassi at one of the lassi shops for which Varanasi has become known. Dinner on the roof terrace of the Brij Rama Palace Hotel.

28 October Varanasi / Lucknow

Depart (with luggage) for Varanasi railway station to take a train to

Lucknow (journey time approx. 4½ hrs).

Packed lunch on the train. On arrival in Lucknow transfer to the luxurious Taj Mahal hotel, overlooking the scenic banks of the Gomti River, where three nights are spent. Just a few kilometres from the city centre, the hotel's architecture reflects the glories of the Nawabi era with graceful pillars, rich tapestries, and intricate decoration. There are two restaurants and a lovely swimming pool. Remainder of the afternoon at leisure. Dinner at the hotel.

29 October Lucknow

Morning visit to Chota Imambara, also known as Imambara Hussainabad Mubarak, an imposing monument built as an imambara or a congregation hall for Shia Muslims by Muhammad Ali Shah, the Nawab of Awadh, in 1838. It was to serve as a mausoleum for himself and his mother who is buried beside him.

Lunch at the hotel. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner under own arrangements.

30 October Lucknow

Morning visit to the British Residency, a huge complex of impressive ruins preserved as a memorial of the famous Mutiny siege. Visit its gardens, remains of the Treasury, the Banqueting Hall, Dr Fayer's house, Begum Kothi, the museum and the cemetery at the nearby ruined church which has the graves of 2,000 men, women and children, including that of Sir Henry Montgomery Lawrence who died during the siege. Also visit La Martinière College which was founded in 1845 by the Will of Major General Claude Martin of Lyon, France. It is the only school

in the world to have been awarded royal battle honours for its role in the defence of Lucknow during the mutiny of 1857.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner at the hotel.

31 October Lucknow / Hyderabad

Morning departure (with luggage) for Lucknow airport for a domestic flight to Hyderabad. On arrival transfer to the Taj Falaknuma Palace hotel where three nights are spent. Built in 1894, it is the former palace of the Nizam, rumoured to be the richest man in the world at one time. The hotel has distinctive charm, magnificent views of the city and excellent amenities including a variety of restaurants, a swimming pool and library, styled on the one in Windsor Castle.

Lunch at the hotel. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner at the hotel.

1 November Hyderabad

Drive to Golconda, the capital of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty from 1512, and visit the citadel of Bala Hissar, including the ruins of the royal palace, baths, royal mosque, housing for the Abyssinian guards, royal treasury and elephant stables.

Lunch at local restaurant. Visit the Qutub Shahi Tombs, which were built on a square base surrounded by pointed arches incorporating distinctive styles of Pashtun, Persian and Hindu architecture, as well as the Salar Jung Museum, which encompasses the Nawab's prized ancestral collections and Nizam's Royal jewellery which are beautifully on display. Dinner under own arrangements.



Qutub shahi tombs



Hampi stone chariot Vitthala Temple

2 November Hyderabad

Morning at leisure.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Afternoon visit to the Old City including the Charminar, a structure built on the spot of the ornamented granite mosque of Mecca Masjid and where Quli Qutb Shah prayed for an end to a plague epidemic. Roam the Lad Bazaar selling the famous Hyderabad glass and stone studded bangles known as Sona Bai, bridalwear, pearls, and Attar (perfume). There will also be the opportunity to visit a pearl merchant. Visit the exotic Chowmahalla Palace, which was the Nizam's palace, last lived in in 1911 but used for the last coronation in 1967, as well as the British Residency, a World Monument built in the classical style for James Kirkpatrick who married a Hyderabad princess. It was converted into Osmania University College for Women in 1949 after British independence. Dinner under own arrangements.

3 November Hyderabad / Vidyanagar / Hampi

Morning departure (with luggage) to Hyderabad airport for a domestic flight to Vidyanagar. Transfer to the luxurious Evolve Back Resort, where three nights are spent. Set in the ancient city and UNESCO World Heritage site of Hampi, the hotel

offers an infinity pool as well as a world class Ayurvedic spa.

Lunch at the hotel. This afternoon visit Hemakunta Hill, once fortified with tall stone walls, which has a large number of temples and ruins that date back to the pre-Vijayanagara as well as Vijayanagara periods. Also visit the Virupaksha Temple, built by Lakkan Dandesha in about the 7th century and dedicated to Lord Shiva, before stopping at Hampi Bazaar filled with jewellery, clothes and antiques. Dinner at the hotel.

4 November Hampi

Morning walk along the river and take a coracle boat ride from Sree Kondandarama Temple to the Old Stone Bridge near the Vitthala Temple. Visit the ruins of the King's Palace, believed to have been one of the most imposing structures in Hampi, which served as the King's Court. Continue to the 15th-century Vitthala temple, built by King Devaraya II and expanded by Krishnadevaraya, which comprises many fascinating structures including the stone chariot, the Kalyana Mantapa (marriage hall) and the Ranga Mantapa with the musical pillars.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Visit the Zenana Enclosure, a segregated area used by the royal women of the

Vijayanagara dynasty, including the Lotus Mahal, one of the most famous architectural landmarks in Hampi with its central dome carved like a lotus bud; the 15th century Elephant Stables which provided shelter to the royal elephants and with its intricate design indicates their importance to the empire; as well as the three Watch Towers, built in the Indo-Islamic style, where it is believed the royal women could stand and watch royal processions and other ceremonies without being seen by the common people. Visit the remains of the Queen's Palace and the 15th-century Hazara Rama Temple, once the private temple of the kings of the royal family of Vijayanagara with intricate relics and panels depicting the story of the epic Ramayana. Continue to the Malyavanta Raghunatha Temple to enjoy the sunset. Dinner at the hotel.





Elephant stables, Zenana Enclosure

5 November Hampi

Morning visit to the Royal Enclosure, once home to the Vijayanagara King and his Queens, which includes halls, temples, aqueducts, underground chambers and stepped tanks, and offers a glimpse of what life was like under the Vijayanagara kings. Continue for a village walk.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Afternoon at leisure. Dinner at the hotel.

6 November Hampi / Vidyanagar / Bangalore / Dubai

Depart (with luggage) and transfer to Vidyanagar airport for a morning

flight to Bangalore. On arrival in Bangalore transfer to the Taj Bangalore hotel for where day-use rooms will be available.

Lunch at the hotel. Afternoon at leisure. Early evening transfer to Bangalore airport for suggested flights (not included) Emirates EK567 departing at 21.00 hrs arriving Dubai at 23.20 hrs.

7 November Dubai / London

Connect to Emirates flight EK7 departing Dubai at 02.30 hrs arriving London Heathrow at 07.05 hrs.



TOUR PRICES PER PERSON

Tour Price	£8,230
Single Supplement	£2,780

Please note we have not included the cost of the flights in the tour price. Please contact us for prices should you wish to book them through us.

PRICE INCLUDES

- Accommodation throughout as shown in the itinerary
- Breakfast daily; 14 lunches; 9 dinners
- All entrance fees, visits and excursions as per the itinerary
- All transportation as detailed in the itinerary
- Local English-speaking guide/s
- Gratuities to driver/s; gratuities to guide/s; gratuities in restaurants; portage
- The services of your tour leader throughout

PRICE EXCLUDES

- International flights
- Travel insurance
- Items of personal expenditure (e.g. telephone calls / laundry etc.)
- Visa fees
- Government levies or taxes introduced after costing and publication of this programme on 14/07/2026





Your Tour Leader

Chris Caldicott

Since travelling to some of the most remote parts of the world as Photographer-in-Residence to the Royal Geographical Society, Chris Caldicott has continued his globetrotting lifestyle as a freelance photographer, writer and lecturer specialising in food and travel. He has had several books published about food, travel and the spice trade and visited 118 countries on assignments to capture evocative images and write about memorable experiences for publications such as *Vanity Fair*, *Condé Nast Traveller*, *The Sunday Times*, *Harpers Bazaar*, *Tatler*, *House and Garden* and *The Telegraph*.

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