KOLKATA TO VARANASI
India’s Ganges River aboard the Bengal Ganga

With Diana Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies

FROM ITS SOURCE HIGH IN THE MIGHTY HIMALAYAS, the Ganges River (Mother Ganga to the Indian people) flows 1,500 miles south and east through areas western visitors have rarely seen, connecting to the Hooghly River through Kolkata (Calcutta) before emptying into the Bay of Bengal. A vibrant, complex tapestry of religious beliefs, historical sagas, diverse architectural styles, and fascinating cultural traditions spreads along its banks.

During an 800-mile riverboat journey from Kolkata to Simaria aboard the newly refurbished Bengal Ganga, and continuing overland to Varanasi, you will be treated to a panoply of Muslim and colonial architecture, Hindu culture, Buddhist temples, the daily rituals of village life, and the unspoiled countryside of a part of India seldom experienced by travelers.

Infused with the influences of past rulers and European settlers, rich in diverse flora and fauna, and endowed with incredibly beautiful landscapes, the Ganges represents the heart and soul of Indian civilization. An optional post-trip extension to Agra makes a compelling finale for those who have never seen the Taj Mahal.
Diana Eck is professor of comparative religion and Indian studies in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and Fredric Wertham Professor of Law and Psychiatry in Society, at Harvard. Her academic work has a dual focus—India and America. Her interest in India focuses on popular religion, especially temples and places of pilgrimage, called tirthas. She is the author of Banaras: City of Light and Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India. Her most recent book, India: A Sacred Geography, is about the networks of pilgrimage in India.

Her interest in the United States focuses especially on the challenges of religious pluralism in a multireligious society. Since 1991, she has headed the Pluralism Project, which explores and interprets the religious dimensions of America’s new immigration; the growth of Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, and Zoroastrian communities in the United States, and the new issues of religious pluralism and American civil society.

Professor Eck received the National Humanities Award from President Clinton and the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1998, the Montana Governor’s Humanities Award in 2003, and the Melcher Lifetime Achievement Award from the Unitarian Universalist Association in 2003. In 2005–06 she served as president of the American Academy of Religion. Eck has worked closely with churches on issues of interreligious relations, including her own United Methodist Church and the World Council of Churches. She is currently chair of the Interfaith Relations Commission of the National Council of Churches.
## SCHEDULE BY DAY

### Thursday–Friday, December 30–31
#### Home / Kolkata (Calcutta)
Depart U.S. for the iconic Hotel Taj Bengal, enjoying a New Year’s Eve welcome reception this evening. (R)

### Saturday, January 1, 2016
#### Kolkata (Embarak)
Explore colonial Kolkata, the capital of British India until 1912, including the Writers’ Building, once the administrative offices of the British East India Company; the Raj Bhawan, seat of imperial British power; and the Reserve Bank of India. Continue to the Mother Teresa of Calcutta Center, established in memory of the Roman Catholic nun who founded the Missionaries of Charity in Kolkata in 1950. This afternoon embark the Bengal Ganga and depart for Kalna, traveling through areas where successive waves of European settlers established their East Indian companies. Enjoy a welcome dinner aboard ship this evening. Bengal Ganga (B,L,D)

### Sunday, January 2
#### Kalna
Explore the enchanting Rajbari complex, whose impressive concentration of temples includes the Pratapeshwas Temple, richly ornamented with terra cotta, and the Nabakailas Temples, 108 slope-roofed Shiva temples arranged in two concentric circles. Bengal Ganga (B,L,D)

### Monday, January 3
#### Matiari
In the village of Matiari, observe master craftsmen at work making the handcrafted brass pots and utensils for which Matiari is known. Back aboard ship, sail past the battlefield of Plassey, where in 1757 Robert Clive of the British East India Company defeated the Mogul Nawabs and their French allies. Bengal Ganga (B,L,D)

### Tuesday, January 4
#### Murshidabad
In the Hazarudari Palace, view a vast collection of antiquities, including rare books, old maps and manuscripts, and land revenue records from the 18th and 19th centuries. Also visit the Katra Mosque, built in 1723–24 by Nawab Murshid Quli Khan, and the temple complex at Baranagar, a superior example of Bengal terra cotta art. Bengal Ganga (B,L,D)

### Wednesday, January 5
#### Farakka
Today the Bengal Ganga enters the Farakka lock gate and cruises through the feeder canal that connects the Hooghly River to the Ganges in West Bengal. See the Farraka Barrage, which regulates the flow of Ganges water into the delta shared by Bangladesh and India. Bengal Ganga (B,L,D)

### Thursday, January 6
#### Raj Mahal
Enjoy a walking tour of the ruins of Raj Mahal, founded by the Mogul emperor Akbar as the capital of Bengal in 1592. Continue along the river to Karagola, an area rich in bird life. Bengal Ganga (B,L,D)

### Friday, January 7
#### Bateswarsthan
Visit the ruins of Vikramshila University, established in the late 19th century and an important center of Buddhist learning during the Pala Dynasty. Later cruise through the Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary—where the endangered Gangetic river dolphin is protected—accompanied by some of the sanctuary’s wildlife experts. Bengal Ganga (B,L,D)

### Saturday, January 8
#### Sultanganj
Sultanganj is notable for its two imposing granite cliffs, crowned by a mosque and by the temple of Ghaninath Siva. Nearby excavations have yielded a wealth of art and architectural remains, including ancient relics such as stupas, seals, coins, and terra cotta Hindu and Buddha images. Continue to Munger along a picturesque stretch of the Ganges. Bengal Ganga (B,L,D)

### Sunday, January 9
#### Munger
Explore the remnants of a Mogul fort and an 18th-century British cemetery. Also visit the Bihar School of Yoga, established in 1963 in order to preserve yogic science by combining academic and scientific methodology with a spiritual vision. Bengal Ganga (B,L,D)

### Monday, January 10
#### Cruising to Simaria
Spend the day cruising toward Simaria, with time to enjoy the educational program and discussions with fellow travelers. This evening enjoy a farewell dinner on board the Bengal Ganga. Bengal Ganga (B,L,D)

### Tuesday, January 11
#### Simaria / Nalanda / Bodhgaya / Rajgir
Disembark the Bengal Ganga and travel to Nalanda University, by some accounts...
the oldest seat of learning in India. After lunch visit Bodhgaya, an important and sacred Buddhist pilgrimage center. Here, under the “Bodhi Tree,” Gautama attained supreme knowledge to become Buddha, the Enlightened One. Continue to Rajgir, the first capital of the Magadha Empire, where Buddha spent many years. Royal Residency (B,L,D)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12

Varanasi

After breakfast drive to Varanasi, the holiest town for Hindus. Experience the colorful and fascinating street life during rickshaw rides through the city. Continue on foot to the riverside bathing steps known as ghats to witness the religious ritual aarti, in which light from wicks soaked in ghee (purified butter) is offered to one or more deities. Gateway Hotel (B,L,D)

THURSDAY, JANUARY 13

Varanasi

Take an early-morning small-boat ride on the river, then visit the ruins and museum at Sarnath, where Lord Buddha gave his first sermon after attaining enlightenment in Bodhgaya. This evening celebrate your journey at a farewell dinner. Gateway Hotel (B,L,D)

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, JANUARY 14 & 15

Varanasi / Delhi / Home

After breakfast transfer to the airport for the flight to Delhi. Relax in day rooms before boarding flights home, arriving on January 15. (B,L)
BENGAL GANGA

Built in Myanmar in 2004 as a replica of the colonial Clyde steamers, this thoroughly modern ship has 28 outside staterooms (each 168 square feet) on two decks. Fine dining, excellent service, and a hospitable and caring management team all help to make your Ganges River experience very special, and passengers often describe feeling as if they were guests on a private motor yacht rather than passengers on a cruise ship. Although all staterooms are very comfortable and roomy, most passengers prefer to spend their time outside on the deck, observing the fascinating scenes and scenery along the Ganges River. PLEASE NOTE: There is no elevator between decks on the Bengal Ganga.

PRICING
Land/Cruise rates per person

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<th>DOUBLE OCCUPANCY</th>
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AIRFARE
U.S. domestic and international airfare is not included in the program cost. Economy class airfare from New York to Kolkata (Calcutta) and return from Delhi is approximately $1,000 per person as of December 2014 and is subject to change without notice.

RESERVATIONS, DEPOSITS, & FINAL PAYMENT: To reserve a space on this program, a $1,000 deposit is required per person. Please either call us at 800-422-1636 or 617-496-0806 or fill out and mail or fax the registration form found in this brochure. Reservations are acknowledged in order of receipt until the maximum enrollment has been reached. Final payment deadline is September 1, 2015, 120 days prior to departure.

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS: Notification of cancellation must be received in writing by HAA from the participant. Cancellations within 14 days of booking: full refund; cancellations received up to 120 days prior to departure will be assessed a cancellation fee of $1,000 per person. Cancellations received within 120 days prior to departure are subject to 100% penalty of all deposits and payments.

ITINERARY CHANGES: The itinerary contained in this brochure is accurate at the time of printing. We reserve the right to change the program or accommodations as conditions warrant.

INSURANCE: We highly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance. An application for insurance will be provided by HAA upon confirmation.

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Expiration Date
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Cabin Category Preference
1st Choice
2nd Choice
Hotel Room Preference
☐ Double Room ☐ Single Room ☐ Share a Room With:

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Work Telephone
Second Person Name on Passport
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Street Address
City / State / Zip or Postal Code
Home Telephone
Work Telephone
Method of Deposit
☐ Check (please enclose check) ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa
Card Number
Expiration Date
3 Digit Security Code
Name as it appears on Card
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Cabin Category Preference
1st Choice
2nd Choice
Hotel Room Preference
☐ Double Room ☐ Single Room ☐ Share a Room With:

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