

# DESTINATION VARANASI

THE CINEMATIC TRAVEL DOSSIER

## THE MANDAKINI TRAIL

INSPIRED BY SSMB29 | CURATED  
FOR THE SOLO HEROINE

VOLUME NO. 1 | JANUARY 2026 ISSUE



# ARCHITECT'S NOTE

Cool to see you again in this issue.

Varanasi is not a city you visit; it is a city you survive, and if you are lucky, a city you understand.

You are not here to be a tourist. Tourists stand in lines; you walk through history.

With the world's eyes turning to Varanasi for Rajamouli's upcoming magnum opus, the streets of Kashi are the new set.

This dossier is designed for the woman who travels with the curiosity of an explorer and the boundaries of a warrior.

Welcome to the Set.

Anyway, we hope you enjoy this one.

*Jeyarani Venkatasamy*  
Founder, **XPLOREWorld Curation.**

## THE MISSION SPECS

### THE MANDAKINI TRAIL

**CURATION:** XPLORE WORLD

**LOCATION:** Varanasi, India.

**VIBE:** Cinematic / Heritage /  
Action

**SAFETY RATING:** 11/10  
(Fortress Protocol)



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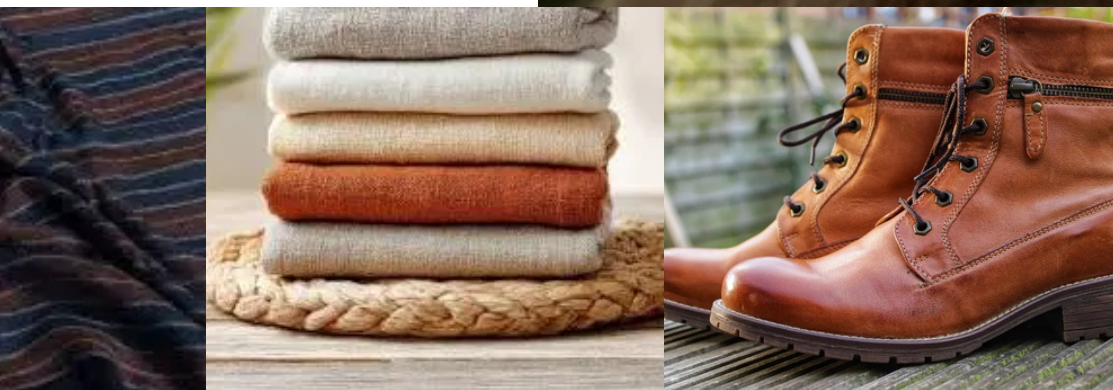
- The Packing Edit
- Curator's Protocols (Etiquette)
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# ACTION CHIC

## THE WARDROBE EDIT

- The goal is '**Action-Heroine Chic**.' You need to look respectful for a temple, but ready to jump onto a moving boat.
- 1. **The Shield:** A giant cotton Dupatta.
- 2. **The Base:** Linen Cargos (No denim).
- 3. **The Stance:** Combat Boots (No heels).





A woman in a red and gold sari is rowing a wooden boat on the Ganges river at sunset. She is looking towards the left, and the sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The background shows the river and some distant structures.

# RIDE, ROW, RISE

We do not hope for safety; we engineer it. This itinerary is powered by the '**Pink Protocol**'—using only female-driven E-Rickshaws and the rare female Mallahs (boat rowers) of the Ganga. It is an economic ecosystem built for women, by women.



# THE 3-DAY SCRIPT.

## DAY 1: THE RHYTHM (Arrival & Immersion)

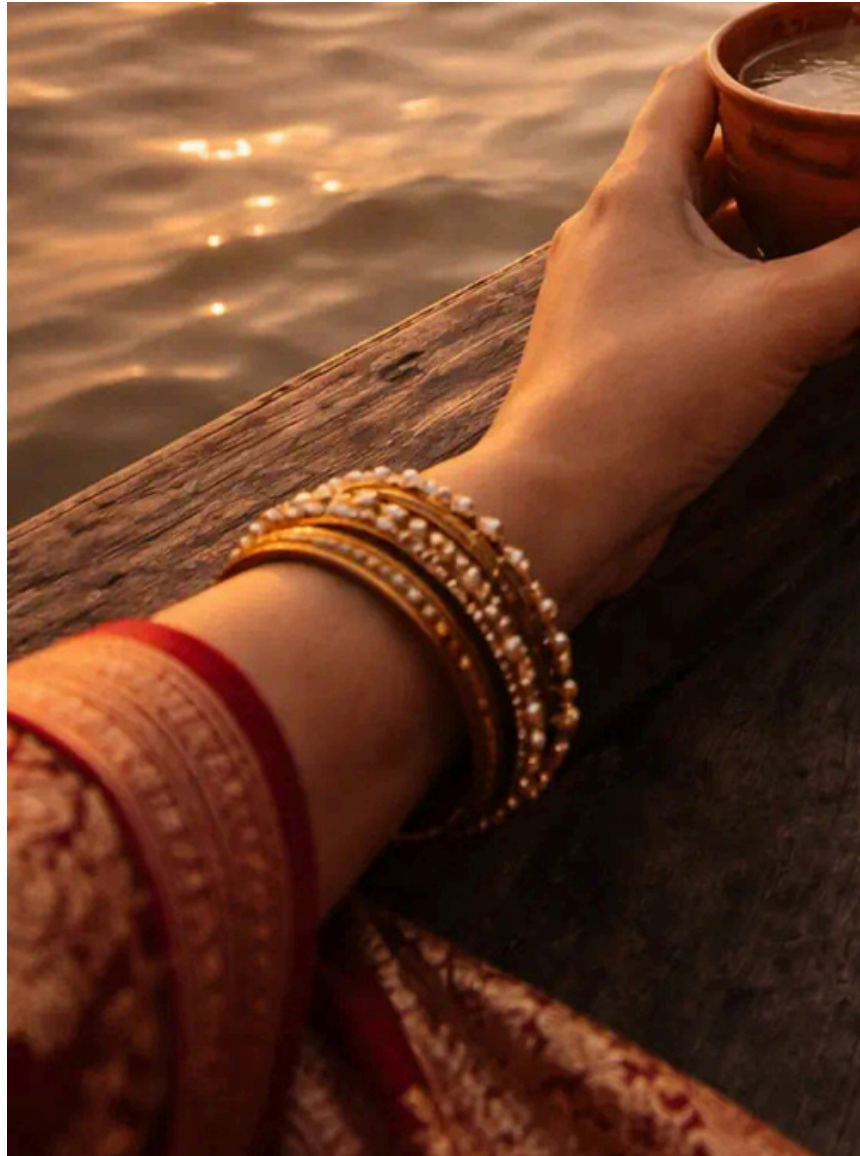
- 06:00 - 08:00 | **The Royal Entry:** Land at VNS Airport. Do not drive to the city center. Take the hotel car directly to Namoh Ghat.
- 08:30 | **The Water Transfer:** Board the private Brijrama Barge. You arrive at your hotel by river, not by road.
- 09:30 | **Rooftop Breakfast:** Early check-in (pre-requested). Breakfast at Darbhanga (Brijrama Terrace) overlooking the waking river.
- 11:30 | **The Music Trail:** Private walk to Kabir Chaura (The Musicians' Neighborhood). Visit the home of a Padma Shri Tabla master (arranged by Women Tours).
- 13:00 | **Lunch:** Authentic Thali at Keshari (off-beat, clean, local favorite).
- 17:30 | **The Director's Cut:** Evening Ganga Aarti. Do not stand in the crowd. View it from the Brijrama Turret.

## DAY 2: THE AESTHETIC (Art & Design)

- 05:30 | **The Silent Row:** Sunrise boat ride with a Female Mallah (Rower). Route: Assi to Manikarnika and back.
- 07:00 | **Subah-e-Banaras:** Watch the morning Havan (fire ritual) at Assi Ghat.
- 10:00 | **The Blue Break:** Post-yoga Lassi at Blue Lassi Shop (Kachori Gali). Note: Opens at 10 AM; arrive early to beat the Instagram crowd.
- 11:30 | **The Textile Hunt:** Private car to Peeli Kothi. Visit the Varanasi Weavers Society Atelier. Watch the 'Nakhsha' (design) process.
- 16:00 | **High Tea:** Sunset tea at Taj Nadesar Palace gardens.

## DAY 3: THE ACTION (History & Departure)

- 07:00 | **The Warrior Workout:** Visit Tulsi Ghat Akhada. Watch the 'Kushti' practice. (Optional: Private Yoga session on the terrace).
- 10:00 | **The Decode:** Drive to Sarnath (30 mins).



## DAY 3

- 10:30 | **The Museum:** Private guided tour of the Sarnath Museum (Lion Capital). Note: Closed on Fridays.
- 13:00 | **The Farewell:** Departure directly to Airport from Sarnath (bypassing city traffic).

# THE LOGISTICS BIBLE

## 1. THE ARRIVAL PROTOCOL (Zero Friction)

- **The Trap:** Most tourists try to take a taxi to the hotel door. In Varanasi, this is impossible (narrow lanes). You will get stuck in mud and chaos.
- **The Fix:** You book Brijrama Palace. You take a taxi to Mahishasura Ghat or Namoh Ghat. The hotel's private motorboat picks you up there. You float to your check-in.
- Email: [reservations@brijhotels.com](mailto:reservations@brijhotels.com)
- Phone: [+91 80690 57704](tel:+918069057704)
- **Bag Check:** The hotel porters handle your luggage from the car to the boat. You touch nothing but your sunglasses.

## 2. THE COMMUTE PROTOCOL (Pink & Private)

- **The Ride:** Inside the city, cars don't work.
- **The Hack:** Use "Pink E-Rickshaws" (driven by women).
- **Booking:** Do not hail them on the street. [Call Priyadarshini at Varanasi Women](#) Tours (+91 99360 77191) one day prior to book a dedicated driver for 8 hours. **She stays with you.**



### THE HIGH TEA:

**Location:** Taj Nadesar Palace (Cantonment Area) The Vibe: Colonial Royalty meets Mango Orchards. This is the quietest place in Varanasi.



# THE LOGISTICS BIBLE

- **The Fixer:** Priyadarshini Upadhyay (Founder, Varanasi Women Tours). She is your ground support.
- **The Boatman:** Ask specifically for "Gangotri" or similar female rowers supported by the Mission Shakti initiative.
- **The Emergency Line:** Dial 1090 (Women Power Line) - It is active and responsive in UP.

- **Dress Code:** Shoulders and knees covered always (Linen/Cotton). No tank tops. This isn't conservatism; it is camouflage. You blend in, you get hassled less.
- **The "Husband" Rule:** If a tout asks "Are you alone?", the answer is always: "No, my husband is meeting me at the next Ghat."





# BUDGET

## 1. The Cost (2025/26 Estimates) For High Tea

- **Budget:** Approx. ₹1,800 - ₹2,500 per person (inclusive of taxes).
  - Base Price: The standard "Hi-Tea" menu is roughly ₹1,500 + 18% GST.
- **What is Included:**
  - The Sip: "Benarasi Chai" served in traditional Kulhads (earthen pots) or premium English blends.
  - The Bites: A curated platter of 4 savory snacks (expect colonial-style vegetable patties/cutlets) and 2 desserts (pastries/soufflé).
  - The View: Access to the palace grounds (Mango orchards and Jasmine fields) which are usually restricted to guests.

## 2. The Timing

- Official Hours: 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM (Lobby Lounge).
- Architect's Recommendation: Go at 4:30 PM. The sun begins to dip, the peacocks in the garden come out, and the light hits the palace facade perfectly for photos.

## 3. How to Book (Critical)

- Do not just show up. The security at the gate is military-grade. If your name isn't on the list, they won't let your auto/car in.
- The Protocol: Call +91 542-666-0001 at least 24 hours prior.
- The Script: "I would like to reserve a table for High Tea at the Lobby Lounge for [Date] at 4:30 PM. Please register my vehicle number [Vehicle No] for security entry."

## 4. Dress Code

- Strictly Smart Casual. No flip-flops, no gym wear. If you look like you belong, the staff treats you like the Maharaja's guest.



# THE TREASURY: ESTIMATED COSTS (2025/26)

Prices are estimates for a seamless, "no-haggling" experience.

Activity / Service	Estimated Cost (INR)	Notes
The Pink Protocol (Transport)	₹2,000 - ₹2,500 per day	For 8 hours of dedicated private hire. Tip generously.
Private Boat (Sunrise)	₹1,200 - ₹1,500	For a private Bajra (Hand-rowed).
Private Boat (Evening Aarti)	₹2,000 - ₹3,000	Premium viewing spot on the water.
Varanasi Women Tours	₹2,000 - ₹3,000	Per walking tour (includes guide fees).
High Tea @ Taj Nadesar	₹2,500 per person	Includes taxes. Pre-booking mandatory.
Rooftop Breakfast @ Brijrama	₹1,800 - ₹2,200 pp	For non-guests (subject to availability).
Blue Lassi	₹150 - ₹200	Cash only.
Sarnath Museum Entry	₹25 (Indian) / ₹300 (Foreigner)	Combined ticket (Museum + Ruins).
Akhada "Warrior" Session	₹500 - ₹1,000	Direct donation to the wrestlers/Guru.

## OPTION 1: THE STREET & CHIC (Authentic Cool)

Best for: The "Real" Varanasi experience that looks great on Instagram.

- Venue: Blue Lassi Shop (Kachori Gali) or Roma's Cafe (Lanka)
- Budget: ₹200 - ₹400 per person
- The Inclusions:
  - Blue Lassi:
    - Order: "Pomegranate Lassi" (The red pearls look amazing against the blue walls).
    - Vibe: Tiny, crowded, iconic. You sit on a wooden bench.
  - Roma's Cafe:
    - Order: Cold Coffee and a Grilled Sandwich.
    - Vibe: Modern diner, AC, student crowd (BHU area). Good for a break from the heat.
- Booking: No booking needed. Just walk in.
- Dress Code: Anything goes.

## OPTION 2: THE HERITAGE MID-POINT (River Views)

Best for: Watching the river flow without the chaos.

- Venue: Brijrama Palace (Darbhanga Terrace) or Ganges View Hotel (Assi Ghat)
- Budget: ₹800 - ₹1,200 per person
- The Inclusions:
  - Drink: Masala Chai or Fresh Lime Soda.
  - Eats: Traditional Indian snacks with a luxury twist (Vegetarian Kebab Platter, Cheese Toast, or Pakoras).
  - Ambiance:
    - Brijrama: You are literally on top of the river. 18th-century fort vibes. Note: You must reserve a "Boat Pick-up" to get there, which might cost extra if you aren't a guest.
    - Ganges View: A cult favorite for artists/writers. Stunning terrace at Assi Ghat.
- Booking: Call in the morning to check terrace availability.
- Dress Code: Relaxed but neat (Kurta/Jeans).



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- All internal ground logistics (hotels, transfers, private aviation, tours).
- Meals and incidentals.

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