

## All over the World

The Travel magazine

**Great Rivers – part 3 – Ganges** 

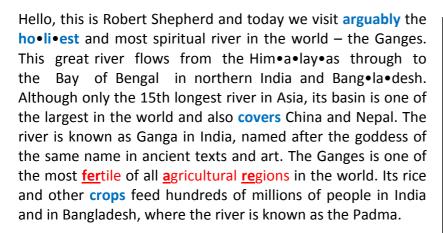
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Vocabulary & pronunciation study by Fiona Kinloch©

Words are explained alongside the text

Syllables are marked with a dot •

Stressed syllables are underlined and in bold\*



The river's 2,520 kilometres is home to 140 different species of fish and 90 different species of amphibians, many of which are near extinction. It is also home to the en•dan•gered fresh water dolphins and Ganges sharks. A visit to the Ganges must in•clude Varanasi or Banaras, which is known as India's spiritual capital and the most visited pilgrim destination in all of India. The ghats, the stone steps that lead down to the Ganges river, are the centre of activities in Varanasi. Each day, throngs of local Hindu devotees and pilgrims from afar descend to the ghats to wash themselves, as well as their clothes, in the sacred river. They believe that the purifying water of the river will absolve them of their sins.

An early morning boat ride in Varanasi has be•come a **ritual** for tra•vell•ers and is the best way to **wit•ness** the spectacle of the age old rituals in the river and on the ghats. Numerous funerals take place on a **dai**ly basis and you can witness first-hand families **cremating** their loved ones before **sca•tter•ing** the ashes in the river. The night ceremony also attracts pilgrims, locals and tourists.



arguably (adv.) it may be
argued / possibly

**holiest** (adj.) has a religious purpose

to flow (vb.) to go / to pass

to cover (vb.) travels across

**crop** (n.) plant e.g. fruit or vegetable

species (n.) a type of

pilgrim (n.) a person who goes to a place for religious reasons

throng (n.) a crowd

afar (adv.) at a distance

to descend (vb.) to go to

sacred (adj.) connected with God

to absolve (vb.) to excuse someone from something (e.g. sins\*)

\*sin (n.) an act that is wrong (e.g. a crime)

ritual (n.) a habit

to witness (vb.) to see

to cremate (vb.) to burn

to scatter (vb.) to throw randomly

As moving as these spectacles are, prepare yourself for some unpleasant surprises. The Ganges is prone to regular flooding and so you might be unfortunate enough to witness dogs feeding off human remains and other carcasses. It will either be the body of a priest, whose body must enter the water intact, or a pauper whose family could not afford to give them a funeral. All of this con to the Ganges being among the world's most polluted rivers, struggling under the pressures of modern India. Environmental initiatives to clean up the river have failed time after time. One of the reasons is corruption — charlatan do-gooders who raise funds from the locals to clean up the river are never seen again.

Other <u>obstacles</u> include a <u>dearth</u> of expertise and lack of help from religious leaders who want to maintain thousands of years of tradition. Once a rich <u>wilderness</u> full of tigers, lions and other big cats, the plains have evolved into the most densely populated place on Earth. The Ganges river basin has the highest population of any river basin in the world and contains over 400 million people. Nourished by the great river's gift of life, it's easy to see how, despite the pollution and economic problems, this entire region has continued to thrive for millennia.

Stay tuned to EnglishWaves and join us again next time when we visit one of Europe's great rivers, the Danube.

unpleasant (adj.) nasty /
horrible

to be prone to something (exp.) to risk

carcass (n.) a dead body

intact (adj.) not damaged

**pauper** (n.) someone who is poor

obstacle (n.) a challenge

**dearth** (n.) a deficiency / lack of something

plains (n.) large areas of land

to thrive (vb.) to develop well

\***Tip!** Syllable Stress can help us to understand spoken words - if we know how to pronounce a word then we are more likely to hear it correctly and therefore understand it and be able to use it when we speak.

Let's take the words 'synonymous' and 'synonym' as an example.

First count the syllables: 'syn•on•y•mous' has 4 syllables 'syn•o•nym' has 3 syllables

Syllable Stress is when you say one of the syllables slightly louder and with more emphasis. So in this example we say: synonymous s and synonym