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India Beach Experience

Adventure



Relaxation



Culture



Trip Name: India Beach Experience **Trip Code:** INBE **Duration:** From 1 week

Trip Highlights

- Kick back and relax on some of India's most beautiful beaches
- Experience India's rich culture with yoga sessions, cooking classes and henna and Bollywood workshops
- Find a bargain in Margao's bustling markets
- Weekend optional trips to Dandeli, Mandrem Beach or Anjuna Beach



Overview

Renowned for its beautiful beaches, places of worship and world heritage architecture, Goa is popular with travellers and tourists alike. On this program we'll show you the best beaches in the area as well as allowing you to explore the marvels of Indian culture. Goa isn't just about the beaches though, there is also rich flora and fauna owing to its location on the Western Ghats range, which is classified as a biodiversity hotspot.

To kick things off, the first week will be a cultural week to ease you into Indian life and give you an insight and understanding of the rich culture. You'll be taking part in yoga sessions, Indian cookery classes, Bollywood dancing and henna making to name just a few! You'll also get a tour of North Goa and dinner on a boat cruise, a definite highlight of the trip. Oh yeah...did we need we mention the time spent lazing around on the endless miles of sandy beaches!

If you choose to stay for longer there are endless activities to keep you busy from water sports, shopping and sightseeing. Not forgetting you'll have plenty of free time to top up your tan chilling out on the beach.

Destination Info

India is the second most populated country in the world, just behind China. Its slogan, 'Unity in Diversity' sums up the country rather well, and its citizens are deeply proud of this fact. All of the world's major religions put in an appearance here, the best represented being Hindu (hence the many 'sacred' cows causing traffic jams in the capital, New Delhi!) as well as Muslims, Christians and Buddhists. The hustle and bustle is virtually constant, but there are always peaceful, spiritual spots that you can escape to easily. With a population of over 1.1 billion (2007 est.) it's not really a surprise that it's a bit noisy!

Goa, India's smallest but richest state is famous for its beaches, churches, temples and architecture. It was ruled by the Portuguese for more than 450 years so has a very different feel to other parts of the country.

Itinerary



Day 1 Monday

You'll be met at the airport and taken to your accommodation to relax after your flight. There's no activities arranged for today so you can chill out and get settled in. Your dinner is included in the evening and it will be a chance for you to meet your fellow travellers and guides.

Dinner included.

Day 2 Tuesday

Make sure you're up early, ready and raring to go as you'll have a morning yoga session. After you've worked up an appetite you'll have some breakfast followed by your orientation. You'll find out more about your trip, learn a bit about the history and culture of India and you'll also be able to ask any questions you might have.

In the afternoon you'll learn about traditional Indian dress before visiting Margao and its famous market.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

Day 3 Wednesday

Rise and shine nice and early again for your final yoga class at 6:30am (yes, that time does exist!) After yoga

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you'll be feeling revitalised and ready to take on North Goa as you have a full days sightseeing.

Your day will finish with dinner and a boat cruise.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.



Day 4 Thursday

Today you'll have several organised cultural sessions to give you more of an insight into the Indian culture. Start off learning to shake your hips with Bollywood classes! After you've burned off loads of calories learning some Bollywood moves, it's only right that you put them all back on again with a cooking workshop on Indian curries. You'll try your hand at making some of the region's best loved dishes as well as sampling them for yourself!

Your final activity for the day will be learning the traditional art of Henna, an Indian tattoo of intricate designs usually on the hands and feet.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

Day 5 Friday

Flip flops at the ready, today you're going on a beach tour! You'll be shown some of the region's best beaches and you'll have the chance to kick back and relax or go swimming in the crystal clear waters.

When you've topped up your tan you'll have to drag yourself away from the beautiful beaches and come inside for a cooking workshop on Indian dessert...yum!

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.

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During your weekends you'll get to choose which activities you want to do...and there is plenty of choice!

Dandeli

If you're into nature then this is the excursion for you! Dandeli is growing as a leading tourist destination for holidays near Goa and it offers a good mix of nature, adventure and wildlife. Travel through beautiful wooded trails and appreciate the rich diversity of plant and animal life.

Mandrem Beach

Located in North Goa, Mandrem Beach is a tranquil beach and one of the most beautiful in Asia. Serene and scenic, the beach is secluded and popular among honeymooners.

Agonda Beach

Agonda Beach is a tranquil and clean beach, ideal if you want to spend time meditating, catching up on your reading or simply, enjoying the sun, and it tends to be less crowded than other beaches. There is also the opportunity to take a boat trip or go dolphin spotting from here.

Anjuna Beach

Anjuna Beach is a favourite hangout of the hippies who used to organise the famous rave beach parties. It was in the late 1950s to 60s that hippies started visiting Anjuna Beach and since then popularised the wild rave parties with trance music which have now become the characteristic features of Goan Beaches.

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One week is nowhere near long enough in Goa, so why not extend your Indian adventure and stay for an extra week or two? Your following weeks will mainly be free time for you to explore and relax on the stunning beaches. There are also loads of optional activities to keep you busy and the in-country team will always be on hand to arrange activities and suggest things to do.

Water sports: water sports such as wind surfing and scuba diving can be experienced on most beaches in Goa. Banana boating, jet skiing, water skiing, parasailing and dolphin cruises are also on offer (at your own cost).

Nature: Goa isn't all about the beach, it also has some amazing wildlife. Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary is a great place to visit and you'll have the chance to see Black Panther, Bengal tiger and leopards. The sanctuary is famous for its reptiles, particularly the King Cobra, the longest venomous snake in the world. The Dudhsagar Waterfalls are also worth a visit and are surrounded by beautiful natural scenery.

Visits to churches and historical landmarks: Churches built during the colonial period leave an everlasting impression on visitors. The most spectacular of them all is the Basilica of Bom Jesus with magnificent architecture.

Shopping: local marketplaces and flea markets offer a good opportunity for bargain hunters. Ingo Saturday's night bazaar is popular with tourists and you can find ethnic wears, jewellery, souvenirs and many other things at this market.

Biking: Hiring a bike (at your own cost) is a great way to get out and see more of Goa, and there is loads to discover when you go away from the beaches. Goa is full of intricate little roads and intriguing pathways, paddy fields and rows of quaint village cottages.

Accommodation

You will be staying in an old-style Portuguese house with a spacious recreation (hang out) hall, a dining area and computer centre. In addition, 3 wings of housing consist of spacious rooms that will comfortably accommodate up to 6 participants per room with private bathroom facilities. There is also a small cafe that will be run and maintained

in the campus for volunteers to buy any additional things for their everyday need at the campus itself.

The campus is 3 km from the beautiful and tranquil Majorda beach, which is adjacent and very similar to Colva beach, which has been our “main beach” for all these years in Goa. A short distance from the camp, are cafes and utility shops that can also help volunteers fulfil their everyday requirements.

Programme Services and Facilities

Internet

Internet access is cheap and readily available in cities and tourist centres in Goa.

Telephone

The international telephone access code for India is +91.

To place an outgoing, direct dialled international call, dial +44 for the UK, +49 for Germany, followed by the telephone number.

There are numerous public call boxes (STD/ISD) all over India from where it is easy to make international calls at fairly reasonable rates. Cell phones, which cost at least Rs. 1700, can be purchased. Most European-style tri-band handsets can take Indian PIN cards and all our present project sites are within mobile network coverage.

Laundry

All washing will have to be done by hand, you can buy washing powder locally. During the monsoon season, a tumble dryer will be installed so you will have an easier time drying your clothes. It will not necessarily be there outside the monsoon months.

Post

India's postal service is growing more efficient, but remains unreliable, especially for incoming and outgoing packages. When mailing in India, be sure to hand your envelopes to the clerk in order that they are stamped and sorted correctly. A private courier service is available is fast and reliable however will cost a little more than regular post.

Meals

Meals are all included during your first week and consist mainly of vegetable and sometimes fish curries, Indian breads, rice and fruit. You are required to be responsible for the up keep of your own room as well as helping out with washing up dishes after meals.

What's Included

- Airport transfers
- Shared accommodation (up to 4 people per room)
- Orientation
- All meals as per the itinerary
- All learning workshops as per itinerary
- Visit to local market
- Sightseeing in Old Goa
- Boat cruise with dinner



What's Not Included

- Flights
- Travel insurance
- Visas
- Any optional excursions
- Personal expenses
- Meals at the weekend or during second week



What to Pack

Please note that this kit list is intended to help you plan what you may need to take with you and, therefore, you may not need all of the listed items on your travels nor is it exhaustive. In addition, it is worth noting that you can buy lots of the above in Goa and at a very cheap price and there will be opportunities for you to shop in local markets and towns.

Personal Admin

- Photocopies of important papers such as passport, airline tickets and insurance documents

General

- Day bag / rucksack (for excursions)
- A torch
- Mobile phone
- Camera and batteries
- Telephone charger with a two pin adaptor plug
- Playing cards for free time
- Ipod and speakers (if you wish)
- Tissues
- Plastic bags
- Snacks (cup of soups, biscuits etc)
- Diary – you will have so many amazing experiences to remember
- Pocket-knife
- Towel

- Tampons, if applicable (as these are scarcely found in India)
- Anti Bacterial Hand Gel

Clothing

- Walking shoes / trainers
- Flip Flops
- A hat to protect you from the sun
- Rain coat (especially during June to September).
- Clothes. Long sleeve shirts and trousers are needed as wearing shorts is not viewed favourable in public in India. Remember to bring beachwear for beach time.

Medical Kit

- Small medical kit containing plasters, medicine for diarrhoea, headache tablets, anti- histamine cream and any medication you will need.
- Mosquito repellent
- Contraception including condoms
- Antibacterial soap gel (does not need water to rinse off)
- Travel wash for clothes

Minimum Age

18 years.

Flights

To receive your arrival airport transfer, your flight to India must land at Goa Airport (GOI) anytime on your programme start date. Your return flight should be arranged to depart between 8pm on your programme end date and 10am the following morning to receive the included airport transfer.

To book your flights, please contact us on 01273 647219.

It is important that once you have booked your flights you add these details to your online account or alternatively you can contact us with your departure date, the flight number and arrival time at your destination.

FAQs

- 1. How much spending money should I take with me?**
We recommend that you take around £70 per week
- 2. Do I need a visa to visit India?**
You will need to obtain an Indian Tourist visa before you leave the UK.
- 3. Do I need to take a sleeping bag?**
No, you don't need to take a sleeping bag as the quilts & mattresses are provided at all the accommodation & during excursions.
- 4. Do I need to take a mosquito net?**
All the rooms at the Camps are equipped with mosquito nets.

5. Will there be a safety deposit box/safe available?

There is locker facility at all the Camps where you can keep your valuables & the keys will remain with you.

Support & Advice

Your safety is paramount which is why all our programs have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimized.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our staff at any time should you need to. In addition our overseas partners and coordinators are on hand in-country to assist you.

Financial Security

We know that the last thing you want to worry about when you're planning your trip of a lifetime is whether your money is in safe hands. As a leading global gap year provider it's our job to make sure your finances are secure, so when you book with us you can be confident that we do just that.

Real Gap Experience is part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

Insurance

Whether you're traveling for two weeks or two years, trekking the Amazon in Ecuador or on safari in Africa, insurance is an essential part of your adventure and will help you enjoy your travels, secure in the knowledge that you have the protection you need. In fact, everyone traveling with us must have adequate cover before their trip begins.

Of course you are free to buy insurance from any provider, however at Real Gap Experience, we have partnered with World Nomads to offer policies that have been specifically designed to meet the needs of global travel. If you think you're already covered by an existing policy, such as those offered by credit card providers, check the policy wording very carefully to ensure it covers you for your Real Gap Experience.

For more information on travel insurance please contact us to speak to one of our travel advisors.

Money Matters

Also denoted as 'Rs' the Indian rupee is the official currency of India. The rupee is divided into 100 subunits called paise (p) but single paise coins are rarely used or found in circulation. Coins are available in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 25 and 50 paise and 1, 2 and 5 rupee coins are also available. Rupee notes come in denominations of 10, 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1000 but note that the larger notes are difficult to change outside banks. The rupee is tied to a number of currencies.

ATMs can be found in most major cities and towns but carrying cash and traveller's cheques is recommended as power cuts can leave ATMs unavailable. All major travellers cheques are widely accepted but US dollar and Pounds sterling are the most popular.

Please note that passports will always be needed when changing currency or travellers cheques.

You'll find your money goes a pretty long way if you purchase local foods and drinks.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant 2.25 \$

Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) 1.65 \$

Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) 0.42 \$

Water (0.33 litre bottle) 0.27 \$

(Prices quoted in US Dollars)

Passports and Visas

All UK passport holders must apply for a visa before travelling to India. All other nationalities should consult their relevant embassy.

Once you have booked your trip you will be provided with further instructions and any necessary supporting documents to obtain the correct visa. Passports and visas are the responsibility of the individual traveller. The visa requirements for your trip vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. As a general rule most countries expect that you will have at least 6 months' validity on your passport beyond your intended stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary.

Cultural Considerations

Greetings

The traditional Indian greeting is to make pranaam, which involves folding your hands together in a prayer gesture in front of your chest, but without bowing. The standard Indian greeting "namaste" or "namaskar" can accompany this gesture and this combination can be used to say hello and goodbye. Female volunteers are encouraged to make pranaam to both women and men, as occasionally some Indian men use the Western tradition of handshaking as a way of making inappropriate physical contact with women. Refusing a man's outstretched hand while making the pranaam gesture is not only appropriate but in some cases it will gain you considerable respect. Male volunteers, however, should feel comfortable in shaking hands with Indian men.

Clothing

Indians dress far more conservatively than we do here in the West. Dressing in accordance with Indian custom is one of the most effective ways to show respect to the local culture and help to eradicate certain stereotypes about Westerners that previous holidaymakers have introduced. In India clothing is not about expressing individuality but expressing group identity, such as status and religious traditions. Female Indian clothing helps to reflect and define the idea of Indian femininity. Therefore, it is best to dress in light clothes that cover your shoulders and your knees; it will prevent any unwanted attention and will protect you from the Indian sun.

Smoking, Alcohol

Smoking and drinking is acceptable in India and readily available. However, please respect other people. Smoking is not permissible in volunteer apartments or the host families' homes. Drinking is only permissible in moderation

and must not impact upon any volunteer work you undertake. While we want you to have fun in your free time, antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated.

Bathroom Facilities

You will experience a range of different shower and toilet facilities. Unless you are staying in a hotel you will rarely have hot water. The cool water takes a little getting used to but I'm sure you'll find it refreshing after a hot and humid day. Toilets will be a combination of western and Asian. Remember to put all toilet tissue in the bin provided and not in the toilet.

Whilst on excursions you will notice that many places do not have a western toilet and will have a typical Asian toilet; again this is all part of the Asian culture. Also, many places do not have soap in the bathrooms. It is a good idea to take a small bottle of soap gel and keep it in your day bag. This is an antibacterial gel that you don't need to rinse off. These are available in chemists in the travel section.

Vaccinations & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad. The risks to your health whilst travelling will vary depending on your general health and the type of activities you are going to be partaking in and the length of your stay.

Since we are not medically qualified, it is recommended that you consult with your Doctor or a recognised Travel Medical Advisory Service who will assess your particular health risks before recommending vaccines and/or anti-malarial tablets and advising you on what precautions you should take.

Safety

India is not a particularly dangerous place for foreigners, but as in any strange setting, safety requires a certain degree of attention and thoughtfulness. Because Westerners are known to carry money and valuables, pickpockets and petty thieves often target them. Especially when riding trains and buses or walking in public areas, be sure to keep a close eye on your possessions. When in transit, money, documents and other small important items should be kept on you, preferably in a pouch or money belt, as opposed to in bags or purses. Valuable technology like cameras should be carried in small bags that can be kept close at hand at all times. Remember to photocopy all your documents (insurance, passport, traveller's checks etc), and keep them in a different place than the originals. If you have credit cards, be sure to keep a copy of the information and the customer service number in case they are lost or stolen.

Various scamsters and low-level con men also target travellers in India. If you are ever in doubt about the trustworthiness of someone that is offering you assistance or services, it is best to walk away. Travellers generally stay away from the truly dangerous and violent places in India, so you need not be worried that refusing assistance or attention will result in a dangerous or unpleasant reaction. When refusing potentially shady offers, be polite but firm.

Certain areas of India are popular with Indian tourists and Indian men will often go on holiday together to escape the confines of their home lives. These men are often interested in watching Western women who behave and dress very differently to the women they are familiar with. Female volunteers occasionally experience unwanted

attention.

We advise that you check your government's advice before travelling abroad. For UK, American and Australian customers please see the relevant links below;

UK: www.fco.gov.uk

USA: www.travel.state.gov

Australia: www.smartraveller.gov.au

The FCO have updated their information to recommend the following for female travellers visiting India;

"Women travellers should exercise caution when travelling in India even if they are travelling in a group. Women should use caution when travelling in India. Reported cases of sexual assault against women and young girls are increasing; recent sexual attacks against female visitors in tourist areas and cities show that foreign women are also at risk. British women have been the victims of sexual assault in Goa, Delhi, Bangalore and Rajasthan and women travellers often receive unwanted attention in the form of verbal and physical harassment by individuals or groups of men. If you are a woman travelling in India you should respect local dress codes and customs and avoid isolated areas, including beaches, when alone at any time of day. Avoid travelling alone on public transport, or in taxis or auto-rickshaws, especially at night. If you have to use a taxi, get them from hotel taxi ranks and use pre-paid taxis at airports."

ATM Theft

It is very likely that you will need to withdraw cash at some point during your travels. Please be cautious when withdrawing money from an ATM and ensure that you are vigilant of other people near the ATM, especially those that offer unsolicited assistance if your card is detained. It has been recognised that individuals are operating unlawful withdrawals by placing 'traps' in ATMs whereby personal bank cards are being detained, causing the victim to believe their card transaction has not been completed, and leaving their bank card in the ATM which is then later retrieved by the thief.

If your card is confiscated or you are concerned that your card has been tampered with, please report immediately to the bank or cancel your card.

Language Guide

Here are some useful phrases in Hindi to remember when you get to India. We also suggest you obtain a Lonely Planet or language guide for the destination(s) you are travelling to.

Hello/Goodbye - *Namaste*

Thank you very much - *Bahut bahut shukriya*

Thank You - *Dhanyavad*

Yes - *Haan (ha)*

No - *Nahi*

So you speak English? - *Kya aap angrezi samajhte hain?*

What is your name? - *Aapka naam kya hai?*

My name is... - *Mera naam ... hai*

How are you? - *Aap kaise hain?*

Fine, and you? - *Bas ap sunaiye?*

Nice to meet you - *Aapse milkar khushii huyii*

Do you understand? - *Kya ap samjhi*

I don't understand - *Main samjha nahi*

Food & Drink

Indian food is incredibly popular in western Europe, but tasting Indian food is a bit different than the stuff produced in the Indian down the road. In this respect the food may take a little getting used to. There are also a few cultural differences that you may need to observe. People in India tend to eat without cutlery, using either their hands or pieces of chapatti. If you are dining with strict Hindus, certain behaviours are considered inappropriate, for example sharing already eaten food and eating directly from the communal bowl.

Traditional Indian cuisine involves the intricate blending of multiple herbs and spices such as ginger, garlic, saffron and cloves. Popular ingredients vary from location to location, from lamb and yoghurt in the Northern regions to seafood in the coastal regions. In the South, more vegetables are used for cooking, along with coconut and curry leaves. In fact, most of the best dishes are vegetarian, especially when you take into account the dominant religious views of India - Hindus do not eat beef and Muslims do not eat pork. In most cases, even if you do order a meat dish, you will not find that much meat actually in it.

What is classed as a curry by western culture encompasses a huge amount of dishes in India, each with its own unique beautifully blended ingredients. You are bound to find something you like. Here are a few tips regarding food and drink:

- Raw food is subject to contamination; avoid salads, uncooked vegetables, and un-pasteurised milk products such as cheese. Fruit should be self-peeled
- Undercooked and raw meat, fish and shellfish may carry intestinal pathogens
- Cooked food that has been allowed to stand for several hours at ambient temperatures should be thoroughly reheated before serving
- Yogurt and curd are naturally safe if kept in hygienic conditions, but be careful that they contain no water, as yogurt is often diluted with water in India
- The safest food is either well cooked and hot or personally peeled fruit
- As you will generally be eating without silverware, washing your hands thoroughly before all meals is absolutely imperative.

Choosing the proper beverages is as important as choosing the proper food. In a climate like India's, regular hydration is essential, however, many beverages can be dangerous to your health. The following suggestions will help you safely quench your thirst:

- Tap water is only safe if boiled; filters and purification tablets are not 100% effective. In all cases bottled water is by far the best option. Fruit juice and ice made with un-boiled water should also be considered unsafe
- When buying bottled water, stick whenever possible to known brands and make sure the bottle has an unbroken seal. Bottled water should cost no more than 30 Rupees.
- Hot beverages like coffee and tea should be boiled fully before consumption
- Though bad for hydration, carbonated beverages (incl. beer) are generally safe
- Try to remain conscious of casual water: dishes and utensils should be thoroughly clean and dry before use; teeth should be brushed with bottled or purified water

Remember to let us know of any dietary requirements before you depart.

Public Holidays

When planning your trip, you should be aware of the major national holidays celebrated throughout the country. However, although businesses and government offices are closed on public holidays, tourist attractions and shops are almost never closed. The main impact on the tourist of these holidays is the increased competition for travel and accommodation from Indians who use long weekends to get away from the big city.

To view a list of the public holidays for India, please see the link below:

www.timeanddate.com/holidays/india/

Weather

India's climate generally has three seasons, which may vary from region to region. The hot season roughly beginning in February in the North and peaking in June can reach up to and above 45 Celsius in some areas, mostly in the centre of the country. You can expect Delhi to have temperatures at the high end of the 30's.

Monsoon season means steady rain for the whole country from the beginning of July. It stays pretty hot, and though it doesn't rain all day, it does generally rain every day. The Monsoon causes muddy conditions at best but serious flooding is also a threat. The cool season is the optimum time to travel in India, as it is not too hot and not too cool. In the winter it does get surprisingly cold in the Northern regions, whereas in the south the temperatures are beautiful.

Time

India is 5.5 hours ahead of GMT.

Electricity

Electricity in India uses 240 volts, 50Hz. If your device does not run on these rates, you'll need a voltage converter.

Outlets across India generally accept the following plug types;



Two round pins

or



Three round pins arranged in a triangle

Trip Note Disclaimer

The information contained in this trip note has been compiled with great care and is provided in good faith. Any itinerary featured is correct at time of release. However, our itineraries may change as we make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of recommended travel advice.

You can rest assured that it is always our goal to provide you with the most rewarding trip and experience ever!

Our Details

If you have any questions about this trip please do not hesitate to contact us and we'll be happy to answer them.

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