T: 1-800-985-4852
E: info@realgap.com
P: Real Gap Experience, 8 Essex Center Drive, Peabody, MA 01960

India Community Development

Adventure Relaxation Culture

Trip Name: India Community Development **Trip Code:** INCD **Duration:**

Trip Highlights

- Visit India's most famous gem; the Taj Mahal!
- Immerse yourself in local life and experience what it is to be in one of Asia's fastest growing economies.
- Make a real difference to the lives of local people.
- Go on a camel safari in Rajasthan or experience Tibetan culture in Dharamshala on the Himachal programme.

Overview

With community development in India you will get a chance to bring a new lease of life to the local community by helping out with a whole host of labour and social development projects.

You can get involved with anything from much-needed restoration work to increasing awareness of HIV/AIDS. As well as taking in the sights of the stunning Himachal Pradesh region you'll gain a unique insight into local life and even get the chance to try your hand at Indian cooking!

Destination Info

This project is based in the desert lands of Rajasthan and the hill state of Himachal. Both regions are home to some of India's most stunning treasures including the Thar Desert and the city of Jaipur in Rajasthan and McLeod Ganj, home to the Dalai Lama and the Great Himalayan National Park in Himachal. There's more than enough natural beauty to keep you busy in your spare time and plenty of markets, forts and temples to feast your eyes on!

Itinerary

India Community Development

Your help is needed to improve public facilities and increase awareness of important social and healthcare issues in some of India's poorest areas. Your day to day itinerary will depend on the needs of the village you are working in. The programme is generally split into two main areas; social development and labour work, your daily tasks may include:

Labour work projects

- Restoration and decoration of Anganwadis/Balwadis (day-care centres)
- Restoration and decoration of the village primary school
- Painting and decoration of school interiors
- Preparing sports facilities for basketball, badminton, court and football.
- Plantation of flowers, ornamental plants and trees at school campus
- Repairing houses of Below Poverty Line families
- Restoration and decoration of village community facilities with participation of the villagers.
- Motivating teams of children from the village to clear garbage, plant trees etc.
- Construction of dustbins (follow up action is intended to create hygiene awareness amongst children)

Social development work

- Importance of nutrition and balanced diet
- Awareness about hygiene and health care issues
- IDD (Iodine Deficiency Disorders) awareness campaign
- Importance of breast feeding
- Precautionary measures against HIV infection

Volunteers staying for 2 weeks will also be able to set off on the following inclusive excursions:

Rajasthan and Himachal volunteers: You will be taken on a two-day/one-night trip to Agra to visit the beautiful Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal is one of the 7 Wonders of the World and the experience of seeing this marvel is truly mesmerising.

Volunteers staying for 3 weeks will be able to take part in the inclusive excursions below:

Rajasthan volunteers: You will set off on two- day/one-night trip to the Hindu religious town of Pushkar, where you can enjoy a camel ride in the spectacular desert surroundings.

Himachal volunteers: You will be taken on a two-day/one-night excursion to visit the seat of Tibetan government in exile at Dharamshala. You'll get to experience Tibetan culture and see some great scenery.

Day 1 Arrival in Delhi
On arrival in Delhi you will be met at the airport and taken to your accommodation.

Days 2 to 4 Orientation
The first few days are all about getting settled in to life in India and are orientation based, giving you an insight into the culture, having a chance to see some of the sights and finding out what you will be doing over the next few weeks. The orientation days include a range of fun activities such as; morning yoga sessions, a Bollywood dance class and a henna workshop. You will also be taken to see a Bollywood movie!

Day 5 Agra
Today you will be transfered to Agra to visit the Taj Mahal which will definitely be a highlight of your trip. As well as the Taj Mahal, you'll get to see the Red Fort and local markets.

Day 6 Transfer to the project
Leaving the Taj Mahal behind, you'll travel to either Rajasthan or Himachal which will be the location of your volunteer work.

Day 7 Free day

You'll have a free day to settle into your new surroundings before you begin volunteering.

Days 8 to 14 Volunteering

For your first day at the project you'll be shown the ropes before getting stuck in. You'll also meet the people around the village who you'll be working with for the following days.

Days 15 to 16

For people on the two-week programme there will be a village meeting and farewell before returning to Delhi.

On Day 16, the group will arrive in Delhi to fly home or continue on their trip.

People on a three-week programme will continue on the programme.

Days 17–18
Rajasthan volunteers: The group will go on a two- day/one-night trip to the Hindu religious town of Pushkar, where you can enjoy a camel ride in the spectacular desert surroundings (for three-week participants only).

Himachal volunteers: You will be taken on a two-day/one-night excursion to Dharamshala to experience Tibetan culture merged into Indian context with great scenery and weather.

Days 19–21

Working at the village.

Days 22–23
For your final day at the village you will attend a village meeting to say goodbye before returning to Delhi and flying home (or continue with independent travelling).

Please Note: Accommodation is included on the 23rd night if you are not departing Dehli until the following day.

Itineraries and activities are subject to change.

Accommodation

You will be staying at a local facility in your allocated area, sharing with no more than one other volunteer. As you will be working in impoverished areas there will be no shower, however, you will have access to bucket baths of hot water.

Programme Services and Facilities

Internet

Internet access can be quite difficult to come across on a project such as this due to the amount that you are moving around throughout. It is likely, though that you will have access to the Internet at various points during the trip, depending on your location. Please note that internet access is sometimes slow and not always reliable.

Telephone

The international telephone access code for India is +91.

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

The telephone situation is the same as with the Internet, and entirely depends on your location.

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. 1600 ($43 USD), 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, so either bring some washing powder or buy some from a shop near to your project.

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.

Meals

Most meals are included and will consist mainly of vegetable and sometimes fish curries, Indian breads, rice and fruit.

What's Included

- Arrival airport transfer
- Accommodation
- Local transport at project locations
- Orientation on arrival
- All Meals - 3 meals a day
- On site assistance

What's Not Included

- Flights
- Tourist Visa
- Personal insurance cover
- Any Excursions

Additional Information

Travelling at Altitude

If you choose to volunteer in Himachal, parts of your trip will go above 2800 metres / 9200 feet where it is common for travellers to experience some adverse effects on your health due to the altitude. Please see further information on Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE) and High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE).

Please note: for this trip the deposit payable at the time of booking is £199 plus 10% of the total trip cost.

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.

Personal Admin

- Passport, insurance certificates and personal documentation
- Photocopies of all the above to be left at home with your next of kin
- Spending money
- Cash for airport departure tax
- Proof of inoculations (please speak to your doctor about necessary immunisations
- Guidebook on country – recommended Lonely Planet or Footprints

General

- Camera / Film / Batteries
- Notebook and pen / diary
- Torch / Extra Batteries
- Sunglasses
- Pocket-knife (comes in handy for general use)
- Water bottle – at least 1 Litre
- Day pack/rucksack for everyday use
- A 3-Season Sleeping bag (especially useful when on weekend excursions)
- Mosquito Net (if required)
- Personal enjoyment - books, cards, music, to enjoy with your fellow volunteers etc.
- Personal hygiene items (deodorant, soap, shampoo, toothbrush etc)

Clothing

- Appropriate clothing*
- Hat
- Sandals
- Waterproof Jacket
- Fleece/pullover (for cool evenings)
- Long trousers
- Warmer clothing for winter
- Swimwear
- Towel

Medical Kit

- Personal Hygiene Kit (ex. Antihistamines, Anti- diarrhoea tablets, headache tablets)
- Personal Toiletries
- Sunscreen
- Mosquito and insect repellent

***Clothing**
All volunteers are advised that conservative clothing is required to be worn by all participants while they are in the projects during their work. While below is a general guideline on clothing, we strongly recommend that volunteers acquire Indian outfits as soon as possible in their programme. Wearing Indian outfits will ensure that the volunteers will be treated with respect by the local people and they attract a lot less unwanted attention, that wearing revealing western outfits will result in. Conservatively dressing will also ensure that your local coworkers will take you a lot more seriously, which will have a positive impact on the effectiveness of your work at your project.

Guidelines for all volunteers:

- All tops should cover the waistband of your pants. Except in the case of saris, styles that show the mid-riff are not acceptable for either women or men.
- Shorts and tank-tops are not considered appropriate wear for men or women.
- If wearing pants with a drawstring, the drawstring should be tucked in.
- Collared shirts are always preferred over t-shirts.

Special guidelines for female volunteers:

- Long skirts (covering the ankle) are appropriate.
- All clothing that is semi-transparent or see through should be avoided.
- Pants should completely cover your ankles – no floods or capri pants.
- Shirts should cover your shoulders; necklines should not show cleavage.
- Tight clothing of any kind is not recommended.

Minimum Age
18 years old

Flights
To get your airport pick up, your flight to India must land into New Delhi International Airport (DEL) any time on your programme start date. Please arrange your flight home for between 8pm on your programme end date and 10am the following morning to receive the included airport transfer.

To book your flights call 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 will I need?**
   We recommend that you take around £70 per week

2. **What type of clothing do you recommend I take with me?**
   Whilst volunteering you will need clothes that cover your shoulders, mid-rif and length should be to at least your knees.

3. **How will I wash my clothes while I'm away?**
   All washing will have to be done by hand, so either bring some washing powder or buy some from a shop near to your project.

4. **Can I do both options year round?**
   You can do the Himchal option year round, however, the Rajasthan option does not run over the summer months as it is far too hot in the desert.

5. **Do I need a visa to visit India?**
   You will need to obtain an Indian Tourist visa before you leave the UK

6. **How high is the trekking in Himachal?**
   The trek will take you through the foothills of the Himalaya and normally reaches a height of 3200 metres.

7. **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.

8. **Do I need to take a mosquito net?**
   All the rooms at the Camps are equipped with mosquito nets.

9. **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.

Police Check

This trip requires a Police Check to be carried out - please contact us for further information on how to do this.

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.

Whist 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 you 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

Thre 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 make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of reommended 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.

Phone: 1-800-985-4852
Email: info@realgap.com
Post: Real Gap Experience, 8 Essex Center Drive, Peabody, MA 01960
Web: www.realgap.com