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India Adventure

Adventure Relaxation Culture

Trip Name: India Adventure **Trip Code:** INXP **Duration:** From 28 days

Trip Highlights

- Variety is the spice of life, and India's got bags of the stuff!
- Volunteer at our local community projects
- Visit the beautiful Taj Mahal
- Take a camel safari into the desert
- Immerse yourself into India's amazing culture

Overview

If you're looking to infuse your travels full of adventure, culture, great food and discovery then India's the place! Full to the brim of fantastic activity, our India Experience trip is perfect for those who fancy seeing the 'real India' whilst exploring and volunteering through different regions of the country.

Although it's almost impossible for us to pick out highlights of our fantastic four week trip, we have become rather attached to our camel safaris in the Thar desert (including a night under the stars in a tented camp), the visits to the Taj Mahal, trekking in Mcleod Ganj and the conclusional week in the beautiful Goa!

Want to find out more on the India Experience? Click HERE to download the full itinerary and trip details.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are looking to start your India Experience between now and the end of 2015 please click here to see the 2015 itinerary that will apply to your trip.

Destination Info

During the India experience you will discover the hustle and bustle of the second most populated nation on earth. You will be submersed within the rich cultural history and witness the countries astonishing natural beauty. From the ‘golden triangle’ of Delhi, the Taj Mahal and Jaipur, your experience in India will be unlike anything you have done before. As a deeply religious country, all the major religions of the world are represented. Away from the noise and bustle of the more populated areas there are also plenty of peaceful and deeply spiritual places to find tranquillity.

Itinerary

Days 1-6

After arriving at Delhi airport (DEL) bright eyed and bushy tailed, you’ll be greeted at the airport and taken to your guest house where you’ll have the chance to get settled for the night before heading out for some sightseeing in the morning.

(Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner included - Dependant on your arrival timings)

After breakfast on day 2 you’ve got a tour of New Delhi (you lucky things)! The tour will visit a handful of India’s important cultural symbols. Drive past the impressive India Gate, Parliament house and President’s Palace. Then visit Raj Ghat, the memorial built in honour of Mahatma Gandhi! Later on, visit Gurudwara Bangla Sahib (a Sikh temple) to learn about the youngest religion in the world whilst absorbing the special atmosphere around this beautiful holy shrine.

(Breakfast & Dinner included)

On day 3, after breakfast obviously, you’ll transfer over to Agra where you get to see the amazing Taj Mahal - one of the world’s most iconic sights! Expect to be blown away, the Taj Mahal is the most famous of Indian heritage and essentially a symbol of love, this place is amazing! You'll be staying overnight in Agra as the journey can be a busy one.

(Breakfast)

Day 4 will start with an early breakfast as you'll be travelling to Jaipur, the drive will take approximately five to six

hours. When you arrive at the camp there will be a short orientation and briefing about the rest of your trip.

(Breakfast & Dinner included)

For the next couple of days, you'll be lending a helping hand volunteering on one of our projects in Jaipur (how thoughtful of you!). Volunteer work will take place in the local communities and you're generally placed at whichever projects needs your help the most at that time.

You'll have some extremely rewarding but challenging starts to the day, but don't worry - in the afternoons you'll get the chance for some cultural activities; learn how to shake your hips to a Bollywood rhythm, learn about the traditional dress styles of India, or learn more about the famous Indian art of Henna making, then enjoy some free time before dinner.

(Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner included)

Days 7-12

It's a bit of an early one today as after breakfast, you'll be transferring to Pushkar, one of the holiest pilgrimages for Hindus and home to the only temple of the 'Creator' God, Brahma. Once you've arrived in Pushkar, you'll take on another exciting form of transport - the ship of the desert... a camel! You'll take a camel safari through sandy ravines of the Thar Desert and the local villages which lace the area. After sunset, you'll enjoy a clear view of the star lit night sky, and you'll spend the night in a tent, - yep you guessed it… in the desert!

(Breakfast & Dinner)

After breakfast on day 8 you'll return to Pushkar where you'll take a leisurely guided tour of the town whilst exploring the steps to the Holy Lake and the town of 500 temples. You'll then get some free time to raid the busy markets of Pushkar and stock up on some souvenirs! Afterwards is a transfer to Jaipur where we'll stay for the night.

(Breakfast & Dinner)

On days 9 & 10 you can either explore the city of Jaipur and stay overnight as part of a free weekend for your own

activities, or feel free to take part in a two day optional tour to Udaipur (this can be booked and paid for locally). Udaipur surrounds the azure lake, hemmed in by the lush hills of the Aravallis.

(Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner)

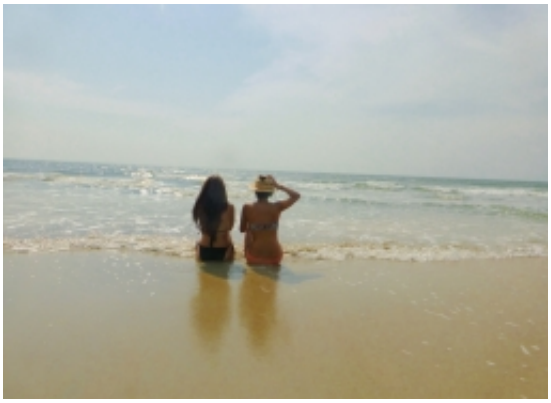
Its back to volunteering on day 11, so pull those socks up! You'll be back in Jaipur continuing to help the locals where they most need it. Again you'll get to do some cultural activities in the evening (whoop whoop).

(Breakfast & Dinner)

After taking an early breakfast on day 12, you'll be visiting the famous Amber Fort and Water Palace! The rest of the day provides plenty of adrenaline rushes too - experience a Rickshaw Ride through the busy markets of Jaipur and the 'Pink City', then you'll have some more time to chill or check out the buzzing shops in the old Bazaars of Pink City.

*Entrance fee not included

(Breakfast & Dinner included)



Day 13-15

Day 13 is a bit of a free day before travelling. A guide will rock up at around lunch time. In the late afternoon you'll be transferred to the railway station to catch the overnight train to Pathankot, don't worry you'll be able to get some sleep on this journey.

(Breakfast, Lunch and packed Dinner)

Upon arrival on day 14 you'll transfer from the railway station to Palampur. Here you'll get to visit the in-country team at their office – here you'll be welcomed and have a small orientation briefing you on your next activities. After the orientation you will be transferred to your accommodation where you'll be staying overnight.

(Lunch & Dinner)

After breakfast on day 15, you'll be driving to McLeod Ganj, here you will visit the waterfall and Bhangsunath Temple, located in Bhagsu Village (3km from McLeod Ganj). This tranquil medieval temple has sacred Hindu pools and is the life of the village housing the Namgyal Monastery and shrine rooms. The largest shrine contains a huge gilded statue of the Buddha, along with two smaller statues of Chenresig and Guru Rinpoche. You'll be staying overnight in McLeod Ganj where you can check out some of the local markets.

(Breakfast & Dinner)

Days 16 – 21

In the morning of day 16, you will start trekking the mountain with a guide. This is a beautiful walk through mixed forests of deodar, oak and Rhodendron. You will be camping overnight in a spot that has panoramic views of the snow-capped mountain peaks of Himalaya (a moment you will never forget). Tents will be provided.

(Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner)

On the following day, you will start trekking down McLeod Ganj so make sure you fuel-up at breakfast. After arriving back in McLeod Ganj you can enjoy lunch before being driving back to Palampur - where you will be staying overnight.

(Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner)

Day 18 will start with an early morning, but this time it's definitely worth it! You'll get to find your Zen with an hour of yoga and meditation followed by what will probably be a very chilled breakfast.

After breakfast you will be transferred to the town of Kangra by train, here you can visit the Banganga River and deep in the valley the Kangra Fort. Later on, you will visit Brajeshwari Temple and return back to overnight accommodation in Palampur.

(Breakfast & Dinner)

Relaxation is on the cards again for day 19 as you'll be rising to an early morning yoga and meditation session (man you're going to be so refreshed). Mid-morning consists of a sightseeing tour visting Baijnath Temple. There are some interesting legendary stories surrounding this temple so be sure to ask! Afterwards you will visit a monastery and Adareta Museum before returning to Palampur.

(Breakfast & Dinner)

You'll be starting day 20 with some serious level-headedness; it's another early morning yoga and meditation class. After this, you have your own time to explore the city. Once you've returned and had some lunch it's time to drive down to the railway station to board your overnight train to Delhi.

(Breakfast, Lunch & Packed Dinner)

On the morning of day 21, you will be greeted at Delhi Railway station and transferred to your accommodation where you can check-in. Mid way through the morning, you will go and visit the Akshardham Temple, with 10,000 years of Indian culture. Later in the day you will visit the amazing Lotus temple; this distinctive lotus shaped temple made of marble is surrounded by a landscaped garden and is a symbol of peace. You then get to stay in Delhi overnight.

(Breakfast & Dinner)

Day 22

Today you will be transferred to Delhi airport to catch the flight for Goa, first of course comes breakfast thought. On arrival, you will be pickup from Goa airport and transferred to your shared accommodation, here you will have an induction before getting settled in.

(Dinner)

Days 23- 27

You'll have the weekend (days 23-24) to relax and explore the beautiful beaches of Goa at your own leisure, Goa is a globally renowned paradise so enjoy it my friend! On the last couple of days you'll be helping out the community by volunteering in the local community projects (days 25-27). You'll have free time in the afternoons to enjoy the beaches.

(Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner)

Day 28

Day 28 will be your final day, this will be spent with a light dose of community volunteering then chilling on the beach before some goodbyes (sad times). Your return flight should be arranged to depart from Goa Airport between 8pm on Day 28 and 10:00am the following morning. Make sure you grab some breakfast if you are flying early the next day! Safe travels!

(Breakfast)

Accommodation

During your stay in hotels you will be staying in twin share single-sex rooms with an en-suite bathroom. While at the volunteer camp you will be accommodated in a shared single-sex room. These are simple but clean and comfortable rooms and you will share with up to three others in your room. There are a number of bathrooms with western toilets and may have Indian showers- basically you fill a bucket of water and use a jug to pour the water over you (this is to conserve water). It takes a few days getting used to but its, all part of the cultural experience.

Your room will be available for check in from 12pm.

Programme Services and Facilities

Telephone

The international telephone access code for India is +91.

To place an outgoing, direct dialled international call, dial +44 for the UK 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. Mobile 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.

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. Private couriers may also be used as they have a fast and reliable service although a little more expensive.

Internet

Internet is available at the camp however it is slow and not always reliable. In Palampur town (1.5km away), there are internet cafés with fast and reliable connection.

Laundry

Laundry facilities will be basic, so be prepared to get your hands dirty and take some travel wash with you! There are local laundry services you can use for a relatively small fee.

Meals

The meals included during your time on the Experience vary from day to day. Meals that are included are stated in the itinerary, all other meals are not included. However, this gives you a great opportunity to sample a varied range of India's world famous food.

What's Included

- Arrival airport transfer (subject to arrival time)
- Meals as per the programme itinerary
- Excursions and activities as stated in programme itinerary (excluding any entrance fees)
- English speaking local guide
- Transfers as per programme itinerary
- Local transport as part of your planned itinerary to volunteer work or activities
- Internal flight from Delhi to Goa

What's Not Included

- International Flights
- Travel Insurance
- Tourist Visa
- Telephone calls/Internet use
- Any entrance fees to monuments

Additional Information

Orientation

You will have a brief orientation of all the amazing things that you will see and do over the coming four weeks when you arrive in Jaipur. This will cover areas such as culture, language, safety and all the activities that you can do in your spare time. This is also a great chance to ask any last minute questions you may have before heading off on this great adventure!

For those that choose the volunteer option will have a more in depth orientation prior to taking part in the volunteering aspect of your Experience.

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

What is a Real Gap 'Adventure'?

A Real Gap Adventure is a small group tour designed to guide you through your chosen country, with less 'hand-holding' than a Real Gap Experience. Some self-travel will be required, but you'll still have the security of having our in-country team around to help you out if needed. All of our Real Gap Adventures include diverse cultural experiences and some include volunteering work. You'll have a load of free time so if you're a bit more independent, this is the trip for you!

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 it is exhaustive. There will be opportunities for you to shop in local markets and towns.

Personal Admin

- Passport, insurance certificates and personal documentation
- Visa Documents
- Photocopies of all the above to be left at home with your next of kin
- Spending money
- Proof of inoculations (please speak to your doctor about necessary immunisations)
- Secure, waterproof bag for documents and money: sealable plastic bags will do

General

- Sleeping Bag (for independent travel after programme)
- 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
- Diary – you will have so many amazing experiences to remember
- MP3 player and speakers (if you wish)
- Toiletries (soap, shampoo, toothbrush etc)
- Tissues/toilet roll
- Wet wipes
- Plastic bags
- Snacks (cup of soups, biscuits etc)
- Pocket-knife (handy for general use - but dont leave in hand luggage!)
- Clothing
- Walking boots or sturdy walking shoes for the trek

- Trainers
- Flip Flops
- A hat to protect you from the sun
- Rain coat (essential during June to September)
- Pashmina or lightweight scarf for covering up whilst visiting temples
- Clothes. Long sleeve shirts and trousers are needed out of cultural respect. Remember to bring beachwear for beach time.
- If travelling between January and March, please ensure you bring warm clothes, jumpers, thermals, thick socks etc as it gets very cold at night.

Medical Kit

- Small medical kit containing plasters, medicine for diarrhoea, head ache tablets, anti- histamine cream and any medication you will need
- Tampons, if applicable (as these are scarcely found in India)
- Anti Bacterial Hand Gel
- Mosquito repellent
- Contraception including condoms
- Travel wash for clothes

Minimum Age

Minimum age 18, maximum age dependent on participant's health.

Minimum Numbers

This programme requires a minimum number of participants to run.

Flights

If you are starting your India Experience trip in 2015: Your flight to India should land into New Delhi Airport (DEL) any time on your programme start date.

If you are starting your India Experience trip in 2016: Your flight to India should land into New Delhi Airport (DEL) between 10AM on your programme start date and 6AM on day 2 of the itineray.

Your return flight should be arranged to depart from Goa Airport 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 for the best deals we can find. Please provide us with your full name as it is stated in your passport. Before you make the call please make sure you have your required departure dates, return dates and other details you may require.

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.

Please note: This programme requires a minimum number of participants to run. Please contact us to confirm whether the minimum numbers have been met for your start date, we recommend that you do not book your flights until we have confirmed these numbers and the programme will be running.

FAQs

1. **Do I need hiking boots for the trek?**
   You will be trekking on quite mountainous terrain so we would recommend sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots to give your feet the support they need!

2. **What is the golden triangle?**
   It's a circuit which covers three magnificent cities Delhi (capital of India), Agra (city of Taj Mahal) and Jaipur (pink city).

3. **How much spending money should I take?**
   We recommend that you take around £70 per week although you know best re your spending habits! You may wish to take more...

4. **I am travelling on my own, what support will I have?**
   You will have project co-ordinator that will meet you on arrival and also be around during your travelling time as well as during project work so you will always have help at hand.

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

6. **Do I need to take a sleeping bag?**
   No, you won't need to take one with you as the quilts & mattresses are provided at all of the accommodation & during excursions for the duration of the trip.

7. **Do I need to take a mosquito net?**
   No you won't need to take one with you as all the rooms are equipped with mosquito nets.

8. **Will there be a safety deposit box/safe available?**
   There is locker facility at all the Camps where you will be able to keep your valuables & you will be responsible for the key.

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.

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