

REAL
Gap Experience

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India Kerala Experience

Adventure



Relaxation



Culture



Trip Name: India Kerala Experience **Trip Code:** INKE **Duration:**

Trip Highlights

- Cruising down Kerala's backwaters by house boat
- Making a child with special needs giggle with joy
- Visiting an elephant camp
- Seeing the Athirapally waterfalls
- Braving the local cuisine infamous for its red hot spices



Overview

You will be spending two exciting weeks experiencing the mellow southern Indian way of life on this trip as you cruise along the stunning backwaters, visit with elephants and also help at a project working with special needs children.

You will also explore Kerala's colonial heritage as you take a tour of the historic Fort Kochi area and will be amazed by the Santa Cruz Basilica, one of the most impressive churches in all of Kerala. Then relax on a house boat as you slowly cruise down the backwaters stopping at fishing villages for lunch, all this in just two weeks!

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!

Kerala is a state located in the Southern tip of India and is renowned as a tropical paradise with palm trees and wide sandy beaches and is famous for its backwaters and house boats. If India is on your list of places to go then Kerala is a must see destination.

Itinerary



Day 1: Arrive into Cochin

Today you will be met at the airport and accompanied to your accommodation. It takes around 45 minutes to an hour to drive from the airport to your homestay so sit back, gaze out of the window and take in the sights, sounds and smells of Kerala. You'll have some time to unpack in your new digs and meet your fellow travellers and in-country team before sitting down to your first Indian dinner.

If you aren't able to arrange a flight to get you into Cochin on the designated arrival day then we'd recommend you fly in a day early. We can arrange an early airport pick-up for you including one night's accommodation for an additional fee. Please call us for more information.

Day 2: Explore Kochi

Today you'll set off to explore Kerala's colonial heritage as you take a tour of the historic Fort Kochi area. Be amazed by the Santa Cruz Basilica, one of the most impressive churches in all of Kerala. You will also take a walk back in time to visit the home of Vasco de Gama, a famous Portuguese explorer, as well as visiting the home of Kerala's royal family and the Jewish Synagogue.

Make sure you don't miss the 'Chinese' fishing nets - one of the most easily recognisable symbols and attractions of Kerala set alongside a peaceful waterfront walk. If you ask nicely the fishermen will even let you have a go yourself! There is also the opportunity for plenty of shopping for colonial artifacts and souvenirs – get haggling!

Breakfast, lunch and dinner of traditional fare are included.



Day 3: Meet the children

Today you'll be up bright and early for your first day your project! Today is all about settling in and getting to know your way around. You'll be accompanied to the project by a member of the in-country team who will make sure you know the way and introduce you to the staff and children. This is a great opportunity to ask questions about the work you'll be doing so don't be shy! Be prepared to be the centre of attention as the children will be very curious and keen to get to know you!

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included.

Day 4 to Day 6: Time to get stuck in!

Your next few days will be spent actively working with children and young people with special needs. Enjoy every minute as you get to know these inspirational children and get stuck into activities including singing songs, playing games, arts and crafts and music. The overall goal will be to keep the children and young adults happy, healthy and to help them to enjoy learning. Your typical day will be working from 9.30am to 3.30pm but you're welcome to stay longer if you have the energy. You'll be working alongside staff at the project and working with children either on a one to one or group basis.

Breakfast, a packed lunch and dinner are included each day.

Day 7: Alleppey backwaters cruise

All aboard! After breakfast you'll be off on your serene picturesque boat cruise. You will have a tasty lunch on the boat and then start exploring the scenic backwaters. You will pass quaint villages, fisherman hard at work, women washing garments in the water, giggling children playing in the canals and running along the canal banks to keep up with you. You'll then spend the night drifting silently along the lush canals as you dig into a traditional tasty dinner.

This is one of the main attractions of Kerala and offers a great insight into a way of life that is rapidly disappearing. Whatever you do, don't forget your camera!

All meals are included today.



Day 8: Back to Kochi

After breakfast on the boat you will head back to your home stay in Kochi to relax and explore more of Cochin at your leisure. Home stays are a great way to get a unique insight into a different culture and to see more of a destination so spend time getting to know your hosts!

Later, it's time to get dressed up in your finery as tonight you will be dazzled by traditional and theatrical Kerala dancing, martial arts and drama. Theatres of this kind are an important part of Kerala's tradition so sit back and enjoy the evening!

All meals are included today.

Day 9 to Day 11: Make a difference

Make the most of your last few days at the project as you spend this time engaging with them as much as your energy levels allow. There is no such thing as being too creative; invent new games, teach new songs and have a ball playing with these very special children and young people. The old saying definitely holds true here; the more you put in, the more you'll get out.

All meals are included today.



Day 12: Elephant Extravaganza and Athirapally waterfalls!

Today it's an early start as you journey to an elephant camp in time for their morning bath! You'll see the mahouts (elephant keepers) bringing their elephants to the water and washing them, and you'll even be able to get stuck in yourself and help with the bath! This is a fantastic opportunity to get up close and personal with these surprisingly graceful long-nosed animals.

Please bear in mind that these very big animals live in the village and in order to control them they are sometimes shackled at the feet. However, there is no cause for concern as the elephants are very well looked after and the mahouts are dedicated and love their animals very much.

Your afternoon will include a trip to Athirapally which is located 70km from Kodanad. You make your way through the stunning landscape on a short but tiring walk before finally arriving at the Athirapally waterfalls where a cool down in a rock pool is a must!

Next is a short drive to a local restaurant for lunch where you can admire the views of the Athirapally waterfalls. After lunch and you have the choice of just sitting back and admiring the views or taking a dip in the infinity pool to round off the day. Bring your swimming costume so you don't have to miss out!

All meals are included today.

Day 13: Backwater tour and fishing village

Today you will have another chance to enjoy the gorgeous backwaters, as you cruise along them in traditional boats, soaking up the atmosphere and relaxing. Meet the locals and enjoy a traditional Kerala lunch in a beautiful village setting.

All meals are included today.



Day 14: Last chance to shop!

Today is the day to buy all those last minute souvenirs. You'll travel to bustling Ernakulam, the commercial capital

of Kerala, which is the perfect place to pick up some traditional gifts. Bring a sari home to your friends and be sure to stock up on miniature Hindu gods and bangle bracelets. Prepare to haggle!

All meals are included today.

Day 15: Time to say goodbye

Say your fond farewells to your new friends as today you will be transferred back to the airport for your journey home or on to your next adventure. Feel free to ask the in country team for some tips if you're travelling on in India! A taxi back to the airport is a maximum of 1 hours ride and will cost round 700 rupees.

You are free to book your flight back at any point during the day, but we'd recommend an afternoon flight to give you enough time to get to the airport.

Meals can be included today if you need them before you head to the airport.

Please note that the order of the itinerary may vary slightly from trip to trip. All the explained activities will be included, although you may not follow this exact itinerary.

Accommodation

You'll spend the majority of your time in Kerala staying in a locally run homestay accommodation in Thoppumpady, a small town just a short bus or rickshaw ride from the bustling tourist area of Fort Kochi. You'll also spend a night on a houseboat, which will have twin bedrooms with showers and western-style toilets.

Rooms are shared by two people of the same sex (although friends and couples of different sexes can also be accommodated easily) and each room has its own bathroom. There's also a communal area where volunteers can eat and relax together.

Accommodation facilities

Bedroom facilities will be on a twin sharing basis, and there will be plenty of storage space and a ceiling fan to keep you cool! A lockable draw will be provided in the accommodation for each volunteer to use.

Each bedroom has a bathroom with western style toilet, running hot water and a shower. You'll be surprised at how your priorities change whilst away – hair straighteners have no place in India!

India Kerala Experience

The communal area has comfortable seating, a large dining table and there's even a television with English language channels! In addition, there's a fridge for keeping your snacks and drinks cool, a kettle, sink and kitchen area for your use.

You will be provided with delicious traditional Indian-style meals every day. Don't worry if you can't handle the spice because you opt for the milder versions if you prefer (we won't tell anyone!). Vegetarians are easily catered for since over 70% of Indians eat a mostly meat free diet. All you carnivores out there should prepare to eat a lot of veggies!

There is a laundry service at the homestay, and you can ask for your clothes to be washed for a tiny 5 rupees per item fee.

Where is the accommodation?

The homestay is based in Thoppumpady, a small town just a short bus or rickshaw ride from the bustling tourist area of Fort Kochi. Thoppumpady is a lovely town with all the facilities you need – internet cafes, shops and banks are within easy reach on foot.

How far is it from my project?

Your journey to work each morning will take a maximum of 45 minutes. There's a 20 minute bus journey followed by a short walk through Fort Kochi, along the beach and past the Chinese fishing nets. You'll be accompanied by a member of the in-country team on the journey until you feel confident making it yourself, but you'll have the company of your fellow volunteers so don't worry, just enjoy the views on your commute!

The bus journey costs just 6 rupees, and if you prefer to travel in style by auto-rickshaw you should budget a maximum of 100 rupees (or cheaper if you're prepared to haggle!)

Programme Services and Facilities

Internet

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

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. For example to call Real Gap Experience dial +44 1892 516164 / +49 69 222226 475.

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

There is a laundry service at the homestay and you can ask for your clothes to be washed for a small fee per item.

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

Please see itinerary.

What's Included

- Shared twin room in a homestay and houseboat
- All breakfast lunch and dinners as stated on the itinerary
- Airport pick up on the arrival day, return airport transfer at the end of the trip
- In country orientation
- Local in country team and 24 hr emergency support
- Excursions as mentioned in the itinerary



What's Not Included

- Flights
- Insurance
- Visa
- Local transport when at the project



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. In addition, it is worth noting that you can buy lots of the above in Kerala and at a very cheap price and there will be opportunities for you to shop in local markets.

Personal Admin

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

General

- Mosquito net and sleeping bag if you plan on travelling independently after the trip
- 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
- Ladies, when you are visiting religious sites it is respectful to cover your hair. Take along a lovely scarf or pashmina to cover your locks.

Clothing

- Walking shoes / trainers
- Flip Flops
- A hat to protect you from the sun
- Rain coat (especially during June to September).
- Long sleeve shirts and trousers are needed as these are required during work placements and wearing shorts is not viewed favourable in public in India. Ladies keep your shoulders covered and wear trousers or skirts that are knee length or longer and avoid tight or revealing clothing, or t-shirts with slogans that could cause offence.

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

Minimum age 18

Minimum Numbers

This trip requires minimum numbers to operate.

Flights

Your flight to India should land at Cochin International Airport (airport code COK) on your programme start date. Your return flight should be arranged to depart any time on your departure day but we would recommend an afternoon flight to give you enough time to get to the airport.

To book your flights, please contact your travel advisor who will do their best to get you the best deal on the day. Please provide them 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 of 4 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 that the programme will be running.

FAQs

1. How much spending money will I need?

We recommend that you take around £70 per week.

2. Do I need to wear particular clothing?

Whilst volunteering you will need clothes that cover your shoulders, mid-rif and length should be to at least your knees.

3. Do I need a visa to visit India?

You will need to obtain an Indian Tourist visa before you leave the UK.

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 programmes have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimised.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our UK 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 and Real Travel are part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

Beware: Don't book with an organisation that has no financial protection for their clients. Not only are they breaking the law, you could lose all your money or be stranded overseas.

Our ATOL licence (6527), offers complete financial protection for any flight inclusive trips. To acquire an ATOL licence we have to undergo a very rigorous inspection from the Civil Aviation Authority, so you know that we tick all of the boxes. The ATOL license means that no matter what happens to us, your money will either be returned or if you've already left, your trip will be guaranteed.

We are also a Member of ABTA which means you have the benefit of ABTA's assistance and Code of Conduct. Many of the travel arrangements that we sell are protected in case of the financial failure of the travel company. If you have any questions about the financial protection that applies to your booking then please ask our team and they'll be happy to help.

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 General Practitioner 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.

A useful website to visit in the first instance is <http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk>

Zika Virus

Zika virus is transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes and whilst the infection often occurs without symptoms it can cause an illness similar to dengue fever. There has recently been reported a possible link between exposure to Zika virus (ZIKV) in pregnancy and microcephaly and other congenital malformations and investigations are ongoing. We recommend you visit the [FCO website](#) and select your destination country for the latest travel advice prior to booking.

If you are already pregnant it is recommended you seek medical advice from your GP as [The National Travel Health Network and Centre \(NaTHNaC\)](#) advises you should consider avoiding travel to areas where ZIKV outbreaks are currently reported.

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 make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of Foreign and Commonwealth Travel Advice.

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

Volunteer numbers

Please note: You may be the only volunteer at your chosen project at any one time. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to contact us.

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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