

GENERAL INFORMATION

Welcome to India !! In order to make your travel smooth and trouble free, we request you to please read this check list we have prepared and please give us the information requested specially about your passport details and your preferences.

A useful source of important information is the US State Department website - http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1231.html. Health information is available at - <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/indianrg.htm>. Please take the time to go through the tips posted there.

Air Tickets for travel to India

You should get your international air tickets to India booked before you start your hotel bookings. This gives us an idea of the exact dates you will be traveling on. It is best to get your international tickets issued by a local agent in your area. If we issue such tickets, they are invariably more expensive than getting tickets issued in your own country.

Air Tickets for travel within India

Without fail, tickets for travel within India are cheaper to purchase in India. Please give us your itinerary and we will get the tickets issued in India.

Entry Procedures:

All non-India passport holders require visas to visit India.

Multiple Entry Visa will be required for those intending to visit the neighbouring countries like Afghanistan, Burma, Pakistan, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, Bangladesh.

A tourist visa is valid for 3 months stay in India. It can be extended for a further period of 3 months.

A visitor whose stay extends over 90 days must register with the Foreign Registration Office and get an exit endorsement on the Registration Certificate from the same office before departure.

In the US, visa contacts are -

Consulate General of India,

3 East 64th Street, New York, New York 10021.

Tel. (212) 774-0600, (212) 774-0610,

Fax (212) 570-9581. E-mail: visa@indiacgny.org

A private visa facilitation service is -

PVS International

1700 North Moore Street

Suite 310

Arlington, VA 22209

International: +1-703-908-0330

Domestic Toll Free: 1-800-556-9990

Fax: +1-703-908-0332

info@pvsinternational.org

In France, a private visa facilitation service is -

Visa Express, 54, rue de l'ouest, 75014, Paris.
Phone - 0 825 08 1020
www.visas-express.fr

In Brazil -
Embassy of India
SHIS QL 08, Coj 08,
Casa 01, Lago Sul, CEP 71.620/285,
Brasilia, DF,
Telephone: 00-55-61-32484006[4 lines]
Fax: 00-55-61-32485486
Email: hoc@indianembassy.org.br
Web : www.indianembassy.org.br

In the UK -
High Commission of India
India House, Aldwych, London WC2B 4NA
Tel: +44 (0)891 44 45 44 (visa information)
+44 (0)20 7836 8484 (switchboard)
Website: www.hcilondon.net
Visa Information - <http://www.hcilondon.net/visa/index.jsp>

Customs and Regulations on arrival:

- a. Tourists who do not have any dutiable goods or unaccompanied baggage can pass through the green channel, while others must go to the red channel for customs clearance.
- b. Importation of:
200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250 gms of tobacco: Alcoholic liquor upto 0.95 litres is permitted duty free.
- c. Importation of personal jewellery, cameras, binoculars, tape recorders, transistor, professional equipment etc. is allowed duty free, provided a TBRE (Tourist Baggage Re-Export) form is completed on arrival.

On Departure:

- a. The TBRE (Tourist Baggage Re-Export) form and the goods entered therein must be produced before Customs for verification at the port of departure.
- b. The export of animal skin, ivory, antique, gold coins and articles other than jewellery is permitted only if an export license is acquired from the Joint Controller of Imports & Exports, Government of India.

Currency

The decimal system of coinage is used in India, with 1 Rupee = 100 Paise. Bank notes are in denominations of 500, 100, 50, 20, 10 rupees.

Coins are in 5, 2, 1 rupee and 50, 25 paise denominations.

Value vis a vis US Dollar - 1 USD = Rs.43.00 (June 2008)

Money Changing

In cities you can change most major foreign currencies and brands of travellers' cheques - but you'll widen your options and save yourself hassles if you stick to US Dollars or Pounds Sterling or Euros, and either Thomas Cook or American Express travellers cheques.

It is not necessary to purchase local currency prior to your arrival in India. Foreign exchange counters at the hotels provide the same official rate of exchange as the banks or the airports.

It is therefore not necessary or recommended to purchase local currency at the airport.

However, it is recommended to purchase small denominations for use as tips or for small purchases. All credit cards are accepted at the city hotels you will be staying at. Smaller hotels and wildlife park lodging accept cash in local currency only.

Restrictions - No Indian currency may be brought into or taken out of the country. There is no restriction on the amount of Foreign currency that may be brought into India. However, if you are carrying more than US\$ 10, 000.00 or its equivalent, the same must be declared on arrival in the Currency Declaration Form.

All visitors to India are advised to change money through AUTHORISED MONEY CHANGERS and to obtain a receipt for all such transaction, because it will help you to reconvert unused Rupees into foreign currency at the time of departure.

Credit Cards

All Major Credit Cards are normally accepted in most city hotels, restaurants and merchant establishments. In small towns, jungle lodges and villages, you may be asked to pay in cash. Some establishments add a handling surcharge on payment by credit card. In many establishments Mastercard and Visacard are preferred over AMEX.

Clothing

Travel as light as possible. Casual wear is suitable for travel in India. The best outfit, especially during the hot summers, is a T-shirt worn with loose cotton trousers. You can purchase them anywhere in India, at very reasonable rates, at any of the shops. Light cottons are recommended from spring to autumn. In winter however you will need warm clothing and preferably a windcheater. Early morning and late evenings are very cold in Rajasthan in winter. People in rural India are quite conservative. It is advisable for ladies to wear modest clothing. Its better for women to avoid tank tops or short skirts / shorts. Adventurous ladies can try wearing the Indian 'salwar-kameez'. It is comfortable and free sized. Clothing and laundry are both quite inexpensive.

Social Interaction

If you give the impression of being from a different country, chances are that you might be stared at, especially in the smaller towns. Don't be offended - they mean no harm, it is just curiosity.

Toilets

In India, public toilet facilities are few and far between. Take every opportunity you can to use a clean toilet in places such as hotels and restaurants. Make this a habit wherever you go.

Beggars

Do not let them hassle you, and do not encourage them by giving them money. It is better to give food or to donate to charities. Websites such as

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Charities_based_in_India,

<http://www.giveindia.org> or <http://www.garamchai.com/charities.htm> list some of the charities active in India.

Water

It is advisable to use only bottled drinking water during your trip in India. Many popular brands are available. In restaurants insist that they bring a sealed bottle to your table. Some leading brands are Kinley (by Coke), Aquafina (by Pepsi), Bisleri, Himalaya.

Food

Beef is not served in many parts of India. Pork is also not easily available. Eat non-vegetarian food only in good restaurants. The meat in cheaper and smaller places can be of dubious quality.

Good quality vegetarian food is easily available. Curd or yoghurt is served with most meals. It is a natural aid to digestion and helps temper the spicy food. Please avoid eating raw food.

Health Precautions

Always drink bottled water.

For the first few days it might be advisable to clean your teeth in bottled water.

Eat fruit you can peel.

Always wash fruit well before eating it.

Eat cooked food and avoid raw salads.

Wash your hands before and after eating.

Always keep a tube of mosquito repellent with you.

Always carry a kit of the basic emergency medicines you might need for diarrhoea, fever, etc. Also, band aids and an antiseptic ointment.

If you do catch a bug, do not panic. It will go away in a few days - but try the following tips to keep it down:

- Drink lassi - a yoghurt drink. It will help tone down the bacteria.
- Eat plain rice, or try a simple khichdi - an easily digestible mixture of rice and lentils.
- Drink plenty of coconut water. It's cooling, and naturally sterilized!
- Drink plenty of fluids and take some electrolyte salts if the bug persists.

Medical Advice

It is advisable to bring medicines specific to your requirements. There are no compulsory vaccinations for travel to India, although we strongly recommend that you protect yourself against Polio, Tetanus, Typhoid, Cholera, Hepatitis A and Malaria, which is taken in tablet form. Certain passengers may also be advised to have a Meningitis injection. Also ensure you have a good mosquito repellent. We strongly advise that you contact your doctor or Travel Clinics allowing at least three weeks before the date of travel, for all medical advice. Should still need a doctor at any time during your travel, we are always at hand to arrange one in consultation with your insurance company.

If you have any allergies, please do let us know so we can inform the hotels and restaurants you would be visiting.

Carry a medical kit with you. Carry earplugs, as the cities can be very noisy with all vehicles blaring their horns for no rhyme or reason.

Shopping

Check the prices at a few shops before making a choice. Bargaining is standard in most places and is enjoyed by all.

Get used to the fact that you will probably be charged more than the locals. If possible, take a local along when you go shopping.

Tipping

It is usual to tip waiters, drivers, porters, guides. In hotels and restaurants, tips are not normally included in the bill. Some hotels include service charges on their bills. In such cases tipping is not necessary.

The amount to be tipped is at your discretion. As an indication, if service is not included in a restaurant bill, 10% is usually the accepted amount.

In hotels, porters and room service attendants are normally tipped at the end of the stay, though an early tip is likely to get you better service. Hotel porters expect about between Rs 20 to Rs 50 for one piece of luggage and about 100 rupees for a trolley full.

It is customary to tip your driver and guide. At the end of your stay if you wish to tip your sightseeing guide and driver, an acceptable amount would be approximately 300 rupees per day of sightseeing.

Traveling by domestic flights

Domestic flights are not always punctual. Some of the newer private airlines may even cancel flights if passenger load is not sufficient. Generally the most reliable airlines are Jetairways, Indian Airlines and Kingfisher. The last has emerged as the most reliable and efficient airline currently. Please provide for 30 minutes to 1 hour traveling time from downtown to most airports.

Travel Insurance

We recommend you take travel insurance prior to your travel. In India, several hotels have a 30 day cut off and do not refund any advances paid for cancellations made less than 30 days prior to date of stay. Travel insurance ensures you are reimbursed for such cancellation fees as well as medical emergencies and loss of personal belongings during your travel. AIG is a good company to contact for such insurance in the US. Website -

http://www.aig.com/gateway/asset/1-70-422-3087-United+States_Individual+Consumer_Travel+Insurance.htm).

Sightseeing

Dress codes for religious places can include covering your head, being barefoot etc. Ask, so that you don't unwittingly give offence.

Some temples do not permit any leather articles at all on their premises.

Certain temples are not open to Non-Hindus. Please check with the local tourist information

office.

Most museums in India are closed on Mondays and Site Museums, those near archaeological monuments, on Fridays.

The dry summer heat can drain you completely. Drink lots of water and fluids.

The sun is strong. Remember to use sunscreen on exposed parts of the body. Wear sunglasses to screen out harmful rays.

Photography is not always permissible, and at many places it is permitted only at a fee.

There is usually a higher fee for using a video camera.

Smoking is not allowed at public places. All properties of the Indian Railways including trains and railway stations are strictly non smoking zones with stiff penalties for violations.

English is spoken at almost all tourist centers, but you can also request Government-trained and approved guides who also speak German, French, Spanish, Japanese, Italian or Russian.

Wear comfortable walking shoes or flats during sightseeing. Avoid high heels or stillettees as the sidewalks are uneven.

Time

Everything in India takes time - longer than in most places. So always give yourself extra time for whatever you may have to do - even it is just a visit to the Post Office or changing money.

Indians joke about the concept of "Indian Stretchable Time" (IST). Certainly, if you're a super-punctual sort, India can be frustrating. Make allowances for this.

Documents

Keep the following handy -

Photocopies of the relevant pages including the Indian visa, of your passport, flight tickets, credit cards, personal IDs. This will be required for Indian permits or in case you lose any of these. Also, keep extra photographs of yourselves. These will be required for permits, filling out forms, etc.

Traffic, Local Taxis & Transport

Traffic is chaotic in India. This will be the first shock you face if this your first visit to India.

Traffic drives on the left hand side of the road. Please pay attention when crossing a road.

Traffic will not stop for you. You have to avoid the traffic and get through patiently.

Taxi and auto-rickshaw fares keep changing, and therefore do not always conform to readings on meters. Insist on seeing the latest rate card (available with the driver) and pay accordingly.

Insist on the taxi/auto meter being flagged down in your presence. As much as possible, especially from the airport or railroad station insist on using the pre paid services which are available at most important places.

Pedestrians do not necessarily have the right of way in practice.

Hotel Check-Ins

All hotels require your complete name as it appears on your passport, your passport number, date of issue, date of expiry, place of issue, date of birth, visa number, date of issue, number of days visa is valid for. If you wish to save time during checking in, we suggest you send these details to us and we can forward to hotels so your check in is smooth. There is a small form at the end of this document, which you can fill out, and email to us.

Name as it appears on your passport -
Passport number -
Date of issue -
Date of expiry -
Place of issue -
Date of birth -
Visa number -
Date of issue -
Number of days visa is valid for -

Electricity

India runs on 220 volts. Do you have a voltage converter for your electrical gadgets? If not, would you like us to arrange these?

Indian electrical outlets use different shapes for the plugs and sockets. Do you have the required adapters? If not, would you like us to arrange these?

Mobiles

Most international mobile companies have tie-ups with Indian counterparts and your mobile should work at most cities in India. However to save money, we recommend purchase of pre-paid SIM cards in India. You will need ID to purchase these cards. Would you like to be directed to the most convenient SIM card shop when you arrive into India?

ATMs

Most big and small cities have ATMs which accept both Visa and Mastercard as well as American Express. The ATM network is ever expanding and in some states, you can find them even in some smaller towns. ATMs are now fairly common in India. But please do not wait until the last moment to ask to be taken to an ATM. It is safe to assume the bigger metros have convenient ATMs wherever you want them. But the smaller cities may not. Do you need help planning your ATM stops? We're here to help.

Time Zone

India's time zone GMT + 5 & 1/2 hours.

Special Interests

If you are interested in any activities like golf, horse riding, playing tennis, squash or other sports; or you are interested in getting to know more about any particular aspect of India and wish to meet related persons, please let us know in advance and we can advise you how best to fit these activities into your programme.

Massages & personal care

A massage the best way to wind down after a long day of sightseeing. Massages are widely available in the hotels or on demand. Many hotels now have spas. If you are interested in availing these facilities, please let us know and we can give details of spas available at hotels you are staying in.

Climate

India enjoys a wide range of temperatures, ranging from sub zero temperatures in the

Mountains, to very hot summers in the plains (48°C). The following is an example of what can be expected in the major cities. Best time to visit the plain of North India and the South is October to March. For trekking in the mountains, the best times are May to August. Temperatures in Northern India can drop to freezing point in December end and early January in the plains and may be even colder in the mountains. The days may be warm and not require you to wear any warm clothes. Please ensure you carry warm clothing to adapt the swings in temperature. A shawl or a scarf are very useful to use during the coldest months.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Agra												
min °C	7	10	16	22	27	30	27	26	24	19	12	8
max °C	22	26	32	38	42	41	35	33	33	33	30	24
rain mm	16	9	11	5	10	60	210	263	152	24	2	4
Delhi												
min °C	7	10	15	21	27	29	27	26	25	19	12	8
max °C	21	24	30	36	41	40	35	34	34	33	30	23
rain mm	25	22	17	7	8	65	211	173	150	31	1	5
Jaipur												
min °C	8	11	15	21	26	27	26	24	23	18	12	9
max °C	22	25	31	37	41	39	34	32	33	33	29	24
rain mm	14	8	9	4	10	54	193	239	90	19	3	4
Bombay (Mumbai)												
min °C	19	20	23	25	27	26	25	25	25	25	23	21
max °C	29	30	31	32	33	32	30	30	30	32	32	31
rain mm	2	1	-	3	16	520	710	439	297	88	21	2
Cochin (Kochi)												
min °C	23	24	26	26	26	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
max °C	31	31	31	31	31	29	28	28	28	29	30	30
rain mm	10	34	50	140	364	756	572	386	235	333	184	37
Madras (Chennai)												
min °C	20	21	24	26	28	28	26	26	26	25	23	21
max °C	29	31	33	35	38	37	35	35	34	32	29	28
rain mm	24	7	15	25	52	53	84	124	118	267	309	139
Calcutta												
min °C	14	17	22	25	27	27	26	26	26	24	18	14
max °C	27	30	34	36	36	34	32	32	32	32	30	27
rain mm	14	24	27	43	121	259	301	306	290	160	35	3
Goa												
min °C	19	20	23	25	27	25	24	24	24	23	22	21
max °C	31	32	32	33	33	31	29	29	29	31	33	33
rain mm	2	-	4	17	18	500	892	341	277	122	20	37
Varanasi												
min °C	9	11	17	22	27	28	26	26	25	21	13	9
max °C	23	27	33	39	41	39	33	32	32	32	29	25
rain mm	23	8	14	1	8	102	346	240	261	38	15	2

