

INDIA: FACT FILE & USEFUL TIPS



1. Passport & Visa Requirements:

India have now introduced Visa on arrival (similar to that for visitors to the US) One needs to visit <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/> register at least 4 days prior to departure.

2. Health

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| Yellow Fever | - Vaccination Certificate is required if arriving from an infected area. |
| Cholera/Typhoid | - Check with your Doctor for updated advice. |
| Malaria | - Check with your Doctor for updated advice. |

It is advisable to check all medical options with your Doctor prior to travel.

Medical treatment in India is comparatively inexpensive, though India has a pool of some of the best doctors in the world. Most hotels have a doctor on call.

Strong sunshine, heat, over eating and digestive upsets and insect bites can spoil one's trip, so it is a good idea to take a few basic precautions:

Take a good hand sanitizer – always handy to keep the germs at bay!

Avoid eating ice-creams sold by roadside vendors, undercooked meat, un-peelable fruit or vegetables, drinking tap water or having un-bottled drinks or even ice in drinks outside the hotel. You can always check that ice has been made from bottled “mineral water”

Carry a kit containing sunscreens and other lotions for protection from the sun, insect repellants and sting relief creams and medicines for possible stomach upsets or indigestion.

Be careful about mosquitoes when outside in the evenings - use a good insect repellant, socks and a long sleeved shirt are good deterrents.

3. Currency

Notes are in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 50, 100 & 500 rupees.

Exchange Rate: USD \$ 1 = Rs. 83 approx

There are no restrictions on the importation of foreign currency by tourists, provided a Declaration Form is completed on arrival. The import and export of the Rupee is, however, prohibited and may not be spent in Duty Free Shops or on board aircraft. Receipts of all currency should be kept, as it may be reconverted on departure.

ATMs are available in all cities. They are not on every street corner, however your driver can assist you in locating them as you go. Changing money through unauthorised persons is illegal as well as risky in respect of receiving counterfeit money. It is usually possible to change money at your hotel. Australian dollars/ USD/EUR however recommend you have smaller notes i.e.\$50 or \$20.

4. Credit Cards

Most hotels, restaurants and some shops accept major credit cards such as (1) American Express, (2) Diners Club (3) Visa and (4) MasterCard.

5. Time

GMT + 5 hours and 30 minutes.

Australian Eastern Standard time – 4 hours 30 minutes behind

Australian Daylight saving time – 5 hours 30 minutes behind

6. Business Hours

Government Offices/Shops	:	Monday - Friday	1000 - 1700 hrs
Shops (most large stores)	:	Monday - Saturday	0930 - 1800 hrs
Banks	:	Monday - Friday	1000 - 1400 hrs
		Saturdays	1000 - 1200 hrs

Some government and commercial offices are open on alternate Saturdays.

7. Electricity

The majority of India works on 220 volts AC 50 Hz. However, it is possible that certain areas have DC (direct current) supplies and it may be a good idea to check before using electrical appliances. Socket sizes vary, so it is well advised to take along a set of plug adaptors. Adaptors should be available in some hotels. Below is most common



8. Tipping

It is usual to tip waiters, porters, guides Representatives and drivers in India.

Tips are not included in the costs

9. Language

English is widely spoken, though the accents may vary considerably, making it a bit difficult to understand at first. The official language is Hindi but there are totally 15 major languages and 544 dialects spoken in India in addition to English.

10. Telephone/Communication

Mobile telephones are widely used. Check with your service provider prior to departure for international roaming and they also now have packages which you can pre purchase. It is expensive to receive and make calls from your mobile phone. **Wi fi** is readily available in hotels which may or may not be chargeable. Every hotel is different. There are many ISD booths all over India and the call rate from these to make international calls is relatively inexpensive. It is easy to send e-mail messages from hotels, cyber cafes and even telephone booths.

Postal services in India are good and stamps can be bought at hotels.

11. Climate

There are 3 seasons in India... Winter, Summer and Monsoon

Generally the coolest (winter) months are from October to mid-March and the best time to visit India.

The monsoons, in the majority of India, occur between the months of June and August. In the northern parts the rains usually start in July. The summer which is the really hot weather leading up to the monsoon is usually the months of May and June.

During the month of January, temperatures may be as low as 7 degrees (overnight minimum) so cold in the mornings and cold in the evenings. The day time may get to 24 degrees.

12. Clothing

For day time sightseeing – casual wear loose fitting – long shorts, trousers – skirts, dresses and jeans, , a jacket or cardigan to start and finish the day. In the evenings, one can dress up or wear more of the same. Check the weather forecast before you depart.

13. Food & Drink

Indian food is as varied as the country itself, with every region having its own mouth-watering specialities. It therefore, does not always have to be “hot” nor can any one dish be labelled a “curry”. Most dishes with a gravy are normally called curries but are prepared with a different ‘masala’ or combination of spices containing among other things coriander, cumin, garlic, onions ginger, turmeric. Additional seasoning which adds to the flavour and richness of meat dishes is called “garam masala” and is made from different combinations of a variety of spices like cardamom, nutmeg, black pepper, cloves cinnamon, bay leaves, saffron, mace and nutmeg. The very aromas and flavours that drew the West to the Indian shores.

A traditional meal all over India is usually served in large metal plate called a ‘Thali’ with a number of small bowls used to hold the gravy dishes. The meal is normally accompanied with Indian bread (which varies from region to region) and rice.

North Indian food has been strongly influenced by Mughal cuisine and is broadly non-vegetarian characterised by the use of yoghurt fired onions, nuts and saffron. Outstanding dishes worth trying, would be biryani, gushtaba, tandoori dishes and kababs.

East Indian specialties include freshwater fish (especially hilsa) cooked in a variety of sauces, Sweetmeats made from sweetened cream and cheese are also a speciality around West Bengal. The areas further east are influenced by Tibetan cuisine, with ‘momos’ (delicious chicken or pork dumplings) being a popular dish.

Western India is a very diverse area in terms of cuisine. Gujarat with its strong Jain traditions, is almost entirely vegetarian with a sweetish touch to all its dishes. Goa is famed for its delicious meat and seafood dishes of Portuguese origin such as Sorpotel, Vindaloo and Xacuti.

Southern India is renowned for its spicy curries, rasam (millagu tannir or literally pepper water, before it was anglicised to mulligatawny), masala dosai or crisp potato pancakes and a variety of rice pancakes. The hot food has to be tempered with pappadums, yoghurt and buttermilk. Coconut is extensively used in the preparation of south Indian dishes which are predominantly vegetarian, with the exception of Chettinad (from the area around Madurai) and cuisine from Kerala.

All good hotels in India provide continental meals as a matter of course, for those who are looking for a respite from spicy Indian cuisine. Many hotels and restaurants, at least in the major cities, specialise in specific international cuisine like Italian, Chinese, Indonesian, Mexican, Thai, and Japanese etc.

For an Indian, a **drink** with a meal usually means water! Imported wines and liquors are available but can be costly. The quality of Indian wines are improving steadily – one of the best local wines either red or white is SULA. Indian beer and rum are considered excellent, while gins and vodkas are good, the Indian whisky is an acquired taste.

Tourists can bring in either one regular size bottle of wine and one quarter litre of spirits or one quart of spirits free from Customs Duty at the time of arrival into India.

Drinking water can be a problem in India, **One should definitely consume only sealed bottled water** and bottled aerated drinks. Bottled water will be available onboard the coach, for consuming during sightseeing or travel. Hotels generally have complimentary bottled water in the rooms.

Salads and fruit - Avoid eating salads that may have been washed in contaminated water. Fruits should be peeled.

14. Shopping

Extraordinary patience, talent and imagination goes into the making of Indian products, whether dazzling silks, hand knotted carpets, bronze statues of Hindu gods, jewellery, shoes/sandals, handbags, men's and women's clothing, musical instruments or perfumes. The list is inexhaustible and the prices reasonable. Each region of the sub-continent has its own specialities. The bazaars are the places to find the best bargains, but one must be prepared to haggle. *It would be prudent to remember that if the shop/emporia undertake to export purchased goods, it invariably takes a longer time for them to reach than indicated at the time of purchase.*

It is forbidden to export recognised antiques over 100 years old. It is advisable to keep the sales receipts to convince the customs officers. Exports of wildlife and products made from them is banned. Insist on getting a proper certificate for the legitimate sale of a particular animal product to avoid inconvenience at departure.

15. Indian Customs Procedures

International airports operate the conventional green and red channels, with officials liable to carry out sudden spot check on passengers passing through the green channel.

If carrying certain items of high value such as Video cameras, lap top computers, cameras one may be asked to fill in a Tourist Baggage Re-export Form (TBRE) while entering the country

And allows one to bring items into India free of duty, provided it is re-exported while leaving.

16. Security

For domestic Air travel, if carrying pen knives, scissors, batteries, electronic items, liquids including perfumes, cosmetics and alcohol they should be packed in the checked in baggage as they will be confiscated.

For extra security reasons, occasionally it may be necessary to identify your baggage on the tarmac before it is loaded on to the aircraft.

17. Baggage Allowance

The normal free allowance for **domestic flights is 15kgs** and more for business class. Only a single piece of hand baggage plus a handbag (within certain specifications) is allowed on domestic flights.

18. Import Restrictions

When entering India, the personal allowances are one litre of spirits, 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250 Gms of tobacco. Indian customs are particularly thorough. These allowances do not apply to persons under the age of 18 years.

19. Crime & Theft

India is not particularly more dangerous than the West. Most deluxe hotels have lockers to keep ones valuables, but one should be cautious with valuables when outside. Violence against foreigners is virtually unheard of, provided basic precautions are taken like anywhere else.

20. National Holidays

Full public holidays -

January 26 - Republic Day

August 15 - Independence day

October 02 - Mahatma Gandhi's birthday

December 25 - Christmas

There are other local holidays which are applicable to different states and cultures

Note: - The above particulars are correct at the time of printing, but may be subject to change. This is purely informational and does not form part of any contract

We strongly recommend that you take Travel Insurance prior to your departure.