

Things You Need to Know for travel to India

Discover Asia – Australia's most complete Travel Company to Asia

INDIA IS A THIRD WORLD COUNTRY, CONDITIONS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT, AT AIRPORTS, THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRYSIDE AND IN MANY PARTS OF THE CITIES CAN BE EXTREMELY BASIC AND SOMETIMES DIRTY BY WESTERN STANDARDS. THE TRUE TRAVELLER SHOULD ACCEPT THESE CONDITIONS AS A SMALL PRICE TO PAY FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT A TRULY OPEN AND HONEST COUNTRY, WHERE YOU WILL HAVE THE VIRTUALLY UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY OF MEETING THE PEOPLE AT CLOSE QUARTERS AT ALL LEVELS OF SOCIETY, AND COMING AWAY WITH A REAL UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR WAY OF LIFE. IF YOU INSIST UPON PRISTINE CONDITIONS, PUNCTUALITY AND EFFICIENCY.... YOU ARE NOT READY FOR INDIA TODAY. IF YOU HAVE AN OPEN MIND, RELISH THE IDEA OF GETTING CLOSE TO THE LOCALS, HAVE A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOUR AND VALUE HONESTY, SINCERITY AND OPEN-HEARTEDNESS..... YOU WILL PROBABLY FALL DEEPLY IN LOVE WITH INDIA AND ITS PEOPLE, AS SO MANY OTHERS HAVE DONE BEFORE YOU.

India - A land for all reasons, all seasons.....

India is more than the sum of its astonishing cultures. A vast geographic tapestry of mountains, rivers, plains, forests and deserts. A land of ancient traditions and countless mother tongues. A nation where the looks, the dress, the language and even the cuisine changes along with its terrain. It is the birth place of Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism. Along the way it welcomed Jews, Christians, Parsees and Muslims. It is a country that pays homage to its artisans who produce enchanting handicrafts – traditional yet fashionable, inexpensive yet lasting. India is a land of festivals; some so colourful and decked out with pageantry that you feel lost in a dream. It's a year round destination that offers a growing number of adventures such as trekking, skiing, mountain climbing, hiking, hang gliding and white-water rafting. More leisurely options let you wind down as you play golf on a course strewn with ancient monuments, float in a high-flying balloon, bask on a sandy beach, fish in a mountain stream, recline in a bubbly hot spring or just soak in an ayurvedic massage. India is a paradox; a unique mix that defies any easy definition or description. It is modern and ancient, rich and poor, it has elephants and Mercedes sharing the roadways. Forever mysterious, forever enthralling, it is a destination quite unlike any other.

IMPORTANT

Every effort has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this information sheet. However, things may change fast, and in the way that we have to respond to these changing conditions, so inaccuracies in the information in this information sheet may occur. For that reason, all statements are intended as a guideline only and no litigation may be based upon inaccuracies contained in this information sheet. The contents of this information sheet do not constitute part of, or in any way amend, the booking conditions or publicised tour inclusions of DISCOVER ASIA. Note that tour inclusions may vary between the different tours. Thus, some of the information in this information sheet may not be relevant to your tour package. If you are unsure, or your tour inclusions have not been explained to you, please contact DISCOVER ASIA for complete details.

Thank you for using DISCOVER ASIA in the planning of your tour to India. You will find plenty more information to assist in planning your tour on our website www.discoverasia.com.au

- For information about cities and sights in India – see 'Glossary of Cities'*
- For our Booking Conditions – see 'Booking Conditions' under India*
- For our Booking Form – see 'Booking Form' on our Home Page*
- For assistance in designing an Independent Tour – see 'Independent Tour Request'*

PRE-TOUR INFORMATION



ALTERATION TO ITINERARY:

Occasionally, tours cannot be operated exactly as per the published itinerary. This can be due to temporary airport closures, flight schedule changes, weather conditions, accommodation shortage or other operational requirements. Such changes may be advised to us at extremely short notice, and often not at all. Whenever possible you will be advised of these changes prior to your departure. In rare circumstances, you may not be advised of these changes prior to your departure. In such cases your final itinerary will be given to you after your arrival in India. It is the policy of the ground operator that no refunds will be made for alteration to or omissions in published itineraries, and generally, alternative arrangements will be substituted. This may occasionally appear harsh or unfair, but, it is a precondition of travel to India and booking with DISCOVER ASIA. When you sign your booking form, you accept this condition. Please rest assured that, when itinerary changes are required, the utmost attention is paid by this company to ensure that they incur the least possible inconvenience for you.



CASH/TRAVELLERS CHEQUES/CREDIT CARDS:

There is no restriction on the amount of foreign currency or travellers cheques that may be brought into India. However, the import and export of local currency is prohibited. On arrival, visitors should declare all foreign currency above US\$10,000. Exchange currency only at banks and through authorised dealers, which include most hotels. With each exchange of currency, you are issued an exchange certificate which should be retained to re-exchange unused rupees on leaving the country. It is also your proof that you exchanged currency through legal channels. You are not allowed to leave India with any local currency. Do not depend on Credit Cards except in the major cities. For the current exchange rate check our website. The Indian Rupee comes in denominations of 500, 100, 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 notes; and 5 rupee, 2 rupee, 1 rupee, 50 paise, 25 paise, 20 paise and 10 paise coins.



CLIMATE:

The climate in India is as varied as that of any of the major continents. There are parts of the country which are extremely dry, others that are humid. There are the cold winters of the Himalayas contrasting with the equatorial heat of some parts of the country and the desert heat of others. The rains, known as the monsoon, sweep the country during the months of June to September, but the rains vary from region to region. (The south-eastern part of the country gets its monsoon in the months of October and November). During the hot summer months of April and May, the mountain and hill resorts are cool retreats, and in the cold winters in the mountains, the plains are cool and pleasant. Most of the country is pleasant, weather-wise, for a major part of the year.



CLOTHING:

Casual clothing can be worn at any time during your stay in India. However, keep in mind that you are travelling in a Hindu country. Please make sure you are appropriately dressed. Clothes that are too tight fitting, short or revealing such as shorts, mini skirts or low cut T-shirts should be avoided, especially in the country-side. December- January: In Northern India one needs woollens. Heavy woollens in the hills. For the rest of India, light woollens suffice. February-March: Light woollens in North India only, April-September: Cotton or tropical clothing, October-November: Tropical clothing and light woollens. Light-weight washable cotton or cotton-blend clothes are most suitable for such climates.



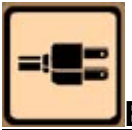
COMMUNICATIONS:

E-mail, fax and international telephone connections are good only from all major cities. Going to the Post Office to buy some stamps is an experience in itself but the easiest way is to let the hotel handle your mail. Your mail will take approximately 7 - 10 days to arrive in Australia. Tip: It is best to avoid receiving mail, especially parcels. Sending parcels is time consuming and a very difficult task.



CUSTOMS REGULATIONS:

CUSTOMS: On entry into India you are allowed to bring 1 litre of spirits or wine, 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250 grams of tobacco. One state – Gujarat – bans the sale of alcohol, and a permit is needed. Such permits can be obtained from overseas India Tourist offices, or from tourist offices in India on arrival.



ELECTRICITY:

220 volts AC, 50 cycles throughout the country. Please be aware that in many areas there is no electricity or it is not reliable as it comes from a generator, especially in remote areas. If you are using personal electrical appliances you will require a multi facet adaptor and a surge protector.



EMERGENCY:

It can be difficult to get in contact with you during your stay in India. Hotels are identified within your final itinerary, - if possible. In the event of emergency ONLY, should anybody in Australia need to contact you, they should contact DISCOVER ASIA direct in Australia. We shall then track you down (this should generally take only a day in a normal working week) & inform you to ring the person back. NB: It may take you a few days to reach a phone or fax machine. Emergency Phone Number - MON-FRI (9am-5.30pm): Sydney (02) 4963 7566. The contact details for our local ground handler will be on your travel vouchers, we suggest you provide this number to someone in Australia for Emergencies only outside of working hours. Your tour guide will assist you should you have an emergency whilst on tour.



HYGIENE/HEALTH:

Keep in mind that you are travelling in INDIA! The standard of hygiene and health in India is different to Australian standards. However health risks in India are no more than in many other Asian countries. Check with your doctor about appropriate inoculations. Carry prescription drugs if they are necessary. Also, if you wear glasses or contact lenses bring your prescriptions. Stomach upsets can occur and it is wise to avoid drinking tap water and ice in drinks; also avoid uncooked vegetables except at major hotels and restaurants and stick to thick skinned fruit that must be peeled such as bananas or oranges. One effective way to counteract digestive problems is to start each day with some natural yoghurt known as curd which is usually available at all hotels and restaurants. Take Lomotil only in extreme emergencies or on doctor's advice as Lomotil can mask symptoms. Always carry an insect repellent. It is advisable to carry personal medicines for common ailments, bandaids, general antiseptic creams, wet ones and paracetamol. Most towns have good doctors and hospitals with an adequate number of medical stores and pharmacies which are fairly well stocked. In major towns, at least one drug store remains open 24 hours a day. Medical insurance is essential to cover you for the entire

period of your tour. No vaccination or inoculation certificates are required unless travelling to India from or through an infected area. However, inoculations against hepatitis, cholera and typhoid are recommended and malaria tablets are a sensible precaution at certain times of the year and in certain areas. Visitors are advised to consult their personal physician, or TMVC, as to what vaccinations are necessary before travelling to India. Less serious is the risk of food poisoning, common among travellers who are not used to local bacteria. Please take sensible precautions - always wash your hands before eating and after using the toilet. Do not eat in places where hygiene standards are suspect or from street stalls. Do not drink tap water at any time during your stay. Take adequate supplies of any personal medication that you might need during your visit.



HOTEL ACCOMMODATION:

Depending on your chosen type of accommodation, your room will vary. India offers some beautiful International Hotels of a very high standard. In general, accommodation is clean, comfortable and acceptable for western travellers. All our hotels have private facilities. You may even be lucky enough to stay in a Palace that a Maharajah once lived in as a lot of the Palaces in India have now been converted into 5 star luxury hotels.



LAUNDRY:

Hotels will arrange laundry for you, but, unless your clothes are very hardy, you are best advised to carry clothes you may wash and dry out yourself in your room. It is always advisable to do any washing when you have a two night stay or longer to allow them to dry properly!



LANGUAGE:

There are 18 languages including English which is the official language along with Hindi. There are about 844 different dialects.



LUGGAGE:

LUGGAGE: You can expect your bags to have a rough time in India! Take sturdy luggage such as the nylon sausage type made of non-tear material. If you use bags with wheels or rucksacks with frames try to find one where they can be removed or are well recessed. This is not only because they may be broken off from your bags, but, they can also do great damage to other people's baggage.



MEALS/DRINK:

DRINK: Rice is, of course, the basic Indian staple, but although it is eaten throughout the country, it's all-important only in the south. The best Indian rice is found in the north where Basmati rice grows in the Dehra Dun Valley. Throughout Northern India, rice is supplemented by a whole range of breads known as rotis or chapattis. Indian curries are also a favourite for the locals and tourists alike. Curries can be vegetable, meat or fish, and the all important spices will be fried in ghee or vegetable oil to release their flavours and aromas. There are many different varieties of food available in India including Chinese, Thai, Japanese and Italian along with many other western types of food. Indians have quite a sweet tooth and an amazing selection of desserts and sweets to satisfy it. The desserts are rice or milk-based, and often consist of nuts or pastries dripping in sweet syrup. All in all, India is a culinary delight, guaranteed to satisfy the tastes of every palate.



PHYSICAL EXERTION/FREE TIME:

Several of the most important sights will involve climbing flights of stairs, lengthy periods of walking or scrambling up fairly steep pathways. Whilst anyone in reasonable health should not find this impossible, anyone with a walking impairment would encounter difficulty. In general, a trip to India should prove no more difficult or taxing than a visit to any other country. DISCOVER ASIA is able to provide very detailed information about local conditions and design tours to suit people of all physical conditions and ages.



RELIGION:

The major Religions of India are Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism and Judaism.



SHOPPING/PRICES:

India is a shopper's paradise with all sorts of handicrafts for sale. A variety of cheap clothes are available but be careful, colours may run. All woollen clothes, from socks to jumpers and shawls are very good value. Carpets are of high quality. New carpets which are crafted in private homes or refugee centres have bright colours from chemical dyes. Traditional Tibetan designs are made with more subtle vegetable dyes. Older carpets with intricate motifs and natural dye colours are still available at higher prices. Jewellery should also be on your shopping list. You will find a large variety of gold and silver jewellery with or without colourful stones. Turquoise, coral and Lapislazuli are often used. These are only a few of the items for sale. The list goes on and on. While shopping, keep in mind that you are supposed to bargain - this can be very exciting and fun.



TIPPING/GIFTS:

Like so many other countries, tipping has become a habit in hotels and restaurants patronized by foreigners. A hotel waiter or porter will expect one or two rupees for service. A 10 % tip is also customary in westernised restaurants. However in other cases please do yourself and the country a favour - abstain from tipping. We at DISCOVER ASIA, do not encourage the indiscriminate handing out of lollies and gifts, it is degrading and unnecessarily patronising. A small gift in exchange for a service provided, or in friendship, is universally polite and appreciated. Your local guide will certainly be pleased to receive a tip at the end of your stay. US\$5 per day per person is usual. The driver should receive 60% of what you pay the guide. When visiting villages, gifts to children or schools are always appreciated – suitable gifts are pens, postcards or souvenir gift books of your local town and small toys.



TOUR ESCORT:

All of our guides are Indians, who are well trained and enthusiastic. We feel that you will benefit from their intimate knowledge of their country, the past and present and future hopes. They will assist you with any matters pertaining to the wellbeing of your tour and ensure that everything runs as smoothly as possible. Local guides will meet you from the train, bus or plane and escort you during your sightseeing. They are also responsible for ensuring you are safely put on the next leg of your journey (ie, they should wait for you to go through to the boarding room for flights and make sure there have been no cancellations), ensure that you are clear about this responsibility and insist on it. You will always have a local guide unless otherwise specified.



VISA:

A visa is required for entry into India. It has to be obtained prior to departure from Australia. Don't take the risk in overstaying your visa.... the penalty is usually jail!