

## **PREPARING TO GO TO INDIA**

### **PASSPORT & VISA**

Citizens of all countries need to have a valid passport and an entry, transit or tourist visa obtained from the Indian Mission in their country prior to departure. Regulations and costs change frequently and differ according to nationality. For the latest information on your specific visa requirements, please contact your local Indian Embassy or Consulate. Visas are usually valid for either 3 months or 6 months from the date of issue and are valid for multiple entry regardless of whether you intend staying that long or re-entering the country. Tourist visas cannot be extended. Note: Be wary of applying for your visa too soon as all visas are valid from the date of issue, not the date of entry to India.

### **INDIA LOCAL TIME**

The standard time for India is calculated from Allahabad and is common to all cities. Indian Standard Time (IST) is 5 hours and 30 minutes ahead of GMT.

### **ELECTRICITY**

220 volts & 50Hz. A variety of power outlets are used in India, but most plugs have two or three round pins.

### **LANGUAGE**

Although English is generally used for official and business purposes, Hindi is the official language and is spoken by about 30 percent of the population. There are in all 22 officially recognized languages.

### **LOCAL CURRENCY**

The monetary unit in India is the India Rupee (INR). Approximate exchange rates (as of June 2009) are as follows:

- 1 CAD = 42 INR
- 1 US Dollar = 48 INR
- 1 Pound Sterling = 78 INR
- 1 Euro = 66 INR

[XE.com](http://XE.com) is a useful site for currency conversion.

### **MONEY EXCHANGE, CREDIT CARD & ATM**

Banks & ATM can be found in most cities and sizable towns where it is possible to exchange cash and travelers checks. Many hotels also offer currency exchange and may offer a faster service at similar rates. Credit cards are usually only accepted in larger shops and more expensive hotels and restaurants.

### **CLOTHING**

As a general guideline, clothing should be lightweight and loose fitting. In India's hot summer months, cotton clothing is much more comfortable than materials like nylon. In the winter months (Dec-Feb) North India can get very cold so warm clothing is recommended.

### **COMMUNICATION & EMAILS**

Internet cafes can now be found in most cities and sizable towns. Connection times are often painfully slow although this does vary from city to city. The average cost for an hour is approx. US\$1.

The Indian phone system is fairly good. Look out for shops/booths labeled with a yellow "PCO-STD-ISD" sign which can be found almost everywhere. A 3 minute call (to the US) will cost approx. US\$10 from a hotel and approx. US\$3 from a shop/booth.

### **WEATHER & CLIMATE**

It is hard to generalize in a country that stretches from the Himalayas to the beaches of the Indian Ocean but broadly speaking October to March tend to be the most pleasant months in India, when it is relatively dry and cool.

**Cool** – North India's cool season is from October to April and South India's cool season is from November to March, however cool does not necessarily mean cold. Daytime temperatures are still quite high - the sky is clear but it is not blisteringly hot. Evenings are cool and comfortable. This is the most pleasant time to travel in sub-Himalayan India.

**Hot** – From April to June the whole country experiences a hot and humid climate by day and night.

**Wet** – The monsoon falls on North India from July to September and in the South from July to October. During this time the climate is humid and wet by day and night.



## MEALS

Approximate costs for meals and snacks not included are shown below:

- Simple snack - US\$ 5-8
- Light meal - US\$ 10-15
- Fancy restaurant - US\$ 25-35

## DRINKS

Approximate costs for drinks bought in a shop in the street are shown below. Note: Prices in restaurants and hotels can be as much as double than those specified.

- 1l of water - US\$ 1.00
- 30cl bottle of soft drink - US\$ 1.00
- 65cl bottle of beer - US\$ 3.00

It is not recommended that you drink the local tap water in India however bottled water, carbonated soft drinks and fruit juices are widely available throughout the country.

## FOOD

Food is exceptional all over India to suit every palette with each region having its own unique specialties

## HEALTH & MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS & GUIDELINES

As a general recommendation, it is advisable to check with your family doctor or travel clinic for latest health information.

## SUGGESTED TIPPING SCALE:

Tipping is a way of showing your appreciation and will be welcomed by the recipient, although if you decide not to tip in a particular circumstance, this doesn't mean you'll receive a lower level of service. Ultimately, tipping is discretionary and should be done at a level that feels comfortable.

Here are some guidelines that you may find helpful:

Services	Tipping amount Per Person/Day	
	Individuals (Min. 02 pax)	Groups (10 & above)
Drivers	US \$ 03	US \$ 02
Assistant Driver	-	US \$ 01
Guides	US \$ 04	US \$ 03
Houseboat Staff	US \$ 05	US \$ 03
Bellman at hotels/check-in or check-out	US \$ 02	US \$ 01
Meals	10% of the total amount	10% of the total amount

## TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is highly recommended that you purchase travel insurance from your travel agent. Health plans only provide limited coverage while traveling outside of the country. Your travel agent can offer you a complete travel insurance package. Some credit cards do offer travel insurance, however they do not always provide adequate coverage. Review and understand the terms of your credit card insurance policy. Extra travel insurance can be purchased.

Most insurance companies do have exclusions in their coverage. Pre-existing medical conditions are not insurable. High risk activities such as skydiving, parachuting, and bunji jumping are also not covered by insurance. Understand the complete insurance coverage you have before travelling out of the country.