



**BHARATIYA SANSKRITI DARSHAN
AUSTRALIA INC.**

P.O. Box 897
North Adelaide 5006
South Australia
Ph: 08 83679987
www.bsda.org.au

TRAVELLING IN INDIA - HINTS AND TIPS

GENERAL HINTS AND TIPS FOR TRAVEL IN INDIA

The following information is intended as a general guide to assist people travelling in India.

Climate

The Indian subcontinent ranges widely in temperature from the Himalayas to the tropical south. November to January is the coolest time. Monsoon season is July - August.

Clothing

Women: best to avoid shorts, short dresses etc. cover shoulders.

Indian clothing is very comfortable and practical. Take walking shoes that go with most outfits.

Customs

Eat with your right hand only.

Sit cross-legged if possible. It is considered an insult to 'point' the soles of your feet at others. Feet and shoes should not touch other people, as they are considered unclean. Shoes are usually left outside homes and temples.

The head and ears are sacred. Never pat a child on the head.

Do not point with your finger – this is considered rude. Indians point with a jerk of the chin.

Time

There is western time and there is 'Indian time'. Discover the latter and you will learn to develop qualities of patience. Slowness and queues are a fact of life.

Conversation

Be prepared to be intensively questioned about your personal life – your name, members of your family etc. In ten minutes people will know all about you – this is part of the Indian way of life.

Be prepared that some Indian people will reply with what they *think* you may want to hear rather than what is necessarily the case. Therefore it is better not to frame a question which requires a simple 'yes/no' answer. Instead of asking 'Is this the way to the Temple' – which will often be met with a 'Yes' reply, it is more informative to ask 'Tell me which is the way to the Temple'.

Food/drink

Vegetarian food is highly recommended. **Avoid any foods which are fried**, except if fried in pure ghee.

Many western constitutions cannot tolerate too much chilli or spicy food at once - i.e. pace yourself.

Be wary of food which has been lying around e.g. on street side cafes.

If afflicted with an upset stomach, try a little boiled rice and plain toast once you are ready to try a little food again. If in doubt ask for plain dahl and boiled rice and ask for all food to be prepared with 'no chilli and no spice'.

Bottled water is recommended. Check to see that seals have not been tampered with. **Avoid local water at all costs**- even in restaurants. Also avoid ice. Some travellers even avoid salads etc, which may have been washed with local water. Some travellers swear by raspberry cordial as a 'pick me up'.

Tea is available everywhere. Try *chai* or *marsala tea* is a sweet milky tea flavoured with spices and ginger.

Health

The Department of Foreign Affairs **Smart Traveller** website has a useful section on **Travelling well**.
<http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/tips/travelwell.html>.

There are a number of specialised travel medical centres throughout Australia. These centres provide the latest information about precautions, immunisations etc. as well as selling medical kits etc.

Alternatively, check with your local GP.

It is worthwhile planning ahead, as the course for hepatitis A & B injections, for example, continues over several months. Do take plenty of mosquito repellent.

India is also the home of Ayurvedic medicine. If you are interested in Ayurvedic medicine the BSDA can provide contact details of Ayurvedic practitioners in India.

Money

Upon arrival at the airport it is useful to exchange some money to ensure cash flow. While ATMs are widely available, traditional ways of changing money in India can be a time consuming experience. Local offices of Thomas Cook and American Express are usually more efficient than banks and are generally open longer hours. As soon as you arrive try to obtain some smaller denominations for tips, rickshaw fares etc. Keep some exchange receipts. These are sometimes (but not always) required to convert money afterwards. Use money belt for majority of cash and valuables.

Security

Check latest security warnings with the **Smart Traveller** (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) website. <http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/india>

To assist in emergency situations it is possible to register your contact details with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. <https://www.orao.dfat.gov.au/orao/weborao.nsf/homepage?Openpage>.

Transport

India is the land of surprises. Always be alert in crowds and allow plenty of time. If you require a porter, an older one usually knows the ropes and can help you quickly and effectively. Pay only at the end.

Telephones/faxes/email

Mobile phones and sim cards are readily available, but restrictions may apply depending on security issues. Be prepared to produce ID and take spare photocopies of your passport information page and the visa. Check conditions including use in different parts of India. Public telephone, fax and email facilities are widely available. Generally most hotels will add a surcharge. To make international calls from India add 00 at the beginning (this is the equivalent of Australia's 0011). Most area codes in India are preceded by a zero, which is omitted when dialling India from an overseas country. Email facilities may require ID for security reasons.

Visas

Do allow plenty of lead in time for a visa. Visas are obtained via Indian Passport and Visa Service Centres which are located around Australia. The application forms are online only and require close attention to detail and include a separate checklist. Note the special photograph specifications. Note also the strict re-entry requirements, including time frames and the information on visa renewals.

HELPFUL ITEMS FOR PACKING

Clothing

- thongs (for showers etc.)
- socks

Stationery

- pens
- magic tape (for mending torn currency)
- correction fluid
- notebooks
- diary

Toiletries

- tissues
- talcum powder (if travelling in humid areas)
- toilet rolls
- Baby wash cloths (travel packs are available)

First aid

- antiseptic/disinfectant
- bandaids
- mosquito repellent
- treatment for insect bites
- sunscreen

Miscellaneous

- freezer bags (for enclosing items which may spill)
- plastic bag
- bubble plastic (for protecting breakables)
- soap for hand washing
- alarm clock
- coat hangers/clothes lines for washing
- universal plugs to fit several size hand basins
- padlocks
- mosquito net - if travelling where it will not be supplied
- back pack (for everyday use)
- water bottles
- plastic mugs, plates, cutlery
- masking tape
- plastic drinking straws
- Swiss army knife (do not take in hand luggage)
- torch
- dust masks (recommended if spending several weeks in large polluted cities)

Food

- muesli bars
- fruit bars
- dried fruits
- nuts/raisins
- dry crackers
- marmite/vegemite
- honey
- raspberry cordial is considered a 'pick me up' by many travellers

Security

- money belt - carry only small amounts of cash 'outside' the money belt
- passport holder
- always lock your bags
- never leave handbags, cameras etc. lying around
- take additional padlocks
- count money in front of the teller and secure it well before leaving the area
- Indian currency may be stapled in large wads of RS \$10,000 – there is an art to unpicking these wads – ask a trusted local to help the first time
- never leave luggage unattended.

.....

© BSDA Inc. 2012

Disclaimer: The BSDA accepts no legal responsibility for any issues or incidents that may arise as a result of using the above information.

