Discovering *India*

India is a dynamic nation in South Asia, recognized for its rich history, cultural diversity, and long-standing traditions. Home to more than 1.4 billion people, it represents a mosaic of languages, religions, and customs that together shape its distinct identity.

India's cultural roots extend back to the Indus Valley Civilization and have been shaped by successive empires and kingdoms. Its traditions are reflected in vibrant festivals such as Diwali, Holi, and Eid, which feature colorful celebrations and time-honored rituals.

Cuisine is a defining aspect of Indian culture, with regional specialties ranging from the spicy curries of the South to the flavorful biryanis of the North. Music and dance—whether classical forms like Bharatanatyam and Kathak, or Bollywood and folk traditions—highlight the country's artistic range.

Indian art and architecture are celebrated worldwide, from intricately carved temples to the iconic Taj Mahal. Traditional crafts such as weaving, pottery, and painting also remain integral to India's cultural heritage.

Activity Level
Moderate

Visa Process

All U.S. citizens require a visa to travel to India unless they hold Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) status. Multiple visa categories are available, and travelers should obtain the correct visa for the purpose and length of their visit. Detailed information and applications are available through the Indian Bureau of Immigration website.

Contact Address
Sita, Tower B, Delta Square, M.G. Road, Sector 25, Gurgaon 122001, Haryana, India

Currency

The official currency of India is the Indian Rupee (INR). Banknotes are commonly available in denominations of ₹10, ₹20, ₹50, ₹100, and ₹500.

Credit Cards

Major credit cards such as Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted in India's larger towns and cities. American Express is less commonly accepted, and mobile payment options like Apple Pay are generally unavailable. Cash is accepted almost everywhere and remains essential, particularly in rural areas.

Gratuities

Tipping is customary in India and appreciated by service workers, who often rely on gratuities to supplement low wages. Travelers are generally expected to tip porters, drivers, restaurant staff, tour guides, and other service providers.

As a guide, a tip of approximately $6 per person per day is recommended.

Plug Sockets

India uses three plug types: Type C (two round pins), Type D (three round pins in a triangular pattern), and Type M (three larger round pins). The standard supply is 230 volts at 50 Hz. U.S. travelers will need a plug adapter and, for some devices, a voltage converter.



India's climate varies greatly by region and season. Travelers are advised to check conditions for their specific destinations and time of travel to prepare accordingly.



Average Summer **77-104°F** Average Winter **50-75°F**



Average Summer **27-104°F** Average Winter **48-75°F**



Average Summer **84-106°F** Average Winter **57-77°F**



Average Summer **79-102°F** Average Winter **50-77°F**



Average Summer **68-81°F** Average Winter **46-59°F**

General Etiquette:

Greetings: The traditional Indian greeting is namaste—pressing palms together with a slight bow. It is a respectful way to say hello, thank you, or goodbye.

Dress Modestly: Modest clothing is expected, especially in religious sites or rural areas. Both men and women should cover shoulders and knees.

Religion and Temples

Temple Etiquette: Dress modestly when visiting temples. Remove shoes before entering and observe any site-specific rules.

Respect for Religious Practices: Be mindful of local customs, particularly during festivals, when large crowds and special ceremonies are common.



Photography

Ask for Permission: Always request permission before photographing people, particularly in rural areas. Be aware that some religious sites and government buildings restrict or prohibit photography.

Hygiene and Health:

Hand Washing: Wash hands frequently, especially before meals. Carry hand sanitizer for convenience.

Food and Water Safety: Exercise caution with street food and drink only bottled or purified water to reduce the risk of stomach illnesses.

Emergency

Dial 112 in India for police, fire, or medical emergencies. Travelers should keep copies of their passport and important documents in a secure location and carry the contact details of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Social Practices

Right Hand for Interactions: Use your right hand when giving or receiving items, eating, or greeting. The left hand is considered impolite for these purposes.

Removing Shoes: It is customary to remove shoes before entering homes, temples, and some businesses. Designated areas for footwear are usually provided outside entrances.



Dining

India offers an exceptional culinary experience, but travelers should be mindful of differing hygiene standards. Always drink bottled water and avoid tap water, including for brushing teeth, washing fruit and salads, or consuming ice. Choosing peelable fruit and following a vegetarian diet can help reduce the risk of contamination.

Travelers are advised to carry medication for stomach upset as a precaution. Exercise caution when purchasing food from street vendors.

Dining Etiquette

Eating with Hands: In many parts of India, meals are traditionally eaten by hand. If doing so, use only your right hand.

Sharing Meals: Food is often served family-style. It is polite to accept when offered, even if only a small portion.

What to pack

Essentials:
Passport & Visa: Carry your passport, visa, and any required travel documents.
Travel Insurance: Strongly recommended for unexpected situations.
Money: Bring cash (preferably in small denominations) and credit/debit cards. ATMs are widely available.
Health Kit: Include prescription medications and essential over-the-counter medicines, kept in your hand luggage.

Clothing:
Lightweight, Breathable Clothes: Cotton and linen are best for the hot climate.
Modest Clothing: In rural areas and religious sites, cover shoulders and knees.
Layers: Evenings can be cooler, depending on the season and region; pack a light jacket or sweater.
Comfortable Shoes: Ideal for walking and exploring; sandals are also useful.

Personal Items:
Toiletries: Bring basic items (toothpaste, shampoo, soap) and any personal products you regularly use.
Sunscreen & Sunglasses: Essential for sun protection.
Insect Repellent: Especially important in rural or tropical regions.

Electronics:
Adapter/Converter: India uses multiple plug types with 230V supply; an adapter is essential.
Phone & Charger: A local SIM card offers better connectivity and avoids high roaming charges.
Camera: Bring extra memory cards and batteries to capture your travels.

Other Useful Items:
Small Backpack/Daypack: Convenient for day trips and carrying essentials.
Scarf or Shawl: Useful at religious sites and as an extra layer.
Hand Sanitizer: Recommended for cleanliness on the go.

