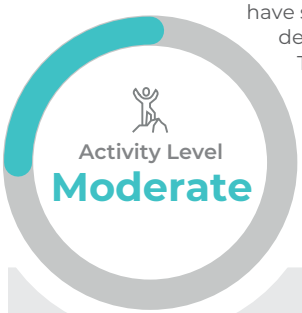
Discovering *India*

India is a vibrant country in South Asia, known for its rich history, cultural diversity, and deep-rooted traditions. With a population of over 1.4 billion, it is a tapestry of languages, religions, and customs, each adding to its unique identity.

Indian culture is deeply rooted in its ancient history, from the Indus Valley Civilization to the various empires and kingdoms that have shaped its development. The country's cultural landscape is marked by its myriad festivals, including Diwali, Holi, and Eid, which showcase colorful celebrations and traditional rituals.

Cuisine is a central element of Indian culture, with each region offering distinct flavors and dishes, from the spicy curries of the South to the rich, aromatic biryanis of the North. Indian music and dance, such as classical forms like Bharatanatyam and Kathak, as well as Bollywood and folk traditions, reflect its artistic diversity.

Indian art and architecture are renowned worldwide, from the intricate designs of ancient temples to the majestic grandeur of the Taj Mahal. Traditional crafts, such as weaving, pottery, and painting, also hold a special place in Indian culture.



Visa Process

You need a visa to travel to India unless you are an Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholder. India has a number of visa categories. Make sure you get the right visa for the purpose and duration of your travel, information can be found by visiting the Indian Bureau of Immigration online.

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

Currency

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

Credit Cards

Major credit cards like Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted in the major towns and cities of India, however American Express is rarely accepted and you also cannot use Apple Pay. Cash is accepted almost everywhere.

Gratuities

It's customary to tip in India. While travelling through India, on a tour or otherwise, travellers are generally expected to tip porters, drivers, restaurant staff, tour guides and other service workers given the low wages they earn.

As a guide, we recommend tipping approximately $6 per person per day.

Plug Sockets

There are three plug types used throughout India, types C, D and M. Plug type C is the plug which has two round pins, plug type D is the plug which has three round pins in a triangular pattern and plug type M is the plug which also has three round pins.



The climate in India varies depending on the location and time of travel.



Average Summer	Average Winter
25-40°C	10-24°C



Average Summer	Average Winter
25-40°C	9-24°C



Average Summer	Average Winter
29-41°C	14-25°C



Average Summer	Average Winter
26-39°C	10-25°C



Average Summer	Average Winter
20-27°C	8-15°C

General Etiquette:

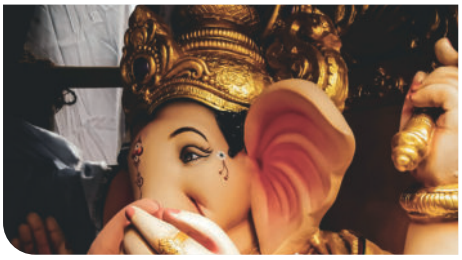
Greetings: The traditional Indian greeting is the “namaste” (pressing your palms together and bowing slightly). It’s a respectful way to say hello, thank you, or goodbye.

Dress Modestly: Especially when visiting religious sites or rural areas. For both men and women, covering shoulders and knees is recommended.

Religion and Temples

Temple Etiquette: Dress modestly when visiting temples. Remove your shoes before entering and follow any additional temple-specific rules.

Respect for Religious Practices: Be aware of local religious customs and practices. For example, during festivals, be mindful of crowds and special ceremonies.



Photography

Ask for Permission: Always ask for permission before taking photos of people, especially in rural areas. Some religious sites and government buildings may have restrictions on photography.

Ranthambore National Park: To protect wildlife, a government ban prohibits tourists from carrying mobile phones in Ranthambhore’s core zones; standard cameras are still permitted for photography.

Hygiene and Health:

Hand Washing: Wash your hands regularly, especially before meals. Hand sanitizer is also useful.

Food and Water Safety: Be cautious with street food and drink bottled or purified water to avoid stomach issues.

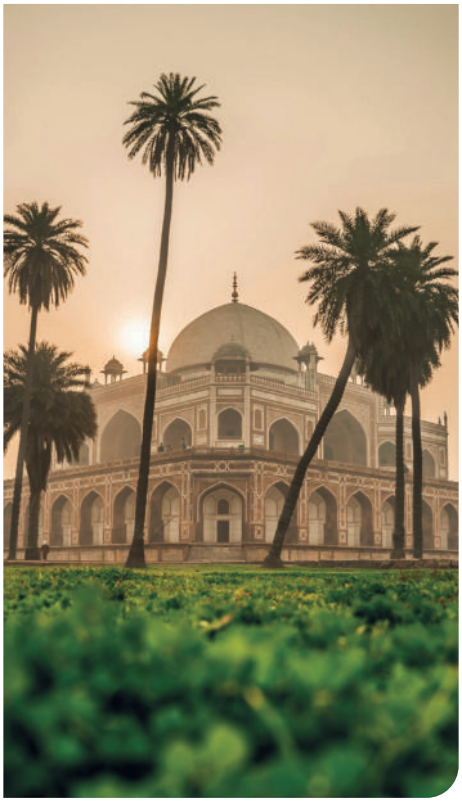
Emergency

Dial 112 for police, fire, or medical assistance. Keep a copy of your passport and important documents in a safe place and have the contact details of the nearest British embassy or consulate.

Social Practices

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

Removing Shoes: Always remove your shoes when entering someone’s home, temples, and some businesses. There’s usually a designated area for shoes outside the entrance.



Dining

Food is an incredible gastronomical experience in India. However, as hygeine levels differ to the UK, it’s important to be mindful when eating out. Always drink bottled water and avoid drinking tap water at all costs, this includes washed fruit and salad, ice cubes and brushing your teeth with tap water. Sticking to a vegetarian diet can help lower the risk of contamination, as can choosing fruit that you can peel yourself. It is advised to pack medicines just in case you do get an upset stomach. Please exercise caution when buying food from street food vendors.

Dining Etiquette

Eating with Hands: In many parts of India, eating with your hands is common. If you choose to eat this way, use only your right hand.

Sharing Meals: Meals are often shared family-style. If offered food, it’s polite to accept, even if just a small portion.

What to pack

Essentials:
Passport & Visa: Ensure you have your passport, visa, and any necessary travel documents.
Travel Insurance: Always a good idea for unexpected situations.
Money: Cash (especially small denominations) and credit/debit cards. ATMs are widely available.
Health Kit: Any prescription medications, over-the-counter medicines (Ensure that you travel with these in your hand luggage)

Clothing:
Lightweight, Breathable Clothes: Cotton and linen are ideal for the hot climate.
Modest Clothing: In many areas, especially rural ones and religious sites, modesty is appreciated (long skirts/pants, covered shoulders).
Layers: Depending on the season and region, evenings can be cooler, so a light jacket or sweater might be needed. Comfortable Shoes: For walking and exploring. Sandals are also useful.

Personal Items:
Toiletries: Basic items like toothpaste, shampoo, soap, and any specific personal items you use.
Sunscreen & Sunglasses: Protection from the strong sun is crucial.
Insect Repellent: Especially important in rural or tropical areas.

Electronics:
Adapter/Converter: India uses a variety of plug types and voltages, so an adapter is essential. Phone & Charger: With a local SIM card, you can have better connectivity and avoid high roaming charges.
Camera: To capture your travels (with extra memory cards and batteries).

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

