



ALLURING ASIA

DESTINATION

INDIA

TRAVELER'S GUIDE





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Thank you.

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POPULATION

India has the second-largest population in the world with a population of 1.15 billion, exceeded only by that of China. By 2030, the population will be the largest in the world, estimated to be around 1.53 billion.

TIME

India is GMT plus 5 1/2 hours.
India is 10.5 hours ahead of East Coast time, except during Daylight savings when it is 9.5 hours ahead.

VISAS

United States Citizens require a Visa. Make sure your passport has at least 6 months validity left. Also make sure you have made a few extra copies of your passport and make sure that you carry a copy in your checked luggage, a copy in your carry on baggage and a copy with your personal items.

INSURANCE

It is advisable to purchase in addition to normal medical insurance, to take out a policy which covers evacuation.



HISTORY

The history of India begins as long as 75,000 years ago when there is evidence of human activity or as long ago as 500,000 years ago with earlier hominids. A detailed history of India would fill volumes of books and take countless hours to cover properly so this is only a brief account of Indian history-one of the oldest continual civilizations on earth.

The Indus Valley Civilization flourished in the northwestern part of India from c. 3300 to 1300 BCE making it the first major civilization in India and then later a more technologically advanced and sophisticated urban culture developed in the Mature Harappan period from 2600 to 1900 BCE. During the bronze age the civilization was located primarily in the modern day Indian provinces of Rajasthan, Punjab, Gujarat, and Haryana. India has gone through periods of Persian and Greek conquests that had major repercussions on Indian Civilization including the Persians' forms of governance and attributes of Greek architecture and culture influenced the emergence of a hybrid early Indian culture.

The Golden age of Indian Civilization was a middle period of notable cultural development. The Satavahana dynasty, also known as the Andhras, ruled in southern and central India around 230 BCE. And defeated the Sunga Empire of north India. Then afterwards the warrior king of Kalanga, Kharavela ruled a vast empire that included maritime trading routes with Burma, Sri Lanka, and the Malay Archipelago.

There was an increase in Indian

trade with the Roman empire in 130 BCE when there were up to 120 ship sailings per year between Myos Hormos on the Red Sea to India.

From the 7th to the 9th century, several dynasties contested for control of northern India: the Gurjara Pratiharas of Malwa, the Eastern Ganga dynasty of Orissa, the Palas of Bengal, and the Rashtrakutas of the Deccan. After conquering Persia, Arab Islamic Caliphate incorporated parts of what is now Pakistan around 720 CE. The Muslim rulers were keen to invade India which was a rich region, flourishing with international trade and the only known diamond mines in the world at the time.

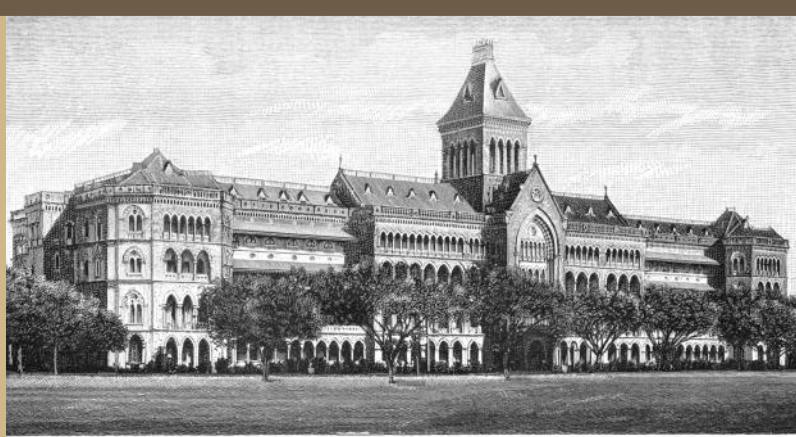
In 1526, Babur, a Timurid descendant of Timur and Genghis Khan from Fergana Valley, swept across the Khyber Pass and established the Mughal Empire, covering what is modern day Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. The Mughals were perhaps the richest single dynasty to have ever existed. It was during this time that an amalgam of Islamic, Persian, Turkish, and Indian architecture came together to define Mughal architecture and perhaps the most notable example of Mughal architecture is the magnificent Taj Mahal at Agra.

The Colonial era began when in 1498, Vasco da Gama successfully discovered a new sea route from Europe to India, which paved the way for direct Indo-European commerce. The Portuguese soon set up trading posts in Goa, Daman, Diu and Bombay. The next

to arrive were the British and the French. Although these continental European powers controlled various coastal regions of southern and eastern India during the ensuing century, they eventually lost all their territories in India to British islanders with the exception of the French outposts of Pondicherry and Chandernagore, the Dutch port of Travancore and the Portuguese colonies of Goa, Daman and Diu.

In 1617 the British East India Company was given permission by Mughal Emperor Jahangir to trade in India, leading to ever more British influence over Indian territories which led to a series of armed conflicts. The first major movement against the British Company's high handed rule resulted in the Indian Rebellion of 1857. After a year of turmoil and reinforcement of the East India Company's troops with British soldiers, the company overcame the rebellion. The nominal leader of the uprising, the last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar was exiled to Burma, his children were beheaded, and the Moghul line was abolished. In the aftermath all power was transferred from the East India Company to the British Crown, which began to administer most of India as a number of provinces.

During British rule, famines in India, often attributed failed government policies, were some of the worst ever recorded, including the Great Famine of 1876-78 in which 6.1 million to 10.3 million people died and then the Indian Famine of 1899-1900 in which up to 10 million people died. In the middle of the 19th century yet another plague pandemic originated in China spread, killing 10 million people in India alone. Despite continued famines and diseases, the population of the Indian subcontinent, which stood at about 125 million in 1750, had reached 398 million by 1941.



The Indian Independence Movement

The physical presence of the British in India was not significant, yet they were able to rule two-thirds of the subcontinent and exercise considerable leverage over the princely states that accounted for the remaining one-third.

Along with desire for independence, tensions between Hindus and Muslims had also been developing over the years. The Muslims had always been a minority within the subcontinent and the prospect of an exclusively Hindu government made them wary of Independence. Although there was a large amount of tension and mistrust between the Hindu and the Muslims, Mohandas Gandhi was able to bring a certain amount of unity between the two groups to stand up to the British. The British, who were extremely weakened after the second World War promised that they would leave and participated in the formation of an interim government. The British Indian territories gained independence in 1947, after being partitioned into the Union of India and Dominion of Pakistan. Following the controversial division of pre-partitioned Punjab and Bengal, rioting broke out between Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims in these provinces and spread to several other parts of India and Pakistan. Pakistan gained its own independence on August 14, 1947 and Bangladesh, formerly known as East Pakistan and East Bengal, seceded from Pakistan.

Today India has capitalized on its large educated English-speaking population to become one of the largest exporters of information technology services and software production. India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world with a GDP of over 4.06 trillion US Dollars per year.

LANGUAGE

There is no 'Indian' language, which is part of the reason why English is still widely spoken over 40 years after the British left India, and it's still the official language of the judiciary. There are a great number of local languages, and in many cases the state boundaries have been drawn on linguistic lines. In all, there are 18 languages officially recognized by the constitution, and these fall into two major groups: Indic, or Indo-Aryan, and Dravidian. Additionally, there are over 1600 minor languages and dialects listed in the 1991 census. The scope for misunderstanding can be easily appreciated!

The Indic languages are a branch of the Indo-European group of languages (of which English is also a member), and were the language of the central Asian peoples who invaded what is now India. The Dravidian languages are native to south India, although they have been influenced by Sanskrit and Hindi.

Most of the languages have their own scripts, and these are used along with English. In some states, such as Gujarat, you'll hardly see a word of English, whereas in Himachal Pradesh virtually everything is in English.

Major efforts have been made to promote Hindi as the national language of India and to gradually phase out English. A stumbling block to this plan is that while Hindi is the predominant language in the north, it bears little relation to the Dravidian languages of the south; and in the south very few people speak Hindi. It is from the south, particularly the state of Tamil Nadu, that the most vocal opposition to the adoption of Hindi comes, along with the strongest support for the retention of English.

For many educated Indians, English is virtually their first language, and for the large number of Indians who speak more than one language, English is often their second tongue. Thus it is very easy to get around India with English - after all, many Indians have to speak English to each other if they wish to communicate.

Common Phrases

English

Hindi

Hello

Helo / namaste

How are you?

Ap kaise/kaisi hai

Thank you

Thainkyu

You're welcome

Apka svagat hai

Goodbye

Namaskar

Please

Krp-ya

I'm sorry/Pardon me

Maaf kijiye

What is your name?

Apka nam kya hai?

My name is _____

Mera nam _____ hai.

Yes

Haa

No

Nahi

Where is the toilet?

Tayalet kaha hai?

How do I get to _____?

_____ tak kaise jaoON?

Water

Pani, jal

How much is this?

Iska kitna hoga?



CLIMATE

India is so vast that the climatic conditions in the far north have little relation to that of the extreme south. While the heat is building up to breaking point on the plains, the people of Ladakh will still be waiting for the snow to melt on the high passes. Basically India has three seasons the hot, the wet and the cool. The best time to visit is during the winter (November through February), except for the northern Himalayan regions where late spring and summer (April through August) is the best time.

Hot: The heat starts to build up on the northern plains of India from around February and by April or May it becomes unbearable. In central India, temperatures of 45C and above are commonplace. Later in May the first signs of the monsoon are seen - high humidity, short rainstorms, violent electrical storms, and dust storms that turn day into night. The hot season is the time to leave the plains and retreat to the hills. Kashmir and the Kullu Valley come into their own, and the Himalayan hill stations and states such as Sikkim are at their best.

Wet: When the monsoon finally arrives, it doesn't just suddenly appear one day. After a period of advance warning, the rain comes in steadily, starting round 1 June in the extreme south and sweeping north to cover the whole country by early July. The monsoon doesn't really cool things off; at first you simply trade the hot, dry, dusty weather for hot, humid, muddy conditions. It doesn't rain solidly all day during the monsoon, but it certainly rains every day; the water tends to come down in buckets for a while and then the sun comes out and it's quite pleasant.

Cool: Around October, the monsoon ends, and this is probably the best time of year in India. Everything is still green and lush but you don't get rained on daily. The temperatures are delightful, not too hot and not too cool. The air is clear in the Himalaya, and the mountains are clearly visible, at least early in the day. As the cool rolls on, Delhi and other northern cities become quite crisp at night in December and January. It becomes downright cold in the far north, but snow brings India's small skiing industry into action so a few places, such as the Kullu Valley, have a winter season too.

Average Temperature & Rainfall

Mumbai	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rainfall(inches)	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.7	1.3	3.1	8.8	6.7	2.3	0.7	0.4	0.1
Min Temp (F)	67	68	73	77	80	79	77	77	77	77	73	69
Max Temp (F)	85	85	88	90	92	89	86	85	87	91	92	89
Agra	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rainfall(inches)	1.5	2.3	3.2	4.0	4.5	6.8	5.1	5.2	6.1	2.4	2.0	1.4
Min Temp (F)	46	50	60	72	79	83	80	78	75	67	56	48
Max Temp (F)	72	77	89	101	106	105	95	92	93	93	85	75
Jaipur ND	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rainfall(inches)	5.5	12.8	6.8	13.4	15	62.5	156.4	198.8	71.7	35.5	6.7	10.2
Min Temp (F)	48	54	63	73	81	82	79	77	75	68	58	50
Max Temp (F)	74	79	90	100	106	104	95	92	94	94	86	78
Cochin	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Rainfall(inches)	1.2	1.9	3.3	6.3	11.8	15.5	14.4	14.4	10.7	4.3	1.4	1.0
Min Temp (F)	57	57	63	68	75	81	81	79	79	73	66	59
Max Temp (F)	66	66	70	77	84	86	90	88	86	82	75	70

THE LAND

India today is one of the most richly rewarding regions of the world to visit. Its scenery is amongst the most varied and exciting anywhere, its history and culture are not just packaged and brought out on show for the tourist, but lived, and its openness, friendliness and freedom from personal threat make it increasingly rare among major travel destinations.

The heart of India beats in the densely populated plains of the River Ganges, settled and cultivated for millennia, and the home of great civilizations which shape the lives of 940 million people today. To the South lies the Peninsula, politically always more fragmented than the Plains and agriculturally less fertile, but with mineral resources which have supplied empires from the Indus Valley Civilization over 4,000 years ago to the present. Beyond lies once of India's great natural frontiers, the India Ocean, stretching from the Arabian Sea in the West to the Bay of Bengal in the East, and offering nothing but scattered island chains between Kanniyakumari and Antarctica.

To the North of the plains stand the Himalaya, what a 19th Surveyor General of India described as "the finest natural combinations of boundary and barrier that exists in the world. It stands alone. For the greater part of its length only the Himalayan eagle can trace it. It lies amidst the eternal silence of vast snowfield and icebound peaks. Could you stand alone on one of the outer ranges in Kashmir, or in Garhwal, or at Darjiling, and watch on some clear day the white outline of the distant snowy range, you would then realize that never was there such a God-given boundary set to such a vast and impressive frontier".

Yet each of these three major physical regions - the Himalaya, the Gangetic Plains and the Peninsula - have their own great diversity. In the eastern foothills of the Himalaya, for example, are some of the wettest regions in the world, still covered in dense rainforest, while in their western ranges are the high altitude deserts of Ladakh. Similarly the Gangetic plains stretch from the fertile and wet delta of Bengal to the deserts of North Rajasthan. Even the Peninsula ranges from the tropical humid climate of the western coast across the beautiful high ranges of the Western Ghats to the dry plateaus inland.





India's most holy river, the Ganges, known today as the Ganga, runs across the vital heartland of the country and through the mythology of Hinduism. Joined by other holy rivers along its route, its waters are a vital source of irrigation. Its path is dotted with towns and settlements of great sanctity, and it is a vital economic asset as well as the focus of devotion for hundreds of millions. To the South the great rivers of the peninsula - the Narmada, Krishna, Tungabhadra and Kaveri to name only the largest - also have a spiritual significance to match their current role as providers of water and power.

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On the diverse physical environment remains etched the evidence of a succession of political powers, religions and cultures going back to prehistoric settlements over 500,000 years ago. From cave paintings, such as those at Bhimbetka to the grandiose triumphalism of British-built New Delhi, every part of India has astonishing cultural artifacts which bear witness to its range and depth of culture and historical experience. Sites from every region all illustrate the flowering of those cultural traditions, whether in remarkable temples - from Konark in the East to Palitana in the West, or from Khajuraho in the North to Madurai in the South - or in the development of rich traditions of music and dance or the abstractions of philosophy. Superimposed on the cities of North India are some of the finest Muslim-inspired building in the world, including Agra's Taj Mahal.

THE PEOPLE

The Indian people are not a homogeneous group. It is quite easy to tell the difference between the shorter Bengalis of the east, the taller and lighter-skinned people of the center and north, the Kashmiris with their distinctly central Asian appearance, the Tibetan people of Ladakh, Sikkim and the north Himachal

Pradesh and the dark-skinned Tamils of the south. Despite these regional variations, the government has managed to successfully establish and 'Indian' ethos and national consciousness.



CASTES

The caste system is one of India's more confusing mysteries - how it came about, how it has managed to survive for so long and how much harm it causes are all topics of discussion for visitors to India. Its origins are hazy, but it seems to have been developed by the Brahmins or priest class in order to maintain its superiority. Eventually, the caste system became formalized into four distinct classes, each with rules of conduct and behavior.

At the top are the Brahmins who are the priests and the arbiters of what is right and wrong in matters of religion and caste. Next come the Kshatriyas, who are soldiers and administrators. The Vaisyas are the artisan and commercial class and, finally, the Sudras are the farmers and the peasant class. These four castes are said to have come from Brahma's mouth (Brahmins), arms (Kshatriyas), thighs (Vaisyas) and feet (Sudras).

Beneath the four main castes is a fifth group, the untouchables. These people, members of the so-called Scheduled Castes, literally have no caste. They perform the most menial and degrading jobs. At one time, if a high-caste Hindu used the same temple as an untouchable, was touched by one, or even had an untouchable's shadow cast across them, they were considered polluted and had to go through a rigorous series of rituals to be cleansed.

Today, the caste system has been weakened, but it still has considerable power, particularly among less educated people. Gandhi put great effort into bringing the untouchables into society, including renaming them the 'Harjans' or 'Children of God'. Recently, the word Harijan has lost favor, and the use of it in official business has actually been banned in Madhya Pradesh. The term the members of these groups prefer is Dalit, meaning Oppressed or Downtrodden.



TRIBALS

For most people, it comes as a surprise to learn that more than 50 million Indians belong to tribal communities distinct from the great mass of Hindu caste society. These Adivasi, as they are known in India, have origins which precede the Vedic Aryans and the Dravidians of the south. For thousands of years they have lived more or less undisturbed in the hills and densely wooded regions which were regarded as unattractive by the peasantry of more dynamic populations. Many still speak tribal languages not understood by the politically dominant Hindus, and they follow archaic customs foreign to both Hindus and Muslims alike.

SACRED COWS

India has nearly 200 million cattle, which play a vitally important role in the rural economy - pulling the farmer's cart to market or plowing the fields. Their religious protection probably first developed as a means of safe-guarding them during droughts or famine when they might have been killed off and subsequently been hard to replace. There is also some dairy production.

One of the most amazing sights in India, especially for the first-time visitor, is the number of cows which roam the streets of every town and city. They seem to be completely oblivious to the Tata bus bearing down on them at 100 miles an hour

In the cities, cows also form an involuntary arm of the garbage-disposal department, and when not roaming the streets munching on cardboard, they can be seen rummaging through the concrete bins where waste vegetable matter is tipped.



RELIGION

Although India is overwhelmingly Hindu (Hinduism is practiced by approximately 80% of the population), there are large minorities of other religions. These include Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Janis. About 7% of the population is classified as 'tribal'. They are found scattered throughout the country, although there are concentrations of them in the north-eastern corner of the country, as well as in Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

ETIQUETTE

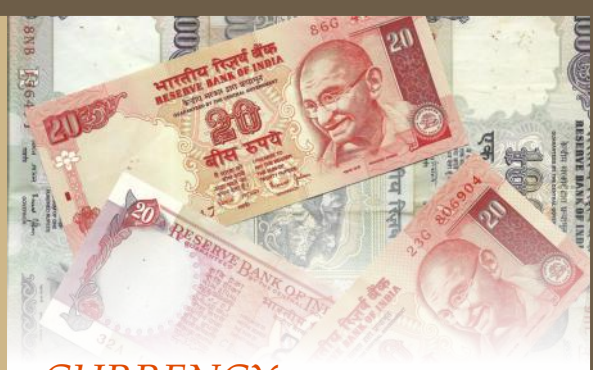
As a general rule, open anger or shows of temper should be avoided. Causing another person to 'lose face' is not recommended and status-particularly in terms of age - should be accorded due respect. Use your right hand for giving, taking, eating or shaking hands as the left is considered to be unclean. Women do not shake hands with men as this form of contact is not traditionally acceptable between acquaintances.

CUSTOMS

The usual duty-free regulations apply for India; that is, one bottle of Alcohol and 200 cigarettes. You're allowed to bring in all sorts of Western technological wonders, but big items, such as video cameras, are likely to be entered on a 'Tourist Baggage Re-Export' form to ensure you take them out with you when you go. It's not necessary to declare still-cameras, even if you have more than one. Note: If you are entering from Nepal you are not entitled to import anything free of duty

CRIME

India has its fair share of beggars, pickpockets, and con artists. India is probably much safer than your hometown, but you must exercise caution. Don't trust strangers with stories about inexpensive gems, rare antiques, old Zippos, and other collectibles that will fetch great prices back home. All are fakes. Please do not encourage or support begging by giving out handouts to beggars. Instead make a small donation to a temple, Mosque or charity.



CURRENCY

The monetary unit of India is Rupee (Rs). You can change money at the hotels in all major cities at the Government fixed rate of exchange.

Do not accept torn bills when changing money as most shopkeepers will refuse torn or marked bills

CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards are widely accepted in India. Small restaurants, shops and bazaars will only accept Rupees.

ATM MACHINES

There are ATM's at branches of all major banks, but you will only be able to get cash in Rupees.

TIPPING

The term Baksheesh, which encompasses tipping and a lot more besides, aptly describes the concept in India. Tipping is a way of life and expected in India. Baksheesh is an integral part of the system - it wasn't invented simply to extract money from tourists. Take some time to observe how Indians (even those who are obviously not excessively wealthy) deal with baksheesh situations; they always give something, and it's expected and accepted by both sides. Tipping is at your own discretion. Below is a guideline.

Guides: \$ 20.00 - \$ 25.00 per person/day

Porters: \$ 1.00 - \$ 2.00 per bag

Drivers: \$ 10.00 - \$ 15.00 per person/day

Restaurants: 10-15%



WHAT TO PACK

The weather is complicated in India and therefore your packing will be too.

Between October and March it is winter in India, and that means it could be cold in North India ie. Delhi and Rajasthan, and hot in Mumbai and further South. It is important to take layers, to takeoff or add to as you need during the day. As the sun comes up it gets warmer, and it gets suddenly cold with the setting sun. The mornings are misty and in Delhi there is a likelihood of smog. The sun sets around 5:30 - 6:00 PM. Rajasthan and particularly Jaisalmer has desert weather with sharp temperature contrasts. Bright sunshine in the day and crisp cold desert nights.

During the day - dress informally while on tour. Carry lightweight clothes that can be laundered easily. Women should remember that India is conservative. Avoid short shorts, mini-skirts, and low cut dresses/tops. Pants and Bermuda length shorts are perfectly acceptable.

In the south of India you can count on summer weather all year round. In the north you will want to pack a sweater or a light jacket to wear in the evening.

Due to restricted weight limits on all the Domestic flights (15kg or 33 pounds) it is recommended to pack accordingly.

Remember you will be walking on cobblestones, through ruins, historical sites, deserts, and notoriously uneven Indian roads. Good walking support shoes are essential. Shoes should be comfortable, cushioned, nonskid with good tread. Get them ahead of time and break them in advance to avoid getting sore feet and blisters.

The sun is strong and you will want to pack sunblock and/or sunscreen, a brimmed hat and good sunglasses. Be sure to bring extra film and/or Memory sticks as well as camera batteries, however, do not carry batteries in your carry on luggage. You may also want to pack a flashlight, umbrella, a lightweight

insulated water bottle carrier, insect repellent, toilet tissue, socks (you will need them at all temples), packets of moist towelettes.



COMMUNICATIONS

Telephone

Country code: 91. Public telephones are available in post offices, hotels and shops displaying a telephone unit sign. To call India from the USA/Canada dial 011 + 84 + City Area Code + Phone Number.

Mobile Telephone

Roaming agreements exist with most major international mobile phone companies. Coverage is good in major towns and cities throughout the country, with sporadic coverage in rural areas.

Internet

Internet is available throughout much of India and it has become a part of everyday life for many. There are reported to be over 100 million internet users in India in 2011. Internet access can be found at internet cafes and in most major hotels.

Post

The Indian Postal Service operates 155,333 post offices making it the most widely distributed post office system in the world.

Media

India's media are tightly controlled by the country's leadership. The industry has been opened up in the areas of distribution and advertising but not in editorial content and access to foreign news providers is limited. In general, the press report on corruption and inefficiency among officials, but they avoid criticism of the Communist Party.

ELECTRICITY

The electric current is 230-240 V AC, 50 cycles. Electricity is widely available in India but breakdowns and blackouts are endemic. Sockets are of a three round-pin variety, similar (but not identical) to European sockets



SHOPPING

India is packed with beautiful things to buy - you could easily load yourself up to the eyeballs with goodies you pick up around the country. The cardinal rule when purchasing handicrafts is to bargain and bargain hard. You can get a good idea of what is reasonable in quality and price by visiting the various state emporiums, particularly in Delhi, and the Central Cottage Industries Emporiums which can be found in Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Bangalore and Hyderabad. You can inspect items at these places from all over the country. Because prices are fixed, you will get an idea of how hard to bargain when you purchase similar items from regular dealers.

Shops are usually open from 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM with a break for lunch between 1:00 PM and 2:00 PM Monday through Saturday.

Bazaars (the local markets) are often a great experience, but you must be repared to bargain. Export of certain items such as antiques, ivory, furs and skins is controlled or banned, so it is essential to get a certificate of legitimate sale and permission for export.

A Warning - In touristy places, particularly places like Agra, Jaipur, Varanasi, Delhi and Calcutta, take extreme care with the commission merchants - these guys hang around waiting to pick you up and cart you off to their favorite dealers where whatever you pay will have a hefty margin built into it to pay their commission.

Stories about 'my family's place', 'my brother's shop' and 'special deal at my friend's place' are just stories and nothing more. Whatever you might be told, if you are taken by a rickshaw driver to a place, be it a craft shop, market or even restaurant, the price you pay will be inflated. This can be by as much as 50%, so try to visit these places on your own.

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Words of Wisdom-Buyer Beware

Bring your purchases home with you. Unless you are prepared to wait a prolonged period of time, do not have it shipped -- not even by air freight.

Do not purchase expensive goods of supposed high quality unless you are absolutely sure of what you are buying.

Unless you are an expert in gems, antiques, artifacts, etc., you should not assume that it is of the highest quality or value.

Always take the time to read the charge slips for credit card purchases before you sign them. This may seem obvious; but in the excitement of making a foreign purchase, travelers sometimes overlook this and are unpleasantly surprised when they return home and are billed by the credit card company. Taking a few moments to review the charge slip before signing it (and computing the exchange rate to be sure you are charged the right amount) can save you headaches later.



FOOD

Each Indian state has its own history, culture and food. To stay healthy keep to a diet of fresh cooked vegetables, rice and Indian breads. Only drink bottled water and as much as possible to avoid dehydration. Avoid ice if possible.

Eat cooked meals, avoid green salads. Do not purchase or consume food from street stalls, eat only fruit you can peel and avoid seafood except in coastal areas. Local beer, wine and soda are safe to consume.

Most visitors are surprised - and often delighted - at the enormous variety of delicious food, some bearing little relation to the various 'curries' available outside India. You find just as much variety in dishes and presentation crossing India as you would on an equivalent journey across Europe. Furthermore, there is a remarkable range of delicious savory snacks and sweets. Rice is one of the universal basis of meals in the South and East, while wheat is more common in the North. But accompanying these essential grains is a huge variety of dishes, many of the spiced, but not always with the kind of hot spices usually associated with Indian food abroad.

India has many delicious tropical and semi tropical fruits. Some are highly seasonal - mangoes in the hot season, for example - while others (e.g. bananas) are available throughout the year.

WATER SAFETY

Drink only bottled water

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ART

Indian Art is the art produced on the Indian subcontinent from about the 3rd millennium BC to modern times. To viewers schooled in the Western tradition, Indian art may seem overly ornate and sensuous; appreciation of its refinement comes only gradually, as a rule. Voluptuous feeling is given unusually free expression in Indian culture. A strong sense of design is also characteristic of Indian art and can be observed in its modern as well as in its traditional forms. The vast scope of the art of India intertwines with the cultural history, religions and philosophies which place art production and patronage in social and cultural contexts.

The earliest Indian religion to inspire major artistic monuments in India was Buddhism. Though there may have been earlier structures in wood that have been transformed into stone structures, there are no physical evidences for these except textual references. Obscurity shrouds the period between the decline of the Harappans and the definite historic period starting with the Mauryas. Soon after the Buddhists initiated the rock-cut caves, Hindus and Jains started to imitate them at Badami, Aihole, Ellora, Salsette, Elephanta, Aurangabad and Mamallapuram.

Folk and tribal art in India takes on different manifestations through varied medium such as pottery, painting, metalwork, paper-art, weaving and designing of objects such as jewelry and toys. Often puranic gods and legends are transformed into contemporary forms and familiar images. Fairs, festivals, and local deities play a vital role in these arts.

It is in art where life and creativity are inseparable. The tribal arts have a unique sensitivity, as the tribal people possess an intense awareness very different from the settled and urbanized people. Their minds are supple and intense with myth, legends, snippets from epic, multitudinous gods born out of dream and fantasy. Their art is an expression of their life and holds their passion and mystery.

British colonial rule had a great impact on Indian art. The old patrons of art became less wealthy and influential, and Western art more ubiquitous. Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951), referred to as the father of Modern Indian art introduced reworked Asian styles, in alignment with a developing Indian nationalism and pan-Asianism to create a new school of art, which is today known as the Bengal School of art. Other artists of the Tagore family, such as Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and Gaganendranath Tagore (1867-1938) as well as new artists of the early 20th c such as Amrita Sher-Gil (1913-1941) were responsible for introducing Avant garde western styles into Indian Art. Many other artists like Jamini Roy and later S.H. Raza took inspiration from folk traditions.

Papier Mache

This is probably the most characteristic Kashmiri craft. The basic paper-mache article is made in a mold, then painted and polished in successive layers until the final intricate design is produced. Prices depend upon the complexity and quality of the painted design and the amount of gold leaf used. Items include bowls, cups, containers, jewel boxes, letter holders, tables, lamps, coasters, trays and so on.

Pottery

In Rajasthan interesting white-glazed pottery is made with hand-painted blue-flower designs - it's attractively simple. Terra-cotta images of the gods and children's toys are made in Bihar.

Silks & Saris

Silk is cheap and the quality is often excellent. The 'silk capital' these days is Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu, although Varanasi is also popular, especially for silk saris.

Carpets

It may not surprise you that India produces and exports more hand-crafted carpets than Iran, but it probably is more of a surprise that some of them are of virtually equal quality. In Kashmir, where India's best carpets are produced, the carpet-making techniques and styles were brought from Persia even before the Mughal era. The art flourished under the Mughal's and today Kashmir is packed with small carpet producers. There are many carpet dealers in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and even Kovalam.

Jewelry

Many Indian women put most of their wealth into jewelry, so it is no wonder that so much of it is available. For Western tastes the heavy folk-art jewelry of Rajasthan has particular appeal. You'll find it all over the country, but particularly in Rajasthan. In the north you'll also find Tibetan jewelry, even chunkier and more folk-like than the Rajasthani variety.

Leatherwork

Of course Indian leatherwork is not made from cow-hide but from buffalo-hide, camel, goat or some other substitute. Chappals, those basic sandals found all over India, are the most popular purchase. In craft shops in Delhi you can find well-made leather bags, handbags and other items. Kashmiri leather shoes and boots, often of quite good quality, are widely found, along with coats and jackets of often abysmally low quality. Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh is the country's major city for leatherwork.

Metalwork

Copper and brass items are popular throughout India. Candle holders, trays, bowls, tankards and ashtrays are made in Bombay and other centers. In Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh the brass is inlaid with exquisite designs in red, green and blue enamel. Bidri is a craft of north-eastern Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, where silver is inlaid into gunmetal. Hookah pipes, lamp bases and jewelry boxes are made in this manner.

Textiles

This is till India's major industry and 40% of the total production is at the village level where it is known as khadi. There are government khadi emporiums (known as Khadi Gramodyog) around the country, and these are good places to buy handmade items of homespun cloth, such as the popular 'Nehru jackets' and the kurta pajama. Bedspreads, tablecloths, cushion covers or material for cloths are other popular khadi purchases.

Bronze Figures

In the south, delightful small images of the gods are made by the age-old lost-wax process. A wax figure is made, a mold is formed around it and the wax is melted and poured out. The molten metal is poured in and when it's solidified the mold is broken open. Figures of Siva as dancing Nataraj are amongst the popular.



Woodcarving

In the south, images of the gods are also carved out of sandalwood. Rosewood is used to carve animals - elephants in particular. Carved wooden furniture and other household items, either in natural finish or lacquered, are also made in various locations. In Kashmir intricately carved wooden screens, tables, jewelry boxes, trays and the like are carved from Indian walnut.

Paintings

Reproductions of the beautiful old miniatures are painted in many places, but beware of paintings claimed to be antique - it's highly unlikely that they are. Also note that quality can vary widely; low prices often mean low quality, and if you buy before you've had a chance to look at a lot of miniatures and develop some appreciation you'll inevitably find you bought unwisely. Udaipur (Rajasthan) has some good shops specializing in modern reproductions.

In Kerala, and to a lesser extent, Tamil Nadu, you'll come across beautiful and incredibly vibrant miniature paintings on leaf skeletons enclosed on a printed card depicting domestic and rural scenes as well as gods and goddesses. Kovalam beach is the prime place to find them, though they're also marketed around Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu) these days. Antiques Articles over 100 years old are not allowed to be exported from India without an export clearance certificate. Make sure you check with authorities before purchasing.

Other Things to Buy:

Marble inlay pieces from Agra are pleasant reminders of the beauty of the Taj. They come as either simple little pieces or large items like jewelry boxes. Appliqué work is popular in many places, such as Orissa.

Indian musical instruments always have an attraction for travelers. A more portable Indian music buy might be records or tapes. Certain Indian streets in major cities now resemble Taipei, Bangkok, Bali and Singapore in having street stalls and shops offering the full range of music.

