

Namaste

Updated August 30, 2008



RECONNECTION JOURNEYS

Pre-departure Guide—India

Everything You Wanted to Know About India

There are so many incredible sites in India that it is no exaggeration to say that it is one of the world's most fascinating travel destinations. India is a land of dreams and romance, a wonderland of fabulous wealth and poverty, of splendour and rags. India is a country of contrasts and paradoxes, of powerful flavours, of spectacular images and events, of extreme patterns of behaviour. And that is what will make this journey so irresistible and powerful. In addition, the Indian people are in general open-hearted, very friendly and will welcome you to share their country with you.

What airlines fly there and can we go in a group?

Most major airlines fly to India. You will be arriving in Mumbai and departing from Delhi. Air India, Jet Airways, United Airlines, Lufthansa, Thai Airways, Singapore, Malaysian, British Airways, Air France, Delta are some of the airlines. Many of you will be using your Frequent Flyer miles to go to India. We will be offering a group price from New York. If you would like to go with the group, we would need full payment by November 1st. The flights to India fill up very quickly.

If you wish to travel earlier and depart later, we can handle that for you too. If you wish to make your own travel arrangements, an excellent site for airfares is www.kayak.com

There are 2 airlines that have direct flights to Mumbai. Continental Airlines and Jet Airways from New York. Flight time is 14 hours and it arrives at a decent time around 9:30 pm. into Mumbai.

What about my passport?

You must have a valid passport that is good for 6 months after your departure date. It is a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport with you in case the original one gets lost.

Do I need a Visa for India?

Yes, please contact the nearest Indian Consulate and request 6 month visa. You will need to have a currently valid passport and then you must apply for a tourist visa in order to enter India. The following links will help you obtain a visa. It can take 4 to 5 weeks to receive your visa, please understand that it is your sole responsibility to have a valid passport and visa prior to embarking on the tour. You cannot get a refund of the tour because your visa was not obtained in time.

USA: With effect from October 01, 2007, visa applicants are requested to obtain visas through Trivisa Outsourcing who handle all India visa requests from inside the United States as a private contractor to the Indian Embassy. (All queries relating to Indian visa services should be directed to them)
316 E. 53rd St., 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10022
Phone: (212) 754-9900
Fax: (212) 754-9905
<https://www.indian-visa.com/>

CANADA:

Consulate General of India, Canada
<http://www.cgitoronto.ca/visasvr/visasvrgeneralinfo.htm>

Uk:

Consulate General of India, Birmingham (England)
www.cgibirmingham.org
www.cgiedinburgh.org

Will my money be refunded in case of a world event where the trip needs to be cancelled?

Written cancellation 120-90 days prior to departure: \$200 cancellation fee per person.

Written cancellation 89-60 days prior to departure: \$1000 cancellation fee per person

Written cancellation 59-30 days prior to departure: 50% of entire tour cost

Cancellation within 30 days prior to departure: no refund.

No refund for unused portions of the tour, including but not limited to, missed meals, hotel nights and sightseeing.

Cancellation by Reconnection Journeys: full refund.

What is the Time Zone in India?

India is 10 ½ hours ahead of the Eastern Standard Time. That means 9 a.m. on Jan 8 in India, is 10:30 p.m. on Jan. 7 in New York .

What is the weather like in Feb-March?

You will experience a range of temperatures during this trip. Delhi and the places on our North Indian tour will be sunny and very pleasant during the day and will be cool in the evenings. Temperatures will be around 65-79 degrees Fahrenheit. Dharamsala which is in the hills of the Himalayas will be around 45-55 degrees Fahrenheit at night and about 60-65 degrees Fahrenheit during the day. A light windbreaker or a warm sweater will be a good idea and pack two pairs of warm socks, just in case.

What about clothes and valuables?

Don't forget a very warm sweater and/or jacket because the nights are cold especially in the hills of Dharamsala. Comfortable walking shoes and open toed sandals are recommended. Dresses below the knees and trousers are great and sleeveless dresses are acceptable. Remember though, that during your journey, you will be in a shopper's paradise for clothes geared for the western world – and relatively inexpensive! Leave all expensive jewelry and anything you would mind losing at home.

Will my hair dryer work in India?

The voltage in India is 220 AC. A dual voltage hair dryer is best and can be used with an adapter.

We use the same plug system as Europe.

What shall I carry with me on the flight?

Carry all valuables with you on the plane: your passport (keep the photocopy in another bag), travelers' checks, cash, camera and film. In case your suitcase arrives late, carry a change of clothes on board along with cosmetics, shaving supplies, deodorant, toothbrush and toothpaste, medicines, travel size kleenex and a roll of toilet paper. Mind you, all amenities are readily available in Delhi and elsewhere in India.

Did you mention toilet paper? So what about the bathrooms?

You will be staying in 4 and 5 star hotels except in Amritsar and Dharamsala where you will be staying in very basic and clean rooms and bathrooms. The bathrooms are all western style.

How can I call home from India?

India uses GSM 99/1800. If your phone is a GSM with multi band, called word phone, it will usually work in India, unless your service provider has locked it. You can buy a temporary sim card and refill the pre-paid phone cards or ask your service provider to allow International roaming, which is usually much more expensive, but your family members can call you at no cost.

My big fear is I will get sick in India.

You are not allowed to get sick on this journey. The most is a day if some of you really insist upon it. The two main reasons why travelers get sick in India are the tap water and eating unwisely. Bottled water is also readily available all over India. The food in India is delicious and generally well prepared. The local Indian fare can include a whole plethora of well-spiced, but not "hot" dishes. Grains and vegetables are common fare. Only eat foods that have been cooked and eat fruit that can be peeled. The prices of meals on your own will range from \$3 - \$10.

Don't put ice cubes in your drinks, brush your teeth with bottled water and shower with your mouth closed (no singing or chanting).

Is this tour like a boot camp?

We want you to enjoy and experience India at a reasonable pace. You will probably get into your coach by 9:00 am. unless of course you have to catch an early flight or train to the next place. Moderate amount of walking will be required and you can always stop, sit and take in the sights and smells and then keep on walking. However, we do ask you to be punctual for departures.

What about the currency?

The “Rupee” is the unit of currency. Just like 100 cents = 1 dollar; 100 paise = 1 rupee.

The current exchange rate is about 40 rupees = 1 U.S. dollar; 40 rupees = 1 Cdn. Dollar.

Travelers’ checks are highly recommended and should either be on your person, or the safety deposit box of the hotel. You will need to show your passport when changing money at the bank or the change house. U.S. dollars are easily changed and eagerly sought after. It is a good idea to bring some \$10 and \$20 bills. These can be used at the end of the trip so you don’t have to change more than you need. Near the end of the trip, be sure to change only small amounts so you are not left with any substantial Indian currency on departure.

Are film rolls available in India?

India is a photographer’s dream come true. Bring sufficient film with you although film is very reasonable and readily available. Bring extra batteries for your camera if you wish.

What about tipping?

Your tour includes a service charge for the hotel staff that will serve you during your stay. This includes the reception area, dining room staff and housekeeping. You may tip an optional amount if you so desire. When eating out, a tip of 10% is acceptable. Many restaurants include a service charge to the bill. The only tip will be for your guide at the end of the tour. Recommendation is usually between \$3 - \$5 per day.

And shopping?

India is a shopper’s bargain paradise, from clothes to jewelry in gold, silver and accessories; artifacts, carpets, rugs, embroidery and ... There are wide ranges of quality and the price depends on this. Be sure to check the quality of what you buy and don’t apologize for bargaining. It is part of the culture. They will hike up the prices 3- 4 times its worth. That’s part of the adventure. Most of the merchants speak a little English, at least to negotiate a price. Shopping is great in New Delhi and Dharamsala.

What are the luggage requirements?

Please travel light. You can have two pieces of luggage to check-in and one carry-on bag. For our travel please bring only one piece of luggage with maximum width of 28”. Carry a collapsible bag for your souvenir shopping in India or you can always buy an inexpensive suitcase. On flights within India, you are allowed 40 pounds of checked luggage. On international flights out of India, you are allowed 2 bags, each total of 50 pounds. Tie a piece of colourful ribbon on your suitcase to identify your bag.

Do I need any vaccination shots?

A booster shot for hepatitis A, cholera and typhoid is required. The odds are that you won’t get any of these diseases. Tetanus shot is recommended. Inquire from your local Center for Disease Control regarding shots. Please do not take any malaria pills as we are going to India in the winter. Besides, there will be enough visual and mental stimulation without incurring the side-effects of these pills. You may want to bring some Tylenol, Immodium and/or Pepto Bismol. Bring any other medications you require. Keep a list of your medications, so that in the event you lose them, they can be replaced. Allopathic medicines are available in India but often under other names.

Registration Information

Space is reserved in the order of receipt of reservation request. To submit a request for a reservation, please order using our Registration Form in PDF format. Print it out, fill in the information and send it to us along with a check of \$1000.

If there is no space available, you will automatically be placed on a waiting list, notified of your status, and no deposit will be taken. Deposits are applied to payment of the tour.

If you have a roommate, let us know. If you do not, we will try and find you a suitable roomy. If however, we are unable to do so, you will be required to pay the Single Supplement fee.

RECONNECTION JOURNEYS

77 Harbour Square, Ste. 3902
Toronto, ON M5J 2S2, Canada

Phone: 416.203.3595
Fax: 416.203.9682

WWW.RECONNECTIONJOURNEYS.COM

Tours that reconnect East-West Spirituality

Please note:

Balance due upon invoicing, 60 days prior to the tour, unless otherwise stated. If payment is not received by 60 days prior to departure, your place cannot be guaranteed.

Travel Insurance

Reconnection Journeys highly recommends travel insurance, a very inexpensive way to protect your investment. Ensure that the policy has, as a minimum, (1) high levels for Medical Expenses and Emergency Transportation, and (2) coverage for cancellation due to a Travel Advisory.

What else do I need to know about my journey to India?

Come on this journey with an open mind and a sense of humour. Like my friend Shelley said, "I totally left North America behind and allowed myself to be immersed in the Indian culture. I surrendered to the Indian way of life".

Check Payable to:

Reconnection Journeys
77 Harbour Square, Ste. 3902,
Toronto, ON M5J 2S2 Canada

You will be notified of your status when your request has been received and processed.

Recommended Reading:

Following are some of our travellers recommended readings and references:

- ✓ Frommer's India (Frommer's Complete)
- ✓ *India: A Divine Destination* by Aruna Deshpande. Available only in India. Aruna is a moving encyclopedia on tourism and covers every aspect of Indian life – from history, to cultural geography, to arts, to religions to symbolism. An excellent resource.
- ✓ *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy – Booker prize winner that will make you want to travel the waterways of Kerala and the villages she describes so vividly.
- ✓ *A Suitable Boy* by Vikram Seth is a book in several cities and is compared to Charles Dickens.
- ✓ *Holy Cow: An Indian Adventure* by Sarah Macdonald is a must read. A lively, snappy travelogue and very informative about Indian people and their religions. You will chuckle throughout if you read it after visiting India. It will prepare you, if you read it before visiting India.
- ✓ *Celestial Keys to the Vedas: Discovering the Origins of the World's Oldest Civilization* by Dr. B.G. Sidharth A fascinating point of view from an astronomer who had taken events from the ancient epics of Mahabharat and Vedas and demonstrated the more probable dates of the history of ancient India.
- ✓ *Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine* by David Kinsley. He describes the mythology, appearances and roles of the goddesses of the Hindu deities. A valuable sourcebook.
- ✓ *The Hindu Vision* by Alistair Shearer explores the extraordinary symbology of the multi-armed deities, fierce demons and fabulous creatures. Comes with 165 illustrations.
- ✓ *The Initiation* by Donald Schnell. A true story of Donald's meeting with the Avatar Babaji in India while he was told by his Guru in South India to travel India for one month before being initiated as a Swami. An amazing book.

Recommended Movies:

- ✓ *Gandhi*, directed by Richard Attenborough
- ✓ *Black*, directed by Sunjay Leela Bhansali
- ✓ *Water*, directed by Deepa Mehta
- ✓ *Earth*, directed by Deepa Mehta
- ✓ *Benaras, A Mystic Love Story*, directed by Pankuj Parashar
- ✓ *Guru*, directed by Mani Ratnam
- ✓ *Dil Se*, directed by Mani Ratnam
- ✓ *Jodha Akbar*, directed by Ashutosh Gawarikar
- ✓ *Kama Sutra*, by Mira Nair
- ✓ *Monsoon Wedding*, by Mira Nair
- ✓ *The Forgotten Women*, a documentary by Dilip Mehta about the widows in Vrindaban .