

India Fact File
India Fact File 2010 provided by
Operator CUL (trading as Charity Challenge)

Tourist office Website: www.tourismofindia.com

Address: Government of India Tourist Office, 7 Cork Street, London, WC2B 4NA.

Telephone: 020 7437 3677

Facsimile: 020 7494 1048

Indian consulate in UK Website: <http://www.hcilondon.org/>

Address: London: India House, Aldwych, London, WC2B 4NA

Telephone: 020 7836 8484

Facsimile: 020 7836 4331

Address: 17 Rutland Square, Edinburgh, EH1 2BB

Telephone: 0131 229 2144

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British embassy in India

Address: New Delhi: i50 Shantipath, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110 021

Telephone: +91 11 2687 2161 or Emergency Duty Officer: +981105 2217

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Address: Calcutta: 1 Ho Chi Minh Sarani, Calcutta 700071

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Area: 3,287,262 square kilometres

Population: 1 billion officially (closer to 3 billion if all responded to the census)

Capital: New Delhi

Language: The official language is Hindi in the Devangari Script with about 30% literacy in it. The states are free to decide their own regional languages for internal administration and education, so there are about 14 official languages widely spoken. English is very widely spoken however there are at least 300 known languages.

Tipping: It is usual to tip waiters, porters, guides and drivers. Service charge is not included.

Bank opening hours: Monday to Friday 10.00 – 14.00 and 10.00 – 12.00 on Saturdays.

All International hotels have 24hr money changing facilities.

Post office hours: Monday to Friday 10.00 – 17.00, plus Saturday mornings. This varies in different cities.

Shops opening hours: Monday to Saturday 09.30 – 18.00.

Time: (+/- GMT) 5½ hours ahead of GMT (Winter). 4½ hours ahead of GMT (Summer).

Electricity: Voltage in most places is 240v AC/DC. Socket take mainly round 3 pin plugs or in some cases round 2 pin.

Public holidays: 26th January – Republic Day, 15th August – Independence Day, 2nd October – Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday, 25th December – Christmas Day.

Telephone: The international direct dialling code for India is 91. Telephone booths are available in all towns/villages. (24hr service is available in large hotels). Please check with your mobile phone provider if your network & contract enable you to have coverage in India. Charity Challenge also has an emergency Satellite Phone available on all expeditions at a cost of £3 per minute.

Photograph: In wildlife sanctuaries and reserves, photography is permitted upon payment of a prescribed fee. Don't photograph military installations. Photography at some civil airports is also forbidden as they are shared with the Indian Air Force.

Postal: The Indian postal and poste restante services are generally excellent. Expected letters are almost always there and letters you send almost invariably reach their destination.

Currency: The currency is the Rupee, abbreviated as Rs.

Currency regulations: Foreign currency regulations are strict. \$USD and £Sterling are the easiest to change, however any money NOT exchanged via a bank is a criminal offence, not to mention a risky affair. Only change money at banks or legal foreign exchange dealers. Keep and look after your transaction receipts as you may be required to provide proof that you obtained your rupees legally. NO Rupee currency may be imported or exported apart from in the form of a cheque without the prior permission of the Reserve Bank of India. Baggage and Foreign Currency may come within US\$2,500 by oral declaration. You may be able to purchase rupees from some UK exchanges prior to travel however please note importing currency must be done at your own risk.

Credit cards: A growing number of hotels, restaurants and shops (Norbulinka Institute) in the major cities are beginning to accept credit cards, the well-known and more accepted ones being American Express, Access/MasterCard, Diners Club and Visas. However, credit cards are not the most convenient form of payment or cash withdrawal.

Passport/Visa: You must hold a full ten-year passport with at least six months to run from the end of your expedition, and at least one blank page for your visa and entry/exit stamps.

All foreign nationals require a visa to enter India – tourist, transit, and entry visas. If you arrive without a visa you can expect to be sent back. As a tourist the maximum stay is 6 months within each 12-month period. Visa's cost £30 or equivalent and are valid for 6 months. We will provide you with a visa application form 3 months prior to departure. The theft of passports and other belongings is on the increase. Replacing a passport will take time and money.

Gifts and souvenirs: These may be imported free of duty up to a value of Rs 4000 / £50.00 or equivalent

Duty free: 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars, 250 grams of tobacco, 1 litre of wine and 1 litre of liquor.

Vaccination and health: Nomad Travel Stores & Medical Centre recommended the following vaccinations: diphtheria; tetanus; poliomyelitis; hepatitis A; typhoid. Vaccines sometimes advised: hepatitis B; rabies; tuberculosis; Japanese B encephalitis; Meningococcal meningitis; cholera. It is necessary to take precautions against malaria in Delhi and Rajasthan. This includes wearing long-sleeved shirts, long trousers and socks at dawn and dusk. You should also wear plenty of insect repellent. Check with your doctor or nurse about suitable antimalarial tablets. Chloroquine together with proguanil is usually recommended for risk areas The water is NOT safe to drink in India. Also see Health notes.

Risks: Theft of valuables especially passports is a particular risk at major railway stations and on trains. Confident tricksters (particularly Agra and Jaipur) promise a substantial cash reward for delivery of jewellery abroad but only in return for an initial financial

deposit. The jewellery is invariably worthless and the deposit is lost. Crime in Delhi is rife, be aware!

Hospitals/pharmacies: There are state-operated facilities in all towns and cities and private consultants and specialists in urban areas.

Water: The water is NOT safe to drink in India prior to being sterilised with iodine or any other purification method. Bottled & sterilised water is provided. If you need to purchase more, check the bottle top has not been tampered with. Also see Health notes.

Climate: India is so vast that the climatic conditions in the far North have little relation to those of the extreme South. While the heat is building up to breaking point on the plains, the people of Himachal, high in the Himalayas, will still be waiting for the snow to melt on the high passes. Basically, India has a three-season-year: the hot, the wet and the cool. Please see the Q&A for your trip for specific details.

Temperature: Because of the unusual topography of the land, climatic conditions are widely diversified on both a seasonal and regional basis. The coolest weather lasts from November to mid-March, with cool, fresh mornings and evenings and dry, sunny days. Really hot weather, when it is dry, dusty and unpleasant, is between April and June. The mean temperature is approx. 29°C - 84°F. Please see the Q&A for your trip for specific details.

Geography: India is located in South Asia, with China, Nepal and Bhutan in the North, Bangladesh and Burma to the East, the Indian Ocean to the South and Pakistan and the Arabian sea to the West. It is the 7th largest country in the world, covering 3,287,590 sq. km's, less than one-fifth the size of Russia.

Do's & don'ts:

Do exchange money only through authorised banks or moneychangers; insist on a receipt when changing money

Do cover your head entering Sikh shrines. Don't wear footwear or shorts, sleeveless tops or revealing clothes inside Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or Jain places of worship. Both men and women need to keep their shoulders and legs covered, especially in temples and it is handy for women to carry a scarf they can use to cover their heads if necessary. While Indian attitudes to informal European styles of dress are generally tolerant, local religious or other sensibilities should be borne in mind.

Do be wary of approaches by strangers

Do keep your money and passport in a safe place

Don't purchase skins of all animals, snakes, etc and the articles made thereof used or unused, as personal baggage, whether accompanied or unaccompanied are banned.

Do not walk in isolated spots on your own in the popular tourist areas, especially after dark.

Do not become involved with drugs of any kind. The penalties for smuggling, possession and use are severe (10 – 20 years jail plus fine) and detention of up to three years awaiting trial. Second offenders can receive the death sentence.