

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW WHEN TRAVELLING TO INDIA

## SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

India has three distinct seasons, with summer from May to October, winter from November to March and the monsoon season from May to October.

## MONEY MATTERS

The Rupee (INR). INR1 = 100 paise. Notes: INR500, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins: INR5, 2, 1 and 50, 25, 10paise.

Credit cards: Big city hotels, stores and restaurants will accept international credit cards but if travelling in more remote areas it is unwise to rely on credit cards as a means of payment. One important thing to note about paper money in India is that it comes in varying degrees of decrepitude. Do not accept notes that are too torn, grubby or marked - it is hard to pass them off again, although they can be exchanged in a major bank. Ageing INR1 and INR2 notes still crop up from time to time but are being taken out of circulation. No Indian currency can be imported or exported and a copy of your encashment slip is required when converting Rupees back into currency prior to departing India.

## DRINKING WATER

It is recommended to buy bottled water.

## TIPPING / PORTERAGE

Although tipping *per se* is not a practice in India, instead it is expected that you pay for all services. For example, if you ask for directions you will likely be taken to where you want to go and may receive an impromptu guided tour, which has to be paid for. The key is to only go along with something where it is genuinely useful to you, otherwise be firm and refuse in no uncertain terms. Although you may be badgered eventually potential touts lose interest in your business. If you do engage a guide, ask what you can expect and how much they expect to be paid beforehand. Most major hotels include a service charge of 10%. Where tipping is left to your discretion, 10% is quite acceptable. Taxi drivers & porters are grateful for any small gratuity.

## TRAVEL RESPONSIBILITY

Learn a few words of the local language so you know what's considered polite in terms of eating, greeting and local values.

Appropriate behaviours by travellers helps ensure local communities continue to be hospital and friendly.

Respect other people's cultures and avoid imposing your beliefs.

Adhere to the hotel's water or energy conservation policies.

Buy locally made crafts and support local skills. Buy them preferably from the craftsman himself to ensure your money goes to the artist and not the middle man.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Lock valuables away while travelling and always be vigilant of your belongings. Never leave them unattended.

The official language is Hindi, but each state has its own regional dialect. English is also widely spoken. Current population 1.27 billion

South African passport holders do require a visa.

Smoking is allowed in designated outdoor areas; however, it is prohibited in indoor public areas.

Voltage in India is 240 Volts, alternating at 50 cycles per second. You will require a voltage converter if you are carrying a device that does not accept 240 Volts at 50 Hertz

Travelling to India carries certain risks and you should look into obtaining immunisations from Yellow Fever, cholera, typhoid and rabies if planning to travel in the country. Other infections to look out for include Hepatitis B which is endemic and meningitis which can be a risk in Delhi during certain times of year. Please check with your GP for the latest information on the immunisations.

## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Beware of pick pockets in markets.

Don't trust beach hawkers selling excursions; these are not safe.

Rather arrange sightseeing through your hotel or from Thompsons.