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CST Permit #2057026-40

Preparing For Your Journey

India Visa

Your passport must be valid for a minimum of six months before it expires, counting from the day of your return home. If in doubt, call a passport/visa services company. **All travellers should double-check visa requirements** with the appropriate embassy or consulate before departure, and carry a printout of the relevant pages from the embassy website.

Visa on arrival: Go to <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html> for details. **Apply min 4 days and maximum 120 days prior to your trip date.** Visa is valid for 60 days, single entry and costs \$60 (subject to change). Also, you can now apply for double entry tourist and business e visas online as well.

You will complete a form, pay online; print out confirmation to present at the airline check-in desk. No need to send your passport. But you do need to upload a scan of a passport photo and the front page of your passport. Make sure the photo matches the one on the passport or at least looks like it. You can email questions to: indiatvoa@gov.in

If you will be traveling in India for longer than 60 days, you will need to apply via their advance visa process: Cox & Kings <https://www.in.ckgs.us/> 516-206-1483 / 646-589-0088 (9a-9p, EST).

The name and address of the reference needed on the visa application is:

Travelcircuit
207 Allied House
#1 Local Shopping Centre Pushp Vihar
New Delhi 110 062, India
91-11-416-49917

They also ask for address in India. Just put the name of your first hotel.

If you do not use the internet and have no one who can do the visa on arrival application for you, you will need to use a visa services company: We suggest Visa Headquarters 800-345-6541. Since the form still needs to be completed online, you can ask for the "Go Service" and a staff person will complete the form for you, with you on the phone answering all the questions. The cost for this service is \$150 above the regular processing fees.

Travel Insurance

Travel Insurance is highly recommended. We suggest Travelex. They have competitive rates and are quick to respond to claims. To waive pre-existing condition, purchase the insurance within 21 days of making the trip deposit. They only consider a condition pre-existing if you seek medical attention for it within 60 days of making a claim. You can review options and purchase online [Travelex](#). We include a brochure for one of the policy options.

Packing suggestions: A Minimalist Approach

First and foremost--pack light!! There is a wonderful world of beautiful custom and ready-made tailoring at great values; not to mention the comfort and fun of wearing Indian style apparel.

Women should wear long dresses, skirts or loose fitted pants--no legs showing. Indian women also do not show their arms from the shoulder to the elbow. It's okay for western women (some temples may ask you to wear a shawl). For men, jeans are okay but khakis will be more comfortable.

Good walking shoes are a must; its wise to bring a pair that are easy to take off & put on again as you will remove them several times a day to enter various temples and monuments. Bring a pair of 'temple socks' if you don't want to walk barefoot. Bring one piece of luggage and one carry-on bag that doubles as your day pack while touring.

- walking shoes, sandals (Velcro fastened for easy off)

- loose pants/long skirts or dresses
- one long sleeve cotton shirt (as layer if ac too cold)
- cotton tee-shirts or lightweight cotton blouses with sleeves covering shoulders; one covering to elbows
- At least two pair socks; plus “temple socks” if you don’t want to walk barefoot in the temple complexes
- windbreaker, light sweater or jacket (& rain poncho for Aug-Sept).

Mornings/evenings can be cold in Dec & Jan. It can rain in the hills of Odisha in the evenings.

- silk underwear (make a great first layer; also nice as sleepwear).
- warm layers including wool hat **for early morning wildlife safaris and in the Himalayas**
- handkerchief/ bandana (as protection against pollution in cities, where around neck for quick access)
- scarf/head covering (required for men & women by certain temples)
- hat, sun-block, sunglasses
- bathing suit, most hotels have swimming pools
- flashlight
- medicine kit: band-aids, disinfectant, aspirin, anti-diarrhea, herbal remedies, vitamins
- insect repellent
- anti-bacterial hand washing gel
- travel alarm
- money belt or other secure system for carrying money & passport
- extra batteries for camera & flashlight
- converter/adaptor kit for electric outlets
- small daypack/tote to carry items while touring
- herb and/or green tea bags if you don’t drink caffeine
- snacks such as energy bars, nuts, dried fruit
- electric adaptors: bring with you a variety: euro plug, Great Britain plug and ones that just say Asia or South Asia.

Each hotel may be different. If you have more than 2 things to plug in, like camera, phone, ipad--I suggest buy a short power strip (3-4 outlets) then you only need 1 adaptor to charge multiple devices.

Baggage Allowance

We suggest taking one carry-on that doubles as your day bag and one medium size checked luggage, half empty if you intend to shop. Indian Airlines, Indigo Air and Jet Airways allow 15kgs for checked bags on domestic sectors and cabin baggage is restricted to 7 kg. Air India baggage allowance for checked luggage is 25 kg and 7 kg for carry-on. The following fees are charged for excess baggage weight: 11 lb/5 kg \$10, 22 lb/10 kg \$35 by the airlines for baggage over the weight limit. This information is to the best of our knowledge and subject to change. **Spirit of India is not responsible for excess luggage charges.** Pack lighter than the guidelines to be sure. Do check with your specific international air carrier as well; though weight limits for the domestic flights are less than the international.

Health Tips

We are often asked for our recommendations on preventing or addressing health issues encountered while traveling in India. It's very possible that travelers will receive conflicting statements from their doctors. Choices depend upon personal factors discussed with your doctor. Below are suggested protection measures. You should do what feels comfortable to you so that you are not worried during your trip.

Center for Disease Control: 404/332-4565

Vaccinations

No vaccinations are currently required. You must decide for yourselves what to do, as every individual is different in the level of risk willing to tolerate versus any side effects from the medicines. The following are recommended:

Hepatitis A, B, Tetanus, Polio Booster and Malaria. Malarone appears to have fewer side effects than other malarial medications such as mefloquine and doxycycline.

Tuberculosis is common in India and has the highest risk category of all developing countries. You might want to have a pre-departure PPD skin test status documented.

For those traveling on South India and Tribal itineraries, malaria and dengue fever protection is recommended. North India is less risky if you make sure you take evening insect repellent precautions.

The Passport Health web site has a wealth of information and you can find a travel clinic near you for immunizations. You can do a search by destination and time of year of your trip. The site gives comprehensive information on all travel diseases, types of medications, prevention tips, current health alerts. <http://www.passporthealthusa.com/>

Basic Preventive Measures

Drink only bottled water and drink plenty throughout the day. Avoid eating beef & lamb unless dining in one of the five star hotel restaurants. Wash your hands frequently. Carry an anti-bacterial gel in your day bag.

Probiotic Complex--take daily to maintain a healthy intestinal track.

Morning and evening insect repellent precautions should be a part of your daily routine.

Natural Sleeping Aid--may help you sleep during the long plane ride and during the first 2-3 nights when your body is adjusting to being on the other side of the world.

Immune Support---make sure you are in top health before departure and take supplements to keep your immune system strong to defend against allergens, bacteria, etc. foreign to your body during the journey. You will be exposed to heavy pollution in the cities.

Vitamin C crystals: Brand names Emergen-C contain 1 gram of vitamin C in crystal form plus minerals; comes in individual packets that are mixed with water. Use on the plane and daily on the trip as a preventive; it also acts as an energy booster; available at health food stores, amazon.com.

Calendula Tincture, a disinfectant for cuts, stops bleeding instantly & takes the pain out of burns; available at health food stores.

Anti-bacterial soap and gel.

Pollution protection: especially if you have a sensitive respiratory system--bring a mask or at least carry a bandana or handkerchief to cover mouth and nose while walking in cities.

ARRIVAL

You will be met at the airport on arrival by our representative. He will be holding a sign with your name and also "Spirit of India." After proceeding through immigration and passport control you will follow the crowd to the baggage claim. In the same area as baggage claim, just near the exit are money exchange counters.

Money Exchange

The best place to exchange money is at the airport. Money exchange booths are not prevalent and not all banks exchange money. The ones that do, require great effort and long waits. The larger hotels also offer money exchange services, at a slightly less favorable rate.

Request some small bills: RS 50 & 100. Count your money before leaving the counter and put the majority away in a safety belt or wallet. Keep a small amount in an accessible money holder.

ATMs are now widely available in India, in the main cities. Do check with your bank as most charge a service fee for exchange of currency in addition to a fee charged by the India bank for using their ATM machine. **Do not count on this as your only source for money.**

Meeting our Representative

Walk through the exit door. Our representative will be waiting on the other side with a placard "Spirit of India" and/or your name.

Free SIM Cards for Mobile Service

Just launched in mid-February 2017, the offer right now is only for arrival in Delhi but will expand to other airports in the future. Before exiting, stop at the BSNL counter and provide a copy of your passport + your e-visa. You will be given a SIM card to put in your unlocked mobile phone for free talk time of RS 50 and 50 MB data. After inserting your SIM, send a text to 9440087000 in the following format ACT <Visa No.> <Expiry Date of e-Visa DD-MON-YYYY>, e.g. <00074158945> <16-Feb-2017>. Within an hour, you will be informed through SMS about the activation of SIM, along with details of your mobile no./e-Visa no/expiry date. For further enhancing your usage value/recharge, you may visit website <http://portal2.bsnl.in/myportal/quickrecharge.do> or download My BSNL App from Google Play. On the recharge page in the above website, you are required to fill in the relevant fields and where the option to fill in state/circle is asked, please select <Haryana> from the drop down box. For 24 x7 assistance, please contact BSNL helpline at 1503.

BEING THERE

Tipping Guide/Driver

The following are standard guidelines. If you received exemplary service, feel free to tip more. With private tours of 1-4 people you will have different local guides in each city for a half or full day or guides who meet you at a specific site for a one or two hour tour. Their primary duty is to guide you at the monuments and sites.

On group tours, there is an accompanying escort who handles many more responsibilities in addition to guiding you at the sites. For certain monuments, the India Gov requires a local guide to tour the monument (this is in addition to your accompanying guide). This guide may be with you for only a couple of hours. Tip at the end of your tour.

One to Four People: Custom Private Tour using local guides.

Local Guide Full day: \$12-15 per person; Half day: \$8-10 per person

Two to Four People with Accompanying Guide:

Guide \$10-18 per person per day (total \$35-40 per day for the group)

Driver \$6-10 per person per day (total \$20-25 per day for the group)

Five to Eight People with Accompanying Guide:

Guide \$8-10 per person per day (total \$40-45 per day for the group)

Driver \$4-6 per person per day (total \$25-30 per day for the group)

Local Guide: as above

Nine to Twelve People Group Tour with Accompanying Guide:

Guide \$10-15 per person per day (total \$50-55 per day for the group)

Driver + helper (they will share the tip) \$4-5 per person per day (total \$40-45 per day for the group)

Local Guide: as above

Airport, Train Station Representative: No need to tip.

Airport, Train, Hotel Porters: (Rs 150 / \$2 per bag). Our group tours often include hotel porter tips.

Restaurant Tips: 10% in main cities. Not expected in rural/remote regions. Not expected for meals included in the tour.

It is the custom to offer the tip at the end of your time with a particular guide or driver. If you are traveling in a group it is suggested to have everyone contribute to a kitty and have one person be responsible for tipping the local guides. However, it is entirely up to you. If you prefer, you can give your own tip privately.

Meals: When meals are not included, the average cost in local restaurants is: lunch \$7-10, dinner \$12-16. In the upscale hotel restaurants prices will be similar to upscale restaurants in the US (\$25-35). Some upscale restaurants have lavish set menus that can be \$100 or more per person. You can use credit cards in the upscale restaurants.

Internet

Access to the internet is prevalent in most parts of India. Though can be difficult in remote regions such as parts of tribal areas and Himalayas. Most hotels have in room wifi. The lower category hotels offer it free, the 5*s at a price, but convenient. Caf e's outside are lower cost.

What to do if You Need Medical Attention

Carry your insurance brochure/policy with you. If you elected coverage by Travelex Insurance. See a doctor for any persistent symptoms. If you receive treatment for minor illnesses keep the receipts to turn into the insurance company upon your return. If you have a serious illness or accident that requires extensive treatment, hospitalization and/or an early return home, call Travelex Insurance collect at (905) 523-7066 or call their London office which may be easier to reach from Asia 44-127-322-3000; fax: 44-127-332-7848. They have a list of approved doctors and facilities. They will also require you to obtain a 'fit to fly' letter from the doctor as well as a report on your medical condition. If there are major medical expenses, the insurance company will handle payment directly to the medical facility provided you follow these steps.

If you need an early return home, our agent in India can assist you with changing your reservation. Save the receipt for any penalties you paid to airlines for reimbursement by the insurance company after you return home.

If you have other coverage, make sure to bring your policy brochure and contact numbers with you.

śivās te panthānaḥ santu
May there be blessings on your journey.