

India

Climate:

Broadly speaking October to March tend to be the most pleasant months throughout much of the country. In the far south, the monsoonal weather pattern tends to make May to September more pleasant, while Sikkim and the areas of northeastern India tend to be more palatable between March and August, and Ladakh, Kashmir, and the mountainous regions of Himachal Pradesh are at their most accessible between May and September. Temperatures in India generally are the warmest in May or June, just prior to the cooling downpours of the southwest monsoon. The temperature range tends to be significantly less along the coastal plains than in interior locations. The range also tends to increase with latitude. Near India's southern extremity the seasonal range is no more than a few degrees. For example, in Trivandrum, in Kerala, there is an average fluctuation of just 4.3 °F (2.4 °C) around an annual mean temperature of 81 °F (27 °C). In the northwest, however, the range is much greater. For example, at Ambala, in Haryana, where the temperature fluctuates from 56 °F (13 °C) in January to 92 °F (33 °C) in June.

NORTH AND CENTRAL INDIA

Generally the plains of North India have three distinct seasons

November to March	Winter with daily highs of 20 degrees Celsius and evening lows of 5 degrees Celsius
April to July	Summer when it is hot and dry with daily highs of upto 40 degrees and evening lows of 30 degrees Celsius in the evening
July to September	The monsoon season which brings relief from the heat but also brings high humidity.
October	autumn when the weather is pleasant with daily highs of 25 degrees and evening lows of 18 degrees Celsius

SOUTH AND WESTERN INDIA

Southern and Western India do not have a "cool season". The summer is hot and humid with the rains coming in June and continuing through till September. Southern India also has winter rains from November onwards, although they are not as heavy as the monsoon rains. From October onwards, the weather becomes pleasant with highs around 30 degrees Celsius and lows of around 25 degrees with minimal humidity.

Snow is usually found from January through to March, only in the foothills of the Himalayas and higher reaches.

Currency: The local currency is the Rupee. You are not allowed to bring Indian currency into the country, or take it with you when you leave. When changing money be sure to get an encashment certificate which allows you to exchange any leftover currency for dollars upon departure. In cities, you



can change most major foreign currencies and brands of travelers' checks. It is easy to change money at the airport, the hotel, or a local bank, and best to get your banking done in the morning. Plan ahead and change money in the larger cities before heading out to more remote areas. Go to finance.yahoo.com/currency?u for current exchange rates.

Indian currency notes circulate far longer than in the West and the small notes, in particular, become very tattered. You may occasionally find that when you try to pay for something with a ripped or grubby note that your money is refused. You can change old notes for new ones at most banks or save them and use them creatively as tips. Don't let shop owners palm grubby notes off on you as change - simply hand them back and you'll usually be given a note slightly higher up the acceptability scale.

Immunizations: We recommend you consult your physician about meningitis, typhoid, gamma globulin, Hepatitis A & B and Malaria. For current information, check directly with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a traveler's clinic or other medical authority. Visit <http://www.cdc.gov/Travel/destinationList.aspx#P>

Visas: You will need to apply for your visa ahead of time. We can supply you with the necessary forms and then, depending on where you live in the United States, you will have to send them to the consulate for your region. You will need a valid passport and a passport photo. The most common visa is for six months. This visa must be applied for and issued within three months of your date of departure. It is then valid for three months following your date of entry into India. Note that if you are going to any other country from India with plans to return, you will need a Multiple Entry Visa. You have a choice to use a visa service (<http://www.zvs.com/home.aspx?Login=72314>) or send it directly to the embassy. The service will expedite and control the flow of paperwork. If you use ZVS, be sure to use the Myths and Mountains account number - 72314 - to receive a discount.

Tipping Guideline: Drivers - \$5-\$8 pp per day
Local guides - \$10-\$20 pp per day
Safari staff - \$100 total for all staff on a 3 day safari

Budget: You will need to analyze your spending habits and decide how much extra money to bring for alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, gratuities, souvenirs, and laundry. For a ten day trip, budget at least \$200 - \$300pp, above and beyond tips, for additional expenses. A rule of thumb: take half the clothing and twice the money you thought you would need!

Photography: We recommend that you bring all photographic equipment with you including an ample supply of film. International brands of film are widely available, though the quality cannot be guaranteed.

When photographing people, always ask permission and offer a small fee for taking their picture. Your tour guide or escort will advise you. The exception is when taking a general picture of crowds and scenes. Photography at airports is strictly forbidden.

Food and drink:

Most hotels serve a variety of international cuisine, with some of them having an excellent reputation for fine dining. When traveling in some of the smaller cities, choices maybe restricted, and sometimes it is advisable to stay with local cuisine rather than requesting European menus, though these can be arranged. Food in all hotels is safe and hygienically stored and cooked; however, it is suggested that in the smaller towns and cities, you avoid raw pre peeled fruit and vegetables and yogurt.

Tap water in India is not safe to drink and we strongly recommend that you always drink bottled water. Bottled water is freely available in all hotels and always kept in a cooler in the transport. When buying bottled water, always ensure that the bottle is sealed when you receive it. Additionally, you will find a wide range of soft drinks, beer and coffee and tea, which are all safe to drink. A word of caution: Imported alcoholic beverages are expensive in comparison to the Indian alcoholic beverages. While traveling in India at any time of the year, it is important to keep yourself well hydrated.

Dialing Code: 91

Time Zone: GMT/UTC + 5.5

Electricity: 240V ,50Hz

Additional Country Information: More country specific information can be found on our website. Go to the Travel Center page (<http://www.mythsandmountains.com/2000/travel/center.cfm>) and then scroll down to the bottom of the page. There you will find links to various websites from the CIA Factbook to travel films.

Arrival and Customs Information:

Please be advised that regulation at most international points of arrival do not permit passengers to be met inside secured passenger areas (such as the immigration and customs areas). The local representative will meet you on arrival immediately after you have passed through the passenger areas.

Baggage:

Security in Indian airports is very stringent and all hand baggage is x-rayed and sometimes physically searched prior to boarding flights. Domestic airlines do not permit any dry cell batteries, sharp implements and inflammable items to be carried in cabin baggage. Therefore please ensure that camera batteries, scissors, razors etc. are packed in your checked baggage.

"A mind that is stretched by a new
experience can never go back to its
old dimensions."

-Oliver Wendell Holmes

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See the Longitude Books website:

<http://www.longitudebooks.com/> for more book ideas.

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