

FAQs



India already has so many incredible experiences that it is no exaggeration to call it one of the world's richest cultural travel destinations.

For many of you who have joined us in India's less known yet spectacular regions, you are already familiar with our travel ethos: we like to push your comfort zone a little. Think rough edges with soft landings. Now we take you even deeper into India's mystique to two showstopping regions: Kashmir and Ladakh.

Beautiful and intriguing, both regions are unique yet interconnected by the push and pull of the pashmina lure. We invite you to learn about a new way of life and question yours. The following information will help you decide if this trip is right for you, and if it is, how to deepen your experience.





Is this tour right for you? It is if you:

- love piecing together how ancient societies live
- are curious about how their past has shaped the present
- like to see how material culture shapes societies
- enjoy exploring off-beaten track destinations with a strong ethnographic and material culture component

This tour may not be the best fit if you:

- get overwhelmed by significantly different cultural norms than in the west
- insist on five-star luxury and comfort when you travel (*please see below for accommodations and transportation)

First off, are Kashmir and Ladakh safe for travellers?

Your perception of safety is important. We urge you to visit your country's travel advisory consular site, bearing in mind that these days, only a few countries do not carry an advisory.

Large volumes of domestic tourists visit Kashmir and Ladakh incident-free each year. Foreign tourism has been steadily increasing ever since 2019 when Indian-administered Kashmir opened. The last incident involving foreign visitors was in 1995. Separatist leaders in Kashmir have regularly stated that they welcome tourists. Their issue is with the Indian government not tourists. A heavy military presence lends to a safer travel environment. Nevertheless, we keep a close watch on developments. Concurrent instability in both regions is highly unlikely. If either region becomes unstable, we will reroute to equally beautiful Himachal

Pradesh. You will have a chance to decide whether to carry on.

As with any destination, travellers should exercise caution in being out in the dark and carrying valuables. A bonus of group travel is you can always be with a travel companion. Additionally, our local office in Canada is on hand to address any concerns.

How strenuous is this tour?

A good level of fitness is essential. Unless you enjoy unimpaired mobility, can cope with everyday walking and stair-climbing, and are reliably sure-footed, this tour may not be for you.

You must be able to walk comfortably and without assistance at a moderate pace for one hour stretches. A moderate pace of walking is 100 steps per minute. Visits to monuments and sites include stairs, as do some hotels. The ground may be uneven. There are some steep walks. Unruly traffic and the busy urban streets require vigilance. This tour involves private bus transfers on crowded urban roads. The longest transfer on this tour is 5hrs with 2-3 breaks.

It is the cultural norm in Kashmir to sit on the floor. Chairs will be provided for participants who cannot do so.

Most sites are shaded but the sun can be strong, even in the cooler seasons.

Secondly, our tours are group events. Even one person who is not fit enough to cope can spoil the experience for everyone else. It also places stress on group leaders and guides.

On this tour we will ride a camel (optional) and visit with nomadic communities herding goats. If you like to hike, we offer a trekking



option.

Please assess your fitness level objectively.
Acknowledgement of your fitness level is a requirement on the registration document, which forms part of your contract.

Should you join the tour and later develop immobility, please let us know immediately.

Please see P.6 for Ladakh altitude.

What is the comfort level of this tour?

On a scale of 0-5, where 5 = decadent luxury and 0 = basic camping, this tour is rated a 3-4. We go into villages, markets, and pastoral areas. We might invite you off the bus to experience a wedding procession or nomads moving house. Such activities add to your overall experience and are designed with your comfort and safety in mind.

Do I need a visa for India?

Unless you have OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) status, you will need a visa.

E-visas are available online.

<https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html>

Be sure to use the official government website. If Safari as a browser doesn't work, try Chrome. For a 30-day e-visa, apply no less than 4 days before arrival and up to 30 days in advance of departure for India. Travelers seeking a 1 yr or 5 yr visa may apply up to 120 days in advance.

Past group members report difficulty with uploading photos, session time-out, and payment. Grab a tech minded friend!

It is your sole responsibility to possess a valid

passport and visa prior to this tour.

NOTE: E-visa application requires an address in India. Our office address in Delhi:

Mr Subroto DasGupta

E.Y.H.O. Tours/Country Tours

**ADDRESS: H- 1585, CHITTARANJAN PARK
NEW DELHI-110019**

Tel.+91-11-40518398

In addition, an innerline permit is required for Ladakh. We will obtain it for you with a copy of your passport.

I hear only 5* hotels are good enough for travel in India. Correct?

Incorrect. We select accommodations for cultural relevance, comfort, safety, and personal service. All accommodations have private bathrooms and western-style toilets. Note: On this tour, we will spend 1-2 nights in a homestay with local living conditions.

What is the Time Zone in India?

India is 10 1/2 hours ahead of the Eastern Standard Time.

What is the weather like in April/May?

April is spring in Kashmir, the most beautiful season as the land is bursting into life. Expect sunny days and cool nights, and average max temps 18°C (65°F)/ min. 10°C (50°F).

May, also spring in Ladakh, sees daytime temperatures 15°-20°C (60-68°F) and can drop to 3°C (37°F) at nights. Altitude affects weather and temperature e.g., Leh will be warmer than Pangong Tso. It is always quite windy in Ladakh!

Bear in mind that climate change is



scrambling weather patterns worldwide.

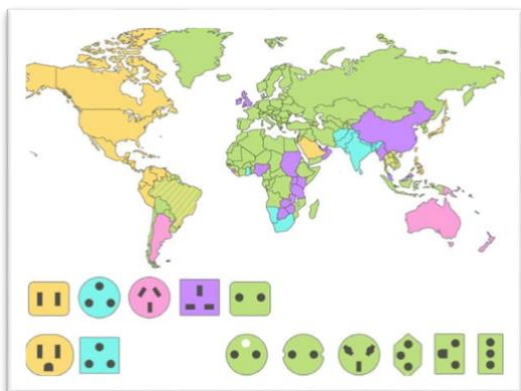
What about clothes and valuables?

A comprehensive packing list will be supplied 2 months prior. Consider layering clothes. Pack a sturdy windbreaker, warm pants and tops, fleece jacket, warm socks, comfortable closed-toed shoes, gloves, toque, sunglasses, and a hat. Remember, you will be in a relatively inexpensive shopper's paradise!

We have never had a theft, but best leave all expensive jewelry and valuables at home.

What is the voltage in India?

The voltage in India is 220 AC with either 2- or 3-pin round plugs. See below.



I'm flying two long haul flights and then a regional flight. What do I carry with me on the plane?

Carry all valuables: passport (keep the photocopy in another bag), cash, phone, ipad, and prescription medication. In case of a baggage delay, pack a change of clothes, chargers, shaving supplies, deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste, medicines, and tissues. All amenities, including toilet paper, are readily available in Delhi.

What the deal with bathrooms in India?

We stay in the best available heritage/boutique hotels equal to a North American 4-5* with western style private bathrooms. Some locations require community-run accommodations built in local living styles. For one night we stay in a homestay. On road transfers, toilet paper may not be available, and toilets may be basic squat.

How can I call home from India?

India uses LTE, 4G, and 5G. Your phone will work with a local postpaid contract SIM card (check your phone for compatibility in India). Local pay-as-you-go data and voice packages are inexpensive. **Normal Indian sims will not work in Kashmir or Ladakh; our local ops can get you a sim upon request. International roaming will not work in either region.**

E-sims can be a hit and miss affair in both regions.

Hotels will have wifi. Network coverage might be spotty in remote areas.

My big fear is getting sick in India

Two reasons why travelers get sick in India are pre-departure stress and eating unwisely. Be sure to get plenty of rest before you fly and be extra vigilant about contracting colds/flu viruses. The food in India is delicious and generally well prepared. But because local Indian fare can include a plethora of well-spiced—not necessarily “hot” dishes—it's advisable to ease western digestive tracts into the cuisine. If in doubt, eat rice and packaged yoghurt until your stomach acclimatizes.

****Only eat foods that have been cooked, and are piping hot upon serving, and eat fruit that can be peeled****

Safe bottled water is readily available. Decline



ice cubes in drinks.

Will drinking water be provided while travelling?

We provide unlimited bottled drinking water while on the road. In interests of reducing plastic waste, please consider bringing your own refillable water bottle. In hotels, normally 2 bottles per room per day are supplied free of charge.

What about the currency?

The "Rupee" is the unit of currency, as in 100 cents = 1 dollar; 100 paise = 1 rupee. The current exchange rate is about 90 rupees = 1 U.S. Dollar. Being a closed currency, Rs 10,000 per person rupees is the maximum you can bring in. USD is freely exchangeable. Taking Indian rupees out of India is a punishable offence.

Travelers' checks are not recommended. Credit cards are widely accepted in urban areas. ATMs are available in urban areas, although long queues and frequent runouts are common. USD cash to change into INR is a good option. Carry smaller denomination bills to use at trip-end to avoid being left with INR. Upon arrival in DEL, change equivalent of \$100-200 to rupees for when you cannot access an ATM during the first couple of days. Please arrange to access ATMs on your free time due to long queues.

How much cash should I carry? In what currency?

You should be able to use a credit card except in markets and with smaller artisans. How much cash to carry depends on your individual needs/shopping capacity. Most meals are included; the ones not included will cost roughly \$10-15 without alcohol. As a

general rule, incidentals might cost you \$200-300. While all major currencies can be exchanged the easiest is USD and GBP.

What about tipping?

We run a \$150 pp tipping kitty for drivers and guides for each segment Kashmir and Ladakh. Supplement as you wish. Any unused amounts at the end will be democratically disposed of.

And shopping?

Kashmir is a shopper's paradise. Ladakh is catching up. From pashmina to jewelry in gold and silver; artifacts, carpets, rugs, embroidery . . . the list goes on. Quality and the price vary widely. Bargaining is expected unless shopping at nonprofit co-ops or directly from artisans.

What are the luggage requirements?

Most flights within India observe a strict 15 kg of checked luggage rule and 7kg of carry-on.

Excess baggage fees run \$5-6 per kilo. Carry a collapsible bag for extra shopping. Depending on the merchant, you may be able to ship home.

Do I need any vaccinations?

No mandatory vaccinations in order to enter India. At all times, follow recommendations of your travel health clinic.

We recommend shots for hepatitis A/B, typhoid and Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Polio. Bring Tylenol, Immodium and/or Pepto Bismol, in addition to prescription medications. Keep a list of your medications with their pharmaceutical names and dosage, as most medicines are available in India under other names.



What about malaria?

There is little malaria in these regions at our time of travel. A travel health practitioner is the best judge of your individual requirements.

What about Covid and other respiratory ailment protocol?

As of May 2023, the WHO has downgraded Covid as ongoing health issue which no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern. Should you develop symptoms and test positive during the tour, you will **not** be required to isolate.

On the other hand, if you are concerned about being exposed to contagion, please assess your comfort level to join the tour and/or consider remaining masked where not possible to socially distance or isolate.

Please note that E.Y.H.O. Tours is not responsible for covering the cost of any curtailment to the tour, missed transport arrangements, additional accommodation, expenses for testing and treatment or any other costs incurred by the traveller/s. Travellers are recommended to ensure that they have travel insurance that covers these costs. E.Y.H.O. will not undertake any administrative responsibility for a traveller's insurance claim.

Acclimating in Ladakh

Ladakh's high altitude, comparable to Peru or Bolivia, requires acclimatisation and moderate physical fitness. High altitude is at 8,000 feet (2,400 meters) above sea level or higher. Risks include altitude sickness, which can cause symptoms like headache, nausea, and shortness of breath. AMS can strike very fit individuals. Age isn't a factor.

We have built in time in Leh, capital of Ladakh at 11,000ft, before venturing to higher altitudes. Avoid alcohol. Due to lower humidity, you might not feel as thirsty, but it's essential to stay hydrated.

Some travelers take medications like acetazolamide (Diamox) to help prevent altitude sickness. Consult a doctor before using any medication and discuss potential side effects

Questions? Please enquire.

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See *Getting There* document for best flights, extra nights and airport transfers.