

FAQs

Destination South India

Tour: Temples, Tea, Backwaters, and Living Heritage of Chettinad



India has so many incredible experiences that it is no exaggeration to call it one of the world's richest cultural travel destinations. India is a land of dreams and romance, of fabulous wealth and poverty, of splendour and rags. India is a country of contrasts and paradoxes, of powerful flavours, of spectacular images, and extreme patterns of behaviour. That is what makes this journey so irresistible and powerful. In addition, Indian people are in general openhearted, friendly, and will welcome you to share their country.

South India's millennia-long temple tradition has given rise to a rich culture. Geographically, expect coconut tree-lined coasts and verdant plains carpeted with tea, paddy, and backwaters. Interspersed with ornate temples, thriving former Dutch and French colonial outposts, microcosms of hereditary communities, and IT hubs of the 21st century.

This is India at arguably its most beautiful. South India is a destination you'll savour long after your return home.

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

- have an interest in historical architecture
- love piecing together how ancient societies lived
- are curious about how their past has shaped the present
- like to see how material cultures shape societies
- enjoy off-beaten track destinations

In fact, we wager you'll fall in love with this relatively undiscovered corner of India and plan to return before you head back home.

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)

We'd be happy to customize a private tour to your exact liking. Please [write us!](#)

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 without difficulty, 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 defined as 100 steps per minute. Visits to historical monuments and even some modern ones include stairs, as do

some hotels. The ground may be uneven in older cities. There are some steep walks. Unruly traffic and the busy streets of larger cities require some vigilance. This tour involves private bus transfers on crowded urban roads. The longest transfer on this tour is 6hrs with 2-3 breaks.

Most sites have some shade, but the sun can be strong, even in the cooler seasons.

Secondly, our tours are group events. The presence of even one person who is not fit enough to cope can spoil the experience for everyone else, and stress group leaders and guides.

Please assess your fitness level as objectively as possible. Should you decide to join the tour and later develop immobility, please let us know immediately. The earlier we know, the better we can recoup \$ for you.

Arrival/departure: where do I fly to/from?

Tour starts Jan 22, 2024, at noon in Chennai. International flights into Chennai (MAA). Or fly to Delhi (DEL) or Mumbai with an internal flight DEL-MAA or BOM-MAA.

Tour ends Feb 2, 2024 in Fort Kochi (COK). Several daily flights COK-MAA are available to suit your international connection.

Good international routes are offered by all major carriers: Air Canada with partners, Delta, American, United; European and Mid-east carriers, and Southeast Asian ones.

Internal flights are easily booked online or can be arranged by us (\$). We can also arrange transfers and additional overnight

stays (\$). For any questions about best flights, routes, timings, don't hesitate to contact us!

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 and markets. Sometimes we invite you off the bus to traipse through fields to see how cotton grows or how fudge is made the old-fashioned way. Such activities invariably add to your overall experience and are designed with your comfort and safety in mind. At all times, the choice is yours.

Do I need a visa for India?

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

Canada and UK: Currently, e-visas/TVOA (Tourist Visa on Arrival) for Canadians but this is expected to change. Only "sticker" visas are available. You will need a valid passport, along with other documentation <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/index.html>

Once the application is filled out in the Indian govt. website, make an appointment at an approved visa processing facility or consulate OR courier your application in. Processing centers: [Canada](#) and [UK](#)

Visa processing can take up to 3 weeks.

For travellers seeking 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

navigating and uploading photos; sessions time-out; payments do not go through right away. But perseverance has does pay off.

Please note it is your sole responsibility to possess a valid passport and visa prior to this tour.

NOTE: While applying for a visa including an e-visa, you will be asked to supply an address in India. You may use 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

Other FAQs

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. We will travel an untrampled part of India in search of unique rural experiences. 5* is not necessarily available or desirable.

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 January?

January is the perfect travel month for India, and generally pleasant for international visitors. Expect average max daytime temps around 30.0°C (87°F) and min. temps. 20°C

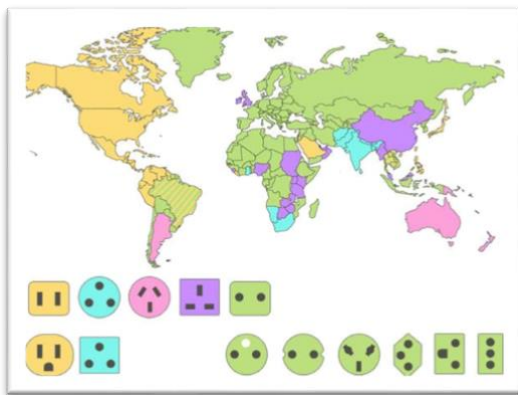
(65°F). Rural areas may be cooler depending on proximity to large bodies of water, and/or green cover. January is a dry month with an average of 11mm (0.4in) rain. In a nutshell, clear skies, gentle breezes, warm days, and bearable nights.

What about clothes and valuables?

A comprehensive packing list will be supplied. Consider layering clothes. Pack a light windbreaker, as well as warm socks in case of inclement weather. Comfortable closed-toed walking shoes are recommended. Dresses below the knees, and trousers and sleeveless dresses are acceptable. 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. Some hotels carry adaptors.



I'm flying two long haul flights. What do I carry with me on the plane?

Carry all valuables with you: your passport (keep the photocopy in another bag), travelers' checks, cash, camera and memory cards, phone, and prescription medication.

In case of baggage delay, a change of clothes along with chargers, shaving supplies, deodorant, toothbrush and toothpaste, medicines and tissues. All amenities, including toilet paper, are readily available in major urban areas of Mumbai.

What the deal with bathrooms in India?

We stay in the best available heritage/boutique hotels that would equate to a North American 4-5*. Some locations require community-run accommodations built in local living styles. All have western style bathrooms. However, on road transfers, toilet paper may not be available, and toilets may be basic squat style.

How can I call home from India?

India uses LTE, 4G, 3G and GSM frequency bands 900/1800. Your phone will work with a local SIM card (check the frequency band your phone uses for compatibility in India). Local pay-as-you-go data and voice packages are inexpensive. Or ask your service provider to allow International roaming. Note: it can take up to 3 business days to activate a local SIM card.

My big fear is getting sick in India

Two main reasons why travelers get sick in India are pre-departure stress and eating unwisely. Before you fly, be sure to get plenty of rest 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—but 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 all over India. 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 80 rupees = 1 U.S. Dollar. The rupee is a closed currency meaning you cannot bring in above a certain amount (currently Rs 10,000 per person). USD is freely exchangeable. Taking Indian rupees out of India is a punishable offence.

Travelers’ checks are not recommended. ATMs are readily available in major urban areas. Carry smaller denomination bills to use at trip-end so you don’t have to change more than you need. Upon arrival, change equivalent of \$100 to rupees for when you may not access an ATM during the first couple of days. Credit cards are widely accepted in urban areas.

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 \$15 without alcohol. As a general rule, incidentals might cost you \$200-300. 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. Supplement as you wish. Any unused amounts at the end will be democratically disposed of.

And shopping . . . ?

India is a shopper’s paradise. From clothes to jewelry in gold and silver; artifacts, carpets, rugs, embroidery . . . the list goes on. Quality and the price vary widely. Be sure to check the quality of what you buy. Bargaining is expected unless shopping at nonprofit co-ops or directly from artisans.

What are the luggage requirements?

Most flights within India observe a strictly-enforced rule of 15 kg of checked luggage and 7kg of carry-on. Excess baggage fees runs \$5-6 per kilo. Or you can pay beforehand for excess luggage at a slightly lower cost. You may wish to carry a collapsible bag for extra shopping. We will try to provide shipping-home options at Ahmedabad and Jaipur.

Do I need any vaccinations?

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

In addition, we recommend shots for hepatitis A/B, typhoid and Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Polio. You may want to 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?

In post-monsoon India, malaria is not a threat. The best prevention is to wear protective clothing and insect repellent. A travel health practitioner is the best judge of your individual requirements.

Covid-related regulations and protocol

The situation and government guidelines are subject to change, so we cannot predict what may happen at tour start date. Here is latest (Aug 2022) information.

What are Covid-related entry requirements to India?

Please follow the following guidelines as of Feb 10, 2022. You need EITHER a negative PCR test OR certificate of full vaccination (min. 2 doses)

<https://www.newdelhiairport.in/pdf/Guidelines-for-International-arrivals-updated-on-10th-February-2022-11-02-22.pdf>

Upon return home, travelers are subject to rules of their countries of residence.

What we will do to deliver as safe a tour as possible

- We require full vaccination of all our travellers or negative PCR test completed 72 hrs prior.
- We recommend travel medical insurance. Travel repatriation insurance is optional but

recommended. We do not endorse any insurance companies. However, we can offer the following advice culled from past travellers' experience: [Last page of T&C](#)

- If you or someone else on our trip has symptoms of Covid 19 while travelling with us, we will assist in testing and medical care if needed.
- We will act quickly to place distance between the unwell traveller and others and follow any government guidelines that are in action at the time. This may include self-isolation or quarantine depending on the risk to others in the group.
- We will provide access to health facilities such as clinics or hospitals if required.
- All our guides have emergency and contact numbers for the traveller to get the best treatment.
- PCR tests are readily available in all urban areas. For additional peace of mind, you may carry your own Rapid Antigen tests.
- In addition, all guides and drivers are fully vaccinated, with most of them having a third booster.

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 required, all expenses for testing and treatment or any other costs incurred by the traveller/s. Travellers MUST ensure that they have travel insurance that covers these costs.

Questions? We have answers
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