

Eat Your Heart Out's South India - Temples, Tea and Backwaters

FAQs



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

Do I need a Visa for India?

Yes, please visit the website of the nearest Indian Consulate. For e-visas, apply here: <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html> (If link does not work, copy and paste in your browser's search function)

An e-visa gives instant confirmation of 30-day double-entry visa. You will need a valid passport (validity extends at least 6 months past your departure date from India), along with other documentation listed on the website. Apply online minimum 4 days up to 30 days in advance of arrival date. Example: For application date of 1st Sept arrival date can be from 5th Sept to 31st September.

Past group members have experienced difficulty with the website. Photos are difficult to upload; sessions time-out; payments do not go through right away. But

perseverance has unfailingly paid off.

If not going the e-visa route, visit the closest Indian consulate or mail your application in. Click on links below for processing centres:

- [Canada](#)
- [USA](#)
- [U.K.](#)

Visa processing can take 4 to 5 weeks. Please understand that it is your sole responsibility to possess a valid passport and visa prior to embarking on this tour.

What is the Time Zone in India?

India is UTC+6:30, 10 1/2 hours ahead of the Eastern Standard Time.

What is the weather like in February?

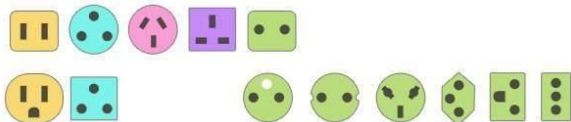
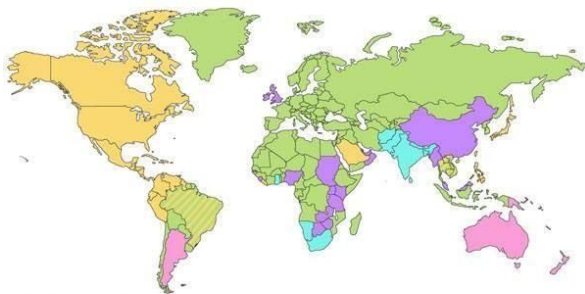
February is a pleasant time to visit this part of India, as it falls right on the threshold between the warm and cool parts of the year. The average daily temperature is around 27°C and around 21°C in the evenings in Cochin. Madras (Chennai) and points inland will be hotter.

What about clothes and valuables?

A comprehensive packing list will be supplied. Consider layering clothes. Pack a light windbreaker and fleece hoodie, as well as warm socks, toque, and mitts, just in case of inclement weather. Comfortable closed-toed walking shoes are recommended. Dresses below the knees, and trousers and sleeveless dresses are acceptable. Carry a shawl for temples and mosques. Remember, you will be in a relatively inexpensive shopper's paradise. Leave all expensive jewellery 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 for socket sample, and 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 photocopy in another bag), cash, camera and memory cards, and prescription medication. In case of baggage delay, carry a change of clothes along with toiletries and medicines.

Did you mention toilet paper? What is the deal about bathrooms?

We stay in best available heritage/boutique hotels. They have western style bathrooms. However, on road transfers, toilet paper may not be available and toilets may be basic.

How can I call home from India?

India uses 3G and GSM 99/1800. If your phone is an unlocked GSM with multi band, it will usually work in India. **This year, India has started issuing free SIM cards to e-visa holders!** Enquire upon landing. You can also ask your service provider to allow International roaming, which is usually quite expensive. Local pay-as-you-go data and voice packages are relatively inexpensive. Note: it can take up to 3 business days to activate a local SIM card.

Do I need any vaccinations?

Shots for hepatitis A/B and typhoid are recommended, in addition to normal ones such as Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Polio. Follow the recommendations of your travel health clinic. Keep a list of your medications with their pharmaceutical names and dosage, as most medicines are available in India but often

under other names.

How do I keep from getting sick in India?

The two main reasons why travelers get sick in India are the tap water and eating unwisely. We provide bottled water throughout the trip, though in an attempt to cut down on waste we suggest you bring a refillable water bottle to fill from larger jugs throughout the day. The food in India is delicious and generally well prepared. Because the local Indian fare can include a plethora of well-spiced but not necessarily spicy dishes, it's advisable to ease western digestive tracts into the cuisine. If in doubt, rely on grains and rice, and packaged yoghurt until your stomach acclimatizes. Only eat foods that have been cooked, and are piping hot upon serving. Eat fruit that can be peeled. **The prices of meals on your own will range from \$3 - \$15 without alcohol.**

Don't use ice cubes in drinks. Brush your teeth with bottled water and shower with your mouth closed.

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 67 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). US \$ are freely exchangeable. Currently, India is going through a demonetisation of some its currency, which is being replaced by new denomination. Expect to use more of your credit card and ATMs (see below).

- 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

- Carry the equivalent of \$50 in rupees for the first couple of days when you may not access an ATM. Change at the airport.
- Credit cards are widely accepted in urban areas.

What about tipping?

We will run a USD 150 tipping kitty for drivers, guides, hotel wait staff and porters.

This amount will be collected in India in USD or rupees. You may supplement if you wish. Any unused amounts at the end will be democratically disposed of. When on your own, follow this tipping guide:

- \$1-2 per meal per person
- \$1-2 per piece of baggage handled
- \$1-2 per person per day for room cleaning staff
- \$2-3 per person per day for drivers
- \$5 per person per day for guides

How much money do I need to carry?

- You'll need relatively little cash for meals (\$5-15 each) since many are included
- Excursions and workshops are included
- Incidentals such as alcoholic beverages cost approx. \$5-10 a drink in high end establishments; less at lower end ones
- If you intend to shop, you'll need approximately \$500-1000, which you can withdraw from ATMs/pay via credit card except in markets
- Rooms normally have in-room safes, in the absence of which you can safely store cash with the hotel office
- Tipping is an extra USD 150 to be collected at tour start

And shopping . . . ?

India is a shopper's paradise. From clothes to jewellery in gold and silver; artifacts, carpets, rugs, embroidery...the list goes on. Quality and price vary widely. Bargaining is expected unless at nonprofit co-ops and in large stores.

A note about shopping on this tour

- Buying directly from artisans supports their art, as well as the community at large
- Time is allocated on the itinerary for you to appreciate/purchase their products. In the interests of the group, please stay within these time limits
- We have a strict NO commission-retention policy for guides or tour leaders

I shopped too much. Can I ship home?

It happens frequently enough that during the tour we arrange to ship your excess home. Rates are favourable and we have never lost a shipment yet!