



ILIKA JOURNEYS

The Basics: India Travel Information

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PRE-TRAVEL

Traveling to India is an extremely eye opening and individualistic experience. Just as in daily life back home, what you may love about something, someone else may dislike. Someone may have life-changing experiences and insights, while another may simply want to leave and go home. Be prepared for the unexpected, both in what you may see and the way you may feel about it.

Do what you need to do to feel confident about your upcoming trip. For some that might mean lots of research, others reading a few place-based novels, meditation for others and next to nothing for some!

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

A valid passport with valid Indian Visa must be held by each passenger. Make sure that your passport is valid for 6 months from entry into the country. Visas are required for entry into India.

- If you are a US citizen please apply for your visa through the following site: <http://indiavisa.travisaoutsourcing.com/>
- For Canadians, see: <http://www.india-visa.com/toronto-info.htm>

All others, please check with your local Embassy or Consulate to learn about Visa requirements for your Nationality. Obtaining Visas is at the passenger's own expense. Apply early to ensure that your Visa is validated.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Contact your doctor or the Disease Control Center in the local hospital if you would like professional immunization advice. They will let you know of any outbreaks of diseases in India, for which you should be prepared. The USA CDC provides useful

information that you may choose to discuss with your physician. Immunizing is a very personal decision, so read the facts, do your homework and make an informed decision.

At the very least, be sure that your tetanus shot is updated, as you will be walking barefooted in many places.

You may want take along herbs and anti-diarrhea medicine, like Imodium AD. But keep in mind, that you can buy almost any medicines you may need in India and for a lot less money!

If you are not adverse to antibiotics and will not be traveling for too long, a very helpful medication is a low-grade antibiotic called “Doxycycline”, which kills bacteria in the Gastro Intestinal tract. It can be taken on a daily basis to ensure that you don’t have stomach problems during your stay, it is also taken as an anti-malarial. Ask your doctor for advice regarding this medication.

Helpful web references:

USA CDC site

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/destinationIndia.aspx>

Regularly updated health recommendations from mdtravelhealth.com

<http://www.mdtravelhealth.com/destinations/asia/india.html>

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Responsible travel is about minimizing your impact and maximizing your connection with people and the environment. It's about making a positive contribution and having the most rewarding and inspiring travel experiences of your life.

Responsible tourism can be more-or-less defined as travel that takes into consideration the 'triple bottom line' issues of:

Environment: travel that minimizes negative environmental impacts and, where possible, makes positive contributions to the conservation of biodiversity, wilderness, natural and human heritage.

Social/Cultural: travel that respects culture and traditions and fosters authentic interaction and greater understanding between travelers and hosts.

Economic: travel that has financial benefits for the host community and operates on the principles of fair trade.

Traveling by the responsible travel ethos is one of the most direct and personal ways you can make a difference to some of the biggest issues affecting our

world: poverty and peace. Be a part of the solution, not a part of the problem – and have the time of your life doing it.

Before You Leave Home:

- * Do as much research as you can – the more you know about a country and its people before you arrive, the quicker you get under the skin of a place.
- * Learn a few words of the local language and make sure you know what's considered polite and what's not in terms of eating, greeting and dressing.
- * Try to leave as much excess packaging at home (eg film boxes, anything plastic) – so your hosts don't have to deal with your garbage.

Culture Shock vs Cultural Connection

One of the best things about traveling is making connections with people from different cultures, in an authentic and mutually enjoyable way.

- * 'Cultural sensitivity' is simply a matter of respect: take your behavioral cues from the locals and, if in doubt, try to see things from the locals' point of view.
- * Go with the flow. Other cultures have very different concepts of time, personal space and socially acceptable behavior. You'll find it a lot less stressful – and a lot more enlightening – if you just chill out. You might even reassess your own ideas.
- * Dress appropriately. Looking at the locals is a good way to gauge what to wear. Particularly in conservative cultures, don't flaunt your flesh and try to be neat and clean – it's only respectful.
- * Try to be conservative with resources such as water, food and energy – you may be depriving local people or making a negative impact on their environs.
- * Buying locally made crafts and curios means your money goes directly to the community.
- * Enjoy the ancient art of bargaining: part pas-de-deux, part drama, part chess-game, bargaining is a skill and an art form. It's as much about the social interaction as the final outcome. Make sure you know when bargaining is appropriate – and when it's not. Have fun with it and keep things in perspective – does haggling over that last dollar really make a difference to you, compared to the vendor?

It's when you make those cross-cultural connections – even though initially you may have thought you had nothing in common – that it hits you again: people are the same wherever they're from; we all have the same needs and desires, aspirations and affections. Reveling in that realization is the holy grail of traveling.

From: http://www.lonelyplanet.com/responsibletravel/travel_tips.cfm

KEEPING HEALTHY

Food Precautions

This is easy advice, but is probably the most important if you want to have a good trip. Watch what and where you eat. Eat at reputable restaurants or at the sattvic ashramas and temples where they are strict about serving hygienic vegetarian foods. You should eat only hot, cooked food or peeled fruits and vegetables. Do not eat from street sellers! And at bus or train stations, only eat fruits that can be peeled by you and certainly no salads. Strictly following this simple advice will help a lot.

Please drink only bottled water in India, even for brushing your teeth, which is available most anywhere. Also, watch out for drinks that use ice, unless you are sure where the water for the ice comes from. You have to be in India a good while for your body to acclimatize, so to speak, to be able to drink water from various places, which you may not want to do anyway.

If something goes wrong with your health during your travels in India, will probably because you failed to follow these rules. It takes only one drop of bad water to cause stomach problems.

Exhaustion from “overdoing it!”

This is a silent killer of a great trip. Remember that you are in an extremely different environment, both physically and psychologically. It is very easy to get completely over exhausted before you even realize it. So when in doubt, have a rest!

Heat Stroke or Heat Exhaustion

This can happen more easily than you think. Make sure when you visit India that you keep yourself covered while in the sun. Make sure you wear a hat or a covering. Too much sun or heat in India can kill you, or put you seriously out of action for days. If you start getting overly hot, tired or dizzy while in the sun, take a break in the shade, and don't forget to drink plenty of water.

CURRENCY EXCHANGE

When traveling with our group tour, we will make arrangements for currency exchange.

**When you arrive at the airport in Dehli, Stop at the bank exchange window that one of the banks will have near to the luggage pick up area and exchange \$100 or \$200 of cash or traveler's checks into rupees. It is better to do it there than at the hotel, where exchange rates are not as good. There is a government bank inside the luggage claim area that generally has good rates. As you face the exit (via customs) it is on the left hand side.

When carrying cash/cheques, it is a good idea to spread your money in different places: between wallet, shoulder bag and camera bag, and don't carry too much money on you.

If you keep most of your money in a money belt, do not let anyone see you taking money from it. It is better to show a wallet with a small amount than to reach in a money belt, because then people will know you have a bundle. Then someone will know where the majority of your money is. That's not good.

PACKING

Here is a suggested packing list that will help you make the trip comfortable and less burdensome.

When traveling with Ilika Journeys please limit yourself to one “checked bag” and one “carry on” sized back pack, trust us, it is sufficient! Simplify, simplify, simplify. *Bring as little as possible. This can't be overemphasized*

If you want to store an extra duffel in your big bag for the gifts you will be sure to buy, please do so, but also know that you can buy a suitable second “checked bag” towards the end of the trip for very little money (\$10 or so).

The list

- 1 Checked bag- It is your preference whether you would like one with wheels or one that is backpack style. Just make sure that you can maneuver it on your own without too much effort.
- Day bag – small backpack or shoulder bag big enough to carry your camera, pack of tissues, notebook, wet wipes, toilet roll or hanky, purse and general junk! Preferably with at least 1 zip pocket in for keys etc.

Clothing Modesty, comfort, ease of washing and packing are all key issues!

- 2-3 pair of cotton or micro-fibre trousers – with pockets that you can spend the day in and practice yoga in. Don't bother with jeans in India, cotton / micro-fibre trousers are easy to pack (light weight) and easy to get washed and dried, plus more comfortable) and traveling on trains and buses is comfortable in trousers than a skirt, particularly for overnight journeys.
- 1 skirt (optional) – long (should be over the knee / mid calf) it feels nice sometimes to dress up / smarten up a bit (also makes a change from the trousers!). Can be bought in India!
- 3 T Shirts – (1) long sleeved for chilly days or nights & short sleeved for warmer days and yoga practice. No tank tops please- modesty is advisable.

- 2-3 cotton shirts or loose tops (could be salwar kameez style) (you can buy in Delhi on your first days there!!), really comfortable to travel in and to cover up from the sun or mosquitos.
- Shawl or scarf – silk / wool – You can treat yourself to a new one in India. They are useful for keeping warm on chilly days and nights and on conditioned buses and draughty overnight trains also, it can be used as a pillow on a train or bus etc.
- Small scarf – light and small, great for tying hair back or covering your head in temples, and for covering / protecting your face from dust etc. Best bought in India-beautiful ones there!
- Cotton sarong (buy in India) or small, light bath towel from home – most guest houses and hotels supply you with a towel, so there really is no need to lug a great big white fluffy towel around with you! Plus a cotton sarong or towel will wash and dry really quickly, and takes hardly any room in your bag.
- Shoes- Sandals – The action sandal type light weight trekking sort, very practical and have lots of support around the ankle and are totally fine for most locations in India and they are very easy to get on and off (most temples etc. will require you to take your shoes off before you go inside). But basically, it can be any sandal that you are comfortable walking a few miles in. If you feel more comfortable in closed toe shoes, please also bring a pair. I hardly ever wear them, but if we get some rainy days or you just can not live without your sneakers- then pack them. Your choice.
- Flip-flops or thongs – buy them when you need them, or bring a pair if they fit! Can be useful for showers and bathrooms and inside rooms.
- Cotton type sun hat / baseball hat – you'll want protection from the sun!
- Lightweight fleece or cotton sweater –it can always double up as a pillow on journeys etc
- Underwear – 3 cotton/sport bras (it depends what you are comfortable with), and 4-5 pairs of cotton pants (1 to wear, 1 to wash, 1 clean and one extra)
- Socks – Bring at least one pair to keep your feet warm at night or on trains. If you are bringing sneakers or close toed shoes you might want 3 pair.

Toiletries

- Shampoo & Conditioner (small travel size decanted into plastic bottles) packed into separate plastic bag (Ziploc). *The Himalaya Ayurvedic range is sold all over India and is fabulous! Plus all the big brand names are sold so you can always get replacement stuff, and treat yourself to some new....*
- Soap (in a plastic bag)
- Nail Brush & / or Pumice stone – the dirt from streets and traveling should never be underestimated!
- Nail scissors and tweezers (I guess you can use the things on a Swiss army knife instead)
- Toothbrush & paste
- A razor – I tend to buy 1 when / if I need 1
- Tube of moisturizer
- Sunscreen
- A small packet of Kleenex.
- Wet wipes
- Mosquito repellent available in India, but if you want natural repellent, bring it.
- Washing powder –you can easily buy more in India and most of the time, you can send your clothes for washing. Your clothes will get thoroughly bashed, so I don't take anything too precious or flimsy. Also remember that some of the clothes you buy in India the colours can run like crazy – so separate stuff out before hand, unless of course you want all your clothes to be pink or blue!!
- Tampons, pads etc – bring what you need, if you will need.
- Medications and tablets – carry some emergency Imodium (for diarea), buy some Ibuprofen / Aspirin / Paracetamol there (very cheap) if you need it. Other herbs or vitamins, is up to you!
- Also consider Q-Tips or cotton swabs for cleaning your ears, some band aid bandages, a roll of medical tape, and a tube of anti-septic ointment, just in case. These can also help if you get blisters on your feet from walking or any small cuts. Dental floss is not readily available, so bring it!

Many of the above items are READILY available in India if you forget or run out. PACK LIGHT :-)

Other stuff

- Yoga Mat
- A good travel alarm clock so you don't miss early morning meditations.
- Notebook & pens - for journaling- great idea you will love it years from now.
- Small Flashlight and spare bulb. Because lights can go out at any time, and it is better to be equipped. (buy spare batteries when you are there)
- ONE book/novel- there are lots of books to buy in India.
- Playing cards / travel backgammon set – helps while away long waits at airports and stations
- USB drive – to download photo's onto

- Camera, spare battery and camera bag, film, enough memory for your digital camera.
- Money belt, highly recommended, but not for small daily transactions. Keep that money in a.....
- Small purse/wallet – for small notes and change. Keep the large denomination notes in a money belt or tucked away out of sight
- 1 credit card, 1 debit card, some travelers cheques, and some dollar notes.
- Copies of passport / travel documents / insurance / immunizations. You can keep scanned copies of these on your webmail account.
- Sunglasses and glasses
- International electrical adapter to change voltage and plug insertion. India uses 220V and has a different plug, so have a look what you will need to convert for your cameras, etc... and pick one up at your local drugstore, Brookstone or online.
- Combination Padlocks (1 large and 1 small)
- Metal chain – to secure your bag for train journeys, can always be bought in India
- String to tie clothes line in your hotel room.
- Swiss Army style knife thingy (bottle opener, knife etc)
- Snacks from home! Snacks like granola bars, dried fruit, or nuts if you want, otherwise there are plenty of snacks you can buy in the stores in India.
- MP3 player (optional). You may or may not want it. Sometimes it is nice to be able to tune out!

FINALLY: EXPECT PERSONAL CHANGES IN YOURSELF

There is no way to prepare for what India may do to you! It can be magic! You just have to be open to whatever may happen and go with the flow. This will be one of the most memorable and possibly most profound experiences in your life! Go for it!!!