

Travel Tips for India

India is unlike anywhere else you will ever go. Go with a sense of adventure and keep an open mind and heart.

If you have never been to India, you might like to read about traveling in India before going. We've compiled a fairly detailed list of tips that will be of help in preparing for and being in India, but for those of you who would enjoy more information, there are a couple of educational and inexpensive books we can direct you to.

Asher Fergusson an MIU grad has a low-cost [online course](#) that you can take to prepare yourself for this grand adventure that you might find useful.

You may also enjoy his earlier free [guide](#).

Another book, called [Enjoying India](#) is designed to give you the information on how to stay safe and healthy, communicate successfully, and use your computer safely. The book is upbeat, not pessimistic.

The same author has a small book for women: [Travel Fearlessly in India: What Every Woman Should Know About Personal Safety](#)

Many of the points covered in these books are about safety for solo travelers. Traveling in a group is really a different thing, so some of the topics covered in these books will not be so relevant. But still, you may find it interesting and useful.

Passport and Visa Info

Passport:

[Here is a site](#) for applying for your passport:

To renew your passport [go here](#).

Passports need to be valid for 6 months after your departure from India, and there must be two blank pages in it.

Tourist Visas: We recommend that you obtain your [India Tourist Visa](#) before booking international flights; just to be sure there are no problems
You may also apply for a 1, 5 or 10 year tourist visa

Just be sure you are on a government site – with a “gov.” somewhere in the address. Other agencies will only charge you extra money and may not be reliable.

Please note; **e-visas must be used within 120 days of issue**, so plan accordingly.

Travel Tips

We've gathered these travel tips below and put them in alphabetical order, so that when you are looking back at it for a specific point, it will be easier to locate.

Adaptors:

For devices, hairdryers, etc. You need Type D for India. If your device doesn't have a voltage switch then you'll also need to get a "voltage converter" so that it would work because adapters do not change the voltage. But most devices such as laptops, cameras, phones, iPads, e-readers and most hairdryers have "dual voltage" built in — they can handle anything from 100 to 240 volts and won't need a voltage converter. Although, one thing to note is that the Indian power supply can be extremely unpredictable and it's important to know how to keep your devices safe from large power surges and outages, etc.

(Asher covers this in an ebook that comes with adaptors he sells through his website, or click here: [Indian power adapter](#);

Airports:

The Mumbai and Delhi Airports are very beautiful with world-class amenities.

Travel Documents —**You will need your passport, copy of your e-visa, and flight documentation to enter airports.**

Early Arrivals:

If you are arriving early and do not wish to pay for a hotel until check in time you can pay to wait in an airport lounge that has sleeping pods, showers, etc. For more info [go here](#).

It is not necessary to give your bags to those who might offer assistance at the airport unless you want to. (It's usually safe, but you could run into some trouble here) You can check your bags yourself.

Attire:

Men:

Long Kurta tops and pants are usually worn, especially in the smaller towns we will be spending a lot of time in. In the bigger cities other casual, comfortable but nice shirts and pants will be fine.

For men, to show respect for tradition when attending Pujas with the Maharishi Vedic Pandits or at Indian temples, the traditional Indian Kurta is preferred, or dignified casual dress. Throughout our time in India, no t-shirts, shorts or jeans please.

Ladies:

In India, it's very important for ladies to **dress very modestly**. It is expected to dress like this and you will see that 90% do. It is safest too as it does not send the wrong messages to the wrong element. Long pants, tunic tops that are mid-thigh or longer, with a light shawl or long scarf to cover the chest. (In India these are referred to as Dupattas and are about 8 ft. in length. They are very light weight and are great for covering the head from cold, wind or sun, and for protecting the respiratory system from pollution or odors. Plus they add elegance to any outfit, and Ccn be purchased everywhere in India.)

In Indian temples and when attending Vedic recitations at the Brahmasthan, it is respectful and traditional for ladies to please wear a sari. This is the preferred dress. If this is difficult for some reason, you may wear a long skirt to the ankles with a loose fitting long sleeve blouse or only the more traditional *Salwar Kamaz* — 'Punjabis' - long Indian loose tops and loose pants with a light shawl or Dupattas to cover the chest.

Please note that at the Brahmasthan there is red dust and dirt—it can get on the bottom of your saris so please keep this in mind. It is hard to remove! When going for a walk, you may want a shoe that covers your toes.

During the entire time we are in India, it is best that women do not wear short or tight tops, shorts, short skirts or jeans.

Weather:

In the south of India it will be in the upper 80s F with the low in the mid 70s F. For the Brahmasthan and the northern part of India the temperatures will usually be in the mid 70s F in the day and mid 50s F at night. Haridwar and Rishikesh will be a little cooler – averaging a high of 69 F, and a low of 52 F.

Rather than bringing too many bulky, warm clothes such as: sweaters, coats, and hats, we suggest layering, bringing something light, like silk long underwear for that purpose. A packable down sweater/jacket, especially those with a hood work perfectly—they pack into their own pocket, can double as a travel pillow, and are super light weight. This can be worn on your journey to and from India, and then in the north it will be all you need in the evening.

Laundry:

We will be at many of our hotels long enough for you to send your laundry out (this will be an additional charge). You may find it useful to bring your own laundry line and soap for hand washing, particularly undergarments. At the Brahmasthan a laundry service is available for a reasonable charge. Should you take advantage of this, you will be asked to make payment in rupees at the end of your stay. There are no washing machines.

Health tips:

On the plane:

An expert on infectious diseases associated with air travel, has been touting this little trick for a while now:

"Set your ventilation at low or medium. Then position it so you can draw an imaginary line of current right in front of your head. I put my hands on my lap so I can feel the current — so I know it's properly positioned."

This way you are getting 'fresh' air, rather than air that has passed by many other people.

At the Brahmasthan Gift Store, MAPI items are available, but they must be purchased in rupees. (All items other than MAPI items can be paid with a credit card.)

Medications – You can buy many medications over the counter in India without a doctor's prescription, but it can be difficult to find some of the newer drugs. Bring the following:

1. Medications whether over-the-counter, prescription, or herbal, in their original, labeled containers—**double your ordinary needs.**
2. If applicable:
 - a. A signed, dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications, including generic names
 - b. A physician's letter documenting the medical necessity of any syringes you bring
 - c. If you have a heart condition, a copy of your ECG taken just prior to travelling

If you're interested, you can get [Health Information for Travelers to India](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The same link has vaccination information.

A note from our side: What vaccines you decide on will be between you and your doctors. Please know that so far no one has gotten seriously ill on MUM's trips to India except for some Delhi belly and the usual colds. Many people decide not to get any vaccines, others get some, others get many. You can decide what feels best for you.

About Jet Lag:

See [article](#).

Luggage:

Traveling light is always a good idea. It's important that each person takes care of their own luggage and personal belongings, and not rely on the good will and strong backs of your fellow course participants. This means bringing only luggage that you can carry by yourself all at the same time.

The baggage limitations of the Indian domestic airlines reinforce this policy. Even though your international flight may allow two checked bags (some only allow one), flights within India only allow one checked bag without significant charges.

This one checked bag must not exceed **62 in.**, or **158 cm.** (L + W + H). Maximum weight is **33 lbs** or **15 Kg.** (most international max weights are 50lbs or 22.5Kg))

Also, only **one carry on is allowed (not a purse or briefcase *plus* a carry on – so we will have to put our cross body bags or whatever *in* our suitcase or carry on).** The carry on cannot measure more than (L + W + H) $21.5 + 13.5 + 9.5 = 45$ in, or $55 \times 35 \times 25 = 115$ cm. The maximum weight is **15.43 lbs** or **7 Kg.**

These guidelines should be what you follow for your flight to India (except putting your extra purse/bag *in* your carry on), even though your international flight allows for more. In fact, if you plan on buying Indian clothes to wear throughout our trip, as many people do, you should pack even lighter, so that you can fit your new purchases in without going overweight. Bring only your essentials!

The good part is that at the end of your trip, you can fill your backpack/bag up with purchases and also add an extra 17lbs to your checked suitcase.

Traveling light is also important on trains as it's hard to manage big suitcases, so please pack light, in small to medium size suitcases. If you've never packed lightly, you'll be amazed at the sense of freedom it can bring!

Important note:

Bring small locks for suitcases or backpacks left unattended in hotel rooms. **Do not lock** suitcases that you check in during flights, as all suitcases may be searched by the airlines in India and your locks will be broken.

Money/Currency:

Everyone is different, but an average amount of spending money would be around \$300–\$500 for snacks, gifts, clothes, flowers, cell phone time, e.g. about \$200 cash, plus ATM and/or credit card, or all cash — *not* traveler's checks or personal checks. Major credit cards are good most places, except small towns. Cirrus cards are international.

A bank debit card is the easiest and most convenient way to change money. ***Inform your bank and credit card companies of your dates of travel in India.*** You may want to have some upper cash limit set on your ATM withdrawal. Your foreign cards work at all the ATMs in the airport and most other ATMs. It seems that the ATMs at the Airport may charge a higher fee. There may be a limit of withdrawing Rs20000 per day from ATMs, in two transactions of 10k each.

Rupees: Check out the [exchange rate](#) from rupees to the U.S. dollar. Rupees from ATMs outside airport give best exchange rate. If you plan on taking advantage of personal services like having your laundry done at hotels, it's good to have lots of small denomination rupees like 10s for tipping. Tipping is expected – tip anyone who helps you outside of our group activities (10% or more). They appreciate it SO much.

Mosquitoes:

It may be possible to come across mosquitoes during our stay but they haven't seemed to be a problem as we are there during the dry season. However, you can bring some natural mosquito repellent if you like.

Tipping: The course fee covers tips for drivers, baggage handlers for the group, and waiters. You may tip room porters who do extra favors for you.

Travel Insurance:

We recommend comprehensive travel insurance, covering medical/dental (up to \$10,000), baggage loss (\$1000), trip cancellation due to illness or a terrorist alert (up to \$5,000), travel delay (\$500), etc. Available online or through the airline.

Asher Fergusson recommends [World Nomads](#):

Valuables:

Keep your valuables very safe. Your passport, tickets and money etc. It's good to have a small passport/money pouch that you wear under your shirt. It is best to take costume jewelry; if it is taken the loss is not as great. Use combination locks for suitcase and bags in trains and hotels. (Again: NOT for flights)

Wi-Fi:

Most hotels have Wi-Fi, although you may end up not having Wi-Fi for a few days at a time while on the side trips. There is excellent Wi-Fi at the Brahmasthan