

ASIA · CULTURE · HISTORY · FOOD · SACRED SITES · ARCHITECTURE · WILDLIFE

 India

India rewards focus rather than ambition: pick one region and go deep. The north offers the Taj Mahal at sunrise, Rajasthan's forts and Varanasi's riverside rituals; the south counters with Kerala's backwater houseboats, Tamil temple towns and the boulder-strewn ruins of Hampi. Internal flights and overnight trains make the distances manageable.

 **The UK Foreign Office (FCDO) advises against all travel to parts of India.**
Read the latest FCDO travel advice before planning a trip. Your travel insurance may be invalid if you travel against FCDO advice.
FCDO advice last updated 7 October 2026.

 CAPITAL New Delhi	 CURRENCY Indian rupee (INR) £1 ≈ ₹127	 LANGUAGE Hindi, English Bengali, Marathi	 BEST TIME Nov–Feb
 DAILY BUDGET £25–£160 ££ Moderate	 PLUGS Type C, D, M 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 8h 30m direct ~£450–£900 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+5:30 standard time

India is less a country to tour than a subcontinent to sample. The classic first trip is the Golden Triangle — Delhi, Agra and Jaipur — often extended to Rajasthan's Udaipur, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer, or east to Varanasi on the Ganges. The south runs at a gentler pace: Kerala's backwaters and tea hills, the temple towns of Tamil Nadu, Goa's beaches and the ruins of Hampi. The Himalaya adds another trip altogether, from Ladakh's monasteries to the hill stations of Himachal Pradesh and Darjeeling. Two weeks suits one region; link regions by domestic flight rather than trying to cover everything overland.

Day-to-day costs are low — a good thali can cost under £3 and comfortable heritage hotels are a fraction of European prices — yet top-end palace hotels rival anywhere. The first days can be intense: heat, noise, traffic and persistent touts around the big monuments. Most people adjust quickly, helped by generous hospitality, excellent vegetarian food and a rail network that is an experience in itself. It suits curious, flexible travellers; build in slack, because trains run late and plans change. Many are surprised by how calm Kerala and the hills feel after the north, and by how much English is spoken.

Top 5 highlights

1

ARCHITECTURE

Taj Mahal

Shah Jahan's white-marble mausoleum for Mumtaz Mahal, in Agra, is best seen at sunrise, when crowds are thinner and the marble glows pink and gold. It closes on Fridays; Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri are close by.

2

SACRED SITE

Varanasi's ghats

Stone steps line the Ganges in one of Hinduism's holiest cities, where pilgrims bathe at dawn and cremation pyres burn day and night at Manikarnika Ghat. Take a sunrise boat, then watch the evening aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat.

3

HISTORY

Amber Fort, Jaipur

Rising above Maota Lake just outside Jaipur, this honey-coloured hilltop fort-palace is famed for the mirrored Sheesh Mahal and views along its ramparts. Arrive at opening time to beat the heat and tour groups.

4

NATURE

Kerala's backwaters

A maze of canals, lagoons and lakes behind the Malabar coast, best explored on an overnight kettuvallam houseboat from Alappuzha or by canoe along narrower village channels, past paddy fields and toddy shops.

5

HISTORY

Hampi

The ruined capital of the Vijayanagara Empire spreads across a surreal landscape of granite boulders in Karnataka. Explore the Virupaksha and Vittala temples, the stone chariot and royal enclosures by bicycle or auto-rickshaw.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Delhi

≈ 33 million people

Mughal monuments — the Red Fort, Jama Masjid and Humayun's Tomb — sit alongside Old Delhi's food lanes and the broad avenues of Lutyens' New Delhi; give it at least two days.

2ND LARGEST CITY

Mumbai

≈ 21 million people

India's financial capital pairs Victorian Gothic landmarks, including the UNESCO-listed Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, with Marine Drive's sea promenade and superb street food; boats to Elephanta's cave temples leave from the Gateway of India.

3RD LARGEST CITY

Kolkata

≈ 15 million people

The former capital of British India is a literary and artistic heavyweight, with the Victoria Memorial, College Street's bookstalls, Bengali sweets and the spectacular Durga Puja festival each autumn.

Ranked by urban-area population where available. Figures are rounded estimates, and sources define city limits differently, so rankings of similar-sized cities can vary.

Holiday regions in India

These areas have their own season and weather — see their guides for sea temperatures, resorts and flights.

**Goa**

India Best: Nov–Mar 10h from London Sea up to 30°C
~£75/day

When to go to India

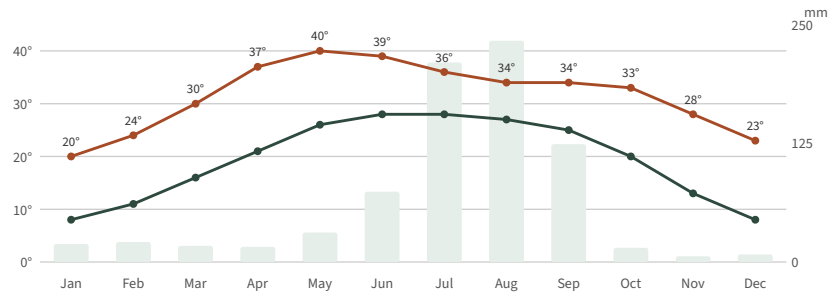
Best time: **Nov–Feb**.



Best Good Mixed Poor

Average climate in New Delhi

High °C Low °C Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Mar	Holi The spring festival of colours: the morning after bonfires on the full moon, people drench each other in coloured powder and water. Mathura and Vrindavan celebrate for days; wear old clothes.
Oct–Nov	Diwali The festival of lights fills homes, streets and temples with oil lamps and fireworks over five days; Jaipur and Varanasi are especially atmospheric, though trains and hotels book up.
Oct–Nov	Pushkar Camel Fair Thousands of camels and livestock traders gather at the Rajasthani lake town of Pushkar around the Kartik full moon, alongside pilgrims, races and moustache contests.

How much does India cost?

SHOESTRING £25 per person / day ≈ ₹3,170 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £65 per person / day ≈ ₹8,241 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £160 per person / day ≈ ₹20,285 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Butter chicken (murgh makhani)

Delhi's creamy tomato-and-butter curry of tandoor-roasted chicken, mopped up with naan — the north Indian classic most British visitors already know.

Masala dosa

A crisp, paper-thin pancake of fermented rice and lentil batter wrapped around spiced potato, served with sambar and coconut chutney; the south's breakfast staple.

Thali

A round tray of rice, breads, dals, vegetable curries, pickles and curd, refilled until you stop; regional versions vary from Gujarat to Kerala.

Getting around

Indian Railways is the backbone: book air-conditioned classes such as 3AC and 2AC on the IRCTC website or through an agent, ideally weeks ahead. IndiGo and Air India cover long hops cheaply. Overnight sleeper buses fill gaps, and hiring a car with driver is common and affordable in Rajasthan and Kerala. In cities, use Uber, Ola, metro systems and auto-rickshaws, agreeing fares first where there's no meter.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



230V — bring a UK-to-C/D/M adapter

DIALLING CODE

+91

TAP WATER

Not safe — drink bottled or treated water

TIPPING

Tip around 10% in restaurants unless service is included; drivers and guides expect a tip at the end, and small notes for porters are appreciated.

ETIQUETTE

Remove shoes before entering temples and homes, cover shoulders and knees at religious sites (and your head in gurdwaras), use your right hand to eat or pass things, and avoid public displays of affection.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Indira Gandhi International Airport (DEL), Delhi; Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (BOM), Mumbai; Kempegowda International Airport (BLR), Bengaluru

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Telephone: **112** (ambulance, fire, police)

You can also download the **112** India mobile app
Indian Ministry of Tourism helpline Telephone: **1800 11 1363**

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

TIME ZONE

UTC+5:30 (standard time)

DRIVING

On the left

Visas & entry for India

Shown for a British passport.

Visa required — apply before you go

You must have a visa to visit India unless you are an Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholder.

India has a number of visa categories including tourist, business, work, journalist and medical. Make sure you get the right visa for your travel.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations

 See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Hepatitis A Tetanus Typhoid

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Chikungunya Cholera Dengue Hepatitis B Japanese encephalitis Measles Rabies Tuberculosis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

A yellow fever certificate is only required if you arrive from (or transit through) a country with yellow fever risk — not if you fly direct from the UK.

MALARIA

Malaria risk in some areas

- There is a risk of malaria in the states of Mizoram, Odisha and Tripura: antimalarial tablets recommended.
- For the rest of India (including Goa and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands) there is a low risk of malaria: awareness of risk and bite avoidance recommended.
- There is no risk of malaria in the Lakshadweep islands.

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in India

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 8 Nov 2026	Diwali
Tue 24 Nov 2026	Guru Nanak's Birthday
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas
Tue 26 Jan 2027	Republic Day
Sat 6 Mar 2027	Maha Shivaratri
Wed 10 Mar 2027	Eid al-Fitr (date may shift)
Mon 22 Mar 2027	Holi
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Wed 14 Apr 2027	Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Birthday
Thu 15 Apr 2027	Ram Navami
Sun 18 Apr 2027	Mahavira's Birthday
Mon 17 May 2027	Eid al-Adha (date may shift)
Thu 20 May 2027	Buddha Purnima
Wed 16 Jun 2027	Ashura (date may shift)
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Independence Day · Prophet's Birthday (date may shift)
Wed 25 Aug 2027	Janmashtami (Vaishnava)
Sat 2 Oct 2027	Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday
Sat 9 Oct 2027	Dussehra

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Hindi

ENGLISH	HINDI	SAY IT
Hello	नमस्ते	nuh-muh-STAY
Thank you	धन्यवाद	DHUN-yuh-vaad

ENGLISH	HINDI	SAY IT
Please	कृपया	<i>KRIP-yah</i>
Excuse me	माफ़ कीजिए	<i>maaf KEE-jee-ay</i>
How much is this?	यह कितने का है?	<i>yeh KIT-nay kaa hai</i>

Know before you go

The Taj Mahal is closed on Fridays, and major monuments charge foreigners a higher entry price; buy tickets online where possible to skip queues and sidestep touts.

Ignore anyone who says your hotel has closed, a monument is shut or a 'government emporium' has a special offer; book rides through Uber or Ola where you can.

Drink sealed bottled or filtered water, eat freshly cooked food from busy stalls, and carry small notes — many small vendors prefer UPI phone payments, which foreign cards cannot easily use.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.