



INDIA



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1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: Indian sub-continent.

Government of India Tourist Office (GITO)
88 Janpath, New Delhi 110 001, India

Tel: (11) 332 0342 or 332 0005 or 332 0008 or 332 0266. **Tel/Fax:** (11) 332 0109. **E-mail:** goitodelhi@tourism.nic.in

India Tourism Development Corporation Ltd (ITDC)
L1 Conaught Place, Nirulas Hotel, New Delhi 111 001, India
Tel: (11) 332 0331 or 332 2336. **Fax:** (11) 331 4744.

Office of the High Commissioner for India
India House, Aldwych, London WC2B 4NA

Tel: (020) 7836 8484. **Fax:** (020) 7836 4331. **Opening hours:** 0930-1300 (personal callers) or 0930-1730 (telephone enquiries) Monday to Friday.

Visa section: **Tel:** (09068) 444 544 (recorded visa information; calls cost 60p per minute). **Fax:** (09068) 444 543 (visa application forms; calls cost 60p per minute).

Web site: <http://www.hcilondon.org>

Opening hours for visa applications and collections: 0830-1200 and 1400-1600 Monday to Friday.

Consulate General of India

The Spencers, 19 Augustus Street, Jewellery Quarter, Hockley, Birmingham B18 6DS

Tel: (0121) 212 2782/90. **Fax:** (0121) 212 2786. **Opening hours:** 0900-1230 Monday to Friday; 1500-1630 Monday to Friday for visa collections.

Consulate General of India

17 Rutland Square, Edinburgh, EH1 2BB

Tel: (0131) 229 2144. **Fax:** (0131) 229 2155. **Opening hours:** 0930-1230 Monday to Friday

Government of India Tourist Office (GITO)

7 Cork Street, London W1X 2LN

Tel: (020) 7437 3677 or 0870 010 2183 (brochure request line). **Fax:** (020) 7494 1048. **E-mail:** info@indiatouristoffice.com

Web site: <http://www.indiatouristoffice.org>

Opening hours: 0930-1800 Monday to Friday.

British High Commission

Shanti Path, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110 0021, India

Tel: (11) 687 2161. **Fax:** (11) 687 2882 or 687 0065 or 687 0062 (commercial) or 611 6094 (consular). **E-mail:** consular@newdelhi.mail.fco.gov.uk (consular section).

Web site: <http://www.ukinindia.org> and <http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel/countryadvice.asp>

Deputy High Commissions in: Calcutta, Chennai and Mumbai.

Embassy of India

Chancery: 2107 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008

Consulate: 2536 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008

Tel: (202) 939 7000 or 939 9806 (consular section). Fax: (202) 265 4351 or 797 4693 (consular section).

Web site: <http://www.indianembassy.org>

Consulate General of India

3 East, 64th Street, New York, NY 10021

Tel: (212) 774 0600. Fax: (212) 861 3788 or 570 9581 (visa section). E-mail: indiapvny@aol.com

Web site: <http://www.indiacgny.org>

Government of India Tourist Office (GITO)

Suite 1808, 1270 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

Tel: (212) 586 4901. Fax: (212) 582 3274.

E-mail: goitony@tourindia.com

Web site: <http://www.tourindia.com>

Office also in: Los Angeles (tel: (213) 380 8855; fax: (213) 380 6111; e-mail: goitola@tourindia.com).

Embassy of the United States of America

Shanti Path, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110 021, India

Tel: (11) 419 8000. Fax: (11) 419 0017.

Consulates in: Calcutta and Mumbai.

High Commission for India

10 Springfield Road, Ottawa, Ontario K1M 1C9

Tel: (613) 744 3751-3. Fax: (613) 744 0913. E-mail: hicomind@sprint.ca

Web site: <http://www.docuweb.ca/India>

Consulates in: Toronto and Vancouver.

Government of India Tourist Office (GITO)

Suite 1003, 60 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M4W 3B8

Tel: (416) 962 3787. Fax: (416) 962 6279.

Canadian High Commission

7/8 Shanti Path, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110 021, India

Tel: (11) 687 6500. Fax: (11) 687 6579 or 687 0031 (consular section). Consulate in: Mumbai.

Country dialling code: 91.

2 GENERAL

Area: 3,287,263 sq km (1,269,219 sq miles).

Population: 970,933,000 (1998).

Population Density: 295.4 per sq km.

Capital: New Delhi. Population: 7,206,704 (1991).

Geography: India shares borders to the northwest with Pakistan, to the north with China, Nepal and Bhutan, and to the east with Bangladesh and Myanmar. To the west lies the Arabian Sea, to the east the Bay of Bengal and to the south the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka lies off the southeast

coast, and the Maldives off the southwest coast. The far northeastern states and territories are all but separated from the rest of India by Bangladesh as it extends northwards from the Bay of Bengal towards Bhutan. The Himalayan mountain range to the north and the Indus River (west) and Ganges River (east) form a physical barrier between India and the rest of Asia. The country can be divided into five regions: Western, Central, Northern (including Kashmir and Rajasthan), Eastern and Southern.

Government: Republic since 1947. Head of State: President Kocherit Raman Narayanan since 1997. Head of Government: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee since 1998.

Language: The official language is Hindi which is spoken by about 30% of the population; English is also often used for official or commercial purposes. In addition, 17 regional languages are recognised by the Constitution. These include Punjabi, Bengali, Gujerati and Oriya which are widely used in the north and Tamil and Telegu which are common in the south. Other regional languages are Marathi, Kannada and Malayalam. The Muslim population largely speak Urdu.

Religion: 80% Hindu, 11% Muslim with Sikh, Christian and Buddhist minorities.

Time: GMT + 5.30.

Electricity: Usually 220 volts AC, 50Hz. Some areas have a DC supply. Plugs used are of the round 2- and 3-pin type.

Communications:

Telephone: IDD service is widely available all over India. Otherwise calls must be placed through the international operator. Country code: 91. Outgoing international code: 00.

Mobile telephone: GSM 900 networks. Network operators include SkyCell (web site: <http://www.skycell-india.com>), Spice Cell (web site: <http://www.spicecell.com>), BPL Cellular Ltd (web site: <http://www.mizone1.bplmobile.com>) and Bharti Cellular Ltd (web site: <http://www.airtelworld.com>). Coverage is limited to major towns.

Fax: Facilities are available in most 5-star hotels and some offices of the Overseas Communication Service in large cities.

Internet/E-mail: ISPs include VSLnet (web site: <http://www.vsnl.net.in>), and Narmada (web site: <http://www.narmada.net.in>). E-mail can be accessed from cybercafés accross the country.

Telegram: International 24-hour service from large hotels and telegraphic offices in major cities.

Post: Airmail service to Western Europe takes up to a week. Stamps are often sold at hotels.

Press: There are numerous local dailies published in several languages. Many newspapers are in English, the most important include The Times of India, Indian Express, The Hindu, Hindustan Times, The Deccan Herald, The Economic Times, The Telegraph and The Statesman.

BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies: From time to time these change.

BBC:

MHz17.6415.5812.109.410

Voice of America:

3 PASSPORT

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
British	Yes	Yes	No
Australian	Yes	Yes	No
Canadian	Yes	Yes	No
USA	Yes	Yes	No
OtherEU	Yes	Yes	No
Japanese	Yes	Yes	No

Restricted entry: Entry is refused to nationals of Afghanistan if their passport or ticket shows evidence of transit or boarding in Pakistan.

PASSPORTS: Passport valid for at least 6 months required by all.

VISAS: Required by all except the following provided they are not missionaries or intending to take up employment:

- (a) nationals of Bhutan and Nepal for a maximum stay of 3 months;
- (b) nationals of the Maldives for a maximum stay of 90 days. The period of 90 days includes any prior period of stay during a period of 6 months immediately before the date of entry;
- (c) transit passengers whose tickets show they intend to continue their journey from the airport, provided they do not leave the airport, and provided they continue their journey within 72 hours (24 hours via Mumbai). Nationals of Pakistan must travel via Amritsar, Delhi or Mumbai airports, continuing their journey the same day, and they are not allowed to leave the airport. Nationals of Bangladesh may require a visa if they have to leave the airport for a connecting flight.

Types of visa and cost: Tourist: £30 (6 months). Business: £30 (6 months); £50 (1 year); £90 (2 years). Transit: £8. Restricted Area Permits are needed to visit some areas (see below). Conference, Journalist and Student visas are also available (contact the Embassy or High Commission for details). Nationals of Afghanistan, Argentina, Bangladesh, Hungary, Jamaica, Maldives, Mongolia, Mauritius, Korea (DPR), Poland, Slovak Republic, South Africa and Uruguay are exempt from visa fees.

Note: (a) The High Commission in London reserves the right to decide on the duration of the visa notwithstanding the minimum fee. (b) 5-year visas are only issued to nationals of Indian origins. (c) Non-UK nationals applying in the UK need to pay an additional £10 (£15 for US passport holders) unless holding proof of at least 1-year residence in the UK. Validity: Tourist (up to 6 months); Business (up to 2 years); Transit (normally 72 hours, but 15 days if stamped by Immigration authorities). Long-term (up to 5 years).

Application to: Embassy or High Commission (or Consular section at Embassy or High Commission); see address section.

Application requirements: (a) Completed application form. Nationals of Pakistan and Bangladesh must complete special application forms. (b) Passport valid for at least 6 months. (c) 2 passport-size photos. (d) Fee (postal orders only for postal applications). (e) Stamped

addressed special delivery envelope for postal applications. (f) Business visa applicants need to present a letter from their employer stating the reason of the visit and an invitation from the company in India.

Working days required: Visas: 1 day (personal applications); 1 week for persons not ordinarily resident in the UK and for nationals of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka; 4-6 weeks (postal applications); up to 3 months (if the application needs to be sent to India). Restricted Area Permits: 7 days.

Temporary residence: Prior permission should be sought before entry into India.

Restricted and protected areas: Certain parts of the country have been designated protected or restricted areas that require special permits and in some cases prior government authorisation which is easily obtained. Intent to visit a specific restricted region should be indicated when applying for a visa and a permit will be granted to visit that region only. Passengers are advised to check with the Government of India Tourist Office (GITO) for up-to-date information before departure.

The following states are subject to some restrictions:

Arunachal Pradesh, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep Islands, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim. Contact the Embassy or High Commission for more details (see address section).

4 MONEY

Currency: Rupee (Rs) = 100 paise. Notes are in denominations of Rs500, 100, 50, 20, 10, and 5. Coins are in denominations of Rs5, 2 and 1, and 50, 25, and 10 paise.

Note: 1 and 2 Rupee notes and 5 paise coins may still be in circulation but are no longer being produced.

Currency exchange: Currency can be changed at banks, airports or authorised money changers. It is illegal to exchange money through unauthorised money changers. US Dollars and Pounds Sterling are the easiest currencies to exchange.

Credit cards: MasterCard, American Express, Diners Club and Visa are accepted. Check with your credit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

Travellers cheques: These are widely accepted and may be changed at banks. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling.

Exchange rate indicators

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Rupee against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date May '00 Aug '00 Nov '00 Feb '01 £1.00 = 65.2867.7267.6868.07 \$1.00 = 43.9845.1446.7646.62

Currency restrictions: Import of local currency is prohibited. Export of local currency is also prohibited, except for passengers proceeding to Nepal (excluding notes of denominations of Rs100 or higher), Bangladesh, Pakistan or Sri Lanka (up to Rs20 per person). Foreign currency may be exported up to the amount imported and declared. All foreign currency must be declared on arrival if value is over US\$2500, and when exchanged the currency declaration form should be

endorsed, or a certificate issued. The form and certificates must be produced on departure to enable reconversion into foreign currency. Changing money with unauthorised money changers is not, therefore, advisable.

Banking hours: 1000-1400 Monday to Friday; 1000-1200 Saturday.

5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported into India by passengers over 17 years of age without incurring customs duty:

200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco; 1 litre of alcoholic beverage; 250ml of eau de toilette; goods for personal use or gifts to a value of Rs600 (foreign passport holders) or Rs3000 (Indian passport holders).

Prohibited items: Narcotics, plants and gold and silver bullion.

6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 26 2001 Republic Day. Mar 8 Idu'z Zuha/Bakrid (Feast of the Sacrifice). Mar Mahavir Jayanti. Mar 18 Muharram (Islamic New Year). Apr 13 Good Friday. May 7 Buddha Purnima. Jun 6 Birth of the Prophet. Aug 15 Independence Day. Sep/Oct Dussera. Oct 2 Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday. Nov 14 Diwali. Nov 30 Guru Nanak's Birthday. Dec 20-21 Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan). Dec 25 Christmas Day. Jan 26 2002 Republic Day. Feb 25 Idu'z Zuha/Bakrid (Feast of the Sacrifice). Mar Mahavir Jayanti. Mar 8 Muharram (Islamic New Year). Mar 29 Good Friday. May 26 Buddha Purnima. May 27 Birth of the Prophet. Aug 15 Independence Day. Sep/Oct Dussera. Oct 2 Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday. Nov 4 Diwali. Nov Guru Nanak's Birthday. Dec 10-11 Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan). Dec 25 Christmas Day.

Notes: (a) Public holidays in India tend to be observed on a strictly regional basis. Only the secular holidays of Republic Day, Independence Day and Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday are universally observed. The above dates are Government of India holidays, when government offices will be closed nationwide. In addition, there are numerous festivals and fairs which are also observed in some States as holidays, the dates of which change from year to year. For more details, contact the Government of India Tourist Office (see address section). See also under the heading Special Events in the Social Profile section. (b) Muslim festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the Moon and the dates given above are approximations. During the lunar month of Ramadan that precedes Eid al-Fitr, Muslims fast during the day and feast at night and normal business patterns may be interrupted. Many restaurants are closed during the day and there may be restrictions on smoking and drinking. For more information see the World of Islam appendix.

7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
Yellow Fever	Yes	1
Cholera	Yes	2

Typhoid and Polio	3	-
Malaria	4	-
Food and Drink	5	-

1: Any person (including infants over six months old) arriving by air or sea without a yellow fever certificate is detained in isolation for a period of up to 6 days if arriving within 6 days of departure from or transit through an infected area (30 days if travelling by ship). When a case of yellow fever is reported from any country, that country is regarded by the Government of India as being infected.

2: Following WHO guidelines issued in 1973, a cholera vaccination certificate is not a condition of entry to India. However, cholera is a serious risk in this country and precautions are essential. Up-to-date advice should be sought before deciding whether these precautions should include vaccination, as medical opinion is divided over its effectiveness.

3: Poliomyelitis is widespread.

4: Malaria risk exists, mainly in the benign vivax form, throughout the year in the whole country below 2000m excluding parts of the states of Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Sikkim. High resistance to chloroquine is reported in the malignant falciparum form.

5: All water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Milk is unpasteurised and should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised, but make sure that it is reconstituted with pure water. Avoid dairy products that are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Pork, salad and mayonnaise may carry increased risk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled. Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information, consult the Health appendix. A sharp rise in the incidence of visceral leishmaniasis has been observed. Cutaneous leishmaniasis occurs in Rajasthan. Filariasis is common throughout India and sandfly fever is increasing. An outbreak of plague occurred in 1994 and was contained by adequate government measures. Tick-borne relapsing fever is reported as is typhus, and outbreaks of haemorrhagic dengue fever have occurred in eastern India. Tick-borne haemorrhagic fever has been reported in the forest areas in Karnataka State. Hepatitis A and E are common. Hepatitis B is endemic. Outbreaks of meningococcal meningitis have been reported. Outbreaks of Japanese encephalitis occur, particularly in Andhra Pradesh. Meningitis is present in Delhi from November to May. Vaccination is advisable.

Health care: Health care facilities are limited and travellers are strongly advised to take out full medical insurance before departing for India. It is advisable to bring specific medicines from the UK. There are state-operated facilities in all towns and cities and private consultants and specialists in urban areas.

On leaving India: Visitors leaving for countries which impose health restrictions on arrivals from India are required to be in possession of a valid certificate of inoculation and vaccination.

Travel - International

AIR: India's national airline is Air India (AI). British Airways (BA) and Virgin Atlantic fly to India from the UK; United Airlines and Delta Airlines fly from the USA.

Approximate flight times: From London to Delhi is 9 hours, to Calcutta is 12 hours, to Chennai is 12 hours 30 minutes and to Mumbai is 9 hours. From Los Angeles to Delhi is 25 hours 30 minutes. From New York to Delhi is 18 hours. From Singapore to Delhi is 5 hours. From Sydney to Delhi is 10 hours.

International airports: All the airports mentioned below have money exchange facilities, tourist information offices and hotel reservation services.

Mumbai (BOM) is 29km (18 miles) north of the city (travel time - 75-90 minutes). Taxi services go to the city. Taxi fares should have fixed rates from the airport to the city. Public transport is also available in the form of the EATS bus service and local buses. Other facilities include a retiring room for passengers in transit and a child-care lounge.

Calcutta (CCU) is 13km (8 miles) northeast of the city (travel time - 40-60 minutes). There is a 24-hour coach service to Indian Airlines city office and major hotels. A bus goes every 10 minutes 0530-2200. Taxi services go to the city. There is a 24-hour post office, bars, duty-free shops and restaurants available.

Delhi (DEL) (Indira Gandhi International) is 22km (15 miles) south of the city (travel time - 45 minutes). There are coach, bus and taxi services to the city. There are 24-hour duty-free shops and restaurants.

Chennai (MAA) is 14km (8 miles) southwest of the city (travel time - 30-40 minutes). A coach meets all flight arrivals 0900-2300. There is a train every 20-30 minutes from 0500-2300. Bus no. 18A runs every 25 minutes from 0500-2200. Taxi services go to the city.

Departure tax: All airports except Mumbai (BOM) levy the following departure tax: RS150 (for flights to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka); RS500 (all other destinations).

Note: Ahmedabad Airport is being upgraded as an international airport.

SEA: The main passenger ports are Mumbai, Calcutta, Kochi, Chennai, Calicut, Panaji (Goa) and Rameswaram (the main departure point for the sea crossing to Sri Lanka; passenger services are presently suspended owing to the political situation in Sri Lanka).

Indian ports are also served by several international shipping companies and several cruise lines. There are, however, no regular passenger liners operating to South-East Asia.

Departure tax: Seaports levy the following departure tax: RS150 (for journeys to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka). RS500 (all other destinations).

RAIL: This section gives details of the major overland routes to neighbouring countries (where frontiers are open); in most cases these will involve road as well as rail travel. Details should be checked with the Government of India Tourist Office as they may be subject to change (see address section).

Connections to Pakistan: Currently only possible between Amritsar and Lahore (New Delhi-Amritsar-Lahore-Hyderabad-Karachi).

Connections to Nepal: The most practical and popular route to Nepal is by train to Raxaul (Bihar) and then by bus to Kathmandu or by train to Gorakhpur (or by bus if coming from Varanasi) and then by bus to Kathmandu crossing the border at Sunauli; also, by train to Nantanwa (UP) and then by bus to Kathmandu/Pokhara, or Bhairawa to Lumbini for Pokhara. It is also possible to make the crossing from Darjeeling by bus to Kathmandu across the southern lowlands.

Connections to Bhutan: The best way of reaching Bhutan is by train to Siliguri, then bus to Phuntsholing. There is also an airtail from Calcutta to Paro by Druk Air.

Connections to Bangladesh: The best route to Bangladesh is Calcutta to Bongaon (West Bengal) by train, rickshaw across the border to Benapol, with connections via Khulna or Jessore to Dhaka. Another route is from Darjeeling via Siliguri, then train or bus from Jalpaiguri to Haldibari.

Currently no land frontiers are open between India and Myanmar or India and the People's Republic of China.

ROAD: Of late, the overland route from Europe to India has become very popular, but travellers should have accurate information about border crossings, visa requirements and political situations en route. Several 'adventure holiday' companies arrange overland tours and buses to India. A bus service between New Delhi and Lahore (Pakistan) has recently been launched (the first one in 50 years). The journey takes roughly 10 hours and there are four weekly return trips available. For information on this and other overland routes to neighbouring countries, contact the Government of India Tourist Office (see address section).

Travel - Internal

AIR: The domestic airline is Indian Airlines (IC). The network connects over 70 cities. Indian Airlines also operates regular flights to the neighbouring countries of Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, the Maldives, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and the Middle East. Domestic airlines include Archana Airways, Gujerat Airways, Jagson Airways, Jet Airways, Sahara Airways and Alliance Air, a subsidiary of Indian Airlines.

SPECIAL FARES: There are various special Indian Airlines fares available to foreign nationals and Indian nationals residing abroad. All are available throughout the year, and may be purchased either abroad or in India, where payment is made in a foreign convertible currency (such as US Dollars or Sterling). With the exception of the Youth Fare India (see below), discounts of 90% are available for children under two years, and of 50% for children aged 2-12. Full details of all the special fares are contained in the India brochure, available from the Government of India Tourist Office. A summary of each is given below.

DISCOVER INDIA: There are two types of ticket available; a 21-day ticket costs US\$750, a 15-day ticket costs US\$500 and a 7-day ticket costs US\$250. These offer unlimited economy-class travel on all domestic Indian Airlines services. No stop may be visited more than once, except for transfer.

YOUTH FARE INDIA: This is valid for 3 months, offering a 25% discount on the normal US Dollar fare. It is available to those aged 12-30 at the commencement of travel for journeys on economy/executive class of domestic air services and Indo-Nepal services.

INDIA WONDERFARES (NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST): Cost US\$300 and are valid for seven days, offering economy-class travel between main centres in India. No town may be visited more than once, except for transfer.

SEA/RIVER: There are ships from Calcutta, Vishakapatnam and Chennai to Port Blair in the Andaman Islands, and from Kochi and Calicut to the Lakshadweep Islands. Services are often seasonal, and are generally suspended during the monsoon. One particularly attractive boat journey is the 'backwaters' excursion in the vicinity of Kochi in Kerala. Several local tours are available.

RAIL: The Indian internal railway system is the largest in Asia and the second-largest in the world. There are over 70,000km (43,500 miles) of track, over 7000 stations and over 11,000 locomotives, including 5000 steam engines. Its trains carry over 12 million passengers every day. The network covers much of the country and is a quintessential part of the fabric of India, as well as being relatively inexpensive. Express services link all the main cities and local services link most other parts of the country. Buses connect with trains to serve parts of the country not on the rail network. Children 5-11 years of age pay half price, children under five travel free. There are seven classes of travel: first-class air-conditioned, second-class air-conditioned, air-conditioned three tier, air-conditioned chair car, first-class sleeper and second-class. Major trains carry restaurant cars. Important routes run as follows: Mumbai-Ahmadabad (five a day), Mumbai-Bangalore-Mysore (two a day), Mumbai-Calcutta (three a day), Mumbai-Chennai (three a day), Mumbai-New Delhi (four a day), Mumbai-Patna (five a day), Mumbai-Pune (five a day); Calcutta-Allahabad (three a day), Calcutta-New Jalpaiguri-Darjeeling (Toy Train, one a day), Calcutta-Chennai (three a day), Calcutta-New Delhi (three a day); Delhi-Agra (Taj Express, five a day), Delhi-Ahmedabad (four a day), Delhi-Allahabad (five a day), Delhi-Jaipur (five a day), Delhi-Chennai (three a day); Chennai-Ernakulam-Kochi (one a day).

SPECIAL FARES: There is a special Indrail Pass consisting of a single non-transferable ticket which enables a visitor to travel on any train without restriction within the period of validity. It is sold only to foreign nationals and Indians residing abroad holding a valid passport, and replaces all other concessional tickets. Payment is accepted only in foreign currency (US Dollars or Sterling). Refunds can be given only if cancellation is made before the starting date. Children of 5-11 years of age are entitled to a Child Indrail Pass and pay roughly half the normal fare. Children under five years of age travel free. The normal free baggage allowances are 70kg air-conditioned class, 50kg first-class/AC Chair Car and 35kg second-class. Child Indrail Pass holders are entitled to half the above allowances. Holders of an Indrail Pass travelling on the Reydhani Express and Shatabdi Express are exempted from all reservation fees, sleeping car charges, express train meal charges and other costs. Validity: A ticket can be used within one year of its issue. Validity period is from the date of commencement of the first journey up to midnight of the date on which validity expires. The ticket must be used within one year of its issue. Advance reservation is essential, particularly on overnight journeys, arranged through travel agents. Reservations are on a first-come-first-served basis. For individuals or small groups a 2/3-month notice should suffice; during summer months a longer period is desirable to ensure reservations for the entire itinerary. Reservations can be made up to 360 days in advance. Indrail passes can be reserved in the UK from SD Enterprises Ltd (tel: (020) 8903 3411 or (020) 8200 9549; fax: (020) 8903 0392; e-mail: dandpani@dircom.co.uk). The passes can also be purchased in India at all the main railway stations and authorised agents.

PALACE ON WHEELS: Expensively decorated Edwardian-style luxury steam train with 14 coaches. Each coach consists of a saloon, four sleeping compartments with upper and lower berth, bathroom, shower, toilet and small kitchen. Room service is available. There is a dining car, a bar, an observation car and a fully-equipped first-aid centre. Modern amenities include air-conditioning, four channel music and telephone intercom throughout the train. Tariff includes cost of travel; full catering; elephant, camel and boat rides; conducted sightseeing tours; and entrance fees.

Itinerary: Delhi-Jaipur-Chittaurgarh-Udaipur-Sawai Madhopur-Jaisalmer-Jodhpur-Bharatpur-Agra-Delhi.

Bookings: Several tour operators/travel agents organise escorted tour facilities which include the Palace on Wheels.

Also interesting is a journey on the Toy Train, a narrow-gauge rail line completed in 1881. Covering the route Calcutta-New Jalpaiguri-Darjeeling in 8 hours, it crosses over 500 bridges and

offers ample opportunity for photos as the pace is leisurely. There is one daily train in either direction.

ROAD: Traffic drives on the left. An extensive network of bus services connects all parts of the country, and is particularly useful for the mountainous regions where there are no rail services. Details of routes may be obtained from the local tourist office. Tourist cars: There are a large number of chauffeur-driven tourist cars (some air-conditioned) available in the main tourist centres. These unmetered tourist cars run at a slightly higher rate than the ordinary taxis, and are approved by the Government of India Tourist Office. Self-drive cars are not generally available. Documentation: An International Driving Permit is required.

URBAN: Taxis and auto rickshaws are available in large cities and fares should be charged by the kilometre. They do not always have meters but, where they do, visitors should insist on the meter being flagged in their presence. Fares change from time to time and therefore do not always conform to the reading on the meter, but drivers should always have a copy of the latest fare chart available for inspection. Public transport is often crowded and can be uncomfortable. For those interested, Mumbai Electric Supply & Transport (BEST) is one of the best public transport operators in India. A 16.45km (10-mile) underground railway was completed in Calcutta in 1995.

JOURNEY TIMES: The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from Delhi to other major cities/towns in India.

	Air	Road	Rail	Sea
Mumbai	1.50	28.00	17.30	a-
Calcutta	2.00	30.00	18.00	b-
Chennai	3.00	45.00	32.00	-
Hyd'bad	1.55	40.00	24.00	-
Agra	0.40	4.30	3.15	-
Jaipur	0.40	6.00	5.15	-
Jammu	1.50	14.45	16.00	-
Triv'rum	5.00	c62.00	60.00	-
Patna	1.30	22.00	16.00	-
Port Blair	5.05	c-d		

a. Time by express (not daily); normal train takes 23 hours. b. Time by express (not daily); normal train takes 25 hours. c. Does not include stopover in Chennai. d. Boat journey from Chennai takes 3-4 days.

NOTE: Further information (including route maps, times of express trains and more detailed journey-time charts) may be found in the official India brochure, available free from the Government of India Tourist Office (see address section).

8 ACCOMMODATION

For all sections, contact the Government of India Tourist Office for detailed information.

HOTELS: Modern Western-style hotels are available in all large cities and at popular tourist centres. Usually they offer a choice of first-class Western and Indian cuisine. The well-known Taj Group offers accommodation in either eight grand luxe hotels or in its many superb business hotels. Several beach resorts, so-called palace hotels, garden retreats and hotels in areas of

cultural significance are also part of the international group. Hotel charges in India are moderate compared to those in many other countries. Hotel bills may be subject to a 10% expenditure tax, 7-15% luxury tax and a variable service charge.

A full list of Government Approved Hotels, Palace Hotels and ITDC (Ashok) Travellers' Lodges is available from the Government of India Tourist Office; or contact the Federation of Hotel and **Restaurant Associations of India, M-75 (Market), Greater Kailash II, New Delhi 110 048** (tel: (11) 648 2690 or 648 4779 or 648 5117; fax: (11) 646 4194; e-mail: hotels@planetindia.net; web site: <http://www.fhraindia.com>). Grading: Hotels range from old palace buildings that have been converted into Heritage Hotels, 5-star deluxe, 5- and 4-star hotels, which are fully air-conditioned with all luxury features, 3-star hotels, which are functional and have air-conditioned rooms, to 2- and 1-star hotels, which offer basic amenities.

Tourist Bungalows: There are tourist bungalows (known as holiday homes in Maharashtra and Gujarat, and tourist lodges in West Bengal) at almost every tourist centre in the country, under the control of the respective State Government Tourist Development Corporation, except in the metropolitan cities of Delhi, Calcutta, Chennai, Mumbai and Bangalore. These include a clean single, double and family room, most with a bath and general canteen. At holiday homes and certain tourist cottages there are kitchen facilities. Bookings should be made (a deposit will be required) with the managing director of the respective corporation, or with the manager of the bungalow.

Houseboats: These are peculiar to Srinagar. Moored on the banks of the river Jhelum and the Dal and Nagin lakes, they range from 24-38m (79-125ft) in length and 3-6m (10-20ft) in width. There are two living rooms, two or three bedrooms, bathrooms, and hot and cold running water. The boats have every comfort and are sumptuously furnished with all modern amenities: electricity, crockery, cutlery, radios and decks for bathing. Smaller boats can be punted about and moored at different places. Each houseboat has a paddle boat for crossings and an attached kitchen-boat which also serves as quarters for the staff. Reductions are available for children and, in the lower two categories, for lodging only. Grading: There are four categories: deluxe, A, B and C.

CAMPsites: These are to be found throughout India. Full addresses may be obtained from the Government of India Tourist Office.

Youth Hostels: These provide a convenient and cheap base for organised tours, trekking, hiking or mountaineering. The Department of Tourism has set up 16 hostels, spread throughout every region, ideally placed for exploring both the plains and the hill stations. Each has a capacity for about 40 beds or more, segregated roughly half and half into male and female dormitories. Beds with mattresses, bedsheets, blankets, wardrobe with locks, electric light points, member kitchen utensils and parking areas are available at each hostel. For further details, contact the Youth Hostels Association of India, 5 Nyaya Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110 021, India (tel: (11) 687 1969 or 611 0250; fax: (11) 611 3469; e-mail: yhostel@del2.vsnl.net.in).

The North

India has a rich history and the palaces, temples and great cities of its ancient cultures cannot fail to grip the imagination. In the spring particularly, the big cities come alive with concerts, plays, parties and exhibitions. Among the most spectacular hill stations (mountain resorts which make ideal destinations in summer) are Shimla (once the Imperial summer capital), Mussoorie, Ranikhet and Nainital (within reach of Delhi), and West Bengal's magnificent resort, Darjeeling, which offers a breathtaking view of the whole Kanchenjunga range. Along the fabled coasts of Malabar and Coromandel, unspoiled sandy beaches stretch for miles. Skiing is possible in the silent snowbound heights of Gulmarg and Kufri in the Himalayas.

Delhi: Delhi has two parts: New Delhi, India's capital and the seat of government, is a 20th-century city, offering wide tree-lined boulevards, spacious parks and the distinctive style of Lutyens' architectural design; 'Old' Delhi, on the other hand, is a city several centuries old, teeming with narrow winding streets, temples, mosques and bazaars. Notable sites are the Red Fort and the nearby Jama Masjid (India's largest mosque) and the Qutab Minar's soaring tower. Delhi attracts the finest musicians and dancers offering an ideal opportunity to hear the sitar, sarod and the subtle rhythm of the tabla, and to see an enthralling variety of dance forms, each with its own costumes and elaborate language of gestures. Theatres and cinemas show films from all over India, and the city has some of the country's finest restaurants offering many styles of regional cuisine.

Delhi lies at the apex of the 'Golden Triangle' - an area filled with ancient sites and monuments. In the southeast lies Agra, city of the fabled Taj Mahal. This magnificent mausoleum was built by Shah Jahan as a monument to his love for his wife, Mumtaz, who died in childbirth. Shah Jehan was later imprisoned by his own son in the nearby Red Fort. Other important landmarks are Akbar's Palace, the Jahangir Mahal, the octagonal tower Mussumman Burj and the Pearl Mosque. Nearby is Fatehpur Sikri, the town Akbar built as his new capital but abandoned after only a few years. This town is now no more than a ghost town.

The southwestern pivot of the triangle is Jaipur, gateway to the desert state of Rajasthan. Known as the 'Pink City' because of the distinctive colour of its buildings, Jaipur is a town of broad, open avenues and many palaces. The Amber Palace, just outside the city is particularly beautiful, as is the façade of the Palace of the Winds within the city walls. To the southwest is Udaipur, famed for its Lake Palace Hotel, built on an island in the lake, while to the north, in the centre of the Rajasthan desert, is Jodhpur, with its colourful, winding lanes and towering fortress. Near Ajmer is the small lakeside town of Pushkar. It is a site of religious importance for Hindus and it is here that every November the fascinating Camel Fair is held. Jaisalmer is a charming oasis town, once a resting place on the old caravan route to Persia. Among its attractions are the camel treks out into the surrounding desert.

To the south of the 'Golden Triangle' is the huge state of Madhya Pradesh. Its greatest attractions lie close to the northern frontier. Less than 160km (100 miles) from Agra is the great ruined fortress at Gwalior. To the east lies Khajuraho with its famous temples and friezes of sensuously depicted figures - a must for any visitor.

To the east of Delhi is the state of Uttar Pradesh, through which flows the sacred River Ganges. Built along its bank is the wondrous city of Varanasi, India's holiest Hindu location. The town itself is a maze of winding streets, dotted with temples and shrines. Lining the river are a series of ghats which, at dawn, are thronged with pilgrims and holy men performing ritual ablutions and prayers.

Less than 320km (200 miles) to the north of Delhi is Shimla, the greatest of all hill stations, surrounded by finely scented pine forests and the rich beauty of the Kulu Valley.

In the far north, reaching into Central Asia, is the extensive mountain region of Kashmir, formerly a popular summer resort (visitors are now advised to consult government advice before visiting this area), and the valley of the River Jhelum. The gateway to the region is Jammu, a town surrounded by lakes and hills. The temples of Rambireswar and Raghunath number among its most impressive sights. Jammu is the railhead for Srinagar, the ancient capital of Kashmir, and favourite resort of the Mughal emperors. It was they who built the many waterways and gardens around Lake Dal, complementing the natural beauty of the area. Among the attractions are the houseboats where visitors can live on the lakes surrounded by scenery so beautiful it is known as 'paradise on earth'. Srinagar is also a convenient base for trips to Gulmarg and Pahalgam. Gulmarg offers fine trout fishing, and enjoys the distinction of having the highest golf course in the world. From here there are good views of Nanga Parbat, one of the highest mountains in the world. It is well placed as a starting point for treks into the hills and mountains. Pahalgam is another popular hill resort and base for pilgrimages to the sacred cave of Amar Nath.

More exotic, though less accessible, is the region of Ladakh, beyond the Kashmir Valley. It is a mountainous land on the edge of the Tibetan Plateau which is still largely Tibetan in character. The capital, Leh, is situated high in the Karakoram mountain range, through which passed the old Silk Road from China to India and Europe.

The West

The principal metropolis of Western India is Mumbai, the capital of the state of Maharashtra, a bustling port and commercial centre, with plate-glass skyscrapers and modern industry jostling alongside bazaars and a hectic streetlife. Many of the country's films are made in the famous Mumbai studios. The city also boasts one of the finest race tracks in India, the Mahalaxmi course. There is a pleasant seafront with a palm-lined promenade and attractive beaches such as Juhu, Versova, Marve, Madh and Manori. On the waterfront is Mumbai's best-known landmark, the Gateway to India, whence boats leave on the 10km (6-mile) journey across the busy harbour to the Elephanta Island. The island is famous for the 8th-century cave temples, on whose walls are large rock carvings, the finest of which is the 3-faced Maheshmurti, the great Lord.

To the north lies the state of Gujarat, renowned for its silks, as the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi, and as the last refuge of the Asian lion, found deep in the Gir Forest. Ahmedabad, in the east of the state, is the principal textile city of India, producing silks which are famous throughout the world. Ahmedabad is also the site of Sabarmati Ashram, founded by Mahatma Gandhi, from where his ideology of non-violence is still promoted. Gandhi's birthplace is some 320km (200 miles) to the west, in the fishing village of Porbandar.

To the east of Mumbai is Aurangabad, the starting point for visits to two of the world's most outstanding rock-cut temples. The Buddhist cave temples at Ajanta date back at least 2000 years. Cut into the steep face of a deep rock gorge, the 30 caves contain exquisite paintings depicting daily life at that time.

The caves at Ellora depict religious stories and are Hindu, Buddhist and Jain in origin. The Temple of Kailasa is the biggest hewn monolith temple in the world. Southeast of Mumbai are several fine hill stations, notably Matheran with its narrow gauge trains, and Mahabaleshwar. The thriving city of Pune with its peaceful Bund Gardens and its cultural attractions is also in this area. Further to the south lies Goa. The 100km-long (60-mile) coastline offers some of the finest beaches in the subcontinent. Goa was Portuguese until 1961, and there is also a charming blend of Latin and Indian cultures. Panaji, the state capital, is one of the most relaxed and elegant of India's cities. The town is dominated by the huge Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, but the shops, bars and pleasant streets are its main attraction. 'Old Goa', only a bus ride away from Panaji, displays a bewildering variety of architectural styles. Buildings of note include the Basilica and the Convent and Church of St Francis of Assisi. In nearby Ponda is the 400-year-old Temple of Shri Mangesh, which is said to be the oldest Hindu shrine.

Accommodation in the region includes the luxury resort of Aguada, the Taj holiday village and the Aguada hermitage. There are also good, simple hotels and cottages for rent in villages along the coastline, notably Calangute, Baga and Colva.

Goa also has several wildlife sanctuaries, including Bondla in the hills of western Ghats, where wild boar and sambar can be seen in their natural habitat. The region is famous for its food - an array of dishes, both Indian and Portuguese - as well as for its colourful festivals, including the spectacular Carnival held on the three days leading up to Ash Wednesday.

The South

The south is the part of India least affected by incursions of foreign cultures through the centuries. It is here that Indian heritage has survived in its purest form.

The regional capital is Chennai (formerly Madras), India's fourth-largest city. Chennai is the cradle of the ancient Dravidian civilisation, one of the oldest articulate cultures in the world. It is also home of the classical style of Indian dancing and a notable centre of temple sculpture art.

Sprawling over 130 sq km (50 sq miles), the metropolis has few tall buildings and enjoys the relaxed ambience of a market town rather than the bustle of a huge city. From Chennai Lighthouse there is a fine view of the city that includes many churches which tell of the city's strong Christian influence, first introduced in AD78 when the apostle St Thomas was martyred here.

Chennai, however, is largely a commercial city and the centre of the area's rail, air and road networks, and serves as a good starting point from which to explore the south.

Within the region are several important religious centres, notably Kanchipuram, which has an abundance of temples, and whose striking gopurams, or gateways, are decorated with sculptures of gods and goddesses. Inland is Madurai, with a large and bustling temple, and Thanjavur. Also worth visiting is Tiruchirappalli, which has a fortress built atop a strange boulder-shaped hill that dominates the town.

Further south, along the coast, is Pondicherry, an attractive town with a distinctive French style, and beyond, Rameswaram, once the ferry link to Sri Lanka.

To the west lies the state of Kerala, where many of India's major coastal resorts are to be found. Among the finest is Kovalam, offering unspoilt beaches with increasingly modern amenities, including luxury bungalows and a number of hotels (some including a swimming pool). Only a few miles away is Trivandrum, the state capital with its famous Padmanabhaswamy Temple. Further inland is the Periyar Game Sanctuary which has a rich and varied wildlife. Other resorts include Cranganor, Alleppey and Kochi.

Further to the north is the state of Karnataka, which has fine, unexplored beaches at Karwar, Mahe and Udupi. The state's capital is Bangalore, an affluent city which is the centre of electronics and engineering industries, but has many charming parks and gardens. To the southwest lies Mysore, where incense is manufactured.

Karnataka has a number of important religious and historical sites, including the ruins at Hampi to the north of Bangalore, and the vast statue of Lord Bahubali at Sravanabelagola, north of Mysore.

To the east of Karnataka is the state of Andhra Pradesh, with its capital at Hyderabad, offering a well-stocked one-man museum. 220km (350 miles) to the east is Visakhapatnam, the fourth-largest port.

Far away to the east across the Bay of Bengal are the Andaman Islands, a lushly forested archipelago which has exotic plant life and a wide variety of corals and tropical fish, making it a major attraction for snorkelling enthusiasts. The islands' capital, Port Blair, can be reached from Chennai and Calcutta by boat or air. Visitors should note that the islands are subject to special entry restrictions and a Restricted Area Permit may be required; see the Passport/Visa section for details.

The East

The largest city in India and hub of the east is Calcutta. Established as a British trading post in the 17th century, it grew rapidly into a vibrant centre. Its colonial heritage is reflected in the buildings of Chowringhee Street and Clive Street, now Jawaharlal Nehru Road and Netaji Subhash Road. The city is filled with life and energy. It is a major business centre and offers fine markets and bazaars. It is also the centre of much of the country's creative and intellectual activity, including the sub-continent's best film-makers. Central Calcutta is best viewed from the Maidan, the central area of parkland where early morning yoga sessions take place. The city's Indian Museum is one of the finest in Asia. Other attractions include the white marble Victoria Memorial, the Ochterlony Monument (Sahid Minar) and the headquarters of the Rama Krishna movement. Across the river are the Kali Temple of Dakshineswar (Belur Math headquarters of Ramakrishna Movement) and the Botanical Gardens.

To the west is the state of Bihar, with the religious centre of Bodhgaya, a sacred place for both Hindus and Buddhists. To the south, in the state of Orissa, are three temple cities. Foremost is Bhubaneswar, a town in which there once stood no less than 7000 temples, 500 of which have

survived. Largest of these is the great Lingaraja Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva. A short journey away to the south of Bhubaneswar lies Puri, one of the four holiest cities in India, now being developed as a beach resort. In June and July Puri stages one of India's most spectacular festivals, the Rath Yatra or 'Car Festival', at which pilgrims pay homage to images of gods drawn on massive wooden chariots. A short distance along the coast to the north is Konarak, known for its 'Black Pagoda' - a huge solitary temple to the sun god in the form of a chariot drawn by horses. The sculpture has a sensuous nature similar to that of Khajuraho, and is counted amongst the finest in India.

To the north of Calcutta is one of the great railway journeys of the world, the 'Toy Train' to Darjeeling. The last part of the line runs through jungle, tea gardens and pine forests. Darjeeling straddles a mountain slope which drops steeply to the valley below, and commands fine views of Kanchenjunga (8586m/28,169ft), the third-highest mountain in the world. It is the headquarters of the Indian Mountaineering Institute, as well as the birthplace of Sherpa Tenzing. It is also a world-renowned tea-growing centre.

A bus journey of two and a half hours takes one to Kalimpong, a bazaar town at the foot of the Himalayas. From here a number of treks can be made to places offering fine panoramas of the mountains.

Further north is the mountain state of Sikkim. The capital, Gangtok, lies in the southwest. The main activity for visitors is trekking, although it is still in its infancy and facilities are minimal. At the moment travel for non-Indian residents is limited. Trekking is allowed only in groups, while individuals may only visit Gangtok, Rumtek and Phodom. The nearest railheads are Darjeeling and Siliguri, on the slow but spectacular line of India's northeast frontier railway.

Even further to the east are the states of Assam and Meghalaya. Assam is famous for tea and wildlife reserves, and can be reached from the state capital of Guwahati. The tiger reserve of Manas is also rich in other varieties of wildlife, while in Kaziranga it is possible to see the one-horned rhinoceros of India.

Shillong: Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya, is the home of the Khasi people. The region is filled with pine groves, waterfalls and brooks and is described as the 'Scotland of the East'.

Beach Resorts

India's coast has some of the most beautiful beaches in the world. Below are listed both well-known resorts, such as Goa, and several lesser-known beaches. Hotel facilities and accommodation are also indicated. Further information may be obtained by consulting the Resorts & Excursions sections.

Major beaches include:

Goa: Goa: Calangute, Baga Beach and Colva Beach. 5-star hotels with private beaches: Fort Aguada Beach Resort, Oberoi Bogmalo Beach and Cidade de Goa. It has reasonably priced hotels, tourist cottages, a tourist resort and youth hostels.

Mumbai: Mumbai: Juhu Beach. 5-star hotel complex. Crowded.

Kovalam: Kovalam: Ashok Beach resort. 5-star hotel complex, including beach cottages, Halcyon Castle and Kovalam Palace Hotel. Hotel Samudra, Kerala Tourism Development Corporation, is reasonably priced. Kovalam Beach gets crowded during the peak tourist season (November to March).

Chennai Region: Chennai Region: Fisherman's Cove at Covelong beach resort; shore cottages by the shore temples at Mamallapuram (which also has a beach resort).

Puri: Puri 3- and 4-star hotels, tourist bungalows, youth hostels. Major Hindu pilgrim centre.

Lesser-known beaches include:

Gujarat: Gujarat: Tithal, Ubhrat, Hajira, Diu (UT), Daman (UT), Chorwad, Dahanu and Dwarka. Cheap hotels, holiday homes. Maharashtra: Off Mumbai - Madh, Marve and Manori. Cheap hotels - Murud Janjira. Holiday homes - Erangal. Goa: Karwar, Ankola, Gokarna, Honnavar and Bhatkal. Karnataka: Ullal (smaller beach resort, Summer Sands, cottages), Udupi (Hindu pilgrim centre), Mahe (UT) and Mangalore. Kerala: Cannanore, Quilon, Varkala. Tamil Nadu: Kanya Kumari, Tiruchendur, Rameswaram, Karikal (UT) and Pondicherry (UT). Andhra Pradesh: Maipadu, Machilipatnam, Mangiripundi and Bheemunipatnam. Orissa: Golpalpur on Sea, Oberoi Hotel. West Bengal: Digha - reasonably priced hotels, tourist bungalows.

Note: UT = Union Territory.

Hill Stations

Hill stations have long been popular among Indians and foreign visitors alike for providing a relaxing and salubrious retreat from the heat of the plains. Further information on some of the places mentioned here may be found by consulting the Resorts & Excursions sections.

The most popular hill stations include:

Kashmir: Kashmir: Leh in Ladakh, Srinagar, Pahalgam, Gulmarg for lakes, houseboats, good hotels, tourist reception centres. Himachal Pradesh: Shimla (various types of hotels, tourist bungalows), nearby Kufri (winter sports centre, skating rink, skiing facilities), Kulu, Manali (reasonably priced hotels, log huts, travellers lodges and tourist bungalows). Uttar Pradesh: Nainital boasts a lake boat club, Almora, Ranikhet (reasonably priced hotels, tourist bungalows, clubs, youth hostels), Mussoorie, Ropeway (hotels and tourist bungalows). West Bengal: Darjeeling, RA, Kalimpong for mountaineering. Maharashtra: Mahabaleshwar, Panchgani, Matheran, Lonavla and Khandala. Meghalaya: Shillong. Sikkim: Gangtok (RA, hotels). Tamil Nadu: Ootacamund, Udagamandalam, Kodaikanal, Silvery Lake - hotels, tourist bungalows. Lesser-known hill stations include:

Himachal Pradesh: Himachal Pradesh: Dalhousie, Dharamsala, Nahan, Paonta Saheb, Keylong, Chamba and Kangra. Kashmir: Sonamarg, Batote. Uttar Pradesh: Dehra Dun, Lansdown. West Bengal: Mirik. Madhya Pradesh: Pachmarhi. Maharashtra: Panhala. Gujarat: Saputara. Rajasthan: Mount Abu. Tamil Nadu: Yercaud, Coonoor, Kotagiri. Kerala: Periyar, Ponmudi, Munnar. Karnataka: Mercara. Andhra Pradesh: Horseley Hills. Bihar: Netarhat. Assam: Haflong.

Trekking

Below is a description of the most important trekking areas in India. For further practical details on trekking, see the Sport & Activities section.

JAMMU & KASHMIR: JAMMU & KASHMIR: Jammu & Kashmir is India's northernmost state, and the one which is best-known for trekking. It is an extravagantly beautiful land of flower-spangled meadows, wild orchards, spectacular coniferous forests, icy mountain peaks and clear streams and rivers. The capital, Srinagar, is the base for many treks, notably to the blue Zabarwan Hills and Shankaracharya Hill. The three other main bases in Jammu & Kashmir are Pahalgam (100km/62 miles from Srinagar) in the Lidder Valley, the base for treks to sacred Amarnath, Aru, Lidderwat and the glacial lakes of Tarsar and Tulian; Gulmarg (51km/32 miles from Srinagar), from which treks can be made to the crystal tarns of Apharwat and Alpathar, the upland lakes of Vishansar and Gangabal and the Thajiwas Glacier; and Sonamarg, in the Sindh Valley, the base for treks into the surrounding mountains.

Srinagar is also the roadhead for trips into the arid plateau of Ladakh, a country of perpetual drought, the home of wild asses and yaks and with high ranges that have some of the largest glaciers in the world outside the polar regions. Leh, the divisional capital, lies on an ancient Silk Road and is the base for spectacular treks across this remarkable landscape.

Further south, excellent trekking may be had in the vicinity of Jammu, the railhead to the Kashmir Valley. The three main centres are Kishtwar, Doda and Poonch.

HIMACHAL PRADESH: HIMACHAL PRADESH: The landscape of this province ranges from the barren rocks and raging torrents of the valleys of Spiti and Lahaul in the north to the southern orchard country of Kangra and Chamba. Treks from Manali include the Bhaga River to Keylong, and then on to the Bara Shigri glacier or over the Baralacha Pass to Leh (see above). Kullu, in the centre of the province, is set in a narrow valley between the towering Himalayas and the River Beas, and is famous for its temples and religious festivals. Treks from here traverse terraced paddy fields and on to remoter regions of snow and ice. The view from the Rohtang Pass is particularly spectacular. The town of Dharamsala, in the Kangra Valley area, is the base for treks into the Bharmaur Valley over the Indrahara Pass, and on to other still higher passes beyond. Chamba, situated on a mountain above the Ravi River, is named after the fragrant trees which flourish around its richly carved temples. Treks from the nearby town of Dalhousie lead to the glacial lake of Khajjiar and to the passes of Sach and Chini. Shimla, once the summer capital of the British, is a high hill station and the base for treks into Kullu Valley via the Jalori Pass and on to the Kalpur and Kinnaur valleys.

GARHWAL: GARHWAL: Set high in the Garhwal Himalayas, this region (which is sometimes referred to as the Uttarakhand) abounds in myths and legends of the Indian gods. It is also where the source of the life-giving 'Ganga' is to be found; indeed, many of the great rivers of northern India have their headwaters in this land of lush valleys and towering snow-ridged peaks. Mussoorie, a hill station much used by the British to escape the searing heat of the plains, is an excellent base for treks into the Gangotri and Yamounotri valleys. The source of the Ganga at Gaumukh can also be reached from here. Another hill station, Rishikesh, is situated just north of the sacred city of Hardwar, and is the base for treks to another holy shrine, Badrinath. A particularly rewarding stop en route to Badrinath is the breathtaking Valley of Flowers, which is in full bloom in August. Other destinations include Hemkund Lake, Mandakini Valley and Kedarnath, one of the 12 Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva with a beautiful temple. **KUMAON:** This region, which stretches from the Himalayas in the north to the green foothills of Terai and Bhabar in the south, consists of the three northeastern Himalayan districts of Uttar Pradesh, all of which are particularly rich in wildlife. One of the major trekking centres is Almora, an ideal base for treks into pine and rhododendron forests with dramatic views of stark, snow-capped mountains. The Pindari Glacier and the valley of Someshwar can be reached from here. Another base is Nanital, a charming, orchard-rich hill station. It is the base for short treks to Bhimtal, Khurpatal and Binayak Forest. Ranikhet, with a magnificent view of the central Himalayas, is the base for treks to Kausani. The view from here is one of the most spectacular in India, and inspired Mahatma Gandhi to pen his commentary on the Gita-Anashakti Yoga.

DARJEELING AND SIKKIM: DARJEELING AND SIKKIM: Dominated by the five summits of mighty Kanchenjunga, the Darjeeling and Sikkim area of the Eastern Himalayas is also a region of gentle hills and dales, pine forests, turquoise lakes and babbling streams. One of the best ways of arriving in the area is by the 'Toy Train' from New Jalpaiguri. The town of Darjeeling is the home of the Everest-climber Tenzing Norgay and also of the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, and is the base for both low- and high-level treks. Destinations include Tiger Hill (offering a breathtaking view of the Himalayas), and the peaks of Phalut, Sandakphu, Singalila and Tanglu. To the north, Sikkim is a wonderland of ferns and flowers, birds and butterflies, orchids and bamboo, forests of cherry, oak and pine, all set among slowly flowing rivers, terraced paddy fields and blazing rhododendrons. Deep in the interior are Sikkim's famous monasteries, their

white prayer flags fluttering against a deep blue sky. The capital is Gangtok, a convenient base for treks into the mysterious north and east of the region, to sacred Yaksum, Pemayangtse and the mountains near Bakkhim and Dzongri.

ARAVALLI HILLS: ARAVALLI HILLS: The Aravallis, remnants of the oldest mountain range in the subcontinent, resemble outcroppings of rocks rather than mountains and are virtually barren except for thorny acacias and date palm groves found near the oases. The main resort in the region, Mount Abu, stands on an isolated plateau surrounded by rich green forest. A variety of one-day treks are available from here, all of which afford the opportunity to visit some of the remarkable temples in the region, notably Arbuda Devi Temple, carved out of the rock face and offering spectacular views across the hills. Guru Shikhar, Gaumukh and Achalgarh Fort can all be reached during one-day treks from Mount Abu.

SATPURA RANGE: SATPURA RANGE: This range straddles central India and forms the northern border of the Deccan. The main hill station is Pachmarhi, a beautiful resort of green forest glades and deep ravines overlooking red sandstone hills. Short treks can be had from here to the Mahadeo and Dhupgarh peaks.

WESTERN GHATS: WESTERN GHATS: The Western Ghats run parallel to the west coast of India from the River Tapti to the southernmost tip of the subcontinent. The mountains are lush and thickly forested and although they cannot claim to have the awesome majesty of the great Himalayas, the region has many features of great natural beauty. The hill station of Mahabaleshwar, in the north of the range, is the highest in the area and is considered an ideal base for trekkers. Other popular bases and trekking destinations include Lonavala, Khandala, Matheran and Bor Ghat, a picturesque region of waterfalls, lakes and woods. Further south in Karnataka is Coorg, perched on a green hilltop and surrounded by mountainous countryside. Madikeri is a take-off point for treks in this region. The Upper Palani hills in Tamil Nadu are an offshoot of the Ghats, covered in rolling downs and coarse grass. Kodaikanal is the attractive base for two short treks to Pilar Rock and Green Valley View. Courtallam, also in Tamil Nadu, is surrounded by dense vegetation and coffee and spice plantations; rich in wildlife, it is also one of the most beautiful areas of the Western Ghats.

NILGIRIS: NILGIRIS: The gentle heights of southern India, a world away from the daunting Himalayas, are friendly and approachable with treks made simple by moderate altitudes and a pleasant climate. Sometimes known as the Blue Mountains because of their lilac hue, they are noted for their orange orchards, tea gardens, wooded slopes and tranquil lakes. There are three major trekking centres here: Ootacamund (popularly known as Ooty) is the base for walks to the Wenlock Downs, the Kalahatti Falls and Mudumali Game Sanctuary; Coonoor, conveniently situated for Drogg's Peak and Lamb's Rock; and Kotagiri, the oldest of the three, whose sheltered position enables it to offer many shaded treks to explore the tranquillity of the Nilgiris.

Wildlife

The Indian peninsula is a continent in itself, the geographical diversity of which has resulted in a vast range of wildlife, with over 350 species of mammals and 1200 species of birds in the **country. Each region has something special to offer:** the hangul is restricted to the valley of Kashmir in northern India, the rhino is found in isolated pockets along the Brahmaputra River in the east, the black langur in the Western Ghats, and Western India is the home of the last remaining Asiatic lions.

Two of India's most impressive animals, the Bengal (or Indian) tiger and the Asiatic elephant are still found in most regions, though their population has shrunk drastically.

Most of India's wildlife finds refuge in over 200 sanctuaries and parks around the country. The following list refers to some of the more important of these. Accommodation often needs to be

booked in advance, either by direct application or through the local State ITDC or the controlling authority of the respective park.

NORTHERN INDIA: Dachigam Wildlife Sanctuary (Kashmir): Broad valley; mountain slopes; rare hangul deer, black and brown bear, leopard; heronry.

Govind Sagar Bird Sanctuary: Govind Sagar Bird Sanctuary (Himachal Pradesh): Bird sanctuary with crane, duck, goose and teal.

Corbett National Park: Corbett National Park (Uttar Pradesh): Himalayan foothills near Dhikala; Sal forest and plains; tiger, elephant, leopard and rich birdlife. Excellent fishing in Ramganga River.

Dudhwa National Park: Dudhwa National Park (Uttar Pradesh): Nepal border; tiger, sloth bear and panther.

Valley of Flowers National Park: Valley of Flowers National Park (Uttar Pradesh): When in bloom this 'roof garden' at 3500m (11,500ft) is a glorious blaze of colour. Permits are required to enter.

Sariska National Park: Sariska National Park (Rajasthan): About 200km (125 miles) from Delhi. Forest and open plains; sambar (largest Indian deer), cheetal (spotted deer), nilgai (Indian antelope), black buck, leopard and tiger; good night-viewing.

Ranthambhor: Ranthambhor (Sawai Madhopur - Rajasthan): Hill forest, plains and lakes; sambar, chinkara (Indian gazelle), tiger, sloth bear, crocodiles and migratory water-birds.

Bharatpur National Park (Keoladeo Ghana Bird Sanctuary): Bharatpur National Park (Keoladeo Ghana Bird Sanctuary)(Rajasthan): India's most outstanding bird sanctuary; many indigenous water-birds; huge migration from Siberia and China; crane, goose, stork, heron, snakes, birds, etc.

Bandhavgarh National Park: Bandhavgarh National Park (Madhya Pradesh): Situated in the Vindhyan Mountains, this park has a wide variety of wildlife including panther, sambar and gaur.

Kanha National Park: Kanha National Park (Madhya Pradesh): Sal forest and grassland; only home of barasingha (swamp deer), tiger, cheetal and gaur.

Shivpuri National Park: Shivpuri National Park (Madhya Pradesh): Open forest and lake; chinkara, chowsingha (4-horned antelope), nilgai, tiger, leopard and water-birds.

Kaziranga National Park: EASTERN INDIA: Kaziranga National Park (Assam): Elephant grass and swamps; one-horned Indian rhinoceros, water buffalo, tiger, leopard, elephant, deer and rich birdlife. Elephant transport is available within the park.

Manas Wildlife Sanctuary: Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (Assam): On the Bhutan border, rainforest, grassland and river banks; rhino, water buffalo, tiger, elephant, golden langur and water-birds; fishing permitted.

Nameri National Park: Nameri National Park (Assam): Tiger and water-birds; fishing permitted.

Palamau Tiger Reserve: Palamau Tiger Reserve (Bihar): Rolling, forested hills; tiger, leopard, elephant, sambar, jungle cat, rhesus macaque (monkey) and occasionally wolf.

Hazaribagh National Park: Hazaribagh National Park (Bihar): Sal forested hills; sambar, nilgai, cheetal, tiger, leopard and occasionally muntjac (larger barking deer).

Sundarbans Tiger Reserve: Sundarbans Tiger Reserve (West Bengal): Mangrove forests; tiger, fishing cat, deer, crocodile, dolphin and rich birdlife. Access and travel by chartered boat.

Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary: Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary (West Bengal): Tropical forest and grassland; rhino, elephant and rich birdlife.

Similipal Tiger Reserve: Similipal Tiger Reserve (Orissa): Immense Sal forest; tiger, elephant, leopard, sambar, cheetal, muntjac and chevrotain.

Chilika Wildlife (Bird) Sanctuary: Chilika Wildlife (Bird) Sanctuary (Orissa): Migratory birds, flamingo, Siberian ducks, heron and Teal Comorant.

Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary: SOUTHERN INDIA: Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary (Kerala): Large artificial lake; elephant, gaur, wild dog, black langur, otters, tortoises and rich birdlife including hornbill and fishing owl. Viewing by boat.

Vedanthangal Water Birds Sanctuary: Vedanthangal Water Birds Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu): One of the most spectacular breeding grounds in India. Cormorant, heron, stork, pelican, grebe and many others.

Point Calimere Bird Sanctuary: Point Calimere Bird Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu): Particularly noted for its flamingo, also for heron, teal, curlew and plover, black buck and wild pig.

Pulicat Bird Sanctuary: Pulicat Bird Sanctuary (Andhra Pradesh): Flamingo, grey pelican, heron and tern.

Dandeli National Park: Dandeli National Park (Karnataka): Park with bison, panther, tiger and sambar. Easily accessible from Goa.

Jawahar National Park: Jawahar National Park (includes Bandipur and Nagarhole National Parks (Karnataka), and the Wildlife Sanctuaries of Mudumalai (Tamil Nadu) and Wayanad (Kerala): Extensive mixed forest; largest elephant population in India, leopard, gaur, sambar, muntjac and giant squirrel. Birds include racquet-tailed drongo, trogon and barbet.

Krishnagiri Upavan National Park: WESTERN INDIA: Krishnagiri Upavan National Park (Maharashtra): Formerly known as Borivli, this park protects an important scenic area close to Mumbai. Kanheri Caves and Vihar, Tulsi and Powai lakes; water-birds and smaller types of wildlife. Lion Safari Park nearby.

Tadoba National Park: Tadoba National Park (Maharashtra): Teak forests and lake; tiger, leopard, nilgai and gaur. Night-viewing.

Sasan Gir National Park: Sasan Gir National Park (Gujarat): Forested plains and lake; only home of Asiatic lion, sambar, chowsingha, nilgai, leopard, chinkara and wild boar.

Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary: Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary (Gujarat): Lake; migratory water-birds; indigenous birds include flamingo.

Little Rann of Kutch Wildlife Sanctuary: Little Rann of Kutch Wildlife Sanctuary (Gujarat): Desert; herds of khur (Indian wild ass), wolf and caracal.

Velavadar National Park: Velavadar National Park (Gujarat): New Delta grasslands; large concentration of black buck.

9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

Trekking: Trekking: India is the ideal destination for a trekking holiday, offering everything from short and easy excursions to the long challenges of the snowy peaks. The highest mountain range on earth - the Himalayas - forms 3500km (2200 miles) of India's northern and eastern frontiers. The spectacle of the snow-capped peaks, glaciers, pine-forested slopes, rivers and lush meadows of wild flowers cannot be equalled. Peninsular India offers natural beauty of another kind, clothed in green woodland and fragrant orchards. (For further details on the main trekking areas, see Trekking in the Resorts & Excursions section.) No system of issuing trekking permits exists in India. Trekkers are, however, reminded that it is forbidden to enter Restricted and Protected Areas without the correct documentation. Consult the Government of India Tourist Office before departure or local tourist offices on arrival in India to ascertain what restrictions may apply and what documentation may be required. The trekking season varies from region to region; check with the Government of India Tourist Office for further information (see address section). In general, it runs from April to June and September to November. It is possible to undertake treks in the valleys of Lahaul, Pangi and Zaskar and in Ladakh during the rainy season (June to August), as these areas receive minimal precipitation. Board and lodging accommodation is available on all trekking routes. Essential equipment includes a tent, sleeping bag, foam/inflatable mattress, rucksack, umbrella (doubles as a walking stick), sun-hat, dark glasses, toilet requirements. The best clothing is a windproof jacket, trousers, shirts, woollen pullover, woollen underwear (for high altitudes), and gloves. Be sure to take a light, flexible and comfortable pair of trekking boots (two pairs should be taken for longer treks) and at least three pairs of woollen socks. Use talc to keep feet dry. A first-aid kit is recommended, as are anti-sunburn cream, morphia salt tablets to avoid cramps, a torch, thermos/water bottle, insect repellent, mirror, cold cream, lip-salve, walking stick, spare boot laces, sewing kit, tinned and dehydrated food.

Watersports: Watersports: India has some of the most beautiful beaches in the world, the most popular ones being in the southern states of Goa and Kerala. But though the beaches are stunning, the waters, particularly in the south, can be quite treacherous, with big waves and strong currents creating hazardous conditions for inexperienced swimmers. To make up for the rough seas, most large hotels now have swimming pools, and there are facilities for a wide range of watersports including sailing, rowing and water-skiing. (For further details on beach resorts, see Beach Resorts in the Resorts & Excursions section). The Andaman Islands and Lakshadweep Islands off the southern coast are noted for their white-sand, deserted beaches and excellent swimming and scuba diving (but visitors should note that they may require a special permit to visit; see Passport/Visa section). Whitewater rafting is a young sport in India; the snow-fed mountain rivers of the northern Himalayas place them among the best regions in the world for this sport. Fishing is also available, particularly in the Kangra Valley and Shimla, in Darjeeling and Orissa and throughout the Himalayas. Tackle can often be hired from local fishing authorities. Check with the local tourist office for details of seasons and licences.

Outdoor activities: Camel safaris: Outdoor activities: Camel safaris can be taken in the Thar desert and range from 1-15 days' duration; an ideal way to visit this fascinating region. Delhi is

the country's centre for rock climbing, also available in the Aravalli Hills and the Western Ghats. Permission for mountaineering must be obtained from the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, Anand Niketan, Beneto Juarez Road, New Delhi 110 021. Hang gliding, ballooning and gliding are also becoming more widely available for those who wish to obtain a bird's-eye view of some of the landscape. Skiing is fast becoming a popular sport, and facilities are offered by some resorts in the north of the country (including Gulmarg and Kufri), set in some of the most beautiful mountain landscape in the world. Horseriding is available in hill stations.

Spectator sports: Spectator sports: One of the great Indian sports is cricket. Interest in the game reaches almost fever pitch, particularly during the winter test season when the country's national team is in action in all the major cities. Club matches can also be seen in almost every town. Other popular spectator sports include polo and hockey, sports at which the Indians have long excelled, winning many Olympic gold medals in the latter. Interest in football is increasing.

Golf: Golf: Enthusiasts will find many courses open to visitors throughout India; enquire at major hotels for details of temporary membership. Calcutta Amateur Golf Championships attract large numbers of serious golfers in the east; the standards are high, and for those interested, temporary membership is available from the Royal Calcutta Golf Club. Srinagar and Gulmarg have good courses and hold tournaments in the spring and autumn, with Gulmarg enjoying the reputation of being the highest golf course in the world. The course at Shillong is widely regarded as being one of the most beautiful in the world.

10 SOCIAL PROFILE

Food & Drink: The unforgettable aroma of India is not just the heavy scent of jasmine and roses on the warm air. It is also the fragrance of spices so important to Indian cooking - especially to preparing curry. The word 'curry' is an English derivative of kari, meaning spice sauce, but curry does not, in India, come as a powder. It is the subtle and delicate blending of spices such as turmeric, cardamom, ginger, coriander, nutmeg and poppy seed. Like an artist's palette of oil paints, the Indian cook has some 25 spices (freshly ground as required) with which to mix the recognised combinations or masalas. Many of these spices are also noted for their medicinal properties and, like the basic ingredients, vary from region to region. Although not all Hindus are vegetarians, vegetable dishes are more common than in Europe, particularly in southern India. Broadly speaking, meat dishes are more common in the north, notably, Rogan Josh (curried lamb), Gushtaba (spicy meat balls in yoghurt) and the delicious Biryani (chicken or lamb in orange-flavoured rice, sprinkled with sugar and rose water). Mughlai cuisine is rich, creamy, deliciously spiced and liberally sprinkled with nuts and saffron. The ever-popular Tandoori cooking (chicken, meat or fish marinated in herbs and baked in a clay oven) and kebabs are also northern cuisine. In the south, curries are mainly vegetable and inclined to be hotter. Specialities to look out for are Bhujia (vegetable curry), Dosa, Idli and Samba (rice pancakes, dumplings with pickles, and vegetable and lentil curry), and Raitas (yoghurt with grated cucumber and mint). Coconut is a major ingredient of southern Indian cooking. On the west coast there is a wide choice of fish and shellfish: Mumbai duck (curried or fried bombloe fish) and pomfret (Indian salmon) are just two. Another speciality is the Parsi Dhan Sak (lamb or chicken cooked with curried lentils) and Vindaloo. Fish is also a feature of Bengali cooking as in Dahi Maach (curried fish in yoghurt flavoured with turmeric and ginger) and Malai (curried prawn with coconut). One regional distinction is that, whereas in the south rice is the staple food, in the north this is supplemented and sometimes substituted by a wide range of flat breads, such as Pooris, Chapatis and Nan. Common throughout India is Dal (crushed lentil soup with various additional vegetables), and Dahi, the curd or yoghurt which accompanies the curry. Besides being tasty, it is a good 'cooler'; more effective than liquids when things get too hot. Sweets are principally milk-based puddings, pastries and pancakes. Available throughout India is Kulfi, the Indian ice cream, Rasgullas (cream cheese balls flavoured with rose water), Gulab Jamuns (flour, yoghurt and ground almonds), and Jalebi (pancakes in syrup). Besides a splendid choice of sweets and sweetmeats, there is an abundance of fruit, both tropical - mangoes, pomegranates and melons - and temperate - apricots, apples and strawberries. Western confectionery is available in major centres. It is common to finish the meal by chewing Pan as a digestive. Pan is a betel leaf in which are wrapped spices such as aniseed and cardamom. Besides the main dishes, there are also countless irresistible snacks available on every street corner, such as Samosa, Fritters, Dosa and Vada. For the more conservative visitor, Western cooking can always be found. Indeed, the best styles of cooking from throughout the world can be experienced in the major centres in India.

Drink: Tea is India's favourite drink and many of the varieties are enjoyed throughout the world. It will often come ready-brewed with milk and sugar unless 'tray tea' is specified. Coffee is increasingly popular. Nimbu Pani (lemon drink), Lassi (iced buttermilk) and coconut milk straight from the nut are cool and refreshing. Soft drinks (usually sweet) and bottled water are widely available, as are Western alcoholic drinks. There is a huge variety of excellent Indian beer. There is also good Indian-made gin, rum, brandy and wine. Bottled water, essential for visitors, is sold everywhere in India, but make sure the bottles are properly sealed. Restaurants have table service and, depending on area and establishment, will serve alcohol with meals. Most Western-style hotels have licensed bars. Visitors will be issued All India Liquor Permits on request by Indian Embassies/High Commissions, Missions or Tourist Offices. Various states impose prohibition but this may change; check with the Tourist Office for up-to-date

information. In almost all big cities in India certain days in the week are observed as dry days when the sale of liquor is not permitted. Tourists may check with the nearest local tourist office for the prohibition laws/rules prevailing in any given state where they happen to be travelling or intend to travel.

Nightlife: India has generally little nightlife as the term is understood in the West, although in major cities a few Western-style shows, clubs and discos are being developed. In most places the main attraction will be cultural shows featuring performances of Indian dance and music. The Indian film industry is the largest in the world, now producing three times as many full-length feature films as the USA. Mumbai and Calcutta are the country's two 'Hollywoods'. Almost every large town will have a cinema, some of which will show films in English. Music and dancing are an important part of Indian cinema, combining with many other influences to produce a rich variety of film art. Larger cities may have theatres staging productions of English-language plays.

Shopping: Indian crafts have been perfected over the centuries, from traditions and techniques passed on from generation to generation. Each region has its own specialities, each town its own local craftspeople and its own particular skills. Silks, spices, jewellery and many other Indian products have long been acclaimed and widely sought; merchants would travel thousands of miles, enduring the hardships and privations of the long journey, in order to make their purchases. Nowadays, the marketplaces of the subcontinent are only eight hours away, and for fabrics, silverware, carpets, leatherwork and antiques, India is a shopper's paradise. Bargaining is expected, and the visitor can check for reasonable prices at state-run emporiums. **Fabrics:** One of India's main industries is textiles; its silks, cottons, and wools rank amongst the best in the world. Of the silks, the brocades from Varanasi are among the most famous; other major centres include Patna, Murshidabad, Kanchipuram and Surat. Rajasthan cotton with its distinctive 'tie and dye' design is usually brilliantly colourful, while Chennai cotton is known for its attractive 'bleeding' effect after a few washes. Throughout the country may be found the himroo cloth, a mixture of silk and cotton, often decorated with patterns. Kashmir sells beautiful woollens, particularly shawls. **Carpets:** India has one of the world's largest carpet industries, and many examples of this ancient and beautiful craft can be seen in museums throughout the world. Each region will have its own speciality; one such are the distinctive, brightly coloured Tibetan rugs, available mainly in Darjeeling. **Clothes:** Clothes are cheap, and can be quickly tailor-made in some shops. Cloths include silks, cottons, himroos, brocades, chiffons and chingnons. **Jewellery:** This is traditionally heavy and elaborate. Indian silverwork is world-famous. Gems include diamonds, lapis lazuli, Indian star rubies, star sapphires, moonstones and aquamarines. Hyderabad is a leading pearl centre

Handicrafts and leatherwork: Each area has its speciality; the range includes bronzes, brasswork (often inlaid with silver), canework and pottery. Papier mâché is a characteristic Kashmir product, some decorated in gold leaf. Inlaid marble and alabaster are specialities of Agra. Leatherwork includes open Indian sandals and slippers. **Woodwork:** Sandalwood carvings from Karnataka, rosewood from Kerala and Chennai. **Other goods:** pickles, spices, Indian tea, perfumes, soap, handmade paper, Orissan playing cards and musical instruments.

Shopping hours: 0930-1800 Monday to Saturday in most large stores.

Note: There is a veto on the export of antiques, art objects over 100 years old, animal skins and objects made from skins.

Special Events: For further information, contact the Government of India Tourist Office (see address section). Below is a selection from the hundreds of Indian festivals celebrated throughout 2001. Public holidays are indicated PH. All the festivals are nationwide unless otherwise stated:

Jan 2001 Mattu Pongal, South India. Jan 26 Republic Day (PH, grand military parade and procession of dancers especially in Delhi). Feb Birthday of Sri Ramakrishna. Mar Holi ('Festival of Colours'), mainly in northern India; Gangaur Fair, Pichola Lake, Udaipur. Mar 18 Muharram (Islamic New Year). Apr Vaisaki, Punjab. May 7 Buddha Purnima (PH). Jul Rath Yatra (temple festival in honour of Lord Jagannah (Lord of the Universe) with three colossal chariots drawn from Puri temple by thousands of pilgrims), mainly Orissa. Aug 15 Independence Day (PH). Aug Onam (harvest festival; spectacular snake boat races in many parts of Kerala); Amarnath Yatra, Sravana. Sep Dussehra (PH; also known as Navaratri/southern India, Gujarat). Nov 4 Diwali (PH; magnificent illuminations and fireworks). Nov Guru Nanak's birthday (PH). Nov Pushkar Fair. Dec Christmas Day (PH, mostly in Goa, Mumbai and Tamil Nadu).

Note: Besides the above festivals there are hundreds of festivals and fairs which are of regional significance, celebrated with equal pomp and colour. The most authentic of these are the following: The Temple Festivals in southern India, a list of which is often available at Government of India Tourist Offices. Festivals at Ladakh in Kashmir. Festivals in Rajasthan; a visitor will be unlucky to visit Rajasthan at a time when a festival of some kind is not either in progress or about to take place. The visitor may also be lucky enough to witness dancing at a village festival or a private wedding.

Social Conventions: The Indian Hindu greeting is to fold the hands and tilt the head forward to namaste. Indian women prefer not to shake hands. All visitors are asked to remove footwear when entering places of religious worship. The majority of Indians remove their footwear when entering their houses. Because of strict religious and social customs, visitors must show particular respect when visiting someone's home. Many Hindus are vegetarian and many, especially women, do not drink alcohol. Sikhs and Parsees do not smoke. Small gifts are acceptable as tokens of gratitude for hospitality. Women are expected to dress modestly. Short skirts and tight or revealing clothing should not be worn, even on beaches. Business people are not expected to dress formally except for meetings and social functions. English-speaking guides are available at fixed charges at all important tourist centres. Guides speaking French, Italian, Spanish, German, Russian or Japanese are available in some cities. Consult the nearest Government of India Tourist Office. Unapproved guides are not permitted to enter protected monuments. Tourists are advised to ask for guides with certificates from the Ministry of Tourism or the Government of India Tourist Office (see address section). Photography: Formalities mainly concern protected monuments and the wildlife sanctuaries. Special permission of the Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, is necessary for the use of tripod and artificial light to photograph monuments. Photographs of the wildlife sanctuaries are allowed on payment of a prescribed fee which varies. Contact the nearest Government of India Tourist Office. Tipping: Tip porters 5-10 rupees per bag and waiters, guides and drivers 10% where service is not included.

11 BUSINESS PROFILE

Economy: India's industrial economy, which has invested much in advanced technology initiatives such as digital communications and space research, contrasts with the poverty that persists, particularly in rural areas. The country rates in the top dozen in the world by gross national product. Roughly two-thirds of the population are involved in agriculture, both subsistence - mainly cereals - and cash crops, including tea, rubber, coffee, cotton, jute, sugar, oilseeds and tobacco. Growth in this sector has been steady despite frequent damage through drought and flooding. India's energy requirements are met by oil, most of which is imported despite the growth of indigenous production, and hydroelectric schemes, mostly based amid the powerful northern rivers. Mining is a relatively small sector, but does produce iron ore and cut diamonds for export. India's main industrial development has been in engineering, especially

transport equipment (a major export earner), iron and steel, chemicals, electronics and textiles. Economic reforms were put into effect throughout the 1990s, under which trade has been liberalised, the sprawling public sector cut back, and state-owned industries sold off. The plan was approved with the IMF, which supplied substantial credits to the Indian treasury. With the exception of the period following the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the economy has grown at a steady rate of around 6% per annum. Indian colleges and universities are turning out large numbers of graduates with advanced technology skills which are now the target of employers in Europe and North America (where there is a shortage of qualified IT workers): the Indian economy is as yet not sufficiently developed to absorb this resource. Japan and Russia are India's major trading partners, among a wide range of extensive bilateral economic relations stretching from Australia and the Pacific Basin through Western Europe to the USA, Canada and Brazil.

Business: English is widely used in commercial circles, so there is little need for interpreter and translation services. Business cards are usually exchanged and should be presented with both hands. When introduced to someone, wait to see if your host greets you with a Namaste, the traditional Indian greeting in which hands are clasped as if in prayer in front of the chest accompanied by a little bow, or offers the hand. When eating, visitors should wait to see if their host uses fingers or cutlery, and follow suit (it is essential that only the right hand is used for eating). All weights and measures should be expressed in metric terms. Indian businessmen welcome visitors and are very hospitable. Entertaining usually takes place in private clubs. The best months for business visits are October to March, and accommodation should be booked in advance. Office hours: 0930-1700 Monday to Friday; 0930-1300 Saturday.

Commercial Information: The following organisations can offer advice: Ministry of Commerce, Udyog Bhavan, Rafi Marg, New Delhi 110 011 (tel: (11) 301 5299 or 301 6917; fax: (11) 301 4418; e-mail: commerce@hub.nic.in; web site: <http://www.nic.in/commin>); or

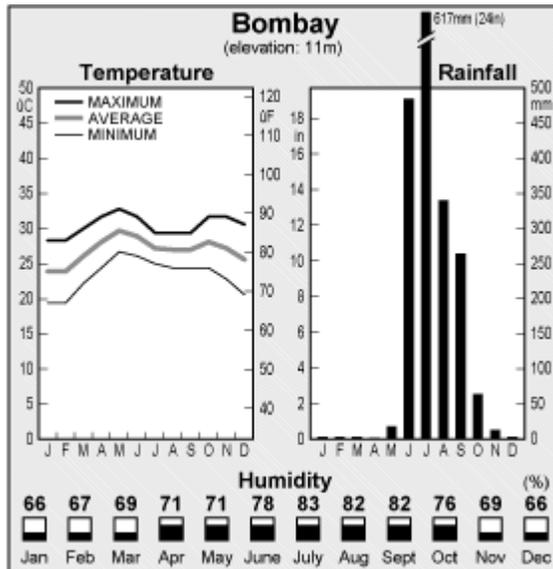
Ministry of External Affairs, South Block, New Delhi 110 011 (tel: (11) 301 2318 or 301 1165; fax: (11) 301 6781; e-mail: webmaster@meadev.gov.in; web site: <http://www.meadev.gov.in>); or

Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), 2nd Floor, Allahabad **Bank Building, 17 Parliament Street, New Delhi 110 001 (tel: (11) 310 704 or 310 779; fax: (11) 312 193); or**

Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Federation House, Tansen **Marg, New Delhi 110 001 (tel: (11) 331 9251 or 331 5442; fax: (11) 330 0714 or 372 1504; web site: <http://www.bisnetindia.com>).**

Conferences/Conventions: The main congress and exhibition centres in the country are Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai, Agra, Jaipur, Udaipur, Varanasi, Bhubaneswar, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Panaji. In addition, top-class hotels and auditoria with convention and conference facilities are found throughout the country. Air India, Indian Airlines and leading hoteliers and travel agents are members of the International Congress and Conference Association (ICCA) and together they provide all the services required for an international event, including the organising of pre- and post-conference tours. There is a particularly useful booklet which gives information on India in general, and in particular on conference facilities, called India: A Convention Planner, available from the Government of India Tourist Office (see address section).

12 CLIMATE



Hot tropical weather with variations from region to region. Coolest weather lasts from December to February, with cool, fresh mornings and evenings and dry, sunny days. Really hot weather, when it is dry, dusty and unpleasant, is between March and May. Monsoon rains occur in most regions in summer between June and September.

Western Himalayas: Srinagar is best from March to October; July to August can be unpleasant; cold and damp in winter. Simla is higher and therefore colder in winter. Places like Pahalgam, Gulmarg and Manali are usually under several feet of snow (December to March) and temperatures in Ladakh can be extremely cold. The road to Leh is open from June to October.

Required clothing: Light- to medium weights are advised from March to October, with warmer wear for winter. Weather can change rapidly in the mountains and therefore it is important to be suitably equipped. Waterproofing is advisable.

Northern Plains: Extreme climate, warm inland from April to mid-June falling to almost freezing at night in winter, between November and February. Summers are hot with monsoons between June and September.

Required clothing: Lightweight cottons and linens in summer with warmer clothes in winter and on cooler evenings. Waterproofing is essential during monsoons.

Central India: Madhya Pradesh State escapes the very worst of the hot season, but monsoons are heavy between July and September. Temperatures fall at night in winter.

Required clothing: Lightweights are worn most of the year with warmer clothes during evenings, particularly in winter. Waterproofed clothing is advised during monsoon rains.

Western India: November to February is most comfortable, although evenings can be fairly cold. Summers can be extremely hot with monsoon rainfall between mid-June and mid-September.

Required clothing: Lightweight cottons and linens are worn most of the year with warmer clothes for cooler winters, and waterproofing is essential during the monsoon.

Southwest: The most pleasant weather is from November to March. Monsoon rains fall between late April and July. Summer temperatures are not as high as Northern India, although humidity is extreme. There are cooling breezes on the coast. Inland, Mysore and Bijapur have pleasant climates with relatively low rainfall.

Required clothing: Lightweights are worn all year with warmer clothes for cooler evenings, particularly in winter. Waterproofing is advised during the monsoon.

Southeast: Tamil Nadu experiences a northeast monsoon between October and December and temperatures and humidity are high all year. Hills can be cold in winter. Hyderabad is hot, but less humid in summer and much cooler in winter.

Required clothing: Lightweight cottons and linens. Waterproofing is necessary during the monsoon. Warmer clothes are worn in the winter, particularly in the hills.

Northeast: March to June and September to November are the driest and most pleasant periods. The rest of the year has extremely heavy monsoon rainfall and it is recommended that the area is avoided.

Required clothing: Lightweight cottons and linens. Waterproofing is advisable throughout the year and essential in monsoons, usually from mid-June to mid-October. Warmer clothes are useful for cooler evenings.

13 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: Indian civilisation can be traced back to at least 2500BC, although the ancient civilisations did not encompass the whole of India as it is known today. The first known civilisation settled along the Indus River in what is now Pakistan. This, however, collapsed around 1500BC. Between 521 and 486BC, under Darius, this area became part of the Persian Empire. Alexander the Great arrived in India in 326BC, but did not venture beyond the boundaries of the Persian Empire, which only extended as far as the Indus. India's two great religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, had already been developed. Various dynasties followed, the last of which was the Gupta Empire (AD319-606). The invasion of the White Huns brought all this to an end, and northern India became fragmented, not being unified again until the coming of the Muslims. During this time the south had been trading by sea with the Romans and Egyptians. The Muslims made their presence felt after AD600, but this was mainly in the north. Under the Moguls (1526-1738), who swept over the mountain passes from Central Asia, the Hindus were conquered but, with some exceptions, were not forcibly converted. By the time of the British conquest, at the end of the 18th century, the Mogul Empire was already in severe decline. Under the British, the many and varied provinces of India were, for the first time, administered by a single, albeit alien, power. The indigenous campaign for independence began with the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, but it made little progress until after the end of the First World War, when Mahatma Gandhi led the Congress and began the policy of non-co-operation with the British. The colonial authorities were gradually persuaded that reforms were needed, but the Congress itself was split on a key issue: the Muslims, under Mohammed Ali Jinnah, claimed a separate homeland in provinces such as the Punjab and East Bengal, where they formed a majority of the population, but Gandhi wanted India to be a unified and secular state. Jinnah's view, supported by the last Governor-General, Earl Mountbatten, prevailed and in August 1947 the independent states of India and Pakistan came into being. Since this time India has been a democratic republic, the first proper elections taking place in 1951, and Hindu law has been modernised to a great extent, eradicating many of the old inequalities. Nonetheless, the caste system, which assigns an individual to a particular stratum in society from birth, has proved resilient to reform. India has also developed a broadly secular policy and has for the most part been free of violent religious strife (although there are dangerous signs that this may be

changing). Indian politics have been dominated since independence by the Nehru family: Jawaharlal ('Pandit') was the first Prime Minister; then came his daughter, Indira Gandhi (one of the modern world's first woman leaders); and finally her son, Rajiv. Their political power was exercised through the Congress Party, which has governed India for most of the time since independence. The party has been known as Congress (I) following a split in the original Congress during the 1970s. Mrs Gandhi held office in several different parliaments until October 1984, when she was assassinated by Sikh members of her personal bodyguard in retaliation for the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Rajiv Gandhi took over immediately afterwards. Successive governments during the 1980s have been dogged by the various manifestations of civil strife and a series of challenging foreign policy problems. Of these the most taxing was the Indian military intervention in the intercommunal conflict in Sri Lanka, where, in 1987, the Indian army became involved in a peace-keeping capacity for two years. This role as regional 'policeman' was also exemplified in late 1988 when Indian forces were instrumental in overthrowing an abortive invasion attempt in the Maldives. It is relations with Pakistan, however, that will always tend to dominate India's foreign policy agenda. Relations between the two have varied between chilly and open warfare. The division of East and West Pakistan in 1971 into the contemporary states of Bangladesh and Pakistan followed decisive military and political intervention by the Indian government. Since then, the border dispute between India and Pakistan in the Kashmir region - which dates back to the division between the two countries at independence - has occasionally erupted into armed conflict. The 1990s have been a particularly tense period in this region (see below), as opposition movements, whose activities India regularly blames on Pakistan, have waged a sustained campaign of political violence against the security forces. Autonomy movements in several parts of India, including Uttar Pradesh and Assam, have also caused occasional headaches for the government, but it was the conflict in Sri Lanka which lay behind the assassination of the last of the Nehru dynasty, Rajiv Gandhi, to have held power. His death in 1991 brought the veteran politician and former foreign minister, P V Narasimha Rao, to the leadership of Congress (I). The election Rajiv was working on was held a few weeks later and the Congress (I) Party came out with just enough seats to form a government. While the Rao government has concentrated much of its effort on reform of the economy (see Economy in Business section), it has not neglected its traditional activist foreign policy. A trade-based dispute with Nepal inherited by Rao has been settled, but bilateral problems with Pakistan, as mentioned above, have proved less tractable. Delhi has made efforts to improve relations with Beijing and achieved some progress with the signing of a cross-border trade agreement and acceptance - if not formal agreement - of the disputed border between the two countries. Of some concern to India are developments in the former Soviet Union, with which India enjoyed very close relations; although there is no common border, instability in central Asia is liable to spill southwards. Relations with the United States, by contrast, benefited from the cooling between Washington and Islamabad during the early 1990s(see Pakistan) and from improved bilateral ties in their own right. However, the latter broke down once again in the summer of 1999 after twelve months of rising tension between India and Pakistan following from the complementary nuclear tests held the previous year. Heavy fighting broke out in the Kashmir region, blamed by the Indians on incursions by Pakistani-backed rebels. The nuclear capabilities of both countries, and their proven delivery systems, now render any such border disputes much more serious. Domestic Indian politics have been turbulent during the latter part of the 1990s due to repeated failures to form a stable government. The general election of April-May 1996 produced no overall winner: the BJP, now led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was the largest party in the Lok Sabha but was unable to form a government; the national and left fronts merged (along with 11 other parties) to form an informal coalition known as the United Front which, with the support of Congress (I), was able to form a government at the end of May, led by H. D. Deve Gowda. A spate of corruption scandals around the same time undermined a number of leading politicians, including Congress leader Ramasinha Rao. In March 1997, Deve Gowda resigned after Congress withdrew its support from his administration although the United Front continued in office with Inder Kumar Gujral holding the premiership. Gujral was, in turn, forced out in November. A general election was held in

January 1998 at which the BJP managed to improve its position and was invited by President Narayanan (elected to the post in July 1997 - the first 'untouchable' to hold the office) to form a government. Since then premier Vajpayee has managed to hold together a fractious coalition administration.

Government: India is a federal republic with certain powers reserved to the 25 states. There are seven Union Territories (Andaman and Nicobar Islands; Chandigarh; Dadra and Nagar Haveli; Delhi; Goa, Daman and Diu; Lakshadweep; and Pondicherry), which are governed from Delhi. Central government comprises bicameral parliament and cabinet. The Head of State is the President, while executive power is vested in the Prime Minister.

14 OVERVIEW

Country Overview: India shares borders with Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The Himalayan mountain range forms a barrier between India and the rest of Asia. Rich in history, the palaces, temples and great cities cannot fail to grip the imagination. In the spring particularly, the cities come alive with concerts, plays, parties and exhibitions. Among the most spectacular hill stations (mountain resorts which make ideal destinations in summer) are Shimla, Mussoorie, Ranikhet and Nainital (within reach of Delhi), and West Bengal's magnificent resort, Darjeeling. Along the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel, unspoiled sandy beaches stretch for miles. Skiing is possible in the snowbound Himalayan heights of Gulmarg and Kufri.

Delhi, the capital, has two parts: New Delhi, seat of government, is a 20th-century city, offering tree-lined boulevards and spacious parks; 'Old' Delhi is a city several centuries old, with narrow winding streets, temples, mosques and bazaars.

India is, of course, renowned for its spicy food. 'Curry' is derived from kari, meaning spice sauce. Meals, like their basic ingredients, vary from region to region.

India has generally little nightlife as the term is understood in the West. Larger cities may have theatres staging productions of English-language plays.

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