

First Time In India? Let Us Be Your Guide

Food

India is an exciting culinary journey, keep your stomach in a good state so you can enjoy it. Only drink treated water which can be purchased in bottles or provided in larger dispensing units.

Exercise caution when eating street food or in restaurants whose hygiene levels look questionable. Try to eat in places recommended by other travellers.

If you do get sick then take rest, find some electrolyte rehydration powder to mix with water and stick to plain simple foods until you recover. Now is the time to upgrade to a room with private bathroom.

Monkeys and Cows

It's common to see animals in India even in the city, especially cows and monkeys. Cows are normally very placid and used to people, give them a wide berth just to play it safe.

Monkeys will take anything that's not nailed down, unattended food such as biscuits are a common target for their thievery. They can become aggressive in large groups or if they have babies. Keep a safe distance and please don't feed them.

Accommodation

You'll find every type of accommodation in India. For those who want a bit of luxury you can stay in a hotel which will come with all the expected creature comforts.

There are also guest houses with private rooms with private and shared bathrooms and hotels with shared dormitory style rooms. Guest houses are usually good value and the most common accommodation found in India.

Home stays involve living in someones home and integrating to some degree with their life. Homestays can be great value and offer a more authentic experience of life in India.

Rooftops are a common place to stay in India. They are very cheap and simple. Often a basic mattress or hammock is all you'll have.

Currency

India uses the Rupee, mostly notes but coins also exist for values under Rs.10. Try to keep a range of note values as shops will often have trouble giving change for very large notes. A good trick is to break the larger notes in more official and larger places.

Transport

Trains

Trains are the most common used form of transport for long distances in India and are great value for money. The best way to book is always at a tourist office inside a train station. They will have access to the most tickets.

Many routes will have special allocations held for foreign tourists, you can make use of this allocation with advance tickets, not just last minute.

We always suggest asking for an upper berth if travelling in sleeper class. Avoid the awkward moment when you want to sleep but the other travellers still want to sit on your bed.

Trains are often delayed, for long periods of time. Have a plan if you are delayed a long time. Make sure you have plenty of food and water.

Busses

Busses come in sleeper (with beds) and non-sleeper varieties and can be a great last minute option if the trains are booked or the route is not well supported by the train network. Some routes just make

more sense on busses. Talk to other travellers and locals to see what they think.

Rickshaws / Tuk-tuks

Be ready to barter, prices can vary a lot and you are likely to be charged a higher price the fresher you look. Try to get an idea of the cost before you try and get a rickshaw and start the bidding. This way they will know you're not as green as you look.

Culture

Much of India can be quite conservative. Wearing revealing clothes such as shorts and crop tops can attract unwanted attention. Look at those around you and think what you might be saying by what you wear.

Indians won't always smile back if you smile at them, probably only if they already know you. Don't take it to heart and look into the Indian head wobble instead.

Scams

These change over time, often they are quite benign and just someone trying to get some money. Do a search online for your destination and "scams", forewarned is forearmed.