

Incredible India



India is an incredible country – a kaleidoscope of images and experiences that overwhelm you from the moment you arrive. A country endowed with natural beauty, inspiring spirituality, rich in history and culture and identified as a New Age economy and Business Hub. These divergent sobriquets define the strange and desirable amalgam that is India.

Borrowing from a rich and colourful past and racing into the 21st century comes easily to this vast country. India demonstrates how best to harmonise the coexistence of ancient with contemporary, evident in old monuments rubbing shoulders with awesome tall skyscrapers; in the fusion of traditional fashion with urban couture; in international fast food balanced by delicious Indian cuisine, that leaves gourmets asking for more. Everything Indian is

essentially traditionalbut with a modern twist. This is a country proud of its past and ready to build on its future with 21st century vision Incredible India indeed.

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History

India's history dates back to 3000 BC. Excavations in Punjab and Gujarat, reveal that the lifestyle of the Indus Valley Civilisation, was highly developed. In fact the two cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro, situated on the two banks of the River Ravi, are seen to have been designed and built according to a similar plan. This essentially means that a new wave of urbanization was taking place along the Ganges belt, around 1500 BC. This has also been recorded in the Rig Veda, the earliest known literary source composed in this period, that sheds light on India's past. From the period of the Magadh rulers and the golden period of Chandragupta, to an era of Muslim rulers and a prolonged Mughal reign, leading up to British rule till the 20th century, India has had an eventful history. A history that has nuances of varying types, a gripping thriller, a fairytale romance, a saga of patriotism and more. All these elements have left their imprint in every corner of the country to understand, to be intrigued by, to learn from and to preserve.

Geography

India is the seventh largest country in the world with a total land area of

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3.3 million square kilometers. It is 2,933 km wide and 3,214 km long. In the North are the towering Himalayas, which slope out into the great Indo-



Kanchenjunga, Sikkim

Gangetic plain. In Central India, the Vindhya range separate the Deccan Peninsula from the Northern plains. On the eastern coast of the country is the Bay of Bengal, while on the western coast lies the Arabian Sea. The southern-most tip of the country projects into the Indian Ocean. The Indo-Gangetic plain is formed by the basins of three great rivers, the Indus, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra.

Other major rivers in the country are the Mahanadi, the Godavari, the Krishna, the Narmada, the Cauvery, the Pennar, the Tapti and the Periyar, all of which have formed deltas and flood-plains on India's east and west coast. In the west of the country, lies the massive Thar desert in Rajasthan. Located south of this are the unique marsh lands of Kutch, while on the east where the Ganges drains out into the sea, is the world's largest delta and a unique mangrove forest. Also part of India, are the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal and the Lakshadweep Islands in the Indian Ocean.

Climate

India essentially has three major seasons: summer, winter and monsoon. The best time to visit is during the winter months from November to February, when most areas in India are cool. The north of India has temperatures ranging from 4 degrees centigrade (min) to 20 degrees centigrade (max). The



Ganges – the holy river of India

desert state of Rajasthan, extremely popular during winter, is warm in the



Camel Safari at Rajasthan

day with cold nights. The hilly states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and parts of Uttaranchal offer winter sports and plenty of snow. The beaches of Goa, are among the most popular destinations for inbound tourists, during winter.



Water Sports – Goa

Summer is from April to June when most of India is hot. During this period, hill stations along the

Himalayan belt remain pleasantly cool. While the plains are hot, for those who choose to travel in summer, there are air-conditioned hotels and air-conditioned modes of transport, to suit any budget.

The monsoon is usually between the months of June and September, but may begin earlier in the south. The maximum rainfall is in the North Eastern belt, a region that registers amongst the highest rainfall in the

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Cherrapunji

world. The coastal areas have a tropical climate throughout the year and there are still many secluded beaches, waiting to be discovered.

Visa Rules

For visitors to India, visas are available from Indian Missions in the country of origin. Six month multiple-entry visas are now issued to visitors from most countries, regardless of the planned duration of their stay. Generally, a tourist visa is valid for 6 months while a business visa can be issued for a year or more, with multiple entry facilities.

Transit visas are issued for a maximum period of 15 days with single/double entry facilities, only to bonafide transit passengers.

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Conference visas are also issued for attending seminars, conferences or meetings in India. For the issue of these visas, a letter of invitation from the organiser of the conference, needs to be submitted along with the visa application.

The fee structure for visas, depends on the nationality of the passport holder and type/duration of the visa applied for. A visa with a one-year validity, can range from \$5 to \$50.

Customs on arrival

There are two customs clearance channels. The green channel is for travellers carrying non-dutiable items while the red channel is for those carrying items that need to be declared.

Duty-free items include personal effects such as clothing. All expensive electronic equipment must be declared at the Customs on arrival and is likely to be re-checked on departure. For those planning to visit neighbouring countries (a multiple entry), an export certificate should be obtained. Gold coins, gold or silver bullion, cannot be brought into the country. Weapons bought into the country should be licensed and declared. Possession of narcotics is strictly prohibited.

Foreigners' Regional Registration Offices

New Delhi

Level II, East Block-8, R.K. Puram,
Sector-1, New Delhi 110 066
Tel.: 26711384/443, Fax: 26711348

Mumbai

Annexe II, 3rd Floor
Crawford Market, Mumbai 400 001
Tel.: 22621169, Fax: 22620721

Kolkata

Office of the Dy. Com. of Police
Security Control,
237, Acharya J.C Bose Road,
Kolkata 700 020
Tel.: 22470549, Fax: 22470549/
22620549

Chennai

Shastri Bhavan Annexe, No. 26
Haddows Road, Nungambakkam
Chennai 600 006
Tel.: 28278210, Fax: 28240338

Facts at a Glance

Full Name of the country: Republic of India.

Area: 3,287,590 sq km (1,229,737 sq mi).

Population: 1,088,422,179

Capital: New Delhi

People: 72% Indo-Aryan, 25% Dravidian, 3% and others.

Language: Hindi is the official language, English enjoys the Associate status while there are 18 other official languages of different states. Religion: 80% Hindu, 14% Muslim, 2.4% Christian, 2% Sikh, 0.7% Buddhist, 0.5% Jains, 4% and others.

Type of Government: Federal Republic. World's largest Democracy.

President: Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam

Time: GMT plus five hours, 30 minutes.

Electricity: 230-240V, 50Hz.

Weights & measures: Metric System.

Currency: The Indian currency is the Rupee and it is fully convertible. Rupee notes are available in denominations of 1000, 500, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are available in denominations of 5, 2, 1 (rupee) and 50 paise.