

Golden Foothills

Country(ies): India

Tour type: Small Group

Transport: A/C minivan/minibus

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 12

Days: 10 Days

Start location: Amritsar, India

End location: Delhi, India

Departs On: Saturday

Meals: Breakfasts - 9, Lunches - 1, Dinners - 1

Highlights: Sikh Golden Temple in Amritsar, Wagah Border ceremony, Buddhist sites at Dharamsala, Pragpur and Garli heritage villages, Toy train to Shimla, Himalayan Foothills, Old and New Delhi

Places Visited: Amritsar, Mcleodganj, Pragpur, Garli, Shimla and Delhi



Itinerary

Day 1: Welcome to Amritsar, airport to hotel transfer included

After arriving in the holy city of Amritsar, one of our staff members will meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel, where we'll brief you on the itinerary for the next few days. We'll also arrange a time to collect you tomorrow.

OVERNIGHT: Amritsar hotel

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: Single Room Supplement (INSGGF)

Day 2: Exploring the Golden Temple

Our morning starts with a visit to the Golden Temple, the holiest shrine of the Sikh religion. The entire top of the temple is made of pure gold and its interior is beautifully inlaid with jewels and covered with gold leaf. There's a serene and peaceful atmosphere and regardless of what faith or none you may have, it really feels like one of the world's special places. We then spend an hour at the temple's free community kitchen which feeds up to 100,000 people every day. We will eat here and also spend an hour doing Langar Seva - helping serve or prepare food, clear or wash up; a small gift of our time and effort in thanks and support.

In the afternoon we head through the farmland of rural Punjab, stopping to see what is growing and in season, to experience the Wagah Border ceremony, which takes place every day before sunset. This is a daily military practice that the security forces of India and Pakistan have done since 1959. We'll watch the colourful, rapid dance-like manoeuvres of the security forces, which serves as a signal of brotherhood and cooperation between the two nations.

We'll head back to Amritsar and you have an option to head back to your hotel, have dinner at a local restaurant or head back to the Golden Temple for the evening Palki Sahib ceremony - which sees the Holy Book, the Guru Granth Saab carried from the main shrine in Hari Mandir to the sanctum, where it rests for a few hours until the opening ceremony the following morning. This is also a great time to explore the inside of the Golden Temple in detail if it has been very busy with pilgrims during the day.

OVERNIGHT: Amritsar hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch

EXTRAS: None

Day 3: A free day in McLeod Ganj

Today we'll drive up into the foothills of the Himalayas to Dharamshala and McLeod Ganj. Once we arrive, you have the day free to do some exploring. Mcleodganj is known for its Buddhist monasteries, museums, temples, waterfalls, lakes, and Tibetan settlements and is home to the Tibetan Government in Exile and the Dalai Lama's residence. It's a lovely small place to walk around, with beautiful scenery and good local markets with exotic sculptures, souvenirs and Thangka paintings in abundance.

OVERNIGHT: McLeod Ganj hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 4: A visit to the Dalai Lama Monastery and a trip to a waterfall

Today, we'll visit the Dalai Lama Monastery, where we'll attend a puja, a prayer session, that includes chanting mantras, bowing and making offerings. We'll offer lamps and Khagat religious cloth, made of silk and worn around our necks as a show of respect.

We'll also visit the 20 metre Bhagsunag Waterfall and Shiva Temple. It's a walk of around 1km from the temple to the main waterfall, which is surrounded by cliffs and trees with great views. If you're brave enough, you can even have a swim in its chilly waters. The freshwater spring beneath the temple produces waters believed to have healing powers and are channelled into large tanks which devotees may bathe to in cleanse their ailments.

We'll also visit the Naddi View Point, which always provides spectacular views of the Dhauladhar mountain ranges and the pristine Dal Lake below.

OVERNIGHT: McLeod Ganj hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 5: Exploring the Heritage Villages of Pragpur & Garli

Our day starts with a visit to the Norbulingka Institute, which is dedicated to the preservation of the Tibetan culture in its literary and artistic forms.

We'll then drive to the little visited Heritage Village of Pragpur, which was founded in the late 16th century by the Kuthiala Soods in memory of Princess Prag Dei of the Jaswan royal family. Pragpur is famous for its winding cobbled lanes, mud-plastered walls and slate-roofed houses.

If there's time before lunch, we'll visit the nearby Dada Siba Temple, famous for its Kangra mural and miniature wall paintings. After lunch, we'll explore the village before heading to Garli and checking in at our accommodation for the night.

Garli is another heritage village in the Kangra Valley which displays a huge range of colonial and regional architectural styles in its mansions, temples and sarais. A local guide will walk us through the village and tell us stories about its history

OVERNIGHT: Garli hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 6: Ride the Toy Train to Shimla

Today we'll drive to Dharampur Himanchal to board the 'toy' train to Shimla - the capital of the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, in the Himalayan foothills. Shimla was once the summer capital of British India, and it remains the terminus of the Kalka-Shimla Railway, completed in 1903. This narrow gauge railway is one of the world's most famous train journeys, now a World Heritage Site, and is a highlight of the tour.

The train travels slowly up through the hills, passing over more than a hundred bridges, and through more than a hundred tunnels along the way, with beautiful views around every bend. We catch the Himalayan Queen service, missing the lowest section from Kalka, which shortens the journey to around 3 hours and concentrates on what we feel is the best scenery. The train stops regularly and you can hop off at the many tiny stations and buy some snacks from one of the local vendors plying the platforms.

We arrive in Shimla in the afternoon and have time to settle in and look around. Shimla is also known for its craft shops, a pedestrian avenue, as well as the Lakkar Bazaar, a market specializing in wooden toys and crafts.

OVERNIGHT: Shimla hotel

MEALS: Breakfast
EXTRAS: None

Day 7: Exploring Shimla

Today, you have the morning free to explore Shimla, but as an option, you can also choose to trek towards the Tara Devi Temple which is positioned amongst a thick forest of oak and rhododendron and offers scenic views of the lofty Himalayas surrounding the town.

This afternoon, we'll go on a walking tour of Shimla, visiting its main attractions such as the Vice Regal Lodge, the Christ Church, the Gaeity Theatre and we'll also take a cable car ride to Jakhu Temple, Shimla's most famous temple, dedicated to the monkey god Hanuman. It's situated on the highest peak in Shimla at a height of 2,455 metres.

OVERNIGHT: Shimla hotel
MEALS: Breakfast
EXTRAS: None

Day 8: A train ride to Delhi, transfer to hotel

Your morning is free to explore Shimla further, and we'll depart just before midday, driving down out of the hills to Kalka where we board an evening fast train to Delhi. Once you arrive, we'll transfer you to your hotel for the night.

OVERNIGHT: Delhi hotel
MEALS: Breakfast
EXTRAS: None

Day 9: Explore Old & New Delhi

Our day starts with a morning tour of India's capital, New Delhi. Built on the banks of the Yamuna river, New Delhi is a beautiful blend of a historical past and a vibrant present.

We start at India Gate in the centre of New Delhi, a 42-metre high "Arc-de-Triomphe" like archway, a war memorial built to commemorate the 82,000 soldiers who partook in the undivided Indian Army. We'll drive past various government buildings such as the President's Palace and the Parliament of India, before passing Humayun's Tomb - a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Bangla Sahab Gurudwara Sikh Temple.

We'll stop at Connaught Place Station and join the locals on the metro to Old Delhi where we'll walk through one of the oldest and busiest markets in Old Delhi, Chandni Chowk, before exploring the narrow streets of Chawri Bazar which specialises in selling brass, copper and paper products. Throughout the afternoon our guide will also introduce you to the wide range of street food snacks and delicacies so you can get a final taste of the delicious and varied Indian cuisine. Our walking tour will also take in a rickshaw ride and the Jama Masjid mosque, one of the largest in India.

OVERNIGHT: Delhi hotel
MEALS: Breakfast
EXTRAS: None

Day 10: Bon Voyage! Airport transfer included

After breakfast, you'll say your final goodbyes before we transfer you to the airport, where you'll board your flight back home. If you'd like to see more of India, then extensions are available to visit the Holy City of Varanasi, head to

the beaches of Goa, or go on safari looking for tigers at Ranthambore National Park. Our North Indian Highlights tour also extends this trip to the Golden Triangle centres of Jaipur and Agra.

OVERNIGHT: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Included

- All accommodation in mid range hotels and heritage properties
- 24-hour airport arrival and departure transfer service
- Transport and transfers in AC vehicles
- Himalayan Queen toy train to Shimla
- Fast train from Chandigarh to Delhi (2nd class AC)
- Sightseeing tours and activities as per the itinerary
- Services of a local tour leader and specialist local guides
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary

Excluded

- International flights (available on request)
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for drivers and guides
- Entrance fees (budget USD 40, payable in Amritsar)
- Any other items not mentioned above

Notes

Restoration of the Taj Mahal

The Taj Mahal, one of India's most iconic structures, is getting a much need facelift. The almost-four-century-old Taj Mahal is finally showing signs of ageing. Air pollution is unfortunately turning its ivory-white complexion - yellow. Adding to the colouration problems, the Yamuna River, with which the Taj Mahal shares a river bank, is contaminated and the insects that breed in its waters are leaving patches of green residue on its marble. In order to restore the Taj Mahal's glistening white marble, mud-pack therapy is being used. If you're worried that it might affect your India tour, this handy [Taj restoration guide](#) will tell you everything you need to know.

Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting.

However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements.

Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

Single Room Supplement (INSGGF)

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$535.00

This option books a single room in all the accommodation throughout the tour. If you are a single traveller and would be happy to share a room, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up with another single traveller of the same sex. If a room share is not available when you book then we will add the single room supplement to your booking and it will be payable with your balance payment unless we have arranged a room share for you by then. If a room share is arranged after you have paid the supplement then we will refund it to you. Room shares are arranged in order of booking.

Extra day in Delhi - post-tour

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$70.00

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport departure transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Ranthambore National Park Safari

Min numbers: 2 persons

Price: \$720.00

Ranthambore is one of the largest national parks in northern India and was declared one of the Project Tiger reserves in 1973. As well as the tigers which are the main attraction for most people, there is a multitude of other wildlife including more than 300 species of trees, 50 aquatic plants, over 300 species of birds, marsh crocodiles and monitor lizards, and 30 mammals including sloth bear, wild boar, Chinkara, Porcupines and Jackals, Leopards, Jungle cat, Sambhar, Chital, Nilgai, Gazelle, Boars, Mongoose and Indian hare. The park is within a day's journey from Delhi.

Day 1 - Travel to Ranthambore

We pick you up from your hotel in Delhi on the last day of the main tour and transfer you to the train station journey on the Kota Jan Shatabdi Express to Sawai Madhopur (approx. 13.20-18.00). The park and your lodge is a short drive from the station.

Overnight at Ranthambore Bagh, Tiger Den, Pugmarks Resort or similar (dinner)

Days 2 & 3 - Morning & afternoon safaris

We include an early morning and late afternoon guided wildlife safari on each of these two days. These are the best times for wildlife viewing, and the middle of the day is spent relaxing back at the lodge. We include two safaris travelling on a 'Canter' which is an open backed truck which provides good height to see into the bush and forest. An additional two safaris are included by jeep, which give you more flexibility to explore different parts of the park. The park is split into different zones, and we will aim to visit several to provide variety and the best chance of good animal sightings. Zones for each safari are allocated by the park authorities and out of our control.

Overnight at Ranthambore Bagh, Tiger Den, Pugmarks Resort or similar (breakfast, lunch & dinner)

Day 4 & 5 - Return by train to Delhi

You leave the lodge early to catch the NZM Jan Shatabdi Express back to Delhi (approx. 0705-1230). You then have one night in Delhi and free time before we transfer you to the airport for departure.

Overnight at Delhi hotel (breakfast)

Notes:

- This option is available between October and June. Pricing shown is based on a minimum of 2 people travelling. Solo traveller and single room supplements apply.
- The extension can also be added to the start of the tour with the night in Delhi being spent at the beginning and Day 5 becoming the first day of the main tour. Please contact us if you would like to arrange it this way.

Varanasi extension

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$465.00

This extension option takes you to Varanasi by train and adds 4 days to our tours that finish in Delhi. In Varanasi you'll discover its traditional villages and the holy Ganges River and join an Aarti ceremony, a Hindu ritual which sees small candles lit inside cups made from leaves and flowers, before they are floated down the river - a very important ceremony for residents and pilgrims alike.

Day 1 - Sleeper train to Varanasi

We pick you up from your hotel in Delhi today (normally the last day of your main tour) and transfer you to the station for an overnight sleeper train journey to Varanasi. The train takes around 12 hours though delays of an hour or so are common, and your ticket is booked in the 2nd class AC carriage. Sheets, blankets and pillows are provided.

Day 2 - Exploring the villages of Varanasi and the holy Ganges River

After your overnight train ride from Delhi, you'll have breakfast in the hotel in Varanasi before we head to the Sarai Mohana Weavers Village, well-known for its silk weaving, with most of the locals here skilled in the art. The Banarasi sarees made in Varanasi are some of the finest you'll find in India.

On the agenda as well is a trip to the Chiraigaon Village, famous for its pickles, jams and guavas, before you spend the evening on the holy Ganges River participating in an Aarti Ceremony, a Hindu ritual where we'll light candles inside cups made from flowers and leaves and float it down the river.

Day 3 - A boat trip on the Ganges and a Brahman family lunch.

You'll start your day with a boat trip on the calm waters of the Ganges. You'll notice how busy the banks of the river are, as the locals come here to pray and immerse themselves in its spiritually cleansing waters.

You'll also have the chance to explore Varanasi with a walking tour through its old streets, visiting its holy temples and busy markets, before visiting a local Hindu Brahman family for some cooking lessons. Here, you'll be given a masterclass in Indian cuisine, before sitting down to have lunch with the family.

This afternoon, we'll head to the ancient Buddhist site at Sarnath, the location where Lord Buddha gave his very first sermon after becoming enlightened. We'll head back to Delhi in the overnight sleeper train, or if you'd like to spend another night in Varanasi, board a flight back to Delhi in the morning.

Day 4 - Arrive in Delhi. Free day

After arriving in Delhi we meet you at the station and transfer you to your hotel where breakfast is included. Normal check in time is midday but we will aim to get you into your room earlier if possible. The rest of the day is free. Various half day tour options are available if you would like to see some more of the city.

Day 5 - Departure airport transfer

Your time is free today until we transfer you to the airport for your departure.

Old Delhi half-day walking tour

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$70.00

This Old Delhi half-day walking tour starts from your hotel and after arriving by car or metro in the old city we explore with a guide on foot, walking through some of its oldest and busiest markets such as the Chandni Chowk and the Chowri Bazaar, which sells unique brass, copper and paper creations.

You'll also have the chance to taste some of India's wide variety of tasty street snacks and delicacies, introducing you to the wonders of Indian cuisine. Once you're full, you'll head out in a rickshaw to explore the Jama Masjid, the largest mosques in India.

Salam Balak Trust walk

Min numbers: 1 person

Price: \$55.00

This two hour tour operated by a respected local NGO through the city of Delhi is guided by adolescents who grew up living and working on the streets, but have since been trained as travel guides with the aim of helping them improve their communication skills and opportunities.

Listen to the stories of these kids as they take you through the busy streets of Delhi, exploring Paharganj and the area around the New Delhi Railway Station. The tour provides a fascinating and different insight into the daily lives of the locals that live here than most typical city tours.

The tour normally starts at 10am, though earlier or later starts can be arranged. It can be arranged on your final day in Delhi or if additional days are added. It can be run on any day of the week though Sundays are not ideal as the streets are much quieter. Transfers to and from your hotel are included.

Spinmonkey cycling tour

Min numbers: 1 person

Price:

\$55.00

The Spinmonkey cycling tours which run through Old and New Delhi are led by a group of young cyclists who want to change the way that people explore Delhi, promoting healthy interaction and fun along the way. It's the perfect introduction into the history, culture, food, architecture and spirit of Delhi.

During the Old Delhi cycle tour, you'll visit the Turukman Gate, the Chawri Bazar, the Jama Masjid Mosque, Chandni Chowk, and a spice market before being treated to an authentic Indian breakfast.

The New Delhi cycle tour explores Connaught Place, the Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, Rashtrapati Bhawan, India Gate, Agrasen Ki Baoli, Dhobi Ghat before enjoying breakfast at the Bengali Market.

This cycling tour normally starts early at 6 or 6.30am during summer or winter to avoid the busy traffic later in the day, and lasts around four hours. The cycling tour can be arranged on your final day in Delhi (subject to your flight departure time) or if additional days are added. It can be run on any day of the week, and transfers to and from your hotel are included.

Tour Notes

1. Accommodation

We use good quality hotels rated at the Indian 3-star and 4-star level on this tour as well as some heritage properties. These heritage hotels are often converted from former palaces or merchant houses and are full of historical character, though they may feel a little dated. They are often a highlight of your stay.

The specific hotels listed on our website are our preferred hotels for our small-group tours. However, these may be changed from time to time based on current availability and other logistics. In this event alternative hotels of a similar standard will be used. If you would like to guarantee any particular hotels for your trip, please contact us to request a tailor-made tour.

Accommodation is based on twin or double en-suite rooms with air conditioning. All couples will receive a private double room.

Single travellers may choose to pay a single room supplement to guarantee themselves a single room throughout the tour. Alternatively, they may choose to share a room with another traveller of the same sex. If there are no other single travellers available to pair up with at the time of booking, then we will need to add the single supplement to your tour price, but will refund this or deduct it from your balance payment if we are able to pair you up later on.

2. Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour. Due to the somewhat chaotic nature of Indian roads, we only use private vehicles for all road journeys on this tour.

The tour also features two journeys on India's famous railway network, on the narrow gauge 'toy train' to Shimla, and a fast train from Chandigarh to Delhi (~4hrs).

On the toy train journey we book chair seats on the Himalayan Queen service. The full journey from Kalka to Shimla takes around 5 hours, but we join the train about half way into the journey once it has started getting into the hills properly. We feel this provides a better experience all round. Your luggage will continue to Shimla with the tour vehicle, so you do not need to worry about carrying or storing it on the train.

For the fast train journeys we aim to always book seats in the AC2 chair class (2nd class air-conditioned carriage). This is relatively clean, comfortable and not overcrowded. Due to the huge distances some trains cover, Indian trains are subject to delays. These can be longer in the winter months if the weather is foggy.

Tickets are issued 120 days in advance and are subject to full cancellation fees after you have arrived in India (US\$10 up until that point). If you book within 120 days of departure we cannot guarantee that you will be allocated a seat next to other people in the group, though the carriage stewards are generally very helpful in arranging to swap you with another traveller.

3. Transfers

The tour price includes a 24-hour airport meet & assist service in New Delhi airport, your arrival and departure airport-hotel transfers and all other transfers.

4. International Flights

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take

account of people with varying travel plans, we don't include your international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

Your airport arrival & departure transfers are included on the first and last days of the tour. Most of our Indian tours start and finish at Delhi airport (DEL).

5. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

We are committed to being a small group operator, as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. There's no point in us providing great guides if you've got to peer over 30-40 shoulders to see them! So, we won't ever put you in a 50-seater coach with 49 other people and just one guide. Instead, we set our India small-group departures to have a maximum of 12 travellers. The minimum group size is 2.

In India we provide a fully trained, local English-speaking tour leader/driver to accompany our groups. On this tour they will accompany you from Amritsar through to Chandigarh where you will be shown to your seat on the train. You will then be met on arrival in Delhi station by your guide for the stay there. Additional specialist local guides are used for some of the sightseeing tours and activities included in the tour.

At Encounters Travel we have a policy of aiming to use only local Indian guides and reps. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

6. Entrance Fees

The tour price does not include entrance fees to the tourist sites mentioned in the itinerary. This allows for fluctuations in the prices set by the local authorities, which do change from time to time.

You should currently allow approx. US\$40 per person to cover these entrance fees. You will also need to cover the cost of entrance to any other extra sites that you may wish to visit that are not listed in the main tour itinerary. Your guide will offer to collect the entrance fee cost from everyone at the start of the tour and pay on your behalf, or you can arrange them yourself as you go along.

7. Money

Rupee (INR; symbol Rs) = 100 paise. Notes are in denominations of Rs 2,000, 1000, 500, 200, 50, 20, 10 and 1. Coins are in denominations of Rs 10, 5, 2 and 1, and 50 paise (Rs 0.5). Note: The import and export of local currency is prohibited. Sometimes smaller vendors will not take bills larger than Rs 500. It is best to carry a range of rupee notes if you are shopping at bazaars and local markets.

Note: You must present your passport whenever you change currency or travellers cheques. Commission for foreign exchange is becoming increasingly rare; if it is charged, the fee is nominal.

Credit cards: In major cities, the full cadre of banks cards are generally accepted including debit cards, American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa. However, in smaller towns and villages, choice is generally narrowed to cash or MasterCard and Visa.

ATM: 24 hour ATM machines can be found in all the major cities and most large towns. Visa, MasterCard, Cirrus, Maestro and Plus are amongst the most commonly accepted cards.

Travellers cheques: These are gradually getting less accepted but may still be changed at larger banks and some larger hotels. The most widely accepted currencies include US Dollars and Pounds Sterling. Some banks may

refuse to change certain brands of traveller's cheques whilst others may exchange quite happily.

8. Tipping and Haggling

Haggling is a traditional necessity, so it's wise not to pay too much regard to initial prices. Instead fix an item's value in your mind then negotiate towards it unhurriedly and don't be afraid to simply walk away if the price isn't right. Once you have offered a price though, you should be prepared to pay it as you may cause offence if you then back out.

While an accepted part of the culture and customs in India, tipping is always optional, and the amounts paid should reflect excellent service. We are often asked for advice on common amounts, and for assistance with tipping. Some suggested guidelines are given below.

Restaurants and taxis: Local markets and basic restaurants - leave the loose change. More up-market restaurants we suggest 5% to 10% of your bill.

Local guides: Throughout your trip you may at times have a local guide in addition to your tour guide. We suggest USD 5-10 per person per day for local guides.

Drivers: You may have a range of private drivers on your trip. Some may be with you for a short journey while others may be with you for several days. We would suggest a higher tip for those more involved with the group, for example if you don't have an extra accompanying guide. However USD 3-6 per person per day is generally appropriate.

Tour Guides: To answer your next question. . . as a guideline for tour guides who accompany you on the entire tour, we suggest you allow around USD 5-10 per person per day, but ultimately, as with all the tipping described above, it's up to your satisfaction with their service and your personal budget. You should not feel pressured to tip any particular amount.

9. Health and Vaccinations - India

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination. You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions. In addition, additional courses or boosters normally recommended for the countries in this region are:

India: Additional vaccinations: Diphtheria, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Yellow fever rules for India are quite complicated and lengthy. Please read the [WHO guidance](#).

Malaria: Vaccinations are not available against Malaria, which is a disease transmitted by mosquitoes that can be very serious and sometimes fatal. You should avoid mosquito bites by covering up bare skin with clothing such as long sleeves and long trousers and applying insect repellents to exposed skin. When necessary, sleep under a mosquito net. Mosquitoes are most active during and after sunset. You should consult with your GP/medical practitioner/travel clinic about the most appropriate malaria prophylactic medication to take for the regions you are visiting. In general the north eastern regions of India including Assam and Orissa are considered high risk, while the rest of India is generally considered low enough risk that anti-malarial tablets are not necessary for most travellers doing relatively short tours.

Yellow Fever: This disease is spread by infected mosquitoes that bite during the day. A Yellow Fever Certificate of vaccination may be required as a condition of entry depending on which country you are arriving from, or that you have travelled or transitted through recently (including connecting flights with stopovers of over 12 hours). You can view a [World Health Organisation map](#) of areas where the virus is present in monkeys and therefore a potential risk to humans. Please ensure you have this certificate with you and to hand if necessary.

Please inform us of any pre-existing conditions such as diabetes or asthma and any prescription medicine you may be taking. We also need to know about any food allergies or physical disabilities that you may have.

10. Passports and Visas - India

Your passport expiry date must be at least 6 months after your time in India finishes. Do not bring a full or almost expired passport. You must also have a machine-readable passport or you may be denied entry. If you have an old-style manually issued passport you will need to replace this with a new machine-readable passport before you travel.

Most nationalities (including UK, USA, European, Australian, Canadian) will need to arrange their Indian tourist visa in advance. A new online e-visa system is available which makes the process more straightforward than before. You can make your application online here... <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html>

Visa requirements for India can and do change regularly and we suggest that you arrange your Indian visa early and re-check your specific visa requirements prior to travel for any changes.

11. Time

The time in India and Sri Lanka is GMT plus 5 1/2 hours.

The time in Nepal is GMT plus 5 3/4 hours.

The time in Bhutan is GMT plus 6 hours.

The time in Tibet is GMT plus 8 hours.

Daylight saving adjustments are not applied.

12. Voltage

Sockets are mainly two round pronged and 230 volts (Type C,D,M). Universal adaptors are available in most airport shops if you don't have one already. Standard European adapters will work fine, though sometimes they may feel a little loose in the sockets. All hotel rooms have electrical sockets where you can re-charge cameras, phones etc. Hair dryers are sometimes available on request from the hotel reception if not in your room already but cannot be guaranteed.

If you have US appliances (110 volts) you will need a voltage converter as well as a plug adapter.

13. Dates & Prices

We run small-group departures on our Indian small-group tours throughout the year, with less frequent start dates during the hot monsoon months of May to September. All departures are guaranteed to run with a minimum of 2 travellers. Departure dates and prices are listed on our website (please check the website for up-to-date prices and special offers).

Private and tailor-made tours are available on any dates and may be adjusted to fit your personal requirements,

available time and budget.

14. Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please [contact us](#) if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

15. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event). [More information...](#)

You may arrange your own insurance, or you can take advantage of a comprehensive policy that we can arrange for you through Endsleigh Insurance which has been designed to be suitable for our tours. The policy is available to travellers of all nationalities and you do not need to live in the UK to take out the policy. For full details of cover provided, prices and to apply for one of our policies, please complete [travel insurance application form](#).

Note: Any country that borders the Mediterranean is considered as 'Europe' for the purposes of travel insurance (including Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Morocco). If you are doing a tour that visits one country in 'Europe' and one that is 'Worldwide' (for example, an Egypt and Jordan tour), then you need a 'Worldwide' policy. When completing the form you should enter your travel dates including any extra days involved in overnight flights or connecting travel between your home and the tour. Our policies are not able to cover any extra time or activities other than your tour and options booked with us and your travel to & from home.

Note - to comply with insurance sales regulations, our travel insurance policies are only available to customers booking directly with us. If you have booked through a travel agent you will need to arrange your own insurance.

If you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally, or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.

16. Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and an ABTA Member (Y4447) and you can be confident when booking with us that your money is safe and protected.

Financial failure insurance is also provided through Affirma to protect all customers for the land portion of your tour. Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

17. Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

18. Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

www.facebook.com/encounterstravel

www.twitter.com/encounterstravl (yes, without the 'e')

19. Before you travel

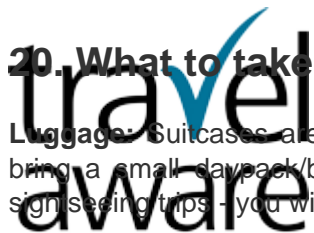
It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current [official government travel advice](#) for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's ['Travel Aware' campaign](#) which provides further useful and invaluable information.

20. What to take

The logo for 'Travel Aware' features the word 'travel' in a blue, lowercase, sans-serif font. A blue checkmark is positioned above the letter 'l'. Below 'travel' is the word 'aware' in a larger, bold, black, lowercase, sans-serif font.

Luggage: Suitcases are fine, though you may find rucksacks or large bags are more practical. You should also bring a small daypack/bag to take out during the day. Your main luggage will be left in the hotel during your sightseeing trips - you will not need to carry it far, and there are nearly always porters to assist.

Luggage allowances: Most international airlines restrict you to between 20kg and 23kg per person of luggage to go in the hold of the plane. Domestic flights often have smaller allowances around 15kg. As airline rules vary we recommend that you take no more than 20kg of luggage if your tour just includes international flights, and no more than 15kg if there are any domestic flights included in your itinerary. Please ask us for details if you are unsure about luggage allowances on your tour. Any excess baggage fees will be your responsibility to cover. Most airlines allow between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage so we suggest that you take no more than 5kg unless you have confirmed that your airline(s) will allow more than this.

Clothing: The weather is mainly hot most of the year with significant variations from region to region. The coolest weather lasts from around the end of November to the beginning of March, with fresh mornings and evenings, and mostly sunny days. The really hot weather, when it is dry, dusty and unpleasant, is between March and June.

Monsoon rains occur in most regions in summer anywhere between June and early October.

NOTE: India is very traditional and some heads will turn if you dress provocatively in public. Short tops, short skirts / shorts, tight or body revealing clothes etc should be avoided. You might invite unwanted attention from certain men who stare and pass comments at women to amuse themselves. More detailed climate information is available on the India Country Guide page on our website.

Suggested List: This is a guide only - there's no problem if you bring more or less with you. Cheap comfortable clothing is also readily available in India and laundry is inexpensive. It is also worth having some smarter clothes for going out. Towels are provided and laundry services are available in all the hotels we use.

Men: Lightweight trousers, shorts, light shirts & t-shirts, Swimwear

Women: Light cotton skirts/dressers, loose-fitting trousers, light shirts or t-shirts, loose shorts, Swimwear

Men & Women: Jumper/sweatshirt/fleece, Long sleeved shirt(s) (for cool nights, protection from the sun & mosquitoes, and visits to religious sites etc), Handkerchiefs, socks & underwear, Comfortable trainers/sandals for daily wear, Other shoes/sandals for evening wear, Sunhat or headscarf (headscarfs come in handy for some sights which require women to cover their heard)

First Aid: Although First Aid and medication is readily available in India, it may be very different to what you are used to so individuals should consider bringing along their own personal kit. Your personal kit might include: Sunscreen, sunblock & aftersun, Insect repellent/relief, Antiseptic cream/spray, Plasters and a bandage, Lomotil or Imodium against diarrhea, Pills against nausea, Aspirin for heat-stroke (or hangovers) Your kit should also include your brief medical history, including allergies, blood group, drug vaccinations etc. We suggest bringing copies of prescriptions if you will be carrying medicines on board your flight.

Toiletries: Razor, soap & box, shampoo, Toothpaste, toothbrush & container, Sanitary items

Note: If you wear contact lenses, you should consider taking or wearing glasses instead, as lenses can be uncomfortable and/or cause infections in hot and humid climates.

Other useful items: Sunglasses, Small Torch, Money belt, Camera and equipment, Toilet paper (this is not always provided in public toilets so it is a good idea to carry some spare tissues in your bag. It should be placed in the basket beside the toilet, not flushed away, for you might block the pipes).

IMPORTANT: As it can get extremely hot in India, and the sun can burn very quickly, it is very important to ensure you are protected from the sun with sun-cream & sun-hats, and do not get dehydrated.

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Note: Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.
