



Stuttford Van Lines Country Guide for

India



Country Guides: Courtesy of Overseas Moving Network International (OMNI)

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1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: South Asia.

Time: GMT + 5.5.

Office of the High Commissioner for India in the UK

India House, Aldwych, London WC2B 4NA, UK Tel: (020) 7836 8484. Website: www.hcilondon.net Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0830-1200 (visa enquiries); 0915-1730 (visa applications and collections; telephone enquiries).

Incredible India in the UK

7 Cork Street, London W1S 3LH, UK Tel: (020) 7437 3677 or (0870) 010 2183 (brochure request line). Website: www.incredibleindia.org

Embassy of India in the USA

Chancery: 2107 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA Consulate: 2536 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA Tel: (202) 939 7000 or 9806 (consular section). Website: www.indianembassy.org

Incredible India in the USA

Suite 1808, 1270 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020-1700, USA Tel: (212) 586 4901. Website: www.incredibleindia.org Office also in: Los Angeles.

2 OVERVIEW

Travel warning

Visitors are strongly advised not to travel to Jammu and Kashmir (with the exceptions of Ladakh via Manali or air to Leh), all travel in the immediate vicinity of the border with Pakistan and the Line of Control (excepting Amritsar and Jaisalmer and for those travelling overland to Pakistan through the Wagah border crossing), and all travel to Manipur and Tripura. For further information, visitors should seek official advice. 'Mystical land of seductive **images**' **It is India's vastness that challenges the imagination:** the sub-continent, 3200km (2000 miles) from the mountain vastness of the Himalayas in the north to the tropical lushness of Kerala in the south, is home to one sixth of the world's population, a diverse culture and an intoxicatingly rich history. The most frequently visited part of India is the Golden Triangle Delhi and the magnificent monuments of Agra and Jaipur, a legacy of centuries of Muslim rule but there is much besides. The unfairly maligned great cities of Mumbai and Kolkata (Calcutta) have a bustling, colourful charm, while the holy city of Varanasi or the awe-inspiring temples of Tamil Nadu are worthy objects of pilgrimage. For those who prefer more sybaritic pleasures, the palm-fringed beaches of Goa have a European charm all of their own. Hinduism is practised by 85 per cent of Indians, the religious rites and red-letter days woven into the fabric of everyday life ritual washing in the Ganges and the ear-splitting celebrations of the festival of Ganesh and the inequalities of the caste system are there for all to see. One of the fascinations of India is the juxtaposition of old and new; centuries of history from the pre-historic Indus civilisation to the British Raj rub shoulders with the computer age; and Bangalore's 'Silicon Valley' is as much a part of the world's largest democracy as the remotest village is. Richard Hopton



3 GENERAL INFORMATION

Area: 3,166,414 sq km (1,222,582 sq miles).

Population: 1.1 billion (UN, 2005).

Population Density: 347 per sq km.

Capital: New Delhi. Population: 19.8 million (2001).

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 APJ Abdul Kalam since 2002. Head of Government: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh since 2004. Recent history: In May 2004, Manmohan Singh became Prime Minister after the Congress Party won the General Election. Singh took the position after the President of the party, Sonia Gandhi, widow of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, declined the post. Singh vowed to tackle poverty and to create economic reforms and better relations with India's neighbours, especially Pakistan. In his first year as Prime Minister, Singh held together a coalition which included communist allies and ministers accused of corruption and oversaw the introduction of nuclear non-proliferation legislation. His promises to raise the poorest citizens out of poverty has yet to be realised. Meanwhile, Indian foreign policy continues to be dominated by relations with Pakistan. The main cause of friction is the status of Kashmir, most of which was awarded to India in 1947. Both sides claim the entire region and both insist their claim is 'non-negotiable'. Separatist guerrillas, backed by Pakistan, have waged a steady campaign against Indian forces which shows no sign of resolution despite regular initiatives. Given the nuclear capabilities of both countries, and their proven delivery systems, this is now viewed as a major potential flashpoint and is closely watched by the world's major powers. In the spring of 2002, following a spurt of guerrilla activity in Kashmir and intercommunal violence between Muslims and Hindus in the western Indian state of Gujarat, the two countries came close to war. Only frantic international diplomacy calmed the situation. Historically, the USA and China had backed Pakistan while India had close relations with the Soviet Union. The demise of the Soviet Union has not, however, damaged India excessively: it still enjoys close links with Moscow and is concerned only by the possibility of instability in central Asia spilling southwards. China has long viewed India as a rival, and the main irritant is the presence of the exiled Tibetan opposition leader, the Dalai Lama, in northwest India. Nevertheless, the two Governments have signed a major trade agreement and relations are steadily improving. As for the Americans, India moved quickly to support the Bush administration's plan for ballistic missile defence in the hope that the remaining sanctions from 1998 will be lifted. 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 a bicameral Parliament and Cabinet of Ministers. Each of the states also has an elected Assembly. The bicameral National Parliament consists of the lower house, the Lok Sabha, which has 542 members popularly elected for a five-year term and the upper house, the Rajya Sabha, which has 245 members indirectly elected by the State Assemblies to serve six years. The Head of State is the President, while executive power is vested in the Prime Minister who is the head of the Cabinet and is normally the leader of the largest party in the Lok Sabha.

Language: The official language is Hindi which is spoken by about 30 per cent 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 Bengali, Gujarati, Oriya and Punjabi which are widely used in the north, and Tamil and Telegu, which are common in the south. Other regional languages are Kannada, Malayalam and Marathi. The Muslim population largely speak Urdu.

Religion: About 82 per cent Hindu, 11 per cent Muslim with Sikh, Christian, Jain and Buddhist minorities.

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

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. Businesspeople 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, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian or Spanish are available in some cities. Consult the nearest Incredible India 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 Incredible India (see Top Things To Do). 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. Photography at many places is allowed on payment of a prescribed fee, which varies. Contact the nearest Government of India Tourist Office.

Passport/Visa

	<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



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

VISAS: Required by all.

Types of visa and cost: The following prices are for UK nationals only; prices for other nationals vary. Tourist: £30. Business: £30 (three/six months); £50 (one year); £90 (two years). Transit: £8. Student: £30 (six months); £50 (one year); £55 (more than one year).

Note: (a) Non-UK nationals applying in the UK need to pay an additional £10 (amounts charged may also vary according to nationality and type of passport held) unless holding proof of at least one-year residence in the UK. (b) A £1 fee may be required for postal applications, depending on consulate.

Validity: Transit: 15 days. Business: three or six months, or up to two years for multiple entry.

Application to: Embassy or High Commission (or Consular section at Embassy or High Commission); see Passport/Visa Information.

Application requirements: (a) Passport valid for up to six months with at least two blank pages. (b) Completed application form. Nationals of Bangladesh and Pakistan must complete special application forms. Personal interviews in some cases may also be necessary. (c) Two passport-size photos. Nationals of Pakistan will require five. (d) Fee (bank draft or postal orders only). (e) Stamped addressed special delivery envelope. Business: (a)-(e) and, (f) A letter from their employer stating the reason of the visit and an invitation from the company in India and a letter of introduction from UK company addressed to the Embassy. Transit: (a)-(e) and, (f) Proof of onward travel. Student: (a)-(e) and, (f) Proof of admission to appropriate university/educational institution with duration of course.

Working days required: Personal applications can normally be processed the same day. Postal applications may take up to 15 working days or longer (early September to February). Those requiring an additional fee may need a minimum of seven working days and possibly much longer for their visa application to be processed.

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. 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 India Tourism for up-to-date information before departure. The following states are subject to some restrictions: Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, borders areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim and the Union Territory of Laccadives Island (Lakshadweep).

Passport/Visa Information: Office of the High Commissioner for India in the UKIndia House, Aldwych, London WC2B 4NA, UK Tel: (020) 7836 8484. Website: www.hcilondon.net Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0830-1200 (visa enquiries); 0915-1730 (visa applications and collections; telephone enquiries). Embassy of India in the USACHancery: 2107 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA Consulate: 2536 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA Tel: (202) 939 7000 or 9806 (consular section). Website: www.indianembassy.org



4 MONEY

Currency: Rupee (INR) = 100 paise. Notes are in denominations of INR1000, 500, 100, 50, 20, 10, and 5. Coins are in denominations of INR5, 2 and 1, and 50, 25, and 10 paise.

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

Traveller's cheques: These are widely accepted and may be changed at banks. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in US Dollars or Pounds Sterling. Some banks may refuse to change certain brands of traveller's cheques which others exchange quite happily.

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 INR100 or higher), Bangladesh, Pakistan or Sri Lanka (up to INR20 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\$5000, 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.

Exchange rate indicators

Date At time of publishing £1.00=INR78.71 \$1.00=INR45.94

Banking hours: Mon-Fri 1000-1400, Sat 1000-1200.

5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported into India by persons over 17 years of age without **incurring customs duty:** 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco; alcoholic liquor or wine (2l); 60ml of perfume and 250ml of eau de toilette; goods for personal use; travel souvenirs (differing amounts according to nationality and duration of stay); reasonable quantities of medicines. Note: Import by non-residents is only permitted if the national has entered India for a stay of not less than 24 hours and not more than six months, provided they visit not more than once a month. Note: Domestic pets (cats, dogs, birds etc) are permitted to be imported into India.

Prohibited items: Livestock and pigs and pig meat products.



6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Below are listed the Public Holidays for the January 2006-June 2007 period. Jan 10 2006 Idu'z Zuha/Bakrid (Feast of the Sacrifice). Jan 26 Republic Day. Jan 31 Muharram (Islamic New Year). Feb 26 Mahavir Jayanthi. Mar 14 Holi. Apr 6 Sri Rama Navami (Birthday of Sri Rama). Apr 10 Milad-Un-Nabi (Birth of the Prophet). Apr 14 Good Friday. May 13 Buddha Purnima. Aug 15 Independence Day. Sept 2 Vijaya Dasami/Dussera. Oct 2 Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday. Oct 24-26 Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan). Nov 21 Diwali. Dec 31 Idu'z Zuha/Bakrid (Feast of the Sacrifice). Jan 26 2007 Republic Day. Jan 20 Muharram (Islamic New Year). Mar 3 Holi. Mar 8 Mahavir Jayanthi. Mar 27 Sri Rama Navami (Birthday of Sri Rama). Mar 31 Milad-Un-Nabi (Birth of the Prophet). Apr 6 Good Friday. Apr 14 Baisakhi, Vishu/Bahag, Mesadi, Maghi. May 2 Buddha Purnima.

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 Incredible India (see Top Things To Do). (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

	Special Precautions	Certificate Required
Yellow Fever	Yes	1
Cholera	Yes	2
Typhoid and Polio	3	N/A
Malaria	4	N/A

1: Any person (including infants over six months old) arriving by air or sea from an infected country must obtain a yellow fever certificate (includes passengers who have been transit in a country in the endemic zone). Otherwise, isolated detainment may occur for up to six days. Those countries that are considered infected are all African countries (except Algeria, Botswana, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Lesotho, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tunisia and Zimbabwe) and all South American countries (except Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay). 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. Immunisation is generally recommended. Typhoid can be contracted and there have been recent reports of typhoid drug resistance.

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 and sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine is reported in the malignant falciparum form. The recommended prophylaxis is chloroquine plus proguanil in risk areas and mefloquine in Assam.

Food & drink: All water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Well water near the Ganges and in West Bengal may contain traces of arsenic chemical. 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.

Other risks: Visceral leishmaniasis occurs in rural areas of eastern India. 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. Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection that can be contracted from water. Outbreaks of Japanese encephalitis occur, particularly in eastern coastal areas. Meningococcal meningitis is present in Delhi from November to May. Vaccination is advisable. 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.

Note: All visitors aged between 18 and 70 years of age who are wishing to extend their visa for one year or more are required to take an AIDS test.

Health care: India has seen a massive growth in the voluntary and private health sector in the last few years; however, health care facilities are limited and travellers are strongly advised to take out full comprehensive 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: The national airlines are Air India (AI) (website: www.airindia.com) and Jet Airways (India) (website: www.jetairways.com). British Airways and Virgin Atlantic fly to India from the UK; Delta Airlines and United Airlines fly from the USA.

Approximate flight times: From London to Delhi is eight hours 35 minutes, to Kolkata (Calcutta) is nine hours 45 minutes, to Chennai is 11 hours and to Mumbai is eight hours 30 minutes. From Los Angeles to Delhi is 20 hours 30 minutes. From New York to Delhi is 15 hours 30 minutes. From Singapore to Delhi is five hours 40 minutes. From Sydney to Delhi is 13 hours.



Main airports: New Delhi (DEL) (Indira Gandhi International) is 23km (14 miles) south of the city (travel time 45 minutes). To/from the airport: There are coach, bus and taxi services to the city. Facilities: Duty free shops, banks/bureaux de change, post office, restaurants and car hire. Mumbai (BOM) (Chhatrapati Shivaji International) is 35km (22 miles) north of the city (travel time 50 to 75 minutes). To/from the airport: 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. There is also a railway system connecting with the Metro rail system. Facilities: Bank/bureau de change, post office, nursery, restaurant and shops. Kolkata (Calcutta) (CCU) (Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International) is 20km (13 miles) northeast of the city (travel time 40 to 70 minutes). To/from the airport: 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. Facilities: Post office, bank, bars, duty free shops and restaurants. Chennai (MAA) (Madras International) is 14km (9 miles) southwest of the city (travel time 20 minutes). To/from the airport: A coach meets all flight arrivals 0900-2300. There is a train every 20 to 30 minutes from 0500-2300. Bus 18A runs every 25 minutes from 0500-2200. Taxi services go to the city. Facilities: Money exchange facilities, tourist information offices and hotel reservation services. Amritsar (ATQ) (Raja Sansi International) is 11km (7 miles) from the city. To/from the airport: Car hire, taxis and hotel pick ups can be arranged from the airport. Facilities: Money exchange facilities, tourist information offices and hotel reservation services:

Departure tax: £10. (£8 for neighbouring countries only.)

SEA: Main ports: Calicut, Kochi, Kolkata (Calcutta), Mumbai, 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: INR500 (for journeys to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka); INR750 (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 Incredible India as they may be subject to change (see Top Things To Do).

Connections to Pakistan: All travel is advised against in the immediate vicinity of the border with Pakistan other than across the international border at Wagah. Approaching the border away from the official crossing point could be dangerous.

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 airlink from Kolkata (Calcutta) to Paro by Druk Air.

Connections to Bangladesh: The best route to Bangladesh is Kolkata (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 China (PR).

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. The most popular border crossings into India are Sunauli (for Delhi and northwest India), Birganj (for Kolkata (Calcutta) and east India) and Kakarbhitta (for Darjeeling). 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 Incredible India (see Top Things To Do).

Travel - Internal

Note: Travel in rural areas during the monsoon season can be hazardous and care should be taken. Monsoon rains cause flooding and landslides that can cut off some towns and villages for days at a time.

AIR: The domestic airline is Indian Airlines (IC) (website: www.indian-airlines.nic.in). The network connects over 70 cities. Indian Airlines also operates regular flights to the neighbouring countries of Bangladesh, Malaysia, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the Middle East. Domestic airlines include Alliance Airlines (3A), a subsidiary of Indian Airlines, Jet Airways (9W) and Air Sahara (S2) (website: www.airsahara.net).

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 Pounds Sterling). With the exception of the Youth Fare India (see below), discounts of 90 per cent are available for children under two years of age, and of 50 per cent for children aged two to 12. Full details of all the special fares are contained in the India brochure, available from Incredible India. A summary of each is given below. Group discounts of up to 30 per cent are also available.

Discover India: There are three types of ticket available; a 21-day ticket costs US\$850, a 15-day ticket costs US\$600 and a 7-day ticket costs US\$400. 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 three months, offering a 25 per cent discount on the normal US Dollar fare. It is available to those aged 12 to 30 at the commencement of travel for journeys on economy/executive class of domestic air services and Indo-Nepal services.

India Wonder Fares (North, South, East and West): Cost US\$320 and are valid for seven days, offering unlimited economy-class travel within the north, south, east or western regions of India. No town may be visited more than once, except for transfer. Details of the main air centres included in the deal can be obtained from Indian Airlines offices.

Departure tax: £8.



SEA/RIVER: There are ships from Kolkata (Calcutta) 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. There is a catamaran service from Mumbai to Goa. 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 state-run by Indian Railways (website: www.indianrail.gov.in). It is the largest rail system in Asia and the second-largest in the world. There are over 62,000km of track, over 7030 stations and over 11,200 locomotives, including many 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 five to 11 years old pay half price, children under five travel free. There are six classes of travel: first-class air conditioned, first-class sleeper, second-class air conditioned, second-class sleeper, third-class air conditioned and air conditioned chair car. Major trains carry restaurant cars.

Indrail Pass: This special pass consists of a single non-transferable ticket which enables a visitor to travel on any train without restriction within the period of validity. First-class sleeper tickets are: US\$135 for seven days; US\$185 for 15 days; US\$198 for 21 days; US\$248 for 30 days; US\$400 for 60 days and US\$530 for 90 days. A/C tickets are twice as much and second-class tickets are much cheaper. Children under five travel free; children aged five to 12 are entitled to half-price fares. 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 Pounds Sterling). Refunds can be given only if cancellation is made before the starting date. Validity period is from the date of commencement of the first journey up to midnight of the date on which validity expires. A ticket can 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. Indrail passes can be reserved in the UK from SD Enterprises Ltd (tel: (020) 8903 3411; website: www.indiarail.co.uk). The passes can also be purchased in India at all the main railway stations and authorised agents.

Special trains: The Palace on Wheels is an expensively decorated Edwardian-style luxury steam train with 14 coaches, which travels to Rajasthan. 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, a lounge area, 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: DelhiJaipurJaisalmer JodhpurRanthambae-ChittaurgarhUdaipurBharatpurAgraDelhi. Bookings: Several tour operators/travel agents organise escorted tour facilities which include the Palace on Wheels. Royal Orient Express: This luxury train journeys through Gujarat and Rajasthan taking in the sights of Chittaurgarh, Udaipur, Palitana, Ahmedabad and Jaipur. The trip takes eight days and accommodation is in furnished carriages with lounge, minibar and kitchenette. Multi-cuisine restaurants and a library are also available. Contact Indian Railways for further information. The Fairy Queen is the oldest steam engine in the world. The journey is a 2-day round trip from Delhi to Alwar. Guests are taken to Sariska Tiger Reserve for a jeep safari and stay overnight in a hotel. The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway operates from Newjalpoiguri to Darjeeling. It climbs 500ft/152.5m. The service is subject to the local weather. Hill Trains: Narrow-gauge rail lines completed in the 19th century linking numerous hill stations and various mountain landscapes.



For example, the Kolkata (Calcutta)-Darjeeling route takes eight hours, crosses over 500 bridges and offers ample opportunity for photos as the pace is leisurely.

Other trains: The Rajdhani Express trains are deluxe super-fast trains connecting Delhi with Mumbai, Kolkata (Calcutta), Chennai, Bangalore, Bhubhaneswar, Guwahati, Jammu Tawi, Secunderabad, Thiruvananthapuram, Ahmedabad, Ajmer and many others. Shatabdi Express: Super-fast trains connecting major and secondary city centres. Visitors can travel chair-car or executive class. Snacks and meals are provided. Konkan Express: This route (Mumbai-Goa-Mangalore) includes 72 tunnels and many bridges often crossing ravines of over 50m deep.

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. However, public transport is often crowded and can be uncomfortable. Details of routes may be obtained from the local tourist office. Outside the major cities main roads and other routes are poorly maintained and congested with poor visibility and inadequate warning markers. 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 Incredible India. Travellers should ask drivers to maintain a safe speed and wear a seat belt where available. Self-drive cars are not generally available. Driving around India is not recommended due to the erratic nature of Indian driving standards. Documentation: An International Driving Permit is required. A green card is required if importing your own car into India.

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. Kolkata (Calcutta) has a 16.45km (10 mile) underground railway.

TRAVEL TIMES: The following chart gives approximate travel 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-Kolkata 2.00 30.00 18.00 b-Chennai 3.00 45.00 32.00 -Port Blair 5.05 c-d Note: 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 three to four days.

Note: Further information (including route maps, times of express trains and more detailed travel-time charts) may be found in the official India brochure, available free from Incredible India (see Top Things To Do).

8 ACCOMMODATION

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 per cent expenditure tax, 7 to 15 per cent luxury tax and a variable service charge. 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, Kolkata (Calcutta), Chennai, Mumbai (Bombay) 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.

CAMPsites: These are to be found throughout India. Full addresses may be obtained from Incredible India (see Top Things To Do).

YOUTH HOSTELS: These provide a convenient and cheap base for organised tours, trekking, hiking or mountaineering. The Department of Tourism has set up several 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.

Accommodation Information: Youth Hostels Association of India 5 Nyaya Marg, Chanakypuri, New Delhi 110 021, IndiaTel: (11) 2611 0250. Website: www.yhai.org Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India B-82, 8th Floor, Himalaya House, 23 Kasturba Gandhi Marg, Connaught Place, New Delhi 110001, IndiaTel: (11) 2331 8781/2 or 2332 2634/47 or 3770. Website: www.fhrai.com Contact for a full list of Government-approved hotels and palace hotels.

Introduction

Note

On December 26th 2004 a massive earthquake registering 9.0 on the Richter scale struck off the west coast of Indonesia. The quake created a tsunami a series of huge waves that spread destruction across many parts of Asia and reached as far as the east coast of Africa. The coastal areas of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in Southern India were badly affected. Travel elsewhere in India was unaffected. Those wishing to travel to affected areas should check with the relevant tour operator, tourist board or embassy for the latest advice prior to travel (see Contact Addresses).

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.

The North

DELHI: Delhi has two parts: New Delhi, India's capital and the seat of government, is a modern 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. Must sees include the Red Fort and the nearby Jama Masjid (India's largest mosque) both built in the mid-17th century at the height of the Moghul Empire. Also of note is the Qutab Minar's soaring tower built in 1193 by Qutab-ud-din immediately after the defeat of Delhi's last Hindu kingdom. At the base of the tower is the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque built in the same period using stone from demolished Hindu temples. 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.

UTTAR PRADESH: 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. 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 in 1631. Shah Jehan was later imprisoned by his own son in the nearby Red Fort, another major attraction whose massive red sandstone walls rise over 65 feet and measure 1.5 miles in circumference. Other important landmarks are Akbar's Palace, the Jahangir Mahal, the octagonal tower Mussuman Burj and the Pearl Mosque. An hour outside Agra 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 but is definitely worth seeing if you have time.

RAJASTHAN: 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 painted in preparation for the visit of Britain's Prince of Wales in 1853, Jaipur is a town of broad, open avenues and many palaces. The Amber Palace, just outside the city is spectacular and the facade of the Palace of the Winds within the city walls is an essential photo stop. Also worth seeing is Jai Singh's City Palace and the Jantar Mantar Observatory. To the southwest is the most romantic city in Rajasthan, Udaipur, built around the lovely Lake Pichola and famed for its Lake Palace Hotel, it has been dubbed the 'Venice of the East'. 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.

MADHYA PRADESH: 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.

HIMACHAL PRADESH: 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.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR: 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 Rambhreshwar 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 Amarnath. 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

MUMBAI (BOMBAY): 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, Marine Drive 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 eighth-century cave temples, on whose walls are large rock carvings, the finest of which is the three-faced Maheshmurti, the great Lord.

MAHARASHTRA: 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.

GUJARAT: To the north of Mumbai 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.

GOA: To the south of Maharashtra lies Goa. The 100km- (60 mile-) long 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. Goa's



infamous hippies are being replaced by backpackers, Indian visitors and package tourists. Full moon parties still take place in Anjuna but are smaller and less authentic than in the heady days of the 1960s. Anjuna is also famous throughout Goa for its Wednesday flea market. If you are looking for beautiful, quiet beaches head for the South between Benaulim and Palolem. 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.

CHENNAI: The regional capital is Chennai (formerly Madras), India's fourth-largest city and capital of the state of Tamil Nadu. 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 AD 78 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.

TAMIL NADU: Within the state 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.

KERALA: 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 Cranganore, Alleppey and Kochi.

KARNATAKA: 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.

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



ANDAMAN ISLANDS: 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 Kolkata (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

KOLKATA (CALCUTTA): The largest city in India and hub of the east is Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal. 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 subcontinent's best film-makers. Central Kolkata (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.

BIHAR AND ORISSA: 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.

DARJEELING: To the north of Kolkata (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.

SIKKIM: 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.

ASSAM AND MEGHALAYA: 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, 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 main Resorts & Excursions sections. Major beaches include:

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

Mumbai: Juhu Beach; crowded 5-star hotel complex.

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

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

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

Popular hill stations: These include: Kashmir: Leh in Ladakh, Pahalgam, Srinagar and 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, Mussoorie, Ranikhet (reasonably priced hotels, tourist bungalows, clubs, youth hostels), Ropeway (hotels and tourist bungalows). West Bengal: Darjeeling, RA, Kalimpong for mountaineering. Maharashtra: Khandala, Lonavla, Mahabaleshwar, Matheran, and Panchgani. Meghalaya: Shillong. Sikkim:



Gangkok (RA, hotels). Tamil Nadu: Ootacamund, Udagamandalam, Kodaikanal and Silvery Lake hotels, tourist bungalows.

Lesser-known hill stations: These include: Himachal Pradesh: Chamba, Dalhousie, Dharamsala, Kangra, Keylong, Nahan and Paonta Saheb. Kashmir: Batote and Sonamarg. Uttar Pradesh: Dehra Dun and Lansdown. West Bengal: Mirik. Madhya Pradesh: Pachmarhi. Maharashtra: Panhala. Gujarat: Saputara. Rajasthan: Mount Abu. Tamil Nadu: Coonoor, Kotagiri and Yercaud. Kerala: Munnar, Periyar and Ponmudi. 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 AND KASHMIR: Jammu and 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: 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 Indrahhar 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: 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



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: 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. There are 90 national parks and 411 wildlife sanctuaries 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 (Himachal Pradesh): Bird sanctuary with crane, duck, goose and teal. 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 (Uttar Pradesh): Nepal border; tiger, sloth bear and panther. 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 (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 (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) (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 (Madhya Pradesh): Situated in the Vindhyan Mountains, this park has a wide variety of wildlife including panther, sambar and gaur. Kanha National Park (Madhya Pradesh): Sal forest and grassland; only home of barasingha (swamp deer), tiger, cheetal and gaur. Shivpuri National Park (Madhya Pradesh): Open forest and lake; chinkara, chowsingha (four-horned antelope), nilgai, tiger, leopard and water-birds.

WESTERN INDIA: Krishnagiri Uppan National Park (Maharashtra): Formerly known as Borivli, this park protects an important scenic area close to Mumbai (Bombay). Kanheri Caves and Vihar,



Tulsi and Powai lakes; water-birds and smaller types of wildlife. Lion Safari Park nearby. Tadoba National Park (Maharashtra): Teak forests and lake; tiger, leopard, nilgai and gaur. Night-viewing. 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 (Gujarat): Lake; migratory water-birds; indigenous birds include flamingo. Little Rann of Kutch Wildlife Sanctuary (Gujarat): Desert; herds of khur (Indian wild ass), wolf and caracal. Velavadar National Park (Gujarat): New Delta grasslands; large concentration of black buck.

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 (Tamil Nadu): One of the most spectacular breeding grounds in India. Cormorant, heron, stork, pelican, grebe and many others. 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 (Andhra Pradesh): Flamingo, grey pelican, heron and tern. Dandeli National Park (Karnataka): Park with bison, panther, tiger and sambar. Easily accessible from Goa. 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.

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 (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 (Assam): Tiger and water-birds; fishing permitted. Palamau Tiger Reserve (Bihar): Rolling, forested hills; tiger, leopard, elephant, sambar, jungle cat, rhesus macaque (monkey) and, occasionally, wolf. Hazaribagh National Park (Bihar): Sal forested hills; sambar, nilgai, cheetal, tiger, leopard and occasionally muntjac (larger barking deer). 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 (West Bengal): Tropical forest and grassland; rhino, elephant and rich birdlife. Similipal Tiger Reserve (Orissa): Immense Sal forest; tiger, elephant, leopard, sambar, cheetal, muntjac and chevrotain. Chilika Wildlife (Bird) Sanctuary (Orissa): Migratory birds, flamingo, Siberian ducks, heron and Teal Comorant.

9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

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 Incredible India 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 Incredible India for further information (see Contact Addresses 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: 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 can be taken in the Thar desert and range from one to 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, 6 Benito Juarez Road, New Delhi 110 021 (tel: (11) 2467 1211; fax: (11) 2688 3412; e-mail: indmount@vsnl.com; website: www.indmount.org). 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. Horse riding is available in hill stations.

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: 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 Kolkata (Calcutta) Golf Club. Gulmarg and Srinagar 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.

Entertainment



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. Things to know: 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. National specialities: Dal (crushed lentil soup with various additional vegetables). Dahi (the curd or yoghurt which accompanies the curry). Kulfi (Indian ice cream). Rasgullas (cream cheese balls flavoured with rose water). Gulab Jamuns (flour, yoghurt and ground almonds). Jalebi (pancakes in syrup). Fruit mango, pomegranate, melon, apricot, apple and strawberry. Pan (betel leaf in which are wrapped spices such as aniseed and cardamom; it is common to finish the meal by chewing Pan as a digestive). Regional specialities: North: Rogan josh (curried lamb). Gushtaba (spicy meat balls in yoghurt). Biryani (chicken or lamb in orange-flavoured rice, sprinkled with sugar and rose water). Tandoori cooking (chicken, meat or fish marinated in herbs and baked in a clay oven). Kebab. Flat breads, such as pooris, chapatis and naan. South: Bhujia (vegetable curry). Dosa, idli and samba (rice pancakes, dumplings with pickles, and vegetable and lentil curry). Raitas (yoghurt with grated cucumber and mint). Coconut is a major ingredient of southern Indian cooking. West coast: Mumbai duck (curried or fried bumblebee fish). Pomfret (Indian salmon). Parsi dhan sak (lamb or chicken cooked with curried lentils). Vindaloo. Bengali: Dahi maach (curried fish in yoghurt flavoured with turmeric and ginger). Malai (curried prawn with coconut). National drinks: Chai (tea) is India's favourite drink. 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). Coconut milk straight from the nut is cool and refreshing. Indian beer (in many varieties). Indian-made gin, rum, brandy and wine. Tipping: Taxis and restaurants do not expect to be tipped, however, hotel and airport porters should be tipped around INR20, and guides and drivers INR100 per day where service is not included (equalling roughly 10 per cent where appropriate).

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 (Bombay) and Kolkata (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 are widely sought after; 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 emporia. **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 Kanchipuram, Murshidabad, Patna 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, such as the distinctive, brightly coloured Tibetan rugs, available mainly in Darjeeling. **Clothes:** Clothes are cheap, and can be quickly tailor-made in some shops. Cloth includes 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. Woven rugs and papier mâché (some decorated in gold leaf) are a characteristic Kashmir product. Inlaid marble and alabaster are specialities of Agra. Rajasthan is known for its colourful fabrics and silks. **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:** Mon-Sat 0930-1700 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.

Business

GDP: US\$759 billion (2005 estimate). **Main exports:** Textiles, gems and jewellery, engineering goods, chemicals and leather manufactures. **Main imports:** Crude oil, machinery, gems, fertiliser and chemicals. **Main trade partners:** Belgium, China (PR), Hong Kong (SAR), Japan, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, UK and USA.

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 ranks among 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, oil seeds 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. After the hiatus following the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the economy has resumed its healthy growth rate, currently just under 7 per cent per annum, while inflation is just 4 per cent. Indian colleges and universities are turning out large numbers of graduates with advanced technology skills who 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. Further reforms, especially improvements to the national infrastructure and basic services, are now seen as the priority for central and regional governments. Foreign direct investment has reached an all-time peak of over US\$4 billion annually and is set to continue rising.

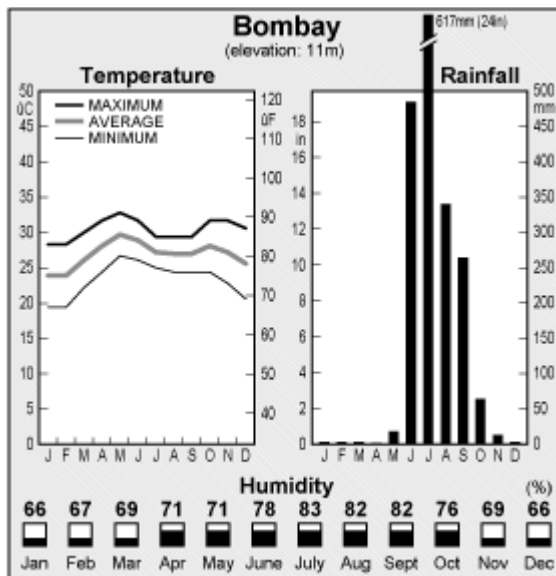
Business Etiquette: English is widely used in commercial circles, so there is little need for interpreter and translation services. Business cards are usually exchanged and should be presented with both hands. When introduced to someone, wait to see if your host greets you with a Namaste, the traditional 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 businesspeople 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: Mon-Fri 0930-1700, Sat 0930-1300.

Conferences/Conventions: The main congress and exhibition centres in the country are Agra, Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kolkata (Calcutta), Mumbai, Panaji, Udaipur and Varanasi. 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.

Commercial Information: Ministry of External Affairs South Block, New Delhi 110 011, India Tel: (11) 2301 2318 or 1165. Website: <http://meaindia.nic.in> Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) 147B Gautam Nagar, Gulmohar Enclave, New Delhi 110 049, India Tel: (11) 2651 2477/9. Website: www.assochem.org Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Federation House, Tansen Marg, New Delhi 110 001, India Tel: (11) 2373 8760/70. Website: www.ficci.com.



10 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 Gulmarg, Manali and Pahalgam 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 mediumweights 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 between late April and July. Summer temperatures hot as high as Northern India although humidity is



extreme. Cooling breezes on coast. Inland, Mysore and Bijapur have pleasant climates with relatively low rainfall. Required clothing: Lightweight cottons and linens. Waterproofing is necessary during the monsoon. Warmer clothes are worn in the winter, particularly in the hills.

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. 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.

11 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: Indian civilisation can be traced back to at least 2500 BC, 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 1500 BC. Between 521 and 486 BC, under Darius, the area became part of the Persian Empire. Alexander the Great arrived in India in 326 BC, 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 (AD 319-606). The invasion of the White Huns brought all this to an end, and northern India became fragmented, and was only reunified with the arrival of Muslims from the west. During this time, the south had been trading by sea with the Romans and Egyptians. It took some time for Muslim forces to forge a permanent presence in northern India: in the late 12th century, Muhammad of Ghori, who had built a powerbase in what is now the Punjab, rapidly expanded eastwards. His conquests led to the establishment of Delhi as a major centre of political power and ultimately its position as the Indian capital. The next major influx after the Muslims was the Moghuls, who swept over the mountain passes from Central Asia in the 1520s and maintained effective control of the north until the mid-18th century. The peak of Moghul influence came in the late 16th and early 17th centuries; by the time of the British conquest, at the end of the 18th century, the Moghul Empire was already in severe decline. The British, motivated by trade and geopolitics, managed to take effective control of the whole sub-continent using the telegraph and the railways both of which they built as their main instruments of control. 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 World War I, when Mahatma Gandhi led the Congress and began the policy of non-cooperation 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 Muhammad 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 (Pakistan was divided into two parts, East and West. See below and Pakistan section). Since this time India has been a democratic republic, with 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 polity which with a number of significant exceptions has served fairly well to minimise violent religious strife. 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. Among the most important decisions that he took was the authorisation of 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 openly hostile. 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 were 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 to have held power, Rajiv Gandhi. Although Indian troops had pulled out by 1991, Tamil guerrillas blamed him for undermining their struggle: in an election rally in 1991, he was killed by a suicide bomber. The last of the Nehru/Gandhi dynasty to hold office, Rajiv's death marked a period of decline for Congress (I) from which it has yet to recover. Since the government of ex-foreign minister, PV Narasimha Rao, who took over from Rajiv, its electoral standing has gradually declined. The main beneficiary has been the anti-secular Hindu party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Under the leadership of Atal Bihari ('AB') Vajpayee, the BJP steadily improved its position throughout the 1990s to the point where, following the most recent poll in October 1999, it had sufficient strength to put together a stable coalition government. The BJP is broadly divided between radical and moderate wings: Vajpayee, by 2002, was facing an increasingly difficult task holding the two together. Indian foreign policy is dominated by relations with Pakistan. The main cause of friction is the status of Kashmir, most of which was awarded to India in 1947. Both sides claim the entire region and both insist their claim is 'non-negotiable'. Separatist guerrillas, backed by Pakistan, have waged a steady campaign against Indian forces which shows no sign of resolution despite regular initiatives. Given the nuclear capabilities of both countries, and their proven delivery systems, this is now viewed as major potential flashpoint and is closely watched by the world's major powers. In the spring of 2002, following a spurt of guerrilla activity in Kashmir and intercommunal violence between Muslims and Hindus in the western Indian state of Gujarat, the two countries came close to war. Only frantic international diplomacy calmed the situation. Historically, the USA and China had backed Pakistan while India had close relations with the Soviet Union. The demise of the Soviet Union has not, however, damaged India excessively: it still enjoys close links with Moscow and is concerned only by the possibility of instability in central Asia spilling southwards. China has long viewed India as a rival, and the main irritant is the presence of the exiled Tibetan opposition leader, the Dalai Lama, in northwest India. Nevertheless, the two governments have signed a major trade agreement and relations are steadily improving. As for the Americans, India moved quickly to



support the Bush administration's plan for ballistic missile defence in the hope that the remaining sanctions from 1998 will be lifted. On December 26 2005, the tsunami and its aftermath struck the southeast coast of India and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Controversially, India refused all attempts at assistance from international aid agencies because of a military base on one of the islands and indigenous tribes on some others. However, military help has enabled them to transport some people onto the mainland and initiate reconstruction.

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 a bicameral parliament and cabinet of ministers. Each of the states also has an elected assembly. The bicameral national parliament consists of the lower house, the Lok Sabha, which has 542 members popularly elected for a five-year term and the upper house, the Rajya Sabha, which has 245 members indirectly elected by the state assemblies to serve six years. The head of state is the president, while executive power is vested in the prime minister who is the head of the cabinet and is normally the leader of the largest party in the Lok Sabha.

Travel Advice

Travellers are advised against all travel to or through rural areas of Jammu and Kashmir (other than Ladakh) and all but essential travel by air to Srinagar. There is a high level of conflict and terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir (excluding Ladakh). Jammu City is somewhat safer but attacks still occur. On 27 April 2006, seven tourists and nine local residents were injured, one of them critically, in a grenade blast at the bus terminus in Pahalgam, a tourist resort 96km south of Srinagar. Travellers are advised against all but essential travel to Imphal (by air) and against all travel in the rest of Manipur and Tripura. Kidnapping, banditry and insurgency are rife throughout the northeastern region. There have also been three bomb attacks in Guwahati (Assam State) this year the latest on 18 March 2006. There have also been occasional skirmishes on the India/Bangladesh border. Rioting is still taking place in Vadodara in Gujarat. Security has been tightened and there is a curfew currently in place. There have also been terrorist attacks elsewhere in India, including in major cities. Visitors should be vigilant in all parts of India. Penalties for trafficking, dealing and using illegal drugs are severe. This advice is based on information provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK. It is correct at time of publishing. As the situation can change rapidly, visitors are advised to contact the following **organisations for the latest travel advice:** British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Tel: (0845) 850 2829. Website: www.fc.gov.uk US Department of State Website: <http://travel.state.gov/travel>

Top Things To See

Delhi has two parts: New Delhi, India's capital and the seat of Government, is a modern 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. Must sees include the Red Fort and the nearby Jama Masjid (India's largest mosque) both built in the mid-17th century at the height of the Moghul Empire. Also of note is the Qutab Minar's soaring tower built in 1200AD by Qutab-ud-din immediately after the defeat of Delhi's last Hindu kingdom. At the base of the tower is the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque, built in the same period using stone from demolished Hindu temples. Gaze at 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. Set high in the Garhwal Himalayas, Garhwal (sometimes referred to as the Uttarakhand) is the source of this life-giving 'Ganga' and abounds in myths and legends of the Indian gods. Indeed, many of the great rivers of northern India have their headwaters in this land of lush valleys and towering snow-ridged peaks. Discover a host of historical gems Delhi, for instance, 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, one of the seven wonders of the world. This magnificent mausoleum was built by Shah Jahan as a monument to his love for his wife, Mumtaz, who died in childbirth in 1631. Shah Jehan was later imprisoned by his own son in the nearby Red Fort, another major attraction whose massive red sandstone walls rise over 65 feet and measure 1.5 miles in circumference. Other important landmarks are Akbar's Palace, the Jahangir Mahal, the octagonal tower Mussumman Burj and the Pearl Mosque. 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 painted in preparation for the visit of Prince Albert, Consort of Queen Victoria, in 1883, Jaipur is a town of broad, open avenues and many palaces. The Amber Palace, just outside the city is spectacular and the facade of the Palace of the Winds within the city walls is an essential photo stop. 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. The State of 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. Visit the most romantic city in Rajasthan, Udaipur, built around the lovely Lake Pichola and famed for its Lake Palace Hotel, and dubbed the 'Venice of the East'. The Hill Stations of India are an enchanting must-see. They have long been popular among Indians and foreign visitors alike for providing a relaxing and salubrious retreat from the heat of the plains. 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 Kullu Valley. Southeast of Mumbai are several fine hill stations, notably Matheran with its narrow gauge trains, and Mahabaleshwar. Mahabaleshwar is in the north of the range of the Western Ghats, running 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. The temples of Rambhreshwar and Raghunath in Kashmir 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'. Kashmir is an extravagantly beautiful land of flower-spangled meadows, wild orchards, spectacular coniferous forests, icy mountain peaks and clear streams and rivers. Escape any Indian stereotypes by entering the principal metropolis of Western India, Mumbai: the capital of the state of Maharashtra, a bustling port and the commercial centre of India, with plate-glass skyscrapers and modern industry that jostles alongside bazaars and a hectic streetlife. Many of the country's films are made in the famous Mumbai studios. Welcome to 'Bollywood'. Enjoy the sights and sounds of India's beaches. Mumbai has a pleasant seafront with a palm-lined promenade and attractive beaches such as Juhu, Versova, Marve, Madh and Manori. Goa's 100km- (60 mile-) long 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. Goa's infamous hippies are being replaced by backpackers, Indian visitors and package tourists. If you are looking for beautiful, quiet beaches head for the South between Benaulim and Palolem. 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. Marina Beach in Chennai is the second-largest beach in the world. The state of Kerala is where many of India's major coastal resorts are to be



found. Among the finest is Kovalam, offering unspoilt beaches with increasingly modern amenities. Further to the north is the state of Karnataka, which has fine, unexplored beaches at Karwar, Mahe and Udupi. Observe some outstanding rock-cut temples, such as the Buddhist cave temples at Ajanta, which 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 regional capital is Chennai (formerly Madras), India's fourth-largest city and capital of the state of Tamil Nadu. 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 AD 78 when the apostle St Thomas was martyred here. Witness the remnants of colonial heritage, most prevalent in the largest city in India and hub of the east, Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal. 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 subcontinent's best film-makers. Central Kolkata (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. If you want temples, 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. 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. There are over 70 national parks, 400 wildlife sanctuaries (including bird sanctuaries) and 24 tiger reserves in the country. 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. In Kaziranga, it is possible to see the one-horned rhinoceros of India. Dachigam Wildlife Sanctuary (Kashmir) is a broad valley with a variety of vegetation, including rare hangul deer, jackal, leopard, himalayan weasel and wild boar. Govind National Park (Himachal Pradesh) has snowclad peaks and glaciers, which contain snow leopard, brown and black bear and musk deer. Corbett National Park (Uttar Ranchal) is in the Himalayan foothills and is home to tiger, elephant, sloth bear and rich birdlife. Dudhwa National Park (Uttar Pradesh) on the Nepal border withholds tiger, sloth bear, rhino and rich birdlife. Sariska Wildlife Sanctuary (Rajasthan) contains sambhar (largest Indian deer), chital (spotted deer), nilgai (Indian antelope), black buck, leopard and tiger. Ranthambhor (Sawai Madhopur Rajasthan) has hill forest, plains and lakes, privy to sambar, chinkara (Indian gazelle), tiger, sloth bear, crocodiles and migratory water-birds. Bharatpur National Park (Keoladeo Ghana Bird Sanctuary) (Rajasthan) is India's most outstanding bird sanctuary; many indigenous water-birds; huge migration from Siberia and China; crane, goose, stork, heron, snakes, etc. Bandhavgarh National Park (Madhya Pradesh) has a wide variety of wildlife, including panther, sambar and gaur. Kanha National Park (Madhya Pradesh) is filled with sal forest and grassland; home of barasingha (swamp deer), tiger, cheetal and gaur. Shivpuri National Park (Madhya Pradesh) contains chinkara, chowsingha (four-horned antelope), nilgai, tiger, leopard and water-



birds. In the enclosures of Tadoba National Park (Maharashtra) are tiger, leopard wild boar and gaur. Gir National Park (Gujarat) is the home of Asiatic lion, sambar, chowsingha, nilgai, leopard, chinkara and wild boar. The best viewings are at dawn and dusk. Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary (Kerala) has a large artificial lake, and elephant, monkey, gaur, wild dog, black langur, otters, tortoises and rich birdlife. Vedanthangal Water Birds Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu) is one of the most spectacular breeding grounds in India. Cormorant, heron, stork, pelican, grebe and many others can be found here. Dandeli National Park (Karnataka) is a park with bison, panther, tiger, sloth bear and sambar, and is easily accessible from Goa. Wayanad (Kerala) is extensively mixed forest and contains the largest elephant population in India, with leopard, gaur, sambar, muntjac and giant squirrel. Birds include racquet-tailed drongo, trogon and barbet. Kaziranga National Park (Assam) contains elephant grass and swamps, one-horned Indian rhinoceros, water buffalo, tiger, leopard, elephant, deer and rich birdlife. Sundarban National Park (West Bengal) is home to tiger, fishing cat, deer, crocodile, dolphin and rich birdlife. Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary (West Bengal) is tropical forest and grassland with rhino, elephant and rich birdlife. This list of sanctuaries and national parks are only a fraction of the wildlife-viewing opportunities available in India. 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. The Aravallis are remnants of the oldest mountain range in the subcontinent, and resemble outcroppings of rocks rather than mountains, 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.

Tourist Information: Incredible India in the UK7 Cork Street, London W1S 3LH, UK Tel: (020) 7437 3677 or (0870) 010 2183 (brochure request line). Website: www.incredibleindia.org Incredible India in the USASuite 1808, 1270 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020-1700, USA Tel: (212) 586 4901. Website: www.incredibleindia.orgOffice also in: Los Angeles.

Top Things To Do

Listen to some of the celebrated sounds of Indian music, such as the sitar, sarod and the subtle rhythm of the tabla. Cities like Delhi are full of such sounds and are also host to an enthralling variety of dance forms, each with its own costumes and elaborate language of gestures. Watch some of the exciting camel fairs and treks in India's desert. Near Ajmer is the small lakeside town of Pushkar, a site of religious importance for Hindus and host every November to the fascinating Camel Fair. Stumble into the Rajasthan desert and you will discover Jaisalmer, a charming oasis town, once a resting place on the old caravan route to Persia which boasts among its attractions the camel treks out into the surrounding desert, and the Desert Festival held in January/February each year with camel racing and a 'Mr Desert' contest. Play golf on the highest golf course in the world, at Gulmarg. From here there are good views of Nanga Parbat, one of the highest mountains in the world. Although smaller and less authentic than in the heady days of the 1960s, there are still some fabulous full moon parties to go to in Anjuna in Goa. Whilst in Goa, attend the spectacular Carnival, held on the three days leading up to Ash Wednesday. This colourful festival is jam-packed with bustling fun, as crowds throng to watch the lavish floats pass by, and dance to music that continually rents the air. Snorkel in the the Andaman Islands, in the Bay of Bengal, a lushly forested archipelago that has exotic plant life and a wide variety of corals and tropical fish. Take one of the great railway journeys of the world, to the north of Kolkata (Calcutta) - 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. Since India has a profusion of mountains, why not try some mountaineering, or trekking for the cautious? Trekking is the main activity for visitors in the mountain state of Sikkim. Trekking is allowed only in groups, while individuals may only visit Gangtok, Rumtek and Phodom. Treks from Manali include the Bhaga River to Keylong, and then on to the Bara Shigri glacier or over the Baralacha Pass to Leh. 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 Indrahhar 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. The region of Kumaon stretches from the Himalayas in the north to the green foothills of Terai and Bhabar in the south, and 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. 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. 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.

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Overview II

India is a mystical land of seductive images. Hinduism is practised by 85 per cent of Indians, the religious rites and red-letter days woven into the fabric of everyday life. It is also India's **vastness that challenges the imagination:** the subcontinent is home to one sixth of the world's population, a diverse culture and an intoxicatingly rich history. Perhaps this is because Indian civilisation can be traced back to at least 2500 BC. The first known civilisation settled along the Indus River in what is now Pakistan. Between 521 and 486 BC, under Darius, the area became part of the Persian Empire. India's two great religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, developed, and various dynasties emerged. The invasion of the White Huns fragmented northern India, only reunified with the arrival of Muslims from the west. The next major influx was the Moghuls in the 1520s from Central Asia, who maintained effective control of the north until the mid-18th century. But by the time of the British conquest, at the end of the 18th century, the Moghul Empire was already in severe decline. The British, motivated by trade and geopolitics, managed to take effective control of the subcontinent using the telegraph and the railways both of which they built; for the first time, the many and varied provinces of India were administered



by a single 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 World War I, when Mahatma Gandhi led the Congress and began the policy of non-cooperation 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 Muhammad Ali Jinnah, claimed a separate homeland in provinces such as the Punjab and East Bengal, where they formed a majority, but Gandhi wanted India to be a unified and secular state. Jinnah's view prevailed and in August 1947, the independent states of India and Pakistan came into being (Pakistan was divided into two parts, East and West). Since this time, India has been a democratic republic. Such a rich history has spawned palaces, temples and monuments. Indeed, the most frequently visited part of India is the Golden Triangle. The unfairly maligned great cities of Mumbai and Kolkata have a bustling, colourful charm, while the holy city of Varanasi or the awe-inspiring temples of Tamil Nadu are worthy objects of pilgrimage. For those who prefer more sybaritic pleasures, tackle the palm-fringed beaches of Goa. And for solitude, India ripples with mountains and hills, from the towering beauty of the Himalayas to pine forests, lakes and babbling streams. One of the fascinations of India is the juxtaposition of old and new; centuries of history rubbing shoulders with the computer age; and Bangalore's 'Silicon Valley' is as much a part of the world's largest democracy as its remotest village.

Communications

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

Mobile telephone: Roaming agreements exist with most international mobile phone companies. Coverage is limited to major towns.

Internet: E-mail can be accessed from Internet cafes across the country.

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

MEDIA: The state's TV monopoly was broken in 1992, resulting in a boom of private channels. News and entertainment shows are especially popular, with news programmes often attracting the larger audiences. A number of 24-hour news channels operate in India. Public TV is run by Doordarshan, while STAR Plus, owned by News Corporation, is one of the most popular private channels. Private radio stations were sanctioned in 2000, but only public All India Radio is allowed to broadcast news. Newspaper circulation has risen, thanks to a growing middle class, as has the number of Internet users. Press: There are numerous local dailies published in several languages. Many newspapers are in English; the most important include The Economic Times, The Hindu, Hindustan Times, Indian Express, Navbharat Times, Punjab Kesari, Deccan Herald, The Statesman, Pioneer and The Times of India. TV: Doordarshan Television operates 21 national, regional and local services throughout India. Zee TV and Star TV are satellite and cable TV services. Aaj Tak is a 24-hour news channel, New Delhi TV (NDTV) operates NDTV-India and NDTV 24x7 news channels. Sun Network is a commercial broadcaster. Radio: Stations include All India Radio, All India Radio External Service (offering broadcasts in local and regional languages, Arabic and English), Radio Mirchi (a commercial network in Mumbai, Delhi and other cities), Radio City (a commercial station in Mumbai and other cities), and commercial network Red FM.