

rustic india

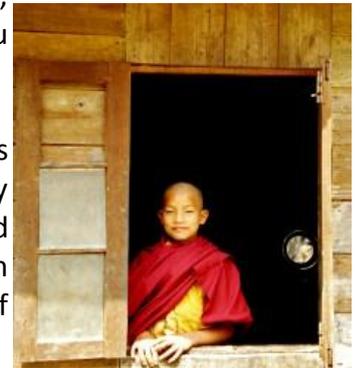
explore | discover | encounter

TRAVEL TIPS FOR YOU

Accommodation

Most of the hotels in India have a check in & check out time of 12 noon. However, there are some hotels where this may differ and we will try our best to inform you in advance about this if we are made aware of the same.

Early check-in or late check-out is subject to availability and at the hotel's discretion. Your meal plan for the stay at a hotel will be as per the final itinerary given to you. (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner). Most hotels are booked on a bed and breakfast basis, and consist of Indian as well as Continental dishes. On houseboats, a few jungle and mountain resorts, all meals are included. Rates of the hotels may increase during festival dates as well as Xmas and New Year



Flight Tickets

Should you also book flights with us, or if they are a part of your itinerary, then they will be in the form of E-tickets, which will be emailed to you. We strongly recommend that you take a print-out of these tickets, as you will require to present your ticket at the entrance of the airport. Along with this you will also require to present a relevant photo ID (you can use your passport as a identification).

Since flight tickets are issued in advance, it is possible that there might be amendments in flight timings flights. Please reconfirm these timings with the airline on the day of the journey. You can also ask the local agent to do this for you.

Train Tickets

Your itinerary may include either a day or an overnight train journey. The train tickets will also be booked as E-tickets. Please carry print-outs of these E-tickets during your journey. You might also be asked to provide proof of identification.

Any changes in timings after the issue of tickets cannot be advised. Our local agents will be able to assist you in reconfirming the departure timings. We would advise that you bring a blanket or a sleeping bag, and perhaps a padlock to secure your bag to your berth.



Trains can be booked up to 90 days prior to the date of travel. Day journeys will be travel in “AC Chair car” which is similar to airline-style seating and the price sometimes includes a meal. Overnight journeys will be by “AC Two Tier” or “AC Three Tier”. In two tiers, the compartments have four berths in the cabin and two berths in the passage. There are no doors but only a curtain is there for privacy. In three tier, the compartments have six berths in the cabin and two berths in the passage. There are no doors or curtain. There are two toilets each at either end of the bogie and is usually a mix of Western



and Indian styles. During an overnight journey, you will also be provided with freshly laundered blankets, sheets and pillows. If you like you can also carry a sleeping bag.



Transfers

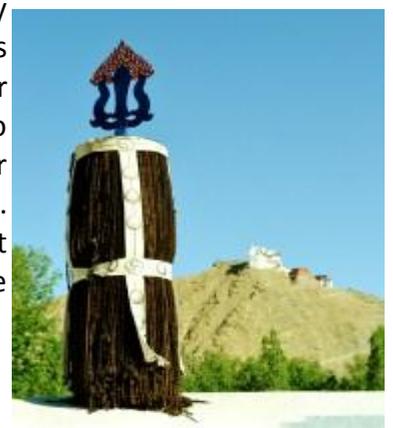
For any transfers requested we arrange a private car and chauffeur. Upon arrival at a railway station or airport, please look for our representative who will be holding a placard with your name on it. Our drivers have been directed to report at your hotel ahead of the time mentioned on the voucher, if this is the case; please do not be alarmed as he will be happy to wait until you are ready to depart.

In case you haven't requested a specific transfer, you can engage local transports like taxis, auto rickshaws or cycle rickshaws. Taxis are recommended for longer journeys but are more expensive than rickshaws. Auto rickshaws usually take a maximum of 3 passengers and are ideal for short trips and for squeezing through city traffic. Cycle rickshaws are three wheeled transport with an open seat and

accommodate a maximum of 2 people. Similar to auto rickshaws they are also good for short trips provided that you have time on your hands and are ready for an unusual experience. While taxis and auto rickshaws have fare meters, they sometimes disregard them and the charges will depend on your bargaining skills. You can check with the hotel staff as to the appropriate amount for the journey you are about to undertake.

Transport

Depending on your itinerary, part or the total of the tour may include travel by air-conditioned private transport with chauffeur except for mountainous regions where air-conditioning is not a necessity. The type of car will differ according to the size of your party and the nature of your itinerary. In order to prepare for the following day of the tour, it is suggested that you speak to your driver and agree on the departure time for the next destination in advance. Even though the driver is at your service, we request you to please ensure that he has enough time to rest and also to have his meals. The driver will make arrangements for his own accommodation and meals.



Vehicle allocation is based as follows:

- 1 to 2 pax – Standard car
- 3 to 4 pax – Toyota Innova

- 5 to 10 pax – Tempo Traveller

However this may change depending on the place. In hilly regions, the car allotted will be a Toyota Innova or similar, which carries a maximum of 4 pax.

All the transport is air-conditioned excepting in a few places like Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Darjeeling, Sikkim, etc. Also in some of these places, there are no coaches available and we may be using smaller vehicles. You will be pre-informed.



Sightseeing

For places that have sightseeing included in your itinerary, an English-speaking local guide will be at your service. Entrance fees are not included so these you have to pay directly.

For certain sights there may be extra fees for cameras and video cameras. While we have tried to ensure that you see a lot during your trip, there is always some extra time available. During this you can take one of our optional excursions and our local agent will advise you of the opportunities in each place you visit.

In a half day tour, the visits are normally for four hours. In a full day tour, the visits are normally for six to eight hours.

Photography

There are a lot of colourful and intriguing people that you will encounter on your trip. Should you feel like taking a photograph of one of them, please ask for their consent beforehand and respect their decision if they say no. Sometimes you will find that they may ask for some remuneration in return for the photo. While don't encourage this, we suggest that you carry some small change for this purpose in case you do feel like giving them something.



Shopping

While most of us love to shop for souvenirs and keepsakes, keep in mind that in India most of the shops do not keep a fixed price for their products. Haggling is commonplace in shops and markets and should not be taken too seriously. In these shops you will be expected to bargain down until you reach what you think is a fair price for the item of interest. You always have the option of walking away if you are not happy with the price. There are some government shops which have fixed prices and bargaining is not entertained here.

On completion of your sightseeing, the guide may lead you to a shop which displays a local speciality. Often there might be a presentation on how the items are made and you may even find it interesting. This is the shopkeeper's way of marketing their products. You are under no obligation to purchase any items from them, however, if you do choose to buy something during your tour, please keep in mind that we cannot be held responsible. We do not have any "recommended" or "approved" shops, please disregard any claims to the contrary from guides or shopkeepers!



Tipping

Tipping is a part of the service culture. For a service provided we recommend restaurant waiters can be given between 5 to 10% of the bill amount.

With regards to sightseeing guides, you can give them Rs 100 per person (per guide). When porters at hotels help you with your bags

it is recommended that you give them approximately Rs 25 per bag. In addition to this, it is suggested that you tip the driver of your tour transport at the end of the trip. We advise Rs 200/- per person per day but you are welcome to tip extra if you're happy with your driver.



Money Talks

Most ATMs are operational around the clock and can be easily found in large cities. They accept Visa, MasterCard, Maestro and Plus. Credit cards and international bank cards are also accepted in larger cities and shops, more expensive hotels and restaurants.

In case you are more comfortable with cash, then we advised that you exchange your currency or travellers cheques at banks or official exchange offices, which are available in most cities and towns. Many hotels also offer currency exchange and may offer a faster service at similar rates. Exchange rates change daily. It is a rule that Indian currency can neither be imported nor exported. Hence we suggest that you retain the receipts until the end of your holiday as you will need this to change your money back before you leave the country. Travellers cheques are rarely accepted except in banks.

India has a shortage of small change, so we urge you to maintain a small supply of coins and small denomination notes (e.g.10 & 20 INR notes). If you are given any torn bank notes, please do not accept them, as most Indians do not accept them as payment. This does not apply to just Indian rupees but every country's currency as well. Coins are in denominations of 1, 2, 5 & 10 rupee coins and bank notes are in values of 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 500 & 1000 rupees.

Climate

India, being a subcontinent, has different climates. For example, in Rajasthan, Agra, Delhi and Varanasi in October and in mid-April, temperatures range between 22 °C to 32 °C. While they don't receive extreme rainfall, it touches 40°C during high summer.

Darjeeling & Sikkim: between March to mid-June and October to December (15°C to 20°C). While the temperature is still pleasant from July to September the monsoon here can be quite wet.

Dharamsala & Manali: March to June (10°C to 20°C) and October/November (around 8°C to 14°C). The monsoon comes in during July & August.

Ladakh: June to September has warm sunny weather with temperatures around 20-30°C

Bombay, Goa, Kerala & Tamil Nadu: November and mid-April. If you like the monsoon then June to September is the best time. The

temperature during the year ranges between 27°C to 40°C.

Madhya Pradesh: November to February, temperatures are 10°C to 27°C.

Gujarat: Between October to February, temperatures range between 12°C to 29°C and the weather is usually warm and dry.

Orissa: Recommended time is from June to February. Temperatures range from 7°C to 15°C. March to May is very, very hot



Electricity

In most places the voltage is 220V, but in some places there is also DC current. It is advisable to check the voltage before you plug in any electrical gadget. The plug points also vary from place to place and can be either 2-pin or 3-pin (round pins). For more detailed information, you can visit <http://electricaloutlet.org/>

Begging

Despite India's economic growth, begging continues to be prevalent everywhere. While it is a personal choice, we suggest that you do not give money, pens, gifts or sweets as this encourages a begging mentality. Should you feel the need to, it is recommended that you give while you are leaving a place (not arriving), to prevent being



mobbed. If you do want to help it is probably better to give to a recognized charity. If you choose not to give anything, simply say “no” with a smile and keep on walking.



Etiquette & Customs

A majority of Indians do not use cutlery. They use their right hands for eating and the left for toilet tasks. It is therefore good to remember that for all courtesy actions, you use your right hand. Public displays of affection are not encouraged.

While the dress code has become a lot more liberal over the years, it is still advisable to dress modestly, keep your shoulders and knees covered.

If possible carry a light scarf with you to use when entering a temple. You may also be asked to leave your footwear outside a temple or home as a sign of respect.

Some Hindu temples insist that you do not take any leather goods such as belts, wallets and leather bags inside

Touts

There are a number of people who try to milk tourists to make a quick buck. There are street vendors, rickshaw drivers, fake sadhus (holy men) or women selling henna drawings. Even after a curt “yes” or “no” they will still harangue you with doubled determination, so it is better to just ignore them. Don’t get fooled by sob stories of going out of business or other financial failures, as these are just told to gain your sympathy and your money.



Baggage allowance

The baggage allowance is normally 15 to 25 kilos but varies from airline to airline. Normally 1 handbag is allowed. For safety reasons, your suitcase should be locked. All liquids, more than the specified quantity of 100 ml in reseal-able bags, should be placed in your checked in baggage.

Packing for your trip

We recommend some items that you may want to carry along with you to make your life easier while on tour. These are a travel alarm clock, ear plugs, sun cream and lip salve, toilet paper, sunglasses, a spare pair of spectacles or contact lenses, liquid soap, a couple of polythene bags (possibly banned in some areas), insect repellent or citronella oil, calamine lotion. We also suggest you carry a spare towel with you just in case. A universal Traveller International Adaptor will also come in handy for those who are carrying their electrical gadgets. Depending on your choice, you can opt to carry a



sleeping bag and an inflatable pillow.

Clothing may vary depending on the weather. The Indian subcontinent has a mix of climates. As such, each place might require a different ensemble. In general, we recommend that you carry quick dry T-shirts, loose fitting trousers, a sunhat and cotton headscarf, swimwear and a thin waterproof jacket. For colder times, carry a jacket or sweater with a hood. For temple visiting, we suggest you also carry a sarong just in case some extra covering is required. The best way to tackle the climate variation is to adopt the art of layered clothing.



Your medical kit can include band aids, a crepe bandage, some antiseptic cream, some aspirin or paracetamol, and nausea and diarrhoea medication. Apart from this you may also include your own personal medication as you see fit.

While on tour, you may meet some charming locals. For this, we suggest that you carry with you some pens & other educational giveaways for this purpose.

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for anyone travelling with Rustic India and you will need to provide this information to your tour leader on Day 1 of your tour.

Health & Safety

India will require some vaccinations. We suggest you check for the list of vaccinations with your general practitioner. Travelling at high altitudes can make one prone to altitude sickness which is caused by reduced pressure and lack of adequate oxygen. The severity and speed that it may affect each one varies. Should you feel any nausea, headaches or any uneasiness, please do inform your tour leader. Should you suffer from heart or lung conditions, anaemia, asthma, high blood pressure, we recommend you consult with your doctor before travel.



have a wonderful rustic holiday