



HEART OF YOGA TOURS

India Tips

Getting your [Visa](#) is essential and can take time. Plan on it taking three months, though it will likely take far less time. A travel agent can help you. Or hire [Travel Docs](#) to expedite the process.

Travel insurance should cover personal accident and repatriation to the USA in the event of injury, illness, death or hijacking. I use [World Nomads](#).

If you decide to vaccinate, or need assistance in deciding, [Passport Health](#) can help you. If you want to find out about homeopathic remedies against malaria, Helios Homeopathics may be helpful.

If you have health problems take clean needles with you and any medication that you need as well as checking with your doctor about malaria. If you do carry needles have a doctor's note to explain why they are in your suitcase. Keep an International Health Certificate of all your immunisations. Bring copies of your prescriptions in case you run out of or lose your drugs.

You can buy pretty much anything over the counter at a pharmacy in India, but if you're concerned, bring your antibiotics (and the prescriptions), pain relief meds, anti-diarrhea medicine, antiseptic cream, and anything else you use regularly.

Tummy upsets are the most common thing for travellers in India. Immodium, [DiaResQ](#), Ceralyte for re-hydration, and iodine tablets for purifying water can be very useful. Starting with a good ProBiotic a few months before travel can be very helpful.

India has a very good network of pharmacies where drugs are available on request. Although it can seem quite rural, there are good medical networks throughout India as well as good homeopaths and ayurvedic treatments.

Tamil is the language of Tamil Nadu. Some people will speak English, but not everywhere.

The weather will be warm to hot and fairly humid.

Bring sunscreen, long sleeves and a hat or umbrella for shade as there is very little shade on the beaches.

Take care swimming, the currents are very strong.

There are about 65 rupees to the dollar.

When you first arrive at the airport change some money so that you immediately have cash. The Foreign Exchange Bureaux in the airports are very reliable.

Make sure that your bank knows in advance which cards you will use in India or you will find that your cards do not work in the cash machines.

Make sure all your travel documents are photocopied and are at home with a contact person and that you have a copy with you and you have all your bank/embassy numbers in case of theft etc. Take extra photos. In India they have gotten keen on having 2" x 2" photos, so have a few extras done.

Bring nothing of any value if you can. It makes travelling easier. You may want to bring a belt for under your clothes for passport and cash. It's usually easy to get money from a cash machine.

Large shops can take credit cards but most other traders only take cash so it is important to ensure that you have enough cash with you if you plan on shopping.

Keep a close eye on your bank accounts after paying with a credit card or

direct debit – strange things can be taken out of your account as there are increased ways to defraud people.

Some accommodations in Tamil Nadu will be lovely and others, not so much. This is not a resort style tour. Accommodations will be simple but adequate. Not all hotels have hot water, but it's so hot that the cold water can be rather refreshing actually. You will want to approach each day as an adventure, like an indoor camping trip. I've been happy I had my travel towel, very lightweight sleeping bag and blow up pillow.

We'll primarily travel by van/bus with a personal driver, but near the end of the trip we'll travel by public transportation. Packing as light as possible is helpful as you will have to carry and keep an eye on your luggage while using public transportation.

You'll need at least four changes of clothing. Have some soap for doing your laundry by hand. Bringing a stopper for the sink can be helpful. If clothes are lightweight they will dry quickly. Most places will have a bidet but no toilet paper. Sometimes you will have a sitting toilet, but occasionally you'll have a squat toilet.

Long, loose, well-covered, modest clothes are best. There are lots of clothes to buy in India. There are always people you can leave your clothes with at the end of the trip.

Most people wear flip flops and sandals. It's good to have shoes that really suit you for hot weather walking. Try to keep them easy to take off, preferably not having to use your hands. You will have to take them off for everyone's house and all temples. Water resistant shoes are useful for the loo, walking through streams, in the sea and so on.

Pack whatever will make you comfortable – a neck pillow, sunglasses, tampons, a sink plug, locks on suitcases, secure way to carry money, razors, a knife, fork, cup, insect repellent, wet wipes, antibacterial spray for when you can't wash your hands, loo paper, water bottle and water purification tablets, washing line, zip lock bags can be very useful.

Voltage can be between 220 and 240 and you will need an adaptor with two pins. It must say that it can be used in India.

Your name and address needs to be INSIDE the baggage as well as on the outside.

It is good to have a small handbag which you can sling across your chest for sunglasses, reading glasses, pen, little notebook, slithers of soap and tissues (for the loos), sun cream and ideally a half litre of water.

South India is predominantly vegetarian and the places we'll eat are exclusively vegetarian and do not sell alcohol.

In some restaurants you can ask for a fork, although it's fine to bring your own. People will not be offended. However if eating in a small place or in someone's home using the right hand only is advisable.

Shoes off in people's homes and in all temples it is obligatory. It is not so in hotel rooms and the car.

Please do not visit the temples if you are menstruating, and there may be some temples that do not allow non Hindus into. Temples that have Vishnu as their Lord may not allow you in beyond a certain point.

In the temples you do need to dress modestly covering the chest, shoulders, and knees. Do not wear hats, and you don't need to cover your head. Photos are often not allowed, or there will be a fee.

Please be tasteful, respectful, and reverential about the photos you take at temples. It's inappropriate to strike a yoga asana pose for your social media pages at a place of worship.

Coffee is THE BEST in South India! You'll always need to remind people, two or three times, if you don't want sugar. Same for tea which is strong, boiled and very milky. You don't get a huge mug – just little stainless steel cups.

Bottled water is available everywhere and we may have to bring all our bottles back to the hotel for recycling. Do not use the tap water for drinking or even brushing your teeth. Drink at least 1 litre of water a day.

Tipping is important to people and you may want to give people money for their services. Tips of 5 - 20 rupees for bringing you tea or coffee are fine. If you have had good service from someone in a hotel then a tip of 50 – 100 rupees is fine.

Always negotiate a fee in advance for an auto rickshaw – even locals get

ripped off and for us everything seems so reasonable it is easy to get it wrong. A trip of about 15 minutes should cost around 50 rupees.

India is full of people and often they want to talk to you, to have their photos taken with you, to practice their English, to be genuinely helpful and of course, to beg. It really is worth being friendly and firm. With the beggars you may decide that certain people are the ones you want to support and that is what you stay with. However it is good to have small change for that moment when your heart goes out to someone.