



HEART OF YOGA TOURS

Travel 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. I got a regular Visa which lasts for 10 years. You may choose to get an E Visa which is quicker to get and lasts for only 6 months.

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

Our accommodations in Tamil Nadu and Kerala will be on the whole lovely, but do understand this is rural India. For the 2019 Tour we'll be staying at the very best hotels in the area which is why the cost has increased from 2018. The consensus from the 2018 Tour Group was it was worth paying extra to stay in a comfortable place after a long day of sensory stimulation. One day I will offer the Budget Tour again as I think there's much to gain from the experience.

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 embassy numbers in case of theft etc.

We'll primarily travel by van with a personal driver, but in Munnar we'll travel by public transportation.

Health Tips:

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. We are not going to high risk areas for disease, but you may choose to take precautions anyway. I chose Hep A and Thyphoid vaccines, and I take Anti Malaria pills during the trip.

India has a very good network of pharmacies where drugs are available on request, including anti-biotics. Although it can seem quite rural, there are good medical

networks throughout India as well as good homeopaths and ayurvedic treatments.

Take any medication that you need as well as checking with your doctor. If you 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, so no need to bring a suitcase full of just-in-case medicines. But if you're concerned, bring your antibiotics, pain relief meds, anti-diarrhea medicine, and anything else you use regularly.

Tummy upsets are the most common thing for travellers in India, although I've never had a problem by eating simple vegetarian food and avoiding street food. Starting with a good ProBiotic a few months before travel can be very helpful.

South India is predominantly vegetarian. This tour is exclusively vegetarian and alcohol free. Even in Munnar where eating animals and drinking alcohol is accessible. This is non-negotiable.

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 unless you have a UV stick for treating water. Drink at least 1 litre of water a day.

Money Tips:

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

Bring a direct email and phone number of someone to contact at your bank for all just-in-case situations. Calling America can be difficult and timely, and the collect numbers on the back of your cards will not work from India.

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.

ATM's usually work, but not always. Use big bank ATM's only, like ICICI, Syndicate, and Canara. If the ATM looks sketchy don't use it. Any ATM at the airport is safe and reliable.

Once you arrive at the hotel I can get you to a working ATM. You may also choose to purchase rupees ahead of time in America, in which case you can contact your bank.

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

You won't need money for food unless you need to eat more than three times a day, want to have more than a couple cups of coffee in the morning, or want fresh juices.

Juices are delicious, but expensive and will be your own expense.

Keep a close eye on your bank accounts after paying with a credit card or direct debit for fraudulent actions.

Packing Tips:

Packing as light as possible is helpful.

Long, loose, well-covered, modest clothes are essential. You'll need three or four changes of clothing. 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.

Have some soap for doing your laundry by hand. I just use a regular bar of soap. If clothes are lightweight they will dry quickly. A stopper for the sink can be helpful, and most hotels will have a bucket in the bathroom for you.

The weather will be warm to hot and fairly humid in Tamil Nadu.

Munnar temperatures will be a bit cooler, especially at night, but still quite warm during the day. Bring good shoes for hiking and a light jacket or sweater for hiking in the early mornings.

Cheap plastic flip flops are best for the Temple Tour. Don't bring your good expensive sandals. Water resistant shoes are useful for the public bathrooms. Keep them easy to take off, preferably not having to use your hands. You will have to take them off for houses, temples, and even some shops.

Bring sunscreen if you need it and a hat or an umbrella if you anticipate needing extra sun protection.

Bring nothing of any value if possible. It makes travelling easier. I do not recommend bringing your laptop.

American Toilets and tp will be at our hotels, but we'll be travelling in very rural villages during the day where squat toilets will be the norm. Toilet paper will not be in provided in public toilets, and bringing your own soap and hand sanitizer on our day trips is a very good idea.

Pack whatever will make you comfortable – the items I've been most grateful for (while staying in accommodations like the very nice ones we'll be staying at) in India are spirulina (or some form of powdered greens), Ceralyte (or something to quickly combat dehydration), a lightweight titanium mug, a spoon, tissue, earplugs, a UV wand for sterilizing tap water, a battery pack to charge my phone, a small day bag, journal, pens, a good book, soap leaves from REI, travel size hand sanitizer, lip balm, business cards with a direct contact to my bank, & extra underwear.

You'll need a converter/adaptor to use electricity in India. Do not bring a hair dryer.

And I'll suggest again not to bring your laptop.

Cultural Tips:

India has over 200 languages.

Tamil is the language of Tamil Nadu. Some people will speak English, but not everywhere, and perhaps not very well. When communicating with locals using a few simple words is best. Most people in Tamil Nadu speak three to five languages, and English is just not as strong a priority as Hindi, Malayalam and Telugu.

Malayalam is the language of Kerala. Most people will speak English in Munnar.

There are about 65 rupees to the dollar.

Many restaurants will not give you silverware as people eat with their right hand in India. People will not be offended if you bring your own utensil with you, but be prepared for restaurant staff to tell you that food tastes better if you eat with your hand.

Shoes off in all temples it is obligatory. You may not put your shoes in your bag and walk into a Temple, they must be left outside of the Temple.

Please do not visit the temples if you are menstruating. There may be some temples that do not allow non Hindus beyond a certain point.

In the temples you need to dress modestly covering the chest, shoulders, knees, and ankles. 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 Tamil Nadu! They assume you want sugar, so you'll need to remind people if you don't want sugar. Same for tea which is boiled and very milky. You don't get a huge mug like in America – just little stainless steel cups.

Tipping is important to people and you may want to give people money for their services. Tips of 10 - 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 – ask me or the hotel management what the cost should be before going off on a solo adventure.

India is full of people and often they want to talk to you, to take selfies with you, to practice their English, to sell you something, to be genuinely helpful, and to beg. Being friendly and firm is best. With the beggars it is good to have small change for that moment when your heart goes out to someone.

