



## Pre-Departure Information

FESTIVALS, CULTURES, AND WILDLIFE OF NORTHEAST INDIA



# Table of Contents

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## TRAVEL INFORMATION

- Passport
- Visas
- Money
- Tipping
- Departure Tax
- Special Diets
- Communications
- Electricity

## MEDICAL INFORMATION

- Inoculations
- Malaria Prevention
- Staying Healthy

## HELPFUL INFORMATION

- Photography
- Cultural Considerations
- Being a Considerate Traveler

## PACKING LIST

- The Essentials
- WT Gear Store
- Luggage
- Weight Limits
- Notes on Clothing
- Clothing
- Equipment
- Personal First Aid Supplies
- Optional Items
- Prohibited Items

# Reminders Before You Go

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## WELCOME!

We're delighted to welcome you on this adventure! This booklet is designed to guide you in the practical details for preparing for your trip. As you read, if any questions come to mind, feel free to give us a call or send us an email—we're here to help.

## PLEASE SEND US

- Trip Application:** Complete, sign, and return your Trip Application form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- Medical Form:** Complete, sign, and return your Medical Form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- Air Schedule:** Please forward a copy of your email confirmation, which shows your exact flight arrival and departure times. Refer to the Arrival & Departure section of the Detailed Itinerary for instructions. Please review your proposed schedule with Wilderness Travel before purchasing your tickets.
- Passport Photocopy:** Scan\* a COLOR copy of your passport photo page and email it to us as a JPG or PDF attachment, or send us a high quality photocopy by mail (immediately upon reserving your trip).
- Visa Photocopy:** Once you have obtained the required visa in your passport, please scan\* a copy of your visa and email it to us as a JPG or PDF attachment, or send us a high quality photocopy by mail.
- Vaccination Card:** Please send us a photo or scanned copy of your completed Covid-19 Vaccination Card if you have not already done so. Just the front side of the card is sufficient.

*\*If you are scanning documents to email, we suggest a maximum resolution of 300 dpi.*

## PLEASE CAREFULLY REVIEW

- Travel Documents & Medical Information:** Carefully review the Travel Documents and Medical Information sections of this booklet to familiarize yourself with Passport and Visa entry requirements for your destination, as well as any recommended inoculations.
- Optional Travel Insurance:** Review the Trip Cancellation & Transfer Fee Schedule included in the Detailed Itinerary. We recommend that all trip members purchase Travel Insurance.
- Final Documents:** Approximately three weeks before your trip, we will send you final departure documents, including hotel and local contact information and rendezvous instructions.

## QUESTIONS?

Call: 1-800-368-2794, go to our **website** ([www.wildernesstravel.com](http://www.wildernesstravel.com)) or e-mail us at: [info@wildernesstravel.com](mailto:info@wildernesstravel.com).

# Travel Information

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## PASSPORT

A valid passport is required for your trip. Be sure to check the expiration date. Your passport must be valid for six months after your date of exit from India. In addition, we recommend your passport have at least two completely blank visa pages for every country you will be visiting. It is very important that the blank pages say "Visas" at the top. The last few pages of your passport, which say "Amendments and Endorsements," and the final page of your passport, which may not have a page number, are not considered to be legitimate visa pages. The service of adding pages for visas was discontinued as of January 1, 2016. You can request a new passport through **US Passport Services Office** (<http://travel.state.gov/passport>) or use a visa service agency, which can take care of your passport renewal and expedite the process, if needed. We recommend **Passport Visas Express** (<http://www.passportvisasexpress.com/?affId=2120>). Be sure to allow sufficient time to acquire this before your trip.

It is a good idea to carry photocopies of your passport's photo page and any acquired visa pages for your trip (if applicable) in case your passport is lost or as an additional piece of identification, as well as two extra passport photos.

## VISAS

US citizens need a visa for India. **Indian visas cannot be obtained at the airport upon arrival; you must obtain an Indian visa in advance of your departure from the US.** We suggest applying for your Indian visa 2-3 months prior to trip departure, as visa processing can take time.

1. The **e-Visa** (electronic visa) for India is now applicable for 163 countries including the US. The validity of e-Visa will be 60 days from the date of arrival in India and is double-entry. The e-Visa can be applied for a maximum of two times in one calendar year.

The e-Visa is now valid for entry through 24 designated airports but visitors have the flexibility to depart/exit from any of the authorized Immigration Check Posts (ICPs) in India. For more details on the process, other highlights and key points on both the e-visa and revised fees for the regular visa process, please visit the official website of the Ministry of Home Affairs at

**<https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html>**(<https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html>)

2 . You can also apply to get a **longer-stay visa stamped into your passport** through **Cox & Kings Global Services (CKGS)**(<http://www.in.ckgs.us/>), the official visa processing agent for the Indian Embassy. Complete instructions are outlined **on the CKGS website** (<http://www.in.ckgs.us/>).

Visa applications are by walk-in (if you live near a CKGS Application Center) or by postal courier. For application by postal courier, we strongly recommended using FedEx so that you can track your passport and application.

You should apply for an India Tourist Visa. If you expect to return to India in the near future, you may want to consider obtaining a 5- or 10-year, multiple-entry option, if available to your jurisdiction. Please visit CKGS for more details.

On the visa application form, you will need to list the "name and address of two references." Please use the following:

**In India**

Exotic Journeys  
Office No. 7, 2nd Floor  
Local Shopping Centre  
B-7 Vasant Arcade, Vasant Kunj  
New Delhi, 110 070  
India  
Phone: (+91) 112-612-4069

**In applicant's country**

Wilderness Travel  
1102 Ninth St  
Berkeley, CA 94710  
USA  
Phone: (+1) 510-558-2488

3. You may also choose to obtain your visa through our designated visa processing service **Passport Visas Express (PVE)**(<http://www.passportvisasexpress.com/?affId=2120%20>). PVE will be your contact with Cox & Kings Global Services. Please check with PVE directly regarding their service fees, processing time and Indian visa information. Although there is an additional fee for the service provided by PVE, they are extremely helpful in obtaining your visa, and past Wilderness Travel clients have greatly enjoyed their service.

**If you are a citizen of any country other than the US, please check with a local consulate for entry requirements.**

## MONEY

**India's currency** is the Indian rupee (INR). You can exchange money at the international airport on arrival and at our hotels during the trip. You will be issued a currency exchange form each time you change money; keep these forms as you will need them to change rupees back into dollars at the airport upon departure. Credit cards are accepted in most shops, hotels, and restaurants in India. It is a good idea to have some small US bills (\$1s) on hand for minor expenses. There are ATMs at the international airports, and you can use these upon arrival in India. Please note that there are ATMs elsewhere in India, but they may not be conveniently located near the hotels on our trip.

You will need to budget spending money for gratuities, for any meals not included in the trip itinerary, and for personal items such as snacks, phone calls, etc. A great variety of craftworks are available in India. Depending on your taste, you could spend anything from \$100 to \$1,000 or much more.

To use an ATM internationally, you must have a four-digit PIN. If you plan to use your credit cards, inform your credit card company before your departure that you will be using the card abroad.

## TIPPING

Tipping is completely discretionary, but over the years, clients have asked us for tipping guidelines to reward outstanding service. A range of reference would be \$180-240 per trip member for the Trip Leader and \$150-200 per trip member as a shared tip for the local guides/drivers. During the trip, the Trip Leader takes care of tips for waiters at restaurants and for porters for luggage handling.

## DEPARTURE TAX

Departures taxes are generally included in the cost of your air ticket. Your Trip Leader will advise you of any updates regarding departure tax.

## SPECIAL DIETS

We will do our best to accommodate special dietary needs, however, please keep in mind that certain cultural differences or limitations due to logistics can make it extremely difficult and at times impossible to accommodate dietary restrictions. Please inform us at least eight weeks before your trip if you have a restricted diet. It is important to bring a flexible attitude and supplemental snacks.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### **Telephone**

The international dialing code for India is 91. Please contact your cell phone company for specific instructions for international use.

### **Email & Internet Access**

Internet is available in many of our hotels, but not when we are in very remote areas. Please note: in some hotels, the internet is available in the reception area only.

## ELECTRICITY

India has 230-volt current and either C or D plug types. Most newer electronic appliances do not need a converter, but you will need a plug adapter.



# Medical Information

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The following recommendations should be used as a guideline only; consult your physician for medical advice. It is vital that you let Wilderness Travel know of any medical problems, allergies, or physical limitations you may have. Please fill out and return the personal medical questionnaire, and feel free to consult us if you have any questions about your ability to undertake this particular trip.

Wilderness Travel is not a medical facility and has no expertise or responsibility regarding what medications or inoculations you and your physician decide are necessary for your safe participation in the trip.

Traveler's health information is available from the **Centers for Disease Control**. (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>) Medical travel products are available from **Travel Health Medicine** (<http://www.travmed.com>) and from **Magellan's Travel Supplies**. (<http://www.magellans.com>)

## INOCULATIONS

Entry requirements are subject to change; check with the Centers for Disease Control for updates. All shots should be entered on your International Health Card (yellow card), which is provided by the facility giving the shots. Keep it with your passport while traveling. This provides an important personal record for you to refer to when making future travel plans. We recommend you discuss the following with your physician:

### **Polio**

People who have received the primary series of at least three doses of polio vaccine are considered fully immunized. People who are unsure of their status should receive the vaccine (three doses spaced at intervals).

### **Hepatitis A**

The vaccines HAVRIX and VAQTA (two injections, six to 18 months apart) give long-term protection against Hepatitis A and are worthwhile if you travel regularly to developing countries.

### **Tetanus Booster**

A booster is strongly recommended (effective for 10 years).

### **Typhoid**

The CDC recommends the shot or the oral vaccine, Vivotif Berna. You may not be able to take the oral vaccine simultaneously with mefloquine (for malaria prevention).

## MALARIA PREVENTION

Malaria is a serious but preventable disease spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. Please discuss antimalarial medication with your doctor, who will explain various antimalarials and their side effects and recommend a regimen for you. In addition to medication, a further precaution against malaria is to wear long sleeves and long pants at dusk. Thin clothing should be sprayed with insect repellent, especially around the elbows and ankles. Use repellent containing DEET.

If, after returning from your trip, you have a persistent fever with chills, muscle aches, and headache, report to your doctor the possibility of exposure to malaria.

For further malaria information, consult your doctor or the **CDC Malaria Hotline**(<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/malinfo.htm>): 888-232-3228.

## STAYING HEALTHY

In hotels, don't brush your teeth with tap water; use bottled water. Don't use ice in your drinks unless you are sure it was made with treated water. When in doubt, ask your Trip Leader for guidelines.



# Helpful Information

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## PHOTOGRAPHY

### Camera Recommendations

With the many advances in digital technology, a simple compact digital camera or even your smartphone is capable of taking pictures suitable for the needs of most people. For higher quality images and the ability to use long lenses for closer wildlife pictures, a DSLR camera is well worthwhile, though heavier. Most digital cameras and phones have good video options, but you may want to consider a GoPro for a lightweight, waterproof option. Always practice ahead of time with new equipment and bring your manual with you. Camera equipment is available for rent from **Borrow Lenses** (<https://www.borrowlenses.com/discount/wildernesstravel>), with a 10% discount offered to Wilderness Travel clients. This is an especially good idea for renting large zoom lenses that you may need for just one trip.

### Camera Accessories

We recommend bringing at least two large capacity memory cards or a small digital storage unit (or tablet) to back up your photos, freeing space on your memory cards. Don't forget to bring a battery charger and a backup battery so one is always charged and ready to use. For trips where you may be away from power sources for multiple days, consider looking into a solar-powered battery charger or buying additional backup batteries, and check that you have the appropriate adapter for the electrical outlets in your destination.

### Sharing Your Images

We would love for you to share photos from your trip, and with your permission, may even use your photos in our marketing materials or on our photo blog. We request that you send us a small sample of your best images. Please email your photos to **wtphotoblog@gmail.com** or tag us **@WildernessTravel** on social media.

### Photography Etiquette

When taking pictures of local people, be aware of cultural considerations. Approaching people with a warm smile and using polite gestures or simple phrases to ask permission to photograph them usually works well. It is always recommended to engage people in conversation before asking to photograph them, but if people do not wish to have their photo taken, please honor their requests. We urge travelers to avoid giving money in exchange for photo opportunities, which makes it harder for future travelers to have a meaningful personal interaction with local people. Please always heed your Trip Leader's guidelines for what is appropriate.

## CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

In India, folk beliefs and religion merge until they become almost indistinguishable. It is difficult for travelers in India to comprehend the traditions and rituals involved in everyday life. As in all travel situations, it is important to observe the local people carefully and use common sense. For example, ask permission before taking a photo, entering a temple, washing at a tap, or touching a baby. You'll almost always find the Indians friendly and helpful. A few guidelines are offered below.

### Body Language

When seated, it is not polite to show the bottoms of the feet, and it is especially rude to point them in someone else's direction. Therefore you should not stretch your legs out or cross them with the sole turned up or out. Also, never step over

or on any part of a person as this exposes them to the bottom of your feet. The purity of the body is viewed as being the highest at the head, becoming progressively dirtier down to the feet. This also makes patting children or other people on the head ill-mannered. Touching a person of the opposite sex, even on the shoulder or hand, can be easily misinterpreted and it's best to refrain from doing so.

### **Clothing**

Be modest in the way you dress while visiting India. (See Notes on Clothing in this booklet.) Women should wear skirts falling at least to the knee, or pants. Bathing suits, halter tops, and tank tops are considered an unseemly display in India and will embarrass local people. Especially in and around temples, wear long pants or a skirt, and a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms. Men may wear shorts up to mid-thigh, but no shorter. It is permitted for men to rest and sunbathe without a shirt, but it is considered extremely rude for men to walk about bare-chested.

### **Water**

Spring water is considered sacred and is protected by ritual. River and stream water is not subject to these taboos. Many villages have only small springs from which to draw their water. Do not casually take water from these springs. It is best to receive permission from a local person. If there is no one nearby, then follow these guidelines: Use only a very clean utensil to draw water. Do not drink directly from this utensil or from the spring. Do not brush your teeth or wash anything near the spring. Carry water 20 feet or more away from the spring before washing. If the water source becomes polluted by careless practice, the consequences for the village are disastrous.

### **Shrines**

Along almost every street and trail you will find temples and shrines of all sorts. Regardless of their size, they are revered with great devotion. When entering a temple, ask about or observe local practice. In some temples, shoes must be removed. In some, it is forbidden to wear leather of any kind (such as a leather belt) or to eat.

### **Begging**

Begging is a tradition in India and can be difficult for westerners to confront. There are no easy answers as to whether to give small amounts of money to beggars. It is ultimately up to each of you to decide. Children along popular travel routes often ask for candy, pens, or money. Rewarding this behavior sets up a barrage of requests for more, a dependency on products not locally available, and in the case of sweets, an increasing dental problem. We, therefore, ask that you do not give anything to children: no candy, pens, balloons, or money. If you like, you can bring pens, crayons, large felt-tip pens, paper, maps, or postcards to donate to schools we pass along the way.

### **Homes**

Indians are very hospitable and it is common for them to invite travelers into their homes. If your hosts take off their shoes before entering a household or room, do likewise. Inside, cooking and eating areas should be treated with special respect. Avoid going into the hearth unless specifically invited there; it is sacred, and home to a guardian spirit. Do not touch the fire area or dry your shoes by it, and do not point your feet at or burn trash in the fire. Do not touch food or eating utensils used by local people. Also, many Hindus cannot eat food that has been touched by a foreigner, so don't offer anything from your plate.

## BEING A CONSIDERATE TRAVELER

Please show respect for the cultures we are visiting by observing local customs concerning appropriate dress, particularly in sacred places. Your Trip Leader is always available to answer any questions that you may have regarding this. If it is necessary to use a cell phone during the trip, please do so privately. Smoking is rarely an issue these days, but if you do smoke, please do so only away from the group.

# Packing List

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## THE ESSENTIALS

- Air tickets (or E-tickets)
- Visa for India
- Passport
- One other picture ID, such as a driver's license
- Expense money

## WT GEAR STORE

To help you prepare for your next WT adventure, we've put together a great collection of top brands including Patagonia, Outdoor Research, Eagle Creek, and more at our **WT Gear Store** (<http://wildernesstravel.newheadings.com>).

## LUGGAGE

- Standard hard or soft-sided suitcase, with a small padlock (must be unlocked for air travel unless it's a TSA-approved lock). Rolling suitcases have been the preferred choice of past travelers.
- Daypack for a water bottle, camera, and other items you want with you during the day
- Small roll-up duffel to carry home purchases

## WEIGHT LIMITS

On the internal flights for this departure, each passenger can bring **one piece of checked luggage with a weight limit of 33 lbs., as well as one carry-on of 15 lbs.**

If your baggage exceeds this weight limit, you may be required to pay excess baggage fees on the spot.

## NOTES ON CLOTHING

We recommend you bring comfortable, lightweight clothing and shoes made for walking. India is a traditional culture. Visitors should take care to dress modestly. For women, long pants, skirts, or knee-length hiking shorts are fine. Skimpy or revealing tops are generally frowned upon. Men should wear shirts with sleeves and long pants or knee-length hiking shorts. In some temples, shoes must be removed. The clothing list below is provided as a guideline only; we encourage you to pack as lightly as possible. Laundry service is available at most of the hotels.

## CLOTHING

- Light to medium-weight fleece jacket or sweater
- Lightweight long-sleeved shirts
- Short-sleeved shirts or T-shirts (loose and modest)
- Light cotton or quick-drying synthetic pants
- Lightweight skirts for women
- Knee-length hiking shorts (optional)
- Lightweight rain jacket and/or folding umbrella (umbrellas can also be used for sun)
- Sturdy walking shoes or running shoes with good traction
- Tevas or other sandals
- Underwear/socks. Synthetics dry faster.
- Shade hat with a wide brim
- Sleepwear
- Bathing suit (for hotel pools, where available)
- Casual city/hotel attire

## EQUIPMENT

- Personal toiletries
- Good quality sunglasses with case
- Plastic bags to organize items in luggage
- Flashlight or lightweight headlamp, spare batteries (blackouts are possible; keep a flashlight handy in your hotel room)

## PERSONAL FIRST AID SUPPLIES

Every trip member should bring a small kit for personal use. Your own experience will influence your choices.

- Sunscreen SPF 30 or higher, lip balm with sunscreen. We recommend mineral-based sunscreens with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide because they do not contain harsh chemicals that are harmful to the environment. Brands such as Honest Company, Badger, and Alba Botanica are found in most sporting goods stores and drugstores.
- Aspirin, ibuprofen, or Tylenol for muscle pain or headaches.
- Topical antibiotic (such as Neosporin) for cuts, bites, or sores
- Insect repellent. Repellents with DEET are recommended. DEET content of about 30-35% is ideal (higher DEET content is not recommended). Wipe DEET off your hands before touching plastic surfaces (such as binoculars) because it can damage the plastic. Aerosol repellents are useful for spraying on clothes.
- Blister kit. Look for the long-lasting gel-type bandages that you can apply directly on blisters, such as Band-Aid Advanced Healing Bandages or Curad Gel Multi-Day Bandages. "Liquid band-aids," such as New-Skin, are useful because they dry rapidly to form a tough protective cover over a blister.
- Anti-bacterial gel for hand washing
- Antihistamine such as Benadryl
- Pepto-Bismol tablets for indigestion and diarrhea
- Imodium for diarrhea. If you wish to bring an antibiotic for diarrhea prophylaxis, please consult your physician.
- Prescription medications properly labeled
- Spare contact lenses or spare prescription glasses

## OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Water bottle (however, bottled water is widely available on the trip)
- Camera, spare batteries, spare flashcards
- Reading/writing material
- Voltage converter and plug adapter for appliance use in hotels
- Travel clock
- Money belt or neck pouch. Always carry your passport, credit cards, and cash with you in a money belt or neck pouch tucked down inside your shirt or blouse.
- Hiking poles

## PROHIBITED ITEMS

Satellite phones are no longer allowed to be brought into India. If you bring a satellite phone to India, it will be confiscated and you could be subject to serious penalties, including arrest. Please double-check entry requirements on your own before traveling.

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