

INDIA



Welcome to India

"The street children that I worked with were so friendly and welcoming; I can't believe that anyone could harm them. It was such an amazing experience to explore ancient temples with my students as my guides, smiling and eager to show me everything!"

From the moment that you set foot in India, you are on the way to one of the most rewarding experiences of your life. Bounded by the majestic Himalayan ranges in the north and edged by a spectacular coastline surrounded by three seas, India is a vivid kaleidoscope of landscapes, magnificent historical sites and royal cities, golden beaches, misty mountain retreats, colourful people, rich cultures, and festivities. Imagine that you're a maharaja in the rich ambience of royal forts and palaces; luxuriate in the serene beauty of a coral island with its turquoise lagoon; participate in the exuberance of a village fair or a colourful festival; or simply daydream on a house boat drifting down palm-fringed backwaters.

Know your History

India's extraordinary history is intimately tied to its geography. A meeting ground between the east and the west, it has always been an invader's paradise, while at the same time its natural isolation and magnetic religions allowed it to adapt to and absorb many of the peoples who penetrated its mountain passes. No matter how many Persians, Greeks, Chinese nomads, Arabs, Portuguese, British and other raiders had their way with the land, local Hindu kingdoms invariably survived their depredations, living out their own sagas of conquest and collapse. All the while, these local dynasties built upon the roots of a culture well established since the time of the first invaders, the Aryans. In short, India has always been simply too big, too complicated, and too culturally subtle to let any one empire dominate it for long.

Indus

The civilisation that laid the bricks, one of the world's oldest, was known as the Indus. They had a written language and were highly sophisticated. Dating back to 3000 B.C., they originated in the south and moved north, building complex, mathematically-planned cities. Some of these towns were almost three miles in diameter and contained as many as 30,000 residents. These ancient municipalities had granaries, citadels, and even household toilets. At its height, the Indus civilisation extended over half a million square miles across the Indus river valley, and though it existed at the same time as the ancient civilisations of Egypt and Sumer, it far outlasted them.

Aryan

The first group to invade India were the Aryans, who came out of the north in about 1500 B.C. The

Aryans brought with them strong cultural traditions that, miraculously, still remain in force today. They spoke and wrote in a language called Sanskrit, which was later used in the first documentation of the Vedas.

Persian

The second great invasion into India occurred around 500 B.C., when the Persian kings Cyrus and Darius, pushing their empire eastward, conquered the ever-prized Indus Valley. Compared to the Aryans, the Persian influence was marginal, perhaps because they were only able to occupy the region for a relatively brief period of about 150 years. The Persians were in turn conquered by the Greeks under Alexander the Great, who swept through the country as far as the Beas River, where he defeated King Porus and an army of 200 elephants in 326 B.C.

Buddhism

In the 5th Century B.C., Siddhartha Gautama founded the religion of Buddhism. As the overextended Hellenistic sphere declined, a king known as Chandragupta swept back through the country from Magadha (Bihar) and conquered his way well into Afghanistan. This was the beginning of one of India's greatest dynasties, the Maurya. Under the great King Ashoka (268-31 B.C.), the Mauryan Empire conquered nearly the entire subcontinent, extending itself as far south as Mysore. When Ashoka conquered Orissa, however, his army shed so much blood that the repentant king gave up warfare forever and converted to Buddhism. After the demise of the Maurya dynasty, the regions it had conquered fragmented into a mosaic of kingdoms and smaller dynasties.

Arab

Arab traders had visited the western coast since 712, but it wasn't until 1001 that the Muslim world began to make itself keenly felt. In that year, Arab armies swept down the Khyber Pass and hit like a storm. Led by Mahmud of Ghazi, they raided just about every other year for 26 years straight. They returned home each time, leaving behind them ruined cities, decimated armies, and probably a very edgy native population. Then they more or less vanished behind the mountains again for nearly 150 years, and India once again went on its way.

British

In 1610, the British East India Company created its own outpost at Surat. This small outpost marked the beginning of a remarkable presence that would last over 300 years and eventually dominate the entire subcontinent. English dominance was executed through a highly effective and organised system called the Raj. Treaties and agreements were signed with native princes, and the Company gradually increased its role in local affairs. The Raj helped build infrastructure and trained natives for its own military, though in theory they were for India's own defence. In 1784, after financial scandals in the Company alarmed British politicians, the Crown assumed half-control of the Company, beginning the transfer of power to royal hands.

In 1858, a rumour spread among Hindu soldiers that the British were greasing their bullets with the fat of cows and pigs, the former sacred animals to Hindus and the latter unclean animals to Muslims. A year-long rebellion against the British ensued. Although the Indian Mutiny was unsuccessful, it prompted the British government to seize total control of all British interests in India in 1858, finally establishing a seamless imperialism. Claiming to be only interested in trade, the Raj steadily expanded its influence until the princes ruled in name only.

In 1915, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi came onto the scene, calling for unity between the two groups in an astonishing display of leadership that would eventually lead the country to independence. The profound impact Gandhi had on India and his ability to gain independence through a totally non-violent mass movement made him one of the most remarkable leaders the world has ever known. He led by example, wearing homespun clothes to weaken the British textile industry and orchestrating a march to the sea, where demonstrators proceeded to make their own salt in protest against the British monopoly. Indians gave him the name Mahatma, or "Great Soul".

The British promised that they would leave India by 1947.

Civil unrest

When the British left, they created the separate states of Pakistan and Bangladesh (known at that time as East Pakistan), and violence erupted when stranded Muslims and Hindu minorities in the areas fled in opposite directions. Within a few weeks, half a million people had died in the course of the greatest migration of human beings in the world's history. The aging Gandhi vowed to fast until the violence stopped, which it did when his health was seriously threatened. At the same time, the British returned and helped restore order. Excepting Kashmir, which is still a disputed area (and currently unsafe for tourists), the division reached stability.

Independence

India's history since independence has been marked by disunity and intermittent periods of virtual chaos. In 1948, on the eve of independence, Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic. His right-hand man, Jawarhalal Nehru, became India's first Prime Minister. Nehru was a successful leader, steering the young nation through a period of peace that was contrasted by the rule of Lal Bahadur Shastri, who fought Pakistan after it invaded two regions of India. Shastri died in 1966 after only 20 months in power, and he was succeeded by Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi.

With the name Gandhi (though no relation to Mahatma), Indira was a powerful, unchallenged leader, and opposition remained negligible until she abused her power by trying to suppress the press. When the rising opposition began to threaten her power, she called a state of emergency and continued to reform the nation, actually making some positive economic and political changes despite her questionable tactics. Her most unpopular policy was forced sterilisation, and she was eventually defeated at the polls in 1977 by Morarji Desai of the Janata party. She won back power in 1979, however, but was later assassinated in 1984 by a Sikh terrorist.

1990 – Present

After political unrest and short-lived alliances holding sway for many years, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) formed the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with several other parties and became the first non-Congress government to complete a full five-year term in 1998. In 2004, the Indian National Congress (INC) won the largest number of Lok Sabha seats and formed a coalition with the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). Supported by various Left-leaning parties and members opposed to the BJP, the UPA came into power again in the 2009 general election despite the number of Left-leaning parties within the coalition having significantly reduced. Manmohan Singh became the first prime minister since 1962 to be re-elected after completing a full five-year term. Although India's political climate remains divisive, the country has attained apparent stability in recent years. Today, India seems poised to realise its potential as an international economic power.

Money Talks

After the 1990s, post-independence, India's socialist-inspired economy inspired economic reform and the country began a rapid economic growth – markets opened for international competition and investment and India is now an emerging economic power thanks to its vast human and natural resources and huge knowledge base. In 2007, India accounted for 1.5% of world trade, by 2008, India was established as the world's 2nd fastest growing economy and it's predicted that India will be among the leading economies of the world by 2020.

62.6% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is from India's large service industry, whilst the agricultural sector is 17.5% and the industrial sector 20%. Although it only accounts for a small proportion of India's GDP, agriculture is the predominant occupation with 52.2% of employment. India's labour force is a massive half a billion workers. India's agricultural products include: rice, wheat, oilseed, cotton, jute, tea, sugarcane, potatoes, cattle, water buffalo, sheep, goats, poultry, and fish. The country is rapidly becoming a major force in the industrial sector, with telecommunications, textiles, chemicals, food processing, steel, transportation equipment, cement, mining, petroleum, machinery, information technology services, and software.

However, the economic inequality in the country is widening; roughly 80% of its population lives on less than US\$2 a day, 40% of children under the age of three are underweight and one third of all men and women suffer from chronic malnutrition – even though the "Green Revolution" brought an end to India's famine.

Exports

India's exports cover a wide range of industries. From textiles to plastics, and from agriculture and leather to chemicals and jewellery, India has managed to become a dominating force in the world's market, with no signs of slowing down.

Money

The Indian currency is the rupee (INR), and is divided into 100 paise (singular: paisa). ATM machines are widespread in India and withdrawals may have a small surplus charge although this is likely to be similar to traveller's cheque commission rates. Credit and debit cards (MasterCard and Visa) are accepted for cash withdrawal at most banks but rarely for general payments. However a credit card will come in useful in the event of an emergency.

Get Culture Savvy

Southern Indians are linguistically and culturally different from the rest of India, although mutual interaction and the effects of similar external influences have made much cultural impact. According to some experts, the worldview of southern Indians is essentially the celebration of the eternal universe through the celebration of the beauty of the body, and motherhood, which is exemplified through their dance, clothing, and sculptures.

Traditional Dress

South Indian women traditionally wear the sari while the men wear a type of sarong, which could be either a white dhoti or a colourful lungi with typical batik patterns. The sari is an unstitched drape and

only partially covers the midriff. In Indian philosophy, the navel of the Supreme Being is considered as the source of life and creativity. Hence by tradition, the stomach and the navel is to be left unconcealed, though the philosophy behind the costume has largely been forgotten. These principles of the sari also hold for other forms of drapes, like the lungi or mundu worn by men.

Food

Rice is the staple diet, while fish is an integral component of coastal South Indian meals. Coconut is an important ingredient in Kerala whereas Andhra Pradesh cuisine is characterised by pickles, and spicy curries. Dosa, idli, and uttapam are popular throughout the region. There are large coffee estates in southern Karnataka and parts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu; many southern Indians drink coffee.

Music & Dance

The music of South India is known as carnatic music, which includes rhythmic and structured music by composers like Purandara Dasa, Kanaka Dasa, and Swathi Thirunal.

South India is home to several distinct dance forms – the Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Theyyam, Ottamthullal, Oppana, Kerala Natanam, and Mohiniaattam (which literally translates as Dance of the Enchantress) The Bharatanatyam expresses the celebration of beauty and the universe, through its tenets of having a perfectly erect posture, a straight and curving stomach, a well rounded and proportionate body mass – to the body structure, very long hair and curvaceous hips. These tenets bring to life the philosophy of the Natyashastra. This is elaborated in the araimandi posture, wherein the performer assumes a half sitting position with the knees turned sideways, with a very erect posture. In this fundamental posture of the Bharatanatyam dance, the distance between the head and the navel becomes equal to that between the earth and the navel. In a similar way the distance between the outstretched right arm to the outstretched left arm becomes equal to the distance between the head and the feet, thus representing the "Natyapurusha", the embodiment of life and creation.

Literature

South India has an independent literary tradition going back over 2000 years. The first known literature of South India is the poetic Sangams, which were written in Tamil from 2000 to 1500 years ago. The 850 CE Kannada classic Kavirajamarga, written by King Amoghavarsha I, makes references to Kannada literature of King Durvinita in the early 6th century CE.

Movies

The movie industry has emerged as an important platform in South India, over the years portraying the cultural changes, trends, aspirations and developments experienced by the people. Some movie classics like Nammukku Paarkkaan Munthiri Thoppukal (1986) by Padmarajan, Adi Shankara (1984) by director G V Iyer, and Perumthachan (1990) by Ajayan have gained worldwide acclaim for their masterful depiction of the worldview of the South Indian people.

Important: You will notice during your stay, Indian men (and women) are not used to the Western way of dressing; therefore you should try to cover up your shoulders and chest with either long shirts and/or a shawl. This does not mean you cannot bring your tops and shirts, as you can wear them; a shawl can do miracles (Indian tops are perfect for this, and you will have the opportunity to buy one).

Especially in the villages, it is considered rude to pay money or eat food with your left hand. Pointing your foot at a person, deity or religious image could be considered rude. Wearing your footwear inside a traditional home or temple is frowned upon. However, people are understanding of the fact that you are from a different culture and may not know these facts when inadvertently done.

Holidays

Because of India's diverse ethnic, cultural and religious background, there are innumerable festivals and holidays across the country. However, there are four main public holidays that are observed in all states;

26th January - Republic Day

30th January - Martyrs' Day

15th August - Independence Day

2nd October - Mahatma Ghandi's birthday

Learn the Lingo

Most people in and around Bangalore speak Kannada. Here's a quick guide to get you started:

ENGLISH	KANNADA
Greetings	
Hello	Namaskara
Goodbye	Hogi Barthe
How are you?	Neevu hegi ddheeri?
I like Udupi	Nanage Udupi ishta
You are beautiful	Neevu chanda iddiri
I am fine	Naanu chennagi ddene
Thank you	Dhanyavadagalu
Introduction	
My name is...	Nanna hesaru...
I am from...	Naanu (country name) deshavadanu
Happy to meet you	Nimmannu bh etimaadi santosha agi de
Sorry I'm late	Kshamisi, naanu thadavaagi bandhe
Enquiry	
What is your name?	Nimma hesaru enu?
How do I go there?	Allig e naanu hege hoguvudu?
How much is this?	Idhu eshtu?
Where can I make a phone call?	Phone kare yelli madabahudu?
Can you help me?	Nanage sahaya maadutheera?
Please take me to the nearest temple	Dayavittu nannanu hattirada hogi
Where is the nearest police station?	Police station hatharadalli elli iday?
General	

Sorry	K shamisi
I want it	Idhu nanage beku
Please translate into English	Dayavitu idhannu Englishig e bh aashantharisi

Lay of the Land

A dominant feature of South India is the tropical climate. Lush evergreen vegetation in the South Western Ghats, and moist deciduous forests are found along the Western Ghats. With high altitude rainforests called the South Western Ghats montane rainforests, the Western Ghats are a biodiversity hotspot. The Malabar Coast moist forests are found on the coastal plains. And the South Deccan Plateau is home to tropical dry forests. Dry deciduous forests and scrub lands, known as Deccan thorn scrub forests, are common in the interior Deccan plateau.

Some of the most famous wildlife sanctuaries are found in South India. These include Project Tiger reserves such as Periyar National Park, the neighbouring Mudumalai National Park, Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park and Waynad wildlife sanctuary, Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary, Silent Valley National Park, and the Nagarjunsagar-Srisaillam Tiger Reserve among many others.

Important protected ecological sites include the Annamalai Hills and Nilgiri Hills of the Western Ghats and backwaters like the Pulicut Lake in Andhra Pradesh; Pitchavarum in Tamil Nadu and the famed backwaters of Kerala formed by the Vembanad Lake, the Ashtamudi Lake and the Kayamkulam Lake.

What's the Weather like?

Between December and mid-February the Indian winter is cool but rarely uncomfortably cold. From April onwards the summer begins and brings hot summer evenings and humid summer rains. As October approaches the temperature cools and a mellow autumn descends.

Biodiversity

From tropical rainforests to alpine vegetation, from temperate forests to coastal wetlands, India has a rich a varied heritage of biodiversity, which significantly contributes to latitudinal biodiversity trends. India is also home to two biodiversity hotspots; the Western Ghats and the eastern Himalayas. This country covers 2.4% of the world's area, yet accounts for 7.21% of global faunal species – a total count of 89,451 faunal species.

India's bio-regions are rich and diverse; the Palaearctic realm and the Indo-Malaysian realm, the tropical humid forest biomass, tropical dry/deciduous forest biomass, the warm desert/semi-desert biomass, and its 10 bio-geographic regions:

1. Trans-Himalayan
2. Himalayan
3. Indian Desert
4. Semi-arid Zones
5. Western Ghats
6. Deccan Peninsula
7. Gangetic Plain
8. Northeast India

- 9. Islands
- 10. Coasts

India is also one of the 12 worldwide centres of origin of cultivated plants (roughly 30-50,000 varieties of rice, pigeon-pea, mango, turmeric, ginger, sugarcane, and gooseberries are considered to have come from India). It has five world heritage sites, 12 biosphere reserves and six Ramsar wetlands (wetlands of global significant importance identified under the Ramsar Convention). It works hard to preserve its fantastic biodiversity, and has set up 88 national parks and 490 sanctuaries countrywide.

Good Books

Guidebooks

- The Lonely Planet Guide to India. Sarina Singh. ISBN 9781741791518 (2009)
- The Rough Guide to India. David Abram. ISBN 9781858289946 (2008)
- Learn Kannada in a Month. Srinivasa Sastry. ISBN 9788187782094 (2000)

Fiction

- The Red Carpet: Bangalore Stories. Lavanya Sankaran. ISBN 9780385338172 (2005)
- The White Tiger. Aravind Adiga. ISBN 9781843547228 (2008)

Teaching Guides

- Essential Grammar in Use with Answers: A Self-study Reference and Practice Book for Elementary Students of English 2nd Edition. Raymond Murphy. Cambridge University Press, 2002. ISBN 9780521529327
- Essential Grammar in Use with Answers: A Self-study Reference and Practice Book for Intermediate Students of English 3rd Edition. Raymond Murphy. Cambridge University Press, 2004. ISBN 9780521532891
- Lessons from Nothing: Activities for Language Teaching with Limited Time and Resources (Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers). Bruce Marsland. Cambridge University Press, 1998. ISBN 9780521627658
- Games for Children (Resource Books for Teachers). Gordon Lewis & Gunther Benson. Oxford University Press, 1999. ISBN 9780194372244
- Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching 2nd Edition. Diane Larsen-Freeman. Oxford University Press, 2000. ISBN 9780194355742

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