Destination

INDIA

Important information to help you prepare for your upcoming Exodus trip.

We have put this guide together to provide you with as many of the tips and insights we’ve picked up over the years of running tours in this region. The information has been gathered from our local partners, Exodus staff as well as past Exodus travellers, and we hope will assist you when making your final preparations over the coming weeks.

Please read it in conjunction with your Joining Instructions and the Trip Notes for your holiday, to ensure you are fully prepared.

Namaskar – Welcome to India!

Whether you have 10 days or a month to spare; whether you want to walk or cycle over some of the highest passes in the Indian Himalaya or float through the tranquil landscapes of Kerala; maybe you want the best tiger safari or a cultural trip soaking up the stunning forts and palaces of Rajasthan, at Exodus we aim to show you all that this incredible country has to offer. During your time here, our outstanding local leaders will take you to the very heart of this country we love or, as we call it, ‘the real India’!

Katherine Tory
Exodus India Product Manager

FACT BOX:

Currency: Indian rupee
Language: Hindi, English
Capital City: New Delhi
Population: 1,200,000,000+
Dialling code: +91
Time zone: GMT/UTC +5.30hr
National Flag:

Facts correct as of April 2015

New Delhi
Varanasi
Leh
Jaisalmer
Jodhpur
Calcutta
Cochin
**ACCOMMODATION INFORMATION**

The hotels you stay at will all be of good quality, with en-suite facilities. You may have an odd night where the standard is slightly lower but this will usually be due to where you are and therefore limited by what is available.

If you are trekking, all of our Indian treks are offered on a full-service camping basis, meaning that you need only carry your daypack. Our camp staff will erect and dismantle the tents, cook, wash up and do all camp chores for you. We also provide toilet tents and a dining tent. Tents are on a twin-share basis although single tents may be requested for a supplement. Treks in India are predominantly wild camping, meaning there are no official campsites and for the most part there are no fixed facilities and water will be from a local spring, stream or river.

**LAUNDRY, TOWELS & HAIRDRYERS**

Most hotels in India offer a laundry service, but you will usually need a two night stay to ensure you have enough time to get it done. Towels are provided and hairdryers, if not available in the bathroom, can be obtained from reception (but a small travel one may be a good idea if you need it daily).

Hotels in Ladakh tend to be a little more basic. All rooms have en-suite facilities, although the hot water supply (together with the electricity) can sometimes be intermittent. Some hotels will have back-up generators but lanterns, torches or candles are usually provided in case of power cuts. You can get laundry done in Leh, although it’s likely to be hand washed so be careful of anything too delicate!

**WI-FI + PHONE RECEPTION**

Most hotels around India these days have Wi-Fi, some have it in every room, others just in communal areas. Often it is free of charge but some of the more premium hotels may charge a small fee for use.

Except in Ladakh, India has very good mobile network coverage. If you want to stay connected to friends and family back home, you also have the option of buying a local SIM, which is easy to do. Reliable mobile companies include Idea, Airtel and BSNL.

To obtain an Indian SIM, you will need:
- Passport size photographs
- Photocopy of your passport and Indian visa

In Ladakh, an internet connection is available in Leh only but this can often be out of service for months at a time and quite temperamental when actually working. For international SIM cards, mobile phone coverage is non-existent, you cannot buy a local SIM card and there is hardly any mobile signal outside of Leh itself anyway. There are public phones and internet cafés around Leh which you can use to keep in touch with home, if needed.

**DRINKING WATER**

Tap water in India isn’t suitable for drinking but safe bottled water is available everywhere to purchase quite cheaply. If you’re out on trek, stream water is collected and boiled each day, and it’s a good idea to have some purification tablets with you as well.

**PLUG**

Three pin round

---

**MONEY & COSTS**

**SPENDING MONEY**

The Indian rupee is a closed currency, meaning you can only get it upon arrival in the country. Cash in most major currencies can be exchanged on arrival at the airport or alternatively at the hotel, exchange rates are often more favourable outside of the airport, especially in Delhi. There are also banks with exchange desks in most major towns and cities. When you change money, make sure you keep the receipt in case you need to change any back before leaving India.

**ATMS & USING CARDS**

ATMs can be found in all major towns and cities, and credit cards are accepted almost everywhere, except in smaller shops and restaurants. You should always inform your bank before leaving home so they don’t try and block your card for security reasons, and also carry your bank’s contact details in case there are any problems. While ATMs are now quite common, they are not always 100% reliable, so it’s advisable to take some of your spending money in cash as well.

**SHOPPING**

Shopping is an integral part of the culture in India and you will find colourful markets, stalls and bazaars around almost every corner. Most towns and cities have a main or central market which is the hub of the town. From the noisy streets crowded with rickshaws, bullock carts, trucks and taxis, to the packed pavements filled with goods overflowing from every kind of shop imaginable, it’s a thrilling place to visit, although not for the faint hearted!

**Staff Tip:**

“If your trip visits Ladakh, there are a couple of ATMs in Leh but you shouldn’t rely on these as they’re often out of order or have run out of cash. It’s best to take cash or use an ATM in Delhi before flying north.”

**Staff Tip:**

“Half the joy of shopping in India is the sheer scale of what’s on offer, from upscale boutiques in New Delhi, Mumbai and Calcutta to the crowded and sweaty markets of pretty much any town or village you come to. Handicrafts, art, leather goods, spices, hand carved statues, silk – the list goes on – all the way to cheap knock offs of western brands!

Remember, outside of the proper shops, haggling is the key but don’t waste your time trying to split the difference over a few pence – the best result is when everyone comes away happy!”

**Staff Tip:**

“I loved the approach shopkeepers in Varanasi’s silk shops had toward their most popular art. They demonstrated how I could distinguish fabric made elsewhere by examining thread patterns as well as how you can identify real silk from the mass produced synthetic silk. After our sight-seeing along the Ganges river, we sat down on a mattress in a back room lined with stunning silks, and a constant stream of chai was produced to sweeten the deal. These silk shops offer an incredible range of hand woven products such as scarves, shawls, and rolls upon rolls of silk fabrics at amazingly low prices.”
FOOD

There is a real mix of styles and flavours of food available in India, and you won’t be disappointed. The local cuisine is predominantly vegetarian with lots of rice and, while traditional curry is ubiquitous, there is also lots of variety. Vegetarians and ‘non-spicy’ food people are easily catered for, and the leader will make sure a wide range of dishes are ordered for each meal. In North India, the curries tend to be rich and spicy and served with various types of nan or rice. In Ladakh, Danleeng and Sikkim, there is chance to sample more Tibetan style food such as momos. Ladakh is also famous for its German Bakeries – try the delicious fresh apricot crumble made with locally grown apricots. In South India, be sure to try a Masala Dosa, a crispy pancake filled with potato curry. A typical Indian beverage is Lassi, a yoghurt drink served plain, or with salt or sugar, which goes well with curry especially, if it’s a little spicy.

APPROXIMATE COSTS

For any meals that are not included in the price of your holiday, you should generally allow around £15 per day to cover these. You can eat out very cheaply in India but obviously prices can vary, depending on the quality of the places you choose to visit. Tea and soft drinks are very cheap, a large bottle of beer is about £3 and a litre of bottled water about 50p.

Staff Tip:
"You will normally be booked in 2-tier sleeper A/C. All seats are pre-allocated at the time the tickets are issued, meaning that we’re not able to guarantee the whole group are together on the train but your leader will manage this as best as possible and will always check on you during the journey. You could end up sitting beside a Mumbai businessman or a sadhu on pilgrimage, it can be pot luck. There is usually a stream of friendly hawkers, chai boys and fascinating faces passing through at all hours, which makes for a memorable experience."¹

Staff Tip:
"India has delicious food to cater for all preferences but, like anywhere in the world, hygiene is important. Keeping your hands well washed before eating, staying as hydrated as possible and sticking to bottled water is the best protection against an upset tum."²

Staff Tip:
"Be savvy when it comes to entrepreneurial tuk tuk drivers taking less scenic routes via preferred jewellery and souvenir shops!"³

Staff Tip:
"A popular restaurant, situated in Old Delhi on the ground floor of Hotel Broadway, is the Chor Bizarre Restaurant. It has a good selection of North Indian and Kashmiri cuisine, and also has regular Indian cultural programmes in the evenings. Being a popular restaurant, it is advisable to make an advance booking for either dinner or the show."⁴

TRANSPORT

If you are arriving independently and have booked transfers through Exodus, the driver/representative will meet you with a sign bearing your name.

If you are on an international flight into Delhi, they will meet you outside Gate No. 6. If you are arriving on a domestic flight, they will be at Gate No. 3.

Please note that once you move out of the above mentioned gates, you will not be permitted to go back into the arrival lounge.

You should always keep a copy of your Joining Instructions from Exodus (one per passenger) throughout the trip, as you will need to show a record of your flights to get into all airport terminal buildings. If you have booked your flights independently, you will need to print and take a copy of your flight itinerary with you. There will be policemen at airport entrances checking flight details and passports before you’re allowed into the building.

You should be careful of taxi drivers who may tell you that the hotel you are booked at is either sold out or is not open for some reason. This can sometimes be a scam to take you to a different hotel or charge you a very high fare, so always use the pre-paid taxi counters at the airport, where you pay the fare in advance and nothing to the driver.

Staff Tip:
"You will normally be booked in 2-tier sleeper A/C. All seats are pre-allocated at the time the tickets are issued, meaning that we’re not able to guarantee the whole group are together on the train but your leader will manage this as best as possible and will always check on you during the journey. You could end up sitting beside a Mumbai businessman or a sadhu on pilgrimage, it can be pot luck. There is usually a stream of friendly hawkers, chai boys and fascinating faces passing through at all hours, which makes for a memorable experience."¹

Staff Tip:
"India has delicious food to cater for all preferences but, like anywhere in the world, hygiene is important. Keeping your hands well washed before eating, staying as hydrated as possible and sticking to bottled water is the best protection against an upset tum."²

Staff Tip:
"Be savvy when it comes to entrepreneurial tuk tuk drivers taking less scenic routes via preferred jewellery and souvenir shops!"³

Staff Tip:
"A popular restaurant, situated in Old Delhi on the ground floor of Hotel Broadway, is the Chor Bizarre Restaurant. It has a good selection of North Indian and Kashmiri cuisine, and also has regular Indian cultural programmes in the evenings. Being a popular restaurant, it is advisable to make an advance booking for either dinner or the show."⁴

METRO

In Delhi there is now a very good and efficient Metro system which is similar to the London Underground. If you’re staying in Delhi, you will be given a Metro map upon arrival and it is a cheap and easy way to get around. We do not recommend women use the Metro on their own but if you do, the first carriage in every train is reserved for women travellers.
**VISITING NORTH INDIA**

**New Delhi**
As the main gateway for travellers to India, most people will touch down or spend free time in New Delhi at some point. If you’re doing some sightseeing, the first thing to bear in mind is that Delhi is a BIG city and most sights are very spread out, so it’s not the kind of place you can just stroll from place to place.

You should also bear in mind that it can be pretty draining when you land, between the heat, the noisy traffic and the poor air quality. People sometimes make plans to see a lot but then find it all a bit much on the first day, so it’s best to see how you feel when you land and don’t go too far from the hotel if you don’t feel up to it.

Most trips include sightseeing in Delhi, where some key sites will be visited. The exact itinerary for sightseeing trips can vary from departure to departure depending on different factors, but if you have some free time, you may want to consider some of the following: The Red Fort, which was built by Shah Jehan and used by the British when in power here. Opposite is the Jama Masjid, the largest mosque in Delhi and behind is Chandni Chowk, the tiny alleyways of Old Delhi with many small markets selling spices, jewellery, sari and much more. It’s easy to get lost so it’s best to take a cycle rickshaw around the narrow streets. India Gate is close to the President’s residence and former home of the Viceroy of India. Raj Ghat is the memorial to Gandhi and is a pleasant quiet park. Humayun’s Tomb is a forerunner to the Taj Mahal and the first tomb garden built by the Moghuls. An imposing red sandstone monument, it can be found in Nizamuddin.

If you would like to find out exactly what you may be visiting on your departure, please contact Exodus.

For something more restful, you could go for coffee and cakes in the 1911 Coffee Shop in the Imperial Hotel. (Or go the whole hog with sandwiches, scones and cakes.)

The local agent or hotel can arrange a car with a driver for a half or full day, and you can visit whatever sights you prefer. Outside most hotels you will find auto rickshaws (tuk tuks) which will also take you to any of the sights.

If you take a tuk tuk or local taxi, always agree on a price before the journey and be aware that the driver will most likely try and suggest you visit his friends shop at some point.

**Regional**
As well as its multitude of impressive palaces and forts, the city of Jaipur is renowned for its wealth of craft artisans, especially in the manufacture of jewellery. You can stroll through Johari Bazar to see talented silversmiths at work, or step into the side lanes around Tripolia Bazar and Chaura Rasta to see craftsmen of every kind working.

The main bazaar in Jodhpur, marked by a clock tower, is a fascinating place to stroll around. Side-stepping around the free roaming (sacred) cows as you soak up the hive of activity, it’s the perfect place to pick up a colourful Rajasthani sari.

Away from the very busy riverside ghats, a highlight of Varanasi is exploring the endless narrow alleyways located in the old town. Bustling with temples, shops and bazaars, it’s easy to lose yourself for a few hours in the teeming life which surges around this ancient part of the city. Just watch out for the sleeping cows...

---

**Staff Tip:**

“An interesting excursion when you have an extra day in Delhi is a trip to the new Aakasharam temple. Situated on the outskirts of New Delhi on the embankment of the river Yamuna, this sprawling site spreads over 100 acres and is renowned for its carved pillars, water fountains and 20,000 statues. Made from white marble and pink stone this new temple was only completed in 2005, which makes it less well known by western tourists or the guide books. A visit to the temple is the perfect way to explore the amazing world of Indian culture and get a unique view of the Hindu religion.”

**Staff Tip:**

“Fancy a night out in India just like the locals? Head to a Bollywood movie and join in an evening packed with entertainment. The Bollywood masala movies are a mixture of dance, drama and musical with a break in between, as most of these are lengthy 3 hours movies. The songs and dances make it like a 60’s musical where you could have the whole audience singing and dancing to the tune and in fact, some movies become hits only because of these. Movie theatres that you may want to visit are Raj Mandir in Jaipur, the Odeon in Connaught Place, New Delhi, Filmistan, Karol Bagh, also in New Delhi – but all cities have theatres. A word of warning – try to avoid the rush when entering and exiting the theatre and keep valuables close to you, zipped up at all times.”
Cochin
Most Exodus trips in southern India start at the Hotel Grand in Cochin, centrally located in the main market area of MG Road on mainland Cochin. Close by the hotel are banks, shopping malls, fruit and vegetable markets, as well as hotels and restaurants, so it's a great place to stock up if you have forgotten to pack anything.

If you like, you can get away from the hustle and bustle of mainland Cochin and head towards the old part of town around Fort Kochi. To get there, it's best to take the ferry, and the ferry stop is about 15 minutes' walk from the hotel. Once in Fort Kochi, you can wander around to see the Chinese fishing nets and fish market and you can find plenty of small open restaurants serving the freshly caught fish. If you want to get away from the hurly burly of the mainland, enjoy a bit of luxury or just sit and watch river life go by, then this is the place for you. It's also a good place to eat if you're looking for some alternatives to curry for dinner.

This area has plenty of small cafés and restaurants to choose from, so you won't be stuck for choice.

Staff Tip:
"Head down to the Cochin Cultural Centre to catch performances of the ancient form of dance-drama traditional to Kerala. The photogenic Jewish quarter is also great for sharpening your bartering skills and you can include a visit to one of the oldest functioning synagogues in the Commonwealth."

Staff Tip:
"Enjoy a cup of spiced tea with the Chai Wala’s you will meet at the side of the road. The sweet tea is lovely. Don’t be afraid to try the local food stalls too – all part of your India experience!"

Client Tip:
"I especially enjoyed the stay in Munnar and the trek in the Western Ghats, with breathtaking views of the Annamudi Peak and surrounding hills. I could have stayed here for another day just exploring the countryside, photographing the wildlife and surroundings, and talking to local people."

Stella
The Tropical South

Mattancherry Palace and Jewish Synagogue area
Mattancherry Palace is an old maharajas’ residence now converted into a local museum depicting the lives of the various Maharajas for the area. The palace is worth a visit for an insight into the history of the region and its’ rulers. The Synagogue area has quite a few spice, fabric and other curio stores to browse and indulge in some shopping. Be warned however, that most “antiques” for sale these days are not real, so buyer beware!

Whilst in Cochin, you should also go and see a Kathakali performance (classic Indian dance-drama). There are lots of places that have an evening show – go early to watch the make up being applied.

Houseboats
The famous houseboats of Kerala must be experienced at least once by anyone travelling through the region. Whilst comfortable, the accommodation will be more basic than that of a hotel. Rooms have mosquito nets, a fan or sometimes air-conditioning, and electricity is supplied by a generator in the evenings (not 24hr). Rooms are small and so your main luggage will be left on the coach which will re-join you the following morning. All meals are provided on the houseboat and you can buy drinks before boarding, or along the route where the houseboats will stop.

Kovalam
A visit to the popular Lighthouse Beach is a must, and if you get there mid-morning you can watch local fishermen getting their nets ready for the days fishing, chanting and singing as they do so. Follow this with a delicious seafood lunch from one of the many restaurants which line the beach and then, to work off some calories, it’s a short hike to the 35m working lighthouse situated on a hillock at the southern tip of the beach. It’s open for 2 hours between 3pm and 5pm and the admission is Rs 25, with an extra charge if you have a camera. The final stretch to the top involves climbing a metal ladder and it’s well worth it for the spectacular 360 degree views of the beach and nearby coastline.

Spice Trails of Kerala trip (TGK)
On this trip, you have the option to leave any unwanted baggage either at the Cochin hotel (where the trip starts and ends) or take it with you until Munnar and then give it to the jeep driver coming on the trek. If you take the second option, the jeep will be carrying all the tents and other supplies from camp to camp each evening, so you’ll have the luggage most days on the trek. It’s only when you go from Top to Central station, as there is no motorable road, that we will be using porters and ponies to take the luggage and supplies. At this point, you can only take your sleeping bag and your overnight Exodus bag, and the rest of the luggage can be left on the jeep that will come to the last campsite. Although most of the trip will be quite warm, the evenings at camp can be quite cold so take a warm jacket for when the sun goes down.
VISITING LADAKH

Leh, the capital of Ladakh, sits at an altitude of approximately 3500m above sea level. Most people flying into Leh may feel the effects of being at altitude to begin with, perhaps experiencing shortness of breath or headaches but these are usually short-lived provided you stay hydrated and pace yourself over the first day or so.

While as much time as possible has been allowed for acclimatisation, you should be aware that all of Ladakh sits at a high altitude and you are likely to feel the effects at some point. Advice varies, but the general consensus on how to combat altitude sickness is to drink plenty of non-alcoholic fluid (at least 1.5 litres per day) and rest for the first few hours when you reach altitude.

The drug Diamox (also known as acetazolamide and normally only available on prescription) has been shown to aid acclimatisation in some individuals, and therefore may reduce the risk of AMS. Clients considering using Diamox should speak to their doctor about the drug, its side-effects and a prescription.

SIGHTS & EXCURSIONS

Leh is a great spot for people-watching, and an hour or two wandering around the bazaar will demonstrate the regions reputation as a crossroads of trade. Tibetan refugees, Kashmiri traders, Indian army officers, Sikh civil servants, Changpa nomads and Dards all jostle and rub shoulders in the narrow alleyways. If you have some extra time in Leh, take the jeep trip to the Khardungla, supposedly the highest motorable road pass in the world at 5,602m. Your leader will have details and prices and can help you arrange.

Other attractions in the area include walking up the 555 steps to the Japanese Peace Pagoda in the late afternoon to watch the sun go down over the valley. Alternatively you could buy a bag of carrots in the local market and take them to the Donkey Sanctuary to share out as a treat – they will love you for it! This sanctuary is supported by Exodus as one of our Himalayan Community Support projects.

If you want a break from sightseeing around Leh, you can sample some amazing fresh apricot crumble in one of the many German bakeries around Leh, or try the carrot cake and coffee at the Open Hand Café, where you can also buy souvenirs sold in aid of various small projects around India.

In Leh, street stalls line the pavements of the main street and little bazaars, selling everything from food to clothing, jewellery, handicrafts and trekking gear, fill the backstreets.

TREKKING

For anyone trekking in the region, there are a few trekking stores now in Leh and pretty much everything is available for a price. However, we cannot guarantee the quality or quantities you will find, and we advise that for anything really important, you should take it from home.

For most treks, lightweight clothing is fine with warmer layers for the evening. You can usually sit out with a fleece jacket in the evenings, except over the valley. Alternatively you could buy a bag of carrots in the local market and take them to the Donkey Sanctuary to share out as a treat – lots of layers are best. A truck will carry all the camping gear, along with the cook and his team, and they will always be ahead of you and have camp ready at the end of each day.

A support vehicle will always be at the rear of the group and there will be a mechanic to help fix any problems with your bike, should they arise. If you’re struggling with the cycling, the support vehicle will never be too far away and you can always jump on and take a break. The leader will also usually collect a small kitty on arrival which is used to buy water and snacks for the group for the cycling days.

On all bike trips in India you’ll have a briefing about the rules of the road and safety for the group for the cycling days.

We have bike trips in Rajastan, South India and Ladakh.

On the bike trips in South India, the temperatures are usually hot and, while it can rain, plenty of lightweight gear is essential. If you are on the Rajastan or Manali to Leh bike trip, these both start and finish in Delhi. The Manali to Leh trip is tough in places, as it goes to very high altitudes. It can get very cold on top of the high passes, and the Rothang and Baralacha passes can attract bad weather, so you need to have decent wind and waterproof gear – lots of layers are best. A truck will carry all the camping gear, along with the cook and his team, and they will always be ahead of you and have camp ready at the end of each day.

A support vehicle will always be at the rear of the group and there will be a mechanic to help fix any problems with your bike, should they arise. If you’re struggling with the cycling, the support vehicle will never be too far away and you can always jump on and take a break. The leader will also usually collect a small kitty on arrival which is used to buy water and snacks for the group for the cycling days.

On all bike trips in India you’ll have a briefing about the rules of the road and safe cycling in India. The most important thing to remember is the pecking order on Indian roads. Trucks and buses are the biggest and have the most priority, minibuses and cars come next, motorbikes are next and right at the bottom are cyclists and pedestrians. This is very different from the west and is important to remember when cycling on the roads anywhere in India.
DOING A TIGER TRIP

Temperatures can be quite cold on the early morning game drives but can increase quickly once the sun rises higher in the sky. The start of the afternoon drives can get very warm so some good sunscreen and a sun hat is essential. The forest trails you drive along can get pretty dusty so it's a good idea to have a scarf or cloth to wrap your camera in. Bottled water is supplied so you don't need to worry about taking your own. While tigers are the main draw obviously, there should be plenty sightings of other wildlife such as monkeys, peacocks, snakes, vultures and, if you're very lucky, a leopard!

If you would like to do extra game drives, you should discuss this with your leader before you leave for the park. He will confirm if this is possible and what extra money you may need to take with you.

It's not possible to change or withdraw money from an ATM once in the national parks, so you need to get plenty of cash organised at the airport on arrival. That said, the biggest expense would be additional drives so without those, there's not much to spend money on until you get to Agra, where there are cash machines and banks. The only other expense to consider in the national parks would be drinks and lunches.

Windows at the hotels and guest houses we use are screened and mosquito nets are provided, so there's no need to bring one with you. Rooms also usually have mosquito repellents and coils provided as extra protection.

Client Tip:

“We had two highlights – firstly, seeing a tiger in Ranthambore (the guide in the park was fantastic and let us spend extra time when there was a chance of seeing a tiger and it paid off). Secondly, seeing the Taj Mahal! It truly is magnificent and definitely worth getting up early to see it at dawn (once again, our guide was brilliant and had us at the front of the queue before giving us some chai to keep us awake).”

Will

Highlights of Northern India

Tips & Advice for Travelling Responsibly...

Responsible Travel is central to the ethos of Exodus. We design and operate our holidays in a way that gives the highest degree of long-term economic benefit to the host communities, whilst also minimising the impact on the environment. We believe that travel should encourage positive cultural exchanges and the below tips are designed to help you get the most out of your holiday as well as making a genuine contribution to the people and places visited.

- Why not be a bit braver than the average, and pair the somewhat overused greeting ‘Namaste’ with ‘Aap kese hain’ (how are you) or ‘Dhanyavad’ (thank you).
- Appropriate dress for both men and woman includes neat, loose-fitting which covers shoulders to knees/legs. Ladies, necklines should not be too low, carrying a light shawl can help you cover up at short notice.
- Do it like a local – The left hand is associated with toilet/unsavoury duties, so try using your right hand while eating or for any exchanges. Displays of affection should be kept at bay.
- If you wish to give, donating to a local charity, school or hospital maximises benefits and can discourage a begging mentality. Handing out sweets or pens can result in kids hanging around to collect them rather than using them at school.
- Stay on existing paths and be aware that using products while swimming may pollute water downstream.
- Keep your trip litter-free – toxic products like batteries should be taken home for disposal. When trekking, biodegradable toilet paper, resealable bags, and eco-friendly sun lotion are best, along with paraben-free body products and reusable water bottles (use alongside purification tablets).
- Tipping is customary for good service and will be appreciated.
- To support local livelihood and talent, simply go local when purchasing food or souvenirs. Feel free to haggle in markets, but do drive a fair price.
- Steer clear of souvenirs made from wild species e.g. Shahtoosh shawls made from endangered Tibetan antelope. Spotted cat skins, reptile products, stony corals, elephant ivory and turtle shells could also be taken by customs.
- Think before taking pictures of snake charmers. Snakes are taken from the wild, their teeth removed and venom ducts pierced.
- Perfect your temple etiquette – ask permission before entering, remove your shoes, and try not to point your feet at others or the deity. Some temples do not allow leather goods.
- If you’d like to take a photo of somebody, ask permission. Exchanging a few words or gestures also provides an opportunity to communicate with locals! Offering (and actually sending) a copy is a great way to benefit both parties. Avoid snapping anything military-related.
- Be sure to check whether you can drink or smoke in public, as in many places it is prohibited and locals may feel bad to impose their duties, so try using your right hand while eating or for any exchanges. Displays of affection should be kept at bay.
- If you find yourself the subject of stares or personal questions, there’s no need to interpret it as being hassled or insulted. If you want to, you could learn more about Indian culture in return.

The information provided is given in good faith and is subject to change. If you have returned from your trip and found anything within this document which is incorrect, please help us keep it up to date by emailing customersops@exodus.co.uk. Likewise, if you have a tip you would like to share with future clients, please let us know and we will hope to include it in future editions. Please note that some of the information provided here is personal opinion and does not form part of our contract with clients.