

Responsible Tourism

We are fully aware that the environment in our part of the world is fragile and many people are poor. We care deeply about the local people and the environment and are committed to responsible tourism. As most of our bookings are made by couples or small groups the environmental impact is kept to a minimum. We regularly contribute to the following organisations.

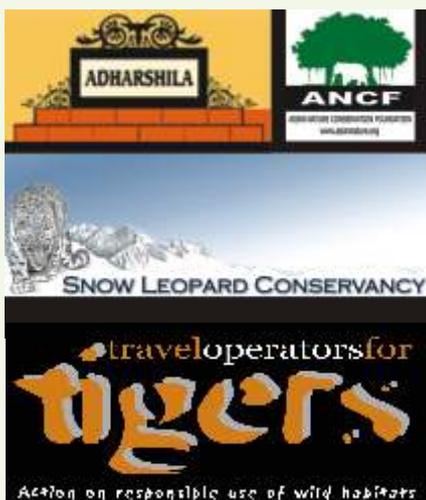
The Travel Operators for Tigers campaign (TOFT) is a travel industry platform. It works in cooperation with Global Tiger Patrol, which aims to advocate and support a more responsible and sustainable approach to tourism in South Asia's wildlife reserves, together with aiding specific conservation programmes which benefit the local communities and wildlife. Royal Expeditions is one of the founder members of the TOFT India programme.

The Asian Nature Conservation Foundation (ANCF) is based at Bangalore, in South India and has been working to stem the rapid decline in the natural landscape and biological diversity of India.

Snow Leopard Conservancy, based in Ladakh, in the Himalayas, promotes community-based stewardship of the endangered snow leopard, its prey and habitat.

In Delhi we support Adharshila that runs awareness and vocational programmes for slum communities. A visit to their centre while sightseeing in Delhi can be arranged on request.

Carbon Off Set - Royal Expeditions can customise your holiday to reducing your impact on our environment by using eco-friendly means of travel like trains, chauffer driven car running on compressed natural gas, horse carriage, camel carts or cycle rickshaw's on your expedition to India. If you wish to contribute, we will be happy to put you in touch with legitimate agencies involved in reforestation programmes.



Getting around the Indian Subcontinent

Air Travel

Air networks are extensive in India and are often the best way to quickly move from one region to another and allow itineraries to see the vastly different geography of India. There are many internal airlines operating in India. The most common airlines, however, are Indian (formerly Indian Airlines) Jet Airways, King Fisher and Air Deccan. They all have one of the youngest fleets in the world. The aircraft are typically Boeing 737's or Airbus A320, ATR.

In India, some times there are delays, schedule changes and cancellations with little or no warning. Should this happen to you, our staff will do their best to ensure as small a deviation as possible from the original itinerary. They will discuss the best possible solutions with you and will do all they can to get you to your destination on the correct day. This may involve a route change or destination change in some instances. This can be trying, but it is important that you bear these possibilities in mind when flying in the Indian skies.

Road Travel

Using a private car and driver is one of the best ways to see India. It allows great flexibility in your itinerary. Having a driver on stand-by allows you to go where you want, when you want without having to deal with the compulsory haggling over the price with a taxi, rickshaw etc.

Most of the time your car is likely to be an Ambassador, Tata Indigo, Toyota Qualis or Innova. The Ambassador cars are a favourite with tourists. Based on the old Morris Oxford, they may seem rather dated but they are always well maintained, clean and can be air-conditioned or non-air-conditioned depending on the season and location (an air-conditioned car is more expensive). If you would like to travel by luxury cars Mercedes Benz or BMW can also be arranged in most areas at additional cost which is high.

For first time visitors road travel can be pretty hair-raising, as the roads are poor compared to western countries! However, the slew of new highways linking the important metros and cities are well-kept and smooth-running.

We supply excellent local drivers who one used to these unique conditions. Our cars have an ice box well stocked with soft drinks and bottled water. On long drives the drivers will know of good quality hotels to stop at for meal and amenities breaks.

Train Travel

The Indian Railway System is the world's fourth largest with a route length of over 60,000 km. Everyday over 7,000 passenger trains run carrying over 10.5 million passengers, connecting 7,100 stations. A train journey is recommended as part of an itinerary as it offers an insight into the way most Indian locals travel.

A factor to consider with Indian trains is that getting there is not always half the fun, but it is certainly 90 per cent of the experience. Indian rail travel is unlike any other sort of travel in any other place on earth. At times it can be uncomfortable or incredibly frustrating (since the trains are not exactly fast) but it certainly is an experience.

ACCOMMODATION

The Indian subcontinent has a huge variety of hotels including some of the world's most luxurious properties. If your budget doesn't fit 5 star plus we can recommend and book a wide range of accommodation including colonial properties, good quality mid-range hotels, homestays, jungle lodges, tents and treehouses.

Please note that a high 'official' government classification does not necessarily mean a better hotel. Grading is based on facilities and does not take into account character, location and service. Royal Expeditions therefore does not give the 'official classification' of the hotels listed in our itineraries, but we do offer our opinion.

Our categories are as follows:

Luxury (L) – these are top range hotels of five star plus quality, offering a full range of facilities.

Deluxe (D) – these hotels may not be as luxurious as the above but will be of a four or five star standard of comfort and have a good range of facilities.

Mid-Range (M) – three or four star hotels offering a range of facilities and reasonable comfort. They mostly offer air-conditioning (where necessary).

Economy (E) – this includes simple hotels or guesthouses. The facilities will be limited but the rooms will have en suite facilities (unless stated otherwise). These hotels may not offer air-conditioning but a friendly service often compensates for the lack of amenities.

Homestay (HS) – most homestays will offer a comfortable room with en suite bathroom but otherwise the facilities are likely to be limited. You will be welcomed to a family home and be expected to eat the local cuisine.

Heritage (H) – any of the above categories may also be heritage properties offering a colonial or atmospheric ambience.

Boutique (B) – any of the above but a hotel with a small number of rooms offering stylish accommodation. Boutique hotels are usually privately owned.

FLYING TIME

London - Delhi 8hrs 45mins
New York - Delhi 15hrs 50mins
Frankfurt - Delhi 7hrs 20mins
Singapore - Delhi 5hrs 30mins
Sydney - Delhi 14hrs 55mins

LOCAL TIME

India UTC/GMT + 5hrs 30mins
Nepal UTC/GMT + 5hrs 45mins
Bhutan UTC/GMT + 6hrs
Sri Lanka UTC/GMT + 5hrs 30mins

WEATHER

India is essentially a tropical destination. However the country is so large and diverse that the stunning cold of the Himalayas can co-exist with the searing heat of the Rajasthan desert. It's best to think of India in terms of hot, wet and cool. The amazing heat, which can reach 45oc in areas of central and western India, begins to build from April end. In June the monsoon rains bring some relief, but downpours can make for calamitous travel conditions and remains hot and humid. Then in September, the rains cease and India is at its cool and lovely best.

In general, the south tends to be slightly cooler than the north and central plains. Naturally, any place with a high elevation, such as the hill stations of Shimla or Darjeeling, will enjoy a cooler climate. In short, October through March are the best months to travel, though both October and March can be pleasant as well.

However, prices at this time are higher, particularly over Christmas/New Year, when you will need to book at least six months in advance in order to get your choice of hotels. For lower prices and fewer tourists it is worth considering travelling outside this period.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

All Non-Indian Passport holders require visas for India which must be obtained prior to travel to India. NO visa is issued on arrival in India airport. Please note that if you are arriving into India more than once during your stay, you will require a multi-entrance visa.

In addition to the entry visas, special permits are required to visit the following restricted areas of India: North Eastern Frontier States (Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh), border areas of Jammu & Kashmir, selected areas of Himachal Pradesh, Uttranchal, Union Territories of Andaman and Lakshadweep Islands. We will require at least four weeks to apply for a special permit on your behalf.

HEALTH ADVICE

No vaccinations are currently required, but the following are recommended: Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Polio and Tetanus, Anti-malarial prophylactics. If you have recently travelled in a Yellow Fever affected part of the world, proof of a Yellow Fever inoculation is required. We also suggest that you bring an appropriate travel medical kit, including items such as remedies for minor stomach ailments, dehydration and motion sickness. To protect against the risk of malaria we also recommend you bring mosquito repellent cream or lotion. General medicines and mosquito repellents are easily available in India in local shops and are cheaper than in western countries.