

# TRAVEL GUIDE TO INDIA

*by Apelsha*



**A Journey Through  
Culture, Heritage, and  
Natural Beauty**



# *Ready for an Indian Adventure?*

If you're traveling to India for the first time, don't worry — I've got you covered!

This is your go-to guide with all the essentials: visas, transport, travel destinations, and some insider tips so you feel like a pro. No boring stuff, just what you actually need to know! 😊

Get ready to explore, eat, and experience India like never before!

# the boring but important stuff - VISAS!

Before traveling to India, ensure you have the appropriate visa. There are two main options:

## 1. **STANDARD VISA**

- Apply through the Indian High Commission or Consulate.
- Visit: [Indian High Commission Visa Information](#)
- Processing time: Varies (usually 5-7 working days).

## 2. **E-VISA**

- Available for citizens of eligible countries.
- Apply online at: [Indian E-Visa Portal](#)
- Processing time: Usually 72 hours.

### Required Documents:

- Passport valid for at least six months.
- Recent passport-sized photo (white background).
- Flight itinerary and accommodation details.

I recommend applying for an **E-visa** since it's minimum effort and most nationalities are eligible for it (except if you have a Pakistani Passport or are of Pakistani origin 😞).

Everyone else is fine! 🎉

# Flights & Transportation

## GETTING TO & AROUND IN INDIA

**Major International Airports:** Delhi (DEL), Mumbai (BOM), Bengaluru (BLR), Chennai (MAA).

**Domestic travel:** : India has a vast domestic flight network with budget airlines like IndiGo, SpiceJet, and Vistara offering frequent flights between major cities.

**Local Transport:** Metro systems in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Kolkata are efficient. Auto-rickshaws and local taxis are also widely available. Ola and Uber operate in most cities, providing a convenient way to book cabs.

## PRO TRAVEL TIPS

- Download Uber and Ola for quick, hassle-free travel. Be sure to add a payment method, preferably an international card, and select "Pay by Card" when booking an Uber. You can also pay by cash if you have the local currency.
- Metro systems are the best way to avoid traffic congestion in big cities - You can buy tickets for these at all metro stations.
- When using auto-rickshaws (also known as tuktuks), negotiate the fare or insist on using the meter.

**Your Make sure to travel in a tuk-tuk (auto-rickshaw) for an authentic Indian experience!**





# *Tourism Highlights*

**Here are some fun facts before I take you on a journey to India's top destinations!**

- India has over 2,000 languages spoken across the country.
- The Taj Mahal changes color throughout the day, depending on the sunlight.
- India invented the concept of zero and the decimal system.
- India is home to Bollywood, the largest film industry in the world!
- India has a floating post office in Dal Lake, Kashmir.
- The Lonar Lake in Maharashtra is a unique meteorite impact crater formed about  $52,000 \pm 47,000$  years ago.
- The Sundarbans, home to the famous Royal Bengal tigers, is the largest mangrove forest in the world, and you can explore it by boat.



# Golden Triangle - Delhi, Agra, Jaipur

The Golden Triangle is a popular tourist circuit showcasing India's rich history, culture, and architecture.

**Delhi:** Explore ancient monuments like the Red Fort, India Gate, Humayun's Tomb, and Qutub Minar. Don't miss the spiritual Akshardham Temple and Lotus Temple, and experience the bustling Chandni Chowk for food and shopping.

**Agra:** Home to the Taj Mahal, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Visit Agra Fort, Mehtab Bagh for a Taj view, and Fatehpur Sikri for Mughal grandeur.

**Jaipur:** Known as the Pink City, with highlights like Amber Fort, City Palace, Hawa Mahal, and Jantar Mantar. Shop for handicrafts and jewelry, and enjoy a Rajasthani meal at Chokhi Dhani.

This route is ideal for history lovers, cultural enthusiasts, and architecture admirers.

**Varanasi:** An ancient city on the banks of the Ganges, Varanasi is known for its ghats, temples, and spiritual significance. Witness the mesmerizing Ganga Aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat and take a boat ride along the river at sunrise.

**Rishikesh & Haridwar:** These spiritual towns along the Ganges offer yoga, meditation, and Ayurveda retreats. Rishikesh is also the adventure capital of India, perfect for river rafting and trekking, while Haridwar is known for its vibrant ghats and the Har Ki Pauri Ganga Aarti.

**Amritsar:** Home to the Golden Temple, a symbol of peace and spirituality, and the iconic Wagah Border ceremony. Don't miss the Amritsari kulcha and the community meal (langar) served at the temple. The Jallianwala Bagh memorial offers a poignant look at India's history.

These destinations are ideal for those seeking spirituality, adventure and a deep connection to India's cultural roots



# Spiritual & Cultural Destinations

# Beaches and Islands

**Goa:** Famous for its stunning beaches, lively nightlife, and Portuguese heritage, Goa offers both adventure and relaxation. Enjoy water sports at Calangute and Baga, unwind at the quieter Anjuna and Palolem, and explore historic churches like the Basilica of Bom Jesus. The vibrant flea markets and delicious seafood at beach shacks add to the charm. \*More about Goa further down.

**Andaman & Nicobar Islands:** Known for their crystal-clear waters and serene beaches, the islands are perfect for scuba diving and snorkeling. Radhanagar Beach on Havelock Island is breathtaking, while Cellular Jail in Port Blair offers a historical insight into India's freedom struggle. These islands are a peaceful escape for nature lovers and water sports enthusiasts.





**Shimla and Manali** - two popular destinations in Himachal Pradesh, offer a blend of scenic beauty and adventure. Shimla, with its colonial charm and pleasant weather, is perfect for relaxation, while Manali attracts adventure seekers with activities like skiing, trekking, and paragliding. Both are surrounded by stunning Himalayan landscapes, making them ideal for nature lovers and thrill-seekers alike.

**Jammu & Kashmir:** Known for its scenic beauty, Jammu & Kashmir offers some of the most stunning mountain landscapes in India. Gulmarg is a popular winter destination, offering skiing, snowboarding, and breathtaking views of the Pir Panjal mountain range. Pahalgam is a picturesque town along the Lidder River, surrounded by lush meadows, forests, and snow-capped peaks.



# Mountain Retreats

A circular image showing two tigers walking in a savanna landscape. The tiger in the foreground is on the left, looking towards the right. The second tiger is slightly behind and to the right, also looking towards the right. The background is a dry, open landscape with some sparse vegetation.

# Wildlife & Reserve

India is home to a rich variety of native and endemic wildlife species, thanks to its diverse ecosystems ranging from rainforests to deserts. Here are some top places to experience India's rich biodiversity:

## **Ranthambore National Park (Rajasthan)**

One of India's most famous tiger reserves, Ranthambore is known for its Bengal tigers, which are often spotted in the open. The park also features the Ranthambore Fort (a UNESCO site), ancient ruins, and scenic lakes. Other wildlife includes leopards, sloth bears, marsh crocodiles, sambar deer, and over 270 bird species.

## **Gir National Park (Gujarat)**

The only place in the world to see Asiatic lions in the wild, Gir National Park is a conservation success story. Apart from lions, you can spot Indian leopards, striped hyenas, jackals, sambar deer, nilgai (blue bulls), and over 300 bird species. The park's rugged landscapes and teak forests add to its charm.

## **Kaziranga National Park (Assam)**

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Kaziranga is famous for having the largest population of one-horned rhinoceroses in the world. It is also home to Bengal tigers, Asian elephants, wild water buffalo, swamp deer, and over 500 bird species. The park's vast grasslands and wetlands, fed by the Brahmaputra River, create a stunning landscape for wildlife safaris.

# Kerala

Kerala, known as "God's Own Country," is a tropical paradise on India's southwestern coast. Famous for its backwaters, beaches, hill stations, and rich culture, Kerala offers a perfect mix of natural beauty and tradition.



## Top Things to Do in Kerala:

- Cruise the Backwaters of Alleppey – A serene houseboat ride through lush landscapes.
- Relax on Beaches – Visit Varkala or Kovalam for peaceful beach days.
- Explore Munnar – Enjoy tea gardens and cool hill station vibes.
- Spot Wildlife in Periyar – See elephants and tigers in Periyar Tiger Reserve.
- Discover Fort Kochi – Explore historical sites like the Chinese fishing nets and St. Francis Church.
- Experience Kathakali – Witness Kerala's traditional dance-drama.
- Try Ayurvedic Treatments – Rejuvenate with Kerala's renowned wellness therapies.

# Leh Ladakh\*

Leh Ladakh, nestled in the northernmost part of India, is a stunning destination known for its breathtaking landscapes, rugged mountains, and rich Tibetan culture. It offers a perfect escape for adventure seekers and those seeking tranquility amidst nature.



## Top Things to Do in Leh Ladakh:

- Visit Pangong Lake – Marvel at the vibrant, crystal-clear waters of this iconic lake.
- Explore Nubra Valley – Experience sand dunes, camel rides, and monasteries.
- Trek to Tsomoriri Lake – A beautiful, remote lake surrounded by snow-capped peaks.
- See Monasteries – Visit the famous Hemis, Thiksey, and Diskit Monasteries.
- Drive through Khardung La – Conquer one of the highest motorable passes in the world.
- Raft on the Zaskar River – Try white-water rafting for an adrenaline rush.
- Stargaze in Leh – Enjoy clear skies and stunning views of the night sky.

\*apeksha's fav place in India

# More about Goa

## Best Beaches

- Baga Beach – Famous for nightlife, water sports, and beach shacks like Britto's.
- Anjuna Beach – Known for its bohemian vibe, flea market, and cliffside cafes.
- Vagator Beach – Stunning red cliffs, great sunset views, and a relaxed vibe.
- Palolem Beach – One of the most beautiful beaches, with calm waters and beach huts.
- Butterfly Beach – A hidden gem with stunning rock formations and turquoise waters.
- Cavelossim Beach – Clean and quiet, with luxury resorts nearby.
- Sinqerim Beach – Snorkeling, scuba diving, and dolphin watching.



## Historic spots

- Basilica of Bom Jesus – Home to the relics of St. Francis Xavier, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Fontainhas (Panjim's Latin Quarter) – Goa's colorful Portuguese-influenced neighborhood, perfect for walking tours.
- Sahakari or Savoi spice plantations to see how spices like cardamom and pepper are grown.
- Aguada Fort, a 17th-century Portuguese fort.

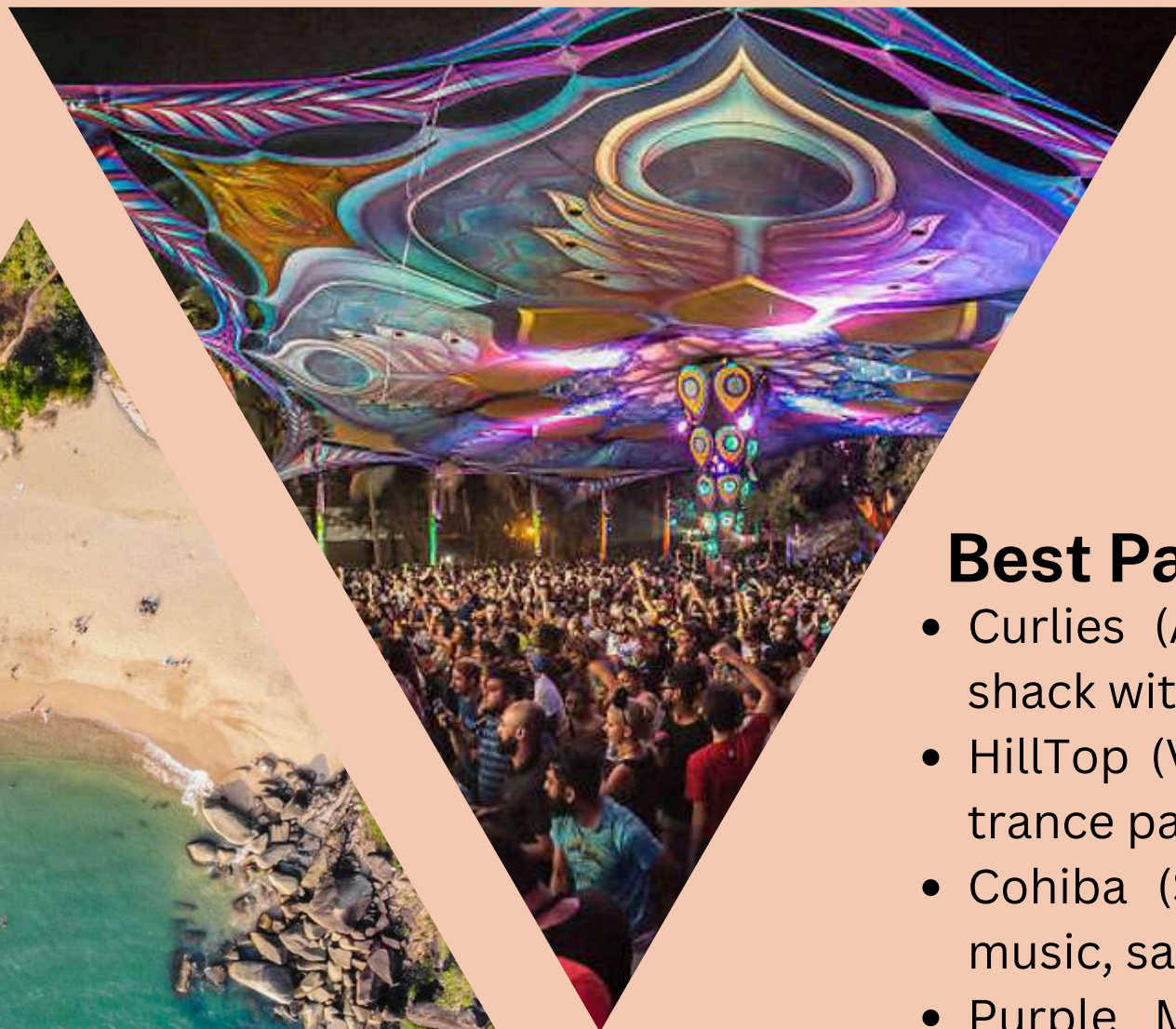
## Best Food Spots 🍴

- Martin's Corner (Betalbatim)
- Thalassa (Siolim)
- Gunpowder (Assagao)
- The Black Sheep Bistro (Panjim)
- Pousada by the Beach (Calangute)

## Best Party Spots in Goa 🎉

- Curlies (Anjuna Beach) – A legendary beach shack with psychedelic trance parties.
- HillTop (Vagator) – Famous for electronic and trance parties, especially on weekends.
- Cohiba (Sinqerim) – A classy bar with live music, salsa nights, and great cocktails.
- Purple Martini (Anjuna) – Sunset cocktails, music, and a fantastic seaside view.

\*reach out to me for more secret venues



# Cuisine - A flavorful journey

India's cuisine is diverse and rich in flavours, with each region offering unique dishes. Here's a quick guide to what to try and what to be cautious about.

## Foods to Try:

Butter Chicken (North India): Creamy and mild chicken curry.

Dosa (South India): Crispy rice crepe served with chutneys and sambar.

Biryani (Hyderabad/All India): Fragrant rice and meat dish, often cooked with saffron.

Pav Bhaji (Mumbai): Spicy vegetable mash with buttered bread rolls.

Gulab Jamun (All India): Deep-fried dough balls soaked in syrup.

## Foods to Avoid or be cautious!

- **Street Food:** While tempting, street food (like Pani Puri and Chaat) may not always meet hygiene standards and can lead to stomach issues. If you choose to indulge, opt for well-established vendors.
- **Unfiltered Water & Ice:** Always drink bottled water and ensure ice is made from purified water.
- **Indian cuisine is known for its bold flavours and spices.** If you're not accustomed to spicy food, start with milder dishes and ask for less spice when ordering.



# Cultural Etiquette & Travel Tips

Respecting local culture is key for any tourist. Embracing India's customs enriches your experience and fosters mutual respect. Here are some tips to help you navigate cultural norms:

- **Greetings:** "Namaste" with folded hands is common.
- **Dressing Modestly:** Cover shoulders and legs, especially in religious places.
- **Bargaining:** Common in markets; feel free to negotiate.
- **Food & Water:** Stick to bottled or filtered water; avoid street food unless from a reputable vendor.
- **Public Behavior:** Public displays of affection may be frowned upon in most areas.
- **Tipping:** 5-10% tip is appreciated for good service.
- **Shoes Off Indoors:** Remove shoes when entering homes, temples, or religious sites.



# Currency & Payment



**Currency:** Indian Rupee (INR).

**ATMs & Cards:** ATMs are widely available, and credit/debit cards are accepted in most places. I use Revolut, Monzo or Barclays when I am back home.

**UPI & Digital Payments:** Google Pay, PhonePe, and Paytm are commonly used for digital payments and are accepted in many shops, restaurants, and even for local transport.

**Cash:** While digital payments are growing, it's advisable to carry some cash for smaller establishments, rural areas, or street vendors.

**Currency Exchange:** You can exchange currency at airports, hotels, or authorized exchange counters. Avoid exchanging at unauthorized places to get the best rates.





# Accommodation

## ***RANGE OF OPTIONS FROM BUDGET TO LUXURY***

India offers a wide range of accommodation options, from budget hostels and guesthouses to luxury hotels and resorts. You can also find unique stays like heritage properties, homestays, and boutique hotels.

## ***BOOKING HOTELS***

Popular hotel booking platforms include Booking.com, Agoda, and MakeMyTrip. It's advisable to read reviews and check hotel policies (like check-in/check-out times) before booking.

## ***AIRBNB***

Airbnb is widely used in India, offering a variety of accommodations, from private rooms to entire homes. Ensure the host is verified and check reviews for a reliable experience.

***Most things can be booked online, but if you need help arranging any trips before or after the wedding, please reach out to me and I can put you in touch with a travel agent.***



# Shopping and Souvenirs

## Souvenirs to Buy:

- **Tea:** India is famous for its tea, especially Darjeeling, Assam, and Nilgiri. You can buy loose-leaf tea or pre-packaged tea blends.
- **Spices:** Take home some aromatic spices, like saffron, cardamom, or masala, for a taste of India.
- **Jewelry:** Traditional Indian jewelry, including gold and silver pieces, is popular, particularly in Rajasthan and Hyderabad.
- **Saris & Dupattas:** These iconic garments are perfect souvenirs. Look for authentic handloom saris or scarves from regions like Banaras, Kanchipuram, and Kolkata.
- **Handicrafts:** Don't miss out on India's traditional handicrafts, such as handwoven textiles, pottery, wooden carvings, and brassware. Each region offers unique crafts, like Kashmiri Pashmina shawls, Rajasthani block prints, or Kerala's coir products.



# Conclusion

India offers a rich blend of history, culture, nature, and adventure. From vibrant cities to peaceful landscapes, each experience will leave you with unforgettable memories.

Plan wisely, stay open to new experiences, and immerse yourself in the country's diversity.

I hope you enjoy your journey and fall in love with this incredible place that I call home!

*Apeksha*