



Buddhath/Eleven Directions

TRAVEL FACTS

CURRENCY EXCHANGE, ACCEPTANCE OF CREDIT CARDS & TIPPING

As stated above, hotels, food, transportation within India, and guide services are all covered by the tour fees. It is suggested that travelers carry adequate cash for expenses like gifts or souvenirs, as it is difficult to change money at the sites we visit during the pilgrimage. Travelers will also need money if they are planning to extend their stay in India before or after the pilgrimage. Credit cards such as VISA or American Express are accepted *only* in some of the hotels and large shops in Delhi or Varanasi, but **not** in all the places we visit. There are ATM machines in most places where one can access cash, but their presence is not universal as it is in the U.S. or other countries. One US Dollar approximates 80 Indian Rupees as of November 20, 2024. We recommend that you convert some cash at the airport when you arrive in New Delhi. There is no need to exchange it in your country — it is best to do so in India. There are a couple of banks with a standard exchange rate at the airport both before and after you clear customs. Please keep your bank receipts carefully in case you need to change the money into dollars when you return home.

Travelers often have questions about **tipping**. In the last few years, we have developed a system where a kitty is collected at the beginning, and the tips are distributed from it (contributing is optional). Thus far, this has worked well. It usually works out to \$10 to \$15 per day, but this figure could vary. It may be a good idea to set aside \$200 for tips.

US\$ 500 in cash currency is a suggested amount to carry to India.

If you arrive before the start of the pilgrimage or stay after it concludes, the general rule is as follows: tipping someone who has carried your luggage is common and we would suggest Rs.100. In restaurants, one normally leaves a tip of between 5% to 10% of the entire bill, unless a service charge has already been levied. It is not necessary to tip taxi drivers; however, if you have hired a car for the day and you are happy with the driver, a tip of between Rs.200 to Rs.500 is fine.

HOTELS/HOUSING

We choose the best available accommodations in the vicinity of the sites (which are normally five-star hotels, heritage hotels and Japanese guest houses) based on shared, twin-bedded rooms with a private bath or shower and toilet. The accommodations are clean and comfortable — in some cases monastic-style, and in some cases rather luxurious. If you prefer a single room (where available), there is a price supplement.

ELECTRICITY

India uses 220 volts, 50 cycles AC. Plugs/sockets are usually an issue (the electrical sockets in India have round holes, not flat one, so please ensure that the stems of your plug have rounded stems). It's best to travel with a **universal plug adaptor**.

WEATHER & CLOTHING NEEDS

Given that there can be a high variation between the daytime and evening temperatures (the general range is from 10 degrees to 25 degrees Celsius, (60 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit) layering is a practical approach. It's important to be comfortable and modestly dressed. We recommend that you bring one jacket and a light sweater for the evening; perhaps a shawl if you want to meditate in the morning. For the warmer part of the day, cotton shirts, T-shirts and cotton trousers will work well. There is no need to bring formal clothing.



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Generally, the weather is dry with a small possibility of light rain or fog in some places. It is handy to have an umbrella that can double as a sunshade if it gets too sunny or even be used as a walking stick. Please bring comfortable sneakers or sandals (which you can wear with socks if it gets cold). We do not go on treks, but one or two of the (optional) walks are long. We also visit a number of temples where you will need to remove your shoes, so it is helpful to bring a pair of socks (the airline slip-ons are very convenient). It is always useful to have a hat or cap to protect you from the sun. We are allowed 15 kilos (33 lbs.) check in baggage and 7kgs (15 lbs) as cabin baggage on Indian airplanes, so we recommend that you travel light. You can carry extra baggage, at an additional cost. Laundry facilities are available at all the places we stay, and laundry is returned within 24 hours. Please do bring along your meditation cushion (if you are unable to sit, a folding camp stool is a good substitute).

HEALTH CONCERNS (*please note this is pre-COVID 19 information. We will update you a few months before the journey*)

We are cognizant of the ongoing COVID pandemic and will be taking precautions to avoid unnecessary exposure where possible. There are Governmental regulations that change from time to time. We will keep you informed of the relevant changes as we go along.

We stay in clean, safe places, and the food in the places we stay will be clean, fresh and prepared to suit a delicate digestive system. You will be provided bottled mineral water for drinking.

If you are coming from Africa or some parts of Latin America, a certificate of yellow fever inoculation is required by the Indian authorities. If you are coming from Kenya, you have to take the OPV (Oral Polio Vaccine) before you travel.

There is no other medical restriction upon your entry into India. We recommend a Hepatitis-A inoculation and a Tetanus shot. If you prefer to be more careful, then please speak to your physician. We do carry a first-aid kit with us, but many people prefer to bring their own supply of medicines. We would recommend you get an insect/mosquito repellent and also a stomach medicine for both diarrhea and constipation as one's stomach has its own way of adjusting to different foods.

If you have any special diet needs or medical needs, please do let us know.

SIM CARD, IPHONE ETC.

It is quite easy and inexpensive to get a local SIM card for your mobile phone at the Delhi airport. You need one photograph and a copy of your Indian visa and passport. If you have an iPhone, you may need to 'unlock' it before you come to India. Mobile telephony in India is inexpensive.

Internet and wi-fi is available at many of the hotels we use.

ADDITIONAL TRAVEL SERVICES (e.g. shuttle buses, taxis)

We provide airport transfers both ways and all the transport services during the pilgrimage, including having you met on arrival in New Delhi. There is no extra charge for meeting you at the airport. For those who want to make your own arrangements, the Delhi Airport has cabs lined up and you can register with them.