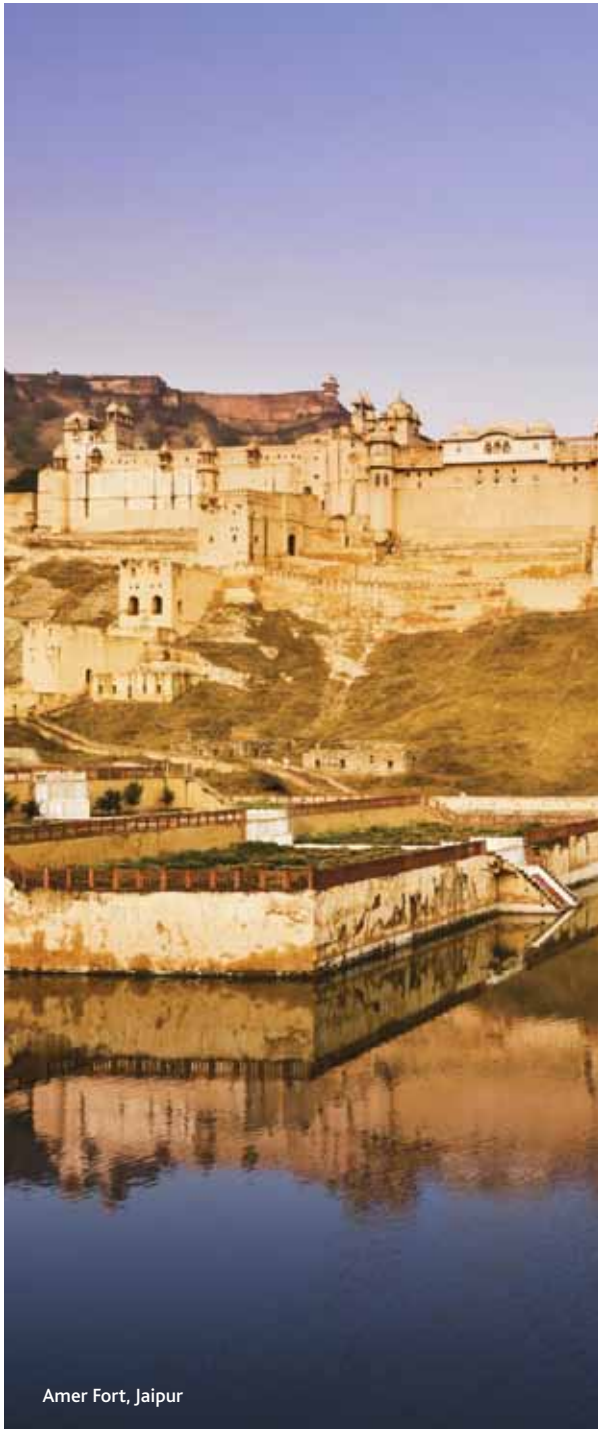


YOUR TRAVEL GUIDE

India & Sri Lanka



Wendy Wu Tours



Amer Fort, Jaipur

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WELCOME TO WENDY WU TOURS

India and Sri Lanka continue to amaze, fascinate and thrill our passengers, many of whom have travelled to different parts of Asia with us, year after year. We urge you to keep in mind all the rewards, as well as challenges of travelling in a country with a history, culture and attitude so unlike your own.

A typical day's sightseeing may include the bustle and noise of a city street, sights and smells of a local market and interacting with the locals. Travelling in India and Sri Lanka requires patience and potential delays are to be expected due to different standards of service. There is a low level of English spoken throughout India and Sri Lanka, so your National Escort/Local Guides will be indispensable during your trip.

Almost everything will be different to what you may be used to. We have found that our passengers who embark with a sense of humour and adventure, who accept that things do not always go to plan, are those who find their experience most rewarding.

Although India and Sri Lanka are developing quickly, please note that health and safety standards overseas can differ greatly from those we enjoy at home, often of a lower standard. However, all of our suppliers meet local and national safety standards as a minimum.

At Wendy Wu Tours we are continually working with our suppliers in India and Sri Lanka to maintain and improve safety standards by seeking good practice in health and safety and we will do our best to ensure that your holiday is safe and trouble free. Part of the enjoyment of travelling abroad is experiencing a different way of life and cultures, but it may also mean experiencing different safety and hygiene standards than those we are used to in the UK. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense as well as refer to notices and follow the advice from your National Escort/Local Guides.

Your Travel Guide provides you with practical advice and cultural information to help you prepare for your holiday. We are aware that this can seem like a lot of reading material, but we ask that you take some time to familiarise yourself with this information prior to departure and refer to the contents within throughout your travels.

Your Tour Dossier provides a straightforward description of the physical activities involved in each day's sightseeing for your itinerary. If there are any particular challenges, from the length of time spent on your feet, the duration of drives and flights, to the standard of remote accommodation for our more adventurous tours; they will be explained there. (Tour dossiers are not available for FIT itineraries).

Our tours are operated at a moderate pace with appropriate rest stops and are designed to be comfortable for people of all ages. A normal level of fitness and mobility is all that is required to enjoy our tours – unless stated in your Tour Dossier.

ELECTRICITY

There is an electricity supply of 240 volts throughout India and 230 volts throughout Sri Lanka so 240-volt appliances will work safely with this supply. There is no universal power point but they generally use the three-pin socket, so you can use the round two-pin (Europe) plug or the round three-pin (India) plug. You can buy adaptors, also known as conversion plugs, from hardware, department and duty free stores.



Europe plug



India plug

IN REMOTE AREAS

In some areas of India and Sri Lanka the electricity supply is uncertain. Many buildings will only have a few hours each day of electricity from either the town's supply or a diesel generator. Whenever there is limited electricity supply this will also mean limited hot water supply. Remote and village areas may experience power surges or outages, both of which can make re-charging electrical appliances very difficult. We advise you to bring a supply of batteries (bought in the UK) with you to allow for days when you cannot recharge.



Jain Temple, Ranakpur

MONEY

In India, the local currency is known as the 'rupee' and is written as INR or Rs. It is divided into coins called paise, where Rs1 = 100 paise. Rupee notes are available in denominations from Rs5 to Rs1000 but the Rs500 note is the highest note commonly available.

In Sri Lanka, the local currency is known as the 'rupee' and is written as LKR. Coins come in denominations of 5, 10, 25 and 50 cents and Rs. 1, 2, 5 and 10. The higher value denominations are found as notes, namely Rs.10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1000.

Here is a reference table of approximate exchange rates (for up-to-date exchange rates, please check before you travel):

	Indian Rupee (INR)	Sri Lankan Rupee (LKR)
GB£1	75	170
US\$1	45	110

(Correct at the time of printing – September 2011)

We recommend that you have access to more than one source of money – bringing a combination of cash and a credit/debit card will give the most security and flexibility while travelling.

Keep some of your exchange receipts: You can convert any unused notes into USD at the international airport exchange desks when you depart. You will need to present your passport, airline ticket and some receipts of the money exchanged/withdrawn in India and Sri Lanka. Some banks in the UK may be able to convert your money back into Sterling, however please check before departing the UK.

Plan ahead: Exchange desks can close and ATMs can run out of cash and your group could be scheduled to leave your hotel at 7am tomorrow morning! Once you have started your tour, you will quickly get a sense of how often or how much you need to exchange money. Try not to leave this to the last minute.

Spending Money: We recommend you take some local currency for the country you are visiting as well as Sterling and/or US Dollars. We also recommend taking a debit and/or credit card. Please ensure you have sufficient funds to pay for personal expenses such as drinks, snacks, souvenirs, additional tipping and optional extras.

Counterfeit Cash: This is a problem in India and Sri Lanka so shop owners and clerks at banks or exchange desks are very cautious and can refuse to accept notes in bad condition. When purchasing cash in the UK or when exchanging them during your holiday – it is a good idea to stand at the desk to count and check the condition of each note.

Do not accept any notes which are torn, very faded, a different shade, have ink stamps or any writing on them. If you accept the notes and sign the exchange receipt, then notice a problem, you will not be able to exchange them.

Credit/Debit Card: Taking one credit/debit card is recommended in case of emergency and may be used for large purchases in most of your hotels, department stores and souvenir stores. The most widely accepted credit cards include Visa, MasterCard and American Express. However, please do not rely on a credit/debit card as your only source of spending money and keep a photocopy of your card(s).

Travellers Cheques: We do not recommend taking any travellers cheques to India and Sri Lanka.

ATM'S: Whilst ATM's are readily available, please try to withdraw as few times as possible because overseas withdrawal fees for credit and debit accounts can very high (we recommend checking your bank's fees before departing the UK).

IN REMOTE AREAS

In remote areas, banking facilities are very basic and you will need to plan ahead with more care. ATMs in remote areas or rural regions are unreliable and should not be used as a source of money. Few hotels, restaurants or shops are able to take credit/debit cards and the sterling currency is not well recognised.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

A number of optional extra programmes/activities may be offered by your National Escort/Local Guide whilst on tour, time permitting. Please feel free to ask your National Escort/Local Guide about any optional touring they may be planning over the next few days and the approximate cost so you can ensure you have the appropriate funds. All the optional extras must be paid for in local currency. If you do not wish to take part in any optional extras, you will have the option of enjoying some free time at leisure or to return to the hotel.



Tiger, Ranthambore National Park

INSURANCE

Anyone joining our tours must take out comprehensive travel insurance. Please ensure you have the appropriate cover for your holiday as overseas medical costs are expensive. Please inform our office of your relevant policy number and note it on the booking form and keep details of the policy in your travel documents including policy number, 24 hour emergency number and next of kin details.

If you are taking out travel insurance with your credit card company, you need to investigate the policy's inclusions and conditions fully. You should receive a policy number, an international access phone number to contact them in an emergency and a copy of full conditions.

It is essential you inform your insurance company of all pre-existing conditions. All travel insurance providers require you to contact them ASAP in the unlikely event that you need medical treatment, hospitalisation or change travel plans (evacuate) to inform them of your situation. They will then decide the best course of action in regards to further treatment and/or repatriation and make appropriate booking arrangements. Our staff in India and Sri Lanka will be able to assist you in contacting your travel insurance company.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Phone Calls

International and domestic calls can be made from your hotel room. International calls are expensive (from Rs200 per min) and usually incur an additional service charge. There are also telephone booths in most towns and cities displaying the letters 'ISD', which can place calls for cheaper rates and have meters so you can keep track of the call rate's progress.

• Calling to the UK (from India or Sri Lanka)

To call the UK the international access code is 00, followed by the country code 44, then the local area code (omitting the first 0), then the number. To call Wendy Wu Tours it is 00 44 207 403 7860.

• Calling to from the UK to India

India's country code is 91. To call from the UK: dial 0091 followed by the area code (omit first zero) then the number.

• Calling from the UK to Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's country code is 91. To call from the UK: dial 0091 followed by the area code (omit first zero) then the number.

Mobile Phones

Mobile phones are very popular in India and Sri Lanka and you will find high quality coverage. India and Sri Lanka have active roaming agreements with most international phone carriers; however SMS and call rates can be expensive. We recommend that you contact your mobile supplier if you intend to use international roaming during your holiday and ensure you investigate all associated costs before you leave the UK.

Fax

Most hotels will have a business centre which will also have a fax machine. The cost is approx £4 for the first page and £2 for each page thereafter. To receive a fax costs approx £1 per page.

Postage

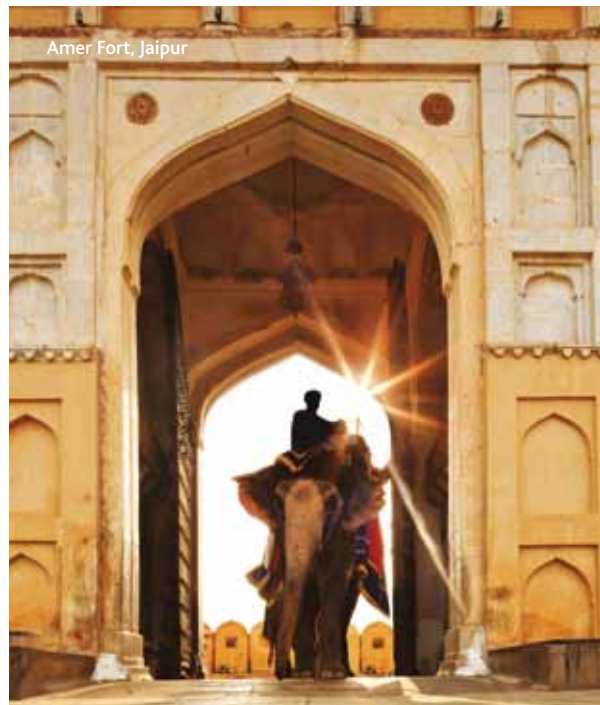
We recommend that you use the Post Offices, rather than your hotel to post items. From large cities or major towns, airmail letters and postcards take 5-10 working days to arrive and from smaller towns, they will take over a month. We advise you to use a courier service from Post Offices to send anything valuable or important.

Internet & Email

Internet cafes can be found in all major cities and even in some small towns. This is often the easiest and cheapest way to stay in touch. Most hotels have a business centre with internet access, but at a slightly higher rate.

IN REMOTE AREAS

In remote areas you will rarely be able to access phone or internet facilities and mobile phones are not likely to have reception. We advise that you let friends and family at home know that you will be out of phone contact during these sections of your itinerary.



TRANSPORT

We use a variety of transportation including planes, coaches, trains, boat cruises, elephants and rickshaw rides to operate your itinerary at the best pace and to give you an authentic travel experience so you are not always 'removed' from the locals.

Domestic Flights

The flight schedule of domestic airlines changes frequently, hence all domestic flights that appear in your itinerary are very subject to change. Please ensure that all valuables and any medications you may need for the rest of the day are taken on-board with you. The luggage limit is 20kg per passenger and all seats are economy class. Airlines currently do not allow liquids (alcohol, spirits, wine, water, perfume etc) or sharp objects to be carried on-board the aircraft and these will be confiscated. Wendy Wu Tours issues all domestic flight tickets in India and Sri Lanka will be handled by your National Escort/Local Guide and given to each passenger just prior to their flight.

Coaches

Our coaches are comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles. Please note – seatbelts are not compulsory by law here and local people largely choose not to wear them. Wendy Wu Tours cannot guarantee that vehicles will be fitted with operable seatbelts.

Day Trains

Train travel is a fun, interesting and comfortable way of moving around a country. All group train travel will be in AC2 meaning "air conditioned, second class". Each passenger has an individual seat, which can recline and is similar in style to an airline seat with plenty of space. Luggage is stored in overhead racks above your seats.

Your National Escort/Local Guide will try to organise the whole group to be seated in the same carriage but in busy periods of travel, this may not be possible. You may be lucky and find yourself sharing your area with people from another tour group or with some of the locals – this is an excellent chance to mingle and share your experiences.

Snacks and drinks can be purchased in the train's restaurant carriage or from trolley carts. There is usually a western style toilet at one end and a squat toilet at the other end of the carriage. Carry all valuables with you at all times. A money belt is recommended. A passenger should remain with your belongings at all times. Keep a lock on your main luggage.

Toy Trains

The term 'toy train' refers to several trains originally built by the British to travel up to their hill station resorts. They had very narrow track gauges to ascend along the steep hillsides; hence the

engines were also smaller and sometimes required the engineer to sit on top of his engine. A few of the toy trains still operate today; the most famous, in Darjeeling, has a gauge of only two feet. The carriages have ample room for the average sized westerner, but are in original condition with wooden bench seats. Some itineraries also make use of the famous toy trains so named because of their narrow track gauge and shorter carriages, which were built to traverse the mountainous routes up to the hill stations resorts. Riding a toy train offers a rare insight to life in these colonial era resorts. If you are travelling on the Kerala & Southern Highlights group tour, this information applies to you.

Overnight Trains

All travel will be on first class 'soft sleeper' trains, which are the best available in India. Each compartment is shared by four people and is air-conditioned, with lockable doors and four beds which are fixed in place. There is room for passengers to sit on the lower berths and a folding table. A pillow, clean sheets and a quilt are provided.

Your National Escort/Local Guides will try to organise the whole group to be sleeping in the same carriage but in busy periods of travel, this may not be possible. Each group will receive tickets with sequential berth numbers; these may be sharing with people from another tour group/company, or with some of the locals.

In the past we have had requests for 'upgrades' so that a single passenger or a couple do not need to share with anyone else. As there are no two-berth or single-berth compartments available, the only way we can arrange this is to purchase the empty berths (if available) and thus give you a private compartment. Cost of this upgrade is on application and subject to availability.

There is usually a western style toilet at one end and a squat toilet at the other end of the carriage. Hot drinking water is available from a boiler which is located at the end of the carriage.

We recommend you bring a small overnight bag to carry whatever you need until the following morning as you will not have access to your main luggage which will be stored on a separate carriage of the train. Consider including a face towel, all toiletries, medication you require until midday next day, a tracksuit or similar outfit to sleep in and toilet paper, as the train supply tends to run out. There is no dining car, so please carry snacks with you.

Keeping valuables safe on the train: Carry all valuables with you at all times. A money belt is recommended. A passenger should remain with your belongings at all times. Keep a lock on your main luggage.

Boats

Your tour could include taking a ride in a motor boat on Lake Pichola in Udaipur, a narrow wooden boat along the Ganges in Varanasi or an overnight stay on-board a kettuvallam houseboat in Kerala. To take part in any boat ride, you need to be of average mobility to be able to climb on and off all these boats unaided; able to disembark onto makeshift docks without handrails, or onto muddy riverbanks.

Canters

These are large, open jeeps with wooden bench seats in the back and used on safaris in the national parks.

Bicycles / Motorbikes / Jeeps / Rickshaws

Occasionally your National Escort/Local Guide may organise an alternative mode of transport if your group coach is unable to negotiate the road (i.e. a mode of transport not mentioned in your itinerary) because of road damage after heavy rain, or to access remote areas. If you use these modes of transport in your free time, then passengers must bear full responsibilities. Please also be aware that safety helmets are generally not provided or available for hire.

ROAD CONDITIONS & CONSTRUCTIONS

Road conditions are improving but still affected by monsoonal rains. Your National Escort/Local Guide will do their utmost to avoid possible delays but cannot guarantee against delays, changes or – in rare cases – cancellations of sections of your itinerary. Road construction in India and Sri Lanka usually encompasses an enormous section of road, not a couple of kilometres like you may be used to. Please keep in mind that traffic is increasing in the cities and towns and may affect the timing of your tour and meal times. In remote areas, there are rough, unsealed roads covering a vast section of the rural and mountainous regions and existing road surfaces can be affected by heavy and constant monsoonal rains.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS & FESTIVALS

There are so many public holidays and religious festivals in India and Sri Lanka that we cannot list them all. The majority are observed on a regional basis while the important national days (such as Independence Day on 15th August) and major festivals of each religion (such as the Diwali Hindu Festival, or the Ramadan Muslim Festival) are observed by several states or the entire nation. If your tour coincides with a national or local holiday, you may find that transport and business open hours (e.g. shops or banks) are affected, you may encounter crowds and the availability of food or alcohol could be restricted.

TIME DIFFERENCE

India and Sri Lanka are 4.5 hours ahead of the UK during the summer and 5.5 ahead of the UK during the winter.

SAFETY & SECURITY

All travellers should maintain a high level of personal security. Although India and Sri Lanka are considered safe for travellers, please keep in mind that cash or wallets in pockets, obvious jewellery, swinging handbags etc may attract unwanted attention. Keep your belongings with you at all times and beware of pickpockets in market areas and at train stations.

Make sure your valuables and cash are secure and inconspicuous. Do not leave any valuables unattended in your hotel room. Lock away cash you do not need during the day/evening, credit cards, airline tickets, passports, jewellery etc either in your room's safe or at Reception; as not all hotels will have an in-room safe deposit box.

Wearing a money belt under your clothing is strongly recommended. We advise you not to bring valuable jewellery with you to India and Sri Lanka and keep a photocopy of your passport and debit/credit card(s).

We also recommend you take taxis rather than walk at night. Taxis are mostly metered and inexpensive, but make sure the driver activates the meter and is clear on your destination – carry a hotel card so your taxi driver knows where to take you.

TRAVEL HEALTH

A health certificate is not required for entry into India and Sri Lanka.

Do you need to visit a doctor before travelling?

We strongly recommend that you see a doctor at least six weeks before your holiday to allow time for any necessary vaccinations etc. Remember to take your itinerary with you to the appointment. You can also refer to www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk for further travel health information.

Drinking Water

It is not safe to drink the tap water, nor take ice in your drinks. There will usually be a kettle or flasks of boiled water in your hotel room and on-board trains. Boiled water is suitable for drinking and cleaning teeth. Safe, bottled drinking water is readily available for sale everywhere – from small shops, supermarkets, restaurants and hotels. It is not customary for hotels to provide complimentary bottled drinking water. Always ensure that the seal is unbroken.

Toilets

Toilet facilities are very basic throughout Asia and it is rare that you will find a 'western' style toilet (except in hotels). 'Squat' toilets are very common in public places and toilet paper is never supplied. We suggest that you carry toilet paper in your day backpack as well as not turn down the opportunity to use a 'nice' toilet when you see one!

TRAVEL ADVICE

We strongly recommend that you check www.fco.gov.uk for up-to-date travel information and advice from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office for India and Sri Lanka before departure.

PERSONAL MEDICAL KIT

Take all pharmaceutical products that you may require on your tour; do not rely on being able to purchase these during your holiday.

You will see pharmacies all over India and Sri Lanka, but they stock local traditional medicine and many unregulated brands of western medicine. You are also very unlikely to find anyone who can speak English, nor any products with English writing.

Consider taking a 'personal medical kit' containing any medication or medical equipment you may need during your time in India and Sri Lanka:

- ✓ All prescribed medication (with a cover note from your doctor for prescribed medication and/or equipment you will carry)
- ✓ Headache tablets
- ✓ Anti-diarrhoea tablets
- ✓ Cold and flu tablets
- ✓ Travel sickness tablets
- ✓ Lozenges
- ✓ Insect repellent and sunscreen
- ✓ Antibacterial hand wipes and/or hand wash
- ✓ Small first-aid kit

If you need to purchase any pharmaceuticals or medical equipment while in India and Sri Lanka – you may ask your National Escort / Local Guide or hotel staff to help you locate a pharmacy, identify medication or to translate from the local language to English. If you need medical attention they will be able to arrange a call from a doctor, usually one who speaks English. However, the decision to purchase or take any non-prescribed (either western or traditional local medicine) is entirely your own.

The staff at Wendy Wu Tours (in the UK and in India and Sri Lanka) are not medically qualified. Therefore they are neither able, nor allowed to give any medical advice, recommendations or administer medications.

ACCOMMODATION

We use a range of accommodation during your tour to enhance your experience in India and Sri Lanka.

Hotels

All group tour hotels are mainly local three to four star standard and located conveniently in the city, or near markets or shops. All rooms will have private western bathroom facilities, television, air-conditioning and a telephone.

Some hotels may have hot water restrictions, operating for only a few hours at a time, usually in the mornings/evenings. It is not customary for hotels to have in-room fridges or tea/coffee making facilities. If an in-room safety deposit box is not provided, please use the security boxes at reception. Most hotel rooms do not have irons or boards, but most will offer a laundry service that can launder your clothes (typically in 24hrs) for a small fee.

Usually check out time is 12 midday and check in time is 2pm. Please keep this in mind on the days when you are travelling between cities as it may result in a delay of access to your room, or a change of itinerary. Delays due to previous night's guests are out of our control. Hotels cannot guarantee late checkout.

Hotel Ratings

Countries throughout the world adopt various classification systems for hotels in accordance to their chain name and the type of hotel. No international classification system exists. Typically, a three-star Indian or Sri Lankan rated hotel cannot be compared to a three-star UK rated hotel. Attempts at unifying the classification system have been made so that it becomes an internationally recognised and reliable standard. However, differences do exist in the quality of accommodation which plays an integral part in defining which hotel category the specific accommodation fits into. Your accommodation can range from a business hotel in a city to a family-run guesthouse in a smaller town. Please be advised that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our operators so that standard of quality is maintained.

Kettuvallam Houseboats (Kerala)

Accommodation is simple but comfortable, in a twin berth cabin with private western toilet. Usually there is only cold water for showers but most passengers don't mind this due to the hot weather all year round in the south. There is also a kitchen and an open deck with a shaded sitting and dining area. The boats usually have two or three cabins, allowing up to 6 passengers. If you are travelling on the Grand Tour of India group tour or the Kerala and Southern Highlights group tour, this information applies to you.

Manvar Tented Camp

This is classed as a "deluxe tented camp" by the Indian Tourism Authority. There are 20 permanent tents with simple but very comfortable accommodation. Each has two single beds, a private bathroom with western toilet and shower (hot and cold water) and a veranda. There is no air-conditioning. Meals are served in the nearby dining tent. Tents will have generator supplied electricity, usually restricted to a few hours in the evening and morning. If you are travelling on the Rajasthan Panorama group tour or the Royal Rajasthan private tour, this information applies to you.

National Park Tents & Huts

India's national parks and wildlife sanctuaries are popular places to visit and most have a cluster of small hotels located near the entrance gates or in a town close by.

Heritage Properties & Havelli's

These were once private homes, full of character. Each room is unique and vary in decoration, size and seating areas.

LUGGAGE

All passengers are limited to two items of luggage each:

- ✓ One suitcase or backpack, with a maximum weight of 20kg. Your main luggage must have a lock on it.
- ✓ One piece of hand luggage, with a maximum weight of 5kg. It is advisable that your hand luggage consist of a 'daypack' – a small bag which you can access during the day and carry items like your camera, bottled water, toilet paper, hat etc.

CLIMATE – INDIA

The Indian subcontinent stretches over some 3,000 kilometres from north to south and a similar distance from east to west. Within this vast area, the climate is affected by the height above sea level and the sweep of the annual monsoon. There are generally three seasons; the "cool", the "hot" and the "wet" seasons.

In the "cool" season daytime temperatures are still quite high but it is not blisteringly hot and humidity levels are lower than the rest of the year. Evenings are dryer and cooler. In the northern and central plains, this lasts from Oct to Apr, while in the south it is a little shorter; from Nov to Mar. This is the ideal time to visit most of the country, although it can get very cold in the hill stations and mountainous areas (see Himalaya section below).

In the "hot" season from Apr to Jun, the whole country experiences uncomfortably hot and dusty weather, day and night, as temperatures build up towards the wet season. This is not a good time to visit the south, central or northern plains.

The "wet" season starts in the south, from Jun to Oct and covers the northern and central plains from Jul to Sep. This is a true monsoon with high temperatures, heavy rains each day (although not all day) and high levels of humidity. Rain, flooding and muddy road conditions can make travelling difficult in this period. The Himalaya region including the states of Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir, has an extremely cold winter from Oct to Apr when most roads and facilities are closed. The best time to visit is from May to Oct.

You will find helpful climate charts in your Suggested Packing List. We also recommend you check recent weather conditions before you depart.

CLIMATE – SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka has a tropical climate with two distinctive seasons, wet and dry, with two monsoon seasons; the "Yala season" from mid-May to October and the "Maha season" from Dec to Mar.

The "Yala" season brings heavy rain from the Indian Ocean to the south and west coasts and the Central Highlands, with the northern and eastern parts of the country a little drier.

The "Maha" season brings rain from the Bay of Bengal and causes heavy rain in the northeast of the country. The average temperature throughout the country varies from 26-28°C, with 14-16°C in the Central Highlands. Nov to Jan are the cooler months, with Feb to May being the hottest.

You will find helpful climate charts in your Suggested Packing List. We also recommend you check recent weather conditions before you depart.



Pinnawela Orphanage, Sri Lanka

TIPPING

Tipping is a firm and expected element in the tourism industry today and India and Sri Lanka are no exception. We strive to establish trust with our guides who rely on and expect tips from passengers. If the guides are keen to work with our passengers regularly, they become familiar with our itineraries as well as the Wendy Wu Tours' philosophy and expectations we have of their work.

Many passengers are often uncertain of how much to tip so we have established a tipping system whereby every passenger gives a set amount (in US Dollars) to the National Escort who will distribute the amount appropriately. On multi-country tours, this amount will be paid in stages on arrival in each country. All group tour passengers are expected to contribute to the tipping kitty. (If there is no National Escort, please give the money directly to your Local Guides and tipping amounts for each city will be shown in your final itinerary).

The amount for the kitty is calculated for each tour depending on the length, group size and services used during the trip. Your final documents will specify the exact tipping amount for your group. The tipping kitty will cover local guides and drivers in each city/province, local and/or site guides and your National Escort. Tipping for hotel porters is at your own discretion.

ADDITIONAL TIPPING

For independent passengers, or group passengers with pre/post tour arrangements, you should allow USD 7-10 per person per day in India and Sri Lanka.

CUSTOMS & DUTY FREE

Each person can bring two bottles of alcohol and a carton of cigarettes into India and Sri Lanka. Good quality foreign alcohol and cigarettes are likely to be cheaper in India and Sri Lanka compared to the UK. If you carry over US\$5000 in cash (or equivalent in another currency) you need to declare it on entry and/or exit. Cultural relics, handicrafts, gold and silver ornaments and any jewellery purchased in India and Sri Lanka must be declared at exit. All luggage is x-rayed and if any of the above is not declared, customs agents will seize them. You must also declare all food items on exit if carrying them in your luggage.

EATING IN INDIA & SRI LANKA

All meals are included in the cost of your group tour. Breakfast is served in the hotel and includes western and local dishes. As is traditional in this region, lunch and dinner consists of small dishes of local cuisine which is then placed on the table so you can experience the variety of speciality dishes. The amount of food served is enough for the whole group and caters to the tastes of the majority of people so dishes are not too spicy or unusual in their taste.

One of the great myths about India is that the food is of poor quality and always hot and spicy. This is definitely not the case! In fact, North Indian dishes whilst often very rich and indeed spicy don't contain as much chilli as South Indian dishes. Indian cuisine is predominately vegetarian; however more meat (chicken and lamb) dishes are available in the North. If you like Indian food in the UK, you will have no problems with the real Indian food as it is the same, only more flavoursome. You'll love it though don't expect to lose weight on your holiday, Indians love to eat and eat big. In tourist centres, some restaurants and hotels may also serve western dishes to provide variety.

Drinks will be at each tour members own expense. Beer is widely available and cheap. Wine lovers should remember that western style wine is very expensive to import into India and Sri Lanka, so is not stocked except by upmarket restaurants. Bottled drinking water, soft drinks and fruit juices are also widely available – remember that you should only have ice, fruit juices or lassies (yoghurt based sweet or salty drinks) from a trusted restaurant; where they will use boiled or bottled water to prepare ice and drinks.

Obviously, tea is very popular and the Indians and Sri Lankan's simply love visiting the many street stalls which brew chai (also known as tea). Generally you will be served 'masala' chai - a sweet, spiced tea brewed with boiling milk.

It is possible to buy snacks at shops in major towns and cities. Alternatively, you may also prefer to bring comforts like cereal, biscuits, muesli bars and tea/coffee from home.

Packed Meals

On some days, your National Escort/Local Guide may arrange for a simple, packed meal for your group. It may be a matter of schedule (on long driving days), hygiene (on train journeys), or your location (in remote areas) and we ask you to bear this in mind. Although this is not a full meal, most of our passengers seem to enjoy this change from the large portions and more elaborate banquets enjoyed every other day.

Food/Diet Requests

Any food/diet requests MUST be specified on your booking form at the time of booking and you should mention it again to the National Escort/Local Guides when you meet them – they will do their utmost to cater for any special requests, such as vegetarian meals or food to be avoided in case of allergies. People on restricted diets should expect complications in India and Sri Lanka and unfortunately we can give no guarantee that special requirements can be met. In these cases, patience and understanding will go a long way.

TRAVEL WITH CONSIDERATION

At Wendy Wu Tours we believe responsible travel is not about how much you give, rather it is about how much you consider. Some of our group tours include visits to local schools, villages or homes. We urge you to use this opportunity to give something back to the country by learning a little and behaving with respect and consideration.

Gifts & Begging

Begging has long been a part of life in this region, however charitable and government initiatives recommend not to give any money as this only encourages a begging mentality. Ultimately, donations are every traveller's personal choice but before you give in to the pressure of a persistent beggar, consider the alternatives. Give food to children who would otherwise give any monies collected to an adult, behave like a local and politely but firmly say no and walk away or, best of all, give to a recognised charity.

We also do not condone the practise of giving gifts such as sweets, coins or souvenirs to local people while travelling throughout this region. Instead, think about how you would like to be treated when at a village, school or home. Taking sweets to a village or school is unhealthy, encourages begging and embarrasses the adults.

As a rule, it is best to take school materials for children, or useful household items and local treats (candles, batteries, sugar, tea, rice, shampoo etc) for families or village groups. You will be contributing more to the local economy if you buy these items while you are in India and Sri Lanka.

When giving any gifts try to present these to the teacher, the head of the household or village leader. This discourages begging and over excited grabbing, and demonstrates your respect for their traditions and pattern of authority.

Taking Photos

"Tourists stick cameras in our faces and promise they'll send photos back, but they never do."

Once again, we encourage you to think about how you would like to be treated by camera wielding tourists – always check that it is ok before taking a photograph. Simply indicate to your camera to ask and never take the photograph if someone gestures or says that they do not want you to. People often ask tourists for a few rupees in return for a photo, so it is a good idea to carry a supply of small notes if you intend on taking 'people' shots.

Carry a small notepad with you so that you can write down the email or postal address of people who you have promised to send a copy of the photo to and keep your promise!

Please remember that you are an ambassador of your country and your interaction with this person shapes their attitude towards the tourists that come after you.

Dress Appropriately

The locals dress conservatively and you should make every effort to do this too. According to their culture, wearing brief shorts or shirts, revealing shoulders and legs, or going without a shirt is offensive no matter if you are a man or woman, and no matter the weather. For men, full-length cotton trousers are preferable, while shorts that cover the knees are acceptable. For women, skirts or trousers that reach below the knee are ideal, worn with tops that cover the shoulders. Women will find a modesty shawl (such as a large shawl or sarong) is useful to carry in your daypack while sightseeing, so that you can cover up when required.

Observe Local Rules

In most cases, your National Escort/Local Guide will brief you on etiquette. In India, roughly 80% of the population is Hindu, 12% Muslim and the remainder a mix of Buddhist, Christians, Sikhs and Jains. In Sri Lanka, 70% of the population is Theravada Buddhists, 15% are Hindu's, 7.5% are Muslims and another 7.5% are Christians. With this in mind, the laws, regulations and behaviour are affected by this colourful mix and we ask you to respect them by following some simple rules:

- ✓ Things happen in their own time and punctuality really has no meaning. Having patience and a sense of humour will be essential and only add to your holiday
- ✓ Greet people with the 'namaste' traditional greeting rather than trying to shake hands – clasp hands together in front of you, bow your head forward and say 'namaste' for both hello and goodbye. Indian women, in particular prefer not to shake hands
- ✓ Remove your shoes when entering any religious sites and houses (especially kitchen areas). If you do not want to remove them, you should remain outside
- ✓ Public displays of affection between men and women are not acceptable – Indian men do commonly hold hands as a sign of friendship and this is in no way sexual
- ✓ Move around chortens, other shrines, alters and all religious objects or buildings in a clockwise direction
- ✗ Do not wear any leather articles (shoes, belts, camera straps) at any Jain temples
- ✗ Do not touch anyone on the head
- ✗ Do not point the soles of your feet towards people or religious objects. You could inadvertently do this while laying down or sitting with your feet up
- ✗ Cameras are not allowed in some sightseeing spots, particularly temples and pagodas. Please consider the reason behind this before getting upset just because you may miss a souvenir photograph

- X Never offer or accept anything with the left hand, use the right or both hands
- X Do not raise your voice as this can be very offensive.
- X Women should never touch a monk, or their robes

SHOPPING

Shopping can be fun and entertaining, especially in local markets all over India and Sri Lanka, where souvenirs can be purchased for next to nothing. However all passengers must realise that the authenticity and value of goods is always questionable here. If the price seems too good to be true, then it probably is!

Some shopping is made up of copied brand items and reproduced antiques. We have had cases where passengers have bought goods in stores, especially jewellery, only to find upon their return home that the goods are of very inferior quality.

Wendy Wu Tours, our staff, National Escorts and Local Guides are not qualified nor permitted to guarantee the quality or value of any goods purchased during your holiday. All passengers who make purchases must accept responsibility for their decision regarding the good's value, as well as the risk involved with processing of the debit/credit card purchase or shipping. Unfortunately, we cannot assist in returning or refunding goods once you have left India and Sri Lanka.

In keeping with most people's interest whilst on holiday, your tour will include a reasonable number of opportunities in local shops and government factories. This may vary depending on local conditions, and should never interfere with your itinerary's included sightseeing.

Haggling or Bargaining

In local shops, markets and street stalls haggling is the accepted way to agree on a selling price. It can be a great way to save money, as well as a wonderful way to interact with the locals. Follow a simple rule: offer half the first price quoted, then bargain to somewhere in between. Always be polite – a smile and some phrases in the local language will get you further than anything else!

When deciding how much to tip for a service or how hard to haggle for a souvenir, please consider that any profit will be sincerely appreciated. Most will genuinely appreciate it after a lifetime of isolation and incomes below the poverty line.

Some foreign visitors find it too confronting and prefer to shop in the more upmarket tourist shops or department stores, where prices are set.

READING LIST

- The Age of Kali – William Dalrymple
- A Suitable Boy – Vikram Seth
- The Inheritance of Loss – Kiran Desai
- Are You Experienced? – William Sutcliffe
- Kim – Rudyard Kipling
- Holy Cow – Sarah MacDonald
- City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi - William Dalrymple
- The God of Small Things – Arundhati Roy
- A Passage to India – E.M. Forster
- The Life of Mahatma Gandhi – Louis Fischer
- City of Joy – Dominique Lapierre
- Curry (A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors) – Lizzie Collingham
- A Fine Balance – Rohinton Mistry
- India (Insight Guides, 2004 ed)
- South India (Insight Guides, 2005 ed)
- In Spite of the Gods – Edward Luce
- No Full Stops in India – Mark Tully
- India's Unending Journey – Mark Tully
- Midnight's Children – Salman Rushdie
- Eat Smart in India: How to Decipher the Menu, Know the Market Foods & Embark on a Tasting Adventure – J. Peterson & I. Menon
- Maharanis: The Lives and Times of Three Generations of Indian Princesses – Lucy Moore
- The Honourable Company: The History of the English East India Company – John Keay
- Liquid Jade: The Story of Tea from East to West – Beatrice Hohenegger
- India: A History – John Keay
- Inhaling the Mahatma – Christopher Kremmer
- Last Mughal – William Dalrymple
- Vanishing Act Of Esme Lennox – Maggie O'Farrell
- Namesake – Jhumpa Lahiri
- Space Between Us – Thrity Umrigar
- Travellers History of India – Stephen G Haw
- Shadow of the Great Game – Narendra Singh Sarila
- Freedom at Midnight – Dominique Lapierre
- Buddha and the Sahibs – Charles Allen



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