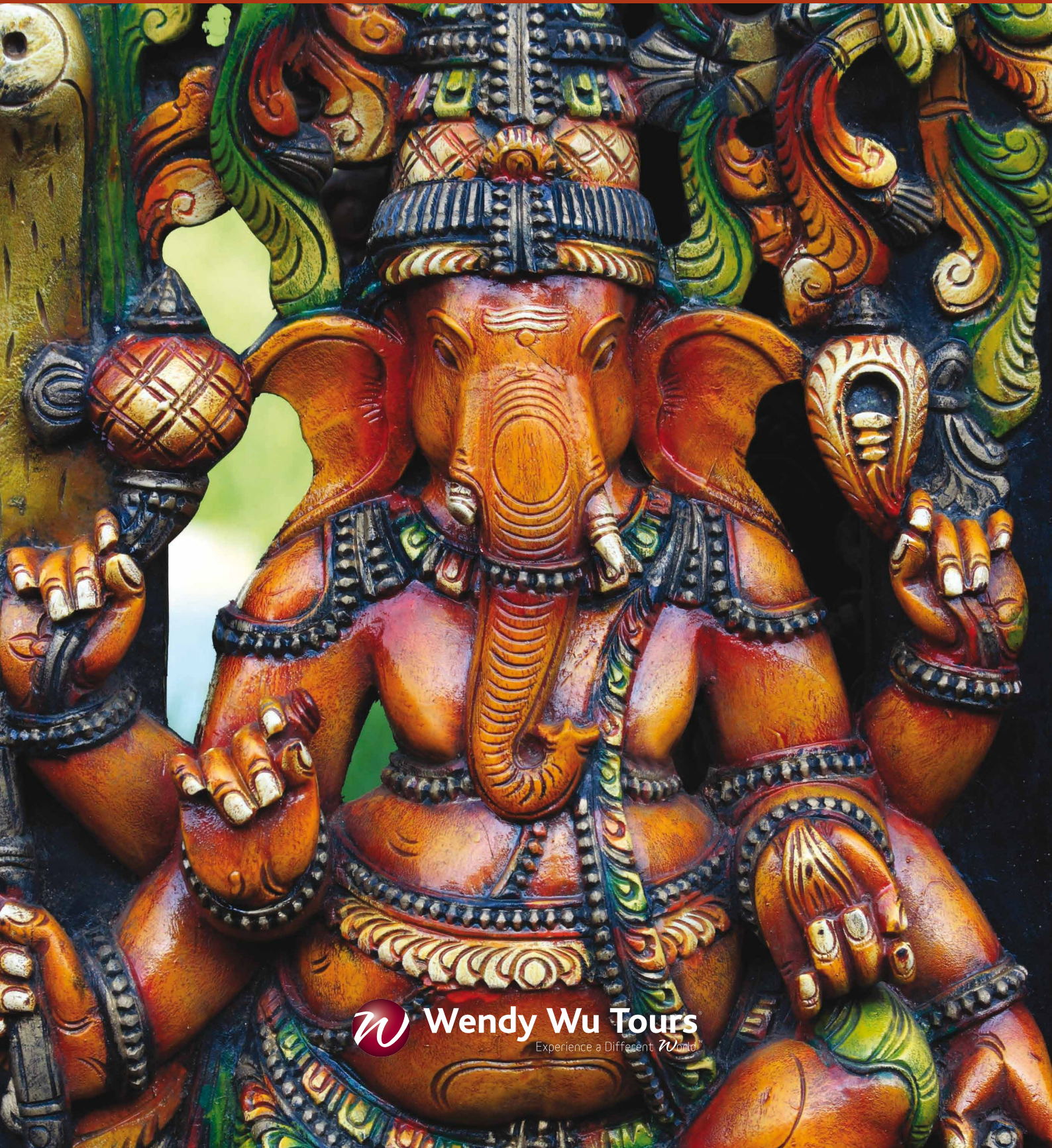


India

PRE DEPARTURE INFORMATION



Wendy Wu Tours
Experience a Different World

Welcome to Wendy Wu Tours

India continues 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 market and interacting with the locals. Travelling in India requires patience with delays and different standards of service. We have found that our passengers who embark with a sense of humour and adventure and who accept that things can and do go wrong, are those who find their experience most rewarding.

Newly arrived visitors may find the crowds and busy pace of life in India overwhelming – the population density here is about 364 people per square km! Almost everything will be different to what you may be used to.

India is developing quickly but still lacks international standards of civil infrastructure and therefore tourist facilities. For example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. Concepts of personal responsibility are different to those you may be used to. Consequently tourist and public facilities will not uphold the same safety standards as at home.

Both Asian and Western-style toilets can be very basic, so we recommend you don't turn down the opportunity to go to a nice toilet when they are available; also be prepared that not all public toilets offer Western facilities.

This pre departure booklet is aimed to provide you with practical advice and cultural information to help you prepare for your holiday. We are aware that this may seem like a lot of reading material but ask that you take the time to familiarise yourself with this information prior to departure.

TOUR GRADING Is this the tour for you?

Please give us honest and complete information about your health and ability to complete your itinerary.

- Read the tour grading description in our brochure.
- Read the [Tour Dossier](#) to find out what the harder aspects and challenges of your tour will be.
- Refer to the YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES section to see if you are required to complete a [Medical Information Form](#). If yes, this must be submitted to us before we can issue your final documents.

Consider that your ability to complete all group activities independently and without assistance will affect not only your holiday, but also the experience of your fellow passengers.

Depending on the tour you choose, you must be able to:

- Walk, sometimes for long distances, over uneven and unsealed surfaces without assistance.
- Endure a sometimes hectic daily pace of touring, with minimal breaks.
- Climb uneven stairs, sometimes without handrails.
- Step on and off coaches, sometimes onto uneven ground, without assistance.
- Dis/embark between moving pontoons, docks and boats, sometimes without either handrails or assistance.

The [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 length of drives and flights, to the standard of remote accommodation for our more adventurous tours; they will be explained here. We expect all group passengers to read the [Tour Dossier](#) to confirm their itinerary is suitable for your interests and that you are physically able to undertake the demands of the tour.

Occasionally traffic, parking restrictions and construction will mean you will have to walk extra distances from the bus to sights/train stations/airports. In unusual circumstances, this could involve carrying your own luggage.

Sightseeing in India can involve walking for a few kilometres in high temperatures and humidity, over uneven ground or uphill/up steps. All passengers must be able to walk unaided. You will need to pay attention to your surroundings. Streets and pavements are uneven, roads are busy and the traffic follows very different rules!

Of course, our National Escorts/Guides always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance, but they cannot be expected to cater for passengers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

It is your responsibility to provide Wendy Wu Tours with correct information. This applies to all details that you have given to us by phone, or written on the [Booking Form](#), [Visa Application Form](#) and [Medical Information Form](#).

Wendy Wu Tours depends on the details you have written on your booking form for flight and ground arrangements. In a country with as much red tape as India, it is crucial that these details are correct 'to the letter'.

Please make sure your Booking Form is correct:

Each passenger must fill in their relevant section of the [Booking Form](#), and each provide Next of Kin details.

Your name must be written LEGIBLY and EXACTLY AS IT APPEARS IN YOUR PASSPORT. E.g. If your flight tickets need to be reissued because your writing is unclear, or you have entered a different (commonly used) name then you, the 'passenger', will incur any cost of reissuing tickets.

One passenger per file may sign on behalf of their spouse/companion to legally state that they both agree with all booking conditions therein.

Do you need to submit a Medical Information Form?

We send every single passenger a link to download the [Medical Information Form](#) on their deposit letter, regardless of their age, to ensure everyone considers any fitness issues well in advance of booking their holiday. However, you are only required to complete and submit this form if you:

- Have a pre-existing medical condition that affects your fitness to travel, or
- Have a medical dietary condition (e.g. food or MSG allergies, coeliac disease), or
- Will be carrying medications which require refrigeration (eg. insulin), or
- Have a history of DVT, or
- Have sleep apnoea and require the use of a CPAP or BiPAP machine, or
- Have a clinical mental illness, or
- Have dementia, hearing loss, vision impairment or muteness

Please take care to complete all sections. Should any ailments either exist at the time of booking, or arise before your departure, you must inform Wendy Wu Tours of these by completing a [Medical Information Form](#).

Please make sure your visa application form is correct:

Due to lengthy processing times, you are required to have your passport, completed visa application form and photos in our office **no later than 90 days prior to your departure.**

Your name must be written LEGIBLY and EXACTLY AS IT APPEARS IN YOUR PASSPORT. The Indian Consulate does not process visa applications urgently under any circumstances. If your application is rejected by the consulate and returned to our office, there may not be enough time to submit your application again. In this case, you 'the passenger', will incur any cost/s involved and normal cancellation and refund conditions apply. You must also ensure that the photograph supplied **is recent (taken within the last 3 months)** and meets the size criteria of 5cm high and 5cm wide.

Passports must have a minimum of 6 months validity left, from the date of your arrival back into Australia. If you notice any discrepancies or have any queries please phone our office (Visa Dept) and we will be happy to assist.

Safari Bookings in Ranthambore National Park

To ensure your safari booking at Ranthambore National Park we will require a scanned copy or photocopy of the photo page in your passport along with a deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot confirm your safari arrangements without this information. Please refer to your [Tour Dossier](#) to see if this applicable for your tour.

Please note: At the beginning of 2010 the Indian Consulate implemented a new online visa processing system. Please refer to your [visa application instruction sheet](#) for more detailed information.

ELECTRICITY

There is an electricity supply of 220 Volts throughout India and 240-Volt appliances will work safely with this supply. There is no universal power point but they generally have the round three-pin socket, so you can use the round two-pin (Europe) plug or the round three-pin (India) plugs. You can buy adaptors, also known as conversion plugs, from hardware, department and Duty Free stores.

Used almost exclusively in India



European round two-pin plug



IN REMOTE AREAS

Outside of the main towns and cities, some areas can have electricity surges and outages, the supply may only be available for a few hours each day, or they may rely on a diesel generator. Whenever there is limited electricity supply, there may be limited hot water supply and therefore limited showers. Power surges or outages can both make re-charging electrical appliances very difficult. We advise you to re-charge in major cities and bring a supply of batteries (from home) to allow for days when you cannot recharge. **Most group tours feature a night of accommodation with limited electricity, this is especially the case when travelling through Southern India** – refer to your [Tour Dossier](#).

MONEY

Here is a reference table of approximate exchange rates (as of June 2014):

	AU\$1	NZ\$1	US\$1	ZAR R1
Indian Rupee	56.50 Rs	52.67 Rs	62.48 Rs	5.97 Rs

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

The local currency in India is known as the Indian 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. It is a good idea to collect as much small change as you can as shopkeepers and drivers are unlikely to have large amounts of change.

CURRENCY EXCHANGE

We advise all tour members to take their own currency in cash to exchange in India. If you have US dollars from previous journeys, you will also be able to use them in India. Exchange facilities will be available at the airport upon arrival, at most of your hotels and at banks in cities and sizable towns.

If your tour travels to Nepal, all tour members will need to change their large Indian Rupee denominations (INR500 and INR1,000 notes) into Nepalese Rupee (NPR) before boarding their flight. INR 500 and 1,000 notes are not accepted in foreign exchange centres and many local shops in Nepal. If you are re-entering India after your time in Nepal, please make appropriate arrangements.

Should you require assistance regarding currency exchange, please enlist the help of your National Escort/Local Guide.

CREDIT CARDS

Taking a credit 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. If you do choose to bring any cards overseas we recommend that you advise your bank of your travel dates and destination prior to departure.

ATMs

All major cities have reliable ATMs and banks. ATM cards with Cirrus and Maestro logos will work in Indian ATMs displaying those signs. Cards which use Plus are problematic and are not a reliable source of obtaining money from an ATM. ATM machines have their quirks so you should not rely on this as your only source of money. Try to withdraw as few times as possible because overseas withdrawal fees for credit and debit accounts are very high (check your bank's fees).

SAFETY & SECURITY

Although India is considered to be safe for travellers, you must ensure while travelling that you keep belongings on you at all times and that you purchase/install locks on each of your bags and suitcases, especially in crowded areas like marketplaces and train stations.

Do not leave any valuables unattended in your hotel room. It is recommended that prior to departure you purchase a money-belt for the safekeeping of belongings.

It is also recommended that you **do not** bring valuable jewellery, etc. with you to India. We suggest each passenger makes two photocopies of valuable documents, such as; credit cards, passports, tickets and visas. We recommend you keep one copy with you in a separate place to the original document and leave another copy with family or friends at home.

Likewise while travelling each day, do not leave any valuables unattended on the coach. It is your own responsibility to ensure that you carry your money and valuables on you at all times.

LUGGAGE

All passengers are limited to two (2) items of luggage each:

One (1) suitcase or backpack, with a maximum weight of 20kg.

One (1) 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, drinking water, toilet paper, hat, etc.

Domestic airlines within India have recently reviewed their checked luggage limits. As such, all airlines have now implemented a **maximum checked luggage limit of 15kgs**. Please keep this in mind when packing for your upcoming trip. Any excess luggage charges incurred will be at your own expense – Please refer to your [Suggested Packing List](#) for more information.

INSURANCE

It is a condition of travel that all customers have adequate travel insurance for the duration of their travel arrangements.

If you wish to take out an insurance policy through Wendy Wu Tours, please contact our office for a quote. Please also ensure you have the appropriate cover for your holiday; overseas medical costs are expensive and Medicare or private health insurance will not cover you outside of your home country. Please inform our office of the name of your travel insurance company, your policy number and the insurance company's international emergency assistance phone number.

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 full copy of conditions.

You are obliged to you inform your insurance company of all pre-existing medical conditions.

All travel insurance providers require you to contact them ASAP in the unlikely event that you need medical treatment, hospitalisation or a change of 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 partners on the ground will be able to assist you in contacting your insurance company. **You must check your policy** for exact inclusions and procedures.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Mobile phones are quite popular in India and you will find high quality coverage. India has active roaming agreements with most of the service providers. Please check with your mobile supplier for all associated costs and to activate global roaming services prior to departure.

IN REMOTE AREAS

In remote areas you will rarely be able to access phone or internet facilities. Mobile phones are also unlikely to have reception nor able to be charged because of the limited electricity supply. 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. Please refer to your [Tour Dossier](#).

TRANSPORT

We use a wide variety of transportation including coach, boat cruises, trains, air travel, elephants and rickshaw rides, to operate your itinerary at the best pace and to give you an authentic experience so you are not always 'removed' from the locals. You will find mention of these in your [Tour Dossier](#) and final itinerary – they allow us to visit areas that normal coach tours cannot reach.

TRAINS - Train travel is a fun, interesting and comfortable way of moving around India. All group train travel will be in AC2 meaning 'air-conditioned, second class'. For shorter journeys during the day, we use **AC2 chair 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.

BOATS - Your tour could include taking a ride in a motor boat on Lake Pichola in Udaipur, in a narrow wooden boat along the Ganges in Varanasi, or spending a night on board a kettuvallam houseboat of 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; able to disembark onto makeshift docks without handrails, or onto muddy riverbanks.

BICYCLES / MOTORBIKES / JEEPS / RICKSHAW - If at any time throughout your tour you choose to ride on a bicycle, motorbike, jeep or rickshaw, you must bear responsibility for yourself. Please be aware that safety helmets are generally not available for hire or are not considered safe by Australian standards.

These are not vehicles owned or operated by Wendy Wu Tours and as such we cannot accept responsibility pertaining to your chosen participation.

On rare occasions your National Escort/Guide may need to organise an alternative mode of transport if your group coach is unable to navigate the road due to road damage or limited access. Your guide will keep you updated of any such changes.

CANTERS - These are large, open jeeps with wooden bench seats, no seat belts and usually cover rough ground, so the ride can be bumpy.

TOY TRAINS - The term 'toy train' refers to several trains originally built by the British to travel up to the hill station resorts which 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 and no air-conditioning.

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.

TRAVEL HEALTH

The staff of Wendy Wu Tours across the world are obviously not medically qualified. Therefore they are neither able, nor allowed to give any medical advice, recommendations or administer medications under any circumstances.

This section is for Australian passengers only. All other passengers should check with their country's specific travel health advice.

Do you need to visit a Doctor before travelling?

Yes, anyone travelling to a developing country in Asia should see a Doctor beforehand. The government's Smartraveller scheme advises people to visit either their Doctor or a travel vaccination centre, such as The Travel Doctor (T.M.V.C) to receive a health check and vaccination advice. For most people, this should be 8 weeks before your holiday to allow time for any necessary vaccinations, etc. Remember to take your **Tour Dossier** with you to the appointment!

As stated in our booking conditions, Wendy Wu Tours requires all clients to familiarise themselves with any health requirements specific to the countries being visited. All clients should visit their Doctor for these aforementioned purposes, and/or to confirm that they are physically able to undertake the day-to-day requirements of the tour.

Medical Information Form – please refer to the YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES section.

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 upon request. Boiled water is suitable for drinking and cleaning teeth. Safe, bottled drinking water is readily available for sale everywhere in India – from small shops, street stalls, supermarkets, restaurants and hotels. All hotels on your tour throughout India will provide you with one bottle of water per day to use.

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 but they stock local, traditional medicine and many unregulated brands of Western medicine.

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

Suggestions include:

All prescribed medication (with a cover note from your doctor for any prescribed medication and/or equipment you will carry).

Headache tablets

Anti-diarrheal tablets

Cold and flu tablets

Travel sickness tablets

Lozenges

Insect repellent and sunscreen

Anti-Bacterial hand wipes/and or anti-bacterial gel

Spare pair of glasses/contact lenses

ALTITUDE

Some of our tours, such as those that visit Nepal & Bhutan, reach areas of high altitude. Your Tour Dossier will list altitudes reached each day and describe activities undertaken there. Please refer to this information to confirm that you are physically able to undertake your chosen itinerary. AMS (Acute Mountain Sickness) occurs in some people when they travel to altitudes over 3,000m [9,840 feet]. Mild symptoms of AMS include dizziness, fatigue, nausea or loss of appetite, breathlessness or headache. These usually develop over the first 36 hours at altitude and not immediately on arrival. AMS symptoms are experienced by people of varying ages and levels of fitness, and usually the symptoms will subside after a day or so. If symptoms worsen you should seek medical advice and descend in altitude immediately.

Making sure you are well hydrated (by drinking lots of water and refraining from alcohol/caffeine) before and during the tour, as well as exercising to improve your aerobic fitness before you leave, are generally considered to be excellent ways to prevent or alleviate the severity of mild AMS. If you have an existing respiratory, vascular or coronary condition, we recommend checking with your doctor before undertaking this tour.

CUSTOMS & DUTY FREE

You can bring in up to 200 cigarettes/50 cigars/250g of tobacco, 2L of alcohol, 60ml of perfume duty free. Exporting any antiques is illegal and these items will be confiscated. If you buy a souvenir that could be mistaken for a genuine antique, get an official receipt from the shop.

TIPPING

Tipping is a firm and expected element in the tourism industry today and India is 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.

A nominated tipping amount is included in all group tour pricing; however it is not paid to Wendy Wu Tours in your final payment. This is so that it can be given directly to your National Escort/Guide in India. They will distribute the tips among your main service providers – guides and drivers – on your behalf.

Hotel porters are not covered in this amount. If you require their assistance, tipping is at your discretion. The tipping amounts will be outlined in your final itinerary.

ADDITIONAL TIPPING

For independent passengers, or group passengers with pre/post tour arrangements – please allow **USD5 per person per day**.



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 you are visiting by learning a little and behaving with respect and consideration.

TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS

We encourage you to think about how you would like to be treated by camera wielding tourists. Although Indians do not mind being photographed at tourist sights, they do not like to be photographed while they are in their every day clothes while doing demeaning work.

We recommend that you request permission before taking photographs and respect their wishes.

Please be wary that while in Muslim districts persistent photo takers of street scenes may be harassed by locals, as some prefer to have their privacy respected.

DRESS APPROPRIATELY

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in non-revealing clothes. Full-length trousers with a shirt or tshirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable while sightseeing at mosques. When visiting Jain temples, you must not wear or take in any leather items such as belts, watches, camera straps, purses and shoes.

Religious sites and homes throughout India – for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are 'shoe minders' who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a 'tip' – this is not compulsory so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove them, you will have to remain outside. Bring some shoes that easily slip on and off, and carry a pair of thick, old socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces.

Please refer to the [Suggested Packing List](#) which can be downloaded from our website.

DID YOU KNOW?

The name Himalaya originates from the Sanskrit language, hima, meaning 'snow', and alaya, meaning 'abode'. They are found in the northern regions of India. They extend 1,500 miles and are slowly growing taller, by almost an inch a year. Several ancient Indian monasteries are found perched in the magnificence of these mountain ranges.

India has the largest postal network in the world with 150,000 post offices. However, it is not unusual for a letter to take two weeks to travel just 30 miles.

Cricket was introduced to India by the British and is the country's most popular sport, although Field Hockey is regarded as India's national sport.

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 Djinn: 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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