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## SICOGA 2022 – Tourism and India General Information

### India- General Information

- **Political System:** Parliamentary democratic republic in which the president of India is the head of state, and the Prime Minister of India is the head of elected government with a federal structure of government.
- **Location:** The country of India is geographically located on the Indian subcontinent in south-central Asia. India is geographically positioned, both, in the Northern and Eastern hemispheres of the Earth. It is bordered by Afghanistan and Pakistan in the north-west; by China, Nepal and Bhutan in the north; and by Bangladesh and Burma (Myanmar) in the east. The Indian peninsula tapers southward resulting in the division of the Indian Ocean into two water bodies - the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.
- **Territory size:** It is the seventh-largest country by area, with size of an area of about 3.28 million sq. kms, it has a land frontier of more than 15000 km and a coastline of about 7,500 kms plus.
- **No. of states:** 28 STATES & 9 Union Territories.
- **Population:** With population of 1.353 billion, it is the second-most populous country, and the most populous democracy in the world.

### Climate during November

There is tremendous variation in climate in various corners of country. Generally, it is dry and sunny in November throughout India. The humidity is at low levels. It is the perfect for sightseeing and / or relaxing on beaches. Pleasant temperatures can be experienced in most of the country but up North (in the mountain regions) it can be quite cold.

### Etiquettes & customs

- **Religions and Language:** Indians by heritage are religious, congenial people following social norms, ethical values, traditional customs, belief systems, but simultaneously have modern outlook. Technological developments have been very well accepted and adopted by the people. It is country of multiple religions, ethnicities, and languages. Although Hindi is most common language of communication in most parts, English is also very commonly spoken / understood in most of the areas.
- **Greeting style:** The usual way to greet each other in India is with a NAMASTE, in which the palms of both hands are put together in polite and graceful manner in front of the chest, and the head is bowed slightly as the “NAMASTE” is exchanged. It means “Accept my respect to divinity within you” It is used, both – while taking leave or during the initial meeting. In some places they say RAM-RAM or JAI SHRIKRISHNA instead of NAMASTE. Even a simple Hello is also exchanged while greeting each other.
- **Clothing:** - Indians believe in ATITHEE DEVO BHAV which means guests are like God. The general experience is of congenial welcome. However, in rural areas formal full clothing is advisable. Seniors are specially respected in all houses holds and treated as superiors and head of the family. Shoes usually are not permitted inside house, temples religious gatherings etc. In most of the modern houses there are dining



tables but otherwise the food is taken while sitting on ground – raised platforms.

- **Safety:** India is considered safe for travel. But one has to take care of avoiding, shady areas/ people, dark isolated lanes, staying out very late in nights etc. to avoid unpleasant experiences of nuisance from bad elements of society. It is best to travel in groups or with escorts in such cases. The emergency numbers in India are: EMERGENCY 112, POLICE 100, AMBULANCE 102.

## Transportation

India has very good connectivity by Air, Rail & Road.

- Advance bookings are available for most modes of transport, and it is advisable to plan and book tickets well in advance to avoid unavailability of tickets at the eleventh hour. For this one can book directly on Airline sites or many other booking sites available online.
- **Air:** Metro cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai and Kolkata are very well connected with direct flights from many countries. Various Airlines in India such as – Air India, Indigo, Vistara, Go-Air, Spice-Jet – connect more than 80 cities across India, and are joined by several foreign airlines in providing international routes. It should be noted that some of the Metro airports have more than one terminal that may require transfers between terminals to take connecting flights. Participants are advised to check Terminal Information for departing/ connecting flights to avoid any last-minute confusion.
- **Rail:** India has a large railway network. Because of seasonal load and heavy traffic, it is better to book ticket in advance. Reserved tickets in Indian Railways can be booked 120 days in advance of journey. Foreign Tourists can book their tickets well in advance under Foreign Tourist Quota. Please note that there may be more than one main train station in Metro cities. For example, Delhi has “New Delhi” and “Delhi” (which is in Old Delhi). Mumbai has CST (previously known as Victoria Terminus), Bombay Central & Kurla stations from which different trains start. In Kolkata there is Howrah Railway Station and Sealdah Railway Station. IRCTC offers both domestic and international tour packages on IRCTC Tourism website. ( <https://www.irctc.co.in> ) Train stations in major metros have waiting rooms, and retiring rooms, Dormitories are available in some of the stations.
- **Buses:** Most of the towns and cities within India are connected by state and national highways. State Transport Corporations as well as Private bus operators offer scheduled bus services. Bookings can be made online. There are many options available such as AC, Non-AC, luxury and Sleeper buses amongst others. The A.C sleeper coaches can be a pleasant way to travel.
- **Taxi services:** Taxi services are available for within city, intercity as also National level travel across India. The Metered Taxi cabs in Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai have distinctive black and yellow colors with the bottom half painted black and upper half painted yellow. There are also online cab services such as Uber, Ola, Meru, Savaari, etc. One has to download of the respective Cab service to avail of the services. Private taxis available for hiring for specific trips have their own color themes approved by the government. Amongst Private Taxies there is option of Regular Sedan, SUV, Luxury, Taxies. There is also a system of shared Taxi service between some cities. At most of the airports there is a service of Prepaid Taxies which is considered to be reliable and good. All taxies, being commercial vehicles are having **black lettering on a yellow backdrop**. Note that in India NO TIPS are required to be paid to drivers. Only the metered amount or pre decided fare needs to be paid. For foreign tourists, travel by private taxies, prepaid taxies at airports, and Uber tend to be the most convenient.



## Servas International 32nd Conference and General Assembly - SICOGA 2022

Venue: Asia Plateau, IofC, Panchgani, Maharashtra, India

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- **Suburban Railway services:** They are the Suburban rail services in many metro cities in India. Suburban services tend to be quite crowded and are not generally recommended for foreign tourists.
- **Subway/Metro:** Metro rail is considered the fastest, affordable and best means of **travel within Indian cities**. **Presently** Kolkata, Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Mumbai are some of the cities where metro rails are available. The size of the network is constantly changing. It is advisable to check for details on routes.

### Tourism

- India with its 5000-year-old history and culture offers you multiple exciting tourism opportunities. With its variety of festivities in different regions, religions and cultures viz. vibrant colorful Holi, Diwali - the festival of lights, Sankranti – the festival of kites/harvest, Navratri – the festival of dance and for the triumph of good over evil, and Ganeshotsav – festival of the Elephant God, and Christmas. These colorful occasions beacon international travelers to be part of the celebrations.
- Historically it has magnificent forts, temples and palaces that stand testimony to its 5,000 year history – with stories of valor and romance.
- Geographically, with its thousands of kilometers of coastlines, beautiful mountain ranges including the majestic Himalayas to the North and North-East, vast deserts towards the west, tropical forests, and majestic rivers, it offers you lots of places of tourist interests, and opportunities to trek, enjoy adventure sports, and a chance to enjoy different Indian cuisines.
- Culturally, you can experience the enthralling classical, vocal and instrumental music and dance forms of India.
- For tourists with interest in ancient practices of Yoga, meditation, naturopathy, there are many centers to train you in this unique contribution of India to the world – and an opportunity to learn the tools to enhance inner peace and spirituality.
- The list of popular places of tourists' attractions is endless; we give below a general idea about some of them.
- **Golden Triangle** This includes a trip comprising of Delhi, Jaipur and Agra. One may add Jodhpur, Udaipur, or Jaisalmer (or substitute for Jaipur) in this itinerary.
- **Mountain vistas** One can visit the Himalayan terrain by going to Shimla, Kullu, Manali, Leh, Ladakh, Nainital, Gangtok, Dharamshala, Dalhousie, Darjeeling, Gangtok etc. For the wild life enthusiasts there are many famous National parks in and around this region viz. Sariska National Park, Ranthambore National Park, Jim Corbett National Park, Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, Rajaji National Park, Kaziranga National Park etc. In the South, one can visit the hill regions of Ooty, Yercaud, and Coorg.
- **Archeological wonders** Konark (Sun Temple), Aurangabad (with must-see UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES of Ajanta, Ellora Caves), Mysore
- **Beaches** Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Orissa.



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- **Cities** Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai - Within cities, often there are conducted tours offered by the Tourism Department.
- To optimize one's travel in India requires planning in advance. You may check the India host list to explore feasibility of home stays.
- One can go through some the following websites to know further and plan accordingly.
  - Incredible India - <https://www.incredibleindia-tourism.org>
  - Travel & Tourism- <https://www.india.gov.in/topics/travel-tourism>
  - IRCTC TOURISM - <https://www.irctctourism.com>
  - Itinerary guides - [India Itineraries - Rough Guides | Rough Guides](#)

We do hope that your will find that information helpful.

The Servas India team looks forward to welcoming you to India and to participate in SICOGA 2022.

It wishes you a very pleasant trip.

Abhay Shaha

On behalf of Servas India team and members