

Directory

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ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in Rajasthan ranges from simple whitewashed cells to glorious palaces and forts that have been converted into some of India's most luxurious, atmospheric and extraordinary hotels.

Accommodation listings are usually divided into budget, midrange and top-end categories. Recommendations within these listings are in ascending order of tariff. Roughly, the budget breakdown in this book is from around Rs 75 to Rs 800 (US\$2 to

BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at lonelyplanet.com/hotels. You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

US\$20) for a budget room, from around Rs 800 to Rs 4000 (US\$20 to US\$100) for mid-range and from around Rs 4000 (US\$100) upwards for the top end. However, this is a loose guide; many places have rooms covering a variety of categories – their upper-priced rooms are midrange, lower-priced ones are budget. Prices also vary depending on the season, the festival calendar, whether it's a tourist hot spot, and whether you are bedding down in the town or country. Standout options throughout this book are indicated by **our pick**.

Although most prices quoted here are for single and double rooms, many hotels will put an extra bed in a room to make a triple for about an extra 25%.

During the peak tourist season, which falls from mid-November to February, and some festivals, hotel rates can skyrocket and it can be tough even finding a bed – advance reservations are advisable.

Room quality can vary dramatically within properties, particularly budget properties, so try to inspect a few rooms first. For a bathroom low-down see *Get to Know Your Bathroom*, p352.

Some hotels operate on a 24-hour system (ie your time starts when you check in), while others have fixed checkout times – it pays to ask.

Credit cards are accepted at most top-end hotels and many midrange ones; however, few budget places will take them. Some hotels may request an upfront payment. If you're asked to sign a blank impression of your credit card, refuse to do so. If they insist, fill in an amount less than your estimated expenditure.

In some towns, notably Jodhpur, some hotels 'borrow' the name of a thriving competitor to confuse travellers. To avoid landing up at an inferior copycat, make sure that you know the *exact* name of your preferred hotel, and before paying the driver double-check that you're at the right place, as some cheeky chaps will try to off-load you at hotels where they receive fat commissions. Also see *About Touts*, p356.

Accommodation Options

BUDGET & MIDRANGE HOTELS

These options range from squalid dives to excellent-value and well-kept guesthouses. Most hotels in these categories come with ceiling fans. Shoestring travellers may like to consider bringing their own sheets and pillowcases, as some of the cheaper places have bed linen that even the most ferocious *dhobi-wallah* (washerwoman) couldn't whiten.

Midrange hotels offer you more comfort than their budget brothers, but they can be a mixed bag: some have dreary, boxlike rooms while others ooze character. Some of these hotels have 'air-cooled' rooms that are one step up from a ceiling fan and one step below air-conditioning. An air-cooler is a large (usually noisy) evaporative device built into a frame within a wall.

Some budget and midrange hotels lock their gates at night and remain unmanned on the outside, so let someone know if you intend coming back late.

CAMPING

There are few camping options in Rajasthan, though a couple of hotels allow you to camp in their grounds, as detailed in the Sleeping sections of regional chapters. Some budget hotels let travellers sleep on their rooftop (usually providing a mattress and some bedding) for a nominal charge.

PAYING GUEST HOUSE SCHEME (HOMESTAYS)

Rajasthan pioneered the Paying Guest House Scheme, so it's well developed in the state. Staying with a local family can be a stimulating change from dealing only with hoteliers. Prices range from budget to upper mid-range – contact the local Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation (RTDC) tourist offices for details (for contact information, see the individual regional chapters). Jaipur also has a reputable private scheme called Jaipur Pride (p164).

RAILWAY RETIRING ROOMS

These are found at train stations, and you can technically only stay here if you possess an ongoing train ticket. The rooms, which can range from substandard to adequate, are handy if you have an early morning train departure, although they can be noisy if it's a busy station. Most are let on a 24-hour basis, and usually offer dormitories (sometimes male only) and private rooms.

PRACTICALITIES

- Electricity is 230V to 240V, 50Hz AC and sockets are the three-round-pin variety. Blackouts are fairly common so bring a torch (flashlight) and the gear to protect delicate electronic equipment.
- Officially India uses the metric system for weights and measures. Terms you're likely to hear are lakhs (one lakh = 100,000) and crores (one crore = 10 million).
- Major English-language dailies include the *Hindustan Times*, *Times of India*, *Indian Express*, *Pioneer*, *Asian Age*, *Hindu*, *Statesman*, *Telegraph* and *Economic Times*. In Delhi there are several listings and general information guides: *Delhi City Guide*, *Delhi Diary*, *Explore Delhi*, *First City* and *Time Out Delhi*. Jaipur also has a couple of listings and tourist guides: *Jaipur Vision* and *Jaipur City Guide*. In Udaipur look out for *Out and About in Udaipur*.
- Read incisive current affairs in *Frontline*, *India Today*, *the Week*, *Sunday* and *Outlook*. For India-related travel articles get *Outlook Traveller*.
- The national (government) TV broadcaster is Doordarshan. More widely watched are satellite and cable TV; channels include BBC World, CNN, Discovery, Star Movies, HBO and MTV. TV (and radio) programme/frequency details appear in most English-language dailies.
- Government-controlled All India Radio (AIR) nationally transmits local and international news. There are also private channels broadcasting news, music, current affairs, talkback and more.

GET TO KNOW YOUR BATHROOM

All top-end and most midrange hotels in India have sit-down flush toilets with toilet paper. Some midrange and many budget hotels have a choice of squat and sit-down flush toilets. In the rock-bottom category squat toilets are the norm and toilet paper is rarely provided.

Some hoteliers refer to squat toilets as 'Indian-style' and sit-down flush toilets as 'Western-style'. In some places you may discover the curious hybrid toilet, which is a sit-down toilet with footpads on the edge of the bowl.

Throughout India, there's differing terminology for hotel bathrooms: 'common bath', 'without bath' or 'shared bath' means communal bathroom facilities. 'Attached bath', 'private bath' or 'with bath' indicates that the room has its own bathroom.

'Running', '24-hour' or 'constant' hot water indicates that there's hot water around the clock (not always the case in reality). At the cheapest level, some hotel bathrooms only have cold tap water so hot water is provided in buckets, sometimes only within certain hours and at a small charge.

Hotels that advertise 'room with shower' can be misleading. Even if a bathroom has a shower, check that it works before accepting the room. Some hotels surreptitiously disconnect showers to cut costs, while showers at other places render a mere trickle of water.

Some budget and midrange hotels have small hot-water tanks in the bathroom, which need to be switched on anywhere up to an hour before use.

In this book, hotel rooms have private bathroom unless otherwise stated.

RTDC ACCOMMODATION

RTDC hotels are government run and their facilities and service are not usually up to much. They may offer dorm beds (Rs 100 per person per night), and there are also usually two or three types of rooms available, all with private bathroom: ordinary, deluxe and superdeluxe. The local branch of the RTDC tourist office is often on the premises.

PALACES, FORTS & CASTLES

Rajasthan is famous for its wonderful palace, fort and castle hotels, most famous being the Lake Palace (p253) in Udaipur, Devi Garh (p253) near Udaipur, Rambagh Palace (p169) in Jaipur and Umaid Bhawan Palace (p310) in Jodhpur. But there are hundreds of others, and it often doesn't cost a fortune: some are the height of luxury and priced accordingly, but many are simpler, packed with character and in stunning locations.

As palaces and forts were not originally designed for tourism, the size and quality of rooms can vary, so look at a few rooms first.

Throughout Rajasthan you will discover many finely appointed historical buildings that have been converted into tourist accommodation. They are known as 'heritage hotels' and include *havelis* (traditional mansions), forts and former royal hunting lodges. Many of the RTDC tourist offices have a brochure that lists heritage

hotels, or you can check out the website <http://heritagehotels.com>.

TOP-END HOTELS

As major tourist centres, Rajasthan, Delhi and Agra have a bevy of top-end hotels, ranging from swanky five-star chains such as the Oberoi, Taj and Welcomgroup (affiliated to Sheraton), to less-glamorous four-starrers.

Note that US dollar rates often apply to foreigners, including to nonresident Indians (NRIs).

If you're interested in staying at a top-end hotel, it's often cheaper to book it through the internet. Nevertheless, unless the hotel is busy, you can nearly always score a discount from the rack rates.

Additional Costs

SEASONAL VARIATIONS

Most hoteliers in Delhi, Agra and Rajasthan crank up their high-season prices to around two to three times the low-season price – the process is gradual, so as the high season approaches, prices will creep up. The prices quoted in this book are high-season rates.

High season begins about a month before Christmas and includes the two months following. Some hotels charge higher rates for the brief Christmas and New Year period, or over major festivals such as Diwali (p360) and the

Pushkar Camel Fair (p209). Conversely, in the low season (from around April to September), prices at even normally expensive hotels can drop dramatically, creating some amazing bargains. Between low and high season there's a shoulder season with intermediate prices. It's *always* worth asking for a better rate if the hotel doesn't seem busy.

TAXES & SERVICE CHARGES

At most rock-bottom places you won't have to pay any taxes. Once you get into the top end of budget places, and certainly in midrange and top-end accommodation, you will usually have to pay a 8% to 10% 'luxury' tax on rooms over Rs 1000 plus 12.5% on food and beverages in hotels that attract the luxury tax on their rooms.

On top of taxes, many midrange and up-market hotels have a 'service charge' (usually 8% to 10%). This may be restricted to room service and telephone use, or may be levied on the total bill. Rates quoted in this book exclude taxes unless otherwise indicated.

Many hotels raise their tariffs annually, some raise them when business is good, and some raise rates with an increase of popularity (often because they have had a good write-up in Lonely Planet!) – be prepared for increments on the rates quoted here.

ACTIVITIES

From exploring the desert on camelback, to being covered in Ayurvedic oils, Rajasthan has an exhilarating range of activities on offer.

Remember that travel agents often take a cut of what you pay and sell you on as clients to someone else. The end provider gets only part of what you paid and so you may get poor equipment, insufficient food or poor safety standards. If you are using an agent, try to deal with companies that are the end provider and ask if they're registered with the state government. Then ask if they're members of an accredited association such as the Travel Agents Association of India, Indian Association of Tour Operators or the Adventure Tour Operators Association of India – ask to see their accreditation. Ask official tourist offices for government-approved operators or, best of all, get recommendations from fellow travellers.

For information on camel, horse, jeep and wildlife safaris, see p368.

Ayurveda

Massages, treatments and assessments are available at various places, including Ashtaang, in Delhi (p107), and Kerala Ayurveda Kendra and Chakrapania Ayurveda in Jaipur (p161). There are also Ayurvedic hospitals in Udaipur (p248) and Bundi (p227) offering treatment.

Bird-watching

Rajasthan contains some renowned bird-watching sites, including World Heritage-listed Keoladeo Ghana National Park (p188); Ranthambhore National Park (p215); Khichan (see the boxed text, p318), near Phalodi; Sariska Tiger Reserve (p198); and Dungarpur (p263).

Boating

In southern Rajasthan, boats can be hired at Nakki Lake (p265) in Mt Abu, at Chambal Gardens (p230) in Kota, and on Pichola Lake (water-level permitting; p243) in Udaipur. At Jaipur, you can hire boats at Tilon-ki-Pol (p327).

Cycling

Ramesh Jangid, from Apani Dhani (p281) in Nawalgarh, Shekhawati, can organise cycling tours around the villages of Shekhawati, including informative commentaries on the region's remarkable paintings. Hotel Jamuna Resort (p287) in Jhunjhunu, Shekhawati, can also arrange cycling tours. Butterfield & Robinson offers more-upmarket organised bicycle tours (see p377 for more information).

Golf

It's possible to play golf in Jaipur (p161) and Jodhpur (p306); equipment is available for hire.

Swimming

Quite a few of the upmarket hotels allow non-guests to use their swimming pools. Expect to pay anywhere from Rs 100 to 500 for this privilege, which should include a towel.

Trekking

Various operators can organise treks in the Aravalli Range. Ramesh Jangid (see p280) organises treks that include a guide, all meals, transport and accommodation in village homes, tents and *dharamsalas* (pilgrims guesthouses).

You can also make short treks in the marvellous Aravalli hills around Mt Abu (p268). Other places worth exploring are around Udaipur (p249), Ranakpur (p261) and Kumbalgarh (p260), which have stunning scenery.

BUSINESS HOURS

Official business hours are from 9.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday. Unofficially they tend to be from 10am to 5pm.

Most banks are open from 10am to 2pm (some from 9am to 1pm and 1.30pm to 4pm) on weekdays, and from 10am to noon on Saturday – there are often variations, so it pays to check. In the bigger cities and tourist centres there are invariably foreign-exchange offices that stay open for longer.

In most cities, the main post office is open from 10am until 5pm on weekdays (some close for lunch any time between 1pm and 2pm) and on Saturday until noon (and occasionally on Sunday).

Shop hours vary regionally, but most tend to open from around 10am to 6pm and close once a week (often on Sunday).

In the more popular tourist areas, such as Udaipur, Jaisalmer and Pushkar, many shops open at around 9am and don't close until about 7pm, and half close on Sunday.

In this book we note opening hours of major sights and activities. Restaurants are generally open from 8am to 11pm daily; specific hours are provided in listings.

CHILDREN

Being a family-oriented society, India is a child-friendly destination. But travelling with kids in India can be hard work, requiring constant vigilance – be especially cautious of road traffic. Any long-distance road travel should include adequate stops, as rough roads can make travel more tiring than usual, especially for little ones. Train is usually the most comfortable mode of travel, especially for long trips. Always carry sufficient clean drinking water, snacks and amusements (books, toys, portable DVD players etc).

Health risks, such as diarrhoea (p391), can be much more of a threat to children than adults. If your child takes special medication, bring along an adequate stock in case it's not easily found locally.

For helpful hints, see Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children*, and the travelling with

Children section of Lonely Planet's Thorn Tree forum (<http://thorntree.lonelyplanet.com>) for more advice.

Practicalities

Many hotels have 'family rooms' or will happily provide an extra bed, and the more up-market hotels may offer baby-sitting facilities and kid's activity programmes. Upmarket hotels have cable TV featuring children's channels such as Cartoon Network.

Regarding restaurants, it's usually the upmarket ones that supply high chairs. Restaurants rarely have dedicated nappy-changing rooms. For more information on eating, see p71.

Standard baby products such as nappies (diapers) and powdered milk are available in larger towns.

Sights & Activities

Allow several days for children to acclimatise to India's explosion of sights, smells, tastes and sounds. Start with short outings and include child-friendly attractions (generally more prevalent in bigger cities), such as the sound-and-light show of Delhi (p98), and fun museums such as Delhi's doll museum (p108). For other ideas in Delhi see Delhi for Children (p108). Chokhi Dhani (p172), near Jaipur, is a great place for children, and they'll love the elephants at Amber Fort (p178).

Wildlife, camel and horse safaris are also worth considering (see p368).

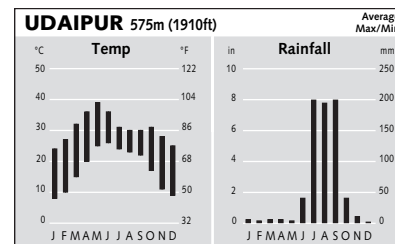
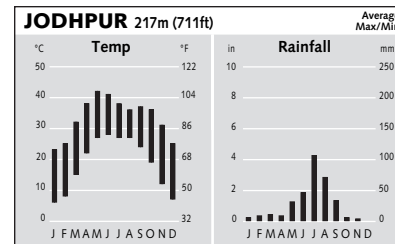
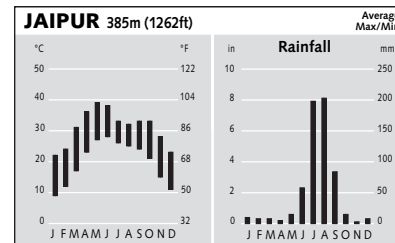
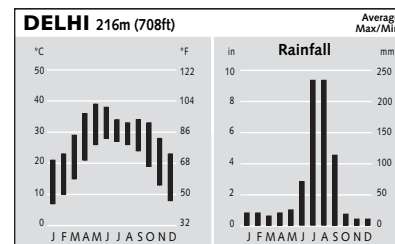
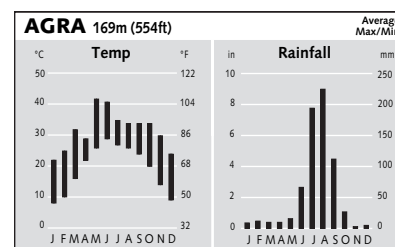
Travelling is usually much better out of the larger towns – without the hectic traffic and hassle, children will be safer and will find it much easier to adapt. Mt Abu and Bundi make great places to relax with the kids. Bear in mind, however, that you won't find the facilities and comforts of the cities unless you pop into plush hotels.

CLIMATE CHARTS

The climate of Rajasthan can be neatly divided into four seasons: premonsoon, monsoon, postmonsoon and winter. *Kharif* (monsoon) and *rabi* (winter) are the two main crop-growing seasons. For comprehensive details, see p17.

COURSES

To find out about new courses that may now be on offer, inquire at tourist offices, ask fellow travellers and check local newspapers



and magazines. For information on arts and crafts see p53, and for cooking courses, see p73.

Arts & Crafts

There are myriad arts and crafts courses available in Rajasthan.

Jaipur Blue pottery can be tried at Kripal Kumbh (p163). For block printing and blue pottery head to Sakshi (p163), about 16km south of Jaipur in Sanganer Village.

Jhunjhunu Tuition in local Shekhawati painting is offered at Hotel Jamuna Resort (p287).

Nawalgarh Bandhani (tie-dye) and other crafts are offered at Apani Dhani (p280).

Udaipur Painting lessons are offered at Ashoka Arts (p250).

Astrology

Those fascinated by the future can take lessons in astrology at the Rajasthan Astrological Council & Research Institute (p163) in Jaipur.

Ayurveda, Meditation & Yoga

There are many places in Rajasthan, Agra and Delhi offering meditation and yoga courses – ask around for recommendations. For places that don't levy a charge, donations are much appreciated. Try the following:

Delhi (p108) Hatha yoga at Ashtaang. Meditation and yoga at Dhyana Foundation. Various forms of yoga at Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga. Meditation and various forms of yoga, including asanas and pranayama (traditional breath control) at Studio Abhyas. Buddhist meditation at Tushita Meditation Centre.

Jaipur Vipassana meditation at Dhammathali Vipassana Meditation Centre (p163) and yoga (p164) at Yoga Sadhana Ashram and Madhavanand Girls College.

Mt Abu Raja Yoga meditation at Brahma Kumaris Spiritual University (p267).

Udaipur Hatha yoga at Ashtang Yoga Ashram (p250).

Languages

Apani Dhani and Ramesh Jangid's Tourist Pension (p280) in Nawalgarh can arrange Hindi lessons.

Music & Performing Arts

Places to hone your musical and dance skills include Maharaja Sawai Mansingh Sangeet Mahavidyalaya (p163), Jaipur, where you can learn sitar, tabla, flute and classical Indian dance; various places in Udaipur (p250) where teachers offer sitar, tabla and flute lessons; and Saraswati

Music School (p210) and Pushkar Music School (p210) in Pushkar for tabla, flute, singing and *kathak* (classical Indian dance) lessons.

CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

The usual duty-free regulations apply for India, that is, 1L of alcohol and 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco.

You are permitted to bring in expensive items, such as video cameras and laptop computers; they may have to be entered on a 'Tourist Baggage Re-export' form to ensure you take them out with you when you go (although this isn't always policed).

Technically, you're supposed to declare any amount of cash or travellers cheques over US\$10,000 on arrival. Officially, you're not supposed to take Indian currency into or out of India.

If entering India from Nepal, you are not entitled to import anything free of duty.

There are certain restrictions about what you can take out of India – see p365.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Indian cities have occasionally been targeted by bombers, typically associated with the situation in Kashmir. In May 2008 Jaipur suffered such an attack. However rare such attacks may be, it makes sense to check the security situation with embassy travel advisories and local newspapers.

Like anywhere else in the world, common sense and caution are your best weapons against theft or worse. Chat with other travellers and tourism officials in order to stay abreast of the latest potential hazards. Also check the India branch of Lonely Planet's **Thorn Tree forum** (<http://thorn.tree.lonelyplanet.com>) where travellers often post warnings about problems they've encountered. Women travellers should see p371.

Delhi is one of the worst places in India for scamming travellers, as scammers prey on new arrivals. See p95 for handy avoidance tips.

Contaminated Food & Drink

In past years, some private medical clinics have provided patients with more treatment than necessary in order to procure larger medical insurance claims – get several opinions where possible. Worse still, a serious food scare erupted in North India in 1998, principally in Agra and Varanasi, when numerous travellers became sick and two died after eating purposely contaminated food at restaurants linked to corrupt medical clinics. This scam has thankfully been quashed, but there's always the chance it could reappear.

Water (see Drinking Water, p391) can also be a potential problem. Always ensure the seal is intact on bottled water and check that the bottom of the bottle hasn't been tampered with. Crush plastic bottles after use to avoid them being misused later. Better still, bring along water-purification tablets to avoid adding to India's plastic waste problem – see p83.

Druggings & Theft

Never leave important valuables (passport, tickets, money) in your room (see p363) and always keep luggage securely locked. On trains, keep your gear near you; padlock bags to luggage racks or the loops found under some train seats. Thieves tend to target popular tourist train routes, such as Delhi to Agra. Be extra alert during train departure times, when the confusion and crowds are at their worst. Airports are another place to exercise caution, as after a long flight you're unlikely to be at your most alert.

Occasionally tourists (especially those travelling solo) are drugged and robbed on train or bus journeys. Unwary travellers are

befriended, offered a spiked drink (to send them to sleep) and their valuables are then stolen. It's wise to politely decline drinks or food offered by relative strangers (use your instincts), particularly if you're alone.

Unfortunately, some travellers make their money go further by helping themselves to other people's – take care. For stolen or lost travellers cheques, contact the Amex or Thomas Cook office in the closest capital city – to locate nationwide branches contact their Delhi offices (p91).

Holi Festival

Although the Holi festival (p360) is mostly good fun, there have been incidences of people being doused with toxic substances mixed in water, sometimes leaving them with scars. During Holi, there's also a tradition of guzzling alcohol and consuming cannabis-derived bhang in the form of lassis, pakoras and cookies. Female travellers have been groped by spaced-out blokes – particularly in touristy areas. Officials advise women to avoid venturing onto the streets alone during Holi.

Other Important Warnings

Gem scams are a major problem in Rajasthan, especially in Jaipur (see p154) and Agra (see p133), and many people have been conned by dealers who convince them to part with large sums of money for gems to resell at home. The gems are usually overpriced and often valueless.

Be careful using credit cards when shopping. If you're told that the merchant won't forward the credit slip for payment until you've received the goods, don't believe a word of it. No trader will send you as much as a postcard until they have received the full amount for the goods. Don't let your credit card be taken out the back to be processed – make sure transactions take place in front of you to avoid multiple imprints of your card by unscrupulous traders.

Precautions

A good travel-insurance policy is essential. If you have something stolen, report it immediately to the police. Ensure you get a statement proving you have done so – essential if you want to make an insurance claim. Note that some policies require you to report a theft to the police within a certain amount of time after you realise you've been robbed.

It's a good idea to keep photocopies of your important documents (passport, insurance documents etc) in a separate place, in case they do get pinched.

Always keep a stash of emergency cash in case you lose your travellers cheques, and in that same place (ie separate from your travellers cheques) keep a record of the cheques' serial numbers, proof-of-purchase slips, encashment vouchers and your photocopied passport details (data and visa pages).

To rapidly replace lost travellers cheques you need the proof-of-purchase slip and the numbers of the missing cheques (some places require a photocopy of the police report and a passport photo). If you don't have the cheque numbers, Amex (or whichever company has issued them) will contact the place where you bought them.

DISCOUNT CARDS

Senior Cards

For those aged over 65, Indian Airlines offers 50% discount on domestic air travel and Jet Airways offers 25% discount. Discounts on other air carriers may emerge as competition among airlines increases (ask travel agents). However, cut-price fares on budget airlines may well be cheaper than discounted full fares. If you're over 60 you're entitled to a 30% discount on train travel.

Student & Youth Cards

Student cards are of limited use nowadays – many student concessions have either been eliminated or replaced by 'youth fares' or other age concessions. Hostels run by the Indian Youth Hostels Association are part of the Hostelling International (HI) network; an HI card entitles you to standard discount rates. Members of YMCA/YWCA are also entitled to standard discounts on accommodation.

Foreigners aged below 30 receive a 25% discount on full-price domestic air tickets. Again, standard fares on budget airlines may be cheaper still.

EMBASSIES & HIGH COMMISSIONS

Indian Embassies & High Commissions

The following represent just some of India's missions around the world. For comprehensive contact details see www.meaindia.nic.in (click on the 'Missions and Posts Abroad' link).

ABOUT TOUTS

Rajasthan, Delhi and Agra are magnets for touts, all vying for your cash. Their natural habitats are airport terminals and bus or train stations, waiting to snare the fresh (most vulnerable) arrivals. Often they're rickshaw- or taxi-wallahs. Some try to gauge your vulnerability by enquiring whether it's your first trip to India – say it isn't. Their goal is to divert you to a hotel where they earn commission. Some hotels refuse to pay touts and you'll more often than not hear stories about those places being 'full', 'under renovation', 'closed' or whatever. Nine times out of 10 they'll be just that – stories. Think twice before agreeing to stay in any hotel recommended by a tout, as you'll be paying through the nose for your accommodation.

Apart from the main mission, there are Indian consulates in many countries – inquire locally for these.

Australia (☎ 02-6273 3999; www.hcindia-au.org; 3-5 Moonah Place, Yarralumla, ACT 2600)

Bangladesh (☎ 02-9889339; http://199.236.117.161; House 2, Rd 142, Gulshan I, Dhaka)

Bhutan (☎ 02-322162; www.eoithimphu.org; India House Estate, Thimphu)

Canada (☎ 613-744 3751; www.hciottawa.ca; 10 Springfield Rd, Ottawa, Ontario K1M 1C9)

France (☎ 01 40 50 70 70; www.amb-inde.fr; 15 Rue Alfred Dehodencq, 75016 Paris)

Germany (☎ 030-257950; www.indianembassy.de; Tiergartenstrasse 17, 10785, Berlin)

Ireland (☎ 01-497 0843; www.indianembassy.ie; 6 Leeson Park, Dublin 6)

Israel (☎ 03-5291999; www.indembassy.co.il; 140 Hayarkon St, Tel Aviv – 61033)

Italy (☎ 064 88 46 42; www.indianembassy.it; Via XX Settembre 5, 00187 Rome)

Japan (☎ 0332 622 391; www.embassyofindiajapan.org; 2-2-11 Kudan Minami, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 1020074)

Myanmar (Burma; ☎ 01-240633; www.indiaembassy.net.mm; 545-547 Merchant St, Yangon)

Nepal (☎ 014 0149000; www.south-asia.com/embassy-india; 336 Kapurdhara Marg, Kathmandu)

The Netherlands (☎ 0703 46 97 71; www.indianembassy.nl; Buitenrustweg 2, 2517 KD, The Hague)

New Zealand (☎ 04-473 6390; www.hicomind.org.nz; 180 Molesworth St, Wellington)

Pakistan (☎ 0512 206950; G5, Diplomatic Enclave, Islamabad)

Sri Lanka (☎ 012 421605; www.hcicolombo.org; 36-38 Galle Rd, Colombo 3)

Thailand (☎ 0 2258 0300; www.indianembassy.gov.in/bangkok; 46 Soi Prasarnmitr, Soi 23, Sukhumvit Rd, Bangkok 10110)

UK (☎ 020-7836 8484; www.hcilondon.net; India House, Aldwych, London WC2B 4NA)

USA (☎ 202-939 9806; www.indianembassy.org; 2536 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20008)

Embassies & High Commissions in India

Most missions operate from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday (some close between 1pm and 2pm).

If your country's mission is not listed below, that doesn't necessarily mean it's not represented in India – see the local phone directory, *Delhi Diary* magazine, or call one of the missions listed here for relevant contact details.

The following are located in Delhi:

Australia (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-41399900; www.ausgovindia.com; 1/50G Shantipath, Chanakyapuri)

Bangladesh (Map pp92-3; ☎ 011-24121389; www.bhcdelhi.org; EP39 Dr Radakrishnan Marg, Chanakyapuri)

Bhutan (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-26889230; Chandragupta Marg, Chanakyapuri)

Canada (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-41782000; www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/new-delhi; 7/8 Shantipath, Chanakyapuri)

France (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-24196100; www.france-in-india.org; 2/50E Shantipath, Chanakyapuri)

Germany (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-26871831; www.new-delhi.diplo.de; 6/50G Shantipath, Chanakyapuri)

Ireland (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-24626741; www.ireland.inindia.com; 230 Jor Bagh)

Israel (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-30414500; www.delhi.mfa.gov.il; 3 Aurangzeb Rd)

Italy (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-26114355; www.ambnewdelhi.esteri.it; 50E Chandragupta Marg, Chanakyapuri)

Japan (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-26876564; www.in.emb-japan.go.jp; 50G Shantipath, Chanakyapuri)

Malaysia (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-26111291; www.kln.gov.my/perwakilan/newdelhi; 50M Satya Marg, Chanakyapuri)

Myanmar (Burma; Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-24678822; 3/50F Nyaya Marg, Chanakyapuri)

Nepal (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-23327361; Barakhamba Rd)

The Netherlands (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-24197600; www.holland-in-india.org; 6/50F Shantipath, Chanakyapuri)

New Zealand (Map pp92-3; ☎ 011-26883170; www.nzembassy.com; 50N Nyaya Marg, Chanakyapuri)

Pakistan (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-24676004; 2/50G Shantipath, Chanakyapuri)

Singapore (Map pp92-3; ☎ 011-46000915; www.mfa.gov.sg/newdelhi; E6 Chandragupta Marg, Chanakyapuri)

South Africa (Map pp92-3; ☎ 011-26149411; www.sahc-india.com; B18 Vasant Marg, Vasant Vihar)

Sri Lanka (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-23010201; www.slmfa.gov.lk; 27 Kautilya Marg, Chanakyapuri)

Switzerland (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-26878372; www.eda.admin.ch; Nyaya Marg, Chanakyapuri)

Thailand (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-26118104; www.thaiemb.org.in; 56N Nyaya Marg, Chanakyapuri)

UK (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-24192100; www.ukindia.com; Shantipath, Chanakyapuri)

USA (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-24198000; http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov; Shantipath, Chanakyapuri)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Rich in religion and tradition, Rajasthan has scores of vibrant festivals. Most holidays and festivals follow either the Indian lunar calendar (a complex system determined by astrologers) or the Islamic calendar (which falls about 11 days earlier each year; 12 days

earlier in leap years), and therefore change annually relative to the Gregorian calendar. The India-wide holidays and festivals listed here are arranged according to the Indian lunar (and Gregorian) calendar which starts in Chaitra (March or April) – contact local tourist offices for exact festival dates, as many are variable.

Many festivals in India occur during Purnima (full moon), which is traditionally auspicious.

The 'wedding season' generally falls between the cooler months of November and March (the dates revolve around auspicious timings set by astrologers). During this period you're likely to see at least one wedding procession on the street, which will be a merry mix of singing, dancing and a loud brass band.

The following represent major national festivals – for more details about regional ones see the Festivals in... boxed texts at the beginning of individual chapters.

Chaitra (March/April)

Mahavir Jayanti Jain festival commemorating the birth of Mahavira, the founder of Jainism.

Ramanavami Hindus celebrate the birth of Rama. In the week leading up to Ramanavami, the Ramayana is read and performed.

Easter This Christian holiday marks the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ.

Eid-Milad-un-Nabi An Islamic festival celebrating the birth of the Prophet Mohammed.

Vaisakha (April/May)

Muharram This 10-day Muslim festival commemorates the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the Prophet Mohammed's grandson.

Baisakhi A Sikh festival commemorating the day that Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa, the Sikh brotherhood. The Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy book, is read at gurdwaras (Sikh temples). Feasts and dancing follow.

Buddha Jayanti This 'triple-blessed festival' falls on the full moon (usually in May, sometimes in late April or early June) and celebrates Buddha's birth, enlightenment and attainment of nirvana.

Jyaistha (May/June)

No major festivals currently fall during this period.

Asadha (June/July)

No major festivals currently fall during this period.

Sravana (July/August)

Naag Panchami This Hindu festival is dedicated to Ananta, the serpent upon whose coils Vishnu rested between universes. Snake charmers do a roaring trade.

Raksha Bandhan (Narial Purnima) On the full-moon day girls fix amulets known as *rakhis* to the wrists of their (not necessarily blood-related) brothers to protect them in the coming year. The brothers reciprocate with gifts.

Bhadra (August/September)

Independence Day This public holiday on 15 August marks the anniversary of India's Independence in 1947.

Drukpa Teshi The first teaching given by Buddha is celebrated during this festival.

Ganesh Chaturthi This joyful festival marks the birth of the popular elephant-headed god, Ganesh. On the last day of the festival clay idols of Ganesh are paraded through the streets before being ceremoniously immersed in a river, sea or tank.

Janmastami The anniversary of Krishna's birth is celebrated with happy abandon – in tune with Krishna's own mischievous moods. Devotees fast all day until midnight.

Shravan Purnima On this day of fasting, high-caste Hindus replace the sacred thread that they wear looped over their left shoulder.

Pateti Parsis celebrate their new year at this time.

Ramadan (Ramazan) This 30-day dawn-to-dusk fast marks the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, the month during which the Prophet Mohammed had the Quran revealed to him in Mecca. This festival moves forward 11 days each year and is due to begin in late September in 2008, 22 August 2009 and 11 August in 2010.

Asvina (September/October)

Navratri (Festival of Nine Nights) For nine happy nights, this Hindu festival leading up to Dussehra is dedicated to the goddess Durga, who valiantly beheaded a menacing demon. Goddesses Lakshmi and Saraswati, of wealth and learning respectively, also get special praise. During the day Hindus take part in rituals, fasting and prayer. Then after sundown there's often tabla-accompanied *dandiya raas* (folk dancing with sticks). Some regions also have nightly *garbas* (folk dances without the sticks).

Dussehra (Durga Puja) This festival celebrates Durga's victory over the buffalo-headed demon Mahishasura. In many places it culminates with the burning of huge images of the demon king Ravana and his accomplices, symbolic of the triumph of good over evil. In Delhi (and elsewhere) it's also known as Ram Lila (Life Story of Rama), with fireworks and re-enactments of the Ramayana. It's particularly spectacular in Kota.

Gandhi Jayanti This public holiday is a solemn celebration of Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi's birthday on 2 October with prayer meetings at the Raj Ghat in Delhi, where he was cremated.

Eid al-Fitr This feast celebrates the end of Ramadan; festivities continue for three days.

Kartika (October/November)

Diwali This is the happiest festival of the Hindu calendar, celebrated on the 15th day of Kartika. At night decorative oil lamps are lit to show Rama the way home from his period of exile. The festival is also dedicated to the goddesses Lakshmi and Kali. In all, it lasts five days. On the first day, houses are thoroughly cleaned and doorsteps are decorated with intricate *rangolis* (chalk/powder designs). Day two is dedicated to Krishna's victory over Narakasura, a legendary tyrant. Day three is spent worshipping Lakshmi. Traditionally, this is the beginning of the new financial year for companies. Day four commemorates the visit of the friendly demon Bali whom Vishnu put in his place. On the fifth day men visit their sisters to have an auspicious tikka put on their forehead. Giving sweets has become as much a part of Diwali as the lighting of oil lamps and firecrackers.

Govardhana Puja A Hindu festival dedicated to the holy cow.

Aghan (November/December)

Nanak Jayanti The birthday of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, is celebrated with prayer readings and processions.

Eid al-Adha This Islamic occasion commemorates the Prophet Ibrahim's readiness to obey God even to the point of sacrificing his son.

Pausa (December/January)

Christmas Day Christians celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Christ on 25 December.

Magha (January/February)

Republic Day This public holiday on 26 January celebrates the anniversary of India's establishment as a republic in 1950. Celebrations are held in Jaipur, but it's most spectacular in Delhi, where there's a military parade along Rajpath. As part of the same celebration, three days later a Beating of the Retreat ceremony takes place in Delhi.

Vasant Panchami Heralds the onset of spring. People worship Saraswati, goddess of wisdom and knowledge, on this day, and make floral offerings, dress in yellow, cook yellow rice and exchange yellow sweets – yellow represents the ripening of the spring crops. It's held on the 5th day of Magha.

Phalgun (February/March)

Holi This is one of the most exuberant Hindu festivals, when people celebrate the beginning of spring by throwing coloured water and *gulal* (powder) at one another. Don't wear good clothes, be ready to duck, and expect to look like a *gulab jamun* (a red, sticky sweet) at the end of the day (women see also p357). Udaipur and Jaisalmer

are both excellent venues to celebrate Holi. On the night before Holi, bonfires are built to symbolise the destruction of the evil demon Holika.

Muharram An Islamic festival commemorating the martyrdom of the Prophet Mohammed's grandson, Imam.

Shivaratri This day of Hindu fasting is dedicated to Shiva, who danced the *tandava* (cosmic dance) on this day. Temple processions are followed by the chanting of mantras and anointing of lingams (phallic symbols).

FOOD

Sampling India's amazing cuisine is an adventure in itself. For comprehensive coverage of Rajasthan's culinary scene see p64.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

As with relations between heterosexual Western couples travelling in Rajasthan – both married and unmarried – gay and lesbian travellers should exercise discretion and refrain from displaying overt affection towards each other in public. For more information see p41.

The Mumbai publication *Bombay Dost* is a gay and lesbian magazine available at a limited number of bookshops and newsstands in Delhi.

For further information about India's gay scene, there are some excellent websites, including **Gay Bombay** (www.gaybombay.org), **Humsafar** (www.humsafar.org) and the Delhi-based **Humrahi** (www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Heights/7258).

HOLIDAYS

In India there are three national public holidays: Republic Day (26 January), Independence Day (15 August) and Gandhi Jayanti (2 October). There are usually also holidays during major festivals (sometimes only followed by certain religious denominations), which include Diwali, Dussehra and Holi (all

BEWARE OF THOSE BHANG LASSIS!

Although it's rarely printed in menus, some restaurants in Rajasthan clandestinely whip up bhang lassi, a yogurt and iced-water beverage laced with bhang, a derivative of marijuana. Commonly dubbed 'special lassi', this often potent concoction doesn't agree with everyone. Some travellers have been stuck in bed for several miserable days after drinking it; others have become delirious.

REGIONAL FESTIVAL CALENDAR

Look at the Festivals in... boxed texts at the beginning of each regional chapter for detailed coverage. Following is a quick reference for dates of the major regional fairs and festivals up to the year 2010:

Festival & location	2008	2009	2010
Nagaur Fair (p301), Nagaur	13-16 Feb	2-5 Feb	22-25 Feb
Baneshwar Fair (p224), Baneshwar	17-21 Feb	5-9 Feb	26-30 Jan
Jaisalmer Desert Festival (p301), Jaisalmer	19-21 Feb	7-9 Feb	28-30 Jan
Brij Festival (p185), Bharatpur	2-4 Feb	2-4 Feb	2-4 Feb
Elephant Festival (p148), Jaipur	21 Mar	10 Mar	28 Mar
Kaila Devi (p185), Karauli	8-9 Apr	29-30 Mar	18-19 Mar
Shri Mahavirji Fair (p185), Chandangاون	14-20 Apr	3-9 Apr	24-30 Apr
Gangaur (p148), Jaipur	8-10 Apr	29-31 Mar	18-20 Mar
Mewar Festival (p224), Udaipur	3 Apr	23 Mar	12 Mar
Summer Festival (p224), Mt Abu	18-20 May	7-9 May	26-28 Mar
Tej (p148), Jaipur	4-5 Aug	24-25 Jul	12-13 Aug
Kajli Tej (p224), Bundi	18-19 Aug	8-9 Aug	26-27 Aug
Ramdevra Fair (p301), Ramdevra	9-10 Sep	29-30 Aug	17-18 Sep
Dussehra (p224), Kota	7-9 Oct	26-28 Sep	15-17 Oct
Marwar Festival (p301), Jodhpur	13-14 Oct	3-4 Oct	21-22 Oct
Pushkar Camel Fair (p209), Pushkar	5-13 Nov	25 Oct-2 Nov	13-21 Nov
Chandrabhaga Fair (p224), Jhalrapatan	12-14 Nov	1-3 Nov	20-22 Nov
Kolayat Fair (p301), Kolayat	9-18 Nov	29 Oct-7 Nov	17-26 Nov

three are Hindu), Nanak Jayanti (Sikh), Eid al-Fitr (Islamic), Mahavir Jayanti (Jain), Buddha Jayanti (Buddhist) and Easter and Christmas (Christian). For dates see above.

Most businesses (offices, shops etc) and tourist sites close on public holidays. Apart from more crowding, public transport tends to remain unaffected during festivals. Remember that accommodation at festival destinations can be difficult to get and room rates increase dramatically. It's wise to make reservations well in advance if you intend visiting during major festivals. You'll also need to book train tickets well in advance.

INSURANCE

A travel insurance policy to cover theft, loss and medical problems is wise – health insurance is vital (see p386). Be aware that some policies specifically exclude dangerous activities, which can include trekking. There is a wide variety of policies available, so check the small print.

If you have to make a claim later, ensure you keep all documentation. Check that the policy covers an emergency flight home. Note that it is crucial to get a police report if you've had anything stolen, as insurance companies may refuse to reimburse you without one.

INTERNET ACCESS

Most travellers make constant use of internet cafés and free web-based email such as Yahoo (www.yahoo.com) or Hotmail (www.hotmail.com).

If you're travelling with a notebook or hand-held computer, be aware that your modem may not work once you leave your home country. The safest option is to buy a reputable 'global' modem before you leave home, or buy a local PC-card modem if you're spending an extended time in any one country. For more information on travelling with a portable computer, see www.teleadapt.com.

Internet outlets in Rajasthan are spreading fast – most towns have email facilities and so do most midrange hotels. In bigger towns there are usually several broadband cafés. It usually costs around Rs 10 to 60 per hour. Some places enforce a minimum time of 15 minutes.

See also p21 for internet resources.

LAUNDRY

Unless a hotel has its own in-house laundry, your clothes will be washed by a dhobi-wallah. You hand over your dirty clothes in the morning and you'll usually get them back washed and pressed that same evening for a minimal cost. If you don't think your gear will stand

up to being thrashed clean, then hand wash them yourself or give them to a drycleaner. Washing powder can be bought cheaply in small sachets all over the place.

LEGAL MATTERS

If you find yourself in a sticky legal predicament, contact your embassy (see p357). Travellers are subject to Indian laws and in the Indian justice system it can often seem that the burden of proof is on the accused.

You should carry your passport at all times, and the less you have to do with local police the better. If you are asked for a bribe the prevailing wisdom is to pay it, as the alternative can be a trumped up prosecution. Again it's better to avoid any situation where you might be asked for a bribe.

Drugs

India has long been known for its smorgasbord of illegal drugs, but would-be users should be aware of the severe risks. Apart from opening yourself up to being taken advantage of by dealers and/or police, if convicted on a drugs-related charge, sentences are for a *minimum* of 10 years and there is no remission or parole. Cases can take several years to appear before a court while the accused waits, locked up. In addition, there's usually a hefty monetary fine. The police have been getting particularly tough on drugs-related issues involving foreigners so you should take the risk seriously.

Smoking

The Indian government has banned smoking in public places in Delhi. Transgressors face a mere Rs 100 fine, which probably accounts for the ban's limited success.

MAPS

There is a dearth of high-quality maps in India. Some of the better possibilities include TTK's Discover India series, which has a number of state, regional and city maps. Eicher produces an excellent *Delhi* street atlas, as well as useful foldaway city maps. The Survey of India publishes decent city, state and country maps, while the Indian Map Service has a *Rajasthan* road atlas (based on Survey of India maps). There's also the *Rajasthan Road Atlas*, published by Anada Sahitya Prakashan and Gyan Vigyan Prakashan, which has 1:600,000 maps of each district. Nelles Maps

publishes a *Western India* map, which has pretty good coverage of Rajasthan, but it can be hard to find in India. All these maps are stocked at good bookshops and some modern petrol stations.

Throughout Rajasthan, tourist offices stock local maps, which are often dated and lacking in essential detail, but they're still reasonably useful for general orientation.

MONEY

The rupee (Rs) is divided into 100 paise (p). There are coins of five, 10, 20, 25 and 50 paise and Rs 1, 2 and 5, and notes of Rs 10, 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1000.

Whenever you change money, take your time and check each note even if the wad appears to have been stapled together. Some bills look quite similar, so check them carefully. Don't accept any filthy, ripped or disintegrating notes, as you'll have difficulty in getting people to accept these (you can change them at the Reserve Bank of India as a last resort). Remember, you must present your passport whenever changing currency and travellers cheques.

It can be difficult to use large denomination notes because of a seemingly perpetual lack of change in shops, taxis etc, so it's a good idea to maintain a constant stock of smaller currency.

For information about costs, read p19. See inside the front cover for exchange rates.

Outside Rajasthan's main cities, the State Bank of Bikaner & Jaipur (SBBJ) or the State Bank of India (SBI) are usually the places to change money. In the more remote regions, few banks offer exchange facilities, so use banks in the main tourist centres before heading out into the desert – although you'll have no trouble changing money at Bikaner or Jaisalmer.

ATMs

Twenty-four hour ATMs linked to international networks are common in many places in Rajasthan. This means that travellers can now rely on debit cards as a primary cash source. A cash or travellers cheque back-up is recommended in case you lose or break your card, or if ATMs are temporarily out of order – a fairly regular annoyance, especially in smaller towns. You shouldn't rely on ATMs as your sole source of cash if you're planning to travel beyond the larger towns or away

from tourist centres, as they either won't be available, or may not accept foreign cards. Alternatively, ensure you withdraw adequate cash from ATMs in big cities before striking out into the outback.

ATMs usually accept Cirrus, Maestro, MasterCard, Plus and Visa (but not always all cards). Banks in India that currently accept foreign cards include Citibank, HDFC, ICICI, UTI, HSBC, SBI, Standard Chartered, IDBI, SBBJ and Corporation Bank.

Your bank is likely to impose higher charges on international transactions, so once in India it's generally more economical to withdraw big amounts of money at once rather than make lots of small transactions. *Always* check in advance with your home bank whether your card can indeed access banking networks in India and, if so, what the charge per transaction is and whether they have schemes to minimise these.

Several travellers have reported ATMs snatching back money if you don't remove it within around 30 seconds. Conversely, some people have said that machines can take more than 30 seconds to release cash, so don't hastily abandon the ATM assuming something has gone wrong.

The ATMs listed in this book's regional chapters all accept foreign cards (but not necessarily all types of cards). Keep the emergency lost and stolen numbers for credit cards in a safe place and report any loss or theft immediately.

Cash

It's no problem changing money in bigger towns. However, it's advisable to have some US dollars or pounds sterling (the most widely accepted currencies) in cash in case you're unable to change travellers cheques or use a credit card, especially in smaller places.

Credit Cards

Most major cities and tourist centres accept credit cards, with MasterCard and Visa being the most widely accepted. Cash advances on major credit cards can be made at various banks (although rarely in smaller towns). For details about whether you can access home accounts in India, inquire at your bank before leaving.

Credit cards are accepted at almost all top-end hotels and at some midrange ones, but it's rare that budget hotels and restaurants accept them. Regularly check your banking online for

errant transactions which should be reported to your credit-card company as soon as possible.

Encashment Certificates

By law, foreign currency must be changed at official moneychangers or banks, which give you an encashment certificate (a money-exchange receipt that is valid for three months). They are required to re-exchange rupees exceeding Rs 10,000 into foreign currency when departing India. Encashment certificates are also needed for tax clearance certificates (below). Some shipping agents may request them as well.

International Transfers

Naturally it's preferable not to run out of money but, if you do, you can have money transferred in no time at all (at a charge of course) via Thomas Cook's Moneygram service or at Western Union, both of which have branches throughout India. To collect cash, you need to bring along your passport and the name and reference number of the person who sent the funds.

Moneychangers

Usually open for longer hours than the banks, private moneychangers are a convenient option and are virtually everywhere. However, it pays to check the bank rates first, and as with anywhere, check you are given the correct amount.

Security

The safest place for your money and your passport is next to your skin, in a moneybelt or pouch. Never, ever carry these things in your luggage or a shoulder bag. Bum bags are not recommended either, as they advertise that you have a stash of goodies. Never leave your valuable documents and travellers cheques in your hotel room (including under your mattress). If the hotel is a reputable one, you should be able to use the hotel safe.

It's wise to peel off at least US\$100 and keep it stashed away separately from your main horde, just in case.

Finally, separate your big notes from your small ones so you don't display large wads of cash when paying for things.

Tax Clearance Certificates

If you have a visa enabling you to stay in India for more than six months, you must

technically get a tax clearance certificate to leave the country. This is to prove that you financed your stay in India with your own money rather than through working in the country. For details, contact a local Foreigners' Regional Registration Office (in Delhi or Jaipur). You'll need to show your passport, visa extension form, any other appropriate paperwork and a bunch of bank encashment certificates.

Tipping, Baksheesh & Bargaining

In tourist restaurants or hotels, where a service fee (amounts vary regionally) is usually already added on to your bill, tipping is optional. In smaller places, where there is no service fee, a tip is appreciated. Hotel and train porters expect around Rs 20 to carry bags, and hotel staff also expect around the same to provide services above and beyond the call of duty. It's not mandatory to tip taxi or autorickshaw drivers.

Baksheesh can be defined as a 'tip'. Baksheesh also refers to giving alms to beggars. Many Indians implore tourists not to hand out sweets, pens or money to children, as it's positive reinforcement to beg. Instead you may prefer to donate to a school or charitable organisation (see Volunteer Work, p369).

Apart from at fixed-price shops, bargaining is the norm in India – see The Art of Hagglng, below.

Travellers Cheques

All major brands are accepted in India, with Amex and Thomas Cook being the most widely traded. Pounds sterling and US dollars are the safest bet, especially beyond the major cities. Charges for changing travellers cheques vary from place to place and bank to bank.

If you lose your cheques, contact the Amex or Thomas Cook office in the closest capital city – to find details of branches nationwide contact their offices in Delhi (p91).

PHOTOGRAPHY

For useful tips and techniques on travel photography, read Lonely Planet's *Guide to Travel Photography*; *Travel Photography: Landscapes*; and *Travel Photography: People & Portraits*.

Digital processing and memory cards are available from photographic shops in the larger cities and most tourist destinations. Internet cafés will generally download images onto DVD and CD (for around Rs 100).

Colour print film-processing facilities are still readily available in most Indian cities. You'll only find colour slide film available in

the major cities. Always check the use-by date on all film stock.

Restrictions

India is touchy about photographs being taken of places of military importance – this can include train stations, bridges, airports, military installations and sensitive border regions.

Places of worship (temples and mosques) may prohibit photography. If in doubt, ask.

PHOTOGRAPHING PEOPLE

Some people are more than happy to be photographed, but care should be taken in pointing cameras at people, especially women. Again, if in doubt, ask. A zoom is a less intrusive means of taking portraits – even when you've obtained permission to take a portrait, shoving a lens in your subject's face can be disconcerting. A reasonable distance between you and your subject will help reduce your subject's discomfort, and will result in more natural shots.

POST

Indian postal and poste restante services are generally good. Expected letters almost always arrive and letters you send do invariably reach their destination, though they may take up to three weeks. Even though the Indian postal system is fairly reliable, don't count on a letter or package getting through if there's anything of market value inside it. Amex in major city locations offers an alternative to the poste restante system for holders of Amex cards.

Some cities have courier services (such as DHL) that can reliably arrange speedy air freight around the world; from Delhi DHL charges around Rs 2700 for 1kg to Australia, Europe or the USA.

Receiving Mail

Ask senders to address letters to you with your surname in capital letters and underlined, followed by poste restante, main post office and the city or town in question. Many 'lost' letters are simply misfiled under given (first) names, so always check under both your names. Also ask senders to provide a return address, just in case you don't collect your mail. Letters sent via poste restante are generally held for one month before being returned. To claim mail, you'll need to show your passport. It's best to have any parcels sent to you by registered post.

Sending Mail

Posting aerogrammes/postcards overseas costs Rs 8.50/8 and for airmail letters the cost is Rs 15. For postcards, it's not a bad idea to stick on the stamps *before* writing on them. This is because post offices can give you as many as four stamps per card, which can cover up your carefully composed missive.

Posting parcels is quite straightforward, and prices vary depending on the weight. The parcel counter usually closes in the early afternoon, so if you want to send something, it's best to go to the post office in the morning. In the main cities, there's usually a person at the post office who sews parcels up in cheap linen. The post office will have the necessary customs declaration forms. To avoid paying duty at the delivery end, specify that the contents are a 'gift' under the value of Rs 1000.

Parcel post has a maximum of 20kg to 30kg depending on the destination, and charges vary depending on whether it goes by air or sea. A 1kg parcel by air/sea costs Rs 570/450 to Australia, Rs 645/500 to Europe, and Rs 645/480 to the USA.

It is often cheaper to send packages under 2kg as registered letters. You also have the option of EMS (Express Mail Service; delivery within three days) for around 30% more than the airmail price.

Books or printed matter can go by book post (maximum 5kg), which is considerably cheaper than parcel post, but the package must be wrapped a certain way: make sure that it can be opened for inspection along the way, or that it's wrapped with the two ends exposed so that the contents are visible. A customs declaration form is usually not necessary. The overseas bookpost rates start at Rs 260 for 1kg to any international destination.

Be cautious with places that offer to mail things to your home address after you have bought them. Government emporiums are usually fine but in many other places it pays to do the posting yourself.

SHOPPING

Rajasthan (and Delhi) really is one of the easiest places to spend money, with its busy bazaars, colourful arts and crafts, gorgeous fabrics, miniature paintings, and much more. The cardinal rule is to bargain and bargain hard.

Be careful when purchasing items that include delivery to your home country. You

THE ART OF HAGGLING

Hagglng is a must in most parts of India. Shopkeepers in tourist hubs are accustomed to travellers who have lots of money and little time to spend it. It's not unusual to be charged at least double, or even triple the 'real' price.

So how do you know if you're being overcharged and need to strike back with some serious hagglng? Well, you're safe in government emporiums, cooperatives and modern shopping complexes, where the prices are usually fixed. But in most other shops that cater primarily to tourists, be prepared to don your hagglng hat. The kind of places that usually fall into this category include handicraft, carpet, painting, souvenir and clothing shops.

The first 'rule' to hagglng is never to show too much interest in the item you want to buy. Secondly, don't buy the first item that takes your fancy. Wander around and price things, but don't make it obvious. Otherwise if you return to the first shop the vendor will know it's because they are the cheapest.

Decide how much you would be happy paying and then express a casual interest in buying. If you have absolutely no idea of what something should really cost, start by slashing the price by half (even more in tourist spots). This is usually completely unacceptable to the vendor but it works as a good starting point to haggle for a happy compromise. You'll find that many shopkeepers lower their so-called 'final price' if you proceed to head out of the shop saying you'll 'think about it'.

Hagglng is a way of life in India, but it should never turn ugly. Keep in mind exactly how much a rupee is worth in your home currency so you don't lose perspective, and if a vendor seems to be charging an unreasonably high price and is unwilling to negotiate, simply look elsewhere.

may well be given assurances that the price includes all charges, but this is not always the case.

Be aware that sellers often claim that miniature paintings are antiques; this is rarely the case. For other important warnings also read p154.

Avoid buying products that further endanger threatened species and habitats. It's illegal to export ivory products or any artefact made from wild animals. Articles over 100 years old are not allowed to be exported from India without an export clearance certificate. If you have doubts about any item and think it could be defined as an antique, you can check with branches of the Archaeological Survey of India. In Delhi, contact the Director of Antiquities, **Archaeological Survey of India** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-23017443; Janpath; 🕒 9.30am-1.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri), located next to the National Museum.

Detailed information on what is best to buy in each region is given in the regional chapters. For information on buying Rajasthani arts and crafts, see the Rajasthani Arts & Crafts chapter, p53.

SOLO TRAVELLERS

Perhaps the most significant issue facing solo travellers is cost. Single-room rates at guesthouses and hotels are sometimes not much lower than rates for a double; some midrange and top-end places don't even offer a single tariff, though you can try to bargain down the double rate.

If you tire of your own company, never fear: Rajasthan, Delhi and Agra are tourist hubs, so it's easy to meet other travellers – head for popular hotels and restaurants.

Although most solo travellers experience no major problems in India, remember that some (locals and travellers alike) may view lone tourists as an easy target for theft. Don't be paranoid, but, like anywhere in the world, it's wise to stay on your toes in unfamiliar surroundings.

For important information specific to women, see p371.

TELEPHONE

Even in the tiniest of towns you will find private call booths with direct local, interstate and international dialling (PCO/STD/ISD); these are invariably cheaper than calls made from hotels. A digital meter means

you can keep an eye on what the call costs, and you receive a print-out when the call is finished.

Throughout most of India, interstate calls from booths (not hotels) charge the full rate from around 9am to 8pm. After 8pm the cost slides, with the cheapest time to call being between 11pm and 6am. Interstate calls are half rate on Sunday.

India's White Pages are found at www.india.whitepages.com, and the Yellow Pages at www.indiayellowpages.com.

Domestic Calls

Telephone numbers in Rajasthan have an annoying tendency to change. Call ☎ 197 for local telephone-number inquiries. Reverse-charge (collect) operators can be reached on ☎ 186.

International Calls

Direct international calls from call booths (not hotels) cost an average of Rs 22 to 40 per minute depending on the destination. The cheapest international calls can be made through internet cafés using Net2phone, Skype or a similar service. Calls cost from as little as Rs 5 per minute.

In some centres PCO/STD/ISD booths offer a 'call-back' service – you ring your folks or friends, give them the phone number of the booth and wait for them to call you back. The booth operator charges about Rs 5 to 10 per minute for this service, plus the cost of the preliminary call.

Mobile Phones

If you bring your mobile phone to India, you'll find local mobile networks are cheap to use and getting hooked up to the mobile phone network is straightforward. Calls (even international) are delightfully cheap by world standards.

In most towns you simply buy a prepaid mobile phone kit (SIM card and phone number) from any phone shop or other outlet, such as PCO/STD/ISD booths, internet cafés and grocery stores. The most popular (and reliable) companies are Airtel, Hutch, and BSNL.

The SIM card itself costs about Rs 150 but you usually pay for an additional amount of credit to get started. You then buy recharge cards (top-ups) from any phone shop for between Rs 100 and Rs 3400. Credit must usually be used (or topped up) within a fixed period (ie 15 to 60 days) and remember that

the amount you pay for a credit top-up is not the amount you get on your phone – state taxes and service charges come off first, so for a top-up of Rs 500 you'll get around Rs 375 worth of calls. Note that with some networks, recharge cards are being replaced by direct credit, where you pay the vendor and the credit's deposited straight to your phone – ask which system is in use before you buy.

Calls made within the state/city where you bought the SIM card are cheap – less than Rs 1 per minute – and you can call internationally for less than Rs 25 per minute. SMS messaging is even cheaper. The more credit you have on your phone, the cheaper the call rate.

The downside to the whole thing is that the prepaid system is not truly national – major cities and all states have their own network, which means that your SIM card will work fine in the city/state you bought it, and you only pay for calls you make. If you move outside that network area you will have to ensure that it has roaming capabilities. Call rates are a little higher and you will be charged for incoming as well as outgoing calls.

Some travellers have reported difficulties in using their mobile even within states (either no coverage at all or frequent cut-offs). In addition, international texting is reliable on some days and not others.

As the mobile phone industry is an evolving one, mobile rates, suppliers and coverage are all likely to develop over the life of this book.

Phone Codes

To make a call *to* India from overseas, dial the international access code of the country you're in, then ☎ 91 (international country code for India), the area code (drop the initial 0; this zero only applies for calls made within India) and the local number. See this book's regional chapters for area codes.

To make an international call *from* India, dial ☎ 00 (international access code from India), then the country code (of the country you are calling), the area code and the local number.

Also available is the Home Country Direct service, which gives you access to the international operator in your home country. For the price of a local call, you can then make reverse-charge (collect) or phonenumber calls. Some countries and their numbers:

Country	Number
Australia	☎ 0006117
Canada	☎ 00016788
Germany	☎ 0004917
Japan	☎ 0008117
The Netherlands	☎ 0003117
Singapore	☎ 0006517
Spain	☎ 0003417
UK	☎ 0004417
USA	☎ 000117

TIME

India is 5½ hours ahead of GMT/UTC, 4½ hours behind Australian Eastern Standard Time (EST) and 10½ hours ahead of American EST. The local standard time is known as IST (Indian Standard Time), although many affectionately dub it 'Indian Stretchable Time'.

TOILETS

Public toilets are generally confined to tourist sites (eg museums), upmarket shopping complexes and cinemas, but they can be scarce, and cleanliness is variable.

When it comes to effluent etiquette, it's customary to use your left hand and water, not toilet paper. A strategically placed tap, usually with a little plastic jug nearby, is available in most bathrooms. If you can't get used to the Indian method, bring your own toilet paper (widely available in towns). However, paper, sanitary napkins and tampons are going to further clog an already overloaded sewerage system. Often a bin is provided so that you can dispose of such items.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Local Tourist Offices

There are RTDC tourist offices (often called Tourist Reception Centres) in most places of interest in Rajasthan. Staff range from being extraordinarily helpful to useless and grumpy, but can almost always supply glossy brochures and local maps.

There is a **RTDC Tourist Reception Centre** (Map pp92-3; ☎ 011-3381 884; Tourist Reception Centre, Bikaner House, Pandara Rd, Delhi) in Delhi, and **Government of India tourist offices** (Delhi India Tourism Delhi; Map p100; ☎ 011-23320005; 88 Janpath, Delhi; Jaipur Map pp152-3; ☎ 0141-2372200; Hotel Khasa Kothi; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) in Delhi and Jaipur.

Tourist Offices Abroad

The **Government of India** (Ministry of Tourism; www.incredibleindia.org) maintains tourist offices in other

countries where you can obtain brochures and leaflets. India tourist offices abroad:

Australia Sydney (☎ 02-9264 4855; info@indiatourism.com.au; Level 2, Piccadilly, 210 Pitt St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

Canada Toronto (☎ 416-962 3787; indiatourism@bellnet.ca; 60 Bloor St, West Suite 1003, Toronto, Ontario, M4W 3B8)

France Paris (☎ 01 45 23 30 45; intourparis@aol.com; 11-13 Blvd Haussmann, F-75009, Paris)

Germany Frankfurt am-Main (☎ 069-2429490; info@india-tourism.com; Basolar Strasse 48, D-60329, Frankfurt am-Main 1)

Italy Milan (☎ 028 053 506; info@indiatourismmilan.com; Via Albricci 9, Milan 20122)

The Netherlands Amsterdam (☎ 0206 208 991; info.nl@india-tourism.com; Rokin 9/15, 1012 KK Amsterdam)

UK London (☎ 020-7437 3677; info@indiatouristoffice.org; 7 Cork St, London W1S 3LH)

USA Los Angeles (☎ 213-380 8855; indiatourismla@aol.com; Room 204, 3550 Wiltshire Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 900102485); New York (☎ 212-586 4901; ad@itnyc.com; Suite 1808, 1270 Ave of the Americas, NY 100201700)

TOURS

The RTDC offers a range of package tours covering various destinations in Rajasthan, and including transport, accommodation (usually at RTDC hotels), sightseeing and guide; entry charges are extra. For more information, contact the **RTDC Tourist Reception Centre** (Map pp92-3; ☎ 011-3381884, 3383837; www.rajasthanourismindia.com; Bikaner House, Pandara Rd, Delhi, 110011).

Many travel agencies offer excursions in Rajasthan. One of the few outfits in Rajasthan that promotes sustainable tourism is **Alternative Travels** (☎ 01594-222239; Apani Dhani, Nawalgarh, Shekhawati). Ramesh Jangid of Alternative Travels can organise camel and cycling trips around the painted towns of Shekhawati, treks in the Aravalli Range and homestays with villagers, as well as tours elsewhere in India. For more details on his Rajasthan tours, see p280.

Other agencies:

Indo Vacations (Map pp152-3; ☎ 0141-9414312872; www.indien-reise.com in German; 312-6 Valmiki Rd, Raja Park, Jaipur)

Rajasthan Travel Service (Map pp152-3; ☎ 0141-2365408; www.rajasthantravelservice.com; ground fl, Ganpati Plaza, MI Rd, Jaipur)

Crown Tours (Map pp152-3; ☎ 2363310; Palace Rd, Jaipur)

Safaris

CAMEL SAFARIS

It's possible to take a camel safari lasting from an hour up to several weeks. Camel-safari

central is Jaisalmer (see Jaisalmer Camel Safaris, p330), in western Rajasthan, and prices vary according to what is provided. Basic safaris start at about Rs 600 per person per day, which includes meals, but you pay more for greater comfort. You can also take safaris from Khuri (p336), near Jaisalmer. Places exempted are Amar Sagar, Bada Bagh, Lodhruva, Kuldhara, Akal, Sam, Ramkund, Khuri and Mool Sagar.

Permission is required from the **District Magistrate** (☎ 02982-220003) in Barmer to travel to Kiradu, which is about 35km from Barmer near the border with Pakistan.

The Pushkar area (p210) is also popular, and a couple of operators in Shekhawati (p275) offer camel treks into the countryside, around towns full of interesting painted *havelis*.

HORSE & JEEP SAFARIS

Some hotels can arrange horse safaris – the best options are in Udaipur at the Kumbha Palace and Pratap Country Inn (see p248). The Dundlod Fort (p284), in Shekhawati, can arrange horse safaris for experienced riders – on spectacular Marwari horses – around the Shekhawati region and further afield.

For most horse safaris, you are required to bring your own riding hat and boots – call ahead to check. The best time to ride is during the cooler months (between mid-October and mid-March).

Quite a few hotels, particularly in western Rajasthan, offer jeep safaris, which are also usually available at palace hotels in remote regions. One-day jeep safaris to the Bishnoi villages (p314) around Jodhpur are another popular option.

WILDLIFE SAFARIS

The state's major wildlife sanctuaries are in eastern Rajasthan. Wildlife safaris are available by jeep at Sariska Tiger Reserve (p198) and at Ranthambhore National Park (p215). Another option at Ranthambhore is a trip in a canter (open-topped truck). At Keoladeo Ghana National Park (p188), motorised vehicles are prohibited, but you can see the park by cycle-rickshaw or bicycle.

TRAVEL PERMITS

Due to the hostilities between India and Pakistan, foreigners are prohibited from going within 50km of the India–Pakistan border (with the exception of those trav-

elling to Pakistan on the *Thar Express* (p376). Special permission is required from the **District Magistrate** (☎ 02992-252201) in Jaisalmer to travel to most of Rajasthan west of National Highway No 15, and is only issued in exceptional circumstances. Places exempted are Amar Sagar, Bada Bagh, Lodhruva, Kuldhara, Akal, Sam, Ramkund, Khuri and Mool Sagar.

Permission is required from the **District Magistrate** (☎ 02982-220003) in Barmer to travel to Kiradu, which is about 35km from Barmer near the border with Pakistan.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

India's crowded public transport, crush of people in urban areas and variable infrastructure can test the hardest traveller. If you have a physical disability or are vision impaired, these pose a greater challenge. However, seeing the way the mobility-impaired locals whiz through traffic in modified bicycles proves that nothing is impossible.

India has limited wheelchair-friendly hotels (mostly top end), restaurants and offices. Staircases are often steep. Footpaths, where they exist, are often riddled with holes, littered with debris and packed with pedestrians, severely hindering movement.

Try to prebook ground-floor hotel rooms and, if you use crutches, bring along spare rubber caps for the tips as they can wear down quickly in India.

If your mobility is considerably restricted you may like to consider travelling with an able-bodied companion. Additionally, hiring a car with a driver will make moving around a whole lot easier (see p379).

Organisations that may offer further advice include the **Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation** (RADAR; ☎ 020-7250 3222; www.radar.org.uk; 12 City Forum, 250 City Rd, London EC1V 8AF, UK) and **Mobility International USA** (MIUSA; ☎ 541-3431284; www.miusa.org; PO Box 10767, Eugene, OR 97440, USA).

VISAS

You must get a visa *before* arriving in India. Six-month multiple-entry tourist visas (valid from the date of issue) are issued to nationals of most countries (check visa options with the Indian embassy in your country) regardless of whether you intend staying that long or re-entering the country. Visas cost A\$75 (an extra A\$15 service fee applies at consulates)

for Australians, US\$60 for US citizens and UK£30 for Britons.

You won't be issued a visa to enter India unless you hold an onward ticket, which is taken as sufficient evidence that you intend to leave the country.

Extended visas (up to five years) are possible for people of Indian descent (excluding those in Pakistan and Bangladesh) who hold a non-Indian passport and live abroad. A special People of Indian Origin (PIO) card is also possible (valid for 15 years). Contact your embassy (see p357) for more details.

Visa Extensions

Fourteen-day extensions are possible under exceptional circumstances from Foreigners' Regional Registration Offices (FRROs) in Jaipur and Delhi, but it's rare that you'll get an extension on a tourist visa.

In Delhi, the **FRRO** (Map pp92-3; ☎ 011-26195530; Level 2, East Block 8, Sector 1, Rama Krishna Puram; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm & 2-3pm Mon-Fri) is behind the Hyatt Regency hotel. Come here for visa extensions or replacement visas (if you've had your lost/stolen passport replaced).

For those with a good reason, the FRRO issues 14-day visa extensions, free for nationals of all countries except Japan (Rs 390), Sri Lanka (from Rs 135), Russia (Rs 1860) and Romania (Rs 500). Bring your confirmed air ticket, one passport photo and a photocopy of your passport (the information and visa pages).

VOLUNTEERING

Numerous charities and aid agencies have branches in India and, although they're mostly staffed by locals, there are some opportunities for foreigners. It's advisable to write in advance and, if you're needed, you'll be of far more use if you can commit enough time to be of help. A week on a hospital ward may save your conscience, but you may do little more than get in the way of the people who work there long term.

Flexibility in the work you are prepared to do is also really vital. Some charities are inundated with requests from foreign volunteers who want to help babies in an orphanage, for instance, but few are willing to work with adults who have physical or mental disabilities. Know the level of work involved before you sign up and consider whether you are a good match for the organisation and its philosophy.

Overseas Volunteer Placement Agencies

For long-term posts, the following organisations may be able to advise:

Action Without Borders (☎ 212-8433973; www.idealist.org; Suite 1510, 360 West 31st St, New York, NY 10001, USA)

AidCamps International (☎ 020-8291 6181; www.aidcamps.org; 5 Simone Ct, Dartmouth Rd, London SE26 4RP, UK)

Australian Volunteers International (☎ 03-9279 1788; www.ozvol.org.au; PO Box 350, Fitzroy VIC 3065, Australia)

Co-ordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (☎ 01 45 68 49 36; www.unesco.org/cdivs; Unesco House, 31 Rue François Bonvin, 75732 France Cedex 15, France)

Global Volunteers (☎ 651-407 6100; www.globalvolunteers.org; 375 East Little Canada Rd, St Paul, MN 55117-1628, USA)

Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) (☎ 020-8780 7200; www.vso.org.uk; 317 Putney Bridge Rd, London SW15 2PN, UK)

Working Abroad (France office ☎ /fax 04-68 26 41 79; www.workingabroad.com; PO Box 454, Flat 1, Brighton, BN1 3ZS, East Sussex, UK)

Other useful sites:

- www.volunteerabroad.com
- www.ethicalvolunteering.org
- www.studyabroad.com
- www.responsibletravel.com

Programmes in Delhi & Rajasthan

Following are details of some of the programmes operating in Delhi and Rajasthan that may have volunteering opportunities available; contact them in advance rather than just turning up. Donations of money or clothing from travellers will also receive a warm welcome. Some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may also offer you volunteer work – for details visit www.india nngos.com.

Note that unless otherwise indicated, volunteers are always expected to cover their own costs, including accommodation, food and transport.

DELHI

There are two branches of Mother Teresa's Kolkata-based Missionaries of Charity in the Civil Lines area that welcome volunteers: **Shishu Bhavan** (Map pp92-3; ☎ 011-23950181; 12 Commissioners Lane) looks after infants (female volunteers only) while **Nirmal Hriday** (Map pp92-3;

☎ 011-23952180; 1 Magazine Rd) cares for the sick, destitute and dying.

Concern India Foundation (Map pp92-3; ☎ 011-26210997, delhi@concernindia.org; A-52 1st fl, Amar Colony, Lajpat Nagar 4) may be able to link volunteers with current projects – contact it in advance to ascertain possibilities.

SOS Children's Village (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-24359450; www.sosvindia.org; A7 Nizamuddin West) assists orphaned, abandoned and destitute children. Volunteers may be needed to teach English. You must apply in advance and a minimum three-month commitment is requested. See below for more information about SOS.

RAJASTHAN

Animal Aid Society (Map p242; ☎ 0294-3111435; www.animalaidunlimited.com; Chota Hawala Village, Udaipur) is an animal hospital that rescues and treats injured and destitute animals and sterilises street dogs. For more details see Animal Aid Society, p79.

The first organisation in Rajasthan to provide services under one roof for people living with cerebral palsy and other neural conditions, **Disha – Centre for Special Education, Vocational Training and Rehabilitation** (Map pp152-3; ☎ 0141-2393319, 2391690; disha_jaipur@hotmail.com; 450 AB Nirman Nagau, Kings Rd, Jaipur) provides special education, home management, staff training, counselling and advocacy. Volunteers from the fields of physiotherapy, speech therapy, special education, sports, arts and crafts and vocational counselling are welcomed.

The animal hospital **Help in Suffering** (HIS; Map pp152-3; ☎ 0141-2760803; www.his-india.org.au; Jaipur) welcomes qualified voluntary vets (three-/six-/12-month commitments). Write to: Help in Suffering, Maharani Farm, Durgapura, Jaipur 302018, Rajasthan. Visitors are welcome at the shelter in Jaipur, and donations are also gratefully accepted. For more information see Help in Suffering, p179.

The Jaipur branch of the **Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage** (Intach; Map pp152-3; ☎ 0141-2228275; www.intach.org; B14/A Bhawani Singh Rd, Jaipur) and Jaipur Virasat, a local heritage organisation linked to it, are working to preserve the vast cultural and physical heritage of Rajasthan's capital, and to increase awareness of heritage issues. You can volunteer to work in various capacities. The focus is on restoration and conservation work, but you can also help if you have skills in promotion,

art or administration. You need to stay for a minimum of one month.

Les Amis du Shekhawati (Friends of Shekhawati; ☎ 01594-222239; www.apanidhani.com; Nawalgarh) aims to preserve Shekhawati's rich artistic heritage. The society's work includes educating villagers about the importance of the paintings, as well as promoting the region. You can be involved in painting restoration, promotion or teaching English or French to trainee guides. Architects who can help with creating a record of the *havelis* in Shekhawati will also be welcomed. Contact the society through Apani Dhani ecofarm.

The NGO **Marwar Medical & Relief Society** (☎ 0291-2545210, 2571620; Mandore Guest House; www.mandore.com; Mandore, Jodhpur) works to address drug-addiction problems and provide medical services in the Jodhpur district. It welcomes short-term volunteers for its Village Project.

Missionaries of Charity (Map pp152-3; ☎ 0141-2365804; Vardhman Path, C-Scheme, Jaipur), a branch of Mother Teresa's Kolkata-based order, provides a refuge for the destitute, many of whom are mentally ill or disabled.

Seva Mandir (☎ 0294-2450960; Old Fatehpura, Udaipur) develops natural resources, health promotion and literacy programmes. Volunteers can observe or participate in development work for a minimum of two weeks at this NGO.

SOS Worldwide runs more than 30 programmes across India. In Jaipur **SOS Children's Village** (Map pp152-3; ☎ 0141-2280262; Jhotwara Rd, Jaipur) looks after orphaned, destitute and abandoned children, who are cared for by unmarried women, abandoned wives and widows. Volunteers teach English and help the children with their homework. SOS also educates children (particularly girls) who come in for the day. The organisation only accepts volunteers prepared to commit for one year. You can also sponsor a child's education. SOS Children's Village is opposite the Petal Factory.

Urmul Trust (☎ 0151-2523093; Ganganagar Rd, Bikaner) provides primary health care and education to the people of around 500 villages in Rajasthan; raises awareness among the women of the desert of their rights and privileges in society; and promotes the handicrafts of rural artisans, with its profits going directly back to them. There is volunteer work (minimum one month) available in social welfare, teaching English, health care or possibly helping with implementation and overseeing of projects.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS Attitudes Towards Women

India is a largely conservative country, and the clothing and culturally inappropriate behaviour of some travellers (not to mention Western TV programmes) seems to have had a ripple effect on the perception of foreign women in general. An increasing number of female travellers have reported some form of sexual harassment (predominantly lewd comments and groping) despite making a concerted effort to act and dress conservatively. While there's no need to be concerned to the point of paranoia, you should be aware that your behaviour and dress code is under scrutiny.

Rajasthan is usually a perfectly safe place for women travellers, even those travelling alone, but you will have to put up with some aggravation. Getting constantly stared at is, unfortunately, something you'll have to get used to. Just be thick-skinned and don't allow it to get the better of you. It's best to refrain from returning stares, as this may be considered a come-on; dark glasses can help. A good way to block out stares in restaurants is to take along a book or postcards to write home. Other harassment women have encountered include provocative gestures, jeering, groping and being followed. Exuberant special events (such as the Holi festival, p357) can be notorious for this.

Women travelling with a male partner are less likely to be harassed. However, a foreign woman of Indian descent travelling with a non-Indian male may cop disapproving stares; having a non-Indian partner is still not condoned in parts of India.

Ultimately, there are no sure-fire ways of shielding yourself from harassment, even for those who do everything 'right'. You're essentially going to have to use your judgment and instincts, as there isn't a blanket rule. If the warnings here make travel in India seem a little daunting, remember that most men are not out to bother you, and the problems mentioned here are just things to be aware of.

Clothing

Warding off sexual harassment is often a matter of common sense and culturally appropriate behaviour. What you wear helps enormously. Baggy clothing that hides the contours of your body is the way to go.

Wearing Indian dress makes a positive impression and, although we've had a few reports of women still being groped, most find it curtails harassment. The *salwar kameez* (the long tunic and baggy trouser combination), widely worn by Indian women, is practical, comfortable, cool in hot weather and shows respect for the Indian dress code. The *dupatta* (long scarf) worn with this outfit is handy if you visit a shrine that requires your head to be covered.

Going into public wearing a *choli* (small blouse worn under a sari) or a sari petticoat (which many foreign women mistake for a skirt) is like strutting around half-dressed, so it's best avoided.

You can read other women travellers' experiences at www.journeywoman.com, which has a section devoted to dress.

Staying Safe

To keep discussions short, get to the point as quickly and politely as possible. Getting involved in inane conversations with men can be misinterpreted as a come-on. Statements such as 'do you have a boyfriend?' or 'you are looking beautiful' should start alarm bells ringing. Some women wear a pseudo wedding ring, or announce early on in the conversation that they are married or engaged (whether they are or not). This often proves effective in putting men off, though it may provoke questions on how you're coping during this sexual hiatus.

If, despite your efforts, you still get the feeling that a man's encroaching on your space, he probably is. A firm request to keep away is usually enough to take control of the situation, especially if it's loud enough to draw the attention of passers-by. Alternatively, the silent treatment can be a remarkably good way of getting rid of unwanted male company.

When interacting with men on a day-to-day basis, adhere to the local practice of not shaking hands – instead, relay respect by saying the traditional *namaste*.

Female film-goers will probably feel more comfortable (and decrease the chances of

harassment) by going to the cinema with a companion.

Lastly, it's wise to arrive in towns before dark and always avoid walking alone at night, especially in isolated areas.

Taxis & Public Transport

Officials recommend that solo women pre-arrange an airport pick-up from their hotel if their flight is scheduled to arrive late at night. If that's not possible, catch a prepaid taxi and make a point of (in front of the driver) writing down the car registration and driver's name and giving it to one of the airport police. In 2004 a prepaid-taxi driver (from Delhi's international airport) was charged with the murder of an Australian woman and although authorities have assured travellers that the prepaid system is now safer, most solo women (especially to Delhi) still prefer to prearrange an airport pick-up or wait until daybreak before leaving the airport.

Whenever you catch a taxi, avoid doing so late at night (when many roads are deserted) and never agree to more than one man (the driver) in the car. The driver will invariably try to convince you that it's 'just his brother' or 'for more protection' etc, but authorities warn against it, so heed their advice. Women are also advised against wearing expensive-looking jewellery as it can make them a target for assault.

On extended train and bus travel, being a woman has some advantages. You go to the front of the ticket queue, and on trains there are special women-only carriages. Solo women have reported less hassle in the more expensive classes on trains, especially on overnight trips. When travelling overnight, try to get the uppermost berth, which will give you more privacy (and distance from potential gropers).

On public transport, sit next to a woman; if you can't, don't hesitate to return any errant limbs, put some item of luggage in between you and, if all else fails, move. You're also within your rights to tell him to shove off – loudly enough to shame the guy into leaving you alone.

Transport

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GETTING THERE & AWAY

ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Entering India by air or land is relatively straightforward, with standard immigration and customs procedures. For customs information see p356.

Passport

To enter India you must have a valid passport, visa (see p369) and onward/return ticket. Once in India, if your passport is lost or stolen, immediately contact your country's representative (see p358). It's wise to keep photocopies of your passport and airline ticket.

AIR

Airports & Airlines

Most travellers fly into Delhi or Mumbai for Rajasthan. A small number of international flights serve Jaipur – for details, inquire at travel agencies and see www.indianairports.com.

Delhi (DEL; Indira Gandhi International Airport; www.delhiairport.com; ☎ 011-25652011)

Mumbai (BOM; Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport; www.mumbaiairport.com; ☎ 022-26829000)

India's national carrier is **Air India** (www.airindia.in), which also carries passengers on some domestic sectors of international routes. **Indian Airlines** (www.indianairlines.in), **Jet Airways** (www.jetairways.com), and **Kingfisher Airlines** (www.flyingfisher.com), India's major domestic carriers, also fly

THINGS CHANGE...

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

internationally. The safety records of airlines can be viewed on www.airsafe.com/index.html. For details about India's domestic airlines see p376.

The major airlines servicing India are listed below (see their websites for contact details): **Aeroflot** (code SU; www.aeroflot.org) Hub: Sheremetyevo International Airport, Moscow.

Air Canada (AC; www.aircanada.com) Hub: Vancouver Airport.

Air France (AF; www.airfrance.com) Hub: Charles de Gaulle, Paris.

Air India (AI; www.airindia.com) Hub: Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi.

Alitalia (AZ; www.alitalia.com) Hub: Fiumicino International Airport, Rome.

American Airlines (AA; www.aa.com) Hub: Dallas Airport.

Austrian Airlines (OS; www.aa.com) Hub: Vienna International Airport.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines (BG; www.bangladeshonline.com/biman) Hub: Zia International Airport, Dhaka.

British Airways (BA; www.british-airways.com) Hub: Heathrow Airport, London.

Cathay Pacific Airways (CX; www.cathaypacific.com) Hub: Hong Kong International Airport.

Druk Air (KB; www.drukair.com.bt) Hub: Paro Airport.

El Al Israel Airlines (LY; www.elal.co.il) Hub: Ben Gurion, Tel Aviv.

Emirates (EK; www.emirates.com) Hub: Dubai International Airport.

Gulf Air (GF; www.gulfairco.com) Hub: Bahrain International Airport.

Iran Air (IR; www.iranair.nl) Hub: Tehran International Airport.

Japan Airlines (JL; www.jal.com) Hub: Narita Airport.

CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motor travel generates CO₂ (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow jetsetters to offset the greenhouse gases they are responsible for with contributions to energy-saving projects and other climate-friendly initiatives in the developing world – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: lonelyplanet.com.

Kenya Airways (KQ; www.kenya-airways.com) Hub: Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi.

KLM – Royal Dutch Airlines (KL; www.klm.com) Hub: Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam.

Kuwait Airways (KU; www.kuwait-airways.com) Hub: Kuwait International Airport.

Lufthansa Airlines (LH; www.lufthansa.com) Hub: Frankfurt International Airport.

Malaysia Airlines (MH; www.malaysiaairlines.com) Hub: Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

Pakistan International Airlines (PK; www.piac.com.pk) Hub: Jinnah International Airport, Karachi.

Qantas Airways (QF; www.qantas.com.au) Hub: Kingsford Smith Airport, Sydney.

Qatar Airways (QR; www.qatarairways.com) Hub: Doha International Airport.

Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation (RA; www.royalnepal.com) Hub: Kathmandu Airport.

Singapore Airlines (SQ; www.singaporeair.com) Hub: Changi Airport, Singapore.

Sri Lankan Airlines (UL; www.srilankan.aero) Hub: Bandaranaike International Airport, Colombo.

Swiss International Airlines (LX; www.swiss.com) Hub: Zurich International Airport.

Thai Airways International (TG; www.thaiair.com) Hub: Bangkok International Airport.

Many international airlines are represented by the following agencies, which are located in Jaipur Towers in Jaipur:

Interglobe Air Transport (Map pp152-3; ☎ 0141-2360532; Jaipur Towers, MI Rd; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) Represents United Airlines, SAS, Syrian Arab Airlines and Virgin.

Jetair Ltd (Map pp152-3; ☎ 0141-2368640; Jaipur Towers, MI Rd; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat) Represents American Airlines, Royal Jordanian Airlines, Austrian Airlines, Gulf Air, Biman Bangladesh and Kenya Airways.

Tickets

As travellers aren't generally issued a tourist visa to India unless they have an onward/return ticket, few visitors buy international tickets in India itself. For those who do require a ticket, international schedules and fares are available from travel agents in India.

International fares to India fluctuate according to the low, shoulder and high seasons. The fares we've given in this section represent the average fares of various carriers servicing India. Individual carriers have not been specifically mentioned as their routes and fares are subject to change over the life of this book. Contact your travel agent or check out the internet to get up-to-the-minute ticket prices and schedules.

Online ticket sales are handy for straightforward trips with few or no connecting flights. However, travel agencies are recommended for special deals, sorting out tricky

connections and organising insurance and Indian visas. Here are a few reputable international online ticket sites:

Ebookers (www.ebookers.com)

Expedia (www.expedia.com)

Flight Centre International (www.flightcentre.com)

Flights.com (www.tiss.com)

STA Travel (www.statravel.com)

Travelocity (www.travelocity.com)

AFRICA

Rennies Travel (www.renniestravel.com) and **STA Travel** (www.statravel.co.za) have offices throughout southern Africa. Check their websites for branch details.

Return fares to Mumbai are around US\$600 from Nairobi and around US\$500 from Johannesburg.

ASIA

STA Travel Hong Kong (☎ 22360262; www.statravel.com.hk); Japan (☎ 0353-912 922; www.statravel.co.jp); Singapore (☎ 6737 7188; www.statravel.com.sg); Thailand (☎ 2236 0262; www.statravel.co.th) has branches all around Asia. Another resource in Japan is **No 1 Travel** (☎ 0332-056 073; www.no1-travel.com); in Hong Kong try **Four Seas Tours** (☎ 2200 7760; www.fourseastravel.com/fs/en).

Nepal

A return flight from Kathmandu is about US\$300 to Delhi and US\$450 to Mumbai.

Pakistan

Be aware that flights between Pakistan and India are often suspended when relations between the two countries turn sour. At the time of writing, flights were operating. It costs around US\$180 for a return flight from Lahore to Delhi, US\$300 between Karachi and Delhi and US\$200 between Karachi and Mumbai.

Thailand

Bangkok is the most popular departure point from Southeast Asia into India. Various flights go from Bangkok, including to Delhi and Mumbai (from around US\$500 return).

AUSTRALIA

STA Travel (☎ 1300 733 035; www.statravel.com.au) and **Flight Centre** (☎ 133133; www.flightcentre.com.au) have offices throughout Australia. For online bookings, try www.travel.com.au.

There is usually at least one stop in a Southeast Asian city en route to India,

though Qantas has direct flights to Mumbai. The return fares to Delhi and Mumbai from Australian cities are all fairly similarly priced – you can expect to pay anywhere between A\$1200 and A\$1700, depending on the season.

CANADA

Travel Cuts (☎ 800-667 2887; www.travelcuts.com) is Canada's national student travel agency. For an online booking try www.expedia.ca and www.travelocity.ca.

From Canada, most flights to India are via Europe but a number of reasonably priced fares are also available from Vancouver via one of the major Asian cities.

The return fare from Vancouver to Delhi or Mumbai is from around C\$1500.

CONTINENTAL EUROPE

Flight options from Europe are similar to those from the UK, with many of the cheaper flights from major European cities via the Middle East. There is a plethora of deals so shop around.

For fares from European destinations to the various Indian hubs, try the agencies below or peruse the internet.

France

Some recommended agencies:
Anyway (☎ 08 92 89 38 92; www.anyway.fr, in French)
Nouvelles Frontières (☎ 08 25 00 07 47; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr, in French)

OTU Voyages (www.otu.fr, in French) Specialises in student and youth travellers.

Voyageurs du Monde (☎ 01 40 15 11 15; www.vdm.com, in French)

Germany

Some recommended agencies:
Expedia (www.expedia.de, in German)
Just Travel (☎ 089-747 33 30; www.justtravel.de)
STA Travel (☎ 01805 456 422; www.statravel.de, in German)

Italy

CTS Viaggi (☎ 064 62 04 31; www.cts.it, in Italian)

The Netherlands

Airfair (☎ 0206 20 51 21; www.airfair.nl, in Dutch)

Spain

Barcelo Viajes (☎ 902 11 62 26; www.barceloviajes.com, in Spanish)

NEW ZEALAND

Both **Flight Centre** (☎ 0800 243 544; www.flightcentre.co.nz) and **STA Travel** (☎ 0508 782 872; www.statravel.co.nz) have countrywide branches. For online bookings try www.travel.co.nz.

Flights between India and New Zealand all go via southeast Asia. Return fares from Auckland to Delhi start at about NZ\$1600.

UK & IRELAND

Discount air travel is big business in London so always check the latest deals on offer. Advertisements for many travel agencies appear in the travel pages of the weekend broadsheet newspapers.

Good places to start hunting for competitive quotes:

Ebookers (☎ 0871-2335000; www.ebookers.com)

Flight Centre (☎ 0870-0890 8099; www.flightcentre.co.uk)

STA Travel (☎ 0870-0160 0599; www.statravel.co.uk)

Traillfinders (☎ 08450585858; www.trailfinders.co.uk)

Travel Bag (☎ 0800-8048911; www.travelbag.co.uk)

USA

Discount travel agencies in the USA are known as consolidators (although you won't see a sign on the door saying 'Consolidator'). San Francisco is the ticket consolidator capital of America, although some good deals can be found in Los Angeles, New York and other big cities. As fares are so variable, consult travel agents and scan the internet to nail the best deal.

For online bookings try the following websites:

- www.cheaptickets.com
- www.expedia.com
- www.itn.net
- www.lowestfare.com
- www.orbitz.com
- www.sta.com
- www.travelocity.com

LAND**Rajasthan to Pakistan**

The weekly *Thar Express* (aka *JU MBF Link Express*, 4889) runs from Jodhpur to Karachi. In Jodhpur it leaves from Bhagat ki Kothi station on Saturday at 1.00am and reaches Munabao on the border at 7.00am. From Munabao you take a Pakistan Railways train. The Pakistan side of the border is Khokhrapar.

You must have a valid visa to Pakistan from India to travel on this train. The

train is an ordinary (uncomfortable) mail train. The cost is Rs 98/163 in second-class seating/sleeper. Tickets can only be booked at Jodhpur (ie not online), and have to be booked not more than 15 days before departure.

GETTING AROUND**AIR**

Within Rajasthan, there are airports in Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Udaipur. However, Jaisalmer is closed throughout the year when tensions are high along the Pakistan border.

A nifty booklet containing updated domestic air schedules and fares is *Excel's Timetable of Air Services Within India* (Rs 50; published monthly). It's available at various city newsstands and bookshops.

At the time of writing, the airlines listed below offered domestic services to various Indian destinations (see their websites for the latest). These airlines have offices in major Indian cities (for contact details see the websites and the Getting There & Away sections of some regional chapters):

Air India (www.airindia.in) The national carrier flies between Delhi and Mumbai. Note that most of these flights leave from international terminals (check in advance).

Air India Express (www.airindiaexpress.in) Air India's budget subsidiary with numerous domestic and several short-range international destinations.

Indian Airlines (www.indianairlines.in) India's major domestic carrier offers flights to numerous destinations within India and to neighbouring countries. It is the major player in Rajasthan, serving Agra, Delhi, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer (when the airport is open), Udaipur and Mumbai (see Getting There & Away in the relevant city for prices). The service gets mixed reports and their safety record is not as good as other domestic carriers.

IndiGo (www.goindigo.in) An emerging budget carrier flying between Mumbai, Delhi and Jaipur.

Jet Airways (www.jetairways.com) Rated by many as India's best airline, with efficient staff and a modern fleet, serving Delhi, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Mumbai and Udaipur.

Kingfisher Airlines (www.flykingfisher.com) Giving Jet Airways a good run for its money, Kingfisher flies between Delhi, Mumbai, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur.

Spicejet (www.spicejet.com) Another low-cost airline that includes Jaipur, Mumbai and Delhi in its network.

BICYCLE

Rajasthan offers an immense array of experiences for a long-distance cyclist. Nevertheless, long-distance cycling is not for the faint of heart or weak of knee. You'll need physical endurance to cope with the roads, traffic and climate.

Try to read some books on bicycle touring, such as *Bicycling Magazine's Guide to Bike Touring: Everything You Need to Know to Travel Anywhere on a Bike*. Cycling magazines provide useful information and their classifieds sections are good places to look for a riding companion. Also have a look at the websites for **Cyclists Touring Club** (www.ctc.org.uk) and the **International Bicycle Fund** (www.ibike.org).

If you're a serious cyclist or amateur racer and wish to get in touch with counterparts while in India, there's the **Cycle Federation of India** (☎ /fax 011-23392578; Yamuna Velodrome, IGI Sports Complex, Delhi). For anything bicycle-related in Delhi, head for Jhandewalan Cycle Market (Map pp92-3), which has imported and domestic new and secondhand bikes and spare parts.

Bicycle Tours

If you want to splash out, try **Butterfield & Robinson** (☎ 416-864 1354; www.butterfield.com; 70 Bond St, Toronto M5B 1X3, Canada) who offer biking expeditions through Rajasthan starting and ending in Delhi, returning via Agra. The all-inclusive tours last for 11 days, which are divided into walking and riding days.

Bring Your Own Bike

Most travellers prefer to buy a bike in India, but by all means consider bringing your own. Mountain bikes are especially suited to India – their sturdier construction makes them more manoeuvrable and less prone to damage, and allows you to tackle rocky, muddy roads unsuitable for lighter machines. Inquire in your home country about air transport and customs formalities. When transporting your bike, remove pedals, all luggage and accessories, turn the handlebars, cover the chain and let the tyres down a bit.

It may be hard to find parts, especially wheels, for touring bikes with 700C wheels. Parts for bicycles with 66cm wheels (of variable standards) are available.

Carry a good lock and use it. Consider wrapping your bicycle frame in used inner

tubes – this not only hides fancy paint jobs, but protects them from knocks.

Hire & Purchase

Even in the smallest towns there is usually at least one outlet that hires out bikes but they tend to be rickety bone-rattlers that are only good for short distances. Charges tend to be around Rs 5 per hour, or around Rs 35 per day.

You may like to buy a bike in India and your best bet is to shop around to get a feel for brands and prices. There are many brands of Indian clunkers, including Hero, Atlas, BSA and Raleigh. Raleigh is considered the finest quality, followed by BSA, which has many models including some sporty jobs. Consider bringing your own saddle, rack and good-quality panniers. Get a machine fitted with a stand and bell.

Reselling is usually a breeze. Count on getting about 60% to 70% of what you paid, if it was a new bike. A local bicycle-hire shop will probably be interested.

Repairs & Maintenance

For Indian bikes, there are plenty of repair 'shops' (some are no more than a puncture-wallah with his box of tools under a tree), which makes maintenance delightfully straightforward. The puncture-wallahs will patch tubes for a nominal cost.

If you bring your own bicycle to India, you will need to be prepared for the contingencies of part replacement or repair. Several travellers have warned that it is not at all easy locating foreign parts. Ensure you have a working knowledge of your machine. Bring all necessary tools with you as well as a compact bike manual with diagrams – Indian mechanics can work wonders, and illustrations help overcome the language barrier. Roads don't often have paved shoulders and are very dusty, so keep your chain lubricated, and bring a spare.

Roads & Distances

It's obviously more pleasurable to ride on quieter roads – avoid big cities where the chaotic traffic can be a real hazard for cyclists. National highways can also be a nightmare with speeding trucks and buses. Always make inquiries before venturing off-road.

Avoid leaving anything on your bike that can easily be removed when it's unattended.

TIPS FOR HIRING A CAR & DRIVER

Try to get a driver who speaks at least some English and who is knowledgeable about the region(s) you intend visiting. Night travel is best avoided.

More than a few travellers have shelled out much more money than is reasonable, paying for the driver's accommodation and meals (even booze!), completely unaware that his lodging and meal cost has already been factored into the fee. Make sure you understand the accommodation and meal arrangements for the driver *before* paying the car-hire company and ensure this is made clear to the driver *before* you set off. The charge that's quoted should include an allowance for the driver's daily living expenses (ie food and lodging) as well as petrol (hire rates may fluctuate in tune with petrol prices). Note that there's often a vehicle entry fee into other states, which costs extra. You also have to pay extra for any car-parking or car-entry fees you may incur.

For longer trips, when it comes to where the driver stays overnight, this is for him to decide and should never be your headache (many choose to sleep in the back seat of the car thus pocketing their accommodation allowance).

Be aware that many hotels in Rajasthan don't permit drivers onto their premises (to sleep or eat), even if you're paying. That's because the commission racket has created all sorts of headaches for hotels and, while your intentions may be warm-hearted, the hotel owners are the ones who may face problems with demanding drivers long after you've departed India. Although some places don't mind drivers joining guests at hotel restaurants, respect those that refuse entry – if in doubt, ask. If you want to shout your driver a meal, there are good independent restaurants not attached to hotels that welcome one and all.

Finally, and very importantly, it's imperative to set the ground rules from day one. Many travellers have complained of having their holiday completely dictated by their driver. Politely, but firmly, let the driver know at the onset that you're the boss – it can make the difference between a carefree journey and a strained one.

Shop around to find the best deal and before paying anything, get in writing what you've been promised to avoid 'misunderstandings' later. Before setting off it's wise to inspect the car and meet the driver.

A tip is in order at the conclusion of your journey; anything from Rs 75 per day is reasonable (more if you're happy with the service).

a taxi driver, or if you haggle hard with an agency – with a Rs 100 overnight charge and a minimum charge of 250km per day. If you're hiring for several days, try to negotiate a better deal.

If you're only going one way, remember that you have to pay for the driver to return to your starting point. Your driver may ask you for an advance of a few hundred rupees at the start of the trip to pay for petrol. To hire a car with driver for use only within one city (eg Delhi) expect to pay Rs 600 per day for a nonair-con vehicle, around Rs 800 for an air-con vehicle. There's usually an eight hour, 80km limit per day (additional charges apply if you exceed these).

SELF-DRIVE

Currently there are no agencies in Rajasthan offering self-drive vehicles. Self-drive hire is possible in Delhi, but given the hair-raising driving conditions most travellers opt for a

car with driver. Major car-hire companies in India include Budget and Hertz.

In some cities, such as Delhi, it's possible to hire or buy motorcycles, and you'll often need to produce a driving licence of some sort (see p382). An International Driving Licence can also come in handy for other identification purposes, such as bicycle hire.

HITCHING

Hitching in India isn't a realistic option, as you're likely to only be offered rides by truck drivers (not private cars). You're then stuck with the quandaries of: 'will the driver expect to be paid?' and 'will they be unhappy if I don't offer to pay or will they want too much?' Women are strongly advised against hitching.

LOCAL TRANSPORT

Although there are comprehensive local bus networks in most major towns, unless you have time to familiarise yourself with

the routes, you're better off sticking to taxis, autorickshaws or cycle-rickshaws, or hiring bicycles.

A basic rule applies to any form of transport where the fare is not ticketed, fixed or metered: agree on the fare beforehand. If you fail to do that you can expect enormous arguments and hassles when you get to your destination. And agree on the fare clearly – if there is more than one of you make sure it covers all of you (the price quoted should be per vehicle, not per person). If you have baggage make sure there are no extra charges, or you may be asked for more at the end of the trip. If a driver refuses to use the meter, or insists on an extortionate rate, simply walk away – if he really wants the job the price will drop. If you can't agree on a reasonable fare, find another driver.

Other useful tips when catching taxis and rickshaws:

- Always have enough small change, as drivers rarely do, which can be a real hassle, especially at night.
- If you are staying or dining at a top-end venue and you need to catch a rickshaw, try walking a few hundred metres down the road to avoid the drivers who hang outside assuming you're a cash cow.
- Finally, it's a good idea to carry around a business card of the hotel in which you are staying, as your pronunciation of streets, hotel names etc may be incomprehensible to drivers. Some hotel cards even have a nifty little sketch map clearly indicating their location.

Fares are often steeper (as much as double the day fare) at night and some drivers charge a few rupees extra for luggage. Many autorickshaw drivers are right into the commission racket – see p356.

Autorickshaw & Tempo

An autorickshaw is a noisy three-wheel device powered by a two-stroke motorcycle engine with a driver up front and seats for two (or sometimes more) passengers behind. They don't have doors and have just a canvas top. They are also known as scooters or autos.

They're generally about half the price of a taxi, though the meters are rarely used, and follow the same ground rules as taxis. Because of their size, autorickshaws are often faster than taxis for short trips and their drivers are decidedly nuttier. Hair-raising near-misses are

guaranteed and glancing-blow collisions are not infrequent; thrill seekers will love them!

Tempos are somewhat like large autorickshaws. These ungainly looking three-wheel devices operate like minibuses or share taxis along fixed routes (at fixed fares). Unless you're spending a lot of time in one city, they're impractical.

Cycle-rickshaw

Cycle-rickshaws are effectively three-wheeler bicycles with a seat for two passengers behind the driver. You'll find them in parts of Delhi, in Jaipur and in many smaller towns.

As with taxis and autorickshaws, fares must be agreed upon in advance. A typical ride in a cycle-rickshaw is between 1km and 3km and costs roughly between Rs 20 and Rs 40. Remember this is extremely strenuous work and the wallahs are among India's poorest, so a tip is appreciated and haggling over a few rupees unnecessary.

Share Jeep

Share jeeps supplement the bus service in many parts of Rajasthan, especially in areas off the main road routes, such as many of the towns in Shekhawati.

Jeeps leave when (very) full, from well-established 'passenger stations' on the outskirts of towns and villages; locals should be able to point you in the right direction. They are usually dirt cheap and jam-packed and tend to be more dangerous than buses (drivers are even crazier). Most travellers find them too crowded and claustrophobic for long journeys.

Taxi

Most towns have taxis, and most of them (certainly in the major cities) are metered. Getting a metered fare, however, is rather a different situation. First of all the meter may be 'broken'. Threatening to get another taxi will often miraculously 'fix' it. Opt for prepaid taxis where available.

Another problem with taxis is that their meters may be outdated. Fares are adjusted upwards so much faster and more frequently than meters are recalibrated that drivers often have 'fare adjustment cards' indicating what you should pay for your trip compared to what the meter indicates. This is, of course, open to abuse. You have no idea if you're being shown the right card or if the taxi's meter has actually

been recalibrated and you're being shown the card anyway.

The only answer to all this is to get an idea of what the fare should be before departure (ask at information desks, hotel receptions etc) and possibly agree on a fare with the driver beforehand. You'll soon develop a feel for what the meter says, what the cards say and what the two together should indicate.

MOTORCYCLE

Cruising solo around India by motorcycle offers the freedom to go when and where you desire. There are also some excellent motorcycle tours available (see right), which take the hassle out of doing it alone.

Helmets, leathers, gloves, goggles, boots, waterproofs and other protective gear are best brought from your home country, as they're either unavailable in India or are of variable quality. You'll also need a valid International Driving Licence.

Hire

Organised tours provide motorcycles, but if you're planning an independent trip, bikes can be hired at negotiable prices. You'll probably have to leave a cash deposit (refundable) and/or your air ticket.

In Delhi, Lalli Motorbike Exports (right) rents out Enfields (minimum three weeks; a 500cc machine for three/eight weeks costs Rs 13,000/23,000). There are places to hire (or purchase) motorbikes and scooters in Pushkar and Jaisalmer.

On the Road

Given the overall road conditions in India, motorcycling is not without hazards and ideally should only be undertaken by experienced riders. Hazards range from goats crossing the road to defunct abandoned trucks and of course the perpetual potholes and unmarked speed humps. Rural roads sometimes have grain crops strewn across them to be threshed by passing vehicles – it can be a real hazard for bikers.

Avoid covering too much territory in one day. A lot of energy is spent simply concentrating on the road, making long days exhausting and potentially dangerous. On the busy national highways expect to average 50km/h without stops; on smaller roads, where conditions are worse, as little as 10km/h is not an unrealistic average. On the whole,

on good roads, you can easily expect to cover a minimum of 100km a day (up to or over 300km with minimal stops). Night riding should be avoided.

For long hauls, putting the bike on a train can be a convenient option. You'll pay about as much as a 2nd-class passenger fare for the bike. The petrol tank must be empty, and there should be a tag in an obvious place with name, destination, passport number and train details. When you pack the bike, remove the mirrors and loosen the handlebars to avoid damage.

Organised Motorcycle Tours

Motorcycle tours usually operate with a minimum number of people and some can be tailor-made. Below are some reputable options (see websites for contact details, itineraries and prices):

Ferris Wheels (www.ferriswheels.com.au)

H-C Travel (www.hctravel.com)

Indian Motorcycle Adventures (<http://homepages.ihug.co.nz/~gumby>)

Indian Shepherds (www.asiasafari.com)

Lalli Singh Tours (www.lallisinh.com)

Moto Discovery (www.motodiscovery.com)

Saffron Road Motorcycle Tours (www.saffronroad.com)

Purchase

Buying a secondhand machine is a matter of asking around and a good place to start is with mechanics. Do your homework thoroughly and shop around to get an idea of the latest models on the market and their costs. Also try to speak to other bikers.

In Delhi the area around Hari Singh Nalwa St in Karol Bagh is full of places buying, selling and hiring out motorcycles. The reputation of many places is variable, but Lonely Planet consistently receives good reports about **Lalli Motorbike Exports** (Map pp92-3; ☎ 011-25728579; www.lallisinh.com; 1740-A/55 Basement, Hari Singh Nalwa St, Karol Bagh Market). Run by the knowledgeable Lalli Singh, this place deals in sales (secondhand and new bikes), hiring, spares and servicing of Enfields only. It also offers other services such as arranging motorbike transport in India and collecting your bike from your final destination if it's not Delhi.

Prices for new Enfield models are listed at www.royalensfield.com. For a new bike, you'll also have to pay Rs 4500 for comprehensive one-year insurance and lifetime road tax and

registration. You may like to invest a little more to get extras such as a luggage rack, protection bar, backrest, rear-view mirrors, lockable fuel tap, petrol filter, complete tool kit and loud horn (you're looking at an extra Rs 4000 to Rs 4500 for all of these). An Enfield 500cc gives about 25km/L. Their tanks hold 14L, though you can get a customised 18L to 20L tank for an extra cost.

A secondhand Enfield 500cc (two to three years old, without servicing) costs Rs 35,000 to Rs 65,000, depending on the condition. It's advisable to get it serviced before you set off (around Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000).

When the time comes to sell your bike, expect to get around Rs 30,000 for a secondhand Enfield 500cc (in reasonable condition) and about Rs 35,000 to Rs 45,000 if you purchased it as a new machine.

An obvious tip perhaps, but don't part with your money until you have the ownership papers, receipt and affidavit signed by a magistrate authorising the owner (as recorded in the ownership papers) to sell the machine.

Ownership papers are much more straightforward for a new bike than for a secondhand one. Each state has a different set of ownership-transfer formalities – inquire locally about current requirements.

It takes about a week (up to two weeks for secondhand machines) to get the paperwork done. If you wish to buy a new Enfield, you can contact the dealer in advance so that the paperwork will be ready by the time you arrive in India.

Repairs & Maintenance

Original spare parts from an 'authorised dealer' can be expensive compared to copies available from your spare-parts-wallah. Delhi's Karol Bagh Market (p119) is a good place for parts for all Indian and imported bikes. If you plan on going to remote regions, take basic spares with you (valves, piston rings etc) as they may not be readily available.

For all machines (particularly older ones), make sure you regularly check and tighten all nuts and bolts, as Indian roads and engine vibration tend to work things loose quickly. Check the engine and gearbox oil level regularly – with the quality of oil it's advisable to change it and clean the oil filter every couple of thousand kilometres.

PUNCTURES

Given the road conditions, the chances are you'll make at least a couple of visits to a puncture-wallah. These phenomenal fix-it men are found almost everywhere, but it's good to have the tools to at least remove your own wheel. It's worth buying new tyres if you purchase a secondhand bike with worn tyres.

TRAIN

To take a train is to ride in India's bloodstream. **Indian Railways** (www.indianrail.gov.in) runs over 14,000 trains a day, and moves 14 million passengers daily to any of 6856 stations. At first the system can seem impenetrable. However, it becomes easier (if never straightforward) once you get used to it, and train travel is generally more comfortable than bus travel, especially for long trips. Delhi has a suburban train network and metro, which is usually fine during the day, but can become unbearably crowded during peak hours.

There are tourist quotas for many express trains, and special offices or counters for foreigners in major cities and tourist centres (you are supposed to bring money-exchange receipts or ATM slips if paying for tickets with rupees, but these are rarely asked for). Many stations have left-luggage rooms with nominal daily charges.

Train services to certain destinations are often increased during major festivals or other peak travel periods. Be especially careful during these times as there have sometimes been reports of passengers being crushed to death on overcrowded platforms. Other things to beware of (at all times) are passenger drugging and theft of your belongings – see p356.

We've listed major trains throughout this book but there are many more. If you intend on doing a lot of train travel, it's worth getting the national *Trains at a Glance* booklet (Rs 50; available at various train stations or at city bookshops and newsstands). It contains extensive details and there are timetables covering each regional zone. It takes a bit more than a glance to work these out, but once you've mastered it you will be hooked.

For comprehensive online information about the Indian railway system, a valuable resource is www.seat61.com/India.htm.

Classes

Shatabdi express trains are same-day services between major and regional cities. These are

PALACES ON WHEELS

To travel maharaja-style, try the RTDC *Palace on Wheels* and *Heritage on Wheels* services.

Palace on Wheels (www.palaceonwheelsindia.com) operates weekly tours of Rajasthan, departing from Delhi every Wednesday (September to April). The itinerary covers Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Ranthambhore National Park, Chittorgarh (Chittor), Udaipur, Keoladeo Ghana National Park and Agra. It's a mammoth stretch in seven days, but most of the travelling is done at night. This train once used the maharajas' original carriages, but these became so ancient that new carriages were refurbished to look like the originals. The train has two dining cars and a bar, and each coach, containing four doubles with private bathroom, is attended by a splendidly costumed captain and attendant.

If you can't afford to do the trip for real, go for a virtual chug on the website. From October to March tariffs per person are US\$3920/2905/2380 for single/double/triple occupancy. From September to April it costs US\$2905/2205/1820. The price includes tours, admission fees, accommodation and all meals.

The *Heritage on Wheels* (www.heritageonwheels.com) is a similarly luxurious train which departs Jaipur and explores the Bikaner and Shekhawati regions before returning to Jaipur on the fourth day. The tariff per person per day for single/double/triple occupancy is US\$300/200/150.

Bookings can be made online or at the **RTDC Tourist Reception Centre** (Map pp102-3; ☎ 011-23381884; Bikaner House, Pandara Rd, Delhi 110011) or at the **RTDC Central Reservations Office** (Map pp152-3; ☎ 0141-2202586; MI Rd; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Sat) in Jaipur.

the fastest and most expensive trains, with only two classes; air-con executive chair and air-con chair. Shatabdis are comfortable, but the glass windows cut the views considerably compared to nonair-con classes on slower trains, which have barred windows and fresh air.

Rajdhani express trains are long-distance express services running between Delhi and the state capitals, and offer air-con 1st class (1 air-con), 2-tier air-con (2 air-con), 3-tier air-con (3 air-con) and 2nd class. Two-tier means there are two levels of bunks in each compartment, which are a little wider and longer than their counterparts in 3-tier. Costing respectively a half and a third as much as 1 air-con, 2 air-con and 3 air-con are perfectly adequate for an overnight trip.

Other express and mail trains have 2 air-con coaches, chair car, nonair-con sleeper (bring your own bedding), nonair-con 2nd class, and finally there are unreserved tickets. A sleeper costs around a quarter as much as 2-tier air-con. For more details see *Trains at a Glance*, or big stations often have English-speaking staff at inquiry counters who can help with picking the best train. At smaller stations midlevel officials, such as the deputy station master, usually speak English.

For an excellent description of the various train classes (including pictures) see www.seat61.com/India.htm; scroll down to the 'What are Indian trains like?' heading.

Costs

Fares are calculated by distance. For a full rundown on fares see www.indianrail.gov.in or *Trains at a Glance*. On most trains, if your journey is longer than 500km, you can take one break (for two days maximum) but you must have your ticket endorsed by the station master or ticket collector at the station you stop at.

Bedding is free in 1 air-con, 2 air-con and 3 air-con sleepers, but you'll need your own for ordinary sleepers. Meals are free on Rajdhani and Shatabdi trains, and cheap meals are available on other trains.

The major stations have accommodation called 'retiring rooms', which are a basic option if you have a valid ticket.

Tickets are refundable (opposite) but a fee applies; there are no refunds on lost tickets.

Seniors over 60 years of age are entitled to a 30% discount on train tickets.

Reservations

To make a reservation you must fill out a form stating which class you want and the train's name and number. For overnight journeys it's best to reserve your place a couple of days in advance. If there's no special counter or office for foreigners at the station (New Delhi's International Tourist Bureau is recommended), you'll have to adopt local queuing practices, which range from reasonably

orderly lines to mosh pits. There are sometimes separate ladies' queues, but usually the same window handles men and women. Women should simply proceed to the front of the queue, next to the first male.

If you don't want the hassle of buying a ticket yourself, many travel agencies and hotels are in the business of purchasing train tickets for a small commission. But watch out for small-fry travel agents who promise express-train tickets and deliver tickets for obscure mail or passenger trains, or get you a waiting list reservation rather than a seat or bunk. Only leave a small deposit, if any, and check the ticket carefully before paying.

Reserved tickets show your berth and carriage number. Efficient railway staff will also stick lists of names and berths on each reserved carriage, as well as writing the carriage number in chalk.

If you can't buy a reserved seat, ask if there's a waiting list. If you are on the waiting list, it will say 'wl' on your ticket followed by a number, which gives the number of your position in the queue. You can ask when you buy what the likelihood is that you will get a seat.

Alternatively, you could buy unreserved tickets – which go on sale about an hour before departure – and try to upgrade it. Find a reserved-class carriage and a spare seat,

and seek out the conductor (officially the Travelling Ticket Examiner – TTE). Explain you could only buy an unreserved ticket and ask about vacancies. With luck, the conductor will be happy to oblige. You pay the difference between the ordinary fare and the fare of whichever class you're in, plus a small excess charge of around Rs 30.

ONLINE RESERVATIONS

It's possible to book train tickets online at www.irctc.co.in though many travellers have found it a fruitless exercise in trying. Helpful tips on making online bookings are available at the website www.seat61.com/India.htm; scroll down to the 'How to book – from outside India' heading.

REFUNDS

Tickets are refundable but fees apply. If you present more than one day in advance, a fee of Rs 20 to Rs 70 applies. Steeper charges apply if you seek a refund less than four hours prior to departure, but you can get some sort of refund as late as 12 hours afterwards.

When refunding your ticket you officially have a magic pass to go to the front of the queue, as the next person may require the spot you're surrendering. We've never seen if this works in practice.

Health

Dr Trish Batchelor

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While the potential dangers of travelling in India can seem quite ominous, in reality few travellers experience anything more than an upset stomach. Hygiene is generally poor throughout the country, so food- and water-borne illnesses are common. Travellers tend to worry about contracting infectious diseases, but infections are a rare cause of *serious* illness or death in travellers. Pre-existing medical conditions such as heart disease, and accidental injury (especially traffic accidents), account for most life-threatening problems.

Fortunately, most travellers' illnesses can either be prevented with some common-sense behaviour or be treated easily with a well-stocked traveller's medical kit. The following advice is a general guide only and does not replace the advice of a doctor trained in travel medicine.

BEFORE YOU GO

Pack medications in their original, clearly labelled containers. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications, including generic names, is very useful. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity. If you have a heart condition, bring a copy of your ECG taken just prior to travelling.

If you take any regular medication, bring double the amount you need in case of loss or theft. You'll be able to buy many medications over the counter in India without a doctor's prescription, but it can be difficult to find some of the newer drugs, particularly the latest antidepressant drugs, blood-pressure medications and contraceptive pills.

INSURANCE

Even if you're fit and healthy, don't travel without health insurance – accidents do happen. Declare any existing medical conditions you have, as the insurance company WILL check if your problem is pre-existing and will not cover you if it is undeclared. You may require extra cover for adventure activities, such as rock climbing. If you have health insurance at home that doesn't cover you for medical expenses abroad, consider getting extra insurance. If you're uninsured, emergency evacuation is: bills of over US\$100,000 are not uncommon.

Ask in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures. (In many countries doctors expect payment in cash.) Some policies offer lower and higher medical-expense options; the higher ones are chiefly for countries that have extremely high medical costs, such as the USA. You may prefer to take out a policy that pays doctors or hospitals directly to avoid having to pay on the spot and claim later. If you have to claim later, make sure you keep all documentation. Some policies ask you to call (reverse charges) a centre in your home country, where an immediate assessment of your problem is made.

MEDICAL CHECKLIST

Recommended items for a personal medical kit:

- antibacterial cream, eg Muciprocin
- antibiotic for skin infections, eg Amoxicillin/Clavulanate or Cephalexin
- antifungal cream, eg Clotrimazole
- antihistamine – there are many options, eg Cetirizine for daytime and Promethazine for night
- antiseptic, eg Betadine

- antispasmodic for stomach cramps, eg Buscopan
- contraceptive(s)
- decongestant, eg Pseudoephedrine
- DEET-based insect repellent
- diarrhoea medication – consider an oral rehydration solution (eg Gastrolyte), diarrhoea 'stopper' (eg Loperamide) and anti-nausea medication (eg Prochlorperazine); antibiotics for diarrhoea include Norfloxacin and Ciprofloxacin, for bacterial diarrhoea Azithromycin, and for giardia or amoebic dysentery Tinidazole
- first-aid items such as scissors, Elastoplasts, bandages, gauze, thermometer (but not mercury), sterile needles and syringes, safety pins and tweezers
- Ibuprofen or another anti-inflammatory
- indigestion tablets, eg Quick Eze or Mylanta
- iodine tablets (unless you are pregnant or have a thyroid problem) to purify water
- laxative, eg Coloxyl
- migraine medication if you suffer from them
- paracetamol
- permethrin to impregnate clothing and mosquito nets
- steroid cream for allergic or itchy rashes, eg 1% to 2% hydrocortisone
- sunscreen and hat
- throat lozenges
- treatment for thrush (vaginal yeast infection), eg Clotrimazole pessaries or Diflucan tablet
- Ural or equivalent if you are prone to urine infections

VACCINATIONS

Specialised travel-medicine clinics are your best source of information; they stock all available vaccines and will be able to give specific recommendations for you and your trip. The doctors will take into account factors such as past vaccination history, the length of your trip, activities you may be undertaking, and underlying medical conditions, such as pregnancy.

Most vaccines don't give immunity until at least two weeks after they're given, so visit a doctor four to eight weeks before departure. Ask your doctor for an International Certificate of Vaccination (otherwise known as the yellow booklet), which will list all the vaccinations you've received.

Recommended Vaccinations

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that travellers to India be up to date with measles, mumps and rubella vaccinations. Other vaccinations it recommends:

Adult diphtheria and tetanus Single booster recommended if none given in the previous 10 years. Side effects include sore arm and fever.

Hepatitis A Provides almost 100% protection for up to a year; a booster after 12 months provides at least another 20 years' protection. Mild side effects such as headache and sore arm occur in 5% to 10% of people.

Hepatitis B Now considered routine for most travellers. Given as three shots over six months. A rapid schedule is also available, as is a combined vaccination with Hepatitis A. Side effects – usually headache and sore arm – are mild and uncommon. In 95% of people lifetime protection results.

Polio In 2004 polio was still present in India. Only one booster is required as an adult for lifetime protection. Inactivated polio vaccine is safe during pregnancy.

Typhoid Recommended for all travellers to India, even if you only visit urban areas. The vaccine offers around 70% protection, lasts for two to three years and comes as a single shot. Tablets are also available; however, the injection is usually recommended as it has fewer side effects. Sore arm and fever may occur.

Varicella If you haven't had chickenpox, discuss this vaccination with your doctor.

Immunisations recommended for long-term travellers (those going away for more than one month) or those at special risk:

Japanese B Encephalitis Three injections in all. Booster recommended after two years. Sore arm and headache are the most common side effects. Though rare, an allergic reaction comprising hives and swelling can occur up to 10 days after any of the three doses.

Meningitis Single injection. There are two types of vaccination. The quadrivalent vaccine gives two to three years' protection, and the meningitis group C vaccine gives around 10 years' protection. Recommended for long-term backpackers aged under 25.

Rabies Three injections in all. A booster after one year will then provide 10 years' protection. Side effects are rare – occasionally headache and sore arm.

Tuberculosis (TB) A complex issue. Adult long-term travellers are usually advised to have a TB skin-test before and after travel, rather than vaccination. Only one vaccine needs to be given in a lifetime.

Required Vaccinations

Yellow fever is the only vaccine required by international regulations. Proof of vaccination will only be required if you have visited a country in the yellow-fever zone within the six

HEALTH ADVISORIES

It's usually a good idea to consult your government's travel-health website before departure, if one is available:

Australia (www.dfat.gov.au/travel/)

Canada (www.travelhealth.gc.ca)

New Zealand (www.mfat.govt.nz/travel)

South Africa (www.dfa.gov.za/consular/travel_advice.htm)

UK (www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice/)

USA (www.cdc.gov/travel/)

days prior to entering India. If you are travelling to India from Africa or South America you should check to see if you require proof of vaccination.

INTERNET RESOURCES

There's a wealth of travel-health advice on the internet. **LonelyPlanet.com** (www.lonelyplanet.com) is a good place to start. Some other suggestions:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (www.cdc.gov) Good general information.

MD Travel Health (www.mdtravelhealth.com) Provides complete travel-health recommendations for every country; updated daily.

World Health Organization (WHO) (www.who.int/ith/) Its superb book *International Travel & Health* is revised annually and is available online.

FURTHER READING

Lonely Planet's *Healthy Travel – Asia & India* is pocket sized and packed with useful information about pre-trip planning, emergency first aid, immunisation and disease information, and what to do if you get sick on the road. Other recommended references include *Traveller's Health*, by Dr Richard Dawood, and *Travelling Well*, by Dr Deborah Mills – check out the website of **Travelling Well** (www.travellingwell.com.au).

IN TRANSIT**DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS**

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) occurs when blood clots form in the legs during flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility. The longer the flight, the greater the risk. Though most blood clots are reabsorbed uneventfully, some may break off and travel via

the blood vessels to the lungs, where they may cause life-threatening complications.

The chief symptom of DVT is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle, or calf, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and difficulty in breathing. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent the development of DVT on long flights you should walk about the cabin, perform isometric compressions of the leg muscles (ie contract the leg muscles while sitting), drink plenty of fluids, and avoid alcohol and tobacco.

JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

Jet lag is common when crossing more than five time zones; it results in insomnia, fatigue, malaise or nausea. To avoid jet lag drink plenty of (nonalcoholic) fluids and eat light meals. Upon arrival, seek exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep etc) as soon as possible.

Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate (Dramamine), promethazine (Phenergan) and meclizine (Antivert, Bonine) are usually the first choice for treating motion sickness. Their main side effect is drowsiness. A herbal alternative is ginger, which works like a charm for some people.

IN INDIA**AVAILABILITY OF HEALTH CARE**

There are plenty of English-speaking doctors in urban centres. Most hotels have a doctor on call – if you're staying at a budget hotel and they can't help, try contacting an up-market hotel to find out which doctor they use. Some cities now have clinics catering specifically to travellers and expats. These are usually more costly than local facilities but are worth it, as they will offer a superior standard of care. Additionally, staff at these clinics understand the local system, and are aware of the safest local hospitals and best specialists. They can also liaise with insurance companies should you require evacuation. It is difficult to find reliable medical care in rural areas.

If you're seriously ill, contact your country's embassy (see p358), which usually has a list of recommended doctors and dentists.

Treatment at public hospitals is generally reliable, though private clinics offer the advantage of shorter queues. However, there have been reports that some private clinics have bumped up the level of treatment to more than is necessary in order to procure larger medical-insurance claims.

In even the smallest Rajasthani town you will find at least one well-stocked pharmacy (selling everything from malaria medication to nail-polish remover). Many are open until late. Many pharmaceuticals sold in India are manufactured under licence from multinational companies, so you'll probably be familiar with many brand names. Before buying medication over the counter, always check the expiry date and ensure the packet is sealed. Don't accept items that have been poorly stored (eg lying in a glass cabinet that's exposed to the sunshine).

INFECTIOUS DISEASES**Coughs, Colds & Chest Infections**

Around 25% of travellers to India will develop a respiratory infection. This usually starts as a virus and is exacerbated by environmental conditions such as pollution in the cities or cold and altitude in the mountains. A secondary bacterial infection, marked by fever, chest pain and coughing up discoloured or blood-tinged sputum, will commonly intervene. If you have the symptoms of an infection, seek medical advice or commence a general antibiotic.

Dengue

This mosquito-borne disease is becoming increasingly problematic in the tropical world, especially in the cities. As there is no vaccine available it can only be prevented by avoiding mosquito bites. The mosquito that carries dengue bites day and night, so use insect avoidance measures at all times. Symptoms include high fever, severe headache and body ache (dengue was previously known as 'break-bone fever'). Some people develop a rash and experience diarrhoea. There is no specific treatment – just rest and paracetamol. Do not take aspirin as it increases the chance of haemorrhaging. See a doctor to be diagnosed and monitored.

Hepatitis A

A problem throughout the region, this food- and water-borne virus infects the liver and

causes jaundice (yellow skin and eyes), nausea and lethargy. There is no specific treatment for hepatitis A; you need to allow time for the liver to heal. All travellers to India should be vaccinated against hepatitis A.

Hepatitis B

The only sexually transmitted disease that can be prevented by vaccination, hepatitis B is spread by body fluids (eg by sexual contact). The long-term consequences can include liver cancer and cirrhosis.

Hepatitis E

Hepatitis E is transmitted through contaminated food and water. It has similar symptoms to hepatitis A but is far less common. It is a severe problem in pregnant women and can result in the death of both mother and baby. There is currently no vaccine, and prevention is by following safe eating and drinking guidelines.

HIV

HIV is spread via contaminated body fluids. Avoid unsafe sex, unsterile needles (including in medical facilities) and procedures such as tattoos. The growth rate of HIV in India is one of the highest in the world.

Japanese B Encephalitis

This viral disease is transmitted by mosquitoes and is rare in travellers. Like most mosquito-borne diseases, it's becoming a more common problem in affected countries. Most cases occur in rural areas, and vaccination is recommended for travellers spending more than one month outside cities. There is no treatment, and a third of infected people will die, while another third will suffer permanent brain damage.

Malaria

Considering it's such a serious and potentially deadly disease, there is an enormous amount of misinformation about malaria. You must get expert advice as to whether your trip will put you at risk. For most rural areas, the risk of contracting malaria far outweighs the risk of any tablet side effects. Before you travel, seek medical advice on the right medication and dosage for you.

Malaria is caused by a parasite transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito. The most important symptom of malaria is fever,

but general symptoms such as headache, diarrhoea, cough or chills may also occur. Diagnosis can only be made by taking a blood sample.

Two strategies should be combined to prevent malaria – mosquito avoidance and antimalarial medications. Most people who catch malaria are taking inadequate or no antimalarial medication.

Travellers are advised to take the following steps to prevent mosquito bites:

- Use an insect repellent that contains DEET on exposed skin. Wash this off at night, as long as you're sleeping under a mosquito net. Natural repellents such as citronella can be effective but must be applied more frequently than products containing DEET.
- Sleep under a mosquito net impregnated with permethrin.
- Choose accommodation with screens and fans (if not air-conditioned).
- Impregnate clothing with permethrin in high-risk areas.
- Wear long sleeves and trousers in light colours.
- Use mosquito coils.
- Spray your room with insect repellent before going out for your evening meal.

A variety of medications are available. The effectiveness of the Chloroquine and Paludrine combination is now limited in many parts of south Asia. Common side effects include nausea (in 40% of people) and mouth ulcers.

The daily tablet Doxycycline is a broad-spectrum antibiotic with the added benefit of helping to prevent a variety of tropical diseases such as leptospirosis, tick-borne disease and typhus. The potential side effects include photosensitivity (a tendency to sunburn), thrush in women, indigestion, heartburn, nausea and interference with the contraceptive pill. More serious side effects include ulceration of the oesophagus – you can help prevent this by taking your tablet with a meal and a large glass of water, and never lying down within half an hour of taking it. It must be taken for four weeks after leaving the risk area.

Lariam (Mefloquine) has received much bad press, some of it justified, some not. This weekly tablet suits many people. Serious side effects are rare but include depression, anxiety, psychosis and fits. Anyone with a

history of depression, anxiety, any other psychological disorder or epilepsy should not take Lariam. It is considered safe in the second and third trimesters of pregnancy. Tablets must be taken for four weeks after leaving the risk area.

The new drug Malarone is a combination of Atovaquone and Proguanil. Side effects are uncommon and mild, most commonly nausea and headache. It is the best tablet for beachgoers and for those on short trips to high-risk areas. It must be taken for one week after leaving the risk area.

Rabies

Around 30,000 people die from rabies in India each year. This uniformly fatal disease is spread by the bite or lick of an infected animal – most commonly a dog or monkey. You should seek medical advice immediately after any animal bite and commence post-exposure treatment. Having a pre-travel vaccination means the post-bite treatment is greatly simplified. If an animal bites you, gently wash the wound with soap and water, and apply an iodine-based antiseptic. If you are not prevaccinated, you will need to receive rabies immunoglobulin as soon as possible, and this is almost impossible to obtain in much of India.

STDs

Sexually transmitted diseases most common in India include herpes, warts, syphilis, gonorrhoea and chlamydia. People carrying these diseases often have no signs of infection. Condoms will prevent gonorrhoea and chlamydia but not warts or herpes. If after a sexual encounter you develop any rash, lumps, discharge or pain when passing urine, seek immediate medical attention. If you have been sexually active on your travels, have an STD check when you return home.

Tuberculosis

While TB is rare in travellers and in western countries, it is not rare in India and long-term travellers should take precautions. Vaccination is usually only given to children under the age of five, but adults at risk are advised to undergo pre- and post-travel TB testing. The main symptoms are fever, cough, weight loss, night sweats and tiredness.

Typhoid

This serious bacterial infection is also spread via food and water. It gives a high and slowly progressive fever and a headache, and may be accompanied by a dry cough and stomach pain. It is diagnosed by blood tests and treated with antibiotics. Vaccination is recommended for all travellers spending more than a week in India. Be aware that vaccination is not 100% effective, so you must still be careful with what you eat and drink.

TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA

Traveller's diarrhoea is the most common problem that affects travellers – between 30% and 70% of people will suffer from it within two weeks of starting their trip. In over 80% of cases, traveller's diarrhoea is caused by a bacteria (there are numerous potential culprits), and therefore responds promptly to antibiotics. Treatment with antibiotics will depend on your situation – how sick you are, how quickly you need to get better, where you are etc.

Traveller's diarrhoea is defined as the passage of more than three watery bowel actions within 24 hours, plus at least one other symptom such as fever, cramps, nausea, vomiting or feeling generally unwell.

Treatment consists of staying well hydrated; rehydration solutions like Gastrolyte are best for this. Antibiotics such as Norfloxacin, Ciprofloxacin or Azithromycin will kill the bacteria quickly.

Loperamide is just a 'stopper' and doesn't get to the cause of the problem. It can be helpful, though, for example if you have to go on a long bus ride. Don't take Loperamide if you have a fever, or blood in your stools. Seek medical attention quickly if you do not respond to an appropriate antibiotic.

Amoebic Dysentery

Amoebic dysentery is rare in travellers but often misdiagnosed by poor-quality labs. Symptoms are similar to bacterial diarrhoea: fever, bloody diarrhoea and generally feeling unwell. You should always seek reliable medical care if you have blood in your diarrhoea. Treatment involves two drugs: Tinidazole or Metronidazole to kill the parasite in your gut and then a second drug to kill the cysts. If left untreated, complications such as liver or intestinal abscesses can occur.

DRINKING WATER

- Never drink tap water.
- Bottled water is generally safe – check the seal is intact at purchase.
- Avoid ice.
- Avoid fresh juices – they may have been watered down.
- Boiling water is the most efficient method of purifying it.
- The best chemical purifier is iodine. It should not be used by pregnant women or those with thyroid problems.
- Water filters should also filter out viruses. Ensure your filter has a chemical barrier such as iodine and a small pore size, eg less than four microns.

Giardiasis

Giardia is a parasite that is relatively common in travellers. Symptoms include nausea, bloating, excess gas, fatigue and intermittent diarrhoea. The parasite will eventually go away if left untreated, but this can take months. The treatment of choice is Tinidazole, with Metronidazole being a second-line option.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS Air Pollution

Air pollution, particularly vehicle pollution, is an increasing problem in most of India's major cities. If you have severe respiratory problems, speak with your doctor before travelling to any heavily polluted urban centres. This pollution also causes minor respiratory problems such as sinusitis, dry throat and irritated eyes. If troubled by the pollution leave the city for a few days and get some fresh air.

Food

Eating in restaurants is the biggest risk factor for contracting traveller's diarrhoea. Ways to avoid it include eating only freshly cooked food, and avoiding shellfish and food that has been sitting around on buffets. Peel all fruit, cook vegetables and soak salads in iodine water for at least 20 minutes (avoid iodine if you are pregnant or have thyroid problems). Eat in busy restaurants with a high turnover of customers. For more on safe eating, see Street Food Dos & Don'ts, p72.

Heat

With temperatures hitting 45°C and over in the summer months, heatstroke and heat exhaustion are serious dangers for travellers used to cooler climes; for most people it takes at least two weeks to adapt. Swelling of the feet and ankles is common, as are muscle cramps caused by excessive sweating. Prevent these by avoiding dehydration and excessive activity in the heat. Take it easy when you first arrive. While it's best to avoid salt tablets (they aggravate the gut), it does help to drink rehydration solution or eat salty food. Treat cramps by stopping activity, resting, rehydrating with double-strength rehydration solution and gently stretching.

Dehydration is the main contributor to heat exhaustion. Symptoms include a feeling of weakness, headache, irritability, nausea or vomiting, sweaty skin, a normal or slightly elevated body temperature, and a fast, weak pulse. Treatment involves getting the sufferer out of the heat and/or sun, fanning them and applying cool wet cloths to the skin. Lay the sufferer flat with their legs raised, and rehydrate them with water containing a quarter of a teaspoon of salt per litre. Recovery is usually rapid, but it's common to feel weak for some days afterwards.

Heatstroke is a serious medical emergency. Symptoms come on suddenly and include weakness, nausea, a hot, dry body with a body temperature of over 41°C, dizziness, confusion, loss of coordination, fits and eventually collapse and loss of consciousness. Seek medical help, and cool the person by getting them out of the heat, removing their clothes, fanning them and applying cool wet cloths or ice to their body, especially to the groin and armpits.

Prickly heat is a common skin rash caused by excessive perspiration getting trapped under the skin. The result is an itchy rash of tiny lumps. Treat it by moving out of the heat and into an air-conditioned area for a few hours and by having cool showers. Creams and ointments clog the skin, so they should be avoided. Locally bought prickly-heat powder can be helpful.

Insect Bites & Stings

Bedbugs don't carry disease, but their bites are very itchy. They live in the cracks of furniture and walls, and then migrate to the bed at night to feed on you. You can treat the

itch with antihistamines. Lice inhabit various parts of your body but most commonly your head and pubic area. Transmission is via close contact with an infected person. Lice can be difficult to treat, and you may need numerous applications of an anti-lice shampoo such as permethrin. Pubic lice are usually contracted from sexual contact.

Ticks are contracted after walking in rural areas. They're commonly found behind the ears, on the belly and in the armpits. If you have had a tick bite and experience symptoms such as a rash at the site of the bite or elsewhere, fever or muscle aches you should see a doctor. Doxycycline prevents tick-borne diseases.

Bee and wasp stings mainly cause problems for people who are allergic to them. Anyone with a serious bee or wasp allergy should carry an injection of adrenaline (eg an EpiPen) for emergency treatment. For others, pain is the main problem – apply ice to the sting and take painkillers.

Skin Problems

Fungal rashes are common in humid climates. Two common rashes affect travellers. The first occurs in the moist areas that get less air, such as the groin, the armpits and between the toes. It starts as a red patch that slowly spreads and is usually itchy. Treatment involves keeping skin dry, avoiding chafing and using an antifungal cream such as Clotrimazole or Lamisil. *Tinea versicolor* is also common – this fungus causes small, light-coloured patches, most commonly on the back, chest and shoulders. See a doctor.

Cuts and scratches become easily infected in humid climates. Take meticulous care of any cuts and scratches to prevent complications such as abscesses. Immediately wash all wounds in clean water and apply antiseptic. If you develop signs of infection (increasing pain and redness), see a doctor. Divers and surfers should be particularly careful with coral cuts, as they easily become infected.

Sunburn

Even on a cloudy day sunburn can occur rapidly. Always use a strong sunscreen (at least factor 30), making sure to reapply it after a swim, and always wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses outdoors. Avoid spending too much time in the sun during the hottest part of the day (10am to 2pm). If you

become sunburnt, stay out of the sun until you have recovered, apply cool compresses and take painkillers for the discomfort. A 1% hydrocortisone cream applied twice daily is also helpful.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Pregnant women should receive specialised advice before travelling. The ideal time to travel is in the second trimester (between 16 and 28 weeks), when the risk of pregnancy-related problems is at its lowest and when pregnant women generally feel at their best. Always carry a list of quality medical facilities available at your destination and ensure you continue your standard antenatal care at these facilities. Avoid travel in rural areas with poor transportation and medical facilities. Most of all, ensure travel insurance covers all pregnancy-related possibilities, including premature labour.

Malaria is a high-risk disease in pregnancy. The WHO recommends that pregnant women

do NOT travel to areas with Chloroquine-resistant malaria. None of the more effective antimalarial drugs is completely safe in pregnancy.

Traveller's diarrhoea can quickly lead to dehydration and result in inadequate blood flow to the placenta. Many of the drugs used to treat various diarrhoea bugs are not recommended in pregnancy. Azithromycin is considered safe.

In a lot of places, supplies of sanitary products (pads, rarely tampons) are readily available. Birth-control options may be limited, so bring adequate supplies of your own form of contraception. Heat, humidity and antibiotics can all contribute to thrush. Treatment is with antifungal creams and pessaries such as Clotrimazole. A practical alternative is a single tablet of Fluconazole (Diflucan). Urinary tract infections can be precipitated by dehydration or long bus journeys without toilet stops; bring suitable antibiotics.

Language

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The huge number of languages spoken in India helps explain why English is still widely spoken more than 50 years after the British left, and why it's still the official language of the judiciary. There are 22 languages recognised in the constitution, and over 1600 minor languages spoken according to the last census. While the locals in Rajasthan, Agra and Delhi may be speaking Punjabi, Urdu, Marwari, Jaipuri, Malvi or Mewati to each other, for you Hindi will be the local language of choice. If you do have the urge to delve into the indigenous languages of the region, Lonely Planet's *India Phrasebook* is the tool for you.

Despite major efforts to promote Hindi as the national language of India, phasing out English, many educated Indians speak English as virtually their first language. For the large number of Indians who speak more than one language, it's often their second tongue. Although you'll find it very easy to get around India with English, it's always good to know at least a little of the local language.

HINDI

Hindi is written from left to right in Devanagari script. While the script may be unfamiliar, English speakers will recognise many of Hindi's grammatical features.

Hindi is also marked depending on the gender of the speaker or the gender of a noun (and its adjective). In this language guide we give the options for male and female speaker, marked 'm' and 'f' respectively.

For a far more comprehensive guide to Hindi, get a copy of Lonely Planet's *Hindi, Urdu & Bengali Phrasebook*. For a guide to the main regional languages of the country (including Rajasthani), look for Lonely Planet's *India Phrasebook*.

PRONUNCIATION

Most Hindi sounds are similar to their English counterparts, but there are a few tricky ones. There's a difference between 'aspirated' and 'unaspirated' consonants – the aspirated ones are pronounced with a strong puff of air, like saying 'h' after the sound. There are also 'retroflex' consonants, where the tongue is curled up and back to 'colour' the sound. The simplified transliterations we've used in this language guide, however, don't include these distinctions.

Pronunciation of vowels is important, especially length (eg **a** compared to **aa**). The combination **ng** after a vowel indicates 'nasalisation' (pronounced through the nose).

Pay attention to the consonant sounds listed below. All others are the same as in English.

Vowels

a	as the 'u' in 'sun'
aa	as in 'father'
ai	as in 'hair' before a consonant; as in 'aisle' at the end of a word
au	as in 'haul' before a consonant; as the 'ou' in 'ouch' at a word's end
e	as in 'they'
ee	as in 'feet'
i	as in 'sit'
o	as in 'shot'
oo	as in 'fool'
u	as in 'put'

Consonants

ch	as in 'cheese'
g	always as in 'gun', never as in 'age'
r	slightly trilled
y	as in 'yak'

EMERGENCIES

Help!	<i>mada keejijye!</i>
Stop!	<i>ruko!</i>
Thief!	<i>chor!</i>
Call a doctor!	<i>daaktar ko bulaaa!</i>
Call an ambulance!	<i>embulains le aanaa!</i>
Call the police!	<i>pulis ko bulaaa!</i>
I'm lost.	<i>maing raastaa bhool gayaa/gayee hoong (m/f)</i>
Where is the ...? police station toilet	<i>... kahaang hai? taanaa gusalkaanaa</i>

I wish to contact my embassy.

maing apne dootavaas ko fon karnaa chahtaa/ chahtee hoong (m/f)

ACCOMMODATION

Where is the (best/cheapest) hotel?

sab se (achaa/sastaa) hotel kahaang hai?

Please write the address.

zaraa us kaa pataa lik deejijye

Do you have any rooms available?

kyaa koe kamraa kaalee hai?

I'd like to share a dorm.

maing dorm me teharnaa chahtaa/chahtee hoong (m/f)

I'd like a ...

double room	<i>mujhe ... chaahijye dabal kamraa</i>
room with a bathroom	<i>gusalkaanevaalaa kamraa</i>
single room	<i>singal kamraa</i>

How much for one night/week?

ek din/hafte kaa kiraayaa kitnaa hai?

May I see it?

kyaa maing kamraa dek saktaa/saktee hoong? (m/f)

Is there any other room?

koe aur kamraa hai?

Where's the bathroom?

gusalkaanaa kahaang hai?

bed	<i>palang</i>
blanket	<i>kambaal</i>
key	<i>chaabee</i>
shower	<i>shaavar</i>
toilet paper	<i>taaillet pepar</i>
water (cold/hot)	<i>paanee (tanda/garam)</i>
with a window	<i>kirkeevaalaa</i>

CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

The word 'please' is usually conveyed through the polite form of the imperative, or through

other expressions. This book uses polite expressions and the polite forms of words.

Hello.	<i>namaste/namskaar</i>
Goodbye.	<i>namaste/namskaar</i>
Yes.	<i>jee haang</i>
No.	<i>jee naheeng</i>
Thank you.	<i>shukriyaa/danyavaad</i>
You're welcome.	<i>koe baat naheeng</i>
Excuse me/Sorry.	<i>kshamaa keejijye</i>
How are you?	<i>aap kaise/kaisee haing? (m/f)</i>
Fine, and you?	<i>maing teek hoong aap sunaaiye?</i>
What's your name?	<i>aap kaa shubh naam kyaa hai?</i>

DIRECTIONS

Where's a/the ... bank consulate embassy Hindu temple mosque post office public phone public toilet town square	<i>... kahaang hai? baank kaungnsal dootavaas mandir masjid daakkaanaa saarvajanik fon shauchaalay chauh</i>
--	--

Is it far from/near here?

kyaa voh yahaang se door/nazdeek hai?

HEALTH

Where is a/the ...? clinic doctor hospital	<i>... kahaang hai? davaakaanaa daaktar aspataal</i>
---	--

I'm sick.	<i>maing beemaar hoong</i>
------------------	----------------------------

antiseptic	<i>ainteeseptik</i>
antibiotic	<i>ainteebayotik</i>
aspirin	<i>(esprin) sirdard kee davaa</i>
condoms	<i>nirodak</i>
contraceptives	<i>garbinirodak</i>
diarrhoea	<i>dast</i>
medicine	<i>davaa</i>
nausea	<i>gin</i>
syringe	<i>sooee</i>
tampons	<i>taimpon</i>

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

Do you speak English?

kyaa aap ko angrezee aatee hai?

Does anyone here speak English?

kyaa kisee ko angrezee aatee hai?

I understand.

maing samjhaa/samjhee (m/f)

SIGNS

प्रवेश/अन्दर	Entrance
निकार/बाहर	Exit
खुला	Open
बन्द	Closed
अन्दर आना [निषि/मना] ल०	No Entry
धूम्रपान करना [निषि/मना] ल०	No Smoking
निषि	Prohibited
गर्म	Hot
ठंडा	Cold
शौचालय	Toilets

I don't understand.

maing naheeng samjhnaa/samjhee (m/f)

Please write it down.

zaraa lik deejije

NUMBERS

Where English numbers are counted in tens, hundreds, thousands, millions and billions, the Hindi numbering system uses tens, hundreds, thousands, hundred thousands and ten millions. A hundred thousand is one lakh (*laak*), and 10 million is one crore (*kror*). These words are almost always used over their English equivalents.

Once into the thousands, written numbers have commas every two places, not three.

1	ek
2	do
3	teen
4	chaar
5	paangch
6	chai
7	saat
8	aat
9	nau
10	das
11	gyaarah
12	bara
13	terah
14	chaudah
15	pandrah
16	solah
17	satrah
18	attaarah
19	unnees
20	bees
21	ikkees
22	baaees

30	tees
40	chaalees
50	pachaas
60	saat
70	sattar
80	assee
90	nabbe/navve
100	sau
1,000	hazaar
100,000	ek laak (written 1,00,000)
10,000,000	ek kror (written 1,00,00,000)

SHOPPING & SERVICES

Where's the nearest ...?

sab se karib ... kah hai?

bookshop	kitaab kee dukaan
chemist/pharmacy	davaaees kee dukaan
general store	dukaan
market	baazaar
washerman	dobee

Where can I buy (a/an) ...?

maing ... kah kareed sakta haing?

I'd like to buy (a/an) ...

mujhe ... karidnaa hai

clothes	kapre
colour film	rangin film
envelope	lifaafaa
handicrafts	haat kee banees cheeze
magazines	patrikaae
map	nakshaa
newspaper (in English)	(angrezee kaa) akbaar
paper	kaagaz
razor	ustaraa
soap	saabun
stamp	tikat
toothpaste	manjan
washing powder	kapre done kaa saabun

a little	toraa
big	baraa
enough	kaafee
more	aur
small	chotaa
too much/many	bahut/adik

How much is this?

is kaa daam kyaa hai?

I think it's too expensive.

yeh bahut mahegaa/mahegee hai (m/f)

Can you lower the price?

is kaa daam kam keejije?

Do you accept credit cards?

kyaa aap kredit kaard lete/letee haing? (m/f)

TIME & DATES

What time is it?

It's (ten) o'clock.

Half past (ten).

Five past (ten).

When?

now

today

tomorrow/yesterday

kitne baje haing?

(das) baje haing

saare (das)

(das) baje kar paangch minat hain

kab?

ab

aj

kal (kal is used for both, but the meaning is clear from context)

day

evening

month

morning

night

week

year

din

shaam

maheanaa

saveraa/subhaa

raat

haftaa

saal/baras

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

somvaar

mangalvaar

budvaar

guruvaar/brihaspativaar

shukravaar

Saturday

Sunday

shanivaar

itvaar/ravivaar

TRANSPORT

When's the ... bus?

first

next

last

... bas kab jaaegee?

pehlaa/pehlee (m/f)

aglaa/aglee (m/f)

aakiree

What time does the ... leave?

... kitne baje jaayegaa/jaayeege? (m/f)

What time does the ... arrive?

... kitne baje pahungchegaa/pahungchegee? (m/f)

boat

bus

plane

train

naav (f)

bas (f)

havaaees jahaaz (m)

relgaaree (f)

How do we get to ...?

... kaise jaate haing?

I'd like a one-way/return ticket.

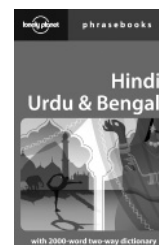
mujhe ek ektaraafaa/dotarafaa tikat chaahiye

1st class

2nd class

pratam shreni

dviteey shreni



Also available from Lonely Planet:
Hindi, Urdu & Bengali and India Phrasebooks

Glossary

This glossary is a sample of words and terms you may encounter on your travels through Rajasthan, Delhi and Agra. For definitions of food and drink, see p74.

agarbathi – incense
Agnikula – Fire Born; name of the mythological race of four *Rajput* clans who were manifested from a sacred fire on Mt Abu; one of the three principal races from which *Rajputs* claim descent
ahimsa – nonviolence and reverence for all life
angrezi – foreigner
apsara – celestial maiden
Aryan – Sanskrit word for ‘noble’; people who migrated from Persia and settled in northern India
ashram – spiritual community or retreat
autorickshaw – a noisy three-wheeled device with a motorbike engine and seats for two passengers behind the driver
Ayurveda – the ancient and complex science of Indian herbal medicine and healing
azan – Muslim call to prayer

bagh – garden
baithak – salon in a *haveli* where merchants received guests
baksheesh – tip, donation (alms) or bribe
bandh – general strike
bandhani – tie-dye
Banjaras – nomadic tribe, believed to be the ancestors of Europe’s Gypsies
baori – well, particularly a step-well with landings and galleries
betel – nut of the betel tree; chewed as a stimulant and digestive in a concoction known as *paan*
bhang – dried leaves and flowering shoots of the marijuana plant
Bhil – tribal people of southern Rajasthan
bhojanalya – basic restaurant or snack bar; known elsewhere in India as a *dhaba*
bidi – small, hand-rolled cigarette, really just a rolled-up leaf; also spelt as *beedi*
bindi – forehead mark
Bishnoi – tribe known for their reverence for the environment
Bodhi Tree – *Ficus religiosa*, under which Buddha attained enlightenment
bor – forehead ornament; also known as a *tikka* or *rakhadi*
Brahmin – member of the priest caste, the highest Hindu caste

Buddha – Awakened One; the originator of Buddhism; also regarded by Hindus as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu
bund – embankment, dyke
bunti – wooden block used in block-printing fabric; also known as a *chhapa*

cantonment – administrative and military area of a Raj-era town
chajera – mason employed by Marwari businessmen of Shekhawati to build *havelis*
chakki – handmill used to grind grain
chappals – sandals
charpoy – simple bed made of ropes knotted together on a wooden frame
chaupar – town square formed by the intersection of major roads
chhan – see *dogla*
chhapa – wooden block used in block-printing fabric; also known as a *bunti*
chhatra – cenotaph (literally ‘umbrella’)
chitera – painters of *havelis* in Shekhawati
choli – sari blouse
chowk – town square, intersection or marketplace
chowkidar – caretaker; night watchman
chudas – bangles worn by Rajasthani women
chureil – evil spirit; also known as a *dakin*
crore – 10 million
cycle-rickshaw – three-wheeled bicycle with seats for two passengers behind the rider

dacoit – bandit
dakin – evil spirit
Dalit – preferred term for India’s *Untouchable* caste
dalwar – sword
dargah – shrine or place of burial of a Muslim saint
darshan – offering or audience with someone; viewing of a deity
darwaza – gateway or door
dhaba – hole-in-the-wall restaurant or snack bar; boxed lunches delivered to office workers
dharamsala – pilgrims guest house
dhobi ghat – place where clothes are washed
dhobi-wallah – person who washes clothes
dhoti – length of fabric worn by men, which is drawn up between the legs
dhurrie – cotton rug
Digambara – Sky Clad; a Jain sect whose monks show disdain for worldly goods by going naked
Diwan-i-Am – hall of public audience

Diwan-i-Khas – hall of private audience
dogla – building adjacent to a village dwelling in which livestock and grain are kept; also known as a *chhan*
dupatta – long scarf for women often worn with the *salwar kameez*
durbar – royal court; also a government

gaddi – throne of a Hindu prince
ganja – dried flowering tips of marijuana plant
gaon – village
garh – fort
ghat – steps or landing on a river; range of hills or road up hills
ghazal – Urdu song derived from poetry; sad love theme
ghoomer – dance performed by women during festivals and weddings
gopis – milkmaids; Krishna was very fond of them
gram panchayat – government at the village level
Gujjars – people traditionally engaged in animal husbandry
gurdwara – Sikh temple
guru – teacher or holy person

Harijan – name (no longer considered acceptable) given by Gandhi to India’s *Untouchables*, meaning ‘children of god’
hathi – elephant
hathphool – ornament worn on the back of the hand by Rajasthani women
haveli – traditional, ornately decorated residence
hijra – eunuch
hookah – water pipe
howdah – seat for carrying people on an elephant’s back

IMFL – Indian Made Foreign Liquor; beer or spirits produced in India
Induvansa – Race of the Moon (Lunar Race); one of the three principal races from which *Rajputs* claim descent

jagirdari – feudal system of serfdom imposed on the peasants of Rajasthan
Jagirdars – feudal lords of Rajasthan
jali – carved marble lattice screen; also refers to the holes or spaces produced through carving timber
Jats – traditionally people who were engaged in agriculture; today Jats play a strong role in administration and politics
jauhar – ritual mass suicide by immolation, traditionally performed by *Rajput* women after military defeat to avoid dishonour
jhonpa – village hut with mud walls and thatched roof
jogi – priest
jootis – traditional leather shoes of Rajasthan; men’s *jootis* often have curled-up toes; also known as *mojaris*
Julaha – weaver caste

kabas – the holy rats believed to be the incarnations of local families at Karni Mata Temple at Deshnok
Kalbelias – nomadic tribal group associated with snake charming
karma – Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh principle of retributive justice for past deeds
kashida – embroidery on *jootis*
kathputli – puppeteer; also known as a *putli-wallah*
khadi – homespun cloth; Mahatma Gandhi encouraged people to spin *khadi* rather than buy English cloth
khadim – Muslim holy servant or mosque attendant
kharfi – monsoon
kheis – shawl; also known as a *pattu*
kot – fort
kotwali – police station
Kshatriya – warrior or administrator caste, second in the caste hierarchy; *Rajputs* claim lineage from the *Kshatriyas*
kuldevi – clan goddess; every Hindu family pays homage to one
kund – lake or tank
kundan – type of jewellery featuring *meenakari* on one side and precious stones on the other
kurta – long cotton shirt with either a short collar or no collar

lakh – 100,000
lingam – phallic symbol; symbol of Shiva
loharis – form of *bandhani* that gives a ripple effect
lungi – worn by men, this loose, coloured garment (similar to a sarong) is pleated by the wearer at the waist to fit snugly

madrassa – Islamic college
Mahabharata – Vedic epic poem of the Bharata dynasty; describes the battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas
mahal – house, palace
maharaj kumar – son of a maharaja; prince
maharaja – literally ‘great king’; princely ruler; also known as maharana, maharao and maharawal
maharani – wife of a princely ruler or a ruler in her own right
Mahavir – the 24th and last *tirthankar*
mahout – elephant driver/keeper
mandana – folk paintings in red chalk on village dwellings
mandapa – chamber before the inner sanctum of a temple
mandir – temple
mantra – sacred word or syllable used by Buddhists and Hindus to aid concentration; metric psalms of praise found in the *Vedas*
Marathas – warlike central Indians who controlled much of India at times and fought against the *Mughals* and *Rajputs*

marg – major road
masjid – mosque
Marwar – kingdom of the Rathore dynasty that ruled from Mandore, and later from Jodhpur
mataji – female priest; also a respectful form of address to a mother or older woman
meenakari – type of enamelwork used on ornaments and jewellery
mehfilkhana – Islamic building in which religious songs are sung
mehndi – henna; intricate henna designs applied by women to their hands and feet
mela – fair, festival
Mewar – kingdom of the Sisodia dynasty; ruled Udaipur and Chittorgarh
Moghul – see Mughal
mojaris – see *jootis*
moksha – release from the cycle of birth and death
monsoon – rainy season; June to October
moosal – pestle
mosar – death feast
Mughal – Muslim dynasty of Indian emperors from Babur to Aurangzeb (16th to 18th centuries)

namaz – Muslim prayers
nawab – Muslim ruling prince or powerful landowner
nilgai – antelope
niwas – house, building
NRI – Non-Resident Indian

odhni – headscarf
okhli – mortar; bowl for grinding grain with a *moosal*
Om – sacred invocation that represents the essence of the divine principle

paag – turban; also called *pagri* and *safa*
paan – chewable preparation made from betel leaves, nuts and lime
pagri – see *paag*
pahar – hill
panchayat sammiti – local government representing several villages
panghat poojan – ceremony performed at a village well following the birth of a child
pattu – shawl; also known as a *kheis*
payal – anklet worn by Rajasthani women
PCO – public call office
pida – low folding chair featuring decorative woodcarving, traditionally made in Shekhawati and Bikaner
pitar – soul of a dead man
pitari – soul of a woman who has died before her husband
pol – gate
prasad – sacred food offered to the gods
puja – literally ‘respect’; offering or prayer

purdah – custom among some conservative Muslims (also adopted by some Hindus, especially the Rajputs) of keeping women in seclusion; veiled
putli-wallah – puppeteer; also known as a *kathputli*
Rabari – nomadic tribe from Jodhpur area
raga – any conventional pattern of melody and rhythm that forms the basis for free composition
raj – rule or sovereignty; British Raj (sometimes just Raj) refers to British rule before 1947
raja – king; also *rana*
Rajputs – Sons of Princes; Hindu warrior caste, former rulers of western India
rakhadi – forehead ornament; also known as a *bor* or *tikka*
rana – see *raja*
rani – female ruler; wife of a king
rawal – nobleman
reet – bride price; opposite of dowry
Road – railway town that serves as a communication point to a larger town off the line, eg Mt Abu and Abu Road
RSRTC – Rajasthan State Road Transport Corporation
RTDC – Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation

sadar – main
sadhu – ascetic, holy person, one who is trying to achieve enlightenment; usually addressed as ‘swamiji’ or ‘babaji’
safa – see *paag*
sagar – lake, reservoir
sahib – respectful title applied to a gentleman
sal – gallery in a palace
salwar kameez – traditional dresslike tunic and trouser combination for women
sambar – deer
sapera – snake charmer; traditionally associated with the Kalbelias tribe
sati – suicide by immolation; banned more than a century ago, it is still occasionally performed
Scheduled Tribes – government classification for tribal groups of Rajasthan; the tribes are grouped with the lowest casteless class, the Dalits
shikar – hunting expedition
Sikh – member of the monotheistic religion Sikhism, which separated from Hinduism in the 16th century and has a military tradition; Sikh men can be recognised by their beards and turbans
sikhara – temple-spire or temple
silavat – stone carvers
Singh – literally ‘lion’; a surname adopted by Rajputs and Sikhs
Sufi – Muslim mystic
Suryavansa – Race of the Sun (Solar Race); one of the three principal races from which Rajputs claim descent
tabla – pair of drums
tempo – noisy three-wheeled public transport; bigger than an autorickshaw

thakur – Hindu caste; nobleman
tikka – a mark devout Hindus put on their foreheads with *tikka* powder; also known as a *bor* or *rakhadi*
tirthankars – the 24 great Jain teachers
tonga – two-wheeled passenger vehicle drawn by horse or pony
toran – shield-shaped device above a lintel, which a bridegroom pierces with his sword before claiming his bride
torana – elaborately sculpted gateway before temples
tripolia – triple gateway

Untouchable – lowest caste or ‘casteless’, for whom the most menial tasks are reserved; the name derives from the belief that higher castes risk defilement if they touch one; formerly known as Harijan, now Dalit

Vaishya – merchant caste; the third caste in the hierarchy
Vedas – Hindu sacred books; collection of hymns composed during the 2nd millennium BC and divided into four books: Rig-Veda, Yajur-Veda, Sama-Veda and Atharva-Veda

wallah – man; added onto almost anything, eg *dhobi-wallah*, *chai-wallah*, *taxi-wallah*

yagna – self-mortification

zenana – women’s quarters
zila parishad – government at district level

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