

Kashmir - 4 days

go guide

don't leave home without it



A World Of Discovery



Located in the vale of Kashmir, with its snow dusted mountains, serene lakes and wildflower meadows, Srinagar's picturesque lakeside setting allows for a relaxing getaway aboard a traditional Kashmiri houseboat.

- Laundry, drinks, items of a personal nature
- Tipping - an entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Arrive Srinagar



Welcome to the Kashmir Valley! Arrive into Srinagar by flight or road where you'll be met by our representative. After boarding your traditional Kashmiri houseboat docked on the shoreline of Dal Lake, the afternoon allows for an enjoyable stroll through the waterside gardens of the Mughal rulers. With a backdrop of rolling hills and the Dal lake, lies Nishat Bagh (the Garden of Gladness) laid out by Asaf Khan in 1632. Time allows you to enjoy the beauty of this and number of other Mughal gardens within the vicinity.

En route to the other gardens it is possible to see Mihrbahri people (market gardeners who have lived around the lakes for centuries) going about their daily lives, tending to their floating vegetable and flower beds cleverly shielded within clumps of floating weed and water's edge Poplar and Willow trees.

Returning to your floating hotel, the remainder of the evening is spent at leisure and overnight aboard your houseboat. **Overnight - Srinagar (L, D)**

Day 2 : Gulmarg

Today drive west through the avenues of Poplar trees and fertile rice fields, passing small villages

to Gulmarg – India's premier winter sports town. Sitting at an altitude of 2650m and offering panoramic views of Vale of Kashmir, Gulmarg is the ideal place for a little outdoor adventure. Opt to ski in the winter, hike or ride horseback along the lofty trails of Pine forest, play a round of golf, fish in the mountain streams (particularly good for trout) or picnic in the flower filled meadows, if you choose. Lunch is included and after a day of outdoor pursuits return to your houseboat on the lake. **Overnight - Srinagar (B, L, D)**

Day 3 : Boat trip on Dal Lake



Today take a shikara (a traditional wooden boat found only waters of the Jammu and Kashmir) to the early morning floating vegetable market. Passing many other shikara's along the way, ferrying people, produce and freshly caught fish across the lake.

The boat ride continues with a leisurely cruise around the 15.5 sq km lake. As the shikara plies its way toward the wetlands of Bod Dal and Lokut Dal you'll pass small island enclaves, narrow bridges, tree lined boulevards, houseboats cruising, Mughal gardens and pavilions. Returning to your houseboat in the evening.

Overnight - Srinagar (B, L, D)

Day 4 : Srinagar

Arrangements conclude after breakfast with house boat check out and onward departure transfer to the airport or awaiting transportation.(B)

WHAT YOU SEE AND WHAT YOU GET

Trip Highlights

- Srinagar - lakeside retreat with with colourful floating flower and market gardens
- Living aboard a Kashmiri houseboat moored on lake Dal
- Gulmarg - outdoor pursuits opt to hike, picnic, ski, horse ride or fish
- Boat trip the to floating produce market
- Views of the Kashmir Valley and the majestic Himalayas

What's Included

- 3 breakfasts, 3 lunches and 3 dinners
- 3 nights aboard a 3 star traditional Kashmiri houseboat on Dal lake. Our houseboat comprises of 3 bedrooms, each with its own private entrance and ensuite facilities. A communal lounge and dining area is available for the use of all onboard.
- Shakari boat trip (traditional Kashmiri row boat) on Dal Lake
- Day trip to Gulmarg
- Arrival and departure transfers on day 1 and day 4
- Services of an English speaking local guide for sightseeing on day 2 and day 3
- Entrance fees to all included sights
- All transfers and transportation in private chauffeur driven vehicles

What's Not Included

- International flights and visa

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Tipping

Tipping is much a part of Indian Culture. For a job well done we would suggest that you reserve the following amount per person per day to cover tips along the way.

- INR400 (USD\$8.50) if the day includes local guide & sightseeing
- INR200 (USD\$4.50) if the day excludes local guide & sightseeing

Secular India

India, despite being a secular state, harbours arguably the world's richest heritage of spirituality and religious experience. India's major religion, Hinduism is practised by more than 80% of the population. In numbers, that translates to in excess of 700 million people.

No definition of Hinduism truly justifies the true meaning and significance of Hinduism. Hinduism has many layers. Hinduism is not just a religion but a complex body of social, cultural, religious beliefs and practises evolved in and largely confined to the Indian subcontinent. Hinduism is marked by a caste system, an outlook tending to view all forms and theories as aspects of one eternal being and truth, and the practice of the way of works, the way of knowledge, or the way of devotion as a means of release from the round of rebirths. It is not based upon a single scripture or the teachings of one prophet. It has no founder, central authority or hierarchy. You can't be converted; to be a Hindu you must be born one. The strictly orthodox maintain only a person born in India of Hindu parents can truly claim to be Hindu.

Hinduism has the largest number of adherents of any religion in Asia. Along with Buddhism, Jainism and Zoroastrianism, it is one of the oldest extant religions with roots extending back to 1000BC. Buddhism and Jainism arose around the same time as one another in the 6th century BC at a time of social and religious discontent. Both were reactions against the strictures of Brahminical Hinduism. Although more recent, Sikhism too has its roots in a protest movement in the late 15th century, the bhakti (devotional tradition) that started in southern India as a reaction against the caste system and Brahmin domination of ritual. It was conceived at a time of great social upheaval and was an attempt to fuse the best of Islam and Hinduism.

Today, there are some 16 million Sikhs in India, mostly from Punjab. The Golden Temple in Amritsar is the holiest shrine of Sikhism. Islam was introduced to the north by invading armies (in the 16th century the Mughal empire controlled much of India) and to the south by Arab traders.

Today, Islam is the largest minority religion in the country with in excess of 100 million adherents. Christianity arrived in southern India not with the first Europeans but with Syrian immigrants in the 4th century. A sect of the Syrian Orthodox church was established and still survives today, along with other eastern Orthodox sects. Catholicism arrived with the Portuguese and Protestantism with the English and Dutch. Today, India has around 18

million Christians, of who around 75% are South Indian.

Fabulous Food

India's vast range of climates, cultures and peoples has produced a very diverse culinary repertoire. Curry is the word that springs to mind when people think of India food. Believe it or not, there is no such thing as 'curry' in India. It's an English invention, an all-purpose term to cover the whole gamut of Indian spicing. Although all Indian food is certainly not curry, this is the basis of Indian cuisine. Curry doesn't have to be that hot it'll blow your head, although it can be made that way, if you ask! Rather, for the most part Indian food is very, very aromatic, since the spices used by Indian chefs and cooks in India don't arrive in the cooking pot via a pre-packed tub of spice.

Indian chefs and cooks have about 25 spices on their regular list and it is from these that they produce the curry flavour.

Normally spices are freshly ground with a pestle and mortar, and blended in certain combinations to produce varying flavours and heat. It is the freshness of the spices that transform the dish. Curries can be vegetable, meat-lamb, mutton or chicken in content, though never beef. The cow is sacred to the Hindu people and India in general, so it is extremely rare to see beef on any menu across the country. Lamb also substitutes beef at McDonalds in India. Ask for a Maharajah Mac!

Festival India

India is a country of colourful festivals and special events. Two of the biggest festivals in the Hindu calendar are Diwali (Deepavali) and Holi. Meanwhile, the Pushkar Camel festival in Rajasthan brings together one of the most colourful spectacles on earth.

Diwali – the Festival of Light is the happiest festival of the Hindu calendar. At night, countless oil lamps are lit to show Rama the way home from his period of exile. In all the festival lasts 5 days. On day 3, time is spent worshipping Lakshmi – the goddess of fortune. Traditionally, this is the beginning of the new financial year for companies. Diwali has also become the Festival of Sweets. Giving sweets has become as much of a part of the tradition as lighting oil lamps and firecrackers. It is also celebrated by the Jains as their New Years Day. For Diwali dates this year and next, please visit our website.

Holi – the Festival of Colour is one of most exuberant Hindu festivals, with people marking the end of winter by throwing coloured water and powder (gulal) at one another. It gets quite mad! Don't wear good clothes on this day, and prepare to duck! On the night before Holi, bonfires are built to symbolise destruction of the evil demon Holika. It is mainly a northern festival; there is no real winter to end in the south, so it isn't as widespread there. Please visit our website for Holi dates this year and next.

If you are interested in visiting India whilst one of the above or many other festivals are on, head to the India - Unique Adventures section of our website.

Kashmiri Houseboats

The Houseboats of Kashmir, unlike their counterparts in Kerala are usually moored at the edges of the Dal Lake. The oldest houseboat on the Dal dates from the early 1900's. All boats whether heritage or modern are made of wood and are complimented by a number of intricately carved panels (both internally and externally) featuring design and motifs typical of the region. Houseboats come in different sizes with varying levels of creature comforts from basic 2 star standard to 5 star deluxe.

Our featured itinerary offers a 3 star standard houseboat comprising 3 bedrooms, each with its own private entrance and ensuite facilities. A communal lounge and dining area (and sometimes a small kitchen) are also available for the use of all onboard. Various other houseboat accommodation is available including deluxe, luxury and fully self contained options. Please contact us for more information.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Climate

India has a three-season year known as the hot, the wet and the cool. The best time to visit is between late September and April when temperatures are cooler and therefore ideal for sightseeing. In the summer months of May to July it is less crowded and conditions are perfect for sightseeing and photography, although parts of India are extremely hot. July signals the start of the monsoon or wet season that continues until early or mid September. Although the weather is humid, the days are punctuated by intermittent rainfall and the monsoon in India is actually quite spectacular and quite refreshing.

Health Requirements

It is recommended that you be vaccinated for Tetanus and Polio, if you haven't had a booster in the last ten years. Food and waterborne diseases are more common, so we recommend vaccinations for Typhoid (valid 3 years) and Hepatitis A (validity varies). You are also advised to take anti-Malarial medication.

Currency

The Indian Rupees (INR) is non-exportable and only available in India. Pounds Sterling, US Dollars and Euros are easily exchanged upon arrival at any major bank or your hotel. ATM's are also available in all major towns and cities.

If planning on using your ATM card whilst in India, please let your bank know of your travel plans prior to departure to avoid your bank assuming that the transaction is fraudulent and blocking your card. Exchange rates are subject to fluctuation.

USD 1 = INR 45
GBP 1 = INR 75

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EURO 1 = INR 65
AUD 1 = INR 47

Time

India is 5 hours 30 mins ahead of GMT.

Essential Packing

- A small daypack for your day-to-day needs.
- A photocopy of your passport data pages.
- The voltage in India is 230-240V. Most outlets in India accept round 3 pin plugs (not a UK, European or USA plugs). You should pack a Universal Adaptor and check that it is suitable for India.
- Insect repellent to guard against pesky mosquitos
- Spare camera batteries/memory card so you can go snap happy.
- Consider packing some pencils, pens or modest educational supplies that can be given to village schools or street children.
- If you fancy a tittle, take advantage of Duty Free buys.
- Buy some Indian Rupees at the airport on arrival.
- Buy a phrasebook and practice your holiday Hindi.
- Keep a supply of small notes for local transactions.

Holiday Money

Funds collected in India for entrance fees and tip kitty (if applicable to your holiday) or optional excursion that you may wish to participate in are payable in local currency (INR).

Pre-Tour Accommodation

If arriving on day 1 of a holiday, that includes an airport arrival transfer (as indicated in the 'What you Get' section of this Go Guide) we will be at the airport, ready to transfer you to your hotel. Further if you are booking pre-tour accommodation with us an airport arrival transfer will also be provided. If arriving prior to 9am on day 1 (essentially on a flight that arrives very, very early in the morning) you will need to purchase a night of pre-tour accommodation to save you waiting until standard hotel check in time, which is generally 2pm.

Arrival Transfers

If your tour or short stay includes an airport arrival transfer (as indicated in the 'What you Get' section of this Go Guide) from Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport, our arrival procedure is as follows:

Arrive to Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport, where after you have attended to customs and immigration formalities, please proceed to the arrival hall. Please have your tour voucher handy and make it available to our representative who will be waiting for you in the arrivals hall, holding a prominent on the go tours logo signboard, ready to escort you to our awaiting transportation and onward to your tour start hotel

If, for any reason you have trouble locating our representative (after waiting 20 minutes in the

arrival hall) or your flight to India is delayed please call the emergency contact number as stated on your tour voucher and our local office who will then advise on the best course of action.

If travelling on our Captivating Kerala tour (with arrival via Kochi Airport) or one of our 'Short Stays' where an airport arrival transfer is included in your holiday, the procedure for meeting you at the airport is the same as those detailed above.

Visas

All foreign nationals must obtain a visa for a visit to India and it is essential the visa be procured prior to travel. A 6 month single entry visa (valid from the date of issue) is issued for most nationals planning to visit India. If you are planning to visit a neighbouring country such as Nepal, Bhutan or Sri Lanka and return to India you will require a multiple entry visa which must be procured in advance of travel. In order to obtain this, you will need to provide the embassy with a detailed itinerary and full flight information, showing the dates and ports of exit and re-entry to India.

If you are a resident in the UK we offer a visa service to save you the inconvenience of having to queue at the embassy, please visit our website or contact us for further information.

Visa requirements are subject to change and that visa procurement prior to departure is solely the responsibility of the traveller and not of on the go. Please also ensure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your planned date of return from India.

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