

short stay: kolkata

# go guide

don't leave home without it



## short stayspotlight

### what you see

**Kolkata:**

- Victoria memorial
- Indian Museum
- Jain temple
- Howrah Bridge flowermarket

### what you get

- 2 breakfasts
- 2 nights - 3/4★ hotels
- Guided sightseeing in Kolkata
- Airport arrival and departure transfer
- Touring and excursions as per itinerary
- Local English speaking specialist guides at local sights
- Entrance fees to all included monuments
- Chauffeur driven air conditioned vehicle



## on location

Your guide to on the ground...

### visa requirements

Visas are required by all visitors to India. It is essential the visa is procured prior to travel. Visa forms are available from us and also supplied upon booking. Please ensure your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your planned date of return from India. Please be advised visa requirements are subject to change. Visa procurement is also the responsibility of the traveller and not of on the go.

### climate

India has a three-season year known as the hot, the wet and the cool. The coolest time to visit is late September through April. Temps during this time are ideal for sightseeing. The hot season runs from around April through July. Conditions are hot and dry, especially in Rajasthan. July signals the start of the monsoon or wet season that continues until around end September. Although the weather is humid, the days are punctuated by intermittent rainfall.

### time

India is 5 hours 30 mins ahead of GMT.

### money

USD\$1 = INR46 (subject to fluctuation). The Indian Rupee is exchangeable only in India. Exchange facilities are available at various bureau de changes and banks. A few ATM machines exist in major towns and cities.

### 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. We recommend vaccinations for Typhoid and Hepatitis A. You are also advised to take anti-Malarial medication. Information can change so please check with your local health care provider.

## how much?

### TIPPING

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

**CAMERA FEES**  
 Please note that nearly all temples, museums, game parks and sights has a fee for camera use.

- Can of coke (330ml) INR40-50
- Mineral water (local, 500ml or 1L) INR30
- Meal for 2 (entree, main, local beer) INR1200
- Beer (local brew Kingfisher - 650ml) INR150

## things to bring

- Insect repellent to guard against pesky mosquitos
- Spare camera batteries/film so you can go snap happy
- If you fancy a tippie, take advantage of Duty Free buys
- Buy some Indian Rupees at the airport on arrival
- Buy a phrasebook and practice your holiday Hindi.
- A small daypack for your day-to-day needs.
- Keep a supply of small notes for local transactions.
- Keep a photocopy of your passport data pages.

## top experiences

- Shop for textiles, spices & more on Chowringhee Road, Kolkata
- Watch the incredible movement of people over the Howrah bridge
- Visit the Dakshineswar Hindu Temple with its 12 Shiva shrines
- Calling all ladies! Indulge in some traditional mendi henna decoration on your hands. Non permanent!
- Climb the 218 steps of the Ochterlony Monument to get a spectacular view of the city





# kolkata: itinerary

## day 1 - kolkata

Kolkata. Transfer to your hotel. Rest of day free to explore your way. Overnight - Kolkata

## day 2 - city sightseeing

Kolkata - breakfast. Enjoy a sightseeing tour of the metropolis, including the Victoria Memorial, the Indian Museum, the Jain Temple & the Howrah bridge.

Formerly known as Calcutta, India's second-largest city (pop. 14,000,000) is a fascinating east coast metropolis. Visit the Marble Palace mansion (to see the paintings and statues), the Jain Temple, Dakshineswar Hindu Temple (12 Shiva shrines), Belur Math (a Buddhist monastery), the Victoria Memorial, Dalhousie Square (interesting architecture) and the Nakhoda Mosque. For a spectacular view of the city, climb the Octherlony Monument (218 steps up).

The Indian Museum is a 19th-century British institution with collections of ancient art and relics beginning from India's Buddhist era. Kolkata is also the home of Mother Teresa's Ashram Home of Children - a visit there can be an emotional and enlightening experience.

For a spot of shopping head to the Maidan (a market) and as in many large Indian cities, Kolkata has a fascinating train station, worth a visit even if you're not taking a train. A microcosm of Indian life, Howrah Station is filled with thousands of people eating, sleeping and even living in its interiors. Outside the station is one of the city's most recognized structures - the massive steel Howrah Bridge across the Hooghly River. If the volume of people in the station doesn't impress you, the mass movement of people across the bridge will. A less modern form of transportation is readily available in Kolkata - the hand-pulled rickshaw. A few years back the Indian government tried to take them off the streets, but relented in the face of opposition from the pullers themselves. Overnight - Kolkata.

## day 3 - kolkata

Kolkata - breakfast. Transfer to Kolkata airport for your onward flight.

## 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!

Thalis are an all-purpose Indian dish offering a variety of curried vegetable dishes, relishes, poppadams, puris or chapatis and a mountain of rice. Often served on a metal tray with a number of small bowls known as katoris holding each dish or just small indentations moulded into the metal tray, Thalis are consistently tasty and cheap.

## 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. Diwali dates - 17 October 2009 • 5 November 2010

**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 (gulaal) 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. Holi dates- 01 March 2010 • 20 March 2011

## etiquette

Wherever the compass points in India, the people, their customs, creed and language are different from one region to the next. Despite some of the inevitable 'ups and downs' of travelling in India, you will generally be accorded great respect. In return, please demonstrate sensitivity and respect for local customs.

- Dress conservatively and ensure limbs are covered if visiting places of religious importance. This applies to men and women.
- Never touch a carving or statue of a deity within a temple.
- Do not touch locals on the head or point the soles of your feet at a person, religious shrine or image of a deity.
- Don't be surprised if you are the centre of attention when travelling in India. Staring is not a social taboo.

- Do carry toilet paper with you. Don't throw it down the WC without checking for a basket to put it in (narrow pipes clog).
- Don't be surprised to see men defecating or urinating in public when restrooms are not readily available.
- Do be open and friendly in conversations with locals. Indians can be quite talkative, asking strangers questions that might be interpreted as overly personal in other cultures.

## 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, it is not simply 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. 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.

The go guide & information contained herein has been compiled with care and in good faith. It is as accurate an illustration as can be given with regard to the proposed itinerary. Circumstances beyond our control such as inclement weather or local conditions could force us to amend the proposed itinerary. This document does not form part of a contract between the client and on the go and their affiliates. Any costs shown may be subject to change but are an accurate reflection of costs at the time of writing this go guide. Please also be advised that visa requirements are subject to change and remain the responsibility of the traveller and not that of on the go.



68 north end road, west kensington, london, W14 9EP • 020 7371 1113 • info@onthegotours.com  
3/690 brunswick street, new farm, brisbane, QLD, australia 4005 • 1300 855 684 • aus-info@onthegotours.com

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