

Trip Notes

ROOT INSTITUTE FUNDRAISING PILGRIMAGE TO BUDDHA'S SITES TO CELEBRATE THEIR 30TH YEAR

1 - 14 January, 2018

13 days, 12 nights



Time: India is 4:30 hours behind Australian EST and 5:30 hours Eastern Time.

Language - Hindi is the official national language of India, however, there are 22 official languages. English is also widely spoken and you will be escorted by a local guide who speaks Hindi and English.

Visa/Entry Requirements - Passports must be valid for six months beyond the length of stay. Visas are required for all travelers. You will get a 60 day visa on arrival but you have to book apply and pay online before your arrival at <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html>. You will then pickup your visa at the airport.

You will also need an Indian reference. Please use us if you wish: **Ekno Tours & Travels PVT LTD, Dickeys Cottage, Village Molhi, PO Sidhpur, HP 176057, Tel: +91 98166 85999 India**

Vaccinations and Your Health - We recommend that you contact either your GP or consult your nearest Travel Doctor about Vaccinations. If you have a medical condition and are taking medication for this please let us know at the time of booking.

Insurance - Travel insurance is compulsory. We recommend that you take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with you while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. The documents should be stored separately from the originals.

Climate - Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found at www.accuweather.com.

Suggested Packing List

A complete list will be provided with deposit documentation.

Luggage

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 15kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of 5kg. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that Indian authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage maybe confiscated.

Domestic airlines within India have recently reviewed their checked luggage limits, as such all airlines have now implemented a maximum checked luggage limit of 15kg. Please keep this in mind when packing for your upcoming trip. Any excess luggage charges incurred will be at the expense of the passenger.

Tipping

Tipping is a firm and expected element in the tourism industry. A nominated tipping amount is included in all group tour pricing, however is not collected in your final payment received by us. This is so that it can be paid directly to your Local Guide who will then distribute the tips among your main service providers – guides, drivers and attendants – on your behalf.

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Any other tipping, such as tips for bathroom attendants or hotel porters that are taking luggage to your room, is at your discretion based on satisfaction of services received, as are gratuities for additional requested special services. The final tipping amount will be outlined in your final documentation.

Exchanging Cash - Machines that dispense cash are readily available throughout India which accept overseas debit/credit cards. They will dispense Indian Rupees in cash only (up to IR10,000 or US\$200 equivalent at any one time). Please notify your bank that you intend travelling to India. If you have cash, it is highly recommended that when travelling to cities outside of Delhi, Jaipur and Agra, and other main cities that extra care and attention is paid when exchanging money. Australian, US Dollars Euros are easily exchanged throughout India however, other currencies can generally be exchanged in hotels and airports provided notes are new and undamaged. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your Local Guide will remind you to do this before departure.

Personal Expenses

You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of USD250 per week should be sufficient; however for those that can't resist a bargain, consider allocating a higher amount.

Your India tour does not include meals while on tour (only breakfast), providing you with freedom to explore the city and discover unique culinary delights. With this in mind, you will also need to allocate a certain amount of money for dinners, snacks and drinks while on tour. These meals are at your own arrangements so the amount allocated will be different for each tour participant.

Optional Tours - Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by

your Local Guide.

Your Accommodation - All group tour hotels have private Western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and a telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty please speak to your Local Guide. Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a boutique family run guesthouse in a smaller town or a heritage type hotel. In remote areas accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all Western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local 4 star standard, but do please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between United States and India. Rest assured that all hotels used by us are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

Late Check-Out - Late check-out until 12pm is included in this group tour for passengers travelling on our package in the last hotel of stay. If you want to stay past the 12pm deadline please let us know on at the time of booking as extra charges will apply.

Development - Although India is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in United States. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in United States; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your Local Guide.

Traffic in India - Main and inner city roads in India have a reputation for being very congested.

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For this reason, it may not always be possible to return to your hotel after sightseeing to freshen up before going to the restaurant for dinner. Roads in India have generally been improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road – not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the sections below are approximations only.

Seatbelts - Please note that seatbelts are not compulsory by law in India and therefore the Indian people largely choose not to wear them. For this reason some vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts or they may be hidden underneath protective seat covers. It is recommended that where seatbelts are available customers must use them and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving.

Rail Journeys - Your trip may or may not involve a train journey in India. Ekno Experience tries to book 1st or 2nd A/c depending on the availability. Getting on and off the trains in India can be quite disordered and confrontational as passengers will start boarding well before people have finished getting off! If your group is disembarking at a stop that is not the end of the line, the train will only stop for 10 minutes and you must have your luggage ready and by your side a few minutes before the train pulls into the station. Follow your Local Guide at all times.

Climbing Steps - Sightseeing at nearly all of the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defence against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails. Hindu and Buddhist temples also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance,

and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

Electricity

240V 50Hz

Electric Plug Details

Indian-style plug with two circular metal pins above a large circular grounding pin



OR



European plug with two circular metal pins

Consider Cultural Differences

India has many religions, cultures and histories. Foreign tourists, particularly females, may be stared at as many Indian women don't often go out without their father or husband. Be considerate of this belief, dress with consideration and don't take it personally.

Safety & Security

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade states, 'Due to the risk of harassment and assault, women should take particular care in all parts of India and exercise caution even if they are travelling in a group.' For full advice on travelling to India, visit <http://smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/India>

Appropriate Dress

When visiting temples or mosques, both men and women should dress in non-revealing clothes. Full-length trousers with a shirt or t-shirt for men; and pants or skirts well below the knee with a top that covers the shoulders and upper arms for women. Women might also consider carrying a 'modesty shawl' in their daypack – this could be a sarong or light scarf – which they can wear over their shoulders and heads to feel more comfortable

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while sightseeing at mosques. When visiting Jain temples, you must not wear or take in any leather items such as belts, watches, camera straps, purses and shoes.

Religious sites and homes throughout India – for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims or Buddhists to name a few – require all visitors to remove their shoes to enter. Even if you then need to walk outdoors, over hot or rough ground, you will not be allowed to wear shoes. You will often find shoe storage rooms near the entrance of a site where it is customary to leave your shoes near the entrance. Occasionally there are ‘shoe minders’ who will offer to keep your shoes safe for a ‘tip’ – this is not compulsory so each customer can choose to tip for this service or not. If you do not want to remove them, you will have to remain outside.

Bring some shoes that easily slip on and off, and carry a pair of thick, old socks in your daypack, which you can wear to protect your feet from any rough or hot surfaces.

The itinerary below will indicate when you need to consider this.

Itinerary changes

1. Our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however order of events and sightseeing may vary according to local conditions.

2. Many roads are uneven and or sections may be undergoing repair. Travelling by car is a slow process in India and usually cars travel on average 50kms per hour for distance travel (ie 500kms take 10 hours).

3. The domestic airlines in this region have frequent schedule changes. We will make alternative arrangements if flights are cancelled and your Local Guide will be informed of these.

Flight Delays or Changes to Arrival Times

Due to unforeseen circumstances, flights can be delayed, and therefore connecting flights may be missed. If you find yourself in this situation, please contact our India office on + 91 9418791001 (Local Guide) OR + 91 98166 85999 (24 hours) to urgently advise your arrival

details have changed. Please ensure you have details (flight number and arrival time) handy to pass on to our local office in India. This will ensure your Local Guide can be informed of your most up to date information and ensure someone is at the airport to meet you on arrival. If we are not advised of late changes and missed connections, Ekno Experience/Travels cannot guarantee someone will be able to meet you upon arrival in India as our local office will have no way of knowing which flight you will be arriving on.

We will not be responsible for providing reimbursement of transportation costs from the airport to your hotel in the event that our local office was not advised of changes to arrival times.

Itinerary

1 Jan 2018

Day 01:

Arrive in Delhi. Transfer from the International Airport to hotel in Delhi. Overnight Delhi.

2 Jan 2018

Day 02:

After breakfast at the hotel, meet with Root Institute representative who will accompany you on your Pilgrimage. We spend the day in the sights and sounds of Delhi, including the National Museum which houses the Sacred Relics of Buddha (5th-4th century BC) which were discovered in Uttar Pradesh (a state of India). The relics are outstanding specimens of Buddhist Art and are illustrated through exhibits in a variety of materials and forms from the three principal Buddhist forms - Hinayana, Mahayana & Vajrayana.

If time permitting, visit other Delhi monuments including India Gate, Rajpath and Secretariat Buildings. Overnight Delhi.

3 Jan 2018

Day 03:

Morning flight to Varanasi, considered the spiritual gateway of India and one of the oldest continuously

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inhabited cities in the world. Arrive in Varanasi late morning and check into your hotel. Sightseeing trip in Main Ghat area and Vishwanath Temple.

Varanasi is the holiest of the seven sacred cities in Hinduism and Jainism and played an important role in the development of Buddhism. This evening, participate in the breathtaking evening puja which accompanies sunset. Overnight Varanasi.

4 Jan 2018

Day 04:

Leave after breakfast for Sarnath, one of the four main Buddhist pilgrimage sites in North India. On arrival in Sarnath, visit the Deer Park where the Buddha taught The Four Noble Truths (his first teachings) after attaining enlightenment.

Afterwards, we visit Dhamekh Stupa and other Buddhist ruins including Chaukhandi Stupa and Mulganda Kuti Vihar. The Dharmek Stupa is said to mark the exact spot of the Buddha's first teaching of the Four Noble Truths. Return to Varanasi late afternoon. The evening is free to explore or rest at your leisure. Overnight Varanasi

5 Jan 2018

Day 05:

After a very early breakfast, we drive to Sravasti (approximately 8 hours) stopping for breaks along the way. Overnight Sravasti

Sravasti is where the Buddha spent many rainy seasons teaching to his disciples and spent the greater part of his monastic life.

6 Jan 2018

Day 06:

Spend the day around the ruins of Sravasti which are believed to be the originals of ancient Sravasti. Overnight Sravasti

7 Jan 2018

Day 07:

This morning we leave for Kushinagar (approximately 6 hours drive). Kushinagar is an important Pilgrimage

site where the Buddha attained paranirvana after his death and where the long statue of reclining Buddha is housed. The image was unearthed during the excavations of 1876. Carved from sandstone, the statue represents the dying Buddha reclining on his right side. The group can also visit the site of the Maitreya Statue Project. Overnight Kushinagar

8 Jan 2018

Day 08:

Our first stop after breakfast is Mahaparinirvana temple – the site of the reclining Buddha. After we visit the Rambhar Stupa - which marks Lord Buddha's cremation ground. Overnight Kushinagar

9 Jan 2018

Day 09:

After breakfast leave for Vaishali an important pilgrimage place as it is where 500 women were ordained by the Buddha.

On the way we visit Kesariya Stupa which was the venue where the Buddha delivered his Kalama Sutta. The Stupa has 5 large terraces which vary in shape and house a life like statue of Lord Buddha. Overnight Vaishali

10 Jan 2018

Day 10:

Depart for Nalanda Monastery (4 hours drive). Afternoon visit to Nalanda which was the most renowned university in ancient India and the home to the great Buddhist scholars). Established in the 5th century B.C. it remained the center of learning till the 12th century A.D.

Afternoon, we leave for Rajgir. Overnight Rajgir.

Rajgir was the lifetime of the Buddha and was the capital of the powerful Magadhan kingdom, ruled by the virtuous King Bimbisara.

11 Jan 2018

Day 11:

After breakfast, take the chairlift to visit Vultures Peak and the Japanese Stupa.

Vulture Peak Mountain is one of several sites

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frequented by the Buddha and his community of disciples for both training and retreat is the place where the Buddha gave sermons including the Heart Sutra. Late afternoon drive to Bodhgaya.

Overnight Root Institute, Bodhgaya

12 Jan 2018

Day 12:

After breakfast pilgrimage to Mahabodhi Stupa.

Overnight Bodhgaya

13 Jan 2018

Day 13:

Rest day. Night at Root Institute sponsored

14 Jan 2018

Day 14:

30 years of Root Institute Celebration. Breakfast at Root Institute sponsored

Includes

- Fully accompanied by representative of Root Institute
- Met on arrival at Delhi International Airport
- Accommodation with breakfast
- Flight from Delhi to Varanasi
- Private transport for all transfers and sightseeing as mentioned below
 1. Delhi airport pickup and drop off
 2. Sightseeing in Delhi
 3. Pickup Varanasi airport to hotel, sightseeing to Sarnath
 4. Car/Mini Bus from Varanasi – Sravasti – Kushinagar – Kesariya – Vaishali – Nalanda – Rajgir - Bodhgaya
- All attractions and entrance fees as per itinerary
- Boat Ride in Varanasi
- Local guides in Delhi, Varanasi, Sarnath, Nalanda and Rajgir
- Accompanied by local English speaking guide from Delhi to Bodhgaya

Excludes

- Airfares to and from India
- Indian visas
- Travel Insurance (compulsory)
- Lunch and dinner
- Occasional optional items not identified in itinerary description
- Tipping and personal expenses
- Donations
- Bottled water and other beverages not included with meals

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