



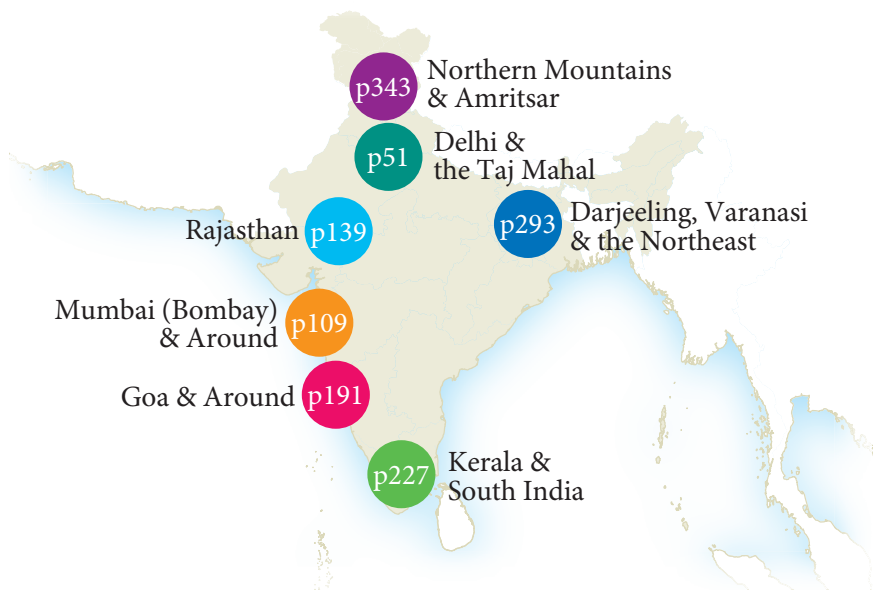
# Discover **India**

Experience the best  
of India

**This edition written and researched by**

**Abigail Blasi,**

**Paul Clammer, Mark Elliott, Paul Harding, Trent Holden, John Noble, Iain Stewart, Michael Benanav, Anirban Mahapatra, Daniel McCrohan, Isabella Noble, Kevin Raub, Sarina Singh**



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# This Is India

India fires the imagination and stirs the soul like no other place on earth, bristling with a mind-stirring mix of landscapes and cultural traditions. Your journey through India, no matter how fleeting, will blaze in your memory long after you've left its shores.

**Famously chaotic, India doesn't have to be intimidating.** True, the big cities can be bedlam, and the markets border on feverish, but there's a bounty of laid-back charms to explore too, from idyllic palm-fringed beaches and tranquil backwaters to sweeping deserts, snow-brushed mountains and lush green tea plantations.

**Natural beauty abounds, but man-made gems also dot the land.** India's history is one of the world's most epic tales, and it has carved its incredible, indelible mark throughout the sub-continent. Temples hide in forests, fortresses rise from the desert, and palaces, mausoleums and more line the banks of the holy rivers that feed India's deeply sacred essence.

**Spirituality is the common thread that weaves its way through India.** Religion is alive, and thriving. It's woven into almost every aspect of daily life and it enriches your experiences at every turn. Follow pilgrims on a temple trail, place an offering on a roadside shrine, smell wafts of incense and feel the well-worn stone of the temple floor beneath your bare feet.

**Nourishment of a different nature awaits you at restaurant tables everywhere.** You're about to jump on board one of the wildest culinary trips of your travelling life. Frying, simmering, sizzling, kneading, roasting and flipping a deliciously diverse repertoire of dishes, feasting your way through the subcontinent is a tongue-teasing ride to remember.

**India is indeed a feast of opportunities.** And even on a short trip you can go surprisingly in-depth and experience a remarkable range of wonders. Just try not to fit too much onto your plate. It's more rewarding to experience a small amount more fully; so slow down, relax and above all enjoy the phenomenon that is India.

“  
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India  
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long after  
you've left  
its shores.  
”





# India

External boundaries shown reflect the requirements of the Government of India.

AFGHANISTAN

CHINA  
TIBET

Jammu & Kashmir

Srinagar

Islamabad

Kabul

Leh

Manali

Gangotri

Dehra Dun

Shimla

Punjab

Rishikesh

Delhi

Agra

Jaipur

Pushkar

Jodhpur

Hyderabad

Udaipur

Gandhinagar

Ahmedabad

Mumbai

Bombay

Porbandar Coast

Sasan Gir Wildlife Sanctuary

Upper Godavari Valley

Aurangabad

Ajanta

Raipur

Chhattisgarh

Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh

Khajuraho

Varanasi

Lucknow

Patna

Bihar

Dhaka

Darjeeling

Gangtok

Sikkim

Itanagar

Guwahati (Gauhati)

Kaziranga National Park

Nagaland

Kohima

Shillong

Imphal

Manipur

Aizawl

Mizoram

Tripura

Agartala

West Bengal

Dhaka

Kolkata (Calcutta)

Simlipal National Park

Sunderbans Tiger Reserve

Mouth of the Ganges

Bhubaneswar

Odisha

Ranchi

Patna

Varanasi

Lucknow

Patna

Bihar

Dhaka

Darjeeling

Gangtok

Sikkim

Itanagar

Guwahati (Gauhati)

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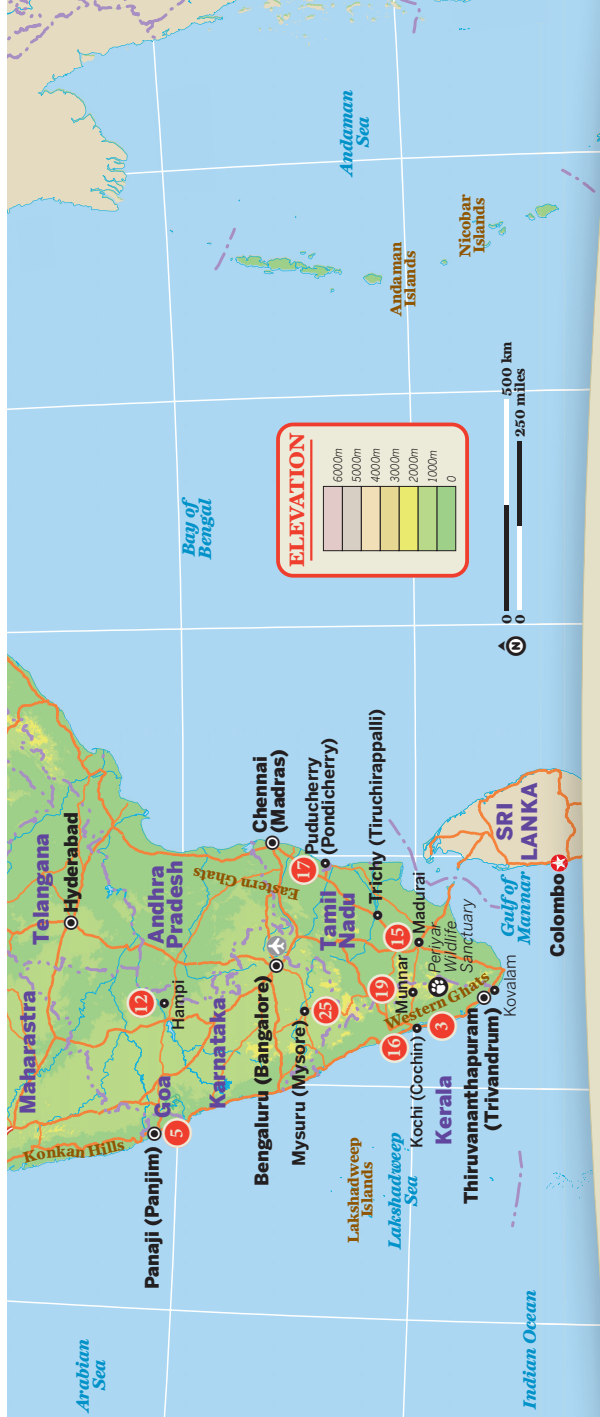
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Kohima

Shillong



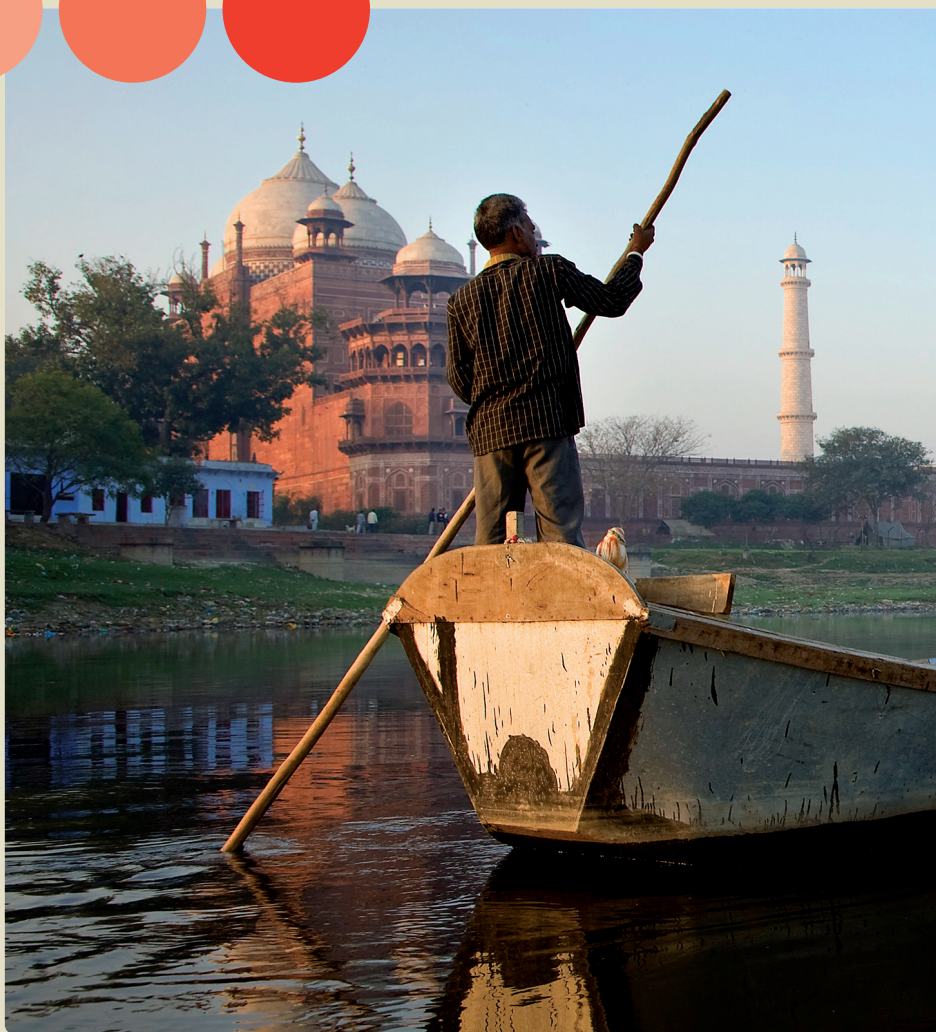
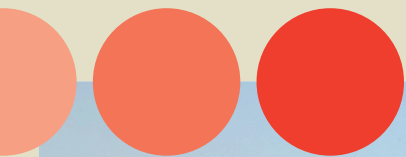
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## Top Highlights

- 1 Taj Mahal
- 2 Holy Varanasi
- 3 Backwaters of Kerala
- 4 Alluring Darjeeling
- 5 Goan Beaches
- 6 Sexy Khajuraho
- 7 Yoga in Rishikesh
- 8 Jaisalmer Fort
- 9 Delhi's Markets
- 10 Ellora Cave Temples
- 11 Tiger Safaris
- 12 Dreamy Hampi
- 13 Mumbai Architecture

- 14 Tibetan Buddhism
- 15 Meenakshi Amman Temple
- 16 Kochi
- 17 Puducherry Savoir Faire
- 18 Mehrangarh Fort, Jodhpur
- 19 Kerala's Tea & Spice Plantations
- 20 Darjeeling Toy Train
- 21 Udaipur
- 22 Camel Rides
- 23 Amritsar's Golden Temple
- 24 Delhi
- 25 Mysore Palace

# 25 India's Top Highlights





## Taj Mahal

The Taj Mahal (p98) rises from the beaten earth of Uttar Pradesh as it does in dreams, but even the wildest imaginings leave travellers underprepared for that breath-stealing moment when its gates are traversed and this magnificent world wonder comes into focus. It is the embodiment of architectural perfection; the ultimate monument to love. Don't let fears of tour buses or hordes of visitors make you think you can skip the Taj – you can't.

1





CHARISMA PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY

2

## Holy Varanasi

Everyone in Varanasi (p325) seems to be dying or praying or hustling or cremating someone, or swimming or laundering or washing buffaloes in the sewage-saturated Ganges. The goddess river will clean away your sins and help you escape from that tedious life-and-death cycle – and Varanasi is *the* place to take a sacred dip. So take a deep breath, put on a big smile for the ever-present touts, go to the holy water and get your karma in order.



## Backwaters of Kerala

It's unusual in India to find a place as vast and tranquil as the backwaters (p248): 900km of interconnected rivers, lakes and lagoons lined with tropical flora. Even if you do, there won't be a way to experience it that's as peaceful and intimate as a few days on a teak-and-palm-thatch houseboat. Float along the water – as the sun sets behind the palms, or while eating to-die-for Keralan seafood, or as you sleep under a twinkling sky – and forget about life on land for a while.

3



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## The Best... Quiet Retreats

### BACKWATERS, KERALA

There are few things more relaxing than travelling through the 900km network of waterways fringing Kerala's coast. (p248)

### SHIMLA, HIMACHAL PRADESH

An engaging blend of hilltop holiday town and Indian city, surrounded by rolling landscapes of green, reached via the 'toy train'. (p361)

### MUNNAR, KERALA

Relax in a homestay at a remote tea plantation near this Kerala hill station. (p253)

### SUNDERBANS TIGER RESERVE

Escape the city chaos of nearby Kolkata with a boat trip through part of the world's largest mangrove forest. (p314)