

PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

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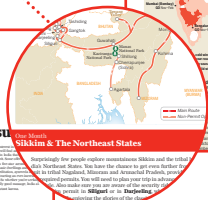
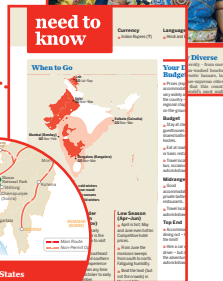
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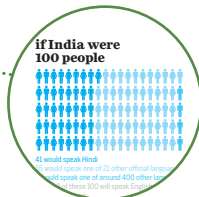
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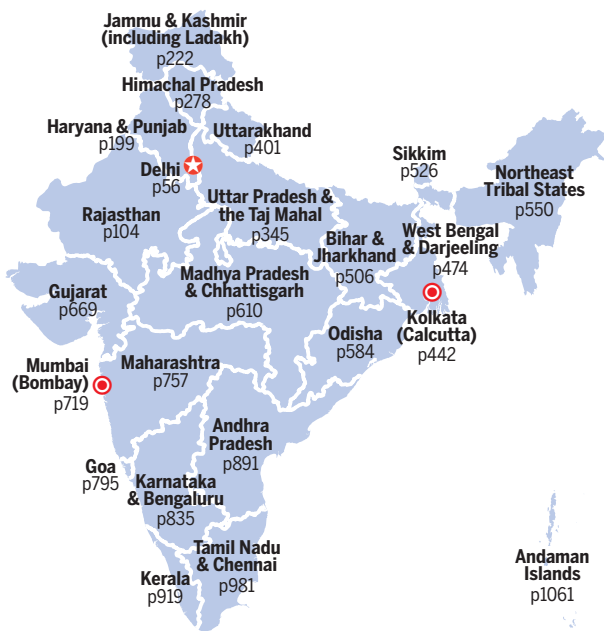
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Look out for these icons:



Our author's recommendation



A green or sustainable option

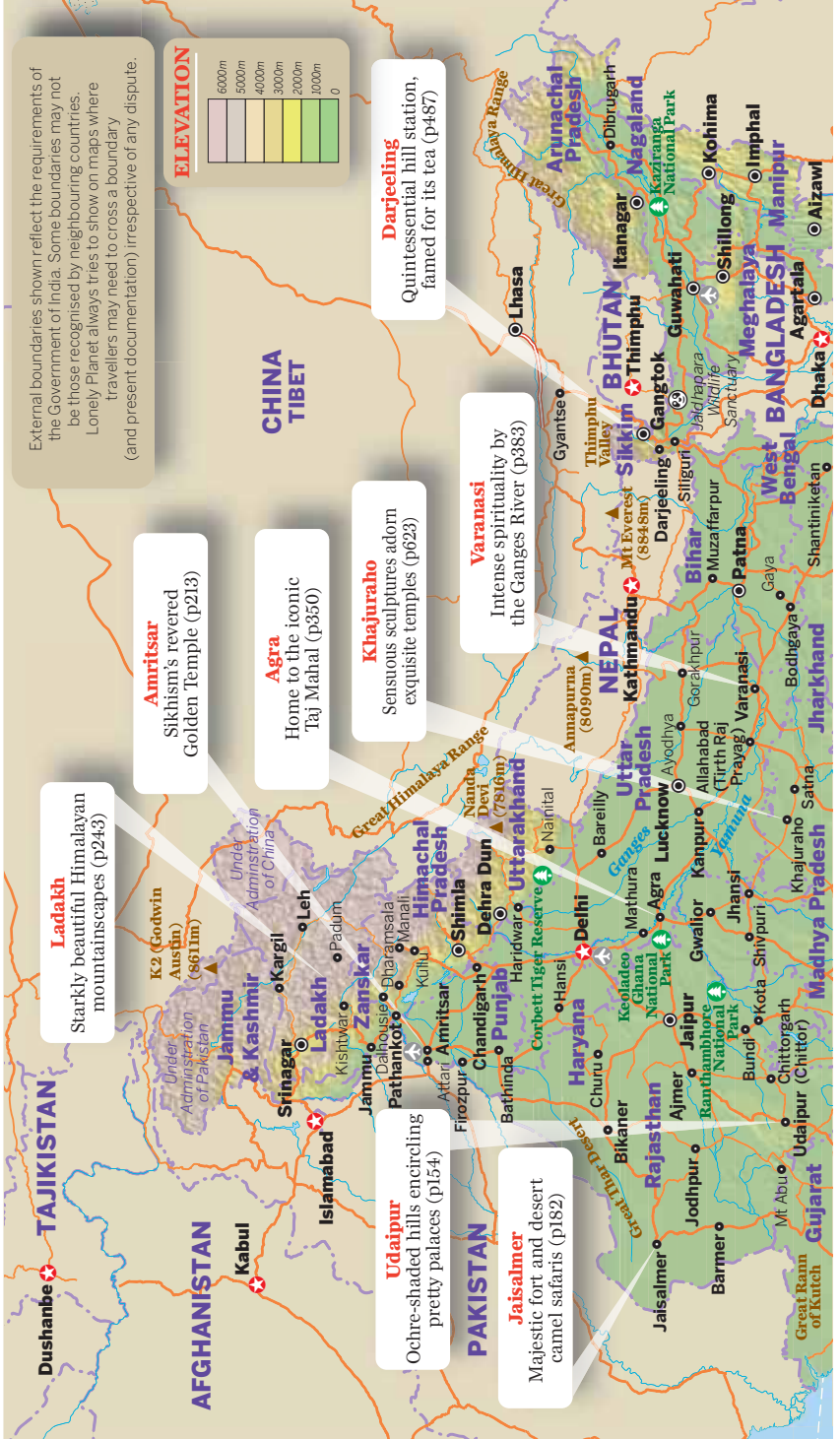


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Starkly beautiful Himalayan mountainscapes (p243)

Amritsar
Sikhism's revered Golden Temple (p213)

Agra
Home to the iconic Taj Mahal (p350)

Khajuraho
Sensuous sculptures adorn exquisite temples (p623)

Varanasi
Intense spirituality by the Ganges River (p383)

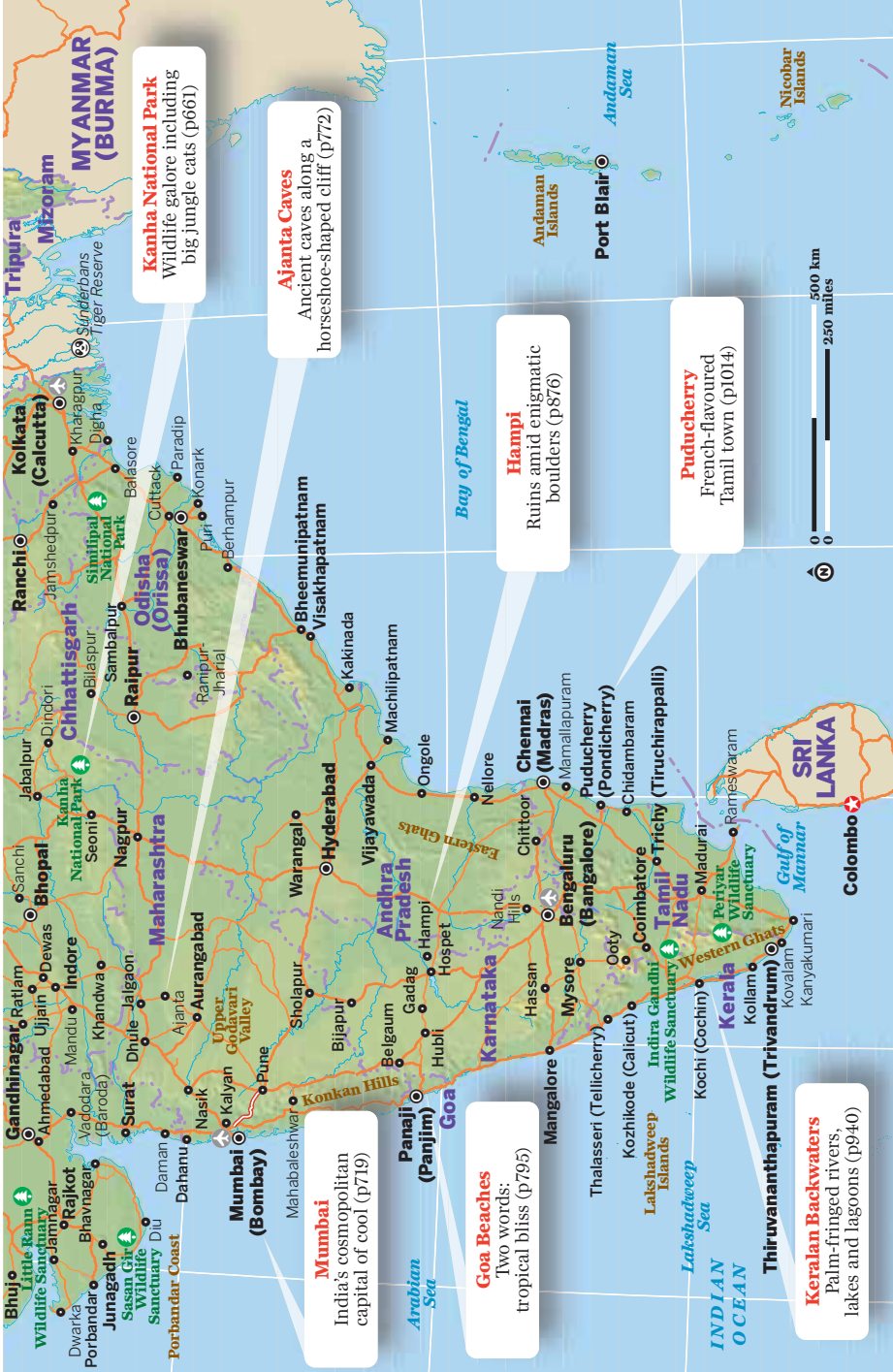
Udaipur
Ochre-shaded hills encircling pretty palaces (p154)

Jaisalmer
Majestic fort and desert camel safaris (p182)

Darjeeling
Quintessential hill station, famed for its tea (p487)

External boundaries shown reflect the requirements of the Government of India. Some boundaries may not be those recognised by neighbouring countries. Lonely Planet always tries to show on maps where travellers may need to cross a boundary (and present documentation) irrespective of any dispute.





Kanha National Park
Wildlife galore including big jungle cats (p661)

Ajanta Caves
Ancient caves along a horseshoe-shaped cliff (p772)

Hampi
Ruins amid enigmatic boulders (p876)

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French-flavoured Tamil town (p1014)

Mumbai
India's cosmopolitan capital of cool (p719)

Goa Beaches
Two words: tropical bliss (p795)

Keralan Backwaters
Palm-fringed rivers, lakes and lagoons (p940)



INDIAN OCEAN
Arabian Sea
Lakshadweep
Lakshadweep Islands
Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum)
Kovalam
Kanyakumari
Kerala
Kollam
Kochi (Cochin)
Western Ghats
Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary
Rameswaram
Gulf of Mannar
SRI LANKA
Colombo
Andhra Pradesh
Nandi Hills
Chittoor
Nellore
Chennai (Madras)
Mamallapuram
Puducherry (Pondicherry)
Chidambaram
Tamil Nadu
Trichy (Tiruchirappalli)
Karnataka
Mysore
Hassan
Mangalore
Thalasseri (Tellicherry)
Kozhikode (Calicut)
Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary
Andhra Pradesh
Vijayawada
Ongole
Machilipatnam
Kakinada
Bihar
Patna
Odisha (Orissa)
Bhubaneswar
Rampur
Jharsihata
Bhadrak
Bargarh
Chhattisgarh
Raipur
Bilaspur
Simalpal National Park
Madhya Pradesh
Bhopal
Jabalpur
Sanchi
Maharashtra
Mumbai (Bombay)
Pune
Nasik
Aurangabad
Dahanu
Daman
Diu
Surat
Vadodra
Mandla
Khandwa
Dhule
Jalgaon
Nagpur
Nagbhus
Uttar Pradesh
Lucknow
West Bengal
Kolkata (Calcutta)
Jamshedpur
Raipur
Bardhaman
Durgam
Asansol
Howrah
Kharagpur
Digha
Sunderbans Tiger Reserve
Tripura
Agartala
Mizoram
Aizawl
Assam
Dispur
Arunachal Pradesh
Itanagar
Nagaland
Kohima
Manipur
Imphal
Mizoram
Aizawl
Andaman Islands
Port Blair
Andaman Sea
Nicobar Islands

itineraries

Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



One Week

The Golden Triangle

One route is so well loved it even has a name: the Golden Triangle. This classic Delhi–Agra–Jaipur trip can be squeezed into a single week.

Spend a day or two in **Delhi** finding your feet and seeing the big-draw sights, such as the magnificent Mughal **Red Fort** and **Jama Masjid**, India's largest mosque. Then catch a convenient train to **Agra** to spend a day being awed by the world's most extravagant monument to love, the **Taj Mahal**, and exploring the mighty **Agra Fort**. Only an hour away is **Fatehpur Sikri**, a beautiful Mughal city dating from the apogee of Mughal power. It is amazingly well preserved and deserves a full day of exploring.

If you have time, take a rural respite at **Keoladeo Ghana National Park**, one of the world's foremost bird reserves. Having relaxed at this beautiful and rewarding place, you can then take a train to **Jaipur**. Spend a couple of days in and around Rajasthan's hectic, dusky-pink capital, seeing the **City Palace** and **Amber Fort**, and stocking up on blue pottery, dazzling jewellery and Rajasthani puppets before heading back to Delhi.



Two Weeks

A Rajasthan Ramble

This much-loved circuit, which explores India's most colourful state, starts and ends in the bustling capital, Delhi, then surveys Rajasthan's greatest hits: it takes in pink, blue, white and golden cities, and visits the region's mightiest forts and most exquisite temples. The circuit finishes on a high with a camel safari in the desert, before a day's exploration in Delhi.

Spend day one in **Delhi**, visiting the calm site of **Humayun's Tomb**, before attending the sound-and-light show at the historic **Red Fort**.

On day two, take the train to **Jaipur** to soak up the sights of the **Old City**. Fill most of day three by exploring the fairy-tale fort at **Amber**, then browse Jaipur's **bazaars**.

On day four, take the bus to the holy town of **Pushkar**. Spend a few days here, chilling out and taking your time visiting the lakeside **temples** and then, on day seven, travel onward to graceful **Udaipur**. Again, you can relax and sightsee for a couple of days. Make time for an extravagant meal at the palace on the **lake**.

Next, on day nine, take a taxi and visit **Kumbhalgarh** and the temple at **Ranakpur** en route to the Blue City, **Jodhpur**. In Jodhpur you can admire the pastel-painted houses and magnificent **Mehrangarh Fort**.

On day 11, take the bus or train through the desert to the ancient fortress of **Jaisalmer** to relive your *Arabian Nights* fantasies on a **camel safari** in the dunes. Finally, on day 13, make your way back to Delhi, where you can visit the **Jama Masjid**, dive into the surrounding **bazaars** and finish off with some last-minute **shopping**.

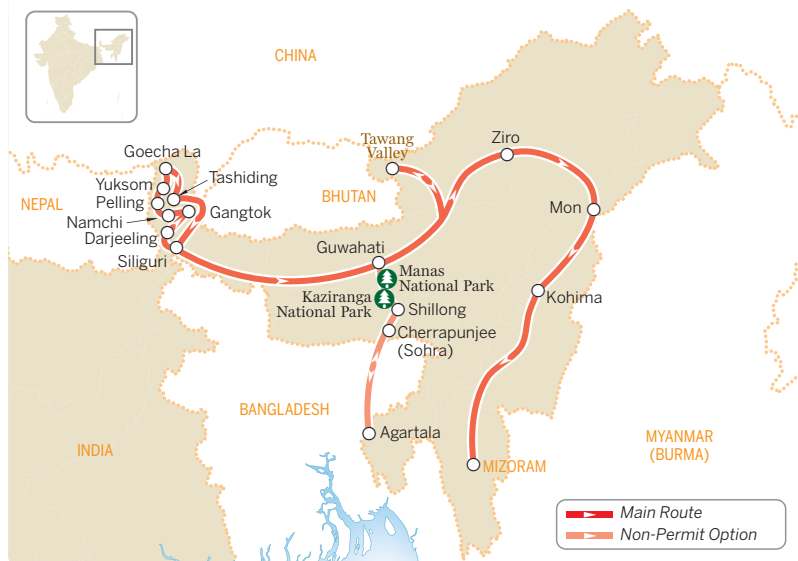


Three Weeks A Taste Of North & South

For a smattering of the north, and a sprinkling of the south, this trip is ideal. Wallow in the cultural and artistic wealth of Delhi, Agra and Rajasthan before flying south for some serene relaxation, including boating in tranquil backwaters, yoga, massage and the beach.

Start by visiting the sights of **Delhi**, such as the **Red Fort**, **Qutb Minar** and **Humayun's Tomb**, then head to **Agra** and the **Taj Mahal**, **Agra Fort** and **Fatehpur Sikri**. Next, if you have time, stop at **Keoladeo Ghana National Park** to see the rich birdlife, and then **Ranthambore National Park** to spot tigers and explore the wild jungle setting, before heading to the confounding Pink City of **Jaipur**. Visit **Amber Fort**, browse the amazing **bazaars** of Jaipur and peek from behind the shutters at the **Hawa Mahal** before returning to Delhi to start the southern part of your trip.

Prepare to relax: fly south to **Kochi** (Cochin), where you can stay in a gorgeous ex-colonial mansion in evocative Fort Cochin, catch a **Kathakali performance**, and spend a couple of nights exploring this exotic spice port with its historic **synagogue**, **Chinese fishing nets**, and delicious restaurants, as well as the remarkable **Kerala Folklore Museum**. The next delight is launching off into the **backwaters of Kerala**. The main launch point is from **Alappuzha** (Alleppey), from where you can take a slow cruise in a houseboat, watching life on the water, kicking back and sleeping under the stars. If you have time, you could head for the hills, staying in a remote hideaway, trekking around the tea plantations, visiting spice gardens and discovering the breathtaking views around **Munnar**. Next stop, the beach: try the less-visited sands around **Varkala**, with its backpacker vibe, dramatic sea-cliffs and long sandy beaches, or the more mainstream town of **Kovalam**. To experience Zen-like calm before taking your return flight from Kochi, do yoga and meditation at a local ashram and revel in **Ayurvedic treatments** such as synchronised massage.



One Month Sikkim & The Northeast States

Surprisingly few people explore mountainous Sikkim and the tribal heartland of India's Northeast States. You have the chance to get even further from the tourist circuit in tribal Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, providing you can obtain the required permits. You will need to plan your trip in advance and have a clear idea of your schedule. Also make sure you are aware of the security risks.

Obtain a Sikkim permit in **Siliguri** or in **Darjeeling**, where you can sample India's most famous **teas** while enjoying the glories of the classic Indian hill station. Then head to **Gangtok**, the Sikkimese capital, and visit the surrounding **Buddhist monasteries**, situated along tortuous lanes that cut through mountainous forested landscape.

Veer to **Namchi** to see the giant statues of Shiva and Padmasambhava perched on their hilltops, and to **Pelling**, to see the inspiring views of the white-peaked **Khangchendzonga** and the beautiful **Pemayangtse Gompa**, ringed by gardens and monks' cottages. Take the week- or 10-day-long trek from **Yuksom** to **Goecha La**, a 4940m pass with incredible views. Exit Sikkim via **Tashiding**, with yet more wonderful views and another beautifully set gompa, before returning to Siliguri for the journey east to Assam.

In **Guwahati**, the Assamese capital, arrange tours and permits for the Northeast States: the remote areas of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur. If you can't get a permit, try this loop: from Guwahati, head to **Manas** and **Kaziranga National Parks** to spot rare wildlife. Detour to sleepy **Shillong**, and the waterfalls and incredible living root bridges of **Cherrapunjee** (Sohra). From **Agartala**, capital of Tripura, head by air or land to Bangladesh.

With the right permits, head from Guwahati to Arunachal Pradesh for the stunning Buddhist monastery in the **Tawang Valley**, or the tribal villages near **Ziro**, where the elder Apatani women have dramatic facial tattoos and nose plugs. A Nagaland permit opens up fascinating tribal villages around **Mon**, rugged countryside dotted by traditional longhouses and remote settlements, and the capital **Kohima**. Manipur permits are rarely granted, but there's a fair chance of eyeing Mizo culture in **Mizoram**.



Two/Three Weeks Central Temples

Discover some of India's most spiritual places in this trip around Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

Start your trip in the cultured yet chaotic city of **Kolkata**, and then travel west to **Bodhgaya**, the birthplace of Buddhism and where Buddha attained enlightenment. Roll across the plains to the sacred city of **Varanasi**, one of India's holiest places, then to **Khajuraho**, where temples drip with erotic carvings.

Head southwest through the tranquil village of **Orchha**, with its imposing 17th-century palaces, to **Sanchi**, where Emperor Ashoka embraced Buddhism. In **Bhopal** catch the train to **Jalgaon**, a jumping-off point for the wonderful **Ajanta Caves**.

You could then head upwards through Rajasthan, stopping in whimsical **Udaipur**, with its lakes and palaces, before visiting the extraordinary Jain temples of **Ranakpur**. Next stop is the holy pilgrimage town of **Pushkar**, then a trip to **Dargah** at nearby **Ajmer**, one of India's most holy Islamic sites. After this you can make your way to **Jaipur**, from where you can catch the train to Agra's **Taj Mahal**. From here it's a short trip to **Delhi** for some last-minute sightseeing and shopping before flying home.

Two Weeks Northern Mountains

This northern exploration takes in some of India's most sumptuous views. It starts in Kolkata (Calcutta), draws a snaking line through some of the highlights of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Kashmir and Punjab, and finishes up in Delhi. Time your schedule so that the last leg through Ladakh falls between July and October, when the mountain passes are open.

Pass a few days enjoying the atmosphere and food in **Kolkata**, the busy and frenetic cultural metropolis that is home to the **Victoria Memorial**. Next, dash northwest to spot tigers in **Corbett Tiger Reserve** and practise yoga in India's New Age capital, **Rishikesh**. Connect through **Dehra Dun** and **Chandigarh** to **Shimla**, India's premier hill station, where you can relax or trek into the hills.

Bus it to **Manali** for some adrenalin-charged activities, then ride the mountain bus to Buddhist city **Leh**. If the political situation allows, head to **Srinagar** in Kashmir, then through **Jammu** to **McLeod Ganj**, home of the Dalai Lama and India's centre of Tibetan Buddhism.

It's a relatively short trip southwest to **Amritsar**, with its shimmering **Golden Temple** before one last train ride to Delhi.



Two Weeks Southwest Coastal Towns

➤ This laid-back trip meanders along some of India's finest beaches and most charismatic southwest towns, and also offers some stunning cultural and temple stops.

Start at Mumbai's **Chowpatty Beach** with a plate of *bhelpuri* (crisp fried thin rounds of dough) while looking out over the Arabian Sea. Cruise to the stunning rock-cut temples on **Elephanta Island**, then travel south by train to beach-blessed **Goa**. Enjoy the best of the sand at **Arambol, Vagator** and **Palolem**, then continue along the coast to the sacred town of **Gokarna**. Next, veer inland to the ruined Vijayanagar temples at **Hampi** and the Hoysala temples of **Belur** and **Halebid**.

Head further south, along the coast, to the enigmatic ex-colonial melting pot **Kochi** for a **Kathakali performance** and to feel the palpable history of this ancient, laid-back port. Cruise Kerala's languorous backwaters from **Alappuzha** via canoe or houseboat, before dipping your toes in the warm waters around beach resorts **Varkala** or **Kovalam**, and visiting off-the-track museums at **Thiruvananthapuram** (Trivandrum) before flying out.

Two/Three Weeks Southeast Beaches & Caves

➤ Mumbai is the borderline between north and south, and the easiest starting point for exploring India's steamy southern tip. Time your trip to avoid the monsoon – the sunniest skies are from October to February.

Kick off shopping, eating and drinking in cosmopolitan **Mumbai** before heading inland to **Ellora** and **Ajanta** to marvel at Maharashtra's finest cave art.

Travel inland to wonderful **Hampi**, with its temple ruins and giant boulders. Rub shoulders with yuppies in the bars of **Bengaluru** (Bangalore), smell the incense in spicy **Mysore** with its extravagant **Maharaja's Palace**, and feast on a banana-leaf **thali**. Zoom south to the awesome Sri Meenakshi Temple in **Madurai**, then return north through the temple towns of **Trichy, Thanjavur** and **Chidambaram**.

Next, head for the coast and the decadent grace of hectic, French-flavoured **Puducherry** (Pondicherry). For desert-island beach splendour, visit the sun-soaked **Andaman Islands**. Stop off at the ruins of **Mamallapuram** (Mahabalipuram) by sunset, then dine in Tamil Nadu's busy capital, **Chennai** (Madras), before heading home.

**Bradley Mayhew**

West Bengal & Darjeeling, Sikkim Bradley has been visiting the Himalaya for 20 years now, exploring from Ladakh to Bhutan. For this edition he focused on Sikkim and the West Bengal Hills. Bradley has also been the coordinating author of Lonely Planet guides *Bhutan*, *Nepal* and *Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya*. He was recently the subject of a five-part Arte/SWR documentary retracing the route of Marco Polo, from Venice to Xanadu, through Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia. See what he's up to at www.bradleymayhew.blogspot.com.

**Daniel McCrohan**

Uttar Pradesh & the Taj Mahal, Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh Daniel has been travelling to India on and off for almost 20 years, and has a deep affinity with the central regions having covered them for the past two editions of this guidebook. Originally a London-based newspaper journalist, he later turned to travel writing and now specialises in China, where he lives, and India, which he visits regularly for the chai, the thali and the (slightly scary) wet shaves. Daniel has cowritten more than half a dozen Lonely Planet guidebooks. He also writes travel apps and is the cohost of the television series *Best in China*. Find out more at danielmccrohan.com. Daniel also wrote the Taj Mahal and Khajuraho colour illustrations text.

**John Noble**

Southern & Western Rajasthan, Gujarat John, from England, lives in Spain and has written on 20 or so countries for Lonely Planet. He first experienced India in the days of Rajiv Gandhi but has never written about it until now. Best on-the-road decision: to get up pre-dawn and take another safari at Sasan Gir – and come upon not just one but four young lions strolling casually back and forth through the bushes in the early morning light. A full 1% of Asia's wild lion population.

**Kevin Raub**

Bihar & Jharkhand, Odisha, Mumbai

(Bombay) Kevin Raub grew up in Atlanta, USA and started his career as a music journalist in New York, working for *Men's Journal* and *Rolling Stone* magazines. Over a decade of trips to India, he's ogled the Taj Mahal, rejuvenated at Maharaja-palace spas in the Himalaya, tracked tigers in Madhya Pradesh and navigated Kerala backwaters, but what magnetically draws him back to the subcontinent every time is far more basic: the absolutely mind-blowing cuisine, which – knock on wood – has never made him sick. You can find him at www.kevinraub.net or at 35,000 feet.

Read more about John at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/ewoodrover

Contributing Authors

David Lukas lives on the edge of Yosemite National Park where he studies and writes about the natural world. He has contributed environment chapters to about 28 Lonely Planet guides and is the author of the recent *A Year of Watching Wildlife*. David wrote the Elephants & Tigers: India's Sanctuaries and The Landscape chapters for this edition.

Amelia Thomas is a writer and journalist working throughout India and the Middle East. Her four small children have travelled extensively throughout India and beyond, and particularly enjoy *masala dosas*, mango lassis, and hurtling through the streets of Old Delhi in autorickshaws. Amelia wrote the Travel With Children chapter of this edition.

**Mark Elliott**

Jammu & Kashmir (including Ladakh), Kolkata (Calcutta) Mark has been making forays to the subcontinent since a 1984 trip that lined his stomach for all eventualities. For this edition an eventful summer saw him dodging flash floods in Kargil, landslides in Ladakh, curfews in Srinagar and stone-throwing mobs around Kashmir. When not researching travel guides Mark lives a blissfully quiet suburban life with his beloved Belgian bride, Danielle, who found him at a Turkmen camel market.

**Katja Gaskell**

Booking Trains, Yoga, Spas & Spiritual Pursuits, Volunteering, Scams, Women & Solo Travellers, Directory A–Z, Transport Sixteen years ago Katja arrived in India on a six week, ill-planned trip that saw her swelter in Rajasthan, get drenched by the monsoons in Goa and suffer the after-effects of a roadside prawn curry in Mumbai. And yet she still fell in love with the country and vowed to return. Today Katja calls Delhi home and regularly travels the country with her husband and two kids. Katja is also the author of Lonely Planet guides to China and Australia.

**Trent Holden**

Andhra Pradesh, Andaman Islands On his last visit to Andhra Pradesh Trent made his film debut as an extra in a Tollywood film. A decade later he's still waiting for a follow-up call (perhaps it's time to let that dream go...), but in the meantime, any opportunity to head back there suits him fine. This is his fourth trip to India, a place he loves like no other. When not on the road researching and coauthoring for titles such as *Nepal* and *Indonesia*, Trent works as a freelance editor with Lonely Planet.

**Abigail Hole**

Itineraries, Delhi, Kerala Abigail was first bewitched by India around 15 years ago, and she's returned with increasing regularity – three times in 2010 alone. This is the fourth time she has worked on Lonely Planet's *India* guide. She cowrote the first edition of *Rajasthan, Delhi & Agra* and has written about India for various newspapers and magazines, including *Lonely Planet Magazine*. This edition of *India* gave her the welcome opportunity of covering Kerala and Delhi, two of her favourite destinations. Abigail also wrote the Red Fort colour illustration text.

**Kate James**

Tamil Nadu & Chennai Melbourne-born Kate grew up in Ooty, where her parents taught at an international school and travelled using the very first edition of this guide. Journalism in Australia led Kate to an editing job at Lonely Planet and then into a freelance writing and editing career. She wrote the Orissa and West Bengal chapters of the previous edition of this guide, and is the author of *Women of the Gobi* (Pluto Press, 2006).

**Amy Karafin**

20 Top Experiences, If You Like..., Month by Month, Goa, India Today, History Indian in several former lives, Amy headed straight to India after university for a four-month trip that would turn out to be karmically ordained. She spent the next few years alternating between New York and faraway lands until, fed up with the irony of being a travel editor in a Manhattan cubicle, she relinquished her MetroCard and her black skirts to make a living on the road. She has been freelancing semi-nomadically ever since, setting up shop in Bombay as much as possible. This is Amy's fourth time coauthoring *India*.

**Anirban Mahapatra**

South and North of Kolkata (in West Bengal & Darjeeling), Maharashtra, Karnataka & Bengaluru For seven long years, Anirban ran a nifty travel scam out of a reporter's cubicle in a Delhi newspaper office. He'd sell outlandish story ideas to gullible editors, and then hare off across the Indian subcontinent in the name of intrepid journalism. When his bluff was finally called, he promptly changed his designation to travel writer, and thereby legitimised his trade. Anirban has regularly contributed to Lonely Planet guidebooks since 2007. When not travelling, he cools his heels in Kolkata.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Sarina Singh

Coordinating Author, Colourful India, Welcome to India, Need to Know, Regions at a Glance, The Way of Life, Spiritual India, Delicious India, The Great Indian Bazaar, Sacred Architecture, The Arts After finishing a business degree in Melbourne, Sarina travelled to India where she completed a hotel corporate traineeship before working as a journalist. After five years she returned to Australia and pursued post-graduate journalism qualifications before co-authoring Lonely Planet's first edition

of *Rajasthan*. She has worked on 30 Lonely Planet books, writes for other major international publications and has a column in India's *Lonely Planet Magazine*. Singh is also the author of two books – *Polio in India* and *India: Essential Encounters*. Her award-nominated documentary premiered at the Melbourne International Film Festival before screening in Australia and Europe. See www.sarinasingh.com.

Read more about Sarina at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/sarinasingh



Michael Benanav

Trekking, Himachal Pradesh,

Uttarakhand Michael has been to North India four times and still hasn't visited the Taj Mahal. He'd like to, but has been too busy migrating through Uttarakhand with a clan of nomadic water-buffalo herders, exploring remote Kashmiri valleys along the Line of Control, and finding spiritual enlightenment while riding public buses over the crazy mountain roads of Himachal Pradesh. Michael photographs, writes books and freelances for the *New York Times*, *Geographical* and other publications. His website is www.michaelbenanav.com.



Lindsay Brown

Eastern Rajasthan, Haryana & Punjab After completing a PhD on evolutionary genetics and following a stint as a science editor, Lindsay started working for Lonely Planet. Formerly the publishing manager of outdoor activity guides at Lonely Planet, Lindsay returns to the subcontinent to trek, write and photograph whenever possible. He has also contributed to Lonely Planet's *South India, Nepal, Bhutan, Rajasthan, Delhi & Agra and Pakistan & the Karakoram Highway* guides, among others.



Stuart Butler

Northeast Tribal States Stuart first travelled to India in the 90s and he's been back numerous times since. Exploring the northeast for this book gave him a totally new angle on the whole India experience. When not enduring the northeast's pot-holed roads, Stuart has travelled from the deserts of Arabia to the beaches of the Caribbean for Lonely Planet and various surf magazines. Stuart lives with his wife and baby son on southwest France's beaches. His website is www.oceansurfpublishations.co.uk.

Read more about Stuart at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/stuartbutler

OVER MORE
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