



Kolkata (Calcutta)

033 / POP 14.1 MILLION

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Bhojohori Manna (p481)
- ➔ 1658 (p478)
- ➔ Oh! Calcutta (p480)
- ➔ Fire and Ice (p480)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Oberoi Grand (p473)
- ➔ Corner Courtyard (p476)
- ➔ Astor (p474)
- ➔ Central B&B (p474)

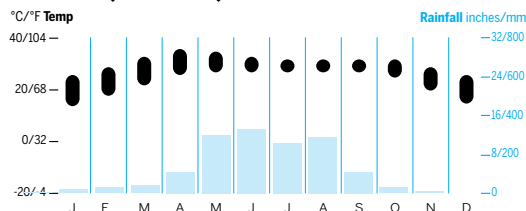
Why Go?

India's second-biggest city is a festival of human existence, simultaneously noble and squalid, cultured and desperate. By its old spelling, Calcutta conjures up images of human suffering to most Westerners. But locally, Kolkata is regarded as India's intellectual and cultural capital. While poverty is certainly in your face, the dapper Bengali gentry continue to frequent old gentlemen's clubs, back horses at the Calcutta Racetrack and tee off at some of India's finest golf courses.

As the former capital of British India, Kolkata retains a feast of colonial-era architecture contrasting starkly with urban slums and new-town suburbs with their air-con shopping malls. Kolkata is the ideal place to experience the mild, fruity tang of Bengali cuisine. Friendlier than India's other metropolises, this is a city you 'feel' more than simply visit. Walk the chaotic back alleys, ride the Hooghly ferries and, if you've got more time, take an excursion to the Sundarbans.

When to Go

Kolkata (Calcutta)



Sep & Oct The city dresses up magnificently for the colourful mayhem of Durga Puja.

Nov-Jan Cool and dry; there's a big film-fest in November and a music festival in January.

May-Sep Best avoided unless you're prepared for a very serious drenching.



Kolkata Highlights

- 1 Watch goddesses coming to life in the curious lanes of **Kumartuli** (p464) or on Kalighat Rd, near the famous **Kalighat Temple** (p465)
- 2 Ponder the contradictions of the magnificent **Victoria Memorial** (p457)
- 3 Sample lip-smackingly authentic Bengali cuisine at **Bhojohari Manna** (p481)
- 4 Discover the enlightened universalist idealism of Ramakrishna in **Belur Math** (p464) and Rabindranath Tagore at **Tagore's House** (p463)
- 5 Volunteer to help the destitute with the organisation founded by **Mother Teresa** (p459)