

Khalsa Ladies Camp INDIA YATRA • Feb-March 2012 TRAVELLING IN INDIA

This Yatra

A yatra is an intentional spiritual journey, taken at the calling of your soul. This yatra is done within a group consciousness. Though you will have considerable free time, you are held in the group consciousness, and participate in the group activities in a sincere way. With such a journey as this, and being within such a culture as India, there is a responsibility on your part as well to represent by your projection and appearance the caliber and consciousness of this path. One can think of it as representing your Highest Self, presenting your best as you bow, receive, and give so much in this magical land.

We ladies are embarking on this intentional yatra together to experience the Adi Shakti in Mother India. We are answering a call to this experience with our souls, with courage, enthusiasm and excitement, and our deep stillness. This is true. YET, our bodies and minds are also going to this crazy wonderful place called INDIA!

Being in India

Welcome to your Indian adventure! To quote our Nirinjan Kaur after spending 3 years in India: "India is like one big kriya!" India will test your concepts of reason, of time, of function and of order. You will see sights that you could not imagine, even if you have seen pictures! India will reveal its heart to you, unashamed and honest. It will delight you with its quirkiness and pragmatism. It will show you the most base of human existences, and exalt you to the greatest humility. It will awe you with its powerful spirit and touch deep into your soul. India is like no other place. It defies definition. You simply will EXPERIENCE it!

Though India truly has to be experienced to be believed, here is a glimpse of India to help prepare you for this journey.

"Ultimately, India is going to be exactly what you make of it. This is certainly not a place you simply and clinically "see." It's an assault on all the senses, a journey that's impossible to define because it's so different for everyone. But there's one thing for sure—no matter where you go or what you do, it's a place you will never forget."

- *Lonely Planet*

India is steeped in antiquity. Traditions existing today arose from ways of life that existed before recorded history. India has absorbed diverse cultures and influences from the people who have occupied it over the centuries and made them her own. Today you can spot an ancient, scantily clad saddhu (ascetic who has renounced the world) sitting outside a modern cyber café. These are the contrasts that India embraces. India is patient and timeless and you can see it in the eyes of every Indian.

India has evolved thousands and thousands of years and her roots are very deep. Compared to India, the West seems an adolescent culture. India is breathtakingly beautiful, colorful and festive, fascinating and mind-blowing. It bears witness to a fortitude and deep spirituality that pervades every part of life.

And yet, India is not a fantasy place. It is also a place of great challenge, especially for the Westerner. It makes other countries seem sterile by comparison. The reality of India can be shocking and we wish to prepare you in some small way by sharing another side of India.

It is the nature of India that you will see people living in conditions that you may find appalling. You will see physical ailments that appear dreadful. You will see dirt and filth and things that you may find quite disgusting. You will see chaos and disorganization. The words will keep coming into your mind: "Why don't they just.....!" You can get stuck in a quagmire of bribery, bureaucracy and rubber-stamping. You will be stared at and gawked at as if you were the entertainment of the day (which you probably are.) You will smell things that you may not want to smell. You may even fear for your life on the Indian roads. You will see pathetic starving dogs and pathetic starving people. You will be beseeched by pawing beggars, and your transport will most certainly be delayed by something or other. There will be frustration and amazement. One cannot completely avoid the raw organic reality that is India.

One way or the other you will have to deal with INDIA, and have what is affectionately known as "an India moment!" Just keep your mind open and be ready to expect the unexpected. Within all the apparent chaos lies the understanding of the true nature and order of the universe. It truly IS a kriya—the only way to deal with it is to go into the Neutral Mind. Yet the astonishing thing is that just being in the great femininity of India makes it EASIER to slip into the Neutral Mind. It is quite a deeply relaxing experience!

Open your senses and open your mind to an encounter that must be experienced to be believed. It is the most ancient of places with the deepest spiritual roots. Here in the West, spirituality is explored. In India it is lived.

The fee for this Yatra covers:

- Accommodation in Amritsar & Anandpur Sahib (single or double in Amritsar, shared for everyone in Anandpur Sahib & Trivandrum. Single in Amritsar will cost you more.)
- Breakfasts in Amritsar
- Bottled water at Le Golden Hotel
- All meals in Anandpur Sahib (including bottled water) & Trivandrum
- Transportation Amritsar to Anandpur Sahib return.

The fee will NOT cover:

- Lunch and dinner while in Amritsar

There are a number of great places to eat around town, as well as the langar hall of the Golden Temple right across from our hotel. Le Golden provides room service, and has a restaurant. Food is good and inexpensive. We will also have some group meals covered.

- Your taxi or rickshaw around Amritsar on your individual adventures
- Laundry service
- Tips to porters, hotel employees, drivers, etc.
- Your shopping!
- Air Transportation from Delhi to Trivandrum

Passport & Visa:

You will need to have a passport that is valid for a minimum of 6 months.

In order to get your Indian Visa you will need to present 2 passport-sized pictures (2"x2") along with your passport and the Visa form application. (It is a good idea to keep a Xerox copy of your passport for your own records, with you in your suitcase while traveling.) You will need to get a **6 month Tourist Visa**. Check out how to do this on line. Alternatively, Kamal, our travel agent, can help you with this when you book your ticket.

On the Visa form they ask for 2 references in India. You may use the following as your contacts:

Guru Dharm Kaur Khalsa, Dashmesh Sudan, Anandpur Sahib. Phone: 91-981-566-2963
Le Golden Hotel, Clock Tower Extension, Bazar Maisewan, Amritsar.
+91-183-5028000

Luggage:

We strongly advise you to check with the airline what is the baggage allowance in affect when we are flying. It continually changes, and over the allowed limit baggage weight can cost you. It is ultimately **your responsibility** to take care of your own requirements in this area. It is good to have locks for your luggage once we are in India and on the road. Locks might not be allowed on luggage that is being checked into the airlines as they now conduct random checks of baggage behind the scenes. Try to pack as lightly as possible and remember to leave room for shopping!

Airport to Hotel:

We have arranged taxis to pick us all up from Amritsar airport to bring us to Le Golden Hotel. Get ready for the chaos of Amritsar Airport. I have never experienced anything so disorganized!! A Virgo's nightmare!!

Be aware that people may try to "help" you with your bags whether you want any

help or not. They will expect money even if they are simply near you and think that they are helping. You can easily say, "no" over and over again emphasizing "no." These are people who hang around the airport preying on polite, unsuspecting tourists.

Money & Valuables:

Best to leave valuables at home. The currency in India is the rupee. The exchange rate is about 49 rupees to the Canadian and US dollar right now, but this changes all the time. Some people like the security of American Express Travelers Checks. US money and travelers cheques is much more readily accepted than Canadian dollars, and easier to exchange. It is not necessary to bring all of the money that you will need, as several banks in Amritsar have ATM machines that will give Indian rupees when you use your ATM card. This is a great way to have access to your money. (10,000 rupees converts to about \$200Cdn. But this changes minute to minute.) **Check with your bank that their system works in India.** (Most Credit Unions use a system that is NOT available in India. Check it out.) And most ATM's won't take a pin number over 4 digits. **CHECK IT OUT WITH YOUR FINANCIAL INSTITUTION BEFORE DEPENDING ON THIS.**

Many merchants take credit cards: VISA or MASTERCARD and some AMEX.

(Important Note: If someone approaches you and says they can give you a higher rate than the banks, DO NOT do business with that person. It is called exchanging on the black market and is highly illegal. You can be arrested for doing this.)

Clothing & Projection

India is a very modest society and it is appropriate to dress accordingly. It might be moderately warm this time of year. Cooling off at night. (In Feb it can be 25°C in Amritsar during the day, cooling down to 10°C at night. Trivandrum is HOT!)

No tank tops, undershirts, low cut shirts, tight tee shirts, sheer shirts or pants, shorts or short skirts. If you can glaringly see any of your undergarments, it's inappropriate in India. Yoga pants and t-shirts or tunics are perfect. As are Punjabi suits: kurtas, churidars or salwars.

Indian men have the impression of Western women as being loose and easy. If you dress modestly and conduct yourself gracefully there will be no problem. Do not feel like you have to talk to everyone (or anyone!) who approaches you. Use your intuition. In Indian culture, eye contact is filled with all kinds of silent messages. Direct eye contact with an Indian man can be misunderstood. (If you are having a conversation, this can be different. Still be aware.) If someone gropes you, feel free to yell loudly at them. Even a slap is not out of line (go for it!)

Head coverings are required for entering temples and Gurdwaras. It's a good idea to bring a head covering that you're used to and that will stay on your head. (Turban

time?)

In India, shoes are taken off frequently, so sandals and slip-ons are the most convenient footwear. (Be ready for very dirty feet!) Though the solid feeling of enclosed runners can be good, too. Your choice.

Shopping

Most shopkeepers expect you to bargain with them, so the first price they tell you is not what they expect you to pay. (Except perhaps Mohinder. His prices are pretty fixed. See below.) Expect to pay cash with most vendors. MasterCard and Visa are accepted by Mohinder Singh (Fancy Handlooms), Crystal Café, and other high-end restaurants and vendors.

Shopping at Mohinder's! (Fancy Handloom)

Mohinder Singh has been serving the Western Khalsa with bana for over 35 years! He stocks tons of beautiful cotton and silk fabrics and has them sewn to your specifications very speedily! I have told him that we are arriving on his doorstep, so have things ready! He is just steps from our hotel and the Golden Temple. Embroidered fabrics ready to be stitched for you, as well as chunis, shawls, and turbans. He is moderately priced. (Suits—fabric and stitching— from approx. 1200-4000 rupees. \$30-100 Cdn.) You can also find less expensive fabrics and ready-mades suits in many many other places.

Packing list

Travel as light as possible without depriving yourself of your needs. You may want to bring your own pillow that squishes up small, as Indian pillows are made of very hard foam. The pillows at Anandpur Sahib & Trivandrum are fluffy and great, though.

Attached is a suggested list of things to bring. Most items on the list are probably available in India. However, you don't want to spend your time trying to find out how and where to get what you could have easily had with you with some forethought.

Medical suggestions

It is likely that you will experience a bout of sickness while in India. There are many strange bacteria and amoebae to which your body has never been exposed and for which you do not have anti-bodies. It will probably be diarrhea (or "loose motions" as it is referred to there.) There are some things that you can take as preventative measures along the way but once it hits, it is best to go straight for the allopathic medicines like immodium. In such an intensive few weeks, you will not really have the time and space to deal with it effectively using natural means.

Travelling in India has changed considerably in the last few years. And we are not expected to be in any high risk environments. The items on the list below are all optional, based on your PERSONAL CHOICE:

- The Centers for Disease Control recommends a shot for Hepatitis A one month prior to going, pill vaccination for Typhoid one week before going. They recommend malaria pills starting one week before going. Hepatitis B is recommended if you predict blood exposure, but we don't. **Taking these is a personal decision.** (I personally took Hepatitis A&B in 1999, which is still effective. I am not taking the other things. Others choose to take them all. It is **your choice!**) Talk to your doctor about it. If you want to check out the CDC website, look at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>
- Another option is to talk to your doctor about bringing a supply (at least six 500-mg pills) of the antibiotic Cipro, or its equivalent, for the treatment of traveler's diarrhea. Please note that Cipro is only for bacterial diarrhea or giardia that doesn't go away with other diarrhea treatment. It is not a regular treatment for diarrhea.
- Bring insect repellent (DEET 30% is the most effective) for mosquitoes, and sun block.
- Order from your pharmacy "World Health Organization Oral Re-hydration Salts" for adding to water to make a re-hydration solution.
- A homeopathic first aid kit, bandages, blister pads, Bacitracin ointment, Tylenol or Advil, Benadryl capsules, **Immodium** and/or Pepto Bismol.
- Bring other medications you require. Keep a list of these so that in the event you lose them, they can be replaced. Allopathic medicines are available in India but often under other names.

Natural Prevention

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." In light of that adage, here is a suggested list:

- You may want to follow the recommendation of eating an onion a day for the month before you go. Onions are a natural blood purifier and help your body deal with the cultural bacterial change.
- **In India, do not eat ANYTHING that has not been cooked, or peeled.**
- **Drink only bottled or filtered water—stay away from ice.**
- Some people put Grapefruit seed extract in their water (Biotin or Nutri-biotic)
- Acidophilus (to balance the bacteria in your intestines)
- Anything green, like Chlorella (if you are used to a lot of salad this will help compensate.)
- Vitamin B (excellent for stress)
- Echinacea and Golden Seal
- Emergen-C packets
- Natural throat lozenges

You may want to make packets of your daily supplements, to avoid carrying lots of bottles.

Jetlag

There is a 13½ hour time difference between Amritsar and Vancouver. One of the hardest adjustments to make is just getting your body's time clock on schedule. Everyone has special remedies to combat jetlag. There are homeopathic jetlag pills available. Emergen-C is great for this. And **melatonin** really helps. Drinking lots of water and moving around the plane helps a lot.

Water

To prevent sickness, **do not drink any water other than filtered or bottled water, and only bottled drinks.** Do not drink anything with ice in it unless you are in a hotel with filtered water. Make sure that the seal on the bottled water is still intact. Once done with your water bottle, crush before throwing away to prevent scams where people refill old water bottles. You may want to bring Grapefruit Seed Extract, a few drops of which works to kill bacteria. To work with that, you may also want to bring acidophilus or equivalent, to replenish those good bacteria!

Food

Street food in India is not subject to any health code; therefore it is best to simply avoid it. Food served in hotels, restaurants and homes is generally safe to eat. If you have special dietary needs you will be best off bringing them with you. All the sweets in India contain sugar. If you need alternatives to sugar, you will need to bring them from home.

In Amritsar we will be provided with a breakfast at the hotel of yogurt, fruit and paranthas (yum!) and tea or coffee. For lunch and dinner you are on your own to sample some of the great Indian food in the restaurants around town. (I find that when in India, a parantha breakfast and one more meal is quite enough.)

In Anandpur Sahib, there will be 3 group meals provided per day. Breakfast is same as in Amritsar. Lunch and dinner will generally be Indian food fare of dahl, rice, a vegetable dish, kitcheri (mung beans and rice), yoghurt, and chapattis or naan. And yogi tea! In Trivandrum, we will have 3 meals a day, buffet style of great very healthy food.

Suggested items to bring with you if you don't love Indian food are: packets of miso soup, instant oatmeal, power/granola bars, trail mix, and anything else you can make with hot water or carry with you for snacks. Raw foodists.....oh, dear, not much to offer you!

Phone Calls / Time Difference

There is a 13-1/2 hour difference between Vancouver and Amritsar. International phone calls can be made from the Hotel by asking them to place an STD call. There are also STD offices all over. You will see signs for these phones everywhere. You give them the number you need to call and they dial it for you and the meter starts running. You pay in cash when you are done. If you are calling from within India to Canada or the US, you will dial 001 then your area code and number. If you are calling within India, you will dial "0" before the city code.

I will have a cell phone with an Indian phone number that you can use to receive emergency calls. These are free to the Indian number. (Your western number will pay normal long distance charges.)

If you have a cell phone with 4-band frequency, you can get a chip with an Indian phone number and there you go. It is quite inexpensive. Phone must also be unlocked.

Electricity

For use of appliances, laptops, or recharging anything, the electrical voltage is 220v and you will need to bring a voltage adaptor, a surge protector. (I will have one of these that can be used for recharging things.) Laptops and ipods usually have the capacity to run on both 220v or 110v but you will at least need a plug adaptor, and using these without a surge protector is risky. You can bring batteries, or recharge on my surge protector. In Vancouver, there is a store on Broadway opposite Mountain Equipment Coop called **Foreign Electronics** for these things.

Personal security

Theft is not uncommon. It is essential to take care of personal valuables when you are carrying them and when you have to leave them in hotels or other places. You cannot regard any place as completely safe. Keep your passport, cash and travelers checks with you at all times. Money belts worn under clothing are a safe option. Handbags should be made of material that is not easily cut. External pockets (on bags or clothing) should never be used for carrying either money or documents. It is a good idea to have a Xeroxed copy of your passport in your luggage. There is no way to control who is in a crowd. Groping is possible. Always be with at least one person.

Beggars

This can be very shocking and distressing. There are beggars everywhere, some of whom may be physically handicapped. They are very aggressive. It is up to you whether you give or not, but be aware that a coin given to one child or to a seemingly destitute woman on the street will make you the focus of swarming from a vast

number of beggars before long. You can bless them with an internal prayer. It is best to give donations to an organization rather than to individuals.

Toilets

Over the last few years this has improved dramatically in Punjab. Most places we go will have western style toilets and toilet paper, and be clean. (Including Le Golden Hotel and Anandpur Sahib facility.) Still, it is a good idea to carry a tissue packet with you. Be prepared sometimes to use squat style toilets, which are ground level, and be ready for unsanitary conditions. **Packets of Travel Wipes** or **hand sanitizer** are a must to have with you.

Air Pollution

The air pollution in Amritsar is horrendous. Anandpur Sahib is better, and Trivandrum clear. If you have a tendency towards asthma, please make sure you bring your inhaler!

Laundry service

Le Golden Hotel has a laundry service. Items that you send to wash in India can sometimes come back less clean than when sent! If you have something that needs more delicate treatment there will be dry cleaning available. Please be forewarned that the dry cleaning process often leaves clothes smelling like a gas station. The Anandpur Sahib facility will have a laundry service available. You will also have sinks in your rooms for hand washing.

MEETING TO BE ANNOUNCED

Well, that covers a lot of territory! Feel free to ask me or Ad Purkh anything. A couple of weeks before our yatra, we will have a meeting, date to be announced, at Raj Yog Nivas. We can connect, meditate together, check in with each other.

With love, anticipation, and immense gratitude,
Guru Raj Kaur Khalsa

SUGGESTED LIST TO BRING

CLOTHING

- kurtas
- churidars
- sadhana head coverings
- T shirts
- shoes
- socks
- slippers
- flip flops
- bathing suit
- turbans
- chunis
- head coverings
- jacket
- pajamas

TOILETRIES

- toothbrush & toothpaste, mouthwash
- moisturizer
- deodorant
- hairbrush
- supplements
- bandaids, etc.
- diarrhea medicine, pain killers (whatever you need)
- Toilet paper

MISCELLANEOUS

- sunglasses
- tote bag, shoulder bag
- sheepskin or mat
- sadhana shawl
- alarm clock
- laundry bag
- cloths for cleaning (like Lysol wipes)
- laundry detergent, other soap
- Travel wipes (lots!)
- Batteries (if applicable)
- pillow
- towel
- TICKETS!!
- PASSPORT