

# EXPLORE!

## Highlights of Assam and Nagaland

16 days

India - Trip code ANN



## Highlights of Assam and Nagaland

This adventurous trip sees us heading in to India's north-eastern states of Meghalaya, Assam and Nagaland. After a brief stop in Guwahati we explore the tribal Khasi villages of Cherrapunjee and test out their ingenious living tree bridges. We spend time in Kaziranga National Park searching for rhino before moving on to Majuli Island, one of the world's largest river islands. Whilst in Nagaland we explore Ao Naga and Regma tribal villages as well as visiting Longwa, where half of the village is in India and the rest in Burma.

## Trip highlights

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Simple

These are often small, family run establishments or campsites which provide a no-frills experience with adequate amenities and service standards. Sleeping arrangements are simple, sometimes with en suite facilities.

### TRIP PACE:

#### Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

**GROUP SIZE:**

**8 - 12**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

# Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

## DAY 1 - Join tour in Guwahati

We begin our journey on the banks of the mighty Brahmaputra River, in Assam's bustling capital, Guwahati. After checking in to the hotel there will be time to relax and recover from the journey before heading out to eat in one of the cities many restaurants.



**Accommodation: Prag Continental** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 2 - Take a ferry to visit Umananda Temple

This morning we will be joined by those arriving on the early morning flight from London. After a chance to relax and freshen up we board a ferry to take us across the Brahmaputra to the 17th century Shiva temple of Umananda. Located on Peacock Island, believed to be the world's smallest inhabited island, the temple stands dramatically at the top of a series of steep steps that also provide a resting place for rare golden langur monkeys. Returning to the city we stop for lunch before a walking tour taking in the colourful markets of Paltan Bazaar. In the late afternoon we walk to Janardhan Temple where we can watch the sun setting over the Brahmaputra.



**Accommodation: Prag Continental** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Drive to Cherrapunjee via Shillong Peak

Leaving the city after breakfast we head first towards the pine forests and rolling hills of Shillong, a region that the colonial British once described as the 'Scotland of India'. Our first destination is Shillong Peak, set amongst the landscapes of the Khasi Hills in the state of Meghalaya, one of the smallest provinces in India. We continue on past Elephant Falls to the Mawphlang Sacred Forest, where we will stop for a while. A haven for orchids and butterflies, these beautiful and sacred groves have been preserved for countless millennia and form a remarkable living museum that contrasts sharply with the expansive grasslands that surround them. We may also get an opportunity to visit the market at Ka Lewbah Sohrarim today, before completing our journey to Cherrapunjee, a town with a reputation as one of the wettest places on earth.



**Accommodation: Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 4 - Walk through the forest to unique tree root bridges

These fertile landscapes are home to the Khasi people, who are believed to be descended from the Mon-Khmer tribes of Southeast Asia. Following breakfast this morning we will take a short drive to the start of our walk, after which we begin a tough day's hiking through the spectacular scenic beauty of the Khasi Hills. The first part of the trail takes us down a series of steep, stone steps, passing by small remote houses and on through the villages of Nongthymmai, Mynteng and Nongriat. At Nongriat we come across the stunning spectacle of the 'double decker' living root bridge, a truly unique structure that over the centuries has been 'trained' to span the river between two ancient rubber trees. After stopping to enjoy a picnic lunch and a well earned rest, we will begin the steep climb back, following the steps back up to our waiting bus. The entire trek will take us around seven hours and you may find walking poles a useful addition for the climb. At the end of the trek we return to Cherrapunjee for a second night.



**Accommodation: Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 5 - Drive to Kaziranga National Park

Today we drive to the World Heritage setting of Kaziranga National Park, some 320 kilometres to the south of Cherrapunjee. Encompassing 430 square kilometres of elephant grass, forest and swampland, it was established in 1974 to help save the Indian greater one-horned rhino. Lying in the shadow of the Karbi Anglong Hills, today this magnificent reserve can boast some 1,200 individuals, the greatest number anywhere in the country and it is probably one of the best places in India to view these rare rhino. Our journey takes us via the Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Culture, a unique venture set up to preserve and promote the cultural diversity of north-east India. After paying a visit to the centre, we then continue towards the southern banks of the Brahmaputra River, where we will spend our next two nights in a simple lodge in the heart of this magnificent landscape.



**Accommodation: Bonhabi Resort** (or similar)



Simple Lodge




Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 6 - Search for Asian one-horned rhino and other wildlife by jeep

We begin early this morning with a jeep safari in search of the Asian one-horned rhino and other wildlife. The park is home to a sizeable population of tigers, a variety of snakes, large monitor lizards and a significant bird population that includes crested serpent eagles, Palla's fish eagle, great adjutant stork, whistling teal and pelicans. In the afternoon we take to the jeeps once more for more wildlife spotting, returning to our jungle lodge late afternoon. Before dinner we hope to have the opportunity to witness the local tribal communities of the area demonstrating traditional Bihu and Jhumur dance forms. Unique to the region, the dancers wear colourful clothing and are accompanied by drummers.



**Accommodation: Bonhabi Resort** (or similar)

 Simple Lodge

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 Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

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## DAY 7 - Time for an optional morning safari: drive to Kohima

This morning we depart the park after breakfast and head east, towards Kohima, Nagaland's pleasant and thriving capital. We travel via the city of Dimapur, site of the old capital of the Dimasa Kachari Kingdom, which ruled over these lands during the Middle Ages. We'll stop here for tea and a stroll through the local market before continuing on through to the dramatic landscapes of Nagaland. Occupying the eastern fringes of the subcontinent, next to the border with Myanmar, the hills and valleys of this staunchly independent and little visited region are the traditional homeland of the Nagas, fiercely proud warrior clans who still revere their ancestral beliefs. Interestingly some 90% of today's Nagas are Christian, the British missionaries finding a receptive flock amongst village communities that already believed in a solitary and all-powerful being.




**Accommodation: Hotel East Gate** (or similar)

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 Simple Hotel

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 Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

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## DAY 8 - Meet members of the Angami tribe at Jakhma and Kigwema

Nagaland is made up primarily of 15 inter connected tribes, including those of the Ao, Konyak, Angami and Sema, all collectively termed under the one title of Naga. Spread across this majestic hill country the tribes number some 3.5 million in total, encompassing common languages and customs that hark back to their original arrival in these lands. The Naga were once headhunters, believing the head to contain the spirit. It was a belief which heralded a tradition of relieving their enemies of their heads and placing them in a central meeting house or 'Morung', ensuring the tribe gained from the added strength of fallen comrades and foes alike. Thankfully this is a custom that has mellowed with time and the removal of heads is not normally a part of any welcoming ritual! Today we'll pay a visit to the Angami villages of Jakhma and Kigwema, to meet with the elders and visit some of the local village homes. We may also get a chance to visit a school and lend a hand in the fields, before returning to Kohima to pay a visit to Kohima's WWII cemetery, a memorial that honours one of the most bitterly fought battles of the Second World War.



**Accommodation: Hotel East Gate** (or similar)

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 Simple Hotel

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 Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

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## DAY 9 - Visit Tseminyu Village en route to Mokochung

Heading north today we drive to the hilltown of Mokochung, a typical Naga town whose surrounding countryside is scattered with Ao villages. We plan en route to stop and pay a visit to Tseminyu village, home to members of the Regma tribe. We will meet with a local guide from the village and take a walk through the narrow streets to the morung, the central house traditionally used by bachelors as a meeting place. At the back of the village there is a simple iron bridge, put in place by the British during the war as they made their way from Kohima to Mokochung. Our long day's drive ends in Mokochung, the cultural centre of the Ao and the most economically and politically important city in northern Nagaland.



**Accommodation: Hotel Metsuben** (or similar)

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 Simple Hotel

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 Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

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## DAY 10 - Take a ferry to Majuli Island

This morning we drive to the town of Neematighat, where we board a ferry across to the island of Majuli, the largest river island in the world. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Majuli is home to some splendid Hindu temples and has been the cultural capital of Assam for the past 500 years. Its origins are steeped in mystery, but it is believed that the social reformer Shankardeva came here in the 16th century and established the 'satras' (monasteries and hermitages) that dot the island, sowing the seeds for a unique tribal culture that continues today. The cradle of its civilisation, these satras have become beacons of art and religion, their traditions still holding sway over the life of the Assamese. On arrival on the island we plan to pay a visit to some of these remarkable centres of culture before making our way on to our overnight eco camp. Our main bags will stay in Neematighat and we will be using just an overnight bag for our stay on Majuli.



**Accommodation: Mepo Okum Eco Camp** (or similar)



Simple Hut



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 11 - Explore the monasteries and villages of Majuli

We will spend today exploring the island visiting some of its monasteries and learning a little more about Majuli's unique traditions and its hold over its people. The monasteries are still seen as centres for learning, drama and dance and the ethnic culture of the Mishing and the Deori have remained relatively unchanged for centuries. We begin by visiting Auni Atri Satra Monastery, the largest monastery on the island. We aim to arrive early in the morning to witness the monks chanting before visiting the small museum on site. We then move on to the smaller monastery of Kamalabari Satra, unique in that the resident monks manage their own agricultural land and also travel throughout India teaching traditional dancing. We will take lunch with the monks, a simple affair with homegrown vegetarian food. Seating is on the floor and there is chance to spend time talking with the monks both during and after the meal. There may also be a possibility to organise a visit to a performance of Satriya dance at one of the monasteries. After lunch we drive to nearby Chamugari where we can see brightly painted masks that are handmade on the island. Besides its cultural importance, the island is also well known for its migratory birdlife, as we drive along we will take time to stop and look out for the resident bee eaters, storks and kingfishers that inhabit the island.



**Accommodation: Mepo Okum Eco Camp** (or similar)



Simple Hut



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 12 - Return to the mainland and drive to Mon, Nagaland

Taking the ferry back to the mainland this morning we then drive on to the town of Mon, the district headquarters for the entire region and a town populated almost exclusively by Konyaks and Aos; tribes distinguishable by their elaborate dress, adorned as they are with a rich array of jewellery and colourful designs. Arriving this afternoon we then have the rest of the day free to meet the villagers and enjoy some time exploring the town on our own.



**Accommodation: Paramount Guesthouse** (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 13 - Visit Longwa Village, located in both India and Burma

This morning we pay a visit to Longwa village, one of the largest in the Mon district, lying on the Indian/Myanmar border. The traditional ceremonial attire of these magnificent people is in itself an art form, with elaborate headdresses and ornate weaponry combining with elephant tusk bracelets and colourful hornbill feathers to present a magnificent spectacle of pomp and majesty. The village is also somewhat unique. Its chief (Angh) controls an area that extends into neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar, with the international boundary running through the middle of his house (his kitchen is in Burma and his bedroom is in India!). The villagers also benefit from dual citizenship. We'll take an orientation tour of the village with the local headman and take a walk up to a viewpoint, before returning to visit the village's international trade centre. After lunch we then return to Mon for a second night. If time allows we will also visit Hongphoi Village, a traditional village set on the outskirts of Mon.



**Accommodation: Paramount Guesthouse** (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 14 - Drive to Dibrugarh via the ancient capital of Sivasagar

We head next for Dibrugarh in the upper districts of Assam. The drive takes us via the town of Sivasagar, the former capital of the Ahom Kingdom which ruled this region for some six centuries, from 1228 until their destruction by the Burmese in the early 19th century. We will stop and pay a visit to the ancient ruins before continuing on to the city that has been titled the 'Tea City of India'. Located close to the Brahmaputra River, Dibrugarh lies in the heart of Assam's tea country, its surrounding estates accounting for some 50% of the entire regions tea crop. In 1950 a major earthquake, measuring 8.5 on the Richter Scale, diverted the course of the river and wiped out about three quarters of the old city. From those disastrous ashes though a new city arose, one that has gone on to become a major centre of learning and commerce in India's northeastern provinces.



**Accommodation: Mancotta Heritage Chang Bungalow** (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 15 - Learn about the tea industry at a local tea garden; fly to Kolkata

After breakfast we visit a working tea plantation to learn about how the tea is picked, processed, tasted and sent to auction before heading to the airport for an afternoon flight to Kolkata.



**Accommodation: Hotel Treebo Globe International** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 16 - Tour ends in Kolkata

Our last day is free for you to relax before your journey home or explore more of Kolkata. You may like to take a cruise on the



Hooghly River, enjoy a walk of the old colonial areas or visit the impressive Dakshineswar Kali temple.

**IOF** Meals Provided: Breakfast



## Why book this trip

This tour is ideal for people wanting to experience a different side of India. This busy itinerary travels through the remote north eastern states and spends time in Nagaland, a state more akin to South East Asia. The roads may be bumpy and the accommodation simple but the rewards for travelling through this little visited region are great with a chance to explore villages where headhunting was still taking place as late as the 1960s.

## What's included?



### Included meals

- Breakfast: 15
- Lunch: 13
- Dinner: 13



### Transport

- Bus
- 4WD
- Ferry



### Trip staff

- Explore Tour Leader
- Driver(s)
- Local Guide(s)
- Naturalist(s)



### Accommodation

- 2 nights simple guesthouse
- 5 nights standard hotel
- 4 nights simple hotel
- 2 nights simple hut
- 2 nights simple lodge

## Trip information

### Country information

### India Holidays & Tours

#### Climate

There is considerable variation between the different regions of India but, in general, the climate is tropical. Summer temperatures on the plains are very hot, but cooled by the South-West Monsoon, which lasts from June- September. During these months it can be very wet and therefore very humid. At altitude, temperatures can become quite cool at night even in the summer and may drop below freezing between December and February so warm clothing is necessary. In the winter, northern and mid India can be very cool, with cold evenings, so warm clothing, including plenty of layers, are essential. The south of India remains warm and sunny during the winter months.

**Time difference to GMT**

+5

**Plugs**

3 Pin Round

**Religion**

Catholicism, Hindu, Islam and Sikhism

**Language**

Hindi and English.

## Budgeting and packing

### Clothing

In general only lightweight clothing is needed during the day, but bring a warm sweater for early mornings and during winter evenings Nov/mid March (esp. Dec/Jan, when a windproof jacket, warm layers, gloves and hat are also recommended). Hotel heating arrangements are not on a par with UK standards and from December to February thermals are also recommended. Casual clothes are the most practical: tight fitting garments, brief shorts and skirts should be avoided, since they attract unwelcome attention. Waterproofs and or and umbrella may be useful.

### Footwear

Comfortable shoes or trainers and sandals.

### Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack. We recommend a holdall or rucksack for ease. Please remember, you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself. You will need to take an overnight bag whilst staying on Majuli Island, the main luggage will be left in Neematighat.

### Equipment

A walking pole will be useful for the walk to the living tree bridges in Cherrapunjee. The terrain is steep steps for the entire walk and so the additional support can ease the strain on knees. Some of the roads, particularly those in Nagaland, are windy and often in poor condition. You may wish to take travel sickness pills if you usually suffer.

### Tipping

**Explore leader**

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

**Local crew**

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly you should allow approx. £65 for gratuities for local staff.

**Country Information**

## India Holidays & Tours

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**



£6

**Dinner price**

£8

**Beer price**

£1.4

**Water price**

£0.5

## Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Indian Rupee Recently new 500, 1000 and 2000 rupee notes have been bought in to circulation and as the old notes are no longer accepted there have been some cash flow issues. You don't need to worry about being given old notes as it's very easy to tell the difference, the new notes are pristine in comparison with most Indian money which is fairly tatty.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

GBP/US\$ are the best currency to change into local currency.

**Where To Exchange**

The Indian rupee is a restricted currency and it is best not to obtain in the UK as rates are very poor. You can either change money at the airport on arrival or in major towns during the tour. Your Tour Leader will advise you on the best places in each town. Both GBP and USD cash are easy to exchange at the airport and at hotels however you will be restricted to changing £60 cash at a time and it's not possible to change money at these locations using a credit or debit card.

**ATM Availability**

ATMs are available in most large cities in India but they are very limited elsewhere so please do not rely on this.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Very rarely, only in the larger outlets.

**Travellers Cheques**

Opportunities to exchange are limited.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, 4WD, Ferry

### Accommodation notes

**Booking a Single Room**

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Accommodation in India is as varied as the country itself. On our tours we stay in a mix of hotels, heritage properties, camp sites and homestays. Standards do not equate to standards in the UK and it's best to approach each type of accommodation with an open mind. Service can be slow in places especially when travelling with a group. For the most part hotels do not have heating so in the winter months it can be chilly and if you feel the cold you may wish to ask for extra blankets. Hot water is not always available 24 hours a day in some of the smaller properties, and with a group staying you might find if you are showering last you may miss out on the hottest water. Please note on the last two nights of this trip in Dibrugarh, depending on group size, we will be staying across two different tea plantations that are approximately 4km apart, Mancotta Heritage Chang Bungalow & Chowkidinghe Heritage Chang Bungalow. Mancotta Heritage Chang Bungalow is the bigger of the two, so meals will be served there. The tea bungalows are of the same standard and there will be transfers provided between both to accommodate group meals and relaxation time. Your Explore Leader will confirm room allocation on arrival.

## Essential information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

#### Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa Information

India: A single entry visa is required by British travellers to India and must be obtained prior to departure. It is not possible to obtain an Indian visa directly from the Embassy. Therefore, Indian visas should be applied for through VFS global and further details of the new visa process and location of the application centres can be found here [http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/visa\\_types.html](http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/visa_types.html). Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office. There is a high probability that the process will change to include the collection of biometric data but a date for this is not yet confirmed. In order to arrange the permits required to travel through Assam and Nagaland please forward a scanned copy of your passport details page and Indian visa to Explore as soon as possible.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

### Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

### Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

#### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

#### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

### Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## India Holidays & Tours

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against Tetanus, Infectious Hepatitis, Typhoid and Polio. Please consult your travel clinic for the latest advice on Malaria, Dengue and Zika Virus. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider.

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