March 2016 India IFE

Pre-Departure Packet

Please carefully review the following information while preparing for your travels in India. As always, feel free to contact CLiGS or CLI anytime if you have questions regarding pre-departure preparations.

Arrival

Our March 2016 India IFE will officially commence at 5:00 pm on Saturday, March 26th in the lobby of the Taj Deccan, Hyderabad Hotel. The group will then depart from the hotel around 5:30 pm to enjoy dinner at a local Indian restaurant (covered by CLiGS).

When you first arrive at the Taj Deccan, Hyderabad Hotel, you can simply check-in by showing your passport and a copy of your reservation confirmation (which CLI emailed you) to the attendant at the front desk.

Taj Deccan, Hyderabad Hotel
Road No. 1
Banjara Hills
Hyderabad, Telangana - 500 034
Phone: (91-40) 665 23 939

Prior to departing the airport, please utilize this opportunity to use an ATM to obtain currency (see "Money" section below.

Packing Considerations

Please pack light! Packing clothes that dry quickly and can be washed and dried overnight will save luggage space. Try not to bring too much clothing—many experienced travelers wear the same outfits multiple times by washing clothing in the hotel or by utilizing laundry service. The CLiGS Travel Challenge is to bring only a carry-on and a personal item! It keeps us nimble. Try your best to meet the challenge. Consider a smaller bag or backpack for use during the day.

Clothing Considerations

- **Climate**: Check the weather and general climate through a simple Google search before you pack. Dressing in layers is recommended.

- **Style**: Dress for comfort, but keep in mind that we engage in several semi-formal activities. Choose fabrics intelligently—try to bring clothes that dry quickly, are relatively wrinkle resistant, and are neutral colored and easily mixed and matched. Please do not bring revealing clothing.

- **Shoes**: Shoes are bulky, so choose wisely. Pack high-quality, comfortable shoes. We'll be doing a lot of walking.

- **Laundry**: Laundry service is provided at each of our hotels, but we are only staying at each location for 3-5 days and laundry service can be expensive. If you plan to do laundry at any location, be sure to start the process on the first or second day of our stay at that given location.

Health Items

- **Medication**: Bring any medications that you routinely need. In addition, you may want to consider bringing other over-the-counter medications such as antacids, antidiarrheals, antihistamines, aspirin, etc. We will have a few long bus rides. If you suspect motion sickness will be a problem, bring a medicine to help alleviate it.

- **Toiletries**: Basic toiletries (e.g. toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, soap, etc.) will be provided by each hotel. Please use your own discretion when packing these items, but do keep in mind that we strongly encourage a carry-on only luggage policy and liquids in anything but small containers may be confiscated by airport security.

- **Toilet paper or tissues:** As toilets in some areas may not have toilet paper, paper towels, or hand soap, having tissues and hand sanitizer with you is recommended.

Electronics

- **Phones**: We will have access to phones while in India, so you will not need your phone to make local calls. However, having data capability is sometimes useful for maps, Skype, Google searches, etc. If you are going to enable your phone for international data or calling, please do so prior to departure.

- **Text Messaging:** Sending international text messages is expensive. A useful smartphone app for sending messages via Wi-Fi is WhatsApp (http://www.whatsapp.com). If you plan to send text messages with friends and family back home, we recommend having all involved parties download WhatsApp.

- **Computers**: Wi-Fi should be relatively reliable throughout the program. You are not required to bring a computer or tablet, but please feel free to do so if you prefer.

- **Converter**: If you bring electronic equipment, you may need to purchase a converter prior to departure (though you can usually find them in the airport). Please reference this website for information regarding power supply in India.

Special Considerations

- **Photography**: Exercise caution and thoughtfulness when taking photographs. Look for signs that prohibit photography and heed them. Also, be extra respectful when photographing people, and always ask for permission. Be sure to bring sufficient batteries and data cards if you plan to take lots of photos.

- **Skype**: A good option for calling home is to use Skype on a Wi-Fi network either through a computer or a smartphone.

- **Additional Note:** As a precautionary measure, we suggest you leave a copy of the following information with a friend or family member back home:
    - Scan and/or copy of your passport and visa
    - Scan and/or copy of your insurance information
    - Flight information and our detailed itinerary
    - Program information

Money

We recommend carrying at least 100 USD on your person at all times in case of emergency or in case you find the perfect souvenir. You can usually exchange currency at the airport or simply retrieve local currency from an ATM using your US debit card. Keeping small denominations of the local currency is recommended for shopping at markets or buying items in convenience stores.

Currency

- **Indian Rupee:** The Indian Rupee (INR) is the official currency of India. The exchange rate is roughly 1 USD to 68.55 INR (1:68.55 as of February 2016).
- **Currency website:** Please see this great site for quick currency rate conversion is XE Currency.

Additional Money Considerations

- **Prices**: Expect prices for many items in India to be lower than what you're accustomed to in the US.
- **Banks**: You can use your ATM and credit cards in urban regions in India, but be sure you call your bank in advance to notify them of international activity.
- **Credit Cards**: Call your credit card companies to notify them you will be traveling internationally.
- **Currency Exchange**: You may want to exchange some currency before you leave for India, but that said, you can likely do so at the airport and by withdrawing funds from local ATMs. ATMs will dispense the local currency regardless of the currency type in your personal account.

Safety and Security

When traveling in India, it is important to always remember that you are in a foreign country with different laws, customs, and personal safety requirements.

- **Street smarts**: The areas in which we will be travelling are generally safe, but you should always be cognizant of your personal belongings (particularly money and electronics) and your surroundings.
- **Buddy system**: Practicing safe behavior is important. If you choose to explore an area alone, let someone know where you are going and ideally take a phone with your colleagues' numbers. If you go for a stroll at night, it is recommended you do so with a group.
- **Hotel address cards**: Most hotels have an address card and map available to guests. Always keep an address card with you in case you get lost.
- **Passport and visa**:
    - Leave a scanned copy with a friend or family member who will be easily reachable during your travels.
    - Scan your passport and visa and send a copy to yourself for electronic retrieval.
    - Consider keeping your passport in a Ziploc bag or waterproof case.

Staying Healthy

- **Food**: Food in India is delicious! Get ready to be adventurous and rewarded. A good rule of thumb for avoiding stomach issues is: "If it doesn't look safe, don't eat it." Avoiding street food and raw foods is also recommended.

- **Water**: Do not drink any water or other beverage from bottles unless you opened the new bottle yourself. Avoid drinks with ice in them. Bottled water is covered in your course fee and will be provided to you on an ongoing basis. Use the provided bottled water for drinking and also brushing your teeth.

- **Time difference**: India is 10 hours, 30 minutes ahead of US EDT.

What to Expect

There are aspects of traveling and working in India that you may find different from your home country. Some will be wonderful, fascinating, and exciting, while some may be disorienting and maybe even uncomfortable. You will also notice similarities.

It is important to be aware of and reflect on these differences and similarities, particularly how you react to them and what you can learn from them (not just about India, but also about yourself).

Some principles for enhancing your own sense of cultural curiosity:

- *Suspend your assumptions and value judgments*
- *Be perceptive and observant of your surroundings*
- *Listen and become analytically inquisitive*
- *Consider how questions will be translated or interpreted before asking*
- *Embrace ambiguity and practice humility*
- *Be aware of multiple perspectives*
- *Maintain an open sense of humor*

We look forward to welcoming you to India soon! If you have any questions or concerns whatsoever, please feel free to contact CLiGS or CLI anytime.