

This is a shortened English version of the German guidelines for Hindi students in India, supplemented by information from Mirja Juntunen

Extracurricular Activities

- It is expected that all students take part in the extracurricular activities (e.g. weekend excursions).

Teaching

- Stationery has to be brought along by the students
- Homework is part of the course and will be part of the evaluation of the students at the end of the course
- Students are advised to bring along a Hindi-English dictionary or buy one after arrival in India

General Rules for touring India

There are some rules of conduct which have to be observed while travelling in India. The differences between the Indian and the North-European culture are very big. Several students travel to India for the first time and know very little about its culture. But even in case of those who have already been in India, note should be taken of the facts that neither is the Hindi course a private tour nor is Varanasi comparable with Delhi or Bombay. Own rules apply for this kind of language course. This is the reason why we have assembled some suggestions that should facilitate your orientation in India. We suggest that whenever problems turn up, try sitting together in order to find some solution. Getting visibly angry and shouting around never helps in India!

Living with a Host Family

- Take off your shoes when entering the house.
- Ask if it is ok to deposit toilet paper and other sanitary articles in the bathroom.
- Ask if you can be of any help in the household (e.g. preparation of food).
- Never offer food leftovers to another person.
- Never touch food of other people.
- If possible, eat with the right hand.
- Presents should be offered with the right hand.
- It is appreciated if you bring small presents from your own country to the country of your host.
- In case you eat with the hand and not with cutlery, don't offer food items to others with that hand. If food is offered to you, wait until it is put onto your plate.
- Don't blow your nose while eating (but belching is ok).
- If the meal takes place on the floor (e.g. in a village), never step over food items.
- Wear proper clothing also inside the house.
- Keep your room in order, don't let clothes lie about.
- Don't whistle inside the house.
- Never smoke or consume alcohol or other drugs in front of your hosts.

- Never invite other people without previous permission from your host family.
- Always inform your hosts about you plans where you want to go and when you will be back.

Attitude towards Indian Teachers

- You are expected to show respect towards your teachers.
- Never address Indian teachers with their first name. In case they are not present, use *ji*, *shri*, or *shrimati*.
- It is not opportune to challenge the authority or knowledge of a teacher: if you want to express a critique, be polite and make innovative new suggestions.
- Never smoke in front of Indian teachers.

Behaviour in Public

- Couples should never kiss or hug in public spaces.
- Take off your shoes when entering a temple.
- Do bargain while shopping.
- When sitting on the ground, never direct the sole of your foot towards another person (this is perceived as an insult).
- At least in some parts of India, it is perceived as impolite if you pass between two persons when they are talking with each other.
- If you want to photograph people, do first ask for their permission.

Dressing

Please note that with regard to dressing, Varanasi is not Delhi, i.e. the population of Varanasi is fairly conservative.

- Traditional Indian clothing is a good choice but not a must.
- Whether you wear Indian or western clothing, in any case it should look neat and clean. Don't wear tattered or very washed-out clothing.
- If female students wear western clothing please take care that it is not too tightly fitted; skirts should cover the knees and T-shirts should have sleeves.
- Be especially careful with regard to your clothing when you are visiting a religious place. Wearing shorts is out of the question.

Some advice for female students

- Don't go out alone in the evening.
- If you sense curious gazes or hear insinuating remarks, try to ignore them.
- Exercise special caution during festivals when there are heightened chances of encountering groups of boozed people.
- If you get harassed it is important that you overcome your shyness and reprimand the person in the presence of passers-by. Usually this is quite effective and most probably you will get immediate help.

- Be reserved and careful regarding contact with Indian men, especially if, for instance, you are addressed on the road and invited somewhere. It is perfectly fine to reject an invitation – normally Indian women would do the same.

Drug usage

- Offences against the Narcotics Law receive severe punishment even when possessing just small amounts of drugs (also cannabis).

Vaccination

- Please enquire with your institute of tropical medicine which vaccinations are recommended for which parts of India.

Prophylaxis against malaria

- Enquire with your institute of tropical medicine whether they recommend malaria prophylaxis for this part of India.
- Very effective repellents are *All Out* and *Good Night* which give off active substances from a liquid that gets heated by plugging a small gadget into a power socket.
- Use lotions like *Autan* or *Odomos* (an Indian product) in the evenings.

Useful luggage

- Sufficient medicine and medical paraphernalia (on the other hand one gets any kind of standard medicine practically everywhere): *Paracetamol*, medicine against stomach and intestinal problems, possibly malaria emergency medication, possibly a broadband antibiotics, *Fenistil*, clinical thermometer, plaster and small cotton bandages, disinfectant, iodine ointment.
- Vaccination card; take along and keep separate one copy of your vaccination card and your passport.
- If you intend to buy an Indian chip card for your mobile you will need two passport (size) photos (having several is advisable anyway).
- Torch.
- A cotton or silken sleeping bag.
- A few small presents (perhaps best from Norway).
- At least one warm sweater.
- An alarm clock.
- Kleenex and perhaps moist cleaning tissue.
- Pens, pencils etc. (however also easily available in India).
- Safety pins.
- Perhaps a mosquito net.
- Locks for locking one's luggage.
- A bum bag for keeping valuables.
- Those who take along a laptop might need an extra storage battery.

Some other tips

- Money: take along from Norway some cash but not too much (probably best are Dollars or Euros); you can also use traveller cheques even though they appear to have come out of fashion; meanwhile you can draw Indian Rupees from many ATMs (minibanks) across the country either with a normal bankcard (e.g. from Nordea) or with a credit card. Foreign currency exceeding the amount of 5.000 US-Dollars has to be declared at immigration.
- Flight back to Norway: Many airlines want a reconfirmation of your return flight at the latest 72 hours before departure.

Some more useful information and addresses

Hospital

- The Heritage Hospital is an upmarket and good hospital but a bit expensive (approximately 1000 INR depending on the treatment, X-rays, blood tests etc.).
- Heritage Hospital, Lanka, Varanasi, Phone: + 91 542 2313978

Banks and money

- Almost all the Indian Banks are represented in Varanasi. The *State Bank of India* is close to the teaching centre, at BHU Campus etc. All phone numbers can be found in the internet, and one can find the bank by telling the *rikshevala* the name of the area. Other banks are ICICI, Axis Bank and UCO bank.

VISA and Masters Card are the most common accepted ones and there are ATMs (cash machines) at every corner in Varanasi.

It is good to keep some foreign currency for emergency. Travellers cheques seem to be out nowadays. In case of problems with cash, anybody at home can easily and within a very short time transfer money to the student through Western Money Union.

Foreign currency exceeding the amount of 5.000 US-Dollars has to be declared at the immigration.

Flight back to Norway

- Many airlines want a reconfirmation of your flight back until 72 hours before departure.