



# Prepare for your study and research in India

*The following checklist has been developed as a tool to support European students and researchers, who plan to come to India in pursuit of various educational programmes (mainly short-term programmes).*



*This document has been developed in collaboration with the Nordic Centre in India (NCI), India Centre for Migration (ICM) and the Association of Indian Universities (AIU).*



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# Introduction

This checklist aims to assist you in finding answers to useful questions in preparation for each step of the process i.e. preparatory phase, pre-departure phase and post-arrival phase, through free and reliable resources. It aims to guide you with the necessary tips and advice to navigate through the various challenges commonly associated with student mobility to India, from the European Union, that include:

- ✧ misinformation and paying for free services;
- ✧ acquiring the correct travel documentation (visa application, residency permits);
- ✧ post-arrival registration—completing the post-arrival registration, ensuring adequate temporary housing arrangements, familiarity of the languages in use—depending on the state;
- ✧ knowledge on some of the key cultural and societal aspects.

The 'Study in India' (SII) project under the Ministry of Education seeks to endorse India as a prime education hub for international students. The project has made the process easier with information on studying in India readily available for students (<https://www.studyinindia.gov.in>).

Moreover, with internationalisation of education institutions planned as part of the new National Education Policy, such a checklist will prove to be a useful tool to European students and researchers.



As per the latest statistics; most of EU student come to India to carry out various short term programmes (6–12 month duration), which includes twinning arrangements, semester exchange programs, short-term programmes in niche disciplines and as part of various research programmes. Additionally, with the educational system evolving in India, under the National Education Policy (NEP) framework, new student and research exchanges are envisioned between various Indian and global institutions (through twinning arrangements, Joint Degree Programmes, and Dual Degree Programmes). As a result, an increasing number of EU students enrolled in such programmes, will be engaging in short-term educational opportunities in India.



## Preparatory phase

*India with its culture of 'Atithi Devo Bhava' (Guests are God) has been attracting foreign students for decades. The country, now, has one of the largest higher education systems in the world (after China and the US). It has some of the most highly ranked universities and colleges in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) as well as a wide variety of institutions that focus on niche areas such as Yoga, Vedic culture, Indian systems of dance/music, traditional medicinal practices, Buddhist studies, etc.*

**W**hen you plan to do a short-term exchange program or a niche course or come to India as part of a study or research programme, some of the first questions that you need to ask yourself are:

Is the higher educational institution (HEI) I am considering a recognised university?

Does the specific HEI have a bilateral agreement with my home university? *Though not essential to getting an invitation letter, this will prove useful when it comes to formalities, transfer of credits, etc.*

What is the reputation of the HEI, does it have an International Relations Office (IRO), and would it provide what I need for my study and stay, from both a practical and an academic perspective, in an organised manner?

Check and compare whether my foreign degree that is being used for admission at Indian HEI, is equivalent (to an Indian degree) and acceptable, as per the requirements of Association of Indian Universities (AIU)? *Your HEI in India would normally refer you to AIU to obtain an Equivalence Certificate. Do allow sufficient time for this process to be completed. For more information, please refer to the adjacent box.*

### Note:

In India, HEIs must be recognised by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and in the case of technical studies, they must be approved by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) (link to access this information provided below in the box on [page...7](#)). Do not consider an institution that is not recognised as it would lead to problems with your student visa application as well as in transferring your credits. Similarly, make sure to enrol into government approved institutions for niche courses (link given in the box below on [page 7](#)).

AIU is an inter-university apex body with more than 850 Indian universities which is mandated by the Indian Ministry of Education, to compare/give equivalence to the foreign degree and Boards.

To check the equivalency of your foreign degree, you can approach AIU at [evaluation@aiu.ac.in](mailto:evaluation@aiu.ac.in) or read detailed instructions at: <https://www.aiu.ac.in/evaluation.php>

To obtain additional details on the HEIs you are considering, you could check their website as well as register with the study in India portal ([@ https://www.studyinindia.gov.in](https://www.studyinindia.gov.in)) or Direct Admission of Students Abroad (DASA) portal ([@ https://dasanit.org/dasa2021](https://dasanit.org/dasa2021)) (for technical institutions) to access information (eligibility criteria, available courses, and infrastructure availability) of the top-ranked institutes in India, offering both mainstream courses and niche disciplines.

Once you have the preliminary information at the preparatory phase and have decided on the desired programme, ask yourself:

What is the application process? What are the deadlines and the overall timeline? What are the admission criteria?

What is the cost of the programme and estimated cost for living expenses? Are there any scholarships that I can avail and does the HEI have arrangements for boarding and lodging?

Do I have all the required documents:

- a certified copy of my educational certification/ degree
- transcript of records,
- motivation letter,
- proof of English proficiency\* (for candidates from non-Anglophone countries),
- CV as relevant.

**Note:**


In case, the documents to be submitted for your application are not in Hindi or English, please note that you will need to provide the originals along with a notarised translation.

\***Remember** that language test score certificates (IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC) should not be more than 2 years from the date of acquisition.

## Advice and tips on university application procedure

Your short-term inward mobility to India or research affiliation can be based on a bilateral agreement between your home university and an Indian host institution, or it can be an arrangement that you make directly with an Indian host institution. In the former scenario, you can expect to get support from your home university's international office but in the latter case, it would be beneficial to orient yourself about your move to India as much as possible with the support of the department where you will be located or International office of the Indian host institution. It would also be useful to familiarise yourself with the guidelines, rules, and practical arrangements that determine your specific mobility to India.

Additionally, if your university is part of an university consortium such as the **Nordic Centre in India, Indo German Centre for Higher Education** or affiliated to an academic exchange support organisation such as **DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst)**, it would be useful to contact their offices in India to find more information on the application procedure for the various educational programmes. Other EU member states have agencies such as **Campus France, Institut Français India (IFI), Uni-Italia** and the **Netherland Education Support Office (NESO)**, which have their presence in India and can be approached for assistance. Cultural centres/institutes may also be able to provide some advice on student travel to India such as the **Polish Institute, Hungarian Cultural Centre, Spanish Cultural Centre (Instituto Cervantes), Portuguese cultural centres (Instituto Camões)** and the **Austrian Cultural Forum** in New Delhi.

**DAAD** and **Campus France** offices are present in all the major Indian cities (New Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai, Mumbai and Pune). Several European universities too have their study centres and support offices in India. Additionally, entities based in EU like the  [India house leuven](http://www.indiahouse.leuven.be/), could be a good contact point for EU students travelling to India.

*You can also make use of the resource webpages for EU students available on the Nordic Centre and the DAAD portal, which can be useful for your preparation for travel and studies in India:*

**Nordic Centre**  <http://www.nordiccentreindia.com/prepare-for-your-studies>  
**DAAD**  <https://www.daad.de/de/laenderinformationen/asien/indien>

Similarly, for courses in niche disciplines or any full time program, make sure to only apply through the application portal of the desired institutes or if the institute is part of the Study in India (SII) Programme, make use of the SII portal for application.

**You are also required to approach AIU to obtain equivalence certificate. The equivalence certificate is necessary for all foreign nationals to study in India. AIU has been mandated by the Ministry of Education (MoE) to give equivalence to the foreign qualifications.**

## Scholarships

**F**irst, check with your home university if you are eligible for any scholarship/fee waiver as part of a university programme, bilateral agreement, etc. The next step is to check the available scholarship avenues in India. With the Indian government's push to attract international students, more and more scholarships are becoming available. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has a mandate of administering scholarship programmes of the Government of India and annually awards about **3,940 scholarships** under **23 different schemes** to foreign students. More details on ICCR scholarships can be availed at the online portal 'Admissions to Alumni (A2A Portal)' (<http://a2ascholarships.iccr.gov.in>).

**Similarly, the Study in India program offers approximately 35,500 fee waivers and 2,000 scholarships (annually), with each scholarship valued at INR 250,000.** These fee waivers (25% to 100% depending upon the course) and scholarships are available for both STEM courses and programs in niche disciplines such as Ayurveda, Yoga, and Buddhist Studies.

The Indian Scholastic Assessment or Ind-SAT is a standardized online-proctored test for students seeking scholarships with Study in India (SII).

## Useful points to consider for researchers

- ✧ The success of the research visa application largely depends on the area of enquiry and the field site being considered, and therefore, care needs to be taken while planning the same. If your research topic is a 'sensitive' topic related to India's security and internal issues, it might affect the approval of your research visa. Additionally, field visits and research in protected/restricted areas (P/RA) would be not allowed as per the Ministry of Home Affairs guidelines (<https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/FAQs-onPAPandRAP.pdf>).
- ✧ If your spouse or dependent family members are accompanying you to India during your research/study, then they **must too apply for a Student Visa (Not Tourist Visa) indicating the purpose as 'dependant of foreign student/researcher' in the online visa application.** The termination date will coincide with the period of the principal Visa holder.
- ✧ In case you are an Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholder, you would require special permission to undertake research work in India. For this, you would need to consult the Indian Mission in your country of residence.



## 🌐 Important web links to access additional information at preparatory phase

- 🌐 List of recognised universities by the Government of India can be accessed at:  
<https://www.ugc.ac.in/oldpdf/consolidated%20list%20of%20all%20universities.pdf> and  
<https://www.aicte-india.org/education/institutions/Universities>
- 🌐 The Student Information Services of Association of Indian Universities (AIU) (available at [studentinfo@aiu.ac.in](mailto:studentinfo@aiu.ac.in)) could also be made use to enquire regarding the recognition status of the Indian university.
- 🌐 To study niche disciplines (Yoga, Vedic culture, Indian systems of dance/music, Buddhist studies or any other short-term theological courses), apply for a programme at the institutions approved by the Government of India and listed in the Ministry of Home affairs guidelines (as this is a requirement to obtain student Visa):  
[https://www.mha.gov.in/PDF\\_Other/AnnexIII\\_01022018.pdf](https://www.mha.gov.in/PDF_Other/AnnexIII_01022018.pdf) (See Appendix VII)
- 🌐 The 'Study in India' portal can also be useful to find information and apply for all courses:  
<https://www.studyinindia.gov.in>. Additionally, you can get in touch with the Study in India team on WhatsApp (+91 8130013265), Toll Free Number (+91 120-6565065) and on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/studyinindiagov>)
- 🌐 Information on the Study in India Scholarship and the Ind-SAT eligibility exam can be accessed at:  
<https://www.studyinindia.gov.in/scholarships/FeeWaiversandConcessions/Scholarship>
- 🌐 To check the 2020 ranking of the university/institute that you wish to apply for:  
<https://www.nirfindia.org/2020/OverallRanking.html>. The NIRF (National Institute Ranking Framework) ranks Indian universities and colleges, based on the following five pillars—Teaching, Learning and Resources; Research and Professional Practices; Graduation Outcomes; Outreach and Inclusivity; and, Perception.
- 🌐 For more tips and advices on student life in India, visit the blog series on Study in India portal:  
<https://www.studyinindia.gov.in/blogs/List>





# Pre-departure Phase

Successfully applying for the student/research visa is the most important step in the pre-departure phase. The process may seem cumbersome but being prepared substantially increases the probability of a successful application in a timely manner. **Most importantly, the requirements may vary over time or by country: do check with the Indian embassy in the host country before applying.**

## Regarding Visa

*All foreign nationals (except for Bhutanese or Nepalese passport holders) entering India require a visa. If you are coming for a study programme to India you will need to apply for a Student Visa, and if you are planning on conducting research in India, you will need to apply for a Researcher Visa. Each visa is typically linked to the time period mentioned in your Letter of Admission/Affiliation, and it can be obtained from the Indian Embassy in your home country.*

As a first step, you would be required to fill an online visa application by visiting the website (<http://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa>). After filling in this application, visit the nearest Indian embassy with printout of the online filled application and required travel documents.

Some of the questions that you need to ask when you start your visa process include:

Do I have my acceptance/affiliation letter from the host institution with accurate information regarding my name, date of birth, passport number, etc.?

Do I have proof of financial means (and health insurance [not mandatory])?

Do I have a picture (in the right format)? (Please refer to the link below:

[https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/VSS\\_IMAGE.pdf](https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/VSS_IMAGE.pdf)).

Do I have a passport valid for at least 6 months longer than the visa I am applying for?

Did I complete the visa application form?

As proof of financial means, you would need to submit duly endorsed financial documents i.e. offer of scholarship or supporting letter from parent/guardian stating they 'would meet the financial obligations towards their child's study in India', accompanied by proof of financial potential to pay for the studies abroad.



## Supplementary Information required for a Researcher Visa:

If you are applying for a researcher Visa, along with the Letter of Affiliation and supporting documents, you will need to provide the following additional information:

- ✧ Subject/topic of the research project.
- ✧ Details of places to be visited in India during the project period.
- ✧ Details of previous visits to India.
- ✧ A brief synopsis (150 words) of research proposal and justification for doing research in India (in case research topic is related to your own country).

### Links to additional information and FAQ's on student Visa and Research Visa

For more details on the student and researcher Visa, refer to:

🌐 [https://www.mha.gov.in/PDF\\_Other/AnnexIII\\_01022018.pdf](https://www.mha.gov.in/PDF_Other/AnnexIII_01022018.pdf)

FAQs on student and researcher Visa available at:

🌐 [https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/student\\_visa\\_faq.pdf](https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/student_visa_faq.pdf)

🌐 <https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/FAQs-ResearchVisa.pdf>

### Other important points to note:

In the context of COVID-19 pandemic, check the travel requirements to India and complete all the necessary requirements (COVID test–PCR or rapid antigen test as per requirements), proof of vaccination certificate, and any travel registration forms required) for your arrival in India. In addition to the website of the Indian embassy in your country, you may also find updated information on this aspect on the site of the Indian Ministry of health:

🌐 <https://www.mohfw.gov.in>



# Post-Arrival Phase

## Foreigners Regional/Registration Office (FRO/FRRO) registration

*Foreigner registration is a mandatory requirement by the Government of India under which all foreign nationals (excluding overseas citizens of India) visiting India on a long term visa [more than 180 days] are required to register themselves with a Registration Officer within 14 days of arriving in India.*

The Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) handles all the services related to foreigners living in India. Since 2018, Government of India has launched the e-FRRO scheme, which allows foreigners to register and avail visa, and immigration related services online. Under the new scheme, a foreign citizen is no longer required to appear in-person at an FRRO, unless specifically required to do so.

### Important Note:

Do check your visa to see if you have the following stamp: 'Registration Required within 14 Days of Arrival in India.' Typically, this message will be stamped on your visa if you have a research visa or if your student visa that is valid for more than 180 days. This stamp requires that you should register at the Foreigner's Regional Registration Office (FRRO) of the city you plan to study/conduct research in **within 14 days of arrival in India**. Do keep this in mind when you are planning your travel itinerary in India.

**NOTE:** Agents are not allowed to register you via the FRRO system, so you must do this process yourself.

## How do you Register at the FRRO

You can do it online via <https://indianfrro.gov.in/eservices/eRegistration.jsp>. Have the relevant documents ready for the registration like the bonafide certificate from the university you are admitted/affiliated to as well as proof of residence for the city in India that you will be located in for your studies/research.

### Points to note:

- ✦ On completion of the registration process, you will be issued a Police Residential Permit (PRP) with a date that usually coincides with the end of the academic programme. **Note that the date on the PRP may not necessarily be aligned to the validity of your visa, and therefore, you need to depart India on or before the expiration of the PRP even if the visa gives you a longer duration of stay.**
- ✦ **The PRP is an important document that you need to safeguard through the duration of your stay in India. You will be asked to surrender this document at the point of departure to the Immigration Officer of the port or check post.**
- ✦ You have to notify the FRRO in case you are moving to another city in India or moving to another residence within the city that you have registered yourself in you are mandated to keep the FRRO notified.
- ✦ Non-registration or delay in registration will mean that you will have to pay a penalty and in case of non-registration, you will have to apply for an Exit Permit from the FRRO to be able to depart from India.

Please note that while extension of the PRP/visa is technically possible, in reality it is a cumbersome and time-consuming process with no guarantee of success. So plan your itinerary before you apply for your visa.

*More information about these stipulations along with information about visa extension, applying for an Exit Permit, etc. can be found at:*

- 🌐 <https://boi.gov.in/content/requirements-extension-visa> and
- 🌐 <https://boi.gov.in/content/general-instructions-registration-foreigners>

## 🛡️ Local Support, Safety and Security

India is a vast country where generally people are hospitable and friendly but, like all travel, it is advisable to not immediately trust or make plans with strangers as there could be hidden dangers not immediately apparent to a non-native. It is advisable therefore, for you to collate a list of resources general to India and specific to your location for your safety and security.

### Some useful pointers in this regard for pre-departure and post-arrival:

- 👉 Contact the consulate of your embassy and let them know that you are in India as a student/researcher. They typically will provide you useful information regarding support in times of difficulty.
- 👉 Identify local resources of assistance like the university resources, the nearest police station, hospital, ambulance, fire station, helplines for women, etc. In most metropolitan cities you will find the police have specific apps as well as active social media handles that can be used in times of emergencies.
- 👉 Have a local contact person(s) within the university who can help in times of distress and who has copies of all your relevant documents including copies of your visa, PRP, health insurance documents, passport size photos, and information regarding your emergency contact person. It would be useful to keep this person(s) informed of your whereabouts and travel plans so that they can be of assistance in case you encounter difficulties
- 👉 Always carry copies of your passport, visa, residence permit and health insurance details while travelling even locally. Safeguard the originals.
- 👉 Online security is also a matter to be considered. Beware of financial frauds, phishing, catfishing, etc. as well as spam calls/messages/emails that can lead to difficult situations.

## 📞 Helplines

👉 National emergency service .....	112
👉 Police .....	100
👉 Fire .....	101
👉 Ambulance .....	102
👉 Women (all India) Helpline .....	1091

Additionally, in times of distress, you can make use of the '24x7 Toll Free Multi-Lingual Tourist Help Line' (Ministry of Tourism initiative) available for foreign travellers in India **1800111363** or on a short code **1363**.

For state wise helplines and other resources, please check: 🌐 <https://indianhelpline.com>

## Housing

**B**e realistic in your expectations of housing while in India. It is good to research and talk to people with regard to what you get for your money's worth because you will find a wide variety of housing options. **It is also advisable not to commit to housing before you see the option yourself unless you trust the person recommending/making the arrangement for you.**

University housing is typically a safe and economical option even though standards vary. If you do choose housing from afar, ask for pictures of the room and information about the amenities including boarding options before you come so that you are mentally prepared. Choosing university housing will also mean adherence to specific rules, so familiarising yourself with the terms of your stay before arrival would be useful. A similar option is a paying guest facility that typically caters to students around a particular university.

Renting an apartment can be a bit trickier as the market is run by brokers and requires getting into a rental agreement. Consider this option only if you are staying for a longer period of time, and then investigate the options, neighbourhood, local amenities, etc. before signing any document. The more hassle free option would then be looking for an Airbnb or a mid-range hotel where the commitment can be worked out in a more flexible manner. Alternatively, international hostels may be an option.

## Finances

**I**ndia is still largely a cash based economy so it is advisable for you to have cash with you in various denominations along with coins. In the last few years, digital payments methods have also become increasingly popular and is driving the shift towards a Paperless, Cashless economy. However, to make use of various digital payment options, you will need to have an Indian bank account.

### Practical information

For a foreigner, a Non-Resident Ordinary (NRO) account can be opened with any bank, after completion of KYC (Know Your Customer) formalities like verification of identity proof and address proof of the person along with his photographs. The proof of identity and address of the foreign student in his home country is verified through his/her passport with appropriate visa and immigration endorsement. You would need to produce a letter from the educational institution containing the intimation that you have been offered admission in their institute. Additionally, a valid proof of local address will need to be submitted within 30 days of opening the bank account (rental agreement or a letter from the university informing about the hostel facility provided).

Additionally, your Visa and Master Card would quite easily work in most commercial establishments in India. You can also withdraw money (up to INR 25,000 per day) from 24 hour ATMs that are very easy to locate especially in the most cities. You can also easily change money at currency exchange providers at the airport or in town. You can also receive money via Western Union Money transfers through Indian post offices.

## Health care

The change in diet, water and climate, alongside possible exposure to tropical disease vectors typically cause health problems for foreign students and researchers. Indian healthcare is a mix of public and private players so it is advisable to prepare yourself in the event of a health emergency.

- ✧ In the event of a pre-existing medical condition(s) it would be advisable for you to carry your personal prescription and medication alongside 'over the counter' medicines and an EpiPen (in case you have had allergic reactions previously).
- ✧ Inform your emergency contact person about any pre-existing conditions, allergies, etc.
- ✧ Map out the health resources available to you and get feedback related to which of the options are the most effective.
- ✧ Carry your health insurance related papers (along with information about emergency contact persons) with you and find out from your insurance providers which Indian hospitals they are tied with so that you can avail cashless treatment.



## Transport

- ✧ Local transport in India is again brimming with options in various price ranges. Public transport (buses, local trains, metro lines) is the cheapest and safest, but depending on the kind of transport being considered you could have to deal with overcrowding, a longer ride, lack of comfort, etc. Auto rickshaws, taxis, etc. are more useful in the context of last mile connectivity but in many cities, you may have to haggle to decide the fare, which can get stressful. In big cities, autos and taxis are governed by metered fare. Also, metro services are increasingly getting operational in most cities of India. Cab aggregation apps, like Uber and Ola, are found in most big cities and are a better and comparatively safer option.
- ✧ Domestic transport options also abound in India. The railways connect most parts of India and you can book tickets on [www.irctc.co.in](http://www.irctc.co.in) or [www.railatri.in](http://www.railatri.in). For train travel queries, you can also contact Indian Railway's International Tourist Bureau (<https://www.irctchelp.in/international-tourist-bureau-railway>), that provides personalised service and assistance to foreign tourists and NRIs regarding reservations, itinerary planning and other enquiries.
- ✧ Most big cities are connected by air, by train or by bus, and there are many web portals like cleartrip.com, makemytrip.com, etc. where you can book your tickets quite easily. Interstate buses—both public and private—are also available and you can book your tickets at [redbus.in](http://redbus.in). Cab companies also hire out cars for long intercity travel. Pick the cab company with care.

## Useful tips

- ✧ Getting an Indian SIM card is advisable. You can get this at the airport or at any telecom provider's store. Also, consider activating mobile internet on your phone, since most cities have 4G bandwidth with tariffs for surfing the internet being quite low. Additionally, please also note that there are no roaming charges for inter-state travel in India.
- ✧ To obtain a SIM card, you will need to submit a set of documents including **photocopy of your Visa, Passport and passport-sized photographs (up to 4)**.
- ✧ Smoking and consumption of alcohol in public is a punishable offence. Furthermore, some states in India have a strict policy of alcohol prohibition. So check your location before you consume alcohol.
- ✧ Strictly avoid possession and consumption of drugs. It is a criminal offence in India.
- ✧ India is a multilingual country with a diverse variation in languages and dialects so language could be a challenge. English works well in most spaces in metropolitan cities, but a rudimentary understanding of basic words that are useful for traveling and transacting business would be useful. So research the area where you will be located and try and learn some basic phrases, words. Youtube can be a useful resource in this context.
- ✧ Indians, generally, are very hospitable and sociable but as is common all across the world, being new to a place often means that one needs to be a bit careful before trusting anyone especially strangers that volunteer to help or offer unsolicited advice.
- ✧ It would also be useful to dress conservatively and in line with the climate of your location. Indian clothes are quite comfortable, easily available and can fit your budget.



- ✧ It is also recommended that women students, in particular, be mindful of the gender dynamics of India. Be prudent with strangers that reach out to you offering assistance, advice or company. Also, be careful to avoid night travel or travel to isolated areas unless you are in a group and have prearranged transport. As in all new destinations, try to avoid travelling alone to the best possible extent, until you understand the nature of your immediate location. It would also be useful to know the social media handles and helplines of the city's police department in this context. Also, take care while socialising in public places, and avoid consuming food and drinks offered by strangers for the same reason.
- ✧ Every country has a uniqueness and charm that takes getting used to! India is no different. Find resources in your home and host university that will support you in this regard.
- ✧ Make an effort to make Indian friends. Indians are generally great friends and go out of their way to help and accommodate you. It is a great way to learn more about India!



