



Backwaters, Kerala

AN INDIAN SUMMER

Traditionally, the best time to visit India is between October and March when the weather in the south is warm and dry after the monsoon rains, and the north is cooler and better suited to city sightseeing. However, for those people who are accustomed to hotter climates and are restricted by the times they can travel, the months from April through to September, with lower visitor numbers and lower rates in our favourite hotels, can be an excellent time to enjoy a truly authentic experience.

May

From mid April, the heat spreads across the plains of south and central India and water levels reduce drastically. During this hot season India's national parks come alive with normally elusive wildlife in search of water. The thinner foliage and the reliance on scarce resources mean that many animals are easier to spot. For the true wildlife enthusiast, this period represents an excellent time to visit some of these reserves in relative peace. You can also expect a much more personalised service from your hosts who will be able to give you their undivided attention. Your game drives will take place in the early morning and late afternoon when the temperatures are cooler.

June

Though views of the mountain peaks beyond may be obscured by cloud, the temperature in Shimla at the foothills of the Himalayas remains pleasant. Once this was the summer capital for the British government and their families, who made the annual journey here to escape from the heat of the

plains to the cooler mountain air. Today, the crumbling remnants of the Raj, the mock Tudor bungalows, church, library, club and theatre are interspersed with modern buildings, but it still has a wonderful colonial air. Arrive on the old narrow gauge railway, stroll along the pedestrian Mall or explore the hills beyond to experience the area to the full.

July

Rajasthan is immensely rich in culture, history and natural beauty. These, together with the magnificent forts, opulent palaces and marvellous havelis, each a splendid architectural creation with



Galle Fort, Sri Lanka



Viceregal Lodge, Shimla



Riceboat, Kerala



Meherangarh Fort, Jodhpur



Amber Fort, Jaipur



Rajasthani market

a legend of its own, are what draw visitors year upon year to India's most popular state. However, the tourism boom over the last few years has led to a considerable rise in prices and problems with availability for those last minute trips in peak periods. Solution: visit off season, April to August. Anticipated temperatures at this time of the year are between 30 and 40 degrees so sightseeing is ideally done in the morning or late afternoon but the rest of the day can be spent enjoying the facilities of the luxury heritage hotels at a dramatically reduced cost.

August

If you are keen to visit the Indian Subcontinent but limited to school holiday times, Sri Lanka is a good choice for August. While you will get some tropical downpours, you should also see plenty of sunshine, with average temperatures in the high twenties. An added draw is the spectacular annual Kandy Perahera festival, which usually takes place in August (31st July - 9th August this year).

September

An excellent time to visit Kerala is between the long summer rains and the later monsoon that comes in October/November, when the scenery is lush and the flowers abundant. Explore the backwaters by riceboat or by the traditional canoes. Inland, the flat plain quickly gives way to rolling hills of rubber and cardamom plantations. Visit Periyar national park, which is home to a large variety of bird and animal life and Munnar, a former colonial hill station, worth a stop for the luminous green tea plantations and the refreshingly cool air. Back on the coast, Cochin is the cultural centre of Kerala where the famous Chinese fishing nets and Portuguese influenced architecture create an eclectic atmosphere.

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FACT FILE

A 14 day summer tour of India, with return flights and accommodation, including the luxurious Oberoi hotels, costs from £1,500 per person. For details on this or other Indian Subcontinent travel please call our specialists on 01869 276 218.

