

Backpacking India Packing List

What to pack for backpacking through India — minimalist gear, durable basics, and the security and health essentials that matter most on a long, budget-conscious route.

WHY BACKPACKING PACKING IS DIFFERENT

Backpacking India usually means longer trips, more transit, and carrying everything yourself between trains, buses, and budget stays — so every item has to earn its place. Durability and versatility matter more than variety, and basic security habits (locks, hidden cash, document backups) carry more weight when you're moving through multiple cities with one bag. This list is built around weight, durability, and self-sufficiency rather than comfort extras.

CLOTHING

- A small, versatile rotation of quick-dry clothing that mixes and matches easily
- One modest outfit that covers shoulders and knees for temples and conservative areas
- Lightweight layer for both air-conditioned overnight trains and cooler regions
- Sarong or large scarf — doubles as a towel, modesty cover, or sheet in a pinch
- Laundry bag and a small packet of detergent for frequent hand-washing on the road

FOOTWEAR & ACCESSORIES

- One durable pair of walking shoes built for daily wear over weeks, not days
- Lightweight sandals for hostels, beaches, and quick on-off at temples
- Combination lock for your bag and for lockers at hostels or train berths
- Sturdy daypack for day trips, separate from your main backpack
- Travel pillow and earplugs for overnight buses and trains

HEALTH, DOCUMENTS & TECH

- Basic first-aid kit with rehydration salts and stomach medication
- Water purification tablets or a filter bottle to reduce reliance on bought water
- Photocopies and digital scans of your passport, visa, and any travel insurance documents
- Hand sanitizer and wet wipes for variable hygiene conditions on the road
- Portable charger and a universal plug adapter (India: Type C/D/M)
- Small amount of cash kept separate from your main wallet as a backup
- Local SIM or eSIM for maps, bookings, and staying reachable between stops

