

# Best First-Time India Itinerary Checklist

A planning checklist built specifically for first-time visitors to India, covering the booking steps and decisions that are easy to miss on a first trip.

## WHY A CHECKLIST, NOT JUST AN ITINERARY

First-time visitors don't just need a day-by-day plan — they need to know what's genuinely different about planning an India trip versus a familiar destination: visa lead times, the value of a private driver, and how much ground a single day can realistically cover. This checklist focuses on those first-timer-specific decisions, sorted by when to make them.

## BEFORE YOU BOOK FLIGHTS

- Apply for your visa early — first-timers often underestimate processing time and document requirements
- Pick a manageable route — the Golden Triangle (Delhi-Agra-Jaipur) is the classic, well-paced first introduction
- Choose your season carefully — October to March is the most forgiving window for first-time travelers in the north
- Decide between a self-guided trip and a private driver or travel designer — the latter removes a lot of first-trip friction
- Check basic health prep with your doctor, including any recommended vaccinations

## 2-4 WEEKS OUT

- Book hotels in well-located, central areas of each city to cut down on confusing first-time navigation
- Arrange airport pickup in advance — arriving without a plan is one of the most disorienting parts of a first trip
- Book a private driver or guide for at least the first city, even if you go more independent later
- Buy advance tickets for major monuments to skip first-timer confusion at the gate
- Get an international SIM or data plan sorted before you land, not after

## THE WEEK BEFORE DEPARTURE

- Save digital and printed copies of your visa, hotel bookings, and any e-tickets
- Learn a handful of basic local etiquette points — appropriate dress at religious sites, tipping norms, and how negotiating works
- Pack a basic medical kit, since stomach upset is one of the most common first-trip issues
- Download offline maps and a translation app for areas with limited signage in English
- Set realistic daily expectations — first-time visitors often over-schedule and end up exhausted

Resist cramming five cities into seven days on a first trip — fewer cities with more breathing room makes for a far better introduction.

