

Holi Travel Guide

What to know before traveling to India for Holi — what actually happens, what to wear, and how to plan logistics around the festival of colors.

WHY THIS GUIDE

Holi photos look incredible, but most travelers don't realize how physical and unpredictable the day actually is until they're in the middle of it. This guide covers what to expect, what to wear, and how to plan travel logistics around a festival that effectively shuts down normal routines for a day or two.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Holi, the festival of colors, typically falls in early spring and is celebrated with public color-throwing, music and water play.

- Expect to be covered in colored powder (and sometimes water) by strangers and friends alike — it's part of the celebration, not an accident
- Celebrations often start in the morning and continue for several hours, with crowds, music and dancing in public spaces
- Some regions and cities are known for particularly large, immersive Holi celebrations, while others mark it more quietly
- Bhang (a cannabis-infused drink or sweet) is traditionally consumed by some during Holi in certain regions — be aware if offered and decide based on your own comfort
- The day after Holi, many businesses and services may be closed or running reduced hours
- Water and color fights can get boisterous — this is a hands-on, full-contact festival rather than a spectator event

Holi follows the lunar calendar and the exact date shifts each year — confirm the date for your travel year before booking.

WHAT TO WEAR & BRING

- Wear old, light-colored clothes you're fully fine with ruining — colors can stain permanently
- Avoid your favorite or expensive outfits, jewelry and watches during celebrations
- Sunglasses or swim goggles help protect your eyes from powder and water
- Apply oil to your skin and hair beforehand — it makes colors easier to wash out afterward
- Bring a waterproof phone pouch or leave your phone safely at the hotel during the most intense color-throwing periods
- Pack a change of clothes and basic toiletries to clean up afterward, especially if you're traveling the same day

PLANNING AROUND THE FESTIVAL

- Book accommodation well ahead in cities known for major Holi celebrations — rooms fill up fast
- Decide whether you want to join public celebrations or experience a more controlled version at a hotel or private event — both are common choices
- Avoid scheduling important travel (flights, key meetings, museum visits) on the main Holi day itself, as logistics and

opening hours can be unpredictable

- If traveling with kids, look into family-friendly or hotel-organized Holi events as a gentler alternative to street celebrations
- Plan transport in advance — some local transport options may be limited or chaotic during the festival
- Build in a rest or laundry day immediately after Holi before resuming a packed sightseeing schedule