

# India Photography Rules & Permits Guide

What you can shoot freely, what needs a permit or paid ticket, and how to photograph people and ceremonies respectfully — before you pack your camera bag.

## WHY THIS GUIDE

India's photography rules aren't one rule — they're a patchwork of monument-specific camera fees, military and border-zone restrictions, drone regulations that changed significantly in recent years, and unwritten social etiquette around photographing people. Most of this is buried in ASI ticket pages or forum threads. This guide gives you the categories to check before you shoot, not after.

## RESTRICTED & SENSITIVE ZONES

Some locations are off-limits to cameras entirely, others just require discretion.

- Avoid photographing military installations, airports, border areas, and bridges — this is taken seriously and can lead to questioning
- Many train stations and metro systems restrict or discourage photography of security infrastructure
- Border regions (parts of Kashmir, the Northeast, Ladakh) may have additional permit requirements beyond standard tourist permits — check current rules for your specific route
- Some temples and gurdwaras prohibit photography inside the sanctum even where it's allowed in the courtyard
- When in doubt, ask a guard or staff member before raising your camera — a quick question avoids a confrontation

Sensitive-zone rules change with regional security conditions. Confirm current restrictions for your specific itinerary close to your travel dates.

## MONUMENTS, MUSEUMS & CAMERA FEES

Many ticketed sites charge separately for still cameras, video cameras, and tripods.

- Check whether your monument ticket includes photography or requires a separate camera fee at the counter
- Tripods and professional-looking rigs often need advance permission or a higher fee than handheld shooting
- Drone photography is banned or tightly restricted at most monuments, including UNESCO World Heritage Sites — assume no until confirmed otherwise
- Some museums and palace interiors prohibit photography entirely to protect artwork or manuscripts
- Keep a printed or digital copy of any photography permit with your ticket in case you're asked

## DRONES

Drone rules in India are stricter and more centralized than in many countries.

- Flying a drone generally requires registration and, in many cases, prior digital permission through India's drone framework

— this applies to tourists too

- Drones are banned outright near airports, military areas, the India-Pakistan and India-China border regions, and many heritage monuments
- Importing a drone into India can also trigger customs scrutiny — research current import rules before you travel with one
- If a drone shot matters to your trip, build in time to research permissions rather than assume you can fly on arrival

Drone regulations have changed substantially in recent years and continue to evolve — verify the current rules directly before traveling with one.

## PHOTOGRAPHING PEOPLE & CEREMONIES

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The technical rules are the easy part — the etiquette matters just as much.

- Ask before photographing individuals up close, especially in villages, markets, and religious settings
- It's common and appreciated to show the photo on your screen afterward, especially with children or families
- At weddings or religious ceremonies you're attending as a guest, take cues from the family on what's welcome
- Some communities and individuals may decline or expect a small payment for posed portraits — respect a no without pressing
- Be especially cautious photographing people at moments of grief, prayer, or ritual significance unless explicitly invited to