

India SIM Card & Connectivity Guide

How to get connected in India quickly and reliably — SIM options, what to bring for registration, and getting your plan working from day one.

WHY THIS GUIDE

Getting connected in India involves an ID-verification process that surprises a lot of first-time visitors, plus a choice between airport kiosks, local shops and eSIMs that isn't well explained anywhere in one place. This guide covers the practical setup steps.

BEFORE YOU LAND

A little prep before arrival makes getting online much faster.

- Check whether your phone is unlocked and supports the SIM/eSIM format used by major Indian carriers
- Consider an eSIM with a data plan that activates on arrival, if your phone supports it, to have connectivity from the airport onward
- Bring a passport-sized photo or two — some SIM registration processes ask for one
- Save your hotel address and a few key contacts offline before you land, in case you're without data initially
- Download offline maps for your first city as a backup
- Check your home carrier's international roaming rates as a fallback option for your first hours in the country

CHOOSING A PLAN

Local prepaid SIMs from major Indian carriers are widely available and generally good value for data-heavy travel.

- A prepaid SIM from one of the major national carriers is the standard choice for most travelers, available at airport counters, official stores and authorized local shops
- Compare prepaid plans by validity period and data allowance rather than headline price alone — plans bundle differently
- Tourist-specific short-validity plans exist at some airports for convenience, though local shop plans are often better value
- International eSIMs aimed at travelers are an alternative if you'd rather skip in-person registration, usually at a premium over local SIMs
- Check coverage expectations for remote regions (mountains, some wildlife reserves) — connectivity can be patchy outside cities regardless of carrier
- Top-ups and plan extensions are usually available through the carrier's app or local shops if you need more data mid-trip

SETTING IT UP

- Bring your passport and visa — SIM registration requires ID verification and sometimes a local address
- Airport SIM counters are the most convenient for arrival-day setup, though local shops in the city are often faster and cheaper
- Activation can take a few hours after registration in some cases — don't assume instant service

- Confirm the SIM is activated and data is working before you leave the shop or counter
- Keep the SIM packaging or registration receipt until you're sure the number is fully active
- Note your new local number somewhere accessible — you may need to share it with hotels or drivers during the trip

Carrier names, exact plan prices and registration requirements change and vary by traveler nationality — check current options on arrival or with your eSIM provider before booking a specific plan.