

Indian Temple Etiquette Guide

What to wear, how to behave, and what to avoid at temples and other sacred sites across India — one quick reference for first-time visitors to keep handy.

WHY TEMPLE ETIQUETTE VARIES

India's temples span multiple faiths and regional traditions, and specific rules at any one site can differ — but a core set of expectations holds at nearly all of them. This guide covers the common ground; site-specific rules are best confirmed at the entrance.

BEFORE YOU GO IN

- Remove shoes before entering — leave them at the designated rack or with an attendant
- Dress modestly: shoulders and knees covered for everyone; some temples ask women to cover their head
- Leather items are restricted at some Jain temples — check before entering if visiting one
- Photography is often restricted inside the inner sanctum even where it's allowed elsewhere on the grounds
- Bag checks and security screening are common at larger or more prominent temples

INSIDE THE TEMPLE

- Walk clockwise around the main shrine if there's a circumambulation path
- Don't touch idols, altars, or offerings unless invited to by a priest
- Lower your voice — temples are active places of worship, not just sightseeing stops
- Accept prasad (blessed food) with your right hand if offered
- Some temples ask visitors to ring a bell or pause briefly at the threshold before entering the main shrine — follow the lead of those around you

WHAT TO AVOID

- Pointing your feet toward a deity, priest, or another person while seated
- Public displays of affection on temple grounds
- Assuming one temple's rules apply everywhere — when in doubt, watch what local visitors do or ask an attendant
- Wearing shoes inside any area where you see others barefoot, even if no sign is posted
- Treating the visit purely as a photo opportunity — many temples are active, ongoing places of worship rather than static monuments

A handful of temples restrict certain visitors from certain areas for various traditional reasons. Confirm before visiting if this matters to your itinerary.

