



Indian security overview – February 2015

1. This document provides a security overview of India for visitors from overseas. Given the size in terms of geography and population, and the political diversity, this report is necessarily very general. This report was written in February 2015 – those intending to visit should seek an updated report before travelling.

Security profile

2. Overall, India is exposed to a wide variety of threats – this reflects the size of the country, the span of its borders, and the religious, cultural and political diversity inherent in a country with such a vast population. The principal threats are: external conflict; internal conflict, terrorism; crime and civil unrest.
3. External conflict. The threat of external conflict is arguably lower than it has been for some time. India's traditionally prime strategic concern is Pakistan, with whom India has been at war on a number of occasions. Recently, however, there has been a general lowering of tension, and any differences between these two nuclear countries receive immediate attention and mediation by the United States and other countries. Some analysts believe that the relatively new BJP government in India, led by Narendra Modi, is well positioned to reduce tension even further, although this remains to be seen.
4. Rivalry with China has led to one war between China and India (in 1962). Tensions continue, with disputes over the Tibet-

Arunachal Pradesh border being a prime driver. As with Pakistan, however, any sharpening of differences leads to intense mediation efforts by the United States and others.

5. Foreign visitors are unlikely to become involved in external conflict in India, but visitors to Jammu and Kashmir should ensure that they have access to knowledgeable sources of information and assistance in case the threat should change suddenly.
6. Internal conflict. There are numerous internal conflicts in India. Over a third of all districts in the country are afflicted by some form of militancy or insurgency. An obvious area of tension is Jammu and Kashmir where violence, although currently muted, can break out at any time. But there is also a widespread Maoist (known locally as Naxalite) insurgency underway in a wide belt of districts – particularly Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar and Chhattisgarh. The Maoist insurgency, given its origins, can affect commercial investment decisions. The northeastern districts of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura are unwilling hosts to a number of (often violent) insurgencies.
7. India is an extraordinarily diverse country, but there are occasionally violent communal clashes, particularly between Hindus and Muslims, and Hindus and Christians.
8. Most foreign visitors do not find themselves involved in India's internal conflicts. However, if you are visiting an area where internal conflict is known to exist, you should take sensible precautions and monitor the media and other sources for any threat warnings.
9. Terrorism. The terrorism threat in India is moderate to high. India has one of the highest rates of civilian casualties from terrorist attacks in the world. The main threat of terrorist attack comes from radical jihadist groups. These groups are numerous, although the most prominent at the moment are probably the Indian Mujahideen, the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed. Al Qa'ida claimed in 2014 to have raised

Al Qa'ida in South Asia, although it is unclear yet how effective, or not, this group will become.

10. Radical Islamist attacks in India often result in very high casualties, such as the attacks on India's parliament (December 2001), hotels in Mumbai (November 2008) and on a German bakery in Pune (2010).
11. On 7 January 2015, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade issued a terrorist threat warning for all parts of India. The advice was to exercise a high degree of caution. "We advise you to exercise a high degree of caution in India overall due to the high threat of terrorist activity..... Information of mid-December 2014 indicates that militants may be planning attacks against upmarket hotels in Mumbai. However, the information was still under investigation. We continue to receive reports that terrorists are planning attacks in India and assess that attacks could occur anywhere at any time with little or no warning, including in locations frequented by Australians. In mid-December 2014, Indian authorities increased security at Metro stations and other public spaces in New Delhi."
12. Overall, foreigners visiting India should take sensible precautions and remain aware and alert. Foreigners should avoid obvious targets (large hotels or other places, such as markets and tourist sites, where large numbers of foreigners and Indians congregate) and monitor the media.
13. Crime. Crime is a moderate risk in much of India. The greatest threat exists in popular tourist destinations, such as Rajasthan, Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Kerala, and Goa. Petty theft, mugging and pickpocketing are common. Women should be alert to the risk of sexual harassment, even in public places. Rapes of international visitors are very rare, although the rapes of local women are becoming increasingly reported. Visitors should take sensible precautions to safeguard their belongings on public transport and in busy marketplaces. Burglaries are also common, and visitors should ensure they lock attractive items in room safes. Violent attacks are relatively infrequent, but do occur.

14. Civil unrest. Demonstrations and riots can sometimes turn violent very rapidly. Mass demonstrations are quite frequent. Given this, and the generally poor police crowd control and tendency to react with extreme force, it is wise to avoid all demonstrations or large crowds.

Conclusion

15. India is a vast country with very diverse security challenges. The majority of travellers visit the country with no security problems at all, but it is well worth seeking security advice on the specific locations that you will visit before you travel.

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25 February 2015