

General Information for Attending Convention 2025

[updated 16th December 2024]

Note – this information is provided for guidance only. If you find something important that is missing, please let Nagamani know (triratnaorderevents@gmail.com).

Contents

1. Travel Arrangements.....	2
2. Visas for India.....	2
3. Accommodation.....	3
4. Health.....	4
5. What to bring.....	5
6. Insurance.....	6
7. Money	6
8. Communications	6

1. Travel Arrangements

Plane:

By far the easiest way to travel is by plane. Many will be concerned by carbon emissions, so consider off-setting them. According to Project Drawdown, one of the most effective ways to reduce carbon emissions is by educating girls (see [here](#)). So consider donating to one of the Karuna Trust education projects for girls.

If arriving by plane, you'll need to book to Gaya Airport (GAY). IndiGo have internal flights to Gaya from Delhi and Kolkatta. There are currently no direct flights from Mumbai. There are some international flights to Gaya including from Bangkok (Air Asia or Thai Airways). Booking internal flights is straightforward.

Try to book a through ticket with your airline; that way (in theory) they'll be responsible for looking after you if there are any delays. Do avoid short connections as security screening is thorough and you'll need a bit more time than at most western airports.

Train:

If arriving by train, head for Gaya Junction station. Train travel is the essence of India: colourful, fun, long and quite often delayed. From Calcutta, it takes 6.5-9 hours to reach Gaya Junction station. From Delhi it is 12-16 hours. From Mumbai it is 25 hours (a whole day of your life).

An excellent website for all train travel information is www.seat61.com. There is a lot of information, so take time to read carefully. It is valuable to check out all the different classes of travel, and ensure you are booked on a second-class AC sleeper not the third-class sitting only carriage.

Fortunately, you can now buy tickets online via 12go.asia. Here you can book and pay online with an international credit/debit card. There is an additional fee, but it is a small price to pay compared with trying to buy directly from the Indian Railways website (www.irctc.co.in).

Tickets can be bought 120 days in advance, and can sell out fast.

You should note, when booking flights, that Indian trains can run very late, so leave a generous time buffer. See the section on train travel for more detail on delays.

Arriving in Gaya:

We hope to offer transfers from Gaya. More information will be available in due course. There are taxis from the airport/station to Bodhgaya for US\$10-15.

2. Visas for India

If you value an easy life, then you may prefer to use a local agency to get your Indian visa. You will pay a service fee, but they can do a lot of the leg-work. In the UK try <http://www.visagenie.co.uk>. You can also use the Indian eVisa service rather than visit and Embassy.

Please apply for a standard tourist visa. Do not apply for a Conference visa or other 'official' event type visas such as for yoga courses. You will be entering India for tourism in Bodhgaya and visiting Buddhist sites.

You will need to provide a contact in India. This should be your hotel name and address. Do not use the names of any Indian OM's as your contact.

Remember, if you have booked for a pilgrimage before or after the Convention, and are visiting Lumbini (Nepal), then you will need a multiple-entry visa.

eVisa

This is the easiest way to get a visa. You can apply online via the government website here – www.indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/. The cost might vary depending on your nationality, but is certainly cheaper than using an agent.

Check the visa type you require. E-Tourist visa's are valid for 30 days. You can apply for a e-Tourist visa 30 days in advance of the proposed date of travel, and a minimum of 4 days in advance. For the 1-year e-Tourist visa you can apply 120 days in advance.

If you are visiting Lumbini and need to re-enter India, please be aware that not all double-entry visa's allow you to enter India at the border crossing near to Lumbini. Carefully check the visa you are applying for allows you to enter India at the places you want to enter.

If you have an e-visa, do print it before travel. We are hearing stories of some immigration staff asking to see a hard copy of e-visas; an electronic version on a phone is not sufficient.

The process is a little tricky and will need some focused time.

- If you have browser issues accessing the website, it is recommended to use Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, Internet Explorer (Windows) version 9.0 and above. The applicant must also have Adobe Acrobat Reader version 7.0 or higher installed on your PC in order to download and print the completed application form. This website is compatible with Android and IOS devices.
- You will need a jpg photo of yourself and a pdf scan of your passport details page.
- Select an eTourist visa, and then select purpose of "tourism, recreation and sightseeing".
- "Email ID" = your email address
- As soon as you pass the first page, note down the temporary application ID (a long string of numbers and letters). If later in the process the webpage crashes (quite likely), you will be able to pick up from where you left off rather than starting again.
- You will need to give a **Reference Name** in India – use the name of the hotel you will be staying at.

This is a really helpful website to guide you through the process - www.indian-visaonline.org/tips-to-avoid-mistakes-when-applying-for-an-indian-e-tourist-visa/.

3. Accommodation

If you have booked the all-inclusive package, then you will have been booked into a twin room at a good quality hotel. We will be in contact with more details in due course. If you wish to extend your stay, or arrive early, please let us know.

If you are arranging your own accommodation, please be aware that several other large events are taking place in Bodhgaya at the same time, and so competition for hotel rooms will be high.

The usual hotel sites are worth searched: www.booking.com and www.hotels.com. It can sometimes be possible to make use of guesthouses at the various Buddhist monasteries in Bodhgaya; please make your own enquiries.

4. Health

Bodhgaya is used to catering to many international visitors. Our own team has a system for ensuring the hygiene of the food provided, and they will supply purified water. Nonetheless, there are the usual precautions to be taken.

Please see your doctor or practice nurse for specific travel advice and vaccinations, especially if you have any pre-existing health problems. We recommend doing this at least 8 weeks before your date of travel to organise travel vaccinations, and earlier if you have any other health problems.

If you have any specific health conditions, do ensure you bring all your medication with you. Many drugs are easily available in India, but your exact brand might not be. Do let us know if there is anything we need to be aware of.

At the convention we will maintain a dana-basis 'health box' where you can help yourself to basic medicines for stomach upsets, headaches, small cuts and bruises, etc. Our onsite team will be there to deal with any more serious medical issues – we have a team of doctors at the Convention to deal with any medical emergencies.

It is important to be up to date with all the routine vaccinations courses and boosters recommended in your country. In the UK, these include the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) and diphtheria-tetanus-polio vaccines. Tetanus booster is combined with diphtheria in the UK and is recommended for all travellers if not given in the last 10 years.

Mosquito-borne diseases like dengue fever and Chikungunya occur all year round but are more widespread during the monsoon season.

Air quality in Bodhgaya can become unhealthy, with high levels of PM2.5 (very fine dust). We recommend you bring a good quality face mask with you to use when walking around the town. The N95 type of facemask is recommended for most people, or the N99 for those who are particularly sensitive.

For up-to-date information, check out the Travel Health Pro website - <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/country/105/india>. You might also wish to check out the general advice for travel in India issued by the UK government - www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/india. And of course, check the advice of your own government if not from the UK.

5. What to bring

The Convention is located in Bodhgaya within the state of Bihar, one of the poorest states in India. Being well prepared will make your stay much more comfortable.

Winter begins in early November and lasts until February. Temperatures are not too challenging, with an average daily range from 5–30° C (41–86° F), and rain is quite infrequent. Days are bright and pleasant, making it the favoured time for pilgrims from around the world to visit Bodhgaya.

Be prepared:

- Bring a photocopy of your passport and visa just in case. Perhaps email yourself copies so you can access them in an emergency.
- Please bring your own bath towel, toiletries, and any medicines you need.
- We highly suggest you bringing vitamins, probiotics, electrolytes, and any treatment for an upset stomach (our catering team will pay close attention to hygiene but eating outside can sometimes bring problems).
- A portable cushion or bench (we will be moving between our land and the Mahabodhi temple).
- A notebook and pen to keep track of activities, and what is happening where and when.
- Insect repellent if you are particularly vulnerable to biting insects.
- A torch and batteries to use during power cuts (usually there is a generator but a torch will help in the meantime).
- Ear plugs – to ensure a peaceful sleep regardless of any noise in the neighbourhood.
- Your own water bottle. We have filtered water available day and night.
- Please note: Toiletries such as shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, toilet paper, razors and deodorant are inexpensive and readily available in Bodhgaya. Tampons are not readily available but sanitary napkins/pads are. Also a good idea to bring your own sunscreen.
- Travel plug – check you have the right adaptor for India (see [here](#)).
- If you are travelling by train, bring a padlock and chain to secure your baggage. Wet wipes are also handy. If you have booked yourself a cheap guesthouse, they often expect you to bring your own padlock for the door.
- Facemask - N95 type of facemask is recommended for most people, or the N99 for those who are particularly sensitive to air pollution.
- And finally, bring some toilet paper.

Clothes:

- Wearing robes: Initially we had been asked that robes are not worn, due to a concern that we could be mistaken for Indian Christian fathers, who wear something similar. However, there has been further discussion among the Order in India, and there is now a positive invitation for anyone to wear robes at the Mahabodhi Temple or on our land.
- Ideally bring loose and comfortable clothing, and aim to dress conservatively (long-sleeved shirts and trousers) – it is not only in keeping with Indian decorum but also protection from mosquitoes. We'll be walking to/from the Bodhi Temple each day so comfortable shoes are a good idea, especially if you don't want to expose your feet to the sometimes-dirty roads (rickshaws are plentiful and cheap as an alternative).
- The mornings and evenings can feel chilly, so bring at least one jumper or light fleece with you and a hat to keep your head warm in the morning and protect from the heat during the day. Good warm socks are useful for the early mornings.
- If you have a blue 'Indian style' shirt please bring it.
- Most hotels offer laundry at relatively cheap rates.

A final general note, it's best to leave anything really valuable at home unless you really need it.

6. Insurance

You need to organize travel insurance for yourself. There are lots of companies offering good travel insurance policies online, and it can even come bundled with your bank account. Do check the insurance covers any specific medical needs you have, and good insurance should cover private hospital fees and medical evacuations.

7. Money

International debit and credit cards are widely accepted in India. Bodhgaya has several ATMs where you can withdraw cash as you need it. However, when using ATMs, be aware that many do charge service fees additional to any fees charged by your bank. Do check with your own bank in advance to check you can withdraw money in Bodhgaya/India.

Bodhgaya is a relatively small town with a high volume of tourists in January. This can result in ATM machines being empty and some challenges in changing money. It's a good idea to change at least some money before you arrive in Bodhgaya if you can do so.

You might need to let your bank know you are in India, otherwise they might temporarily block your card for security purposes. And on a security note, be careful carrying cash around, using a money belt is normal for travellers.

It is helpful to bring some cash (GB£, US\$, Euros) as a back-up, and to change a small amount at the airport to pay for your transport from Gaya to Bodhgaya.

8. Communications

Most good hotels will offer some form of Wi-Fi access. If you need to use your mobile phone, check with your provider that your package allows you access in India (not all do). It is possible to get an Indian Tourist SIM card at major airports or local mobile phone stores might be able to help. Or you could organise an e-Sim in advance through companies such as Saily.