

## India: Culture, Tips, and Facts



### About Hyderabad, India

- Hyderabad is the capital of the Indian state, Telangana, and is located in southern India.
- The city has a population of 6.8 million residents, making it the fourth most populous city in the country.
- Around two million people in Hyderabad live in slums, where 73% of them live below the poverty line working as a day-laborer, earning far less than \$2 per day.
- 40% of children under age three suffer from malnutrition.
- Approximately 1/3 of the world's poor lives in India.
- While the official language of India is Hindi, the people of Hyderabad and the children we serve, speak mostly Telugu. In addition to our national staff who speak English, many of the children in the children's homes we serve also speak some English.
- The most prominent religion in Hyderabad is Hinduism, followed by Islam, with Christianity making up a small minority.
- Indians celebrate 64 holidays within a calendar year and the country is well-known for cricket, the Taj Mahal, and Bollywood films – these facets of culture help to illustrate its resilience and personality will not be defined by hard circumstances.

### Cultural and Travel Tips

- When a person gives a head shake or bobble, tipping the head from side to side, this often means “yes” or “good.” It is also meant as an encouraging gesture while listening and means “I understand.”
- Hyderabad has moderate weather. But, if you are planning to visit the city during summers, it's better that you pack some cotton and loose clothes because Hyderabad has boiling hot summers. Winters in Hyderabad are pleasant and are ideal for vacations, while the summer monsoon season has huge amounts of rainfall, along with high humidity.
- The left hand should never be used for pointing, eating, giving, receiving, or shaking someone's hand for it is considered to be unclean in India, as it's used to perform matters associated with going to the bathroom.
- Pointing with your finger is also rude in India. If you need to point at something or someone, it's better to do so with your whole hand or thumb, or chin.
- Traditionally, women don't touch men in India when meeting and greeting them. A handshake, which is a standard western gesture, can be misinterpreted as something

more intimate in India if coming from a woman. The same goes for touching a man, even just briefly on the arm, while speaking to him.

- Public displays of affection are discouraged, though you may see members of the same sex holding hands in a friendly manner.
- Hyderabad has monkeys! The locals have come to understand that they are their permanent companions in the city and have modified their habits accordingly. The monkeys tend to snatch away belongings such as small bags and cameras; especially if they are unattended! Hence, bags should be carefully held and avoid going alone where a lot of monkeys are present.
- Carry hand-sanitizer and toilet paper with you, as they are rarely found in public washrooms.
- It's good manners to take your shoes off before entering someone's home. Shoes are sometimes also removed before entering a shop. If you see shoes at an entrance, it's a good idea to take yours off as well.
- Clothing: It is important to respect the Indian culture and the children we serve by dressing appropriately. We do not want to stand out more than we already do! Therefore, please follow these dress code guidelines:
  - For women: Long dresses/skirts (calf length or longer), loose fitting pants or capris, casual church clothes (long skirt and a scarf to cover the head).
    - No shorts or tight fitting clothing (leggings, spandex, v-necks) to be worn in public or in the presence of the children
    - Due to cultural considerations in India, please refrain from wearing the following: low-cut jeans, religious images on clothing, midriffs, tank tops, spaghetti strap shirts. Please keep as much of your body covered as possible.
    - Take your own feminine products as well, as the stores here will only carry pads.
  - For men: Work jeans, shorts (must be knee length), casual church clothes (long pants)
    - Due to cultural considerations in India, please refrain from wearing religious images on clothing or tank tops. Please keep as much of your body covered as possible.
- Do not use your camera in any Indian airport.
- Take photographs of people or objects only after receiving permission. Always ask first, and if they say "no," respect it.
- Safe, filtered drinking water is always available on campus and during work projects.
- Electricity is 220V. Power strips and surge protectors will be provided to you on campus for charging US electronic devices (cell phones, cameras, etc).
- We recommend bringing at least \$75-\$100 in cash for meals in the airport during layovers and souvenirs.

