

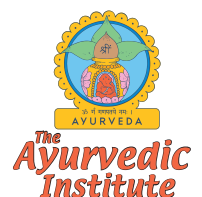


THE AYURVEDIC INSTITUTE

# Vasanta Institute of Ayurveda

## *Travel Tips for Pune*

*The path to balance—a bridge to health and happiness*



# Travel Preparation & Logistics

This information is to guide you through the necessary documentation for immigration upon entry into India.

## PASSPORT

Each traveler is required to have a valid passport. Ideally, your passport should not expire within 6 months of your arrival in India. Information is available on the internet to obtain a passport: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/passports/apply.html>

## TOURIST VISA

Each traveler is required to have a TOURIST Visa (do not apply for a student or business visa). Information is available on the internet to obtain an Indian tourist visa. Some companies that help service Indian Visas in the USA are:

[www.in.ckgs.us](http://www.in.ckgs.us)  
[www.indiavisa.travisaoutsourcing.com](http://www.indiavisa.travisaoutsourcing.com)  
[www.itseasy.com](http://www.itseasy.com)

When applying for your tourist visa, you will be asked in the documentation to give the name, phone number, and address of a contact person in India. Please use the following information:

Name: Rakesh Deogade  
Phone Number: 91 7378 582086  
Address: Vasanta Institute of Ayurveda  
Ganesh Ayurveda Ashram  
Gat - No 414-415  
Inamdar Vasti  
Koregaon Mul (near Uruli Kanchan)  
Tal-Haveli Pune 412202  
Off Sholapur Road  
Maharashtra, India

A tourist visa is given to those visiting India for tourism or other non-business related purposes for up to six months (US and Non-US Passport Holders). Five-year and ten-year visas are available only to US citizens under a bilateral arrangement. Each visit's maximum period of stay in India is limited to six months irrespective of the visa duration.

Documents for a general Indian Tourist Visa can take time, so apply in advance. Pursue this diligently to avoid certain restrictions that apply for last minute visas.

You may inquire about the Indian Visa Process at any Indian Consulate Office in USA. A few places are:

[www.indianembassy.org](http://www.indianembassy.org) (Washington DC)  
[www.Indiacgny.org](http://www.Indiacgny.org) (New York)  
[www.cgisf.org](http://www.cgisf.org) (San Francisco)  
[www.Indianconsulate.com](http://www.Indianconsulate.com) (Chicago)  
[www.cgihouston.org](http://www.cgihouston.org) (Houston)

In the past, the law required a gap of at least two months between two separate visits to India on a Tourist Visa. For Tourist Visa holders who wish to visit India within two months of their last visit, an application for a Permit to Re-enter India is necessary. No Permit is needed if the visa holder is traveling to multiple countries on the same itinerary and the trip follows the itinerary exactly. The visa holder must carry a copy of the itinerary to show the Immigration Officer. If you will fall into this category, please search on the internet about the current law.

## FLIGHT TRAVEL TO INDIA

There are many airlines. Some examples are Air India, United Airlines, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Lufthansa, Qatar Airlines, Etihad Airlines, and Emirates Airlines. For a comprehensive list go to [www.skyscanner.com](http://www.skyscanner.com)

## TRAVEL TO VIOA

### AIRPORT PICK-UP/DROP-OFF

You will get "travel to India" information during your orientation phone calls. VIOA will arrange travel from the Mumbai or Pune airport to VIOA within certain time frames. You will need to be at the airport at those specific times for travel pickup, whatever time or day you arrive. Please send your itinerary to Nishita at [admissions@ayurveda.com](mailto:admissions@ayurveda.com)

## ADDRESS

Vasanta Institute of Ayurveda  
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## AIR TRAVEL TIPS

**Stay well hydrated** with room temperature, non-carbonated water before, during and after the flights. Sipping a small amount of water frequently is better than guzzling a large amount less frequently. A long series of flights requires from one-half to one gallon of water, or more, depending on time span—at least a gallon per 24 hours of travel.

**Drinking carbonated drinks or alcohol** before or during flights increases jet lag.

**Eat lightly** just before or during the flight. Heavy foods increase jet lag.

**You may wish to pre-order** the “Asian” special meals, especially the “Asian Vegetarian,” for those airlines that offer the choice. Experienced vegetarians have found these to be superior.

**Use plain or medicated ghee or Super Nasya®** to moisten the nostrils throughout the flight.

**Dry ginger powder** can help reduce jet lag and motion sickness. Take 2 “00” capsules before departure, 2 upon arrival and 2 every 6 hours in between. Some high Pitta individuals cannot tolerate the dry ginger. They can take fresh slices and chew them.

**Several weeks before leaving** you may want to start taking a pro-biotic. These are available at Whole Foods grocers, co-ops, etc. A good one that does not need refrigeration is Jarro-Dophilus EPS formula.

**Optional items for flight comfort:** ear plugs, eye covers, socks, inflatable or buckwheat neck pillow, rose water spray, hand cream, eye cream.

## GOOGLE MAP

Uruli Kanchan, Pune, India. The Center is at the red border outlining the Uruli Kanchan City limits, and it is closer to Pune. The road is called Sholapur or Mumbai Highway. The bus stop in Google Maps is called Inamdar Vasti.



## DRIVING DIRECTIONS

VIOA is located just off of Sholapur Highway before Uruli Kanchan. It is off a dirt road from the highway in a small community of houses and farms. There is a large sign for the center on the Sholapur Highway. (photo at left)

Get on Sholapur Road to UruliKanchan  
Pass the Toll Booth at km 12

VIOA is on left side past the Shree Balaji Rose Nursery  
on left and Ghule Petrol Pump on right

At km 25, take left at signs for Ganesh Ayurveda Ashram  
aka VIOA. It is a dirt road.

Take next left (you can only go left) and the center is  
the second building at the end of the road on the left.

## IMMUNIZATIONS

Whether to receive vaccines or malaria prophylaxis is a matter of personal preference. No specific immunizations are required for entry into India, and no proof of routine immunizations is required. There are many different viewpoints on the risks and benefits of travel vaccines. See the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, at [cdc.gov/travel](http://cdc.gov/travel) and select South Asia or India or visit Passport Health at [passporthealthusa.com/new-mexico](http://passporthealthusa.com/new-mexico).

If you choose to receive travel-related vaccines, such as Hepatitis A, adult polio booster, and others, see your health care provider at least six weeks in advance, as certain vaccines require several weeks to take full effect. There is no vaccine against malaria. However, it is treatable with certain antibiotics; some health care providers recommend taking pills to prevent malaria (malaria prophylaxis).

BASED ON ADVICE FROM TRAVELERS TO INDIA

### STRONGLY SUGGESTED VACCINATION

For Hepatitis A:

**Gamma Globulin** 1 shot, choice of 3 month or 6 month dose

### OPTIONAL VACCINATIONS

Malaria

**Cholera** 2 shots, 7–45 days apart, lasts 6 months

**Typhoid** choice of 2–3 shots spread over 1–2 months, lasts 3 years

**Polio** 1 shot, 10 years

**Tetanus** 1 shot, 10 years



# What to Bring & What to Expect

## INDIAN CLOTHING CUSTOMS

Clothing in India is significantly more modest than in the west. The following clothing guidelines apply to classes, clinics, temples, and other sacred sites. Feel free to be comfortable at night and in the morning within the center. It will be hot in summer so loose, cotton clothes help you stay cool in India weather.

**MEN** wear tailored button-down cotton or cotton-poly blend shirts, short or long-sleeved, with some sort of collar; long pants are always worn. Khaki pants or cotton pants are fine. T-shirts are not appropriate. Athletic wear, nylon clothing, yoga attire, sleeveless shirts, and shorts are not appropriate. Tight or revealing clothing is not recommended. Western attire is fine. There are also Indian outfits available in Pune that include long cotton tops over drawstring cotton pants.

**WOMEN** wear modest attire that provides coverage from the collarbone down to the ankles. This includes full-length skirts or dresses with modest short or long sleeves. Western attire is fine. Punjabis (also known as salwar kameez) outfits are long tops that cover the buttocks and upper thighs atop pajama-style pants. It is always inappropriate to have bare upper arms or to wear sleeveless attire. Athletic clothing, knit clothing, sleeveless tops, revealing or tight clothing, and yoga attire are not appropriate. Bring cotton/natural fabric clothes that are easy to wash. Saris may be complex for everyday use, especially for those unaccustomed to wearing them.

The Pune administrator has the responsibility and authority to request any person to change their attire to be more appropriate. Please do not take offense, but rather appreciate they are assisting you to be respectful of another culture.

There are shops along Laxmi Rd that have ready-to-wear items. Another store not on Laxmi Rd. that sells quality cotton clothes, towels, sheets is Fabindia. They also sell organic snacks and sugar. Do not bring or wear expensive jewelry.

## PACKING LIST

Many things can be purchased in India at reasonable prices. Some people only take carry-on luggage to India. Note that airlines differ regarding weight limits to and from certain locations. Some airlines weigh both carry on and checked

baggage, and apply a total weight limit. Pack lightly. More details about packing and other program preparation tips are provided in the pre-program orientation calls.

## WEATHER

First time visitors to northern India may be surprised by the temperate autumn climate of Pune. October through December, the temperature is typically in the 70's/80's most days. Mornings and evenings may be cool enough for a sweater or jacket. Only occasionally are mid-days uncomfortably warm. Rain is extremely rare during November and December, but can happen. Overhead fans are found in almost all commercial businesses, hotel rooms, and apartments.

## MONEY

### CURRENCY

The Indian Rupee (INR) exchange rate is currently approximately 69 rupees to a dollar; current exchange rates are available at <http://x-rates.com/d/INR/table.html> and many other web sites.

### UPON ARRIVAL

**It is advisable to exchange money at the airport upon arrival. It may be up to a week before you go into town and you may not have access to a bank at that time.** The current Indian administration has cash withdrawal limits for foreigners and nationals. Please have a credit card or debit card available for international transactions while in India. Be aware that if you arrive in the middle of the night, the banks will not be open to exchange money.

### CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards are accepted at many establishments, including larger stores and higher end restaurants; there may be a required minimum charge. Many credit card companies have fraud protection services that lock out spending in foreign locales. **Call your credit card company in advance of your trip and let them know you will be traveling, to avoid them freezing your card.** Also, ask for the toll-free number to call from India, in case of card loss or theft.

### ATM

ATM machines (HDIC Bank) are available across from the Pranav Clinic and other locations. HDIC, Citibank and ICICI

## What to Bring and What to Expect

are international banks, most DEBIT, ATM or CREDIT CARDS will work at these locations. Most of the amounts allowed to be withdrawn are limited. Citibank on JM road allows larger sums, up to 8,000 rupees. Check with your bank regarding whether your ATM or debit card will work abroad. ATM machines can also be used to get cash advances from credit cards, depending on your card. However, cash advances often carry a 3% charge (or more) for the cash advance and have a high interest rate when not paid off promptly.

### TRAVELER'S CHECKS

Traveler's checks (or traveler's check cards) are not as easy to cash in India as in other locations. They may be cashed at certain large banks and some hotels (bring copies of your passport and visa); however, not all banks provide this service, and hotel services give a lower rate to compensate for their effort.

### BLACK MARKET EXCHANGES

Do not exchange money outside of banks or hotels. It is appropriate to count the bills to ensure that the amount received is correct. Keep the paper with the exchange rate on it, in case you wish to cash in rupees upon departure. Do not accept any bills that are torn or excessively worn, as they may not be accepted by some vendors or rickshaw drivers. Know the going rate for goods and services by asking those whom you trust. When haggling over a few rupees at a vegetable stand or with a rickshaw driver, it is useful to keep the exchange rate in mind: in the larger perspective, a few rupees translate to very little money.

### POWER AND ELECTRICITY

Plug adapters are required for electrical devices. Type D adapters are used in India. Indian plugs have two or three large rounded prongs. Adapters can be purchased in Pune or other large cities. Also check the voltage on your devices before plugging them in. This information is typically found in very small print somewhere on the device. India voltage is 220–240v, while US voltage is 110. If the voltage capacity of your device is lower than 220 volts, a transformer/converter is required to lower (step-down) the voltage before plugging in your device. The plug adapters do not change the voltage, unless they are combined with a converter. Without a converter, if the voltage does not match that of your device or appliance, it could become damaged. VIOA does not have adapters or converters.

Sudden power blackouts may affect all areas of Pune, including Pranav Clinic, VIOA Center, and other areas of Pune as well. The power may simply go out for indeterminate

amounts of time. Carry a penlight or small flashlight with you, or better yet a small headband type LED light so you do not need to hold it in your hands. In addition, there are scheduled brownouts for certain parts of the city, lasting an hour or more. This brownout schedule may change without notice.

### WATER

Be very careful about drinking water in India. Drink “capped” bottled water while in India. That means: sealed bottles that clearly could not have been opened and refilled since leaving the original manufacturer. Unscrupulous people have their own capping systems that look just like the original, so purchase your water bottles from a legitimate shop. Avoid ice in drinks unless you know the ice was made from filtered water.

At the VIOA, reverse osmosis water is available in the dining room. If your digestive system is sensitive, you may want to purchase a battery-operated ultraviolet light water purifier (from REI or other sporting goods stores) to purify your water to make it drinkable when/if you travel outside of VIOA around India prior or after the VIOA experience. Make sure you bring along sufficient batteries as these use hard-to-find batteries.

Drinking enough pure water is also important. Carry a bottle of water with you (1–2 liters). Bottled water is readily available in restaurants and shops. In better restaurants, the water is filtered. (One brand of water filtration is called AquaGuard®. There are others.) Waiters will typically know if water is filtered. However, some students prefer to drink only bottled water in restaurants. Some students have used tap water for gargling and brushing their teeth. Regular tap water is fine for hand washing; alcohol-based hand sanitizers are adequate for times when soap and water are not available.

### FOOD

One of the most important ways to maintain health is to be careful about what you eat. Eat no more than your agni dictates. Many Gurukula students found that one main meal a day plus a snack or two was sufficient. Eating out excessively, overeating, and choosing unsanitary places for dining all contribute to illness. Avoid eating uncooked food, even at fine restaurants, as they are more likely to contain illness-causing bacteria. Even at the best restaurants, workers preparing the food may vary; therefore, cooked food is safest. Avoid salads and garnishes that often

accompany meals. Similarly, avoid fruits, unless you peel them yourself. An exception: all food served at the center is prepared appropriately. If preparing your own salads or other uncooked food, wash it in large amounts of filtered water and allow it to dry before eating.

You may want to bring your own snacks and dinacharya items. Basic things are provided like teas and oils, but other specialty things plan to bring or buy.

## HEALTH CONCERNS, HERBS AND MEDICINE

Krumi is the term for both worms and parasites (such as giardia). Be alert for signs of krumi, including bloating, constipation or diarrhea, sugar cravings, weakness, cloudy thinking, and a thick yellowish or whitish coating at the back of the tongue. If you feel acutely ill, speak to one of the VIOA administrators or consult with Vasant Lad in your personal consultation during the program. You can access our apothecary on campus, with help from faculty or staff, if you need something.

## AIR AND SOUND QUALITY IN PUNE

Air pollution in India can be a lot for Westerners to handle. Having a carbon filter face mask can reduce the inhalation of smog. You can purchase these in the US before traveling, at hardware stores or online. Those that block paint fumes and noxious vapors are preferable to a simple dust mask. Many Pune residents who commute to work on motorcycles wear bandanas or scarves across their nose and mouth. While cloth may help filter large particles from entering the nose, it does little to block the particulate pollution from petrochemicals. After a few commutes through the city without a mask, you may find your nasal secretions to be black.

VIOA is located about 45 minutes from Pune and the air and sound quality is better. But being located along a highway does make it a bit noisy. Those who are sensitive to noise may want to bring ear plugs to sleep or noise reduction headphones.

**HELPFUL TIPS:** Using nasya in the morning may help respiration. Consider bringing along rose water or herbal “spritzer” for hot, stuffy plane, train, or taxi trips. Bring ear plugs for sleeping.

## TOILETING IN PUNE

Public bathrooms are scarce and those that you do find you will probably not want to enter. Sit-down restaurants will

have bathrooms and hand-washing stations. In upscale hotels, one may find a bathroom with a western-style toilet and toilet paper. However, many toilets in Pune are level with the floor, surrounded by ridged porcelain areas for placing the feet for squatting and a valve for flushing the water down. Toilet paper is virtually never provided and may cause clogging of toilets. Many people use the available water taps instead of toilet paper. Wet your left hand, then wipe your body and hand clean using as much tap water as needed, then air dry or use a handkerchief. If you are using toilet paper, use the minimal amount, to avoid clogging the drains. Some toilets flush, while others require that users fill a small pitcher of water, and pour it down the hole.

Large stores sell compact rolls without central cardboard, in the sample/travel size section. Or you may bring a “toilet hanky” for drying off when using water after toileting.

## MENSTRUATION

American products such as pads are available in stores. However, tampons are hard to find so you should bring them. Trash receptacles are not common in public facilities, so bring a tight closing, plastic bag with you, to carry around used materials. If you prefer tampons with applicators, you may want to bring your own. OB is the main brand sold in India, which is applicator-less.

Traditionally, during menstruation women were encouraged to rest and relax, while others served them. In modern India, women typically work during menstruation. However, many women still choose to respect the custom of staying away from temples and holy sites during menses, and taking it easy. This observance provides an opportunity for a little extra rest and relaxation, and respects the sacred nature of that site.

## SAFETY AND SECURITY

Secure your belongings. As a general rule, do not leave money or valuables out in your room, or casually lying around. There are cabinets in the bedrooms at VIOA Center that lock but there is not a safe box. We cannot be responsible for losses of any kind. Consider a travel bag lock while traveling and a money belt for your important documents.

**HELPFUL TIPS:** Plan extra time. India is busy and unpredictable. Give yourself time to slow down amongst it all. Be alert while traveling in India. Buddy up when possible; look out for each other..





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