

India

By Tom Kirvan

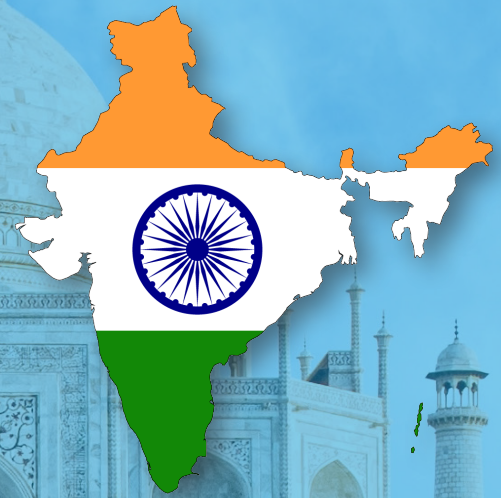
A LAND OF DIVERSITY, HERITAGE, AND SPLENDOR

India, the world's most populous country as of 2023, is home to more than 1.4 billion people. This immense population is a mosaic of diverse cultures, languages, religions, and ethnicities. India officially recognizes 22 languages, with Hindi being the most widely spoken, and English serving as a major language for administration and business. The country is also the birthplace of major religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, and is home to significant populations of Muslims, Christians, and others. The diversity of India's population is reflected in its festivals, cuisine, arts, and daily life, making it a vibrant and dynamic nation.

India is a vast and geographically diverse country, bounded by the Himalayas in the north, which include some of the world's highest peaks, including Mount Kanchenjunga, the third-highest mountain in the world. The country's terrain varies from the fertile plains of the Ganges River to the arid deserts of Rajasthan, the tropical beaches of Goa and Kerala, and the lush forests of the Western Ghats and northeastern states. India is also home to the Thar Desert, the Western and Eastern Ghats mountain ranges, and a long coastline stretching more than 4,660 miles. The country's climate ranges from the extreme cold of the Himalayas to the tropical heat of the southern states, offering a variety of experiences for travelers.

India's history spans thousands of years, with ancient civilizations such as the Indus Valley Civilization dating back to around 2500 BCE. The country has been a melting pot of cultures, with influences from the Aryans, Persians, Greeks, Central Asians, and Europeans. The Maurya and Gupta empires are considered golden ages of Indian civilization, marked by advancements in science, art, and philosophy. The medieval period saw the rise of powerful dynasties like the Mughals, who left behind a rich architectural legacy, including the famed Taj Mahal. In the 18th century, India came under British colonial rule, which lasted until 1947 when the country gained independence. The struggle for independence, led by figures such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, is a significant chapter in India's history, culminating in the creation of the modern, democratic Republic of India.

India is one of the world's largest economies, characterized by a mix of traditional village farming, modern agriculture, handicrafts, a wide range of industries, and numerous services. The service sector, particularly information technology, has become a major driver of economic growth, with cities like Bangalore and Hyderabad



Fast Facts

Capital: New Delhi

Population: 1.4 billion

Primary Religions: Hinduism and Islam

Highest mountain peak: Mount Kanchenjunga,
28,169 feet

Must-see Attraction: Taj Mahal

Primerus Member: Sarthak Advocates & Solicitors

Sarthak Advocates & Solicitors, a full-service business law firm located in New Delhi, has been a Primerus member since 2022.

India

emerging as global IT hubs. India is also one of the world's largest producers of textiles, garments, and steel.

New Delhi, the capital city of India, is part of the larger National Capital Territory of Delhi. It serves as the political and administrative heart of the country and is known for its historic monuments, government buildings, and cultural sites. The city is home to the Rashtrapati Bhavan (Presidential Residence), India Gate, and the Parliament of India. Mumbai, the most populous city, is the financial, commercial, and entertainment capital of India. With a population topping 20 million, Mumbai is a bustling metropolis known for its vibrant street life, Bollywood film industry, and colonial architecture. The city's skyline is a mix of modern skyscrapers and historic buildings, reflecting its status as a global city.

Top 5 Must-See Tourist Destinations

- **Taj Mahal:** Located in Agra, Uttar Pradesh, the Taj Mahal is one of the most iconic landmarks in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Built by Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal, this white marble mausoleum is a masterpiece of Mughal architecture. The intricate inlay work, the symmetry of the gardens, and the reflection of the Taj Mahal in the adjacent pool create a mesmerizing sight, especially at sunrise and sunset.
- **Jaipur and the Amber Fort:** Jaipur, the capital of northwestern state of Rajasthan, is known as the "Pink City" due to the distinctive color of its historic buildings. The city is famous for its grand palaces, colorful bazaars, and rich cultural heritage. The Amber Fort, located just outside Jaipur, is a stunning example of Rajput architecture. Perched on a hilltop, the fort offers panoramic views of the surrounding landscape. Visitors can explore the fort's courtyards, halls, and intricate mirror work, as well as take an elephant ride up to the entrance. Jaipur is also home to the City Palace, Hawa Mahal, and Jantar Mantar, a UNESCO-listed astronomical observatory.
- **Varanasi:** Varanasi, also known as Benares or Kashi, is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world and a major center of Hindu spirituality. Situated on the banks of the Ganges River in Uttar Pradesh, Varanasi is a sacred city for Hindus, who come to bathe in the holy river and perform rituals at the ghats (steps leading down to the river). The city is also famous for its narrow winding streets, ancient temples, and lively festivals. The evening Ganga Aarti, a ritual

of offering prayers to the river, is a mesmerizing experience that draws pilgrims and tourists alike.

- **Kerala Backwaters:** The southern state of Kerala is known for its lush landscapes, pristine beaches, and tranquil backwaters. The backwaters of Kerala, particularly in Alleppey and Kumarakom, are a network of interconnected canals, rivers, and lakes that wind through picturesque villages, paddy fields, and coconut groves. A houseboat cruise on the backwaters is a unique way to experience the serene beauty of Kerala. Visitors can enjoy traditional Kerala cuisine on board, observe local life along the waterways, and relax in the peaceful surroundings.
- **Ranthambore National Park:** Located in Rajasthan, Ranthambore National Park is one of the largest and most famous wildlife reserves in India. The park is renowned for its population of Bengal tigers, making it one of the best places in the country to see these majestic animals in their natural habitat. In addition to tigers, the park is home to a variety of wildlife, including leopards, sloth bears, deer, and numerous bird species. The park's landscape is a mix of dry deciduous forests, grasslands, and ancient ruins, including the 10th-century Ranthambore Fort.

