



India



Welcome

A warm and friendly greeting is greatly appreciated by Indian people. The traditional greeting is to place the palms of your hands together in front of you and say 'Namaste', which comes from Sanskrit and means 'I bow to you'. They will do the same.

Times are changing though and many Indians will now simply shake your hand. Some women may prefer to simply nod and say hello. Don't be surprised if their handshake is gentler than you would ordinarily expect as this is good manners in India.

Indians may be more familiar with the term 'good name', which means 'your surname'. It is not unusual for Indians to call you by your first name and your title, so you may call someone Mr. Sanjay or Ms. Reena and you may become Mr. James or Ms. Sarah.

The Language

English is widely spoken in India and although grammar, sentence structure and word use may differ, it is not generally difficult to understand. Words used may at times appear formal: this is due to an emphasis on traditional language in the teaching of English.

Hindi and English are both official languages of India. There are 22 recognised regional languages, including Bengali, Panjabi, Marathi, Kannada and Telugu; and two classical languages, Sanskrit and Tamil.



Did you know?

More people from India speak English than any other country, including the USA.



India



The Culture

There are many regional differences within India, in terms of language, religion, geography and local customs. People show a great respect for each other's position in life and in particular towards older people. Family unity, obligation and respect are very important and help define where people fit within Indian society.

Maintaining harmony and displays of politeness are also important. Silence or trying to change the subject is usually preferable to the direct approach, particularly if you have to deliver bad news or say 'no'.

Did you know?

There are over 10 million Indians living outside India, including 2 million people of Indian descent living in the UK.

Customer Service Advice

Indian people appreciate efficient service and the personal touch during their travels.

Each religion of India has its own dietary rules and it is best to check customers' dietary requirements in advance. As a general rule, avoid offering beef, as the cow is a sacred animal in many parts of India. Make sure you offer a number of vegetarian options.

Be careful when recommending an Indian restaurant in the UK. British-Indian restaurants serve a range of food from different Indian regions, as well as modern 'fusion' cuisine. Not all of these restaurants will suit your customers' palate, so take a little time to find out about what is offered locally.

- **DO** be patient. Indian people have a more flexible attitude to time; arriving late and rearranging timings is considered acceptable.
- **DO** ensure you use the words 'yes' or 'no' instead of just nodding your head.
- **DO** use your right hand to serve food and shake hands.
- **DO** remember that shaking the head from left to right can mean 'yes', be used to emphasise a point or show agreement or understanding.



India



India Shining

India is the seventh largest country in the world and has the second highest population. India's large English-speaking population have made it popular with businesses in recent years. Over 45% of the world's software engineers are from India and many Western companies now locate their contact centres in the country.

The film industry, known as Bollywood, produces more movies than any other country in the world.

India is the world's largest democracy and has the second fastest growing economy. The improved economic situation has helped many Indians to travel abroad and, for some, this may be their first trip to the UK. Many others however have been travelling for decades, visiting family and friends all over the world and in particular in the UK because of strong social and family ties.

Key Facts

- **Population** – approx 1,120,000,000
- **Capital City** – New Delhi
- **Languages** – Hindi & English (official) and 20 other officially recognised regional languages
- **Religions** – Hindus 80%, Muslims 13%, Christians 2%, Sikhs 2%, Buddhists 1%, Jains <1%, others <2%
- **Currency** – Indian Rupee
- **Exchange rate** – INR77 = £1.00
- **Dialling Code** – +91
- **Time Differences** – GMT+5 1/2



Where to go next

For more information about welcoming international visitors to London, visit www.rln-london.com/welcoming

RLN London's *Service Finder* can help you find language and cultural services – including translation, detailed cultural briefing and language training.

www.rln-london.com/servicefinder

'Welcoming the World' is an initiative which aims to help people in frontline roles to give great customer service to international visitors. RLN London has endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of the information contained within this country profile, which is one of a wider series. However, views or opinions presented by the contributing author do not necessarily represent those of RLN London.

Remember!

These are general guidelines on how people from different cultures *might* act and the customer service they *might* expect. They can't predict every individual's behaviour in every situation.