

## Tips for Travelers to South Asia

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE PUBLICATION 10266  
Bureau of Consular Affairs

Revised June 1995

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## Consular Information Program

For travel information on any country, see the Department of State's Consular Information Sheet for the country. Consular Information Sheets cover such matters as health conditions, unusual currency and entry regulations, crime and security conditions, drug penalties, and areas of instability. In addition, the State Department issues Travel Warnings when we recommend Americans defer travel to a country because of unsafe conditions. Regulations may also prohibit the use of U.S. passports to visit certain countries. This prohibition will be included in the Travel Warnings issued for affected countries. Travel Warnings are under continuous review by the Department of State. Before you depart for a country that has a Travel Warning, make certain that you have the most recent revision of the Warning. The Department of State also issues Public Announcements. Public Announcements are issued as a means to disseminate information quickly about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term and/or trans-national conditions which would pose significant risks to the security of American travelers.

There are several ways to access Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings and Public Announcements. You can listen to them 24-hours a day by calling 202-647-5225 from a touchtone phone. You can receive copies of them by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Overseas Citizens Services, Room 4800, Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4818. (Write the name of the requested country or countries on the outside of the envelope.) You can also find Consular Information Sheets and Travel Warnings at the 13 regional passport agencies and at U.S. embassies and consulates abroad. They can also be accessed through an airline or travel agent's computer reservation system, the Bureau of Consular Affairs' 24-hour automated fax system at 202/647-3000, or through many computer bulletin boards, including the Consular Affairs Bulletin Board (CABB). You may call the CABB on modem number 202-647-9225. Set your communications software to: no parity, 8 bits, one stop bit (N-8-1).

Travelers to areas where conditions are unsettled or communication is poor are encouraged to register at the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate (see list at end of book). All travelers are encouraged to leave a detailed itinerary and their passport numbers at home in case of an emergency.

## Weather

If you have a choice, winter is the best time to visit most areas of South Asia. South of the Himalayas, South Asian weather is warm to very hot. Hot, humid regions like Bangladesh and central, eastern, and southern India are somewhat more comfortable in December through February. Hot, dry regions like Pakistan and northern India have pleasant weather from October to March, with the winter months cool enough for light woollens. The worst weather in the dry regions, when heat and dust can make sight-seeing or other outdoor activity a chore, is during the pre-monsoon period from approximately April through mid-

from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402, or from local, or state health departments. The CDC has an international travelers hotline that can be reached at 404-332-4559.

Travelers should be careful to drink only boiled water (bottled water is not always safe) or bottled drinks, to avoid ice cubes in beverages and unpeeled fruits and vegetables, to take precautions against mosquitoes, and to guard against overexertion at high altitudes. Trekkers and mountain climbers, in particular, should take precautions to avoid frostbite, hypothermia, and altitude sickness. The latter two can be fatal if not detected in time. Modern health facilities are not always available, particularly in rural areas. Prospective travelers should review their health insurance policies to see if they provide coverage while overseas, including medical evacuation service.

### Visas and Other Entry Requirements

A U.S. passport is required for travel to all countries in the region. Most South Asian countries also require entry visas. Travel to certain areas of many South Asian countries is restricted and special permits may be required for these areas in addition to the entry visa. Prospective travelers should contact the embassy or consulate of the country they plan to visit for specific information (see list of foreign embassies at end of book).

All South Asian countries require travelers who have been in yellow-fever infected areas within the last six days to show valid yellow-fever immunization certificates. Yellow fever is found in some African and some Latin American countries. If you plan to travel from Africa or Latin America directly to South Asia, check with the embassy of the South Asian country where you are going to see if a yellow-fever certificate is required. If the certificate is required and you do not have it, you will be refused entry unless you are inoculated and kept in quarantine for up to six days.

### Currency and Customs Regulations

Most South Asian countries require that foreign currency and valuables be declared upon entry as a means of enforcing restrictions on the importation of items such as gold, electronic equipment, firearms, and prescription drugs. Failure to make an accurate declaration or other violations of these restrictions can lead to high fines and/or imprisonment.

### Shopping for Antiques

Most South Asian countries have strict regulations against the unlicensed export of antiquities. Items that are antique, or even appear to be, may be confiscated by customs officials unless the traveler has proof of authorization from the appropriate government office to export the antique, or proof that the item is not an antique.

### U.S. Wildlife Regulations

## Afghanistan

The Department of State warns all U.S. citizens against travel to Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a developing, Islamic country presently in the midst of a civil war. Fighting and indiscriminate rocket attacks, aerial bombardments, and other violence can occur without warning. Land mines are prevalent throughout the countryside. All U.S. personnel at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul were evacuated on January 31, 1989, and no other diplomatic mission represents U.S. interest or provides consular services. The nearest U.S. Embassy is in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Because of safety and security concerns arising from the civil war in Afghanistan, all U.S. airlines and aircraft operators are prohibited by the Federal Aviation Administration from overflying Afghanistan.

## Bangladesh

No visa is required for a tourist stay of up to two weeks if you have an onward ticket; all business travelers must have visas, however. Bangladesh is an Islamic country, and visitors should dress modestly -- shorts are considered inappropriate.

Crime is a serious problem in Dhaka. Foreigners have not been especially targeted, but are often the victims of crime. Travelers should also be wary of and give a wide berth to politically-based street agitation, protests, and general strikes. These can flare into random violence without warning and result in attacks on nearby persons and property.

Travelers should pay special attention to preventive health measures because medical facilities, especially in rural areas, are not always available. River ferries are necessary for travel throughout much of Bangladesh, but travelers should exercise caution when using them. Accidents frequently occur from overcrowding and from hazardous navigation during poor weather. Trekkers may not go to the Chittagong Hill Tracts, which are off-limits to foreigners.

## Kingdom of Bhutan

While Bhutan and the United States do not have formal diplomatic relations, informal contact is maintained through the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, India. Restrictions on tourism to Bhutan have been relaxed recently. Tourists are no longer limited to traveling in organized groups; however independent travelers must book through a travel agency. Visas must be requested in advance and are stamped on arrival in Bhutan. Entry must be via Bangladesh, India or Nepal. The border with China is closed. For information, contact Bhutan Travel Inc., 120 East 56th Street, Suite 1130, New York, NY 10022 (tel. 212-838-6382).

## India

be jailed, fined and/or charged duty at rates exceeding 300 percent of the item's value. Laws against drug smuggling carry heavy penalties, including a ten-year prison term.

Political or communal and inter-caste violence occurs intermittently in many parts of the country. Major civil disturbances can pose risks to a traveler's personal safety and can disrupt transportation systems and city services. In response to communal violence, Indian authorities may occasionally impose curfews. Foreigners have rarely been the targets of communal or political violence in India, and are principally at risk of becoming inadvertent victims only if they stray into demonstrations. Whether dangerous or not, many areas of India have been declared off-limits to foreigners by the Indian authorities. Permits are required for: Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Assam, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, parts of Kulu District and Spiti District of Himachal Pradesh, border areas of Jammu and Kashmir, certain areas of Uttar Pradesh, the area west of National Highway No. 5 running from Ganganagar to Sanchar in Rajasthan, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Union Territory of the Laccadive Islands. Persons of Indian origin can usually obtain permits to visit relatives in restricted areas. Other visitors may have to wait a long time for a permit or be unable to obtain one. Consult the latest Department of State Consular Information Sheet on which areas are restricted. Once in India, consult the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S. consulate for information on restricted areas and advice on obtaining permits to visit them. None of the popular tourist sites in India are in restricted areas.

## Republic of Maldives

The islands of the Maldives have long been popular vacation sites. Diplomatic relations are maintained and consular services are provided through the U.S. Embassy in Colombo, Sri Lanka. In emergencies, there is a U.S. consular agent on the capital island of Male (for address, ask at a resort or hotel) who can help travelers communicate with the U.S. Embassy in Colombo. A no-fee visa for a tourist visit of up to 30 days is issued upon arrival at the airport. Foreign currency may be taken in or out of the Maldives without restriction. Pork foodstuffs and alcohol may not be imported.

## Nepal

Nepal is a popular adventure tourism destination; over 20,000 Americans visit Nepal each year. A tourist visa valid for up to 60 days is issued at ports of entry upon arrival. Visas can be routinely extended in Kathmandu and Pokhara for stays of up to four months; a fifth month requires special approval. Penalties for overstaying a visa may include fines and imprisonment. Nepalese customs laws, particularly those forbidding smuggling of drugs, gold, and foreign currency, are strictly enforced. The penalty for smuggling is a stiff fine and/or a prison sentence. Travelers should take adequate funds in the form of travelers checks. It is difficult to obtain additional funds through bank

Embassy may assist Americans in contacting family or friends.

Americans planning to travel from Nepal to Tibet should be aware that Chinese authorities strictly regulate such trips. Additional information is contained in the Consular Information Sheet on China and in Tips for Travelers to the People's Republic of China. Travelers can also contact the U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu for current information on the status of the border crossing points.

## Pakistan

In March 1995, a shuttle carrying employees of the U.S. Consulate General in Karachi was attacked by unknown assailants. Two American employees were killed. At the time of publication, the State Department had no knowledge of any specific credible threats to U.S. citizens. However, all travelers are urged to exercise prudent security precautions. Sectarian and factional violence has increased in Pakistan. Karachi remains the center of politically-motivated killings. During the Islamic religious observances of Ramadan and Moharram (the exact date for each holiday varies each year), sectarian rivalry and violence often increase.

A visa must be obtained before arrival; travelers should specifically request multiple-entry visas, and must obtain an exit permit if they stay more than 30 days. Pakistan is an Islamic country, and visitors must respect Islamic standards of behavior. Travelers (especially women) should dress modestly, i.e., wear clothes with high necks and long sleeves and not wear shorts. Women are advised not to travel alone in rural areas. The import, manufacture, and consumption of alcohol or drugs are strictly forbidden. Major hotels have special rooms where non-Islamic foreigners may buy and drink alcoholic beverages. In March 1994, legislation was passed which made drug trafficking punishable by death.

A special permit is required for travel to the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, including the Khyber Pass, and to Azad Kashmir. Persons traveling to restricted areas without a permit are subject to arrest. Onward overland travel to India is difficult because of border crossing restrictions (see Consular Information Sheet for India).

Major cities in Pakistan are safe for tourists, but travel to remote rural areas, especially in Balochistan, Sindh and the Northwest Frontier Province is not recommended. Security conditions vary; some areas are only considered safe for daytime travel in groups. Because the security situation can change with little warning, visitors should check at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad or the nearest U.S. consulate for up-to-date travel information.

## Sri Lanka

The insurgency of Tamil separatists against the government in Sri Lanka

Medical facilities in Sri Lanka are limited. Malaria is prevalent in many areas outside of Colombo.

## Foreign Embassies in the United States

Embassy of Afghanistan  
2341 Wyoming Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20008  
(202) 234-3770

Embassy of Bangladesh  
2201 Wisconsin Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20007  
(202) 342-8373

Bhutan Mission to the United Nations  
New York, NY 10017  
(212) 826-1919

Embassy of India  
2536 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20008  
(202) 939-9839

Republic of Maldives Mission  
to the United Nations  
820 Second Avenue, Suite 800C  
New York, NY 10017  
(212) 599-6195

Embassy of Nepal  
2131 Leroy Place, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20008  
(202) 657-4550

Embassy of Pakistan  
2315 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20008  
(202) 939-6200

Embassy of Sri Lanka  
2148 Wyoming Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20008  
(202) 483-4025

# INDIA

U.S. Embassy  
Shanti Path  
Chanakyapuri 110021  
New Delhi, India  
Tel: (91-11) 600651  
Fax: (91-11) 687-2028

American Consulate General  
Lincoln House  
78 Bhulabhai Desai Rd. 400026  
Bombay, India  
Tel: (91-22) 363-3611  
Fax: (91-22) 363-0350

American Consulate General  
5/1 Ho Chi Minh Sarani 700071  
Calcutta, India  
Tel: (91-33) 242-3611 thru 15  
Fax: (91-33) 242-2335

American Consulate General  
Mount Rd., 600006  
Madras, India  
Tel: (91-44) 826-3040 or 827-7542  
Fax: (91-44) 826-3407

MALDIVES (See Sri Lanka)

# NEPAL

American Embassy  
Pani Pokhari  
Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel: (977-1) 411179, 412718, 410531 or 413836  
Fax: (977-1) 419963

PAKISTAN (workweek: Sunday-Thursday)

American Embassy  
Diplomatic Enclave  
Ramna 5  
Islamabad, Pakistan  
Tel: (92-51) 826-161 thru 79  
Fax: (92-51) 214-222

American Consulate General  
8 Abdullah Haroon Rd.  
Karachi, Pakistan  
Tel: (92-21) 568-5170 (afterhours 568-1606)  
Fax: (92-21) 568-3089

American Consulate General  
50 Sharah-E-Bib Badees (50 Empress Rd.)  
Simal Hills Lahore K



American Embassy  
210 Galle Rd. (P.O. Box 106)  
Colombo 3  
Colombo, Sri Lanka  
Tel: (94-1) 448007  
Fax: (94-1) 437345

### Planning Another Trip?

\*For general travel information, the following publications may be ordered for \$1 each from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402; tel: 202-512-1800.

Your Trip Abroad (\$1.25)  
A Safe Trip Abroad  
Tips for Americans Residing Abroad  
Travel Tips for Older Americans

\*Copies of the following publications in this series are also available for \$1 each from the U.S. Government Printing Office:

Tips for Travelers to the Caribbean  
Tips for Travelers to Central and South America  
Tips for Travelers to the People's Republic of China  
Tips for Travelers to Mexico  
Tips for Travelers to the Middle East and North Africa (\$1.50)  
Tips for Travelers to Russia and the Newly Independent States  
Tips for Travelers to Sub-Saharan Africa (\$1.50)

General visa information for these and other countries is available in Foreign Entry Requirements. Information on how, when and where to apply for your U.S passport is available in Passports: Applying for Them the Easy Way. Both publications may be ordered for 50 cents each from the Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, Colorado 81009.

\*Prices and availability are subject to change without notice. Please check with the Government Printing Office for more information.

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