



tourism  
INDUSTRY

ASSOCIATION NEW ZEALAND



# India

CULTURAL BRIEF

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Despite its history dating back thousands of years, India is a "young" country with about half its 1.2 billion population aged under 25. The affluent youth of India are highly educated, more liberal in their views than their parents, internet savvy and very ambitious. They also love to travel and have become key influencers in the family.

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This India Cultural Brief is produced by the Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIA) and is available free to our members. See our website [www.tianz.org.nz](http://www.tianz.org.nz) (News & Media - publications) for more information about the India market, including business meeting etiquette and dress code and links to further sources of information, including Tourism New Zealand research.

Sources include: Tourism New Zealand Asia Visitor Study 2011 and Target Market: Active Considerers Research, TravConsult.

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# Why the India market is important

Indian travellers are good customers for New Zealand as they prefer to visit during the autumn shoulder season, usually speak English, stay for a reasonable length of time, have excellent budgets and like to experience many attractions and activities.

About 12 million Indians travelled internationally in 2010, estimated to climb to 50 million by 2020. Higher disposable incomes and a willingness to spend on luxury brands and big-ticket items like holidays as well as a fast growing middle class and an increasingly global mindset are driving outbound travel from this market.

Despite no direct air links between India and New Zealand, visitor arrivals from India increased from about 6600 in 1999 to around 28,000 in 2011. This number is forecast to grow by 58% to 44,700 in 2016.



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## About the Indian visitor

New Zealand is a popular destination among honeymooners, visitors seeking self-drive itineraries and Indians aged 20 to 49. Indian visitors often travel as a family, quite often either bringing younger children and teenagers or older members of the family.

There is a strong Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) component (about 30%), while holiday visitors account for about 50% of arrivals.

The lucrative free independent traveller (FIT) market currently makes up the major share of New Zealand's Indian visitors and this sector is increasing more rapidly than group travel.

The vast majority of Indians are visiting for the first time.

# Opportunities

New Zealand delivers very well to our target Indian market on a number of important needs, including 'being happy', 'having fun' and 'feeling safe and comfortable' but we could do more to improve on 'reducing stress and feeling relaxed'.

Here are some of the things Indians particularly enjoy about a New Zealand holiday and opportunities for your business.

Indian visitors:

- Are willing to pay if it's a unique experience and they perceive it is good value
- Like Kiwi culture and appreciate our friendly relaxed nature
- Want Kiwi culture to be reflected in their trip, with personalised and tailored trips made for their needs
- Are interested in relaxing and rejuvenating during their trip to New Zealand
- Want to engage, be engaged and have fun
- Have often had many international travel experiences and want more with authenticity
- Enjoy 'experiencing', for example hot air balloon rides, helicopter scenic trips, visiting theme parks, dinner shows (especially with dancing and singing)

Tips:

- Environmental/nature type activities that rate most highly include going to beaches, seeing wildlife in their natural setting, visiting natural attractions and doing a scenic boat cruise
- Urban-based activities that are highly appealing include shopping, photography, walking in the city, gardens and visiting floral shows
- Keep in mind that Indian visitors like to continue their New Zealand experience beyond 5pm. Often attractions close too early for them
- Keep tabs on what Bollywood movies are being made in New Zealand as often these are the places/activities Indian travellers will want to include in their itinerary

# Honeymooners

Indians often travel here on their honeymoon or as part of a romantic trip. This market needs special attention and products for couples.

Tap into this market with romantic products such as sunset walks on the beach, alfresco dining overlooking the sea, mountains or waterfalls, or couple-based day spa products.

# Customer needs and expectations

## IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION

Religion is woven into the fabric of Indian society and is a major influence on social structure, food preferences, customs, culture and even business. About 82% of Indians are Hindus, about 12% are Muslims. The balance includes Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians.

## GREETINGS

To show you understand the Indian culture, you may like to greet your Indian customers with the traditional greeting of clasped hands, as if in prayer, held at chest height, slight nod of the head or bow, and say *namaste* (nah-mas-stay).

## VIEW OF TIME

Indians view time differently to Westerners. They appreciate punctuality but they themselves may not be punctual. As customers, they may be late for meal time or transportation transfer. This can prove problematic when you have other non-Indian guests who are on time:

- Prevention is best – inform your Indian guests that if they're late they will miss the bus/boat etc as it can't wait for them due to other guests
- Always give them options – if they want flexibility, they can pay more for a personalised service, or if they miss the bus, they must wait for the next one or pay for a taxi

## COMMUNICATION STYLE

Indians need lots of information to make a decision. They require many options and ask many questions. Don't get frustrated at what can seem like "a waste of time". This can lead to missed business and sales:

- Be patient
- Understand that Indians view time differently so allocate more time than you would usually allow
- Be prepared with as much product knowledge as possible
- Be prepared for the Indian's attention to detail
- Realise when listening they'll shake their head
- Juniors need to consult with the head of the family or organisation before making a final decision
- Leaders on the other hand have ultimate power and autonomy so will make impulsive buying decisions without the need to consult others
- Remember that not all Indians speak English, and those who do will have cultural background and influences very different to you

## SERVICE

Indians are used to very high levels of service. Recognition of their status is the key customer service expectation and hierarchy and observation of rank in life (society, family, organisation etc) is paramount.

Here are some ways to give status to your Indian customer:

- Appeal in your merchandising and selling to the status aspirations of the Indian customer
- Acknowledge and welcome the Indian customer the moment you see them – as they approach your operation's reception or counter, at the entrance of your restaurant or attraction
- Use their title, i.e. Mr, Mrs, Professor, Doctor
- Show respect to the elders – serve them first
- Seniors do the speaking – juniors are silent unless asked directly
- Try to avoid saying 'no', instead imply no in another way, e.g. 'I will try my best', 'It is difficult'
- Pay them attention and provide personalised service – Indians who can afford to travel overseas usually have servants back home who look after their every need
- When selling to them, offer the top or best product or service first rather than the cheapest
- In situations of complaint or conflict, it is expected that it will be handled by a senior manager – Indian males often prefer that complaints are handled by males

Accommodation operators should provide:

- A porter service and a warm greeting
- Seamless travel – tourism information should be readily available and there should be a connection person between their accommodation and the activities and attractions they visit

## FOOD

Indians are happiest eating an Indian meal, of which spice is an essential component. However, they also appreciate that New Zealand food is vastly different to what they are used to and experiencing classic Kiwi cuisine is considered a holiday highlight – but they need to have what they are eating explained to them.

Suggestions to cater for your Indian guests:

- Look to incorporate spicy Indian snacks in your mini bar or vending machine
- Keep in mind that Indians generally have a later cycle of meals compared with the average Westerner
- Indians generally have their main meal at lunchtime so make sure a generous meal is available at this time
- Indians know that New Zealand is one of the world's major seafood producers and they like to try our fresh seafood
- Indians love chai tea and sweets

Food and beverage taboos are mostly related to religious beliefs and should be catered for:

- Hindu Indians don't eat beef as the cow is sacred in their religion
- Most Hindus are vegetarian so make sure there are plenty of vegetarian options
- Seafood, chicken and lamb are safe options for non-vegetarian Hindus
- Muslims will not eat pork and will only eat meat that is halal-certified
- Beware of offering any sweets made from gelatine as this is derived from pork by-products which is forbidden food for Muslims
- Jains do not eat meat, honey or vegetables from the ground, e.g. onion, potato
- If providing a buffet, ensure that your vegetarian and meat dishes are completely separate to avoid cross-contamination and that dishes are clearly labelled



## ALCOHOL

- Drinking alcohol is prohibited among Muslims, Sikhs and some other Indian communities
- Traditional Indian women do not drink alcohol, especially in public
- Drinking alcohol is quite common for younger and well-travelled Indians, especially educated urban ones



## SHOPPING

Indians love shopping and love to bargain. Cater to both in your offerings:

- Ensure flexibility in your pricing, allowing for group discounts and added value
- Indians love shopping after dinner
- They enjoy markets with local offerings and a chance to bargain

Popular items when shopping and travelling include:

- Duty free alcohol
- Chocolates
- Well-known brands
- Jewellery – both real gold and diamonds as well as costume jewellery – bling is key
- Local souvenirs



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