



**Intercultural
Programs**
India

India

A land of colours, vibrance and dynamism

india.afs.org



About India

India is a land of vibrant diversity, camaraderie and most importantly of a culture that is more than 6000 years old. From the majestic Himalayas in the north to the serene backwaters of Kerala in the south, India's geographical variety is striking. The country is home to ancient civilizations, with landmarks like the Taj Mahal and numerous temples that reflect its historical significance. For students, it is the most desirable place to be as it offers a package of both chaos, enjoyment and parties along with spirituality, personal growth and inner peace.

- Located in south Asia sharing borders with following countries China, Pakistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal and Bangladesh.
- 7th largest country and 2nd most populous country (1.38 Billion) after China.
- Largest Democracy in the world.
- 28 States and 8 Union Territories.
- Today, India is among the top 5 economies of the World
- Indian currency is “rupee” ₹



Indian Climate

The Indian subcontinent is famed for its warm summer mornings, cold starry nights, wet afternoons and a majestic landscape in spring. Each part of India experiences each climate to a somewhat varying degree but all in all, the 4 seasons are a sight to behold.

SUMMER

Summer in India brings vibrant colors and festivals. The sun shines brightly as locals enjoy mangoes and chilled drinks. From the beaches of Goa to the hill stations, adventure awaits!



Summer
April to June

WINTER

Winter transforms India into a cozy paradise. Explore the snowy peaks of the Himalayas, attend lively fairs, and savor warm dishes. It's the perfect time for cultural immersion and exploration!



Winter
November to February



Monsoon
July to October

MONSOON

The monsoon season enchants with lush greenery and refreshing rains. Experience the magic of traditional festivals, relish spicy snacks, and enjoy breathtaking landscapes. It's a unique adventure you won't forget!

SPRING

Spring in India bursts with blooms and joy. Festivals like Holi paint the landscape with color. Ideal for outdoor activities, it's a season of renewal and vibrant celebrations everywhere you go.



Spring
March to April

Religions in India



India is a mosaic of religions, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Each faith contributes to the country's vibrant culture, festivals, and traditions. Students can explore majestic temples, serene mosques, and vibrant celebrations, gaining a deeper understanding of spirituality and community. An enriching experience awaits every traveler!

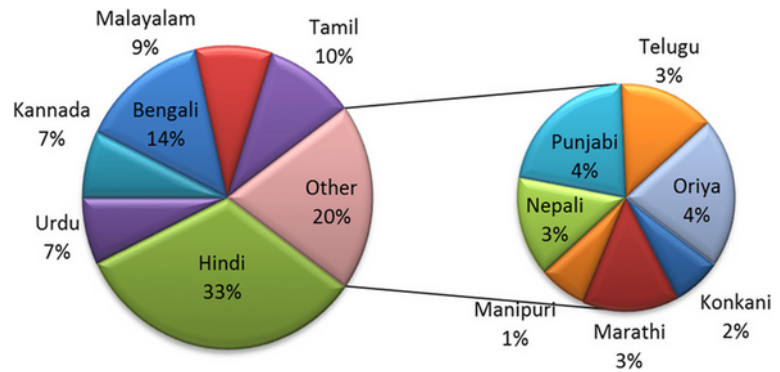
People across India are tolerant of every faith and you can practise any religion you want, without constraints. It's even ingrained in the Constitution of India

Languages in India

India is a linguistic treasure, with over 1,600 languages spoken across its diverse regions. Hindi and English are widely used, but each state boasts its own unique dialects. Students can immerse themselves in local cultures, practice new languages, and connect with vibrant communities, making every exchange program an exciting adventure!

However, India also has the largest English-speaking population than anywhere in the world, making it a prime destination even if one does not know the local languages.

- The Constitution of India recognises 22 languages.
- Hindi is the most spoken language across the country.
- English is also equally popular in major metro cities.
- 11% in India speak English and it is about 12 Millions



Cultural Diversity

India's cultural diversity is a vibrant tapestry of languages, traditions, and customs, making it a unique destination for global travelers and businesses. With over 2,000 distinct ethnic groups and 1,600 languages, India offers a rich blend of heritage and modernity. From the colorful festivals of Diwali and Holi to the spiritual practices rooted in ancient history, the country's cultural landscape is as diverse as its geography. Embracing India's cultural richness not only enhances brand storytelling but also connects businesses with a market that values tradition and innovation, offering endless opportunities for growth and engagement.



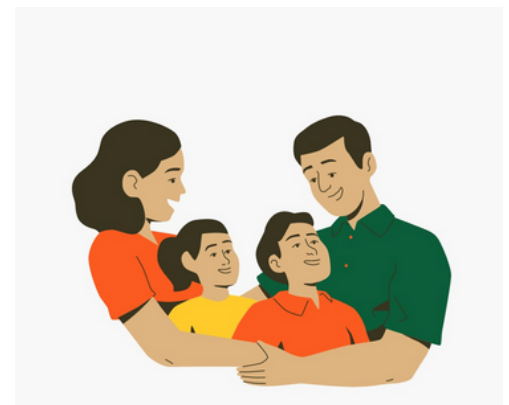
Family Dynamics

India's family system is a rich amalgamation of traditions, values, and close-knit relationships. Families often live together in multi-generational homes, fostering strong bonds among grandparents, parents, and children. Respect for elders and communal decision-making are fundamental, creating a supportive environment that emphasizes love and unity.



Students visiting India through exchange programs will experience the warmth of Indian hospitality firsthand. Family gatherings, festivals, and rituals offer unique insights into cultural practices, such as Diwali and Raksha Bandhan, where togetherness is celebrated. Sharing meals is a central aspect of family life, allowing visitors to savor diverse regional cuisines and discover the stories behind each dish. The Indian tradition is so strong that everyone enjoys the full support of their family behind them. For an exchange student it is quintessential to know that the Indians treat their guests as gods as embodied in the saying - 'Atithi Devo Bhava'. Engaging with Indian families provides an opportunity to learn about customs, traditions, and everyday life. This immersive experience fosters intercultural friendships and helps students develop a deeper understanding of India's societal values. Embrace the warmth of Indian families and create lasting memories during your exchange!

- Close-knit families/joint families, okay to live with parents even as adults
- Guests revered as god, touching elders' feet to show respect and seek blessings
- Arranged marriages also take place, however, the scenario is also changing



Traditional Wear in different parts of India

India's traditional wear reflects its rich cultural diversity. In the north, women wear sarees and men don dhotis or sherwanis, while in Punjab, vibrant salwar kameez and turbans dominate. In the south, women wear silk sarees and men opt for lungis or veshtis and in east people wear more traditional blend dresses, highlighting regional elegance across the country.



Indian Arts

Indian music and arts are a harmonious blend of classical, folk, and contemporary styles. From the soulful ragas of Hindustani and Carnatic music to dynamic dance forms like Bharatanatyam and Kathak, India's artistic heritage reflects its cultural depth, with vibrant visual arts, sculpture, and cinema adding to its creative legacy.



Festivals of India

India is renowned for its vibrant festivals, each offering a unique glimpse into its rich cultural heritage. Participating in these celebrations during an exchange program is a fantastic way to connect with local traditions and communities.

Diwali (Festival of Lights)

Diwali, celebrated in October or November, symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness. Homes are adorned with lamps, and families come together to share sweets and fireworks, creating a joyful atmosphere.



Holi (Festival of Colors)

Holi, occurring in March, is a lively celebration welcoming spring. People throw colored powders and water at each other, fostering joy and friendship. It's a joyous occasion full of music, dance, and delicious food.

Lohri is a popular harvest festival celebrated primarily in Punjab, marking the end of winter. People gather around bonfires, singing traditional songs and dancing to Bhangra, while offering sesame seeds, jaggery, and popcorn to the flames. Lohri symbolizes abundance, prosperity, and the joy of new beginnings in agrarian communities.



Eid, celebrated by the Muslim community, marks the end of Ramadan. Families gather for prayers, feasting, and giving to charity, showcasing the spirit of community and generosity.

Christmas in India is a joyful celebration marked by midnight Masses, decorated churches, and vibrant street markets. While Christians are a minority, the holiday is widely observed, especially in states in Northeast India, Kerala, Goa, and Tamil Nadu. Families exchange gifts, share festive meals, and decorate homes with lights, stars, and Christmas trees.



Indian Cuisines

Indian cuisine is a diverse blend of flavors and traditions, featuring dishes like spicy curries, biryanis, dosas, and samosas. Each region offers unique specialties, from North India's rich, creamy gravies to South India's tangy, coconut-infused fare. Street food like chaats and sweets like gulab jamun add to its vibrant culinary landscape.

- **Regional Diversity:** India's cuisine varies greatly by region, with distinct flavors, ingredients, and cooking styles in the north, south, east, and west.
- **Spices:** India is known as the "Land of Spices," producing over 70% of the world's spices.
- **Vegetarian Tradition:** A significant portion of India's population follows a vegetarian diet, influenced by religious beliefs and cultural practices. The percentage of vegetarians in India is generally between 23% and 37%.
- **Street Food Culture:** Indian cities are famous for their vibrant street food, offering a wide range of snacks like pani puri, vada pav, and chaat.
- **Traditional Meals:** Indian meals are typically served with rice, roti, or both, accompanied by multiple side dishes, including curries, dals, pickles, and chutneys.



Chhole Bhature



North Indian Thali



Biryani



South Indian Dosa



Matar Chat



Gol Gappe



Dabeli



Vada Pao



Papdi Chat



Samosa

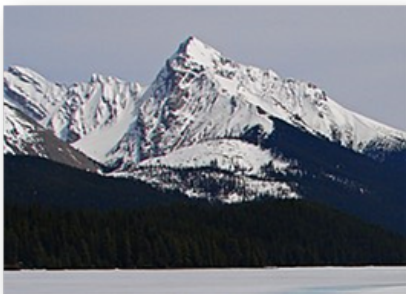
Indian Street Food

Indian Spices



Geographical Diversity

India's geographical diversity is breathtaking, offering a range of landscapes across its vast terrain. In the north, the snow-capped mountains of Leh Ladakh invite adventurers with their rugged beauty and serene monasteries. To the west, Rajasthan's Thar Desert showcases golden sand dunes, vibrant culture, and ancient forts. Moving south, Goa's sun-kissed beaches are a paradise for beach lovers, blending laid-back vibes with Portuguese heritage. Meanwhile, Kerala's tranquil backwaters, with lush greenery and serene waterways, offer a unique experience of houseboat cruises. These diverse terrains make India a traveler's dream, with something for every explorer.



•Snow Mountain – Leh Ladakh



•Desert – Rajasthan



•Beach - Goa



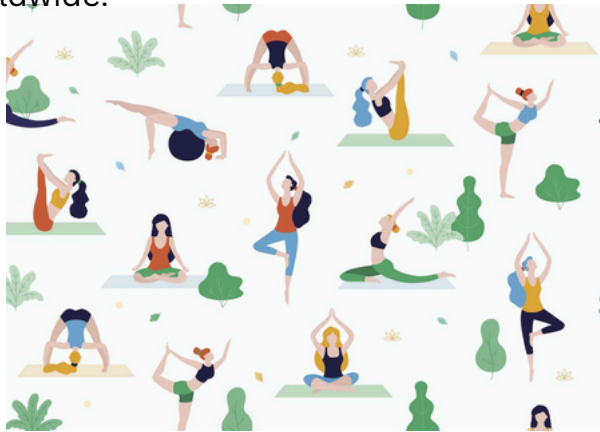
•Backwater - Kerala



•Wild life - Jim Corbett

Land of YOGA, Ayurveda (Natural Medicine)

India, the land of yoga and Ayurveda, offers ancient wellness practices that promote holistic health. Yoga, rooted in Indian spiritual traditions, combines physical postures, breathing exercises, and meditation. Ayurveda, the natural medicine system, uses herbs, diet, and therapies to restore balance in body and mind, enhancing well-being worldwide.



History and Architecture

India's history and architecture reflect its rich cultural legacy, with iconic structures spanning millennia. From the ancient Indus Valley cities to the intricate temples of South India, Mughal masterpieces like the Taj Mahal, and colonial-era buildings, India's architectural marvels showcase diverse influences, telling stories of its vibrant past and heritage.



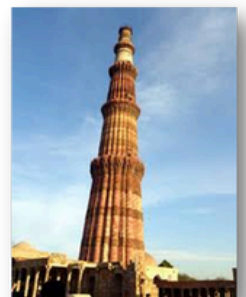
Taj Mahal



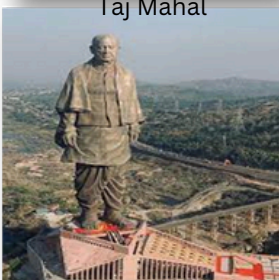
Gateway of India



India Gate



Qutab Minar



Statue of Unity



Golden temple



Mahabalipuram Shore Temple



Sanchi Stupa

Cricket and Bollywood

The Indian film industry is the largest in the world in terms of number of films produced with between 1,500 to 2,000 films produced every year in more than 20 languages

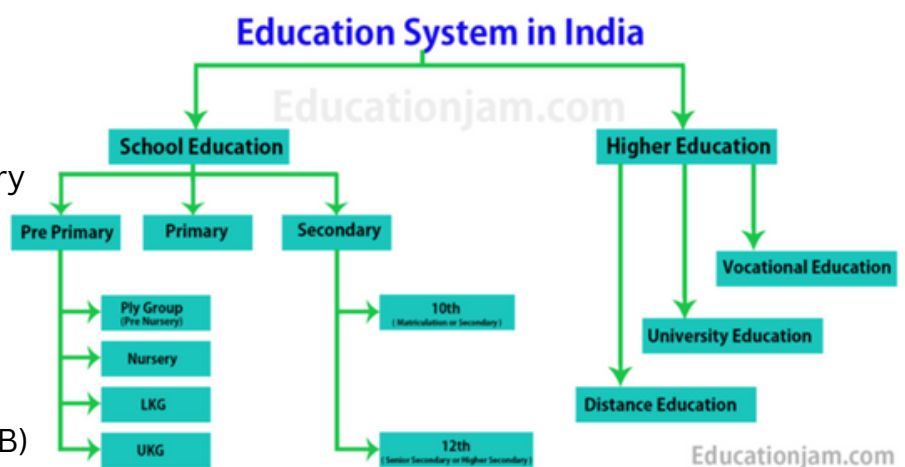


Education System

India's education system is diverse, comprising government and private institutions. It follows a 10+2+3 structure, focusing on primary, secondary, and higher education. Emphasizing academic excellence, it faces challenges like overcrowded classrooms and resource disparity. Recent reforms aim to modernize curricula and improve accessibility and quality across all levels.

The top education boards in India are:

- a) State Boards
- b) Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)
- c) Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE)
- d) Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE)
- e) National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)
- f) International Baccalaureate (IB)
- g) Cambridge International Examinations (CIE)



Our School and Host Family

The day starts with bus, Assembly, and Class



Activities, Computer lab, Science



Outdoor Activities (Sports)



Indoor Games (Chess, Art, Painting)



Community Service



Celebrations with Host Family



Outdoor activities with Host Family



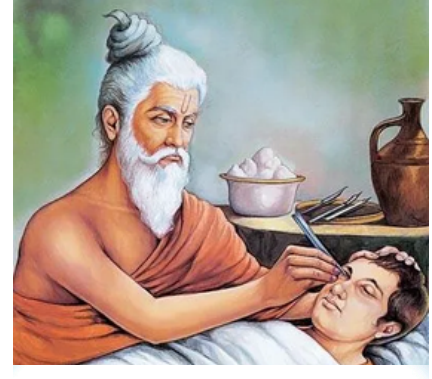
Festivals Celebration with Host Family



Fun Facts about India

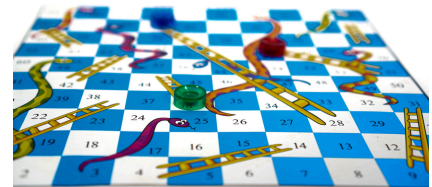
1. Cataracts:

Susruta may have been the first physician to perform surgery for cataracts, using a technique known as couching. Couching is a procedure in which an instrument is used to dislocate the cloudy lens from its anatomical position into the vitreous cavity.



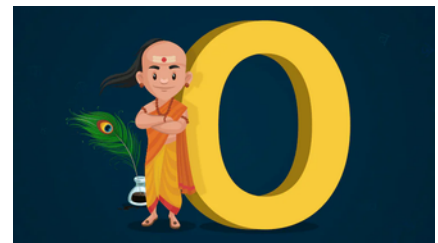
2. Snakes & Ladders:

The game of Snakes & Ladders was created by the 13th-century poet saint Gyandev. It was originally called 'Mokshapat' and was used as a part of moral instruction to children with the ladders representing virtues and the snakes indicating vices.



3. Invention of Zero:

The concept of zero originated in ancient India. The representation of zero has a significant historical connection to ancient Indian mathematics and the development of the numeral system, including the concept of place value. Aryabhatta, the Indian mathematician and astronomer, used zero in algorithms in the 5th century.



To know more interesting fact, come and discover India

AFS Mission

AFS Intercultural Programs is an international, voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit organization that provides intercultural learning opportunities to help people develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to create a more just and peaceful world.

AFS Values

AFS enables people to act as responsible global citizens working for peace and understanding in a diverse world. It acknowledges that peace is a dynamic concept threatened by injustice, inequity, and intolerance.

AFS seeks to affirm faith in the dignity and worth of every human being and of all nations and cultures. It encourages respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language, religion or social status.

AFS activities are based on our core values of dignity, respect for differences, harmony, sensitivity and tolerance.

Global competence is the “power skill” young people require to make their impact on an increasingly diverse world. Active global citizens must be prepared to communicate, collaborate and lead across differences to tackle the world’s greatest challenges.

AFS India Vision

To be the leading organization in intercultural education and experience that focuses on growing its programs for the underserved.

AFS INTERCULTURAL PROGRAMS INDIA

A-9, First Floor, Chittaranjan Park
New Delhi 110019, India



india.afs.org



011-447-74938



india@afs.org

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