

GOING TO PUNE - A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Before Going

- **Apply!** Online via your national association. You must meet the criteria- (minimum 8 years Iyengar Yoga practice with a certificated Iyengar teacher and a recommendation from them. The waiting list is approximately 2 years. Do not go until your place is confirmed.
- **Passport.** Make sure you have at least 6 months on your passport at the time of travelling.
- **Visa.** Essential. Apply for a visa before going. You can apply for a multiple entry visa valid for 6 months or an electronic visa valid for 30 days.
 - For the former it can save a lot of time and hassle to pay an agency to do this - eg ask your travel agent, or use a visa agent eg Visagenie. You complete the visa form filled in online and will be given a temporary application number. Then print and sign it and send with a 2" square photo (dimensions are strict ordinary passport photo will not do) along with your passport.
 - electronic visa. Apply online, you will be sent a confirmation email. Take this with you when you travel and present to Indian immigration on arrival. They will record your biometric data on arrival in India. They will stamp your passport.
 - NB According to current rules you cannot re-enter India within two months of leaving.
- **Immunisations** - check with your GP surgery what you need.
- **Minimum yoga requirements**
 - as well as having sufficient year's of practice under the guidance of a certificated Iyengar Yoga teacher:
 - If you don't already know them, learn the Sanskrit names of the *yogasanas*.
 - If possible learn how to use wall ropes, ceiling ropes, viparita dandasana bench, setu bandha bench etc.
 - you should have an established regular practice of inversions and be able to hold them 8-10 minutes.
 - you should have a regular practice of pranayama
 - women should know what to practise during menstruation
 - be familiar with the introductory chapter to Light on Yoga and be familiar with the terms and principles covered in that chapter
- Tell your credit card company and bank (if planning to use cards) when and where you are going.

Pune Climate

Cooler: November - February. Dry. Cold early mornings rising to a comfortable warmth. Pollution levels tend to be higher as this period goes on. Can be very cold at night, early morning - take a fleece/woollens!

Hot: Late February - June. The Institute is closed to westerners in April and closed completely in May. The temperature can go as high as 40+°C!

Wet: July – October - Pollution levels lower. Take special care with tummy bugs and mosquitoes at this time.

RIMYI entrance



Things to Take (or buy shortly after arrival)

Travel light – there are lots of lovely clothes and other stuff you can buy fairly cheaply in India, although in recent years Indian prices are much higher, and some items are cheaper to buy at home (eg jeans & t-shirts).

- Photos of family (nice for you and Indians tend to be interested)
- Small gifts - (eg egg-free chocolates, small toys for children) for those whom you get to know/ show you kindness
- Mosquito repellent (GPs tend to recommend stuff containing DEET, we find the local brand Odomos effective) - apply frequently including during the day. Try the liquid plug in units ("All Out" or "Good Knight") for overnight.
- Umbrella useful to keep sun off as well as rain
- Footwear for wet weather. (Leather flip-flops don't like water!)
- A notebook/pens to take notes after class and collect contact details for all your new friends (easy to buy in Model Colony).
- A good pumice/foot file – your feet can get very hard and ingrained with dirt if you don't use one often! You can get one in India but one time it once took me a week and several trips before I was successful!
- Any clothes or shoes which need mending or alteration (Richard's idea!) - Indian tailors & cobblers are skilled, fast and much, much cheaper than home.
- Portable electronic scales for weighing luggage.
- Torch
- Tampons (expensive in India and not something commonly used)
- Anti-bacterial hand wipes, spray to use to clean hands if hand-washing not easily available. I am told by doctors that soap and water is most effective so this is a supplement not the main method.
- Small calculator to help you convert prices
- Unlocked mobile phone - but note it's quite hard to get a sim card in India (see below)
- Photocopies of passport photo page & visa page. You will need to do this in addition after arrival as your arrival stamp is needed alongside your visa. Very cheap to do in Pune - look for yellow Xerox signs all over (one in Model Colony nearly opposite Maharashtra Stores).
- Travel iron (otherwise you might have periods of no clothes whilst waiting for ironing to be returned)
- Travel hairdryer (useful during colder season)
- Handkerchiefs (or buy in Tulsi Bagh)
- Eye drops for dry eyes - the pollution can be very irritating. Sunglasses can help too.
- A good quality pollution mask - try cycling shops or icanbreathe.com. Remember it is the quality of the filter rather than the outer mask which is most important.
- Several decent bras can be useful for those who need them - the roads are really bumpy!
- Homeopathic and allopathic remedies for common conditions
- Antiseptic wipes & plasters/dressings
- Rehydration sachets
- Eye drops for dry eyes

Currency

Indian currency is the Rupee (₹). You cannot exchange for Rupees until inside India, nor can you take Rupees out of India. There is a constant struggle to have sufficient small change, however as the cost of living is rapidly rising this is becoming less apparent. Nevertheless try to keep a stock of small notes/coins (eg tens) as they are very useful for rickshaw rides etc. Do not accept torn or stained notes as you might have trouble finding someone who will accept them.

I find US dollars, Sterling & Euros equally accepted in Pune. Most convenient is to change money at RIMYI – Kanji Forex come in 11am-11.45 am weekdays. You can also use banks, eg Bank of India (Deccan). However, I haven't changed money for years in the bank as it was such a tedious overly-bureaucratic process.

Getting There

Flights to Mumbai

- Although many airlines fly to India they often involve stop-overs which makes the journey more exhausting. We have found it makes life a lot easier to get a direct flight to Mumbai (Chhatrapati Shivaji International). For those flying from UK - currently Jet Airways, British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, Air India fly direct from Heathrow.
- Lufthansa fly direct to Pune from Germany.
- Some flights arrive very early morning. You may wish to schedule in a rest in Mumbai. We prefer to go direct to Pune so all the travelling is done in one go. I advise trying to arrive during the day rather than the middle of the night especially after a breakdown at night with a small child and no spare tyre, there is a risk from thieves

In Mumbai

- Iyengar Yoga practitioners are welcome to visit the Mumbai Institute (address Iyengar Yogashraya, 126 Senapatti Bapat Marg. Lower Parel, Mumbai 400 013, phone 2494 8416).
- Hotels in Mumbai are expensive.
- Tea at the Taj Mahal hotel adjacent to Gate of India can be fun though expensive.
- Good shopping and art galleries are available in Mumbai.

Mumbai to Pune

There are several options:

- **Pre-paid Taxi from the airport.** Go to the pre-paid booth inside the airport. They will give you two slips of paper - one for the driver, the other for you to keep. Road tolls are included in the price. You will then have to go outside to the taxi rank. Make sure you get in the prepaid official taxi, you may get hustled to get in another.
- **Bus** (approx. 3 to 4 hours). Catch buses at Dadar which is about 30 - 40 mins drive from the airport and about 10 mins from the Mumbai Institute. There are ordinary buses (cheap) every 15 mins and an A/C bus (a bit more expensive) on the hour. These generally leave on time and tickets can be booked once you reach the bus station. However, it may be difficult on festive occasions.
- **Taxi.** Taxis are also available at Dadar opposite the bus station (journey time approx. 3 hours). More expensive & more comfortable than bus. You also have the option of sharing it with 4 other people.
- **Train.** Train station is CST (aka VT) or Dadar. Tickets are best booked in advance, your travel agent may be able to help. 2nd class AC is a reasonable standard. Unreserved is tough especially after a long flight.
- **Plane:** There are flights from Mumbai to Pune operated by Indian Airlines and Jet Airways. You will need to go to the domestic airport via free coach transfer. Apart from the expense, you may have to wait a long time for the connecting flight, so I am not convinced this is beneficial.
- **Private car & driver.** Your hotel or apartment owners may be able to put you in touch with a private hire company or even arrange it for you. If there are several of you travelling together this can work out to be reasonably inexpensive. Book in advance. I have found Roots and Wings very reliable and others unreliable. Specify you wish to have functioning seat belts if several of you so some will be traveling in the back (don't be surprised if you don't get them even if you are assured you will)
- **Coach** from the international airport directly to Pune.

RIMYI Location



RIMYI is in the area of Pune called **Model Colony**. It is on Hare Krishna Mandir Road. It is helpful to say to the rickshaw drivers that it is in Model Colony near Pune Central on University Road. The Toyota DSK garage at the circle (roundabout) at the far end of HKM Road is also a useful landmark.

Be careful they don't take you to the large Hare Krishna temple which is in Camp ie nowhere near HKM Road!

Model Colony "circle" & Toyota garage

Where to Stay in Pune

Ask someone who has already been to recommend a place. These days with the internet it is easy in principle to reserve accommodation from UK. This will make life easier when you get there. However at peak times it can be hard to find accommodation (eg December, January, February). In that case, even with a reservation, you can find hotels mess you around and don't have a room for you when you get there.

I recommend staying as close as possible to RIMYI to save time, energy and pollution exposure getting to and from the institute. However the RIMYI neighbourhood is expensive

Hotels - There are a few reasonably close to RIMYI. This is an easier option for your first visit. You should get a discount for longer stays. NB Indian hotel rates are given for the room not per person. See IY(UK) website or bksiyengar.com for a list of hotels many of which offer a concessionary rate for Iyengar Yoga students.

Apartments - Alternatively you can rent an apartment or a room in an apartment, which will enable you to do your own cooking or the services of a cook may be available. Eating restaurant food *all* the time is not great for the digestion nor the wallet. There are several apartment blocks (aka "Societies") close to the Institute. Ask someone who has been before or ask at RIMYI when you get there. Expect to pay more nearer to RIMYI even though the standard of apartment, furniture and cleanliness does not always match the expense. I'm sorry to say some landlords are becoming rapacious and standards of accommodation, cleanliness, facilities etc are often poor. Try to get somewhere with recommendations from others who have stayed there.

Homestay – renting a room in someone's home. Things tend to run more smoothly when the owner lives in- eg you can be more sure the water filter cartridges are up to date, the cleaning will get done, the cook turns up etc.

Things to consider when choosing an apartment/homestay:

- How near is it to RIMYI? Do you want to walk a long way eg in the dark on your own or spend a long time each day travelling.
- What's the neighbourhood like?
- Will the owner organise a cleaner? How often? Despite the high rents don't be surprised to have to buy your own house cleaning products for the cleaner
- Will the owner organise a cook?
- Is there wifi?
- Are there some yoga props you can use?
- Is there a washing machine or can the owner organise someone to do washing? (an acquaintance once came home to find the cleaner washing his clothes with the water which had just been used to wash the floor!)
- Is there an iron you can use or can the owner organise someone to come and take the ironing?
- Do you need to pay the staff (cook, cleaner) directly or is this included in the price (it's usual to tip at the end for the services you have received - eg if on a homestay even if the owner is paying the staff your being there is still significantly more work for them). You pay the cleaner more if she also does your washing. Tip the watchman
- Is there somewhere to lock your valuables? (usually a metal wardrobe with a safe inside)
- Is the owner easily contactable and nearby in case of a problem or emergency on the other hand you don't want an intrusive landlord who just lets themselves in unexpectedly which I have heard of happening.

Note: Sometimes having a cook come in can be more trouble than it's worth - if they are not reliable you can end up with no lunch or else a very late lunch. You can get tiffins where a local housewife will cook you a balanced meal inexpensively if you provide a tiffin tin (hardware store in Model Colony)

At RIMYI

Registration

Call in at the Institute as soon as possible after arriving in Pune to register with Mr. Pandurang Rao (known as Mr Pandu), the Secretary, or his assistant Mandar, and find out which classes you will be attending. You need to take with you:

- the balance of fees owing in US dollars or Rupees
- two passport-sized photos
- a photocopy of your passport photo page & visa page with arrival stamp.
- a letter from your landlord/hotelier confirming your address in Pune.

Kunal is the techie guy who also works in the office.

The office is in the foyer and is open Mon, Tues, Weds, Thurs 9-11 am & Mon, Wed, Fri, Sat 4-6 pm.

Institute opening hours.

Please respect the opening hours of RIMYI. You should leave the premises by noon at the latest and leave promptly after evening class. The Institute is closed on Sundays (except for the children's class at 8am).

Classes

- **Only attend the classes you have been allocated.** Apart from being irreverent and discourteous, it causes a headache if you attend other classes as there simply won't be space for everyone and the level will be wrong for you. You will likely be allocated one class a day for six days per week
- **Observation** - you can ask to observe other classes for an additional charge. Sit at the back (or wherever you are told to), do not get in the way, do not use props, do not chatter, do not film or record classes.
- **Medical Class** - if you are qualified you may observe and assist in the medical classes for an additional charge.
- **Monthly meets.** The Institute holds monthly meets on spiritual and psychological aspects of yoga and scriptures. Attendance is expected.

Practice at RIMYI

There are daily (except Sundays) own-practice sessions for those taking classes at RIMYI. 9am - noon Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays & Fridays; 4.00pm – 5.45pm Wednesdays & Saturdays. It is a good idea to use this time to



practise what has been taught in the previous class to help consolidate the learning, or if applicable, do some recuperative poses if you are tired from travelling or sick but well enough to practise as well as working on particular things you need. It is not an opportunity to show-off. In fact of course we should never be showing off!

Leave the institute promptly by the time the practice session finishes having put away your props and do not linger. Do not just start thinking about finishing your practice/putting away your equipment at the end time - that is too late.

Practice session at RIMYI

RIMYI shops

Datta runs the shop in a room just off the foyer. Open 9am - 11.45 am Monday - Saturday. It sells yoga equipment, Iyengar Yoga books, CDs/MP3s/DVDs of classes. You can buy MP3s of the classes which have been recorded (not all). Also ask to see the back catalogue of classes. Don't leave ordering until the last minute - allow a few days for delivery.

Pervez & Zarine run the afternoon shop 4.00 - 5.45pm Monday - Saturday. It sells MP3s of Prashantji's classes and talks and Prashantji's books. Also YOG products such as postcards, photos etc. Zarine also deals with photo orders - there is a large album in the foyer with many photos of Guruji from Light on Yoga for order (8" x 10" B/W only).

Sindhu sells yoga bloomers and doughnuts (yoga prop not the cakes!) after the women's classes.

Special Times – celebrations at RIMYI

19th January Annual Day. Anniversary of RIMYI inauguration.
March/April Hanuman Jayanti.
July Guru Purina
20 August Gururji's death anniversary
October/November Patanjali Jayanti
14th December Gururji's birth anniversary

Closures

RIMYI is closed for May and to non-Indians during March & April. Also it is closed for the Indian holidays of:

Independence Day – 15 th August	Diwali - October/November (4 days)
Ganesh Chaturthi - August/September	Republic Day – January 26 th
Vijaya Dashami – October	Gudi Padava - March
Dussehra – October/November (1 day)	

Library

RIMYI has a very extensive library on yoga and yoga-related subjects. This is open for students to use during the afternoons (3 pm to 5.30pm) except Sundays. The Librarian's names are Uma and Kumar.

Greetings

It is polite to greet Geetaji and Prashantji when you first see them in the day. You can put your hands in the prayer position and say Namaskar (more polite than the familiar namaste). More reverential is to raise your hands in the prayer position to your forehead before placing them at your chest. More reverential still is to bend down or kneel and touch their feet with both hands, placing your forehead on the ground, then raise your hands in the prayer position to your forehead then chest whilst saying Namaskar. No one is going to insist on this, but if your heart says do it then do. You should have bare feet whilst doing this pranam. Also both parties should be in the same space, ie not one inside a room and one without.

There are a number of *murtis* of Patanjali and others around the institute. You can if you wish as a mark of respect touch them with both hands then raise your hands in the prayer position to your forehead and chest. You should have bare feet to do this.

General Dos and Don'ts at RIMYI

It's to be hoped your Iyengar Yoga teacher will have guided you how to behave but just in case here are a few hints!

- First and foremost remember how fortunate you are; out of the millions of Iyengar Yoga practitioners worldwide only a very few get the chance to study at RIMYI our Guruji's Institute. It is not appropriate to have a demanding or complaining attitude. Remember this is not primarily a financial transaction; rather, you are here to study at our Mother Institute. Be appreciative, polite, attentive, willing to stand correction, ready to learn and study.
- The classes and practice sessions can be very crowded. Be aware of others. Don't disturb others, it's not a market place where you meet for a matter. Do not step over people's faces as dust will drop off in their eyes (apart from it simply being unpleasant). Do not drop down blankets or mats heavily causing dust to fly around.
- Personal items should not be placed on the plinths of a *murti* (idol) as that is very disrespectful (it is something like putting your mobile phone down on the altar in a church!). Neither should the plinth of the Patanjali *murti* in the practice room be used as a wall for practising asanas. Nor should feet ever touch the plinth.

Punctuality & regularity

- Turn up on time, be ready sitting quietly at least 10 minutes before start of class. Classes always start on time
- Classes tend to be very full and space limited so you need to be considerate of others.
- Show respect by paying attention and doing your best to follow instructions promptly.
- Be regular in attendance. You are expected to attend all the classes you have been allocated (and not others) and to attend for the whole month.

Cleanliness

- Bathe before going to the Institute - it's like going to the temple. As a minimum wash your feet and hands before class. Then re-apply your mosquito repellent
- Don't wear scent to class. Try to avoid smelling of garlic and onions
- If you go to the loo in the institute you should wash your feet in the adjacent foot wash area and of course wash your hands, before going back into class.
- Keep fingernails short, otherwise they get in the way, especially for such practices as digital Pranayama.
- Take a handkerchief especially to pranayama classes. Paper tissues are discouraged. Do not leave hankies lying around on the floor, keep them tucked into your shorts. Use a hankie when sneezing rather than your hand or spraying your neighbours!

Dress

- Footwear (including socks) must be removed and left in the area provided at the entrance. It is NOT acceptable to bring footwear into the building, even inside a bag.
- It is very impolite to point the soles of your feet at others. Obviously in a class situation this is sometimes unavoidable but in other situations it should be followed.
- Clothing should be modest, especially for women. It is best to wear shorts and a T-shirt for class. The T-shirt should be tucked in. Bare midriffs are not acceptable for women in class, despite what you may have been told or think on the basis of Indian women wearing short blouses under saris - this is different not least because there is a sari on top. Women should not generally have bare upper arms/exposed armpits. T-shirts should not be transparent. It is more comfortable and modest if they are a little loose. Yoga bloomers (cotton shorts with elasticated bottoms for modesty) can be bought very cheaply.
- Clothing should be clean and tidy. Torn clothing is disrespectful, it will not be seen as a fashion statement.
- Don't wear a lot of jewellery. It gets in the way and if you take it off is a risk and a nuisance.
- Hair should be tied up neatly during classes so that it does not fall over the face.

Changing/Personal Storage

- Don't bring liquids into the Institute as there is a leakage risk. Filtered water is available by the entrance door. By the way when you take a drink in India there is often only one drinking container, this is because you are supposed to drink by pouring into your mouth without touching the container with your mouth. That way the same container can be used hygienically by many people. It might be helpful to practise this tricky skill in advance.
- There are separate male and female changing rooms. They are small so be quick and then vacate to give space to others. Do not undress in the yoga hall or any other public area.
- here is a small amount of storage space in overhead racks at the back of the hall. Bring the minimum amount of stuff. Do not leave bag straps hanging down
- Switch off your mobile (including vibrate)
- Don't bring unnecessary valuables to class (money, phones, lap tops, passport).

Equipment

- During class take a mat (and other equipment) from the top of the pile, do not fish around for one you feel is better.
- Equipment is kept at the back and in a storeroom adjacent to the practice room. If it's necessary during a class for all to get equipment from the store the most efficient way is to form a line and pass the equipment along, rather than each one trying to get in the room and just attending to their own needs. Ditto when putting away.
- After class help put all the equipment neatly away before leaving.
- Belts are stored on the hooks, don't undo the loops, store them with the loop in its largest size
- Don't put wooden props on sticky mats (use a mat piece) Do not put wooden props on the sticky mats.
- Do not put soles of the feet on the blankets
- If using a viparita dandasana bench put a folded mat or blanket on the crest, don't unfold a mat and place along the entire length.
- Wall ropes - note the hooks are in narrow pairs with wider spaces between the pairs. When tying for rope sirsasana use the narrow pairs do not tie ropes between two wide hooks. For Rope 1 etc during class use a pair of ropes on a single bolt so more people get a place.
- Ceiling ropes – some hang low so don't use these if you have a long spine. You might need to stand on something to get into the high ones (especially women owing to our hip shape its harder to adjust once in)
- Do not unfold blankets more than one unfold from how they come out of the store as then they never fold up neatly again.
- It can be useful to have a mat in your room for home practice which you can donate to the Institute at the end of your visit. You can buy a mat very cheaply in Deccan. I also prefer to have my own eye bandage to use

Menstruation or Illness

- When menstruating you should attend class and get out a thick mat and put it at the back with the other menstruating women (not necessary in Prashantji's classes). You may be given a separate programme to do with the others. In Prashantji's classes you will join in the main class (except where specified).
- If you are ill and cannot follow the main class then take a place next to the menstruating women and alert the teacher/assistants at the beginning (not necessary in Prashantji's classes). Don't attend class if you have something contagious.

Getting Around Pune

Walking

Ok for short distances but bear in mind pollution is very high, pavements are very uneven and pot-holed or non-existent. It's like doing an assault course sometimes, with piles of dirt and rubble, dog dirt, pot-holes, missing pavement... Many local women wrap a scarf around their hair to help reduce the damaging effects of pollution.

Auto-rickshaw

Can be hailed on the road (shout "ricksha" or stick your arm out) or there are informal rickshaw ranks. Obviously if you see the driver asleep/eating lunch he is on a break and will not want to be disturbed.

These days the meters are electronic and show the actual price. Minimum fare is ₹18. It's to be expected and reasonable to pay more at night or if you have a lot of luggage.

It is very helpful when saying where you want to go to have a landmark rather than just the address, eg 'opposite Jehangir Clinic', "next to Central, Model Colony".

Sometimes you will get the response "no" or "nahin". This could be because they are on a break, can't understand what you are saying, they don't know the way or they simply don't want to go that place - it can be a problem for them to get stuck at other side of town for example.

Taxi A bit more expensive than auto but much more comfortable, often with AC and much better suspension.

Crossing the road.

I still find this hard after many visits to Pune! The roads are extremely busy and seem chaotic. Actually there is order and drivers tend to be very aware and don't usually drive at you (although occasionally boy racers have a go!), it's simply that everyone is trying to get where they need to go and there are a lot of road users. The best thing is to step out confidently and hope for the best once you have detected a negotiable gap in the traffic. You will cause confusion by hesitating too much whilst in mid-crossing! The zebra crossings and pelican crossings seem to be purely ornamental - I've never known traffic stop for you there. Traffic generally moves on the left. But be alert for cycles and other two-wheelers, they can appear from nowhere!! It is helpful to cross at junctions where the traffic might sometimes stop and also where there are central reservations. FC Road is now a six lane one-way with no central refuge and is a nightmare to cross. I try to avoid it!

Be aware that you are more likely to suffer a road traffic accident than almost any other sort of health problem when traveling abroad.

Main Areas of Pune

MG Road (Mahatma Gandhi Road)/Main Street – In the **Camp** area. Clothes and gifts (expensive). Lots of beggars.

FC Road – Fergusson College Road. Student area close to RIMYI. Lots of restaurants, cafes, ice cream, clothes shops, mobile phone shops, stationers etc

JM Road – Jangli Maharaj - restaurants

Deccan – stationery, sweets

Laxmi Road – clothes, jewellery

Tulsi Bagh – household goods market

Model Colony – fruit & veg market, dry cleaners, grocers, cafes, cobbler



Cobbler at the end of HKM Road

Communicating

In Pune most people speak some English and some speak it very well. It can take a little while to tune into the local accent and for them to tune into yours. Actually if you note the way English is used locally (phraseology, intonation) and try to copy, it will help you to be understood (even though it feels rather exaggerated). The first time I went with my husband I could not understand why he was using what sounded like a cheeky Peter Sellars "Indian" accent until I realised it was simply to make himself better understood (and it works)!

Bear in mind only the most well-educated speak fluent English, so anything beyond the most basic interpersonal level or any problem/anything out of the ordinary can prove very challenging communication-wise. I find Indians grossly underestimate the problems you can face if you do not speak the local language.

Speak slowly and enunciate clearly, don't mumble. Avoid idioms.

Don't be impatient, argumentative or demanding. This is counterproductive in Indian culture. A smile and a pleasant attitude go a long way, but I don't mean be passive; you will often need to be assertive. It is friendly and useful to learn a little Hindi. I have been unable to pick up any Marathi except "Ho" (yes)! If anyone would like to help me out I would appreciate it.

Public physical displays of affection such as hugging and kissing are not normally made in India. It is commonplace for men to walk holding hands or one with arm round the other and for women to do likewise but not between the sexes. Avoid holding hands with members of the opposite sex in public.

Indians love acronyms, which can be confusing and can make newspapers impenetrable.

A fairly random list of useful vocabulary follow:

English	Hindi
Hello	Namaste
Goodbye	Khadafis
Yes	Haan
No	Nahin
Please	Ji
Thank you	Dhanyavad
Water	Pani
Enough/stop (eg to rickshaw driver)	Bas
Quick	Jaldi
Chelo	Let's go, start
Kitna?	How much?
Ooper	Up, upstairs
neetchay	Down, downstairs
Who	Kaun

What	Kia
Where	Kahan
When	Kab
Why	Kyon
(cash) money	Paisa
cold	thanda
Warm	Garam, garmi
Plain (eg dosa) or room temperature (water)	Sada

Table 2 English-English & Indian-English	
English – English	Indian-English
Roundabout	Circle
Behind, back (of somewhere)	Backside
Train compartment	Bogey
Yoghurt	Curd
Rupees	bucks

Communicating with Home

- Laptop - if your accommodation does not have wifi you can purchase a dongle from FC road which will give you temporary internet access eg 21 or 28 days. failing this there are many cheap internet cafes.
- You can buy an Indian SIM card for your mobile very cheaply. However this is quite a rigmarole involving passport photos, utility bills from home (something you might not have thought to bring!), letter from landlord etc. If you don't use it for 6 months it will be invalidated. Try Airtel on FC Road. You will need to provide the telephone company with a recent colour passport photograph (photocopies won't do), copy of your passport & Indian visa & arrival stamp, a letter from your Landlord confirming your local address, proof of your home address (eg driving licence, a bill won't do) though sometimes I have been asked for a utility bill (not something you might think of travelling with!) With all this I found it relatively quick and simple (about half an hour). However I have heard some horror stories of several trips to the shop and even then no success in the end. WhatsApp is useful.
- Write! The post in both directions is pretty quick these days (usually around 6 days)
- Bear in mind there are often power cuts so save frequently!

Health

Avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. Although the locality is sprayed with DEET there is some risk of malaria and more risk of dengue fever (no prophylactic for the latter and quite a few people have caught this recently). Keep arms & legs covered especially in evening. Use insect repellent (I find the local one - Odomos effective) and apply it before morning class and late afternoon. remember to reapply after hand/feet-washing. Use plug-in liquid insect repellent in your room (available locally), especially at night.

If you need a doctor or dentist ask your landlord or at the Institute.

I note health and life insurance companies ask if you have had any invasive procedures abroad, so bear in mind your premiums might be affected before rushing into operations and procedures in India. Plus if something goes wrong or needs adjusting it is harder to sort out once you have returned home. Having said that some hospitals are excellent and MRI scans are very cheap.

You can get prescription spectacles expertly made up at a fraction of the cost in UK.

If you do succumb to a stomach bug (most do at some point especially on a first trip) make sure you take in plenty of fluids (rehydration solution is best) and if you can attend classes and tell the teacher, and they will give you a programme to help the problem. You can buy oral rehydration salts from the local shops/chemists, mix it with the exact amount of clean water specified and drink. Also try to stick to plainer food until the problem works its way through, eg curd (yoghurt) and rice, bananas. In fact I am told eating a banana a day is a good preventative for stomach bugs. It seems to work for us! Some people swear by probiotic supplements (I tend to use only after a bug) and also grape-seed extract. Personally I don't actually find these necessary but some people swear by them. Turmeric and coriander leaf are said to be helpful and obviously you get these in much of the food.

There is a lot of rabies in India and a lot of street dogs which can be vicious. If you are bitten seek treatment.

What to Wear

General

Although it may be fashionable at times to wear scruffy, torn clothing in the West, it is unlikely to be seen as a fashion statement in India. The more likely response is to wonder why someone who obviously has the money to travel to India wishes to dress like a beggar. It could be interpreted as having a lack of self-respect and is not going to help you get along there. It is definitely to be avoided in RIMYI and since you are representing yoga wherever you go (as people are likely ask you why you are in Pune) it is best to avoid this look completely.

You will often sit on the floor so wear clothes which easily allow this. Cotton/natural materials are the most comfortable in the climate.

If you can afford it, it is good to buy, or have made, an Indian outfit for special occasions which you can wear if you are invited to a special event at the institute or elsewhere. It shows respect to wear local dress on such occasions. For women this can be a sari or a shalwar kameez (loose trousers and tunic/dress). For men pyjamas (loose fitting trousers) and kurta (shirt-often calf length).

Try clothes on if possible - sizing is very different and variable in India. I find you usually have to go at least one size larger, eg if you normally wear medium try large or even XL etc. Shopkeepers may hike the prices on seeing a Westerner so don't hesitate to bargain except in fixed price shops!

Having items made to measure can be great but can also invite a lot of running around - eg several trips to the tailor as the stuff isn't ready when promised, or not what you asked for. It's often better to take something to copy as the tailors tend to be better at this than at designing, especially if it's a western-style item, even then they may not accurately copy it.

Washing clothes - often cotton clothes will shrink at first wash and dyes may not be fixed. If you have clothes dry cleaned for the first clean this will help fix the size and colour. Dry cleaning is much cheaper in India than UK. There is a dry cleaners in Model Colony, although it can be slow, things are not ready when promised or things go astray, so don't leave it to the last minute..

Women

The most practical clothing in Pune is shalwar kameez or trousers and a tunic top. There are many variations on this theme – short or medium length top, sleeves, no sleeves, tighter trousers gathered at the bottom (churridar). See 'Shopping' for where to buy. The locals also wear saris but these are much harder to carry off (and put on!) It is now more acceptable in Pune to wear t-shirts/shirts/blouses and jeans on the streets but not shorts. A dupatta (long scarf) over the front of the t-shirt is a good idea to help avoid unwanted attention to your breasts and can double as a pollution mask. Mid-calf length or long dresses/skirts are all right, shorter skirts are not. Keep long hair tied up, rather than loose.

Don't assume the way you dress will be 'read' in the same way in India as it is at home; this is not the time or place to make a political point about dress. If you want to avoid hassle dress modestly. Generally it's a good idea to avoid bare arms, tight or low cut clothing especially if you are travelling alone. Western clothes are more commonly worn in Mumbai. Wear a supportive bra - roads can be very bumpy!

Men

For walking around town, trousers are the thing not shorts. It's okay to walk through the streets in shorts when you are coming for class especially in the mornings and if you are not staying too far away. It is good to wear some Indian clothes at least some of the time and this will be appreciated

Food

There are many places to eat in Pune. It is very easy to get vegetarian food. The term 'pure vegetarian' means no eggs, but it does include dairy. Jain food is that which has no garlic, onions, mushrooms and other non-sattvic ingredients. If eating in a mixed veg/non-veg restaurant or when buying food in the supermarket, often veg. food is indicated by a green spot in a green square outline and non-veg by a red spot. Or a vegetable samosa for example will have a green food colouring mark on the pastry to indicate it is vegetarian.

In Indian eateries it is usual to eat with your hands or a spoon. Of course you should wash hands first! Most restaurants have a basin specifically for hand washing before and after meals. I am told by doctors that it is best to wash hands with soap and water, though you can use an antibacterial hand wash/wipe in addition or if this is not available. I tend to avoid using restaurant towels and let my hands air dry. It's polite to eat with your right hand. If you are not yet used to it, with a little practice it is not difficult to learn to scoop up food with chappatis, rotis or other breads or with rice - scoop up in you fingers and push off your fingers into your mouth with thumb. With rice the dal etc is worked into the rice with the fingers first. It's impolite to lick your fingers. You may not get forks that easily at smaller restaurants; a spoon is probably more hygienic anyway. If a dish has too much chilli for you, eat some yogurt or something sweet to take away the burning!

Most restaurants have huge menus catering to most tastes, which makes one sceptical about how well they can really cook all those dishes! As well as Indian food, Chinese dishes also often appear on menus. There are also Italian restaurants and pizza places.

- Punjabi dishes are similar to the Indian food generally available in UK Indian restaurants. Usually served with bread (naan, roti (wholewheat chappati), bhakri (Marathi bread)). These can be buttered or plain.
- Thalīs are good value (several small dishes of vegetable, dal, dahi (yoghurt), bread or rice), often 'unlimited' so your plate is topped up until you have had sufficient. Asha Dining Hall on Apte Road is very popular as it gives a wholesome meal of chapatti, rice, dal, 2 vegetables, yogurt and salads – all unlimited – for Rs140. Also Panchawati (Gujerati), Shabri FC Road (Maharastrian), Hotel Sreyas, South Indies (next to Pune Central) do good, but more expensive, thalis.
- Also try the more local South Indian specialities such as dosas, uttapa, idli, payasam (Try Vaishali, Roopali, South Indies). Dosas are large crispy pancakes often stuffed with vegetable. Idli are steamed rice cakes. Both are always served with sambar/rasam (spicy runny vegetable) and coconut chatni. Note the chatni is cold and made with water so unless you are sure clean water was used avoid. Payasam is a delicious South Indian sweet dish.

It's advisable to always eat hot food. In restaurants avoid salad or food which could have been washed in tap water unless you can be certain they have been washed in filtered water. Avoid food which has been left to stand (eg Western style dishes such as lasagne can be prone to this) or made from yesterday's leftovers (often 'mix vegetable'). You will notice certain foods are eaten at certain times of day (eg Pav Bhaji is an early evening food, idli is a morning food), stick to these times so the food is more likely to be fresh.

A great way to eat is to get a tiffin. Quite a few local women cook you fresh food daily (usually a dal, rotis, rice and one or two vegetable dishes). It's inexpensive and fresh. You can get a tin in hardware shop in Model Colony (1st block on L walking away from roundabout).

If you have too much food from your cook or tiffin, don't waste it, share it with your cleaner or watchman.



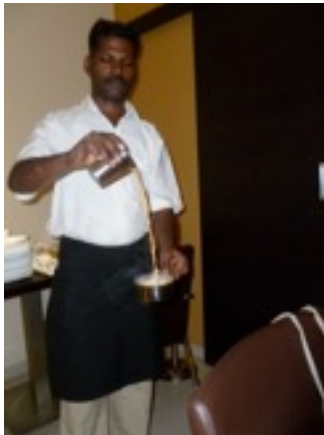
Drinks

Drink only bottled or filtered water (if staying in an apartment check the filters are up to date)

Indians do not usually put their lips to a drink bottle or to the steel cups with projecting rim, but pour it from some distance. This has the advantage that one can hygienically share a bottle or a cup

Buy fresh milk in the morning and boil it before use. UHT milk is more widely available for obvious reasons.

Coconut water is very sattvic and great to have after class or practice. There is usually a street vendor outside RIMYI at dispersal times (Nasim in the day and Deepak in the evenings). If you just want the water say "pani" (water); if you would like the flesh as well say "malai" (cream)- when you have drunk the water hand back to the vendor who will cut it open and make you're a little scoop from the skin with which you can eat the flesh.



Making coffee South Indian-style!

Table 1. Food vocabulary	
Achar	pickle
Adrak	ginger
Aam	mango
Aloo	potato
Anda	egg
Badam	almonds
Baingan, Brinjal	aubergine
Bhindi	okra
Chaaval	rice
Chai	tea
Channa	chickpeas
Chatni	local sauce/dip
Dahi	yoghurt
Daal	lentils

Doodh	milk
Ghee	clarified butter
Gobi	cabbage
Jaggary	unrefined sugar
Kaju	cashew
Khajuur	dates
Kela	banana
Kerella	bitter gourd
Idli	S. Indian rice dumpling served with chutney
Lehsun, lasoon	garlic
Mutter	peas
Masur dal	red lentils
Mausammi	sweet lime
Mirch	chillies
Mooli	white radish
Mungphali	peanuts
Naan	white tandoori bread
Nariyal	coconut
Nimbu	lemon
Palak	spinach
Paneer	cottage cheese
Pani	water
Paratha	fried roti (sometimes stuffed)
Phulgobi	cauliflower
Piaz	onion
Puri	deep fried bread
Rajma	kidney beans
Roti	wholemeal chappati
Sabzi	vegetable
Seb	apple
Shareefa	custard Apple
Urad daal	black gram

Visiting someone's home

Indians are very hospitable and you may well be asked to visit someone's home. It is not essential but if you wish you can take a small gift. If you are not aware of the tastes/interests of your guest then it is best to take some sweets. Most people appreciate western chocolates! (however they don't keep well in the heat so only take if you are able to give them soon after arrival)

In India feet are considered very dirty. Footwear is not usually worn indoors, so remove your shoes at the door. Also don't point the soles of your feet at anyone. If you accidentally touch anyone with your foot do make sure you apologise immediately.

You will always be offered some refreshments. It is of course polite to accept. You may be watched as you eat without the hosts eating (especially the woman who has cooked the food), this can seem a little odd to a Westerner but see it as a gesture of politeness and hospitality from the host - they want to make sure you are replete before they have any. You may eat sitting on the floor, traditionally off a banana leaf. If you are invited to a party the food is usually served at the end and the guests are expected to disperse shortly after eating.

Places to Visit

If you visit a temple be especially careful to dress respectfully and modestly. Shoes are removed at the entrance. There may be certain areas that non-Hindus may not enter. Take some money to give as an offering (they usually have collection boxes near each shrine)

- Sri Venkateshwar temples - one more local (still a drive) very small and beautiful; one further away and much grander and also worth visiting
- Rajkelkar museum is excellent. Bajirao Road, near Abhinav Kala Mandir (2-3 km from Deccan). Tel : 244 74466
- Parvati Temple – involves a long walk up many steps so set out in the early morning and do not go alone
- Aga Khan's Palace - has an interesting exhibition about Mahatma Gandhi who was imprisoned there. Open 9am - 12.30pm & 1.30 - 6pm. Nagar Rd, beyond Fitzgerald Bridge. t:91 202 6880250. e:Gandhi_memorial@vsnl.net
- Tribal Museum – 28 Queens Garaden near railway station. Open 10am-5pm daily
- Fort
- Cave temple in Jangli Maharaj
- Katraj Snake Park, Katraj lake on Pune Satara Highway near Bharatiya Vidypeeth University Open 10.30 am – 6pm. Closed Wednesdays Tel: 020 2437 0747
- Zoo - very big and quite exhausting and rather sad.
- Mumbai – Street Art festival in February. Colabar area.
- Ask the locals for other ideas and about visiting sights further afield (eg lakes)



Sunday Morning on FC Road

Shopping

This publication is intended as a guide on how to behave rather than a shopping guide, not least because I am assuming your main purpose of going is yoga! So I have deliberately tried to avoid giving plugs for particular businesses. If you ask 10 people which is the best place to get 'X' in Pune then you will likely get 10 different answers! I am very happy to advise if you wish to contact me directly or ask someone else who has gone.

In India always remember *caveat emptor - buyer beware*. Consumer protection law is not like home, in fact I do not know if it exists in India. If you buy shoddy goods then that is your hard luck, so learn to check before you purchase, don't assume zips work, stitching is good, items are undamaged, clean etc. If you change your mind about a purchase then you might get a credit note at a mall but you are very unlikely to get a refund.

- Yoga stuff - at RIMYI
- Clothes – Try Laxmi Road for better value than malls. Gandhi khadi shops sell hand-weave fabric and clothes. Indian leather flip flops (chappel) can be found all over. You can buy good ones from Gandhi Khadi in Mumbai which are made only from cows which have died naturally not been slaughtered.
- Incense - a good portable purchase, makes a nice gift.
- Books – Many bookshops- Senapati Bapat Road, FC Road, Deccan, Laxmi Rd (ABC Chowk). I particularly like Motilal Barnarsidass in Sanas Plaza Baji Rao Road which specialises in Indian philosophy and esoterics.
- Toiletries - all easily available. Try some ayurvedic stuff - we like neem toothpaste!
- Spectacles – Indian opticians will make up your prescription much more cheaply than in the UK.
- Gold & silver jewellery - though prices are now very high.
- Gems – good if you know what you're doing
- Homeware, eg steel plates etc, general household - Tulsi Bagh. Try to go late morning as evenings can be very busy.

Shops in more traditional areas (eg Laxmi Road, Tulsi Bagh, Phadke Haud) tend to close on Mondays. Others close on Sundays. Many shops close for lunch from anytime between 12 noon and four-ish.



Don't bother haggling over trivial amounts. But don't pay grossly over the odds for anything as this distorts the local economy. Don't haggle in shops with fixed prices.

If you buy too much to carry you can pay a packer to pack and post it home. Owing to heightened security procedures it's best not to attempt this yourself as you will need to take the unsealed parcel to the post office for checking and then get it stitched up whilst on the premises. Parcels have to be covered in cloth. Alternatively some airlines have generous allowances and/or allow you to pay for an extra bag (in advance) at a reasonable rate.

Travelling with children

India offers a wonderful opportunity for children to broaden their awareness and experience. Indians are very friendly towards children. However young children are likely to have their face squeezed and pinched on a frequent basis, which they can find alarming and very tiresome. When our son was on his first trip he started walking around with his hands on his cheeks to avoid them being pinched!

There is not such a health and safety culture in India as in the West. This can be tricky for children who are used to living in a sanitised world where everything is made safe for them. For example, pavements can have many hazards – dog dirt, spit, bits of rubble strewn around, potholes, bits of pipework sticking up, sharp twigs sticking out at eye level, barbed wire. You need to watch your child carefully and encourage them to watch where they are going. Similarly take extra care crossing the road. Even children's playgrounds can have unexpected dangers – nails sticking out, corroded surfaces on play equipment, lots of hard surfaces.

In rickshaws put the children in the middle to offer them some protection, but bear in mind rickshaw riding is effectively riding a motorbike with no helmet; would you contemplate this at home? Cars seldom have functioning rear seat belts.

Discourage your child from putting their fingers in their mouth for obvious reasons. And be extra vigilant about hand washing before meals.

There is a cinema complex (E-Square) near to RIMYI. Also some hotels allow you to use their pools (eg Pride, Marriott, Meridien) for a charge. Crossword has a good children's section. Central has a children's toy section.

If you are staying in an apartment block then your child will probably be befriended by other children who live there, who will be available to play in the evenings, after school.

Your child might be able to enrol for the children's classes at RIMYI (Sunday mornings)

General Advice

- **Don't try to do too much.** It is tempting to run around all the time and get exhausted. Remember why you are here, ie to study yoga, and act accordingly. It's not a month long shopping trip or a chance to do other stuff, focus on your yoga, it's a very privileged position to be in.
- **Women** try to avoid being out alone at night especially after 9pm
- **Don't carry cash, valuables, passport around with you.** Take only the money you need. Carry a photocopy of your passport and visa page rather than the passport itself. You will have to go to Mumbai and it will be a real hassle if you lose your passport.
- **Security** is much tighter these days owing to terrorism. You and your bags will often be screened on entering hotels, shopping malls etc. Be aware of bomb risks as you would at home.
- **Beggars** Generally Indians advise not to give money to beggars. We tend to give to someone in obvious need, eg people with leprosy or who are doing something for the money. If you intend to do so carry loose change and have it easily accessible. Alternatively if you are near a food place you could give some nice food. It is probably best to give to a charity which helps street people.
- **Tipping.** You can tip in a restaurant if you feel you have received good service. Rs 30-40 is about right. It is also usual to tip the staff if you are staying in someone's home or have an apartment - this is an acknowledgement of extra work they have had to do owing to your being there. Take guidance from their employer on amount, to avoid any awkward situations arising. Staff to tip could include cleaner, clothes washer, watchman, cook, driver.

Thinking about your Environmental Impact

Travelling to Pune creates a big carbon footprint. Do your bit for the environment to make a nominal off-setting of the harm done by travelling there:

Take a refillable water bottle and use filtered rather than bottled water. Minimise other plastic use - plastic is often burned in Pune giving off carcinogenic fumes.

Minimise motor journeys

There are severe water shortages in Maharashtra. Use water sparingly, do not waste water. In some areas the water supply may be turned off on certain days- draw water and store in a bucket.

Vasundhara Pratiisthan project - this is a tree-planting project. Make a positive contribution to the Pune environment. Give some time and help water seedlings. If you can't do that make a donation.

This is a work in progress. If there is something I have missed out please get in touch so this can be updated.
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Thanks to Rajvi Mehta and Richard Agar Ward for their invaluable help in compiling this guide.