



HotellerieSuisse |

Switzerland.



# Swiss Hospitality for Indian Guests



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# Foreword

**“There is more to life than increasing its speed.”**

Mahatma Gandhi



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For you as a hotelier, hospitality for guests from both near and far goes without saying. When guests come from places which have a culture less well-known to you, then knowledge about their traditions and customs helps you to avoid misunderstandings and to

make the guests' stay as smooth and enjoyable as possible. This brochure, "Swiss Hospitality for Indian Guests", addresses these matters. Between 2013 and 2018, the number of overnight stays by Indian guests in Switzerland

increased by over 73 percent. The next two decades are also expected to see a continuous increase in the number of overnight stays by Indian guests. India is one of the fastest growing markets for foreign trips worldwide. Furthermore, about 65 percent of the population is under 35 years of age. This means that there is great potential for Swiss tourism from that country. The visa process has been optimised and foreign currencies are no longer subject to approval. Both the wealthy upper class and the increasingly privileged middle class which can afford a trip to Switzerland continue to grow steadily. Switzerland continues to be one of the most popular destinations for Indian tourists in Europe. Indians know Switzerland from the Bollywood films as being an idyllic, romantic place with amazing natural scenery. For that reason, Indians view their stay here as being a privilege. Correspondingly, they travel here with high expectations and would like to be treated by their hosts in a preferential way. In this brochure "Swiss Hospitality for Indian Guests" (1st edition 2007), newly revised by HotellerieSuisse and Switzerland Tourism, you learn how you can best give your Indian guests a very warm welcome. Next to interesting information about the culture and mentality of your guests, it contains many useful tips and practical everyday suggestions which you will find helpful in your day-to-day business as a host. We wish you good reading and exciting encounters with guests from both near and far.



Claude Meier  
Director of HotellerieSuisse



Martin Nydegger  
Director of Switzerland Tourism

1 Claude Meier  
2 Martin Nydegger



**Mention India's 5000 year-old history. It will make your Indian guests happy.**



# General information about India

## Historical summary

India has been conquered, populated and colonised several times during the course of its over 5000 year-old history. Its strategically favourable location, its abundant mineral resources and its early urban development attracted people from all over the earth. Indians are proud of the resulting cultural diversity within their country, of their history which reaches back thousands of years, as well as of their scientific achievements such as the invention of the digit zero or the calculation of pi. From the 15th century onward, India was colonised by the royal families of England, France, Holland and Portugal. The country was to serve as a pivotal point for European economic powers. In the middle of the 19th century, the Indian independence movement emerged. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, India achieved independence in 1947 by non-violent means.

## Key data

### Name and capital city

India is a republic and its capital city is called New Delhi.

### Population and area

India's 1.3 billion residents live on a surface area of 3287365 km<sup>2</sup> (of which some 80000 km<sup>2</sup> are contested by India and Pakistan). So the surface area of India is almost 80 times that of Switzerland (41290 km<sup>2</sup>).

### Cities

The biggest cities are Mumbai (formerly Bombay, with almost 18.5 million inhabitants), New Delhi over 16 million, Kolkata (Calcutta, with over 14 million), Chennai (Madras, with over 8.5 million) and Bangalore (almost 8.5 million).

### Languages

There are over 100 different languages spoken in India, belonging to four different language families. In addition to the two official languages of Hindi and English, the Indian Constitution recognises a further 21 languages.

## Economy

After its independence in 1947, India isolated itself from the rest of the world economically and to a certain degree, politically too. At the end of the 1980s, the country fell into a deep economic crisis. In the 1990s, India began to reform and open up its economy. Industrialisation has advanced a lot since then, and more and more people enjoy a modern lifestyle. With a population of 1.3 billion, a rapidly growing young middle class and a GDP of some 2.7 trillion USD, India now counts as being one of the largest markets in the world.

## Key economic data

|                             | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|-----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| GDP (in billion USD)        | 1828 | 1857 | 2039 | 2104 | 2290 | 2652 | 2719 |
| GDP/per inhabitant (in USD) | 1482 | 1486 | 1610 | 1640 | 1762 | 2014 | 2038 |
| Growth rate (as % of GDP)   | 5.5  | 6.4  | 7.4  | 8    | 8.2  | 7.2  | 7.1  |
| Inflation rate (in %)       | 10   | 9.4  | 5.8  | 4.9  | 4.5  | 3.6  | 3.4  |

Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database (April 2019)





### **Socio-economic characteristics**

A person from India who can afford a trip to Switzerland belongs to the top two percent of society there. A wealthy middle class has emerged in the cities, one which enjoys spending and travelling.

### **Politics**

India is the largest democracy in the world and is composed of 29 member states and seven union territories, which are administered from the capital city. The political landscape is varied, and election turnout is high. Parliament, which selects the government, consists of an upper and a lower house. The head of state is elected by a committee made up of members of the federal parliament.

### **Religion**

Religions are one of the most important features of this multi-ethnic country. Not only did Hinduism begin here, but Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism did too. Influences from Muslims, Parsis and Christians who moved into the country have likewise had an effect upon the culture of the country. Hindus are the largest population group and strongly dominate Indian culture.

# Characteristics of Indian culture

## Philosophy – four steps to enlightenment

Since ancient times, it has been believed in India that earthly life is divided into four stages, each with its own objectives and tasks.

In the first stage of life, a person sees himself as someone who is learning, who is emotionally, spiritually and physically inexperienced. He needs to learn from people who have more life experience, practice and discipline (for example from parents, teachers, priests). This young person learns from his older tutors that he cannot

make his own decisions.

So he learns to turn to persons who belong to the second, third or fourth stage of life.

The second stage of life is marriage. Matrimony stands at the very centre and all material and physical things that go with it:

one has children, nourishes them and prepares them for life. In this stage of life, one learns to take responsibility and to be a leader.

In the third stage of life, the person has fulfilled his duties in the material world. His children have grown up. Therefore he turns to the metaphysical – or spiritual aspects of life. Although he enjoys fewer material things, he savours them all the more.

In the fourth stage of life it becomes clear that his earthly existence is transitory, but that his soul is immortal. He gradually retires from the hectic pace of everyday life, lives more slowly, more calmly, and practices spiritual things more and more. In the company of younger people, he behaves as a wise person who is more experienced in life.

**“The world has enough for everyone’s needs but not for everyone’s wants.”**

Simple words of greeting make Indian guests feel really welcome.

Welcome

Good morning, good day, good evening

Until later

Thanks

Have a good trip!

Aapka swagat hai

Namaste

Phir milenge

Dhanyavad

Shub yatra

### **Hierarchical social order**

Vedic texts which stem from antiquity leave their mark to this day upon the Indian system of values and social order. These texts form the basis of the Hindu doctrine of faith and describe, among other things, how the gods give every person a place in society based upon the spiritual development of their soul. So it was that a hierarchical social order came into being in India, which is known in the West as the caste system. Some conservative circles continue to hold fast to this traditional social order which has been handed down. But by and by, the trend is turning away from this – above all because of education and financial independence. Many Indians feel that their country needs a new model for society because the caste system hinders both social and economic progress.

Avoid speaking about or criticizing the Indian caste system.

Criticism of the caste system by foreigners, however, is perceived as being unacceptable by Indians. From an Indian point of view, the conquerors and settlers were not able to fundamentally influence either the social order of things or Indian cultural values. Since obtaining independence in 1947, Indians have emphasised their Indian identity. With the economic liberalisation of 1990, India has been moving further and further away from its image of being a country of beggars and gurus, of holy cows and palaces, and is replacing that idea with an “Indian way of life” which is extrovert, self-confident and strongly oriented toward the western system of values.

However, hierarchy continues to remain central to the Indian way of life and finds its roots in the caste system. This helps somewhat to explain the reason for the lack of understanding between Swiss hosts and Indian guests. Indians are used to treating their employees and service providers more brusquely than is customary in Europe. This includes service personnel and those working at the reception desk.

### **Bollywood as an expression of the “Indian way of life”**

This new-found self-confidence is today shown in many things, such as their membership in international bodies, the nuclear programme, or in the Bollywood film industry. Bollywood movies are among the most important components of modern everyday life in India. They serve to entertain, to provide escape from everyday life and for the general good of the soul. The content of the films is often very emotional, and this is carried over into the whole cinematic experience for the audience too.

The beauty of Switzerland has been permanently anchored in public awareness through the many Bollywood films and their love songs

For Switzerland, the significance of Bollywood movies is extremely important. Swiss mountains, lakes, castles and historic city centres are particularly popular with Indian film crews. Since the end of the 1970s, over 170 Indian films have been shot in Switzerland. World-famous Bollywood legends such as Aishwarya Rai or Shah Rukh Khan have been guests here in Switzerland.

Since 2017, the rising young star and influencer Ranveer Singh has been the Swiss brand ambassador in India. Thanks to his hard work, the tradition of having Switzerland as the backdrop to Indian films has continued.

### Family

At the very heart of Indian society is the family. Indians make all of their important decisions based upon what is good for both their present family and their family of origin. They tend to ask themselves things such as “What do we want?”, rather than “What do I want?”. The Indian family provides for strong, emotional ties. Parents and children feel loyalty to one another and expect that in every situation they are to be there for one another and that each individual is to place the collective good above one’s own well-being. Although western European individualism is considered by the majority of Indians to be a form of selfishness, the western model of the small family where both parents work is increasingly gaining more ground in the larger cities.

### Celebrations

Indians always find a reason to celebrate: births, marriages, passing a test, a victorious cricket match.

National holidays include Republic Day (26.1), Independence Day (15.8) and the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi (2.10).

The most important Hindu celebrations include Diwali, also known as the “festival of lights”, the spring festival Holi, Ganesh Chaturthi in honour of the deity Ganesha as well as Raksha Bandhan, the

festival of the “bond of protection” between siblings.

Indian Muslims celebrate the Id al-Ahda in connection with the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and Id al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting. The Sikhs and Jains celebrate the birthday of the founders of their beliefs on the 26.11 (Sikhs) and at the end of March or at the beginning April (Jains).

Buddhists celebrate Vesak (first-full moon day in May), the day on which Buddha found enlightenment.

Christians celebrate Easter and Christmas.

It is very important to note that in addition to religious differences in connection with celebrations, there are also many regional differences too. That is why it is necessary to plan dates carefully in connection with sales and marketing activities in India.

**“We live in a wonderful world that is full of beauty, charm and adventure. There is no end to the adventures that we can have if only we seek them with our eyes open.”**

Jawaharlal Nehru, first prime minister of India



# Relationships and interactions

Invest time in your Indian guests – it is well worth it.

## Create trust

Relationships are very important to Indians. They are interested in the person they are dealing with and are happy when these also show interest in them. Sometimes they appear to be somewhat reserved and shy because they do not want to impose themselves upon anyone. As host, take the first step to speak with your guest. Many topics are suitable for this, such as Indian or Swiss culture. Your Indian guests will value this as a sign of your genuine interest.



## Tips – modes of behaviour

**Eye contact:** direct eye contact with Indian guests is not a problem. If some Indian guests avoid eye contact, this is a sign of respect and carries no negative meaning.

**Handshake:** some Indian women are shy when it comes to greeting a strange man with a handshake. Waiting is recommended. If they offer their hand to a man – then a handshake is desired. If not, then a polite verbal greeting is more than enough. Handshaking amongst women is not a problem.

**Indians like to laugh and are humorous, but not at the expense of other people. This is regarded as being unethical.**

**No:** Indians do not like to hear this word, because it may be construed as being a personal rejection – even though they themselves use it gladly.

**VIP:** Indian tourists appreciate it when you give them the feeling that they are particularly welcome guests. A personal greeting by the hotel manager/hotel director is therefore recommended.

**Age:** in the very hierarchically organised Indian society, the principle of seniority applies. The older person enjoys more respect and their word is not subject to open contradiction. Swiss hosts should not be subservient, but they ought to treat older Indian guests with courtesy. The same is true vice versa: in a conflict situation with an Indian guest, it makes sense that the Swiss “host” or “hostess” takes the decision. This is to be formulated politely – and best with a smile – but without discussing it further.

**Women and men:** outwardly, the husband is the head in the Indian family. Therefore, he is the one who will deal with the hotel staff. However, he hardly takes a decision without his wife agreeing to it. Indian married couples discuss in private what they want and do not want, in order to reflect unity and harmony to the outside world.

# Business practices

It is worthwhile spending time in developing personal relationships.

## **New self-confidence**

Where the Indian businessman was rather unsure of himself in earlier times, today you meet determined businessmen who know exactly what they want. They are proud of their economic achievements and gladly emphasise that India is a democracy with one of the fastest-developing free-market economies. The increasing openness of the Indian market leads to Indians being increasingly used to dealing with foreign partners. Dealing with Indian businessmen is therefore very pleasant.

## Tips – negotiations

It is recommended that you observe the following guidelines for business relationships.

Let your Indian business partners know your nationality. Indians react positively when the Swiss show that they feel anchored in Switzerland with its culture and its values. It is worthwhile informing Indian guests about Swiss culture and the Swiss mentality. Swissness is pleasing to them!

Indians barely separate private life and business life. Some 60 percent of all Indian companies are owned by families. Long-standing friendships, trust and loyalty are the factors which determine success.

Next to good relationships, you should not forget your own business interests. Personal dealings should

be characterised by friendliness – but you have to be determined and clear-cut in your behaviour.

Always keep a plentiful supply of your business cards at the ready. Your job title, your hierarchical status and any possible academic titles which you possess should be evident on your business card in English. Carefully read through any business card which you receive. It is common practice to then get into a conversation by asking about the business activity of your guest or about his business objectives in Switzerland.

In Indian culture, “Give me” is the equivalent of the English “Could you please give me” – the language is much more direct in India. This has nothing to do with politeness, but rather with language usage.

# “Most Indians have one thing in common: the love of snow.”



Ritu Sharma,  
deputy director of  
Switzerland Tourism  
India

**What do you think makes Switzerland particularly interesting for Indian guests?**

**Ritu Sharma:** “Switzerland has always been special to Indians thanks to the Bollywood movies that have been shot in this country since the 70’s.

Indians have always loved the snow-covered mountains, the lush green landscapes and the glacial lakes that they have seen in these movies.

Up until about a decade ago, Indian travellers were sightseers who would simply go to destinations, take pictures and be happy. In Switzerland, they always got exactly what they were looking for and they did not have to go to any specific place to see the natural beauty that they had always imagined Switzerland to have. The reason that Switzerland has stayed so popular over the years is due to the fact that most Indians are happy and satisfied after a vacation to Switzerland.

However, the profile of the Indian traveller has changed in the last few years. They are now looking at having experiences rather than just sightseeing; whereas previously they would be happy to take a picture on Mt. Titlis, they now want to take a picture or a video whilst doing an activity such as tubing or paragliding.

Since India is a huge country, it is difficult to have one single profile of the Indian traveller. Basically Indians can be divided into two categories: the first-time traveller and the frequent traveller.

Both these segments have very specific needs and wants, which are very different from each other. Whereas the first-time traveller is usually a group traveller, one who needs Indian food, is not very fluent in English and needs to be guided, the frequent traveller is usually an independent traveller, one who likes to try local food even if he or she is a vegetarian, and is looking for new experiences and destinations. The one factor that both categories keep in common is the love for snow. Because snow is not something easily available in India, most Indians look forward to enjoying a snow experience in Switzerland.”

**Will Switzerland remain an attractive country for travellers from India?**

**RS:** “Switzerland will remain a very attractive country for Indians in the future as Indians really appreciate the natural beauty and the range of products on offer. They also appreciate the safety and the security, the cleanliness, the punctuality and efficiency of the public transportation – as well as the fact that everything works so well – especially since these qualities are a bit lacking in India.

Switzerland is still the most desired destination for first time travellers; and it is now also becoming a desired destination amongst people looking for adventure, sports, food and wine. We expect the Indian market to grow at a rate of 5 to 8% per annum for the next 5 years."

**What should Swiss hosts take into account when marketing to attract guests from India?**

**RS:** "The most important thing is the availability of these processes in English. The website, booking processes and social media sites have to be in English so that Indians are able to use them. Furthermore, hotels need to mention services such as air conditioning, availability of fans, especially in summer, airport shuttles with charges, and access to public transportation, shops and restaurants. Links to how to get there and to nearby attractions would also be good."

**Is there anything that Swiss hosts should pay special attention to when accommodating travellers from India?**

**RS:** "A welcome kit which includes a list of nearby Indian restaurants, excursions available, as well as the opening and closing times of shops and restaurants close by would be a gesture that would be greatly appreciated.

Indians also like to have a cup of tea in the morning or late afternoon – so a kettle is always appreciated.

It's also important not to come across as being rude; Indians do like to ask a lot of questions, so a bit of patience from the front office staff would be advisable.

Indians are used to higher levels of service in hotels due to the availability of cheap labour at home, so it's surprising to Indians not to have bell boys to help them carry their bags to the rooms or to only have a limited number of staff in the restaurants or front offices. Please understand that Indians do not wish to appear to be demanding or rude, it's just what they are used to at home."

**Is there a faux-pas that should be avoided?**

**RS:** "Treating Indian guests rudely or impatiently is the biggest faux pas. Please explain politely to the Indian guest if something that he or she is doing is not right."

**Can the hotelier offer a service or a small gift so that Indian guests have a particularly good memory of their stay in Switzerland?**

**RS:** "As mentioned above, a kettle in the room is a necessity. So offering one to the Indian guest where these are not available in the room, would be a nice gesture.

Indians also usually look for adaptors, because Indian plugs don't work in Switzerland: so lending them a returnable adaptor would be good as well.

A small gift like a cowbell key chain would also be much appreciated."



# On tour with Indian guests



Indian tourists are aware of their privilege of travelling to Switzerland and would like to be correspondingly treated by their hosts in a preferential way.

## **Increase in trips abroad**

India is one of the world's fastest-growing travel nations. Having a major economy, the subsequent growth of the middle classes who can afford a trip abroad has helped to make India one of the fastest growing markets for foreign travel. By 2025, it is thought that more than 19 million Indians will enjoy holidays abroad each year. This would represent a yearly increase of 12 percent.

As always, Switzerland is one of the dream destinations in Europe, not least because of the fact that Indians love its snow-capped mountains. Many Indians enjoy their first experience with snow here in Switzerland. That is why the "Touch real Swiss snow" experience is a must for many who visit Switzerland.

16 percent of all Indian foreign trips come to Europe. And Switzerland is the most popular travel destination within Europe, followed by France and Germany.

In the year 2018, tourists from India generated some 807 000 over-night hotel stays in Switzerland. That is 9.6 percent more than the previous year. Between 2008 and 2018, the number of overnight stays grew some 147 percent.

In spite of everything, it must be noted that the vast majority of the Indian population cannot afford to travel abroad. It is mainly persons from the upper class or the increasingly wealthy middle class who undertake such trips.

### **Profile of Indian guests in Switzerland**

Indian guests pay attention to obtaining a good price-performance ratio, appreciate good service and have high expectations in respect of the cuisine. Switzerland is known in India as being a clean and orderly country. The main travel season is from May to June; and there is another small peak in October (Diwali).

### **Group travellers**

Some 45 percent of Indian guests tend to travel in groups, especially if it is their first trip. This gives the travellers confidence that they will not miss the sights and sounds, that their meals will match with their customs, but also that they will receive the greatest number of experiences for their money. These group travellers stem from all social classes, but primarily come from rural regions.

Young, urban people from the conurbations of major cities tend to travel individually. Guests travelling long-distance for the first time are confronted with challenges in dealing with western cultures.

Here it is important that the travel guide highlights the appropriate rules of conduct. But one must not forget that the guest has paid what for them is a large sum of money for their trip, and expects a

corresponding level of service. Indian guests book their trip with a travel organiser who sells them a round trip through several European countries and also helps them with their visa application. Switzerland is often the highlight of the European trip, yet the group rarely stays longer than two or three

nights in our country. Switzerland has been, and continues to be, portrayed in Bollywood films and TV productions as a natural paradise with greenery, crystal-clear lakes and impressive mountains with snow and ice, and this is what the travellers want to experience in person. The famous sights are the most popular (Jungfrauoch, Titlis, Lucerne, Rhine Falls, etc.). Indians are generally very inquisitive and grateful for special recommendations. Yet such carefully organised group travel rarely affords time for individual exploration.

**“Touch real Swiss snow”  
is a must for those  
travelling in groups.**

### Individual tourists

The individual traveller from India segment has been growing in recent years – especially thanks to those under 35 years of age with disposable income. An indicator of this trend can be seen in the increasing demand for holiday apartments, for example, in the Bernese Oberland. These days, some 55 percent of overnight stays by Indians are by individual guests. Individual tourists are generally experienced travellers from the large cities of Mumbai, Delhi or Bangalore. They know all about western culture and speak good English.

These guests have already travelled to other countries and would now like to get to know Switzerland better; its culture, and mentality, as well as the local cuisine. They are open, full of zest for life and take the time to see and experience new things. These travellers love our public transport, are very inquisitive and explore Switzerland independently. They are interested in sightseeing in the cities, in excursions into nature and in shopping in brand-name stores. Some individual tourists become returning guests and would like to experience something different in Switzerland each time they come here. Indian guests are very open to recommendations and tips about interesting activities and tourist attractions.

### Timepieces are not the same as time

Indians are not well-known for being exacting in respect of punctuality. Many an Indian tourist has missed the departure of a steamship because he arrived too late. In fact, Indians seem to have a completely different feeling for time than that felt in Switzerland. The following often quoted anecdote serves to illustrate the point: an Indian and a Swiss businessman were on business trip. Sitting in the aircraft next to one another, they struck up a conversation together. "Where do you come from?" the Indian asked. When the Swiss businessman had replied, the Indian said, "Aah, from Switzerland? That is a beautiful country!" "Yes, and we make the most exacting watches in the world," replied the Swiss gentleman proudly and then asked his neighbour, "And where do you come from? From India? I was there once. On a business trip. And I had to wait and wait everywhere I went! Tell me, why does it always take so long with you?" The Indian gentleman thought for a moment and then said, "You know what it is – you may have the timepieces – but we have the time!"

### Indian tourists are guests with money to spend

Indian tourists who visit Switzerland generally spend CHF 310 per day, per person. This does not include their travel costs.

Average day expenditure by over-night tourists in Switzerland (not including arrival and departure)

| Country     | CHF |
|-------------|-----|
| Gulf States | 420 |
| China       | 380 |
| India       | 310 |
| Japan       | 300 |
| USA         | 280 |
| Russia      | 250 |
| Korea       | 210 |
| Switzerland | 140 |
| Germany     | 130 |

Source: Switzerland Tourism Monitor, 2017

# Tips – travelling and stay

Holidays in Switzerland are considered in India as being highly desirable. For Indians, Switzerland is Europe and has come to mean “Touch real Swiss snow”. Next to Titlis, the most popular destination for the snow experience is the Jungfrauoch. Further regions/destinations indicate growing demand.

Ask the organiser about how many single beds are required. Members of the travel group often do not know one another prior to the trip. Rooms are also often shared on business trips.

In India, having personal household staff is standard in many families. Many Indian clients assume that while on holiday, they will be served in the same way.

Most of the Indian guests speak English. However, their accents are sometimes difficult to understand.

Ask your Indian guests how they are doing. This is appreciated in Indian culture and will lead to your being recommended as a good host.

In India, the television is on continually. Make sure that information about pay TV is clear and communicated in English. Making a Hindi TV channel available would be greatly appreciated by your clients (the majority speak Hindi).

Due to the large size of India (from both East to West and North to South it is about 3000 km long), Indians are used to long travel times.

## Personal contact with Indian guests plays a key role.

Source: Swiss Federal Statistical Office (HESTA 2018)

### Overnight stays by guests from India in Switzerland (2012–2018)

|                 | 2012    | 2013    | 2014    | 2015    | 2016    | 2017    | 2018    |
|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Arrivals        | 217 863 | 212 960 | 217 082 | 266 427 | 265 410 | 326 454 | 359 721 |
| Overnight stays | 474 882 | 467 967 | 485 216 | 591 924 | 599 062 | 739 185 | 809 940 |

# Swiss hospitality for Indian guests

Brochures should only be in addition to personal advice.

## Respect and advice

Hospitality in Indian culture has an extremely high priority. For an Indian, being allowed to welcome a guest into the home is the same as having God come to stay. Accordingly, the Indian guest would also like to be shown appreciation and respect by his host. Personal contact plays a vital role for Indian guests. This also means that while information brochures are important, they cannot possibly replace attentive personal advice.

Avoid saying the word "no" openly and show your guests what the alternatives are.

## Special wishes

Above all, the individual Indian tourists expect a big return for the money they spend. Therefore it can be really helpful to point out to them, right upon arriving, exactly what advantages and valuable benefits your business offers – even if these are included in the price anyway. At the same time, Indians may also have special wishes which are only available with the payment of a surcharge. In such cases it is recommended that you first of all enquire as to what it is that is really important to your guest. A short summary of the things mentioned by your guest can help to ascertain that you are both talking about the same thing. Then you can begin to explain what you have on offer ("Yes, we can do that for you."), benefits ("That is particularly pleasant here because you receive...") and conditions.

## Leisure activities

Openness and humour help, as does the question of what those at home in India would particularly like to receive.

### Shopping

Taking something genuinely Swiss ("made in Switzerland") with them back home as a souvenir is very important for Indian guests. They love to go on shopping trips and generally know exactly what they want. But they also enjoy discovering new things! Watches, chocolate and other sweets, cow bells, pocket knives with the Swiss cross (without this it is merely a weapon), music boxes and arts and crafts objects are all particularly loved by Indian guests. They are also open to less typical souvenirs too – but you need to show the tourists what they are and extol the attractiveness of such objects to them. It is very helpful to point out to them just how much their relatives and acquaintances will appreciate the souvenir gifts. Since shopping in India is a social event, they often come into a store as a group together. They discuss goods and prices; they like to take the products into their hands and have further information. A very promising sales tactic is to present the Indian clients with as many



## Indian guests increasingly look for an active experience as the focus of their holiday interest.

different products as possible and watch their reaction very carefully to find out what appeals to them most. Although haggling is customary in India, Indian tourists know that prices in Switzerland are set. However, where Indian clients purchase several items, then it is recommended that you respond to their offer to negotiate by either giving a discount or a product supplement. This serves to give the client a feeling of accomplishment, gives you the opportunity of additional sales, gets your own business some good recommendations and helps build the reputation of Switzerland as being a hospitable country.

### **Sport**

Whereas the first generation of Indian tourists liked to take it easy, the trend in India today is toward adventure and action holidays, especially in the case of young travellers and those from the cities. In the case of young individual travellers, they are mostly searching for an active experience as a highlight of their holiday (e.g. paragliding in Interlaken). When it comes to water sports or wellness activities, it must be remembered that Indian women are often not inclined toward displaying any bare flesh when there are men around. Indian guests increasingly look for an active experience as the focus of their holiday interest.

### **Conversation**

Sometimes Indian guests sit in the hotel lobby as though they are bored and chat about seemingly unimportant things. Nevertheless, such "small talk" has an important social function. By spending time together and sharing wide-ranging information and opinions, it is possible to assess whether everyone in the group is feeling comfortable, and also serves to confirm the social order and cohesion of the group.

# “Food is a very big part of Indian culture.”



Ity Tiwari,  
city tour guide and  
Indian cookery  
teacher, Zurich  
[www.creativ-ity.com](http://www.creativ-ity.com)

## What are the values which particularly distinguish Indian culture?

**Ity Tiwari:** “India is a very diverse country with many different cultures, languages, religions and cuisines. But its people still co-exist and live together. Food is a very big part of Indian culture. Indian cuisine is just as diverse as its population. But one thing that binds the entire continent’s cuisine together is the spices that every region shares. Indians are also very spiritual and family-oriented people. They travel in larger groups of all different ages.”

## What would Indian guests like to experience when they travel to Switzerland?

**IT:** “Switzerland is the ultimate travel destination for Indians. It’s literally called “heaven on Earth” in India. India got to know Switzerland’s lakes, mountains, natural beauty, trains and chocolates through Bollywood movies. When visiting the country, it’s almost like they become part of the movies they have seen, with these snow-covered mountains.

At the moment India is travelling and has got the greatest number of young people in the world. There are about 600 million young people in India under the age of 25. They have big dreams and aspirations and they also want to travel. And when they travel, they want to experience everything. Be it a glass of wine with Swiss cheese, owning a nice Swiss watch, trying bungy-jumping or the ski slopes, swimming in a lake or anything else you can imagine. I see a very big, open market here for Switzerland where India is concerned.”

## Have you ever had a holiday in Switzerland yourself?

**IT:** “I have had the privilege and honour of living in this Alpine country for the past 20 years.”

## Is there anything which has particularly stayed with you from your time in Switzerland? Any special memories?

**IT:** “Like most people, the beauty of the lakes, the mountains, the medieval towns, not to mention the banks, the chocolates, the knives, Swiss cheese and the watches. What is closest to my heart are the mountains, the chocolates and the Swiss people.”

**What did you think about Swiss hospitality? What has your experience been?**

**IT:** "The Swiss are very hospitable people and also very tourist friendly. Seeing how the staff handle tourists at the Jungfraujoch and the Pilatus, I was very impressed: right from the welcome signs which are written in an Indian language, and the possibility of having Indian food at more than 3000 and 4000 metres above sea level felt amazing! In fact, once I taught two chefs the basics of Indian cuisine in a two-day cooking marathon in Pontresina, and it was amazing to see how they have put some Indian dishes on their menu for the Indian guests. Swiss hoteliers and tourist agencies take every pain to make their guests feel comfortable."

**Have you got any tips for us about how Swiss hotels can improve yet further when looking after guests from India?**

**IT:** "Swiss hoteliers go to great lengths to make the Indian guests feel comfortable, especially regarding food. It would be great if more hotels took the extra step and got to know more about Indian food culture, especially the desire for vegetarian dishes, or their love for a warm Indian breakfast. If some of the restaurants picked up some select Indian favourites, I'm sure it would go a long way. As India is the most populated country on the planet, people tend to be rather loud, and chaos and noise are constant features. It's not really needed here in Switzerland, but it's a natural habit. Furthermore, Indian people generally don't like to walk that much, but there is a small niche of persons which do. In my opinion, when you recommend a travel itinerary to them, a walking tour or a little bit of walking should definitely be suggested. The thing is that Swiss old towns are rather small and often free of cars too. When Indian tourists are taken on tour with a bus there, then they don't see a lot and hence feel dissatisfied. Swiss people on the other hand are very sports-friendly. I think travel is not only to see the monumental and beautiful things in a place, but to experience a part of the culture that can be taken home too. And if it's learning to do a few minutes of walking which they pick up when they are here, that would be a great thing for them to incorporate in their daily lives."

**"The Swiss are very hospitable people and also very tourist friendly."**

# Indian eating and drinking habits

Food is not just nourishment for Indians but an important prerequisite for health and happiness.

## Thank heaven for food

Research has shown that Indians are unhappy when they have to go longer than two days without eating Indian food. Indians are convinced that culinary delights are good for the spiritual, mental and physical health of a person. When food is prepared according to the Indian health-philosophy of Ayurveda, it is said to contain all the necessary nutrients and active ingredients which keep a person healthy and help to cure diseases. Many Indians eat a rich, warm breakfast because according to Ayurvedic teachings, cool food tends to slow the digestion. Lunch ought to be served quickly and does not tend to last long. The evening meal, however, is enjoyed at a more leisurely pace. It begins with an aperitif (alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks, as well as spicy snacks), which can last for an hour or more and where they chat a lot. When the food is served, they dispense with ritual pleasantries such as “enjoy your meal” and immediately begin to eat. When they have finished eating, that is basically the end of the evening. Only exceptionally do they linger after the evening meal with a glass of wine, a digestif or a cigar. At home, many Indians eat with their hand, just as they have always done (with the right hand – because the left hand is considered to be unclean) because they feel that this increases the enjoyment. Since Indian cooks tend to prepare vegetable and meat in bite-sized pieces, you will often only find a spoon to eat with in an Indian restaurant. Knives and forks are to be found in eating establishments which are higher-priced. However, when Indians are on tour, they generally adapt to the practices of the host country.

## Recipe for masoor dal (red lentil curry)

If it is not possible to provide Indian dishes on the menu, it is recommended that you keep the ingredients handy for a masoor dal that you can offer to them, it is easily prepared and much loved by Indians.

### Ingredients for 4 persons

- 1 large cup of red lentils washed until the water runs clear and soaked for 30 minutes
- 1 large onion, sliced thinly into rings
- 1 medium-sized tomato, finely chopped
- 3 cm of ginger root finely chopped or grated
- 2 cloves of garlic peeled and finely chopped or crushed
- ½ teaspoon of turmeric powder
- 1 teaspoon of cumin seeds
- ½ teaspoon of chilli powder

- 2 tablespoons of margarine
- 1 teaspoon of salt

### Preparation

Drain the water from the soaked lentils.

Bring 3½ large cups of water to the boil in a large pot.

Add lentils, salt, chilli powder, turmeric powder, tomatoes, ginger and garlic and allow the ingredients to come to the boil together for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Cover the pot with a lid and allow it to simmer for 20 minutes at a reduced heat, until the lentils are soft.

Heat the butter in a pan and fry the onions and cumin seeds together until they are golden brown.

Mix into the lentils and serve immediately with basmati rice.



## Tips – food and beverage

Place a free jug of plain water at room temperature both in the hotel room and on the meal table. Indian guests drink a lot of water.

Many Indian guests cannot imagine that water from the tap is both drinkable and healthy. Encourage your Indian guests to drink water from the mains tap water and mention to them that important minerals are contained in Swiss drinking water.

For Indians, Indian cuisine is the best. Where possible, offer them genuine Indian dishes with many spices. Best of all, get an Indian cook to show you how – if possible.

**In India, fish is also considered to be meat. Therefore, it is not a vegetarian alternative.**

## Tips – food and beverage

Where Indian cuisine is not available, then it is best to offer some standard European dishes which contain declarations on the menu of the criteria listed below.

Menus should contain all necessary information in English too ...

... as well as clearly providing information about which dishes contain which meat (chicken, lamb, beef, pork), those generally containing meat (“non-vegetarian”), or those which are vegetarian or vegan.

Attention: many vegetarian Indians do not eat eggs – therefore, ‘Spätzle’ are not a vegetarian option for such persons!

Attention: European salad is not a vegetarian alternative because it is cold and is not therefore considered to be a full meal.

Alongside Hinduism and Buddhism, Islam is also an important religion in India. This means that Muslim guests do not eat pork!

Depending upon their religious background, certain other foods are subject to restriction. For example, “Jain” vegetarians do not eat anything which grows under the soil (carrots, potatoes, onions, garlic etc.). Or there are “week-day vegetarians” who eat vegetarian on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but who would like to have meat on the other days.

Cook with vegetable oils and fats, as well as with vegetable stock, and inform your Indian guests about it.

Swiss-Indian culinary experiments (for example, Curry-Capuns) may hit the spot.

Offer something warm for breakfast (for example, eggs, omelettes, etc.).

If you can, take the orders for the evening meal whilst the guests are having their aperitif.

Serve your Indian guests with pickles and chutneys with their lunch and evening meals.

Many Indians would like to sample cheese fondue and raclette. However, offer them in small portions because they are not used to consuming cheese products in India.

**Indians eat late and retire after the evening meal. Therefore, plan for an early breakfast!**

# Contact details

Should you require any further information, advice and/or training as to how best to receive Indian visitors or as to how best to work in the Indian market, please do not hesitate to contact one of the following addresses:

## **HotellerieSuisse**

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Monbijoustrasse 130  
3001 Berne  
T +41 31 370 41 40  
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www.hotelleriesuisse.ch

## **Switzerland Tourism**

Morgartenstrasse 5a  
8004 Zurich  
T +41 44 288 12 76  
info@myswitzerland.com  
www.myswitzerland.com

## **Switzerland Tourism – Mumbai office**

Switzerland Tourism  
c/o Consulate General of Switzerland  
102 Maker Chamber IV, 10th floor 222  
Nariman Point  
Mumbai – 400 021  
info@switzerland.com  
www.myswitzerland.com

### **Useful websites**

[www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) (Switzerland Tourism)  
[www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com) (Indian daily newspaper, in English)  
[www.indiatimes.com](http://www.indiatimes.com) (Indian daily newspaper, in English)  
[www.indiatoday.com](http://www.indiatoday.com) (Indian news magazine, in English)  
[www.global-blue.com](http://www.global-blue.com) (Information about VAT refunds)  
[www.indembassybern.ch](http://www.indembassybern.ch) (Indian Embassy)  
[www.sicc.ch](http://www.sicc.ch) (Swiss-Indian Chamber of Commerce, in English)

