

Before Going

- Apply! The form is available from the IY(UK) website. Don't bother applying unless you meet the criteria (for regular classes for one month it's a minimum 8 years Iyengar Yoga practice with a certificated Iyengar teacher and a recommendation from them). There used to be a waiting list but I'm told these days you usually get your first choice even if it's the same year as your year of application. For special events like Yoganusasanam the minimum practice is usually less and the period shorter, making this more accessible for many. You need to apply via the IY(UK), do not apply directly to RIMYI. The (non-refundable) deposit is paid online when you apply. 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 get an electronic visa - e-visa (30 day, 1 year or 5 year) via the Indian High Commission website. You can still get a regular/paper visa from an Indian mission post. If the latter it can save a lot of time and hassle to pay an agency to do this - they will check you've filled the form in correctly and go to the High Commission instead of you having to go in person. I have found the Trailfinders visa service good and also visagenie.co.uk The visa form can be filled in online, then printed, signed and send with a 2" square photo (dimensions are strict ordinary passport photo will not do). NB whatever type of visa you have there will be restrictions on length of stay and period between stays - check the rules carefully.
- Immunisations - check with your GP surgery what you need.
- 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.

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 and early morning - most apartments do not have heating, take a fleece/woollens!

Hot: Late February - June. The Institute is closed for 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.



Things to Take (or buy shortly after arrival)

Travel light - there are lots of lovely clothes and other stuff you can buy 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 - for those whom you get to know/ show you kindness. Toffee seems popular!
- Mosquito repellent (we find the local brand Odomos effective) - apply morning and evening. 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 to take notes after class
- 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 last time it took a week and several trips before I was successful!
- Any clothes or shoes which need mending or alteration (Richard's idea!) - Indian tailors, cobblers & darners are skilled, fast and much, much cheaper than any here.
- Biro's - I never seem to have enough or to see them in shops when I need.
- Portable electronic scales for weighing luggage.
- Torch
- Tampons if you use them (expensive and difficult to get hold of in India)
- Toys to give away - a good opportunity for your children to give away some stuff!
- Anti-bacterial hand wipes, spray to use to clean hands if hand-washing not easily available.
- Small calculator to help you convert prices
- Unlocked mobile phone
- Photocopies of passport photo page & visa page. (Easy & cheap to get in Pune if you happen to get to photocopying shop when they are open and have power).
- Travel iron (otherwise you might have periods of no clothes whilst waiting for ironing to be returned)
- Travel hairdryer (useful during colder season)
- Hankies (or buy in Tulsi Bagh)
- Dry eye drops - I find the pollution really affects my eyes
- comfortable footwear, I find walking sandals good rather than flip flops

Getting There

Flights to Mumbai

- Many airlines fly to India but often involve stop-overs which makes the journey more exhausting. We've found it can make life a lot easier to get a direct flight to Chhatrapati Shivaji International, Mumbai. Jet Airways, British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, Air India fly direct from Heathrow. Air India refused to give me my pre-booked vegetarian food, saying the Indians who hadn't pre-booked their food needed it, and just gave me two tiny packs of nuts, so I don't use them anymore.
- Lufthansa fly direct to Pune from Germany.
- Some flights arrive in the 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.

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 +91 2494 8416).
- Hotels in Mumbai are expensive (prices ranging from Rs. 1400 to Rs. 8000+).
- 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 Options

- **Private car & driver.** My preferred option these days. 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. Insist on seatbelts - often Indian cars have rear seat belts removed or inaccessible. It's worth paying more for a larger car which will tend to have seat belts in all seats. Expect to pay around £50. I find Roots N Wings (based in Pune) very efficient and reliable and you can book online and pay by card. Others less so (we had one occasion where a taxi from another company failed to show up despite having confirmed by email and three of us very nearly missed out flight and only got there by paying a hefty fee to another company).
- **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 every 15 mins and an A/C bus on the hour. These generally leave on time and tickets can be booked once you reach the bus station. However, it may be slightly difficult on festive occasions. Cheap option.
- **Taxi** Taxis are also available at Dadar opposite the bus station (journey time approx. 3 hours). Obviously a more expensive option but can be more comfortable. You also have the option of sharing it with 4 other people.
- **Taxi from the airport** Go to the pre-paid booth inside the airport. They will give you two slips

of paper. One is for the driver, the other for you to keep. The road tolls are included in the price. You will then have to go outside to the taxi rank.

- **Train.** The train station is CST (aka VT) or Dadar. Tickets are best booked in advance. Your travel agent may be able to do this. 2nd class AC is reasonable. Travelling unreserved is tough especially after a long flight.
- **Plane:** There are Indian Airlines and Jet Airways flights from Mumbai to Pune. You will need to take a free coach transfer to the domestic airport. Apart from the expense, you may have to wait a long time for the connecting flight, so I'm not convinced this is beneficial.
- **Coach** from the international airport directly to Pune.

RIMYI Location



RIMYI is in the area of Pune called Model Colony. It's on Hare Krishna Mandir Road. It's helpful to say to the rickshaw drivers that it is in Model Colony near Pune Central on University Road. The former Toyota DSK garage at the "circle" (ie roundabout) at the far end of HK 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 U.K. This will make life easier when you get there. At peak times it can be hard to find accommodation (eg December, January, February). I have had confirmed bookings only to find I am not booked in on arrival and have heard others have had a similar experience.

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 - Renting 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. It can be a bit of a lottery, apartments can be good one time and terrible a short time after, they can bear little resemblance to photos, advertised amenities may or may not be there/working.

Homestay – renting a room in someone's home. Cheaper than a whole apartment. Also 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:

- Will the owner organise a cleaner?
- Will the owner organise a cook?
- Is there a washing machine or can the owner organise someone to do washing?
- Is there an iron or can the owner organise someone to come and take the ironing?
- Do you need to pay the staff directly or is this included in the price? Sadly I have heard some landlords underpay their staff (and wages are not high for such work for anyone) as it is assumed western visitors will top up their wages.
- Is there somewhere to lock your valuables? (usually a metal wardrobe with a safe inside)

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.

At RIMYI

Registration

Call in at the Institute as soon as possible after arriving in Pune to register with Mr. Pandurang Rao (known as 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 Rupiya
- two passport-sized photos
- a photocopy of your passport photo page & visa page.
- a letter from your landlord/hotelier confirming your address in Pune.

You need to bring all these items in one go, your paperwork won't be accepted if there are any missing items.

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

Pandu will give you your class allocation. Please only attend the classes you have been allocated. Apart from being cheeky and ill-mannered, 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.

Institute opening hours.

Please respect the opening hours of RIMYI. You should leave the premises by noon and leave promptly after evening class. The Institute is closed on Sundays except for the children's class at 8am and Prashnatji and Srineet's Yoga Sutras Study group at 9am.

Classes

Classes tend to be very full and space limited so you need to be considerate of others. Equipment is kept in a storeroom adjacent to the practice room, so if it is necessary to get some out during a class the most efficient way is to form a line and pass the equipment down it, rather than each individual trying to get in the room and just attending to their own needs.

Show respect by paying attention and doing your best to follow instructions promptly.

When you are menstruating you should still 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). Do not go to the Institute if you are infectious.

Occasionally RIMYI might change the schedules for example when special events occur. At such times they may offer alternative classes during the period, or alternative classes at a later date. Such changes may be made at short notice (after you have booked your flights). Students need to be flexible and prepared for these possible changes

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, practise any programme you have, or if applicable, do some recuperative poses if you are tired from travelling or sick but well enough to practise. Abhijata and other RIMYI teachers also may practise then so you have the benefit of seeing what they do too. It is not an opportunity to show-off. In fact we should never be showing off!

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

Greetings

It is polite to greet Prashantji and the other Iyengars (and of course those who work at the Institute) when you first see him in the day. The minimum polite greeting is to 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.

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. Guruji used to be there every afternoon, busy with his work. His desk and chair are still there and it is nice to study in the space where he spent so much time. The library has been reorganised and it is much easier to find what you are looking for. You need to ask the librarian to open the relevant bookcase.

RIMYI shops

Datta runs the shop in a room just off the foyer (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.

Atul runs the afternoon shop in the foyer (4.00 - 5.45pm Monday - Saturday). It sells MP3s of Prashantji's classes, talks and his books. Also YOG products such as postcards and handles photo orders - there is a large album in the foyer with many photos of Guruji from Light on Yoga for order.

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

Special Times – celebrations at RIMYI

19th January - Annual Day. Anniversary of RIMYI inauguration.

March/April - Hanuman Jayanti.

July - Guru Purnima

October/November - Patanjali Jayanti

14th December - Guruji's birthday

Closures

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

Independence Day – 15th August

Ganesh Chaturthi - August/September

Vijaya Dashami – October

Dussehra – October/November (1 day)

Diwali - October/November (4 days)

Republic Day – January 26th

Gudi Padava - March

General Dos and Don'ts at RIMYI

- 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. 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 the feet of our Guruji in our mother Institute. Be appreciative, polite, attentive, willing to stand correction, ready to learn and study.
- 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 midribs 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. Similarly women should not have bare upper arms/exposed armpits and certainly no strappy tops. T-shirts should not be transparent. It is more comfortable and modest if they are a little loose. Culturally it is acceptable for men to remove their tops, but please do not do this in a showy-off way. Yoga bloomers (cotton shorts with elasticated bottoms for modesty) can be bought very cheaply in Pune.
- Clothing should be clean and tidy. Torn or dirty clothing is disrespectful.
- Wash hands and feet before class (facilities in the changing rooms). Preferably bathe before coming to the Institute.
- Be punctual - ready to start 10 minutes before the class begins. Classes always commence on time.
- 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. Classes and practice should be your priority, not going off on trips mid-month or leaving early.
- 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.
- After class help put all the equipment neatly away before leaving.
- During class take a mat (and other equipment) from the top of the pile, do not fish around for one you feel is better.
- Don't bring unnecessary valuables to class (money, phones, lap tops, passport).
- Don't wear a lot of jewellery. It gets in the way and if you take it off is a risk.
- Don't wear scent to class and avoid smelly food like onions and garlic.
- 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!

- It can be useful to have a mat in your room for home practice and you can then donate it to the Institute at the end of your visit. I also prefer to have my own eye bandage to use at home and in pranayama class
- Keep fingernails short, otherwise they get in the way, especially for such practices as digital Pranayama.
- Do not put wooden props on the sticky mats.
- 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 use a pair of ropes on a single bolt.
- Ceiling ropes – some hang low so don't use these if you have a long spine.
- The classes and practice sessions can be very crowded. Be aware of others. Don't disturb others. Do not step over people's faces as dust will drop off in their eyes (apart from it generally being unpleasant). Similarly do not drop down blankets or mats heavily causing dust to fly around.
- Do not unfold blankets more than one unfold as then they never fold up neatly again.
- 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 or t-shirt.
- 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.
- The Institute holds monthly meets on spiritual and psychological aspects of yoga and scriptures. Attendance is expected.
- Hair should be tied up neatly during classes so that it does not fall over the face.

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. A pollution mask is advisable (try cycling shops or icanbreathe.com). Remember it is the quality of the filter rather than the outer mask which is most important. It is also helpful to wear sunglasses. 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. The meters show the price. Charges are higher 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' or 'next to X'.

It seems there is something of an alcohol problem and I have come across working drivers who are very drunk. Take care.

Taxi A bit more expensive than auto but much more comfortable, often with AC and much better suspension. There are ridesharing companies which can work well.

Crossing the road

This can be scary - 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, 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 can cause confusion by hesitating too much whilst in mid-crossing! Zebra 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 travelling abroad.

Main Areas of Pune

Camp - MG (Mahatma Gandhi) Road/Main Street. Clothes and gifts (expensive). Lots of beggars.

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

JM (Jangli Maharaj) Road - restaurants

Laxmi Road - clothes, jewellery. Tulsi Bagh - household goods market

Model Colony - fruit & veg market, dry cleaners, grocers, cafes.

Deccan - stationery, sweets



Cobbler on 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). However, 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 hugely underestimate the problems you can face if you do not speak the local language.

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, although it seems to be becoming more acceptable at least amongst the younger generation. It's commonplace for men to walk holding hands or one with arm round the other. Avoid holding hands with members of the opposite sex in public.

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

Some fairly random useful words:

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
Let's go, start	Chelo
How much?	kitne
Up, upstairs	Ooper
Down, downstairs	Neetchay
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 - your accommodation might have wifi if not you can purchase a dongle from FC road which will give you temporary internet access eg 21 or 28 days.
- In theory you can buy a SIM card for your mobile very cheaply (I got one for Rs 36 plus 600 call time. I have paid approx. Rs 10 per minute to call the UK, Rs 5 for a text. Local calls are very cheap.
- Calling India from UK is very expensive. It is much cheaper in the other direction.
- To purchase a SIM card and/or a Dongle try Airtel on FC Road. You will need to provide the telephone company with a recent colour photocopies won't do), copy of your passport & Indian visa, a letter from your Landlord confirming your local address, proof of your home address (eg driving licence, a bill won't do). 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. I think the difficulty relates to security concerns.
- 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! Also wifi can be feeble or go down, especially if it rains.

Health

Do your utmost to 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 sometimes Chikungunya. Keep arm & legs covered especially in evening. Use insect repellent (I find the local one-Odomos effective and high strength repellants from home) and apply it before morning class and late afternoon. Use plug-in liquid insect repellent in your room (available locally), especially at night.

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

Note that 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.

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

If you do succumb to a 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 grapeseed extract.

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 different in India. I find you usually have to go at least one size larger - eg if you normally wear medium try large etc. There may be a tendency for shopkeepers to hike the prices on seeing a Westerner so do not hesitate to bargain except in fixed price shops!

Having items made to measure can be great but can also invite a lot of stress and running around - eg several trips to the tailor as the stuff isn't ready when promised. 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.

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 they can sometimes be unreliable.

Women

The most practical clothing in Pune is a long skirt, tshirt and dupatta or shalwar kameez. 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 tshirts/ 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 and can double as a pollution mask. Mid-calf length or long dresses/skirts are all right, shorter skirts are not.

You cannot 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 is a good idea to avoid bare arms especially if you are travelling alone. Avoid tight or low cut dresses. Western clothes are more commonly worn in Mumbai.

Wear a supportive bra - roads can be very bumpy!

Keep long hair tied up, rather than loose.

Men

For walking around town, trousers tend to be more usual than 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 is 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 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 is impolite to lick your fingers. You may not get forks that easily at smaller restaurants; a spoon is probably more hygienic than a fork anyway.

Most restaurants have huge menus catering to most tastes. 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 (with ghee) 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 on Bandarkar Rd, Hotel Sreyas on Apte Road, South Indies (next to Pune Central) do good, but more expensive, thalīs.
- Also try the more local South Indian specialities such as dosas, uttapa, idli. payasam (Try Vaishali, Roopali, Pune Central, 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 sweet dish.

If a dish has too much chilli for you, eat some yogurt or something sweet to take away the burning!

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. Drink only bottled or filtered water (if staying in an apartment check the filters are up to date). I have usually found it okay to brush teeth in tap water.

Drinks

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

If you buy fresh milk, buy in the morning and boil it before use. UHT milk is more widely available for obvious reasons.



Making coffee South Indian-style!

Coconut water is very sattvic and great to have after class or practice. There is usually a street vendor outside RIMYI at dispersal times. If you just want the water say "pani" (water); if you would like the coconut meat 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. Take your own reuseable steel straw (mine has a drawstring bag & a cleaning brush). If everyone at RIMYI has a coconut a day (and I usually have several) you can work out how many plastic straws that is in a month.



Stalls outside RIMYI

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	south Indian rice-based 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 soon 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 and/pr menstruating women 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 9 am – 6pm closed 12.30 – 1.30 pm. Nagar Road, beyond Fitzgerald Bridge./ tel 91 202 6880250. email: 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 sad at times seeing the tigers pacing up and down
- Mumbai - Street Art festival in February. Colabar area.
- Ask the locals for other ideas and about visiting sights further afield (eg lakes)
- Concerts - Pune has some good for live music

Sunday Morning on FC Road



Currency

Indian currency is 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 (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 ATMs, I found DBS reliable in Model Colony, whereas the Bank Of Maharashtra charged me for money which they did not actually give me via their ATM. I haven't changed money for years in the bank as it was such a tedious, long drawn out, overly-bureaucratic process.

If paying by credit card I think it's best to be charged in local currency rather than GBP.

Shopping

This publication is intended as a guide on how to behave rather than a shopping guide, not least because of the forum in which it appears, 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 here. If you buy shoddy goods then that is your fault, 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 handweave 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. You try on clothes in the 'trial room' (not the changing room)!
- Incense - a good portable purchase, makes a nice gift.
- Books – Many bookshops - FC Road, Deccan. I particularly like Motilal Barnarsidass in Sanas Plaza Baji Rao Road which specializes in Indian philosophy and esoterics.
- Toiletries - all easily available. Try some ayurvedic stuff - we recommend neem toothpaste! There is a good Ayurvedic shop in Model Colony.
- Spectacles - Indian opticians will make up your prescription much more cheaply than 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. Don't haggle in shops with fixed prices. 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.

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 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 generally 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. 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. There is also a good pool called Pyramids beyond Koregaon Park - don't miss the magician in the car park. 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.
- **Women** try to avoid being out alone at night
- **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 now 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/small notes 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 give a small tip in a restaurant if you feel you have received good service. 10% is generally too much. 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.

This is a work in progress. If there is something I have missed out please get in touch so this can be updated.

Thanks to Rajvi Mehta and Richard Agar Ward for their invaluable help in compiling this guide.