

BEST TIMES TO VISIT ASIA

by Toni Neubauer

COUNTRY	Spring (MAR.-MAY)	Summer (JUNE-AUG.)	Fall (SEPT.-NOV.)	Winter (DEC.-FEB.)
<p>BHUTAN</p> <p>The same latitude as Florida and rising 100' above sea level to 24,840' Kula Kangri, Bhutan's temperature varies with the seasons and with altitude. Festivals occur year-round.</p>	<p>Rhododendrons and other flowers begin blooming from the lower hills up the mountainsides.</p> <p>Temperature is comfortable and gets warmer towards later spring. Air is clear, but gets dustier in May. Mar. and Apr. are good for lower treks. May is good for higher ones.</p>	<p>Early June may have showers, but fewer tourists. July, August, and most of Sept. are rainy but bloom beautiful wildflowers.</p>	<p>The Thimphu Tsechu in Sept. marks the beginning of fall. Skies are generally clear, although brief but fierce storms can suddenly arise. Good time for treks.</p>	<p>Good time to visit newly opened Manas in the south of the country on the Indian border. You can also visit other areas, but weather can get cold, snow might cover passes and basic lodges may not have heat. Fancier hotels are fine.</p>
<p>NEPAL</p> <p>Like Bhutan, Nepal goes from 100' above sea level to Mt. Everest at 29,029' in less than 100 miles. Famous for trekking, Nepal also has new roads opening up exciting less-traveled areas for non-hikers.</p> <p>Every season has something to celebrate from Holi or Shivaratr in Spring to Tihar and Dasain in the fall.</p>	<p>For animal lovers, March is the month for visiting Chitwan or Bardiya - not too warm. By Apr. and May, temperature and humidity can be uncomfortable.</p> <p>Through Mar. and Apr. the Annapurna area also provides the right conditions for trekking, though hot and dusty.</p> <p>Additionally, Apr. through June is great for Everest treks while trekking Mustang is doable from May onward.</p>	<p>Summer is monsoon season in most of Nepal.</p> <p>Mustang is on the other side of the Himalayas, and summer is an excellent time to trek there.</p> <p>Dolpo in Far West Nepal can also be okay for trekking with possible showers.</p>	<p>Sept. is still good in Mustang, but too hot and rainy in other trekking areas.</p> <p>Fall is festival season and ideal for most trekking, drives, and visits to Chitwan. Roads may be bumpy because of summer rains.</p> <p>Watch for surprise storms on treks that sweep up from the Bay of Bengal.</p>	<p>Winter brings snow to the higher areas. Although trekking is still possible, be prepared. Pokhara is lovely, warmer than Kathmandu and a winter home for many hill people.</p> <p>For critter viewing, late Jan. - Feb. is grass cutting season in Chitwan and Bardiya, and a good time to see animals. Temperature is pleasant, but remember, many animals sleep late in the cold.</p>

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<p>INDIA</p> <p>A vast country, India has temperatures varying from warm, to hot, to hotter, depending on where and when you go. The exceptions: hill stations in high altitude mountains in the north and Ladakh across the Himalayas.</p> <p>Festivals occur in different places year-round, so most of the time you can find something to celebrate.</p>	<p>Early spring is perfect for visits to most of India from Kerala to Rajasthan and up in the hills. Apr. is lovely in hill stations or Sikkim/Darjeeling. By May, places like Delhi, Agra, or Varanasi become unbearably hot and dusty.</p> <p>By May, Ladakh is thawing, Kashmir is in bloom and heavy tourist season has not yet begun.</p>	<p>Summer in most of India is monsoon season. Exceptions are the Ladakh, Kashmir, and Spiti areas, which are wonderful for touring and trekking and rife with religious festivals and tribal fairs. Ladakh is known as Little Tibet and has maintained the integrity of its Buddhist culture.</p> <p>Aug. can also be a good time to visit Kerala, as the monsoon finishes early, prices are low, and tourists are few.</p>	<p>Monsoon and heat persist in much of India through Sept. but Ladakh is still perfect and host to the colorful Ladakh festival.</p> <p>By Oct., weather in the heart of India has cooled, harvest is in process, and fall celebrations are rampant. This is a perfect time to travel India's heartland and desert areas.</p>	<p>Winter is an outstanding time to explore most of India from Kerala to Orissa to Gujarat. Just allow time for flight delays in the Delhi area and surroundings.</p> <p>Yes, you can visit Ladakh and track snow leopards, but it is v-e-r-y cold!</p>
<p>CHINA</p> <p>Like India, China is huge. And for every place there is a season. The greatest changes in climate are from north to south and east to west. At all times, there are festivals to see, whether traditional Chinese, Buddhist, or other ethnic celebration.</p>	<p>Spring is the ideal time to celebrate the traditional Qingming festival or Sister's Meal Festival in Guizhou or visit Beijing, Xian, and most parts of central and Western China. Yunnan, Guizhou, Guanxi, and other parts are temperate and spring planting is in progress.</p> <p>Southern China is warm in the early part of the season, but then gets very hot and humid by late Apr. and May. Hong Kong may be cloudy.</p> <p>Overall, the Silk Road is pleasant in the late Apr. and May, but the desert areas can get cold at night.</p>	<p>Summer and monsoon rains can affect much of China from east to west, Hong Kong, and south of the Himalayas. Weather is hot and muggy.</p> <p>Across the Himalayas, summer is the best time to visit Tibet for trekkers, tourers, and festival lovers. Snow has melted on passes and cars can get across.</p> <p>EBC visitors can usually drive out of Nepal.</p> <p>On the Silk Road, the desert and Turpan can be very hot during the day with unremitting sun.</p>	<p>Fall, like spring, is glorious in central and western China. Many harvest festivals take place throughout the country, along with the mid-autumn and Double Ninth celebrations.</p> <p>In Tibet, fall is unpredictable with possible snow blocking the high passes by Oct.</p> <p>Early fall is excellent for traveling the Silk Road with moderate temperatures and little rain.</p>	<p>"Go south, young man," could be a theme for winter. Temperatures in places such as Shanghai, Fujian, Hong Kong are sunny and cool.</p> <p>Beijing, Xian, and much of central China can be cold, damp, and cloudy come winter.</p> <p>Snow can blanket higher parts of Yunnan, Sichuan, and Qinghai as well as potentially block many roads and passes in Tibet.</p>

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<p>SRI LANKA</p> <p>About 400 miles north of the Equator, Sri Lanka generally offers warmth and sunshine throughout the year. Temperatures average between 80-86 degrees , peaking in April, in Colombo and on the coasts. Hill country is about 10 degrees cooler, also peaking in April.</p> <p>The country has two major monsoons - <i>Yala</i> or the southwest monsoon, bringing rain to Colombo and the south and west coasts in May/June, and <i>Maha</i>, affecting the north and east between Dec. and Febr.</p> <p>On average, there is plenty of sunshine at all times of the year and the heaviest rain bursts are at night.</p>	<p>Spring is a great time to visit the less traveled north and east coasts, stopping at places such as Jaffna, Trincomalee, Kandy, and hill country.</p> <p>The southwest and locations such as Colombo and Galle are experiencing the <i>Yala</i> rains.</p> <p>Throughout the country, temperatures are humid and at their peak in the high 80's.</p> <p>The month of Apr. is host to Sinhalese and Tamil New Year. <i>Vesak</i>, otherwise known as the festival of light, occurs in May.</p>	<p>Although Sri Lanka is always hot and humid, summer is a relatively dry time to visit anywhere in the country.</p> <p>During July and Aug., join the locals and celebrate the Esala Poya Perahera festival at the Temple of the Tooth or at Kataragama.</p>	<p>In the fall, sometimes you may run into the intermonsoon, with some rain at different times throughout the country. Warm, humid weather with sporadic showers tend to dominate the scene.</p> <p>Fall is the season of Eid-al-Adha, the Moslem Festival of Sacrifice, and Deepawali, the Hindu Festival of Lights.</p>	<p>Beginning in Nov. and running through Feb., the <i>Maha</i> or northeast monsoon, affects the northeast part of the country. During these times, it's best to head south towards Colombo, Yale, and Galle.</p> <p>You can join the pilgrims for their annual festivals such as Sri Pada, the Adam's Peak pilgrimage, or Christmas.</p>