

Travel Tips! - recommended reading

A little research goes a long way! Learn about the people and places you visit. Prepare in advance, read along the way or put the pieces together after your journey; whichever resonates the most with you. Here are some suggestions to shed a little light on a truly fascinating part of India.



Most of the books listed for Orissa are not so easy to source outside of India. Kolkata and Bhubaneswar are the best hubs for Orissa related books.

orissa journeys

Paroja by Gopinath Mohanty

Originally in Oriya, this is a classic, beautifully poignant story of life in tribal Orissa.

Goddess in the Stones by Norman Lewis

A doyen of travel writers; this travelogue accounts a 2500 mile journey in search of old world India.

Out of this Earth by Felix Padel & Samarendra Das

Overwhelming but scrupulous account of East India Adivasis and the Aluminum Cartel

Bondo Highlander, by Verrier Elwin

A study of the Bondo (Bonda) community by 1950's veteran anthropologist.

A Bride for Jagannatha, by Sisir Das

An insight into the traditional culture of Jagannath Temple through the eyes of a devadasi.

Bhima Bhoi ~ Verses from the Void

Compilation, translation & commentary of mystic poetry of a secular Oriya saint.

The Hungry Tide, by Amitav Ghosh

Tale of life in the Sundarbans ~ ok, technically it's not Orissa, but similarities can be seen in the mangroves of Bhitarkanika, besides a thoroughly enjoyable read.

India

For a country as vast and distinct as India there is a plethora of genres, authors and subject matter to choose from. There is no one definitive India book, but there are a few that shine brighter than the rest. Our attempt is to list these here. We hope you enjoy our selection and welcome your suggestions.

history

The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity by Amartya Sen

Sen celebrates India's diversity of religious beliefs, customs and democratic traditions in these provocative, erudite essays.

Taj Mahal, Passion and Genius at the Heart of the Moghul Empire by Diana Preston & Michael Preston

A vivid narrative history of the creation of the Taj Mahal, a memorial created by Emperor Shah Jahan for his beloved wife.

In Spite of the Gods, The Strange Rise of Modern India by Edward Luce

Luce tackles the challenges and reality of the world's largest democracy with insight and balance in this portrait of a nation in transition.

cultural portrait

The Idea of India by Sunil Khilnani

Khilnani confronts the complexities, paradoxes and challenges of the nation in this brief survey of India since independence.

May You Be the Mother of a Hundred Sons by Elisabeth Bumiller

A wonderfully written, fascinating portrayal of Indian women from Bollywood stars to Indira Gandhi to prostitutes. An insightful portrait of the country seen through the eyes of its women.

Kim by Rudyard Kipling

For the sheer pleasure of its prose, insight into the British in India and its extraordinary sense of place, you can't do better than Kipling's classic novel.

India, A Wounded Civilization by V.S. Naipaul

A vivid and unsentimental cultural portrait that draws together conversations with Indians, news reports, politics and literature, paying particular attention to the Hindu confrontation with the West.

Third Class Ticket by Heather Wood

In 1969 a group of 40 elderly Bengali villagers undertake a pilgrimage of India. This is

A portrait of India in 1969 through the eyes of 40 elderly Bengali villagers undertaking a pilgrimage by train on a third-class ticket. Remarkable insight!

India from Midnight to the Millennium and Beyond by Shashi Tharoor

Eloquent argument for the importance of India to the future of the industrialised world. Shashi Tharoor addresses significant questions combining political scholarship, personal reflection, memoir and fiction in vivid prose.

Slowly Down the Ganges by Eric Newby

In 1963, the author and his wife set out on a 1,200-mile voyage down the Ganges River. The title could apply as easily to the ruminative attitude Newby takes towards his journey as to the many mishaps that bedevil the quest.

Literature

The White Tiger, A Novel by Aravind Adiga

Mordant, funny, angry, horrifying, this Booker Prize-winning tale of a village pauper turned success (and murderer) skewers the ambition, inequity and corruption of 21st-century India.

Sea of Poppies by Amitav Ghosh

Amitav Ghosh conjures the tumult of the 19th-century Opium Wars and colonial India in this expansive tale, featuring a motley cast of British, Chinese and Indian characters.

Midnight's Children by Salman Rushdie

A madcap, comic take on the birth of modern India in all its splendid and unexpected manifestations, Rushdie's greatest novel refers to those, like the narrator, born at the stroke of midnight August 15, 1947.

Shantaram, A Novel by David Gregory Roberts

This epic page-turner, a bestseller in Australia, revolves around the exploits of a young Australian man at large in the streets of 1980s Bombay.

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy

This luminous, Booker-prize winning novel is part mystery, part family saga -- a tale of lost innocence set in Kerala during the tumult of the 1960s.

art & architecture

Hindu Art and Architecture by George Michell

An excellent survey of Hindu art and architecture, explaining the meaning and construction of principal images and buildings, as well as the development of Hinduism and the corpus of myths that have influenced its artistic tradition.

autobiography

An Autobiography, Or the Story of My Experiments with Truth by Mohandas K. Gandhi

There is no substitute for reading Gandhi in his own simple, direct prose. A highly recommended glimpse into the personality and life of this remarkable figure.

food

Curry, A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors by Lizzie Collingham

This cultural history explores the origins and spread of Indian food and the interplay between Muslim, Hindu, Portuguese and British traditions on the Subcontinent.

field guide

Birds of India by Richard Grimmett, Carol & Tim Inskipp

A compact, authoritative guide to 1,300 birds of the subcontinent, from Nepal and Bhutan to Sri Lanka, with stunning color plates, range maps and descriptive information.

Mammals of India by Vivek Menon

A Princeton Field Guide edition of Menon's authoritative survey of 400 mammalian species. Large, clear photos, range maps and introductory chapters on groups of mammals, conservation and protected areas.

