

The Departures Guide to the New India

10 OUTFITTERS YOU NEED TO KNOW

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The American Express Platinum and Centurion Concierge can arrange any trip to India along with these regional specialists.

1. A seasoned international player, Abercrombie & Kent leads set and tailor-made tours throughout India, next year debuting a 16-day adventure covering the north and south. One night is spent on a private two-bedroom boat. 800-554-7016; abercrombiekent.com
2. Absolute Travel's privately guided trips and once-in-a-lifetime experiences, like a one-on-one lesson with a famous sitar player, are the forte of this New York-based company. 800-736-8187; absolutetravel.com
3. From its main office in London, Ampersand Travel designs bespoke tours, combining off-the-beaten-path activities with luxury experiences and accommodations. They're especially good on India's south. 44-207/289-6100; ampersandtravel.com
4. Headquartered in Delhi, Banyan Tours creates custom itineraries using authoritative guides. Its sister company, Shakti, focuses on high-end Himalayan expeditions. 91-11/4173-4810, banyantours.com; 91-11/4173-4788, shaktihimalaya.com
5. Known for its upscale biking and walking tours, the Canada-based Butterfield & Robinson, which has been taking riders on a set Rajasthan trip for nearly a decade, launches in March a biking excursion through the southwestern state of Kerala. B&R also does private custom trips. 866-551-9090; butterfield.com
6. The UK-based Greaves's introductory guided tour of India will blow first-timers away, and its bespoke itineraries can include elephant polo matches and dinners with famous authors, all while you travel the country in the company's brand-new private plane. 800-318-7801; greavesindia.com
7. Although its main office is in New York, Our Personal Guest has an unparalleled array of Indian contacts. It uses them to put together highly personalized journeys, which can include a private puja ceremony in Varanasi. 212-319-1354; ourpersonalguest.com
8. Extensively researching clients' individual interests, the Indian firm Peirce & Leslie plans excursions ranging from comprehensive cultural tours to more thematic ones (culinary, architecture, wildlife). They can also introduce guests to an unusual Hindu oracle and the Old Delhi sport of pigeon racing. 91-12/4404-9361; peirceandleslie.com
9. The New York-based Remote Lands uses the unique relationships it has cultivated in India to provide bespoke experiences, such as a stay in the Darjeeling palace of the Maharaja of Burdwan, as his personal guest. 646-415-8092; remotelands.com
10. With a focus more on rural adventures than luxury accommodations, London's Wild Frontiers specializes in north India, even the difficult territory of Kashmir—though its friendships with Raj royalty have been known to land travelers in much safer places. 44-207/736-3968; wildfrontiers.co.uk