

or coalition of parties with a majority in Parliament. Real executive power rests with the Council of Ministers, with the Prime Minister at its head.

Climate

The yearly Indian seasons are winter (December-February); summer (March-May); monsoon, the rainy season (June-September); and post-monsoon (October-November). Temperatures vary considerably across the country. In Delhi, for example, it can reach 45°C in the summer and 5°C at night in the winter. The climate in the south is tropical throughout the year. Rainfall is erratic and unevenly distributed, but is concentrated during the monsoon period.

When to Visit

October to March is the preferred period as the extreme heat of the summer and the humidity of the monsoon season make travel uncomfortable. Because winter is the peak tourist season, however, hotel and air bookings should be made well in advance. Even flights on major routes within India are often fully booked days in advance, because of a shortage of aircraft.

Holidays

Statutory holidays vary from state to state and year to year. Holidays observed throughout India and most states are:

Republic Day — *January 26*

Holi — *March 22*

Good Friday — *March 24**

Id-UI-Fitr — *May 8*

Id-UI-Zuha — *July 14**

Independence Day — *August 15*

Muharram — *September***

Gandhi's Birthday — *October 2*

Dussehra — *October 8*

Diwali — *October 28*

Guru Nanak's Birthday — *November 3*

Christmas Day — *December 25*

** These dates apply to 1989 only. Dates vary from year to year.*

*** Depends on sighting of moon.*