



the
leap

GAP YEAR PROGRAMME

Leap to India

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT + EDUCATION + GOLDEN TRIANGLE

India *Immersed*

From the spice-scented streets of Kochi to the pink sandstone palaces of Jaipur, this 4-week programme blends volunteering, trekking, and cultural exploration. Work in local schools, trek through the biodiverse cloud forest, sail along the blindingly beautiful backwaters and finish with India's world-famous Golden Triangle — Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur.

LOCATIONS:

KOCHI + DELHI + AGRA + JAIPUR

ACCOMMODATION:

VOLUNTEER HOUSE + CAMPING
+ MIX OF HOTELS

ENVIRONMENTS:

WESTERN GHATS + BEACHES +
CITY

TEAM SIZE:

MAX 14 PER DEPARTURE

SOCIAL:

BEACH BARS + CITY EVENTS

FITNESS:

GENTLE MOUNTAIN HIKES

STAY LENGTH:

4 WEEKS

Reserve your place

INFO@THELEAP.CO.UK / +44 1672 519922





Few places burst with life quite like India. The colours, the flavours, the sounds, the sheer energy – it's everything you imagine and more. But this Leap takes you beyond the usual backpacker trail, deep into the lesser-known South where history, community, and purpose collide.

Your home base? Fort Kochi – the fabled port city once at the heart of the world's spice trade. Here, you'll spend three weeks living within its ancient walls, volunteering at two local schools, helping students practice their spoken English and working on small renovation projects that brighten their classrooms.

In between your working weeks, we've lined up adventures for the weekends – a chance to trek through the cloud forests of the Western Ghats, drift along the Kerala backwaters, and watch the sun set over the Chinese fishing nets that frame Kochi's iconic skyline.

And just when you think you've seen it all, the journey shifts north. Your final week sweeps you through the Golden Triangle – Delhi, Jaipur, and Agra – immersing you in India's most famous landmarks and revealing the striking contrasts between North and South.

India will dazzle you, surprise you, and change the way you see the world.



India *Itinerary*

Day 1 – 2 Welcome to Kochi *Settle in & explore*

Your adventure begins in Fort Kochi, a coastal gem where India's spice-trade past meets a creative, cosmopolitan present. You'll settle into our volunteer house tucked within the old town – your base for the first three weeks of this journey.

Your first weekend is all about finding your feet. You'll ease into local life with a guided wander through Kochi's colonial streets, painted doorways, bustling spice markets, and those famous Chinese fishing nets silhouetted against a fiery sunset. Welcome to Kochi.

Days 3–7 Into the Classroom *Teaching and exploration*

During your time in Kochi, you'll work with two local schools – each offering a different glimpse into daily life and education here.

Your first week will be spent at a school where we've been asked to help the students refine their spoken English. Through games, stories, and simple conversation, you'll help them gain confidence with their accent and pronunciation – something they rarely get the chance to practice. It's not about perfect grammar, but about connection, encouragement, and giving these young students the confidence to use their voices.

By mid-afternoon, you'll be free to explore Fort Kochi – weaving through Broadway Market's spice-scented lanes, joining a local football game, or sipping chai by the waterfront.





What an experience, what an adventure, what a brilliant time I had. Many thanks to you and all The Leap team. It is a fantastic and very organised company to travel with.

India *Itinerary*

Days 8-9 Kerala Backwaters

Weekend adventure

After a full-on first week, we've planned for you to experience the spectacular Kerala backwaters, a maze of serene lagoons and canals lined with coconut palms and vibrant village life.

Here you'll board a traditional houseboat and gently cruise through this peaceful world, watching fishermen cast their nets and kingfishers flash across the water. Meals will be freshly prepared on board – fragrant, home-cooked, and best enjoyed as the sun sets over the rice paddies.

The next morning, you'll trade river views for ocean breeze at Marari Beach. Here you'll have time for a lazy morning of sea air, beach cafés, before heading back to Kochi.



India *Itinerary*

Days 10–13 Raksha: Standing Tall with Dignity

Teaching and development

Your second week takes you to Raksha School – a remarkable school and rehabilitation centre dedicated to supporting children and young adults with diverse learning and developmental needs. Founded in 1985 by the inspirational Raksha Menon, the school's mission is simple but profound – to help every student develop their potential, gain independence, and face life with courage and dignity.

Here, we'll have the privilege of stepping into their world – joining teachers and therapists in a blend of creative, sensory, and skill-based activities designed to nurture confidence and communication. Think music, painting, storytelling, and gentle physical play, all tailored to help students express themselves in ways that words alone never could.

The aim is to offer presence, patience, and joy – to encourage ability over limitation and celebrate every breakthrough, no matter how small. It's heart-led volunteering at its best: hands-on, humbling, and full of human connection. By the end of the week, you'll understand just how powerful small moments can be in sparking real, lasting change.



India *Itinerary*

Days 14–16 Trek the Western Ghats

Adventure and challenge

Next up, you'll head up into the misty Western Ghats for a three-day long-weekend trek around Anaerangal Lake – one of India's most beautiful and biodiverse regions.

You'll spend your days walking 4–5 hours along winding trails through tea plantations and spice gardens bursting with cardamom and pepper, with glimpses of tribal village life along the way.

You'll stay in stylish Indian cottage style tents, share home-cooked curries, and wake to mist drifting over the hills – a perfect pause between projects.



India *Itinerary*

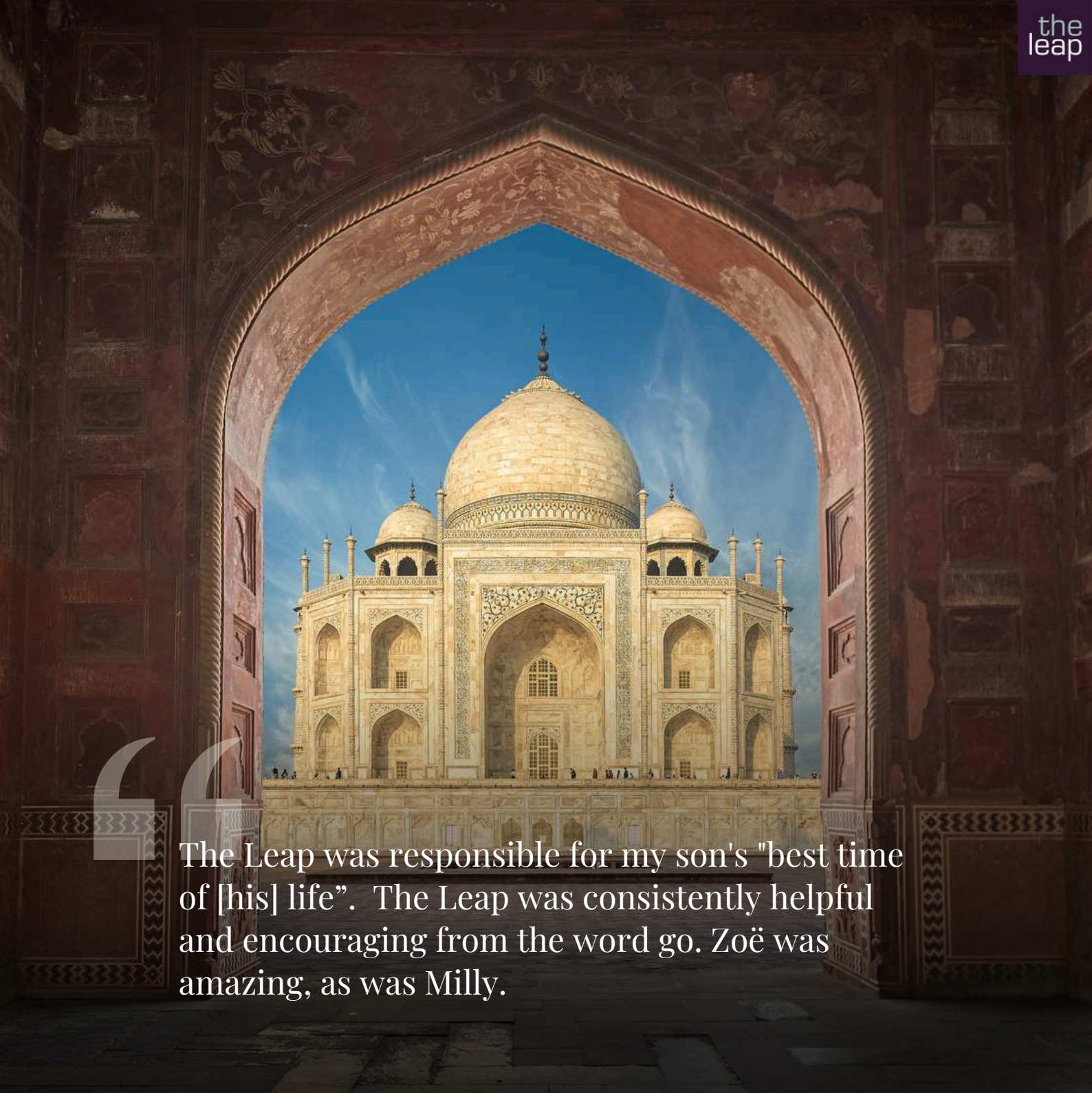
Days 17–21 Paint, Create, and Celebrate

Renovation and exploration

Back in Kochi, it's time to roll up your sleeves for your final project – bringing colour and creativity to the classrooms at Raksha. The plan is for you to help freshen up the walls with paint and murals, leaving behind a space that's brighter and warmer.

As your southern chapter draws to a close, it's time to celebrate – maybe a Bollywood movie night, an evening of dancing, or a farewell dinner by the sea. By now, the South will feel like home... but one last adventure still awaits as you head north.





The Leap was responsible for my son's "best time of [his] life". The Leap was consistently helpful and encouraging from the word go. Zoë was amazing, as was Milly.

India *Itinerary*

Days 22–27 – The Golden Triangle Adventure

Adventure + exploration

Welcome to the North. After the calm, coastal rhythm of the South, you'll fly to Delhi and dive headfirst into India's cultural heartbeat – where history, hustle, and heady spices collide.

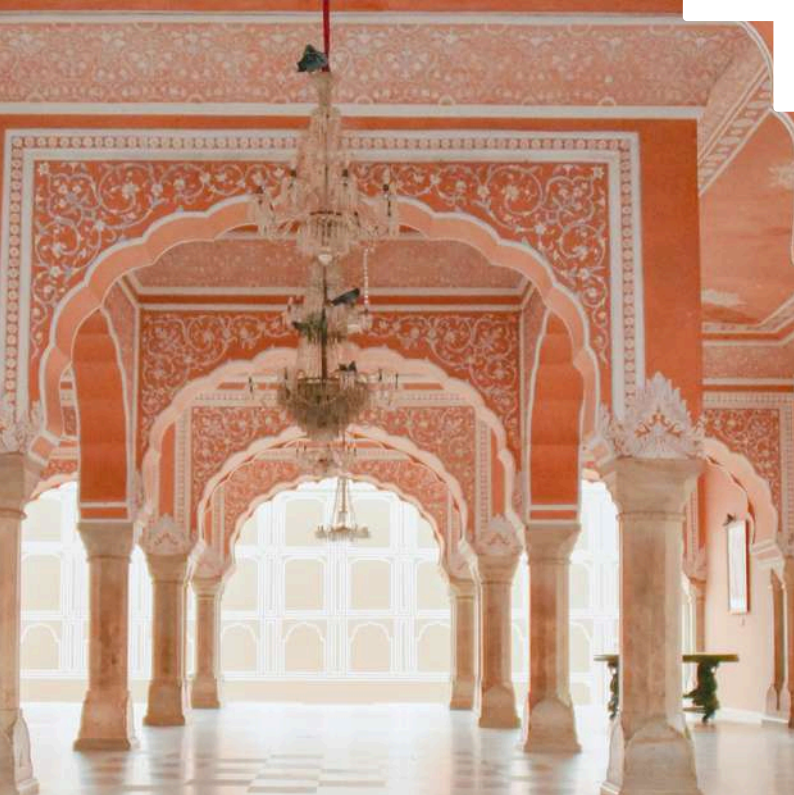
First stop is Delhi – where ancient monuments rise beside buzzing markets and the air hums with life. Practice yoga at dawn, wander Mughal ruins, and taste street food so good it'll ruin all future snacks forever.

Then Agra – waking early to watch the sun spill over the Taj Mahal, glowing pink in the morning light. Then step into the pages of history as you explore the mighty Agra Fort.

Finally – stunning Jaipur – the Pink City, alive with charm and colour. Ride up to Amber Fort, weave through vibrant bazaars, and try your hand at traditional block printing with local artisans keeping centuries-old craft alive.

It's a whirlwind of colour, chaos, and culture – the perfect counterpoint to your southern serenity, and the ultimate finale to your Indian adventure.





India *Itinerary*

Day 28 – Homeward Bound

Fly home or carry on travelling

Your final morning in Delhi – one last coffee, a few final laughs, and that familiar “can’t believe it’s over” feeling. You’ll head home with sand in your bag, a new floaty wardrobe, and a deeper sense of what travel can do – how it connects, challenges, and quietly changes you.



India *Staying & Food*

KOCHI

Rainbow House. Kerala Volunteer Accommodation.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included with a range of dietary options.

MUNNAR TREK

This multiday trek will take you along mountainous trails, lakes and even through dense cloud forest. You'll spend your evenings camping in Indian style tents. All the camping gear you need will be provided for you on site, all you need is a day bag with your essentials.

All meals are provided, but you may want to bring snacks for energy. Expect delicious local dishes, veggie and non-veggie options available.

KERALA BACKWATERS

Spend your night cruising down the breathtaking backwaters, sleeping on a traditional Houseboat.

Meals are provided on board, apart from lunch at Marari beach.

GOLDEN TRIANGLE

This is your chance to see the India you've read about, touring around some of the country's most iconic sites.. As a result, you'll get to stay in hotels such as the Rose Mallow in Delhi, The Retreat in Agra and the Park Ocean in Jaipur. (Exact hotels will depend on availability). Breakfast included in hotels, for lunch and dinner you have the freedom to explore - budget around \$20 per day.



Project *Background*

Our India adventure comes to life through our inspiring local partner, Ridhi Patel, founder of Volunteering Journeys.

Ridhi has dedicated her career to creating meaningful opportunities for travellers to make a tangible difference – combining community impact with authentic cultural immersion. Based in Kochi, she works closely with local schools and grassroots initiatives, building connections that directly support the community she calls home. Together, we've crafted an itinerary centred on education and empowerment – giving you the chance to form real connections and help shape young lives, whether through classroom support, creative workshops, or simply sharing conversation and confidence.

A highlight of this collaboration is our time at the remarkable Raksha School in Kerala – a pioneering centre offering education, vocational training, and rehabilitation for children and young adults with neurodevelopmental challenges. Founded in 1985 by the extraordinary Raksha Menon, the school empowers its students to develop their potential so they can face life with courage and dignity.

Whether you're assisting with English lessons, helping with disabled care, or supporting school renovations, your time here will leave a visible, lasting impact – both on the students and on your own understanding of what it truly means to give back through travel.

India Dates & Costs 2026



31ST JANUARY 2026

4 WEEKS

£3250

INCLUDED:

- Pre-departure briefing
- Leap t-shirt
- Airport pick-up and return transfers for team flight
- Safety and induction briefing on arrival
- 24-hour emergency back-up, management and support by UK and in-country team
- All volunteering projects as described
- Project-to-project transport
- Accommodation as described
- Entrance fees to activities
- Meals as described
- 3-day trekking expedition in the Western Ghats
- Cross country flight journey to the North
- North India tour

NOT INCLUDED:

- International flights
- Private transfers to and from the airport if you do not arrive on the main team flight
- Travel insurance
- Medical expenses
- Food and accommodation if away from the programme
- Alcoholic drinks and some soft drinks
- Laundry fees
- Any excursions not listed
- Meals as described on the Golden Triangle Tour and beach trip.

Good to Know

We recommend bringing a combination of a debit card and a Revolut (or similar) card for convenience and security. ATMs are widely available across India, making it easy to withdraw money as needed.

For extra spending, we suggest budgeting around £100 per week, though this may vary based on extra activities and shopping.



“This trip has left me with a group of life long friends from around the world, experiences that will affect me forever and skills to help me through life. I would highly recommend this trip.

India *What to Pack?*

Clothes

- Less is more and a laundry service is available
- A selection of light weight trousers, shorts, t-shirts to wear during the day for project work
- A selection of nice clothes for the evenings
- A long sleeved t-shirt for working within schools.
- A hoodie/fleece for the trek
- A lightweight waterproof jacket
- 1 pair of sturdy trainers
- 1 pair casual shoes & flip-flops
- Beach wear: sun hat, swimmers etc.

Toiletries & Medical

- Basic everyday toiletries
- Sun cream/after sun
- Travel wash
- Hand sanitiser
- Insect repellent
- Antibacterial spray/cream for open wounds.
- Rehydration powders/tablets
- Savlon/E45/Sudocream
- Antihistamines
- Immodium
- Mediplasters
- Personal Medication: Bring extra supplies, know the generic names of your medication, and ensure you can manage allergies (e.g. carry an epipen if necessary)

Equipment

- Small dry bag
- Waterproof phone cover
- Packing cubes - useful to manage your rucksack
- Towel/sarong x 2. The microfibre towels are great as they dry quickly
- 1 pair of working gloves - a pair of sturdy gardening gloves will do the job
- Head torch with flashlight, red LED option
- Plug adapter required - they have American style plugs
- Sunglasses
- Water bottle
- Spare, cheap phone - just in case you lose/break your mobile
- Portable phone charger

Good to Know

- No hard suitcases allowed - they are a nightmare to travel with.
- Go for a rucksack or a duffle bag.
- Domestic flights are strict about weight limits, so air on the side of caution and pack smart!

India *Nitty Gritty*

Communication

Hindi is the most spoken language in India, though English is widely spoken and you can encounter a range of dialects as you explore the differences between the North and the South. Fancy a challenge? Try impressing locals in Kochi with some key phrases in Malayalam, the official language of Kerala. Your guides are English speaking to help you translate.

Phones & WIFI

Many phone plans have international options. Indian SIM card are readily available near the volunteer house. Wifi is available apart from the Houseboat and the Trek.

Your Team

Maximum of 16 and a minimum of 6 volunteers per departure. The programme cannot run with fewer than this. 5 to 6 weeks prior to departure, if the minimum group size hasn't been met, you will be offered an alternative placement or a postponement, depending on availability and preference. Anyone aged 18- 22 can participate.

Visa + Entry requirements

A tourist visa and entry card are necessary for entry. We will provide you with all references and information needed to process your application in advance of the trip.

Passport: Your passport must be valid for at least six months from your date of entry and have at least two blank pages for visa stamps and immigration stamps.

Exit: You strictly must exit India before your Visa expires. We recommend the standard 30 day tourist visa, though you can explore longer options if you'd like to explore India through onward travel.

Flights

You'll fly into Cochin Airport (COK) and depart from Delhi Airport (DEL) with exact dates dependent on flight availability. Please do not book any flights independently - wait for our admin email, which will include our recommended flight itinerary.

India *Nitty Gritty*

Behaviour

This is a team experience and looking out and being respectful to one another is vital to create a positive experience for all. However, if anyone puts themselves or others at risk, does not listen to safety advice and is being disrespectful to the team and staff then we have to revert to our discipline procedures. These involve: a verbal warning, followed by a written warning, followed by a dismissal from the program – with no refund. Please do not be that person who ruins it for everyone else.

Managing Expectations

We do our best to describe our programme as accurately as we can so that you have realistic expectations. It's important that you read this document carefully, and listen to the pre-departure zoom, so you are fully prepared with what lies ahead. Please remain flexible, as tasks and projects may change, depending on the needs of the communities, projects on the ground and weather.

Your Safety

We prioritise safety in our gap year programs through detailed risk assessments, safety audits, and adherence to industry standards such as BS8848, Trading Standards, the Year Out Group, and the Gap Year Association. On arrival, teams receive thorough safety briefings and are provided with secure accommodation, risk-assessed vehicles, medical evacuation access, and reliable emergency communications.

Accreditations

We're a member of the Year Out Group and the first UK company accredited by the Gap Year Association.



“A truly professional and wonderful experience for any young person. I did not expect there to be such good communication between the The Leap and us parents. This was in the form of emails building up toward the trip and during the time away. Very reassuring for parents.



Reserve your place

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