

Concise Pune Guide for South Africans

This was compiled by Anet Ahern with input from the Pune 2018 SA group as a quick reference for South Africans. It is not as comprehensive as Bobby Clenell's guide, but it covers the main points, so should be seen as a companion to her excellent guide. Mail me if something is out of date!

1. Flying to Mumbai – check [Cheapflights](#) for options from SA to Mumbai. There are flights to Pune, but most people fly to Mumbai.
2. Getting to Pune and back from Mumbai airport – about three to four hours
 - a. Train – [Deccan](#) train – only recommended if you are in a group – you are likely to be tired and possibly distracted after the long flight. Very cost efficient and chilled. Take water and snacks, take your “loo kit” (at the end of this guide). Take a tuk-tuk or Uber from the station. Read “getting around” further on.
 - b. Driver – make sure you pre-arrange through a reputable agent such as [Roots and Wings](#), or through your hotel.
3. Hotels in Pune – check TripAdvisor for recent reviews and Bobby's guide for more options, but these are popular and convenient:
 - a. [Chetak, Ambience, Ketan](#).
 - b. SA [two-prong](#) plugs work in India.
4. Admin
 - a. [Electronic Visa application](#) is easy and convenient – specify tourist, not yoga.
 - b. You need a copy of your passport, your app form (with passport photo attached) and waiver form to register at the Institute.
 - c. A spare set of passport photos and a copy of your passport are always handy.
 - d. From SA it is easier to get US\$ and change to Rupees when you get to India, at the airport or in Pune. A lot of places only take cash. Rupees per Rand rate [here](#).
5. Connectivity
 - a. For a local SIM [Airtel](#) (airport) is convenient, but the signal is not consistent in Pune.
 - b. [Idea](#) is a bit more of a mission, as you need to go to the main office (about 3km from the Institute) and you need e.g. passport photos and an Indian landline number, so make sure you have what they need before making the trip there. However, coverage is great and is it more reasonable than Airtel.
 - c. Most people get by with hotel Wi-Fi, switching on data for maps when needed, and focusing on yoga the rest of the time!
6. Getting around
 - a. Walking – wear (old) closed shoes and a hat. Stay on the main roads and walk in groups after dark. Because of where we live, it is tempting to think anywhere else must be safe – in the words of Abhijata “there are good people and there are bad people”. We are also used to driving everywhere, and not to walking functional distances. Check on google maps exactly how far everything is before venturing out. “Near” can mean a half hour walk through roadworks! Crossing the street is an experience – be careful, but don't walk hesitantly. Raise your hand to draw attention as you intend to cross – even at a pedestrian crossing. Pay attention when you are out and about. Lock your passport and money in the safe, carry what you need.
 - b. Tuk-tuks – make sure the meter is running or agree on a price beforehand. Do not expect the drivers to know where you want to go, even if you've shown them the address. Very convenient once you know where you are going.
 - c. Uber – generally available and reasonable, best option if you don't know where you're going – but you will need data to order one. Just note that the traffic is worse for cars, so it takes longer.

7. Things to pack
 - a. Instant coffee and [milk pods](#) If you're not a tea drinker, rusks, crackers or plain biscuits for when you want something familiar and bland.
 - b. Oatso easy, granola or raw oats to soak and eat with nuts and fruit when you need something filling and simple, or your hotel does not include breakfast
 - c. [Protein](#) powder to mix with takeaway [Lassi](#) for a filling smoothie.
 - d. A [blender bottle](#) (for water and mixing a smoothie) or water bottle. Ask your hotel for a bowl and cutlery to eat fruit, granola, oats, smoothie bowls and leftovers
 - e. Wipes, sanitizer, a small [pocket towel](#), tissues.
 - f. Medication for diarrhea, cramps, Vitathion, anti-allergy tablets, insect repellent, probiotics, painkillers, magnesium, charcoal tablets, antiseptic cream, cold tabs or any alternative remedies that work for you for pain, dehydration, stomach issues, bites. [Sterimar](#) is useful for nasal hygiene. There are many pharmacies, but best to bring what works for you.
 - g. Sunblock, hat, sunglasses, a light scarf to protect your neck from the sun (or just buy one!), light rain jacket or umbrella and a light weight warm top.
 - h. Lightweight shopper or backpack to carry to practice.
 - i. Notebook and pen (not to be used in class, but useful for end of day notes)
 - j. A small container with [laundry detergent](#) for washing if you don't want to use a laundry service, and bring a [travel washing](#) line (nylon string will do).
 - k. [Dorabjee](#) is great for any basics you may need as well as spices to take home.
8. How to prevent diarrhea and other nasties
 - a. Don't use any tap water, not even for brushing teeth or coffee and tea in your room. Stock up on bottled water (usually sold at the hotel). Wash hands frequently and use hand sanitiser.
 - b. Buy fruit and peel it yourself, skip salads.
 - c. Eat at busy, recommended restaurants and stick to vegetarian.
 - d. Street food can be risky, but is tempting – if you have to experiment, go for cooked food, but probably best to avoid altogether.
 - e. The combination of traveling and a different schedule may play havoc with your digestive system for a few days. Keep drinking bottled water and eating well, it usually passes. Lassi (with a dash of turmeric – buy some there) and probiotics help.
9. Yoga practice essentials
 - a. Closed walking shoes and your carry bag or backpack.
 - b. Water for AFTER class – no drinking allowed during practice.
 - c. A snack for afterwards – e.g. banana or nuts.
 - d. Mat and ID Badge.
 - e. Wipes (carry 3-4 wet wipes in an empty [Fizzy](#) Tablet container or Ziplock in your bag), tissues, sanitizer, small pocket towel (use bottled water to wipe your face) and cheap flip flops that stay with your belongings in the practice room for when you need to go to the loo.
 - f. Hat, short sleeve top (no vests), shorts or leggings, coverup – loose pants or skirt, or a tunic ("kurta" – plenty on sale there), kaftan or longer loose top.
 - g. Cash - Yoga clothes, books, props and blankets are sold at, close to or outside the venues where you practice. Tuk-tuks also require cash.
10. Some general tips
 - a. Many Indian toilets don't have paper and the floor is often wet. Use tissues, wipes (place in bin when used) and sanitizer. Wear shoes or wash your feet immediately.
 - b. Laundry service is cheap and hand washing dries quickly, so [pack light](#). The principle of one on the body, one in the wash and one in the wardrobe works well, so you can manage with three yoga outfits. Dress modestly at all times (esp. women).