

Instructions for Foreign Volunteers Residing At Sevalaya

Before Arrival:

We will send you an application, which you need to fill and send it. Basically we will be asking for your contact details, two references, your travel details and your interests. Please inform Sevalaya about your travel details well in advance. If you need pick-up from airport or Rail station, please ask. Sevalaya vehicle with Driver will be sent and the Driver will wait outside with your name plate.

On Arrival:

Please sign the guest register. Based on the availability, room will be allotted to you. It may be one of the guest rooms, or, if not available, you may have to stay in the children's hostel. We will need a copy of your passport and Visa as we have to submit them to local police authorities, as soon as you arrive. A copy of the letter handed over to the local police station, will be given to you, which may be required to be shown to the immigration authorities, when you leave India.

Food:

You will be provided the regular children's home food. It will be difficult to make anything special for you. However, we will instruct the cook to make it less spicy, if you prefer. Anything else, you need, like fruits, bread, mineral water etc., you have to buy yourself from near by shops. Alcoholic drinks and non-vegetarian food is not allowed inside Sevalaya campus.

Dress Code:

Sevalaya is in a typical Indian village. We prefer our volunteers to dress in a way that's best suited to such an environment. From our experience with volunteers from various countries we suggest the following

- 1) The best dresses that women are comfortable with are
 - a. Casual Jeans and close neck T-Shirts/Shirts
 - b. Salwar Kameez (A Dress similar to Shirts and Trousers, but since they are available in cotton would be best suitable to the hot and humid climate. They are less expensive and can be bought once the volunteer arrives in India)

- 2) The best dresses that men are comfortable with are
 - a. T-Shirts/Shirts and Pants/ Long shorts
 - b. Some of the volunteers have even adjusted to the Dhoti, which is very comfortable for a Hot and Humid Climate.

Cotton is best suited for Chennai, throughout the year. You can buy some Indian clothes, in Sevalaya campus itself.

Public Behaviour:

Volunteers are advised to refrain from Hugging and Kissing in Public.

The concept of living together before marriage is still new to Indian Villages and which the villagers might find it difficult to adjust with. So we prefer separate rooms for men and women volunteers who stay with us and are not married.

If you are playing music, please keep the volume low, as there are children studying in the campus.

Voluntary work

The campus In-charge will allocate work to you on arrival, based on your interest and capabilities. While in campus, you need to follow the timetable of the campus.

Tours / Picnics etc

As you have come a long way to India, we recognize that you will be interested in seeing places in India. However, while you are in Sevalaya, your primary objective should be do voluntary service. When you find time, you can also plan your tours and picnics. We will be happy to give you guidance on this, if you want. Also Sevalaya organizes tours for the children and the senior citizens, now and then. If you are in campus during such occasions, you are welcome to join us. If you go out on your own, we need to clearly know your whereabouts, contact numbers, likely date of return etc., as we are answerable to local police about your movements. We will give you a form asking for such details and you need to fill this before leaving the campus. You need to handover the key and sign the guest register.

E-mail:

It will not be possible to access e-mail from the service center (Speed of access is low). However there are many browsing centers at Thiruninravur, which is just 6 kilometers from the service center. In case of emergency, you can use the e-mail facility with permission from campus in-charge, in the campus. Please remember that there is only one line and many incoming calls will be missed while you are using the e-mail.

Phone:

The campus phone does not have ISD connection. So volunteers can attend to incoming calls only. You are advised to carry your cell phone and you can buy an Indian SIM card on arrival. With this, you can have an Indian cell number, while you are in India.

Medical facilities

There is Doctor at Pakkam (2 kilometers from service center), whose clinic functions daily from 9am to 5pm. 24 hours medical facilities available at Thiruninravur.

Charges:

Sevalaya does not charge any money for your stay. As you have come to do service, it is Sevalaya's duty to give you free accommodation and food. Any extra expense has to be borne by you. If you want to make any contribution to the organization, you are welcome.

Gifts to Children:

There are hundreds of children in the campus and school and if you are bringing gift, it is better to bring for everyone. If you bring individual gifts only to some selected children, that will make the other children unhappy. It is much easier to contribute to the organization.

In case you have any Grievances:

In case you are not happy or you have any problem, you can talk to the Campus in-charge and discuss. If you are still not happy, you can contact the Managing Trustee or any one of the trustees.

If not found fit...

If the Sevalaya management finds that you are not fit to carry on the service activity given to you, or if you are found violating the rules of the organization or the laws of land, you will asked to leave immediately, without any notice.

Media

The volunteers have to get prior approval from Sevalaya before giving any news, article or statements about Sevalaya to publish in the press, or interviews in media (both electronic and press).

Sevalaya also will be obliged if it is kept informed on the information posted about Sevalaya in blogs or social networks etc.

Reports and Documents:

The volunteer has to record a daily report sheet provided by Sevalaya without fail. The Volunteer also has to submit a copy of the final report or document which he/she is submitting to the organization they are coming from.

Departure

While leaving the campus, please handover the room keys to the hostel office, sign the guest register. We would like to have your feedback about your stay, about Sevalaya in general and also your ideas for improvement. So we will request you to fill up a feedback form. If you need a drop at the airport or rail station, please let us know in advance.

General Information:

Sevalaya is around 40 Kilo meters west of Chennai city. (The airport is 16 Kilo meters south of Chennai and main train stations are inside the city). It will take 2hours by car to reach Sevalaya from air port and 1.5 Hours from rail stations. The nearest rail station is Thiruninravur, which is 6 KMs from Sevalaya. Small shops are available in Pakkam village, 2 KMs from Sevalaya. Many medium size shops are at Thiruninravur. Many of your day to day items can be purchased in Pakkam or Thiruniravur. If you want anything specific, you need to come to the city.

City is connected by train and bus from Thiruninravur.

Chennai has three seasons, hot, hotter and hostest. The Hot season is from Oct – Jan when the temperature will vary from 20 C to 30 C. From Mid-Jan to April it will vary from 25 C to 35 C. From May to July it will be 30 C to 40 C. From Aug to Sept it will be 25 C to 35 C. Rains are expected in the month of Oct and Nov.

Kasuva, where Sevalaya is situated is a small agricultural village. Majority of people are poor. It is generally a calm village and we don't anticipate any safety issues, under normal conditions.
