

**Dalit Solidarity, Inc.**  
Service Adventours Program Information

**I. Pre-Departure Check List**

- A. **Passports:** All travelers must have a passport that is valid for **6 months after their date of return and should have 2 blank pages.** If your passport expires prior to that date, or you do not have at least 2 blank pages for visa documents, you will need to renew your passport for international travel.
- B. **Visas:** All travelers to India require an Indian visa. Visa guidelines and the application form can be found at [http://www.indianembassy.org/newsite/visa\\_guide.asp](http://www.indianembassy.org/newsite/visa_guide.asp) Applications sent in the mail normally take about 5 working/business days to process from the date of receipt in the Embassy. We recommend that you obtain your visa no later than six weeks in advance of your departure date. Because you are required to include your passport with the visa application, we strongly recommend that you utilize a trackable, registered form of mail service such as Federal Express or UPS. While the majority of the form is self-explanatory, we recommend that the following information be entered:
- Line 23 – Circle “Tourist” visa.
  - Line 24 – Check the “6 months” visa period, unless for some reason you would like a longer visa. (The fee for a 6 month visa is \$60).
  - Line 29 – insert the word “tourism” for object of journey.
  - Line 30 – check “No” in response to the question whether you are traveling on behalf of a company.
  - Line 34 – insert “Chennai” for port of arrival.
  - Line 36 – insert the following name and address for Indian reference:  
**Mary Pauline**  
Principal  
St. Patrick’s School  
V. Salai Post  
Villupruam Dist. 605 652  
Tamil Nadu, India
- C. **Humanitarian Identification:** Prior to departure, all travelers will be provided with documentation (either a letter or id card) indicating that they are traveling with Dalit Solidarity, a humanitarian organization.
- D. **Immunizations and Medication:** All travelers need to make sure that they have the necessary immunizations and medications for the trip. We recommend that you review the current travel health information provided by the Center for Disease Control at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinationIndia.aspx#vaccines>
1. Immunizations. At least 2 months in advance of your departure date, we recommend that you contact your physician or local travel clinic about immunizations and medications that you may require for travel. Although your physician may

recommend additional immunizations, we recommend that each traveler obtain at least the following immunizations: **tetanus, polio, Hepatitis A and Typhoid(oral vaccine).**

2. Malaria. Although malaria has not been a major problem in our area in recent years, we recommend that everyone take an anti-malarial drug. There are several options discussed on the CDC website. Bed nets are not necessary.

3. Medications. You should bring a sufficient quantity of the prescriptions that you take every day. Be sure to follow airline security guidelines if the prescriptions are liquids. We also recommend that you bring medicine for diarrhea, usually over-the-counter medicine is sufficient.

#### **E. Medical Services:**

1. Insurance. **(Students traveling through their colleges and universities will obtain insurance through their respective institutions).** Travelers should contact their primary health insurance carrier, to determine coverage for international travel. All travelers are required to provide Dalit Solidarity with proof of medical insurance coverage for international travel, prior to departure. Should travelers desire additional coverage, for medical expenses, evacuation, life or trip insurance, we recommend that you contact any provider of your choice. We have used previously, International SOS, at [www.internationalsos.com](http://www.internationalsos.com) a major provider of international health care services for travelers, based in Philadelphia, PA.

2. Payment for Services. In India, payment for medical services is required to be made in cash, at the time of service. Travelers are responsible for the payment of any medical expenses incurred the trip, and agree to reimburse Dalit Solidarity in full, for any medical expenditures incurred on a traveler's behalf.

3. Treatment Facilities. Minor illnesses and injuries can be treated at our medical clinic. For more serious problems, travelers will be taken to either the Puducherry Institute of Medical Science <http://www.pimsmmm.com/> a 45 minute drive from St. Patrick's, or the Apollo Institute in Chennai <http://www.apollohospitals.com/Chennai.asp> which is affiliated with John's Hopkins Medical Center, and is a 2.5 hour drive from St. Patrick's.

**F. Luggage:** Dalit Solidarity generally books flights on Lufthansa. Lufthansa's baggage rules can be found online at [www.lufthansa.com](http://www.lufthansa.com) under Information and Services/baggage allowance. We recommend that you pack anything that you cannot live without (i.e. medications, personal items, glasses and contacts) and several days of clothing in your carry-on bag. In our experience, luggage is generally delayed rather than lost, but it may take several days to reach you. **If you need it-carry it on board with you.** All valuable items such as electronic equipment, should be packed in your carry-on bag. Security at the Frankfurt airport is very tight. You should expect to be frisked, and expect to have your carry-on items examined carefully.

- a. Carry-on bags: Lufthansa permits each traveler to bring 1 piece of hand baggage weighing no more than 17 pounds and no bigger than 21"x15"x7". In addition, you are permitted a handbag, or other small bag, a coat or blanket, camera and reading material.

- b. Checked bags: Lufthansa permits each traveler to bring 2 bags, weighing a maximum of 50 lbs each.
- c. Gels and liquids: Gels and liquid items (i.e. toothpaste, contact solution) must be in a container no larger than 4 oz., carried in a clear zip-lock bag, and presented at security.
- d. Extra bags: As humanitarian travelers, we are permitted extra luggage. Groups departing from each airport may be asked to bring extra bags containing supplies and equipment needed for the trip. The program manager will contact each group leader as needed regarding these arrangements.

**G. Currency:**

1. Rupees. We recommend that short term volunteers bring about \$200 worth of Indian rupees in cash with them. Currency conversion is sometimes a lengthy process and it saves time if everyone has their rupees in advance. This should be a sufficient amount of spending money for most travelers on a two week trip. Most purchases in our area must be made with cash. Contact your local banks to arrange to have a sufficient amount of rupees available for exchange prior to your trip. Remaining rupees can be exchanged at the airport prior to departure.

2. Euros. We also recommend that you bring at least 10 Euros with you to purchase food in the Frankfurt Airport.

**H. Flight Information:** Dalit Solidarity makes all airline reservations for volunteers traveling with the organization to India. The airlines require that we provide them with a list of our traveler's names **exactly** as they appear on their passports. Further information will be provided regarding air travel as needed, and all travelers will be provided with the necessary tickets and documentation prior to departure.

**I. Boarding Facilities:** While in India, travelers will reside at St. Patrick's, our boarding school. Living quarters are dormitory style, with bunk beds. The dormitory is air conditioned, although travelers should keep in mind that power outages are common in India. There is a new shower and bathroom facility with western style toilets, showers and sinks.

**I. Dress and Behavior:** India, and especially rural areas like ours, is significantly more conservative in dress and behavior than the US. For women, tank tops, shorts and skirts above the knee are generally not appropriate. (with the exception of soccer coaches when they are on the field). We recommend wearing Capri pants or long skirts. We also recommend wearing shirts that reach the waistline, with a crew neckline or collar, and short sleeves. Public affection between men and women, other than greetings of hello or goodbye, are not considered appropriate. We are not trying to restrict you, as much as we are trying to be considerate of our hosts and their culture.

**J. Food:** We strongly discourage bringing food, with the exception of individually wrapped bars and tubes of peanut butter (available in most grocery stores). We recommend that

each person bring two boxes of some kind of energy or nutrition bar (Cliff Bars are our favorite ☺), and one or two peanut butter tubes. The food at our facilities is south Indian style, plentiful and prepared with Americans in mind. (our cook tries not to make it too spicy). There is an open air cafeteria that travelers will share with the St. Patrick’s students. Bottled water will be provided at all times, including when travelers are visiting and working outside of St. Patrick’s facilities.

**K. Weather:** The weather in southern India is generally hot and humid. Here is a chart of average temperatures and rainfall. Current weather is available on our web site.

Monthly Normals												
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
High Temperature ( F / C )	84 / 29	87 / 31	92 / 33	96 / 36	100 / 38	99 / 37	96 / 35	94 / 34	93 / 34	89 / 32	85 / 30	83 / 28
Low Temperature ( F / C )	69 / 20	71 / 22	74 / 24	79 / 26	82 / 28	81 / 27	79 / 26	78 / 26	78 / 25	76 / 24	73 / 23	71 / 22
Precipitation ( in / mm )	1.06 / 27.0	1.34 / 34.0	0.16 / 4.0	0.47 / 12.0	1.54 / 39.0	2.80 / 71.0	4.76 / 121.0	5.43 / 138.0	6.34 / 161.0	14.69 / 373.0	16.10 / 409.0	5.98 / 152.0
Average Percent Sunshine	37	37	41	40	39	28	26	27	28	27	25	28

**L. Time Difference:** During the months of December and January, India is **10.5 hours ahead** of Eastern Standard Time. When it is 2 pm on Tues. in Philadelphia, it is 12:30 am on Wed. in Villupuram. Dalit Solidarity’s website has clocks with running time for India and the US.

**M. Contact Information in India:** We recommend that except in case of an emergency, travelers advise their families and friends not to call during the trip. All travelers will have an opportunity to make phone calls and use the internet at least once during their travels. If travelers must be contacted, the following phone numbers can be used:

<u>Program Director, Betsy McCoy</u>	(cell) 011-91-866-373-5426
<u>St. Patrick’s School/Pauline:</u>	(cell) 011-91-944-425-0745
<u>Fr. Raj:</u>	(cell) 011-91-944-306-6588

## II. Suggested Packing List

- About 5 changes of summer clothes that wash and dry easily (laundry services are available for a reasonable charge)
- bathing suit/mesh shorts; (needed for those teaching swimming)
- sandals and sneakers
- Sleeping pad (self-inflating type works well), sheet or sleeping bag *liner* (sleeping bags will be too hot), travel pillow
- Lightweight sweater or sweatshirt for evening

- Travel towels-thick towels are difficult to dry
- Toiletries (try to bring everything you need, particularly feminine products and contact lens products, which are difficult to find)
- Sunscreen (minimum FP30)
- Bug spray-with DEET
- Antibacterial soap
- Camera with sufficient batteries and/or charger with plug for Indian outlets, and memory cards (electronic equipment can be purchased in our area, but it is about 3 times as expensive, and selection is very limited)
- 2 nalgene bottles (you will need these when working off-site)
- Journal
- Hat
- Glasses and contacts with prescriptions
- Watch and travel alarm
- Daypack
- Flashlight

We have found that the vacuum packed travel bags are very useful to pack something bulky like a pillow. We do not recommend that you bring laptop computers. I-pods however, are great for the long flights. The school has computers that travelers can use, however, there is only a limited, dial-up internet connection. We will be traveling to a browsing center for blogging, and everyone should have the opportunity to visit a center once during the trip.

### III. Program Policies for Volunteers

Safety and security for all Dalit Solidarity volunteers is a top priority. To ensure the best possible experience for all of our volunteers, we expect all participants to follow our DS program policies. These policies are designed to provide a fulfilling experience for everyone-our volunteers, staff, and the communities in which we work.

**A. Drug, Alcohol and Tobacco Policy:** Volunteers can be terminated from the program at the discretion of the Program Director. Reasons for termination include, but are not limited to the following: jeopardizing one's own safety or the safety of fellow program participants; violating local laws or cultural norms; or jeopardizing Dalit Solidarity's relationship with the communities where we work.

1. **Drugs:** The use of drugs is illegal. Anyone who is found using, buying or seeking drugs will be expelled from the program. This policy is strictly enforced.
2. **Alcohol:** Both minors and adults are prohibited from bringing and drinking alcohol in Dalit Solidarity facilities. Volunteers under the age of 21 are also prohibited from consuming alcohol while participating in a Dalit Solidarity program. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit registered in the United States, we follow all United States laws. In the United States, the legal drinking age is 21. Adults are allowed to drink alcohol outside of Dalit Solidarity facilities, as long as their drinking does not endanger their personal safety or the safety of

fellow volunteers, and does not present a negative image of Dalit Solidarity to the community.

3. **Tobacco:** All Dalit Solidarity facilities are tobacco-free facilities. Smoking of cigarettes, cigars and pipes is prohibited. Chewing tobacco is also prohibited on Dalit Solidarity facilities and during any Dalit Solidarity program or event.

- B. **Gift Giving and Donations:** Dalit Solidarity works diligently to empower the people with whom it works. Your volunteer efforts and program fees help us to accomplish that goal. You will be working with people who live in true abject poverty. Some of them may ask you for money. However, we request that you refrain from giving them cash or gifts directly. Should you wish to provide assistance in addition to your program fees, we request that you consult the Program Director for guidance.
- C. **Safety:** While participating in Dalit Solidarity programs, each volunteer is expected to follow the staff's instructions and recommendations that have been created to ensure the safety of the volunteers, staff and local people. If a volunteer violates any rules and instructions, it is at the discretion of the Program Director to terminate his or her participation. More information on specific safety rules will be provided during orientation upon arrival in India.