Volunteer in India
A Guide by Knowledge Must
Volunteer Guide India

“There are some parts of the world that, once visited, get into your heart and won’t go. For me, India is such a place. When I first visited, I was stunned by the richness of the land, by its lush beauty and exotic architecture, by its ability to overload the senses with the pure, concentrated intensity of its colours, smells, tastes, and sounds. It was as if all my life I had been seeing the world in black and white and, when brought face-to-face with India, experienced everything re-rendered in brilliant Technicolor.”

- Keith Bellows

Welcome to this guide for students, graduates, and professionals who are interested in working as a volunteer in India. With your decision to come to India, you have made the absolutely right choice. Managing intercultural differences is more important than ever in a world which is constantly in a process of transformation. To be prepared for global challenges, the following pages will assist you in the process of successfully crossing cultural boundaries. This guide will answer most of your questions about working and living in India. We hope that you will find it useful.

This guide is presented to you by Knowledge Must, a leading intercultural solutions provider that assists students, professionals, and organisations to successfully cross cultural boundaries, mainly between East Asia, South Asia, and the Western world. Combining the specific service areas of our five divisions, Career Must, Language Must, Training Must, Travel Must, and Culture Must, we at Knowledge Must are able to deliver truly comprehensive solutions for individuals to experience a new professional and private environment. With our division Career Must, we at Knowledge Must assist students and professionals to build an international career.

The unique chance to immerse yourself in the daily routine of another culture opens totally new professional and personal perspectives, and helps you to pursue your goals in life. At Career Must, we provide a great opportunity for applicants to broaden their volunteer choices by locating and securing exceptional volunteer positions, and organising all of the logistics involved, such as arranging housing and transport.

With our bases in India, Europe, and China, we specialise in customising intercultural solutions for our diverse clients. Please visit our website www.knowledge-must.com for more information and contact us to learn how we can be of help to you.
FAQ Volunteering in India

1. Why should I work, study or volunteer abroad?

Whether you are starting your career, you want to add a key differentiator in your curriculum, or you are simply looking for a radical change, working, studying and volunteering among people of other cultures can offer you the opportunities that you are looking for. As a result of your immersion in the daily routine of another culture, you will be able to interface effectively with people of diverse backgrounds. Work, study, and volunteer experiences abroad awaken a tremendous potential in you!

What makes working, studying and volunteering abroad so exciting? It offers dynamic challenges and compelling rewards, such as:

- Developing skills for living in a culturally diverse and interdependent world
- Learning languages by immersion
- Gaining new personal insights
- Expanding your creativity and cultivating different approaches to problems
- Understanding developments taking place in other corners of the world
- Experiencing other cultures (and their architecture, art, history, music, etc.)
- Developing friendships for a lifetime
- Confronting you with different conceptions of life
- Gaining a unique and new appreciation for your native culture
- Getting a change of scenery from home
- Satisfying your desire for adventure, exploration, and fun
- Finding career fulfilment
- Living a fuller life
Besides, work, study, and volunteer experiences abroad not only broaden your personal experience. They also open avenues for cultural exchange and make a contribution to the peaceful globalisation of humanity.

2. Why should I volunteer in India?

“Never respect men merely for their riches, but rather for their philanthropy; we do not value the sun for its height, but for its use.”
- Gamaliel Bailey

Working as a volunteer in India is the opportunity of a lifetime. India is a booming country and foreign knowledge and skills are urgently needed. More and more people have worked in different nations around the world, but India is still an emerging economy and therefore coming to India means to be a pioneer. Whether you volunteer in international organisations, educational institutes, or local NGOs, you will experience and understand how things are done, what problems result, and how to solve them. You will gain knowledge that is valuable to your future career as well as have the satisfaction from having contributed in a meaningful way.

Volunteering promotes intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, solidarity, and tolerance at the national, regional and, most importantly, local level. Participating in volunteer projects is great way to immerse yourself in local culture while at the same time giving you direct opportunities to contribute constructively to a meaningful purpose. You will not only help the needy but also help you as a volunteer to know another culture, may be another language and make many new friends. Besides
learning new skills, you will go back home with a greater appreciation for Indian customs and culture. It has never been so easy to make a difference in our world, while having the time of your life doing it! Indian people generally enjoy sharing their customs and traditions with foreigners so make sure to use this opportunity to immerse yourself in Indian culture. Friends and colleagues will invite you to marriages, celebrate local festivals, and join them on weekend outings. One major advantage in comparison to most volunteer positions elsewhere is that in India right from the start you are usually given the chance to take high responsibility and to be involved in important projects. In addition to that your efforts will be appreciated a lot. You will be loved and respected by the locals for what you do for them.

While you improve your skills at work your volunteer position in India will also lead to personal growth. Difficult situations in everyday life or at work can be challenging but you will learn how to manage them and gain confidence in yourself. What Frank Sinatra sang about New York is even more true for India: “If I can make it there, I’ll make it anywhere!”

“If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions, I should point to India.”

- Max Mueller

Another plus is that life in India is very affordable for volunteers. Food and clothes for example are, for the most part, comparatively inexpensive. Due to the cheap travelling expenses, India is also a wonderful country to combine work and travel experiences. There is really an unlimited amount of places to see and explore, from the majestic Himalayas in the north to the picturesque beaches with their powdery golden sand in the south of India. Watch people while they are praying on the banks of the Ganges River or go to an Indian wedding and dive into the colourful and exciting culture.
3. What are the key ingredients of a successful stint as a volunteer?

“My father used to say, ‘You can spend a lot of time making money. The tough time comes when you have to give it away properly.’ How to give something back, that’s the tough part in life.”

- Lee Iacocca

Central to your successful volunteering experience are your personal motivation, realistic expectations as well as a belief in grassroot changes and their long-term effects.

**Motivation**
You should have an open mind, a willingness to teach others, and a passion for helping those in need as well as enthusiasm for living abroad and meeting new people.

**Realistic expectations**
You will be a happier and a better volunteer for setting yourself achievable goals, rather than trying to go about saving the entire world. Pick the fights you can win and steer clear of insurmountable obstacles.

**Grassroot changes**
Volunteer services make a difference on the grassroot level. Small achievements such as vaccinated children or a new irrigation project accumulate and gradually reinforce each other and play a vital role in major social and economic improvements.

**Long-term effects**
The true benefits of volunteer work mostly only become evident in the longer term. Vaccinated children will not continue spreading a disease and thus will eventually save uncounted lives. Improved irrigation projects lay the foundations for more productive harvests for generations to come. Time turns the smallest achievements into forces of positive change.

4. Why pay for volunteer placements?

Paying for volunteer placements has many obvious and less obvious advantages. However, you might wonder, where exactly is your volunteer placement fee flowing to? The placement organisation acts as a middleman for volunteers and communities/cause, providing the former with administrative and
logistical support, while providing the latter with capable and motivated bodies and brains. These organisations cover their costs by the placement fees they charge volunteers.

Of course you can also organise your own volunteer opportunity and take care of the logistics yourself. Independent volunteering will be an option for those experienced of living and working among people of other cultures and seasoned international travellers. To volunteer independently in India, do some research on reputed organisations in your field of interest and visit your destination to meet organisations you would consider working for and which might be willing to accept you as a volunteer.

But keep in mind that without a partner, volunteers have to independently locate projects, apply to the relevant authorities, arrange housing and transportation, etc. This often takes more time, energy, and in some cases money, than volunteering with the support of a placement organisation.

**Identifying Opportunities**
You may be able to travel independently to many of the places where volunteer positions are available. However, a partner will facilitate the entrance into the community and allow for an exposure to the culture that you will have a hard time to achieve on your own.

**Administration**
Fees paid by volunteers are also used to cover administrative expenses.

**Enlisting Volunteers**
Without expert support many organisations are unable to locate and enlist suited international volunteers.

**Supporting Volunteers**
Volunteer placement organisations provide a wide range of support to volunteers including pre-departure support such as visa facilitation and on-site support. This support is what gives both you and your family peace of mind that your health and safety are ensured.

**Preparation and Training**
Adjustment to a different cultural environment is rarely spontaneous. It is of utmost importance to train and prepare volunteers for this challenge. Trainings are generally provided to help you master the professional skills required for your position and to learn about the language, culture, and traditions of India.
Accommodation, Food, and Transport
The organisation you will be volunteering with often arranges accommodation, food, and/or transport for volunteers.

The Project Itself
Your fees help to sustain volunteer projects, by offering administrative support up to purchasing vital materials. Your contribution guarantees the continuity of the project.

Volunteers vs. Paid Labour
A large share of international volunteers come only on a short-term basis (mostly several weeks to 3 months). In many cases, short-term international volunteers create a considerable burden. That is why organisations constantly evaluate whether or not to rather employ local people, who will have to be paid, but in contrast to international volunteers have better suited skills, knowledge of the local culture and language, and also have a longer term commitment.

5. Who can volunteer?
Everybody who is at least 18 years of age can come to India for volunteering. Many volunteer organisations focus on youth but there are as many who attract volunteers from across the age range. Even with more than 60 years of age you are not too old to volunteer. The maturity, experience, and skills of older volunteers are noticed by organisations.

Also regarding potential timeframes there is much flexibility. Volunteer opportunities can vary between a week and several years. However, if you want to make a bigger difference and want to see some of the effects of your efforts, try to stay for a couple of months.

6. What visa for volunteering in India?
This, in fact, is a very complex question. In India, there are many different types of visa, for example for tourists, businessmen, journalists, and researchers. International volunteers come to India on several different types of visa: Tourist Visa, Entry Visa, Employment Visa, Business Visa or Student Visa, none of them being applicable to all volunteer scenarios.
The Entry Visa (X Visa) is for people whose purpose of visit to India does not fit into any of the standard visa categories, such as people coming for short-term courses, volunteer work, or unpaid internships to India. In most cases, an Entry Visa is required for all non-Indian nationals going to India for volunteer work. You should apply for an Entry Visa along with a copy of the offer letter stating the terms of your volunteer position. However, sometimes embassies refuse to issue Entry Visa for volunteer positions even advising to apply for a Tourist Visa or a Student Visa.

Volunteer positions with an allowance or salary are generally considered to be paid and these technically demand an Employment Visa (which requires additional documentation such as the employment contract and a proof from the employer that no suitable Indian national could be found to fill the position). However, many organisations might directly ask you to come on a Tourist Visa because it is easier for them and for the applicant – although it is technically not legal.

Before applying for any kind of visa, make sure that your passport is valid for at least 6-18 months, depending on your specific visa. Applicants who are not citizens in their country but residents must send a copy of their residence permit with the application. It is always advisable to consult the respective embassy in your country, for example, the Indian embassy in Spain, Germany, Italy, etc. There you will find most of the information concerning your visa. Please also get in touch with us to learn more about the best suited visa for your particular purposes.

Registration of visa is required for all foreigners visiting India on long term (more than 180 days) Student Visa, Research Visa, Employment Visa, Medical Visa, Medical Attendant Visa, and Missionary Visa. These visa types will be required to be registered with the concerned Registration Officer within 14 days of arrival in the country, irrespective of the actual duration of stay.

Foreigners visiting India on other categories of long-term visa, including Business Visa and Entry (X) Visa, do not require registration if the duration of stay does not exceed 180 days on a single visit. In case you intend to stay for more than 180 days on a single visit, you should get yourself registered well before the expiry of the 180 days.

Please also take note that with the change in Tourist Visa regulations there needs to be a gap of at least 2 months between two visits to the country on a Tourist Visa. In case you want to re-enter the country within two months, permission should be sought from the Head of Mission concerned indicating the specific reasons for another visit within a short period. In such cases registration would be required within 14 days of arrival.
Visa extensions up to 15 days on any type of visa is generally granted if you cite reasons such as illness, death in the family, non-availability of flights, etc. Generally, specific powers of visa extensions beyond 15 days and conversion of visa for foreigners residing in India, vests with the Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi. However, note that the change of visa type from one category to another is normally not granted.

Change of original company by a foreigner who has come to India on an Employment Visa is mostly not allowed on the same visa. You will usually be required to go back to your own country and come to India again on a fresh visa. However, in "deserving cases" the Ministry of Home Affairs may permit such a change.

7. How much do I spend on living?

The transport by bus, rickshaw or train is the cheapest and safest way to travel in the splendid scenery and great geographical diversity of India. For short trips within the cities you will normally use an auto-rickshaw. For 10 km all the way across Delhi for example, you should pay 70 INR (Indian Rupees) maximum, which is slightly more than 1 Euro. As the drivers sometimes try to charge strangers (but also locals) a highly over-priced fee, it's all about bargaining, which can be lots of fun. At the same time these experiences will be a good practice for other daily situations. Taxis are around double the auto-rickshaw price but also more comfortable. Take one if you want to have a nostalgic ride in the typical black and yellow Ambassador cars, which were copies of the 1950s British Morris. For costs of travelling see FAQ number 21 “Can I travel in India?”

The official currency in India is the Indian Rupee (INR). The exchange rate fluctuates mostly between 55 and 70 INR to 1 Euro. You can find out the exchange rate any time at www.xe.com. Make sure to retain your receipts whenever you exchange any currency or traveler’s cheque to Indian Rupees or withdraw any money from the ATM. You will be asked to show this receipt when you want to exchange Indian currency back to any other currency upon your departure.
Vegetables and fruits in general are available at every bazaar for a very small amount of money. Imported products such as chocolates are usually a bit more expensive as they are at home. You may like to try to cook Indian food (or maybe just Spaghetti), but you can as well go out for dinner every day, which might be even cheaper. If you do not feel like going out, you can as well order at almost every restaurant or fast-food-wallah and they will usually deliver it for free.

Indian culinary traditions are extremely diverse and justifiably famous throughout the world. You very likely will have tasted Indian food in your country, but this will only be a tiny part of India’s extraordinary range of foods. Indian cuisine is famed for its spicy edge. Even food items people do not mostly associate with spiciness are often richly flavoured with spices in India. To the uninitiated it makes sense to start slowly and gradually build up your capacity to stomach the heavy spice combinations, but for those who have an affinity to spicy concoctions, it usually is love at first taste!

Food safety is an important issue during your stay in India, as many foreigners fall sick due to polluted food or beverages. If you can’t resist the tempting treats of street vendors and their food variety (which most people can’t), we suggest you to look for places that are very popular with local people and foods that are freshly prepared in front of your eyes. Poor food preparation, cooking, and storage are fairly widespread, so please take extra care.

You will get tasty Samosas, a famous Indian snack with spicy boiled potato stuffing inside a crispy flour dough served with spicy chutney, at almost every corner (around 5 INR each, 0.08 Euro) or you can go to a restaurant and try the immense variety of Indian cuisine’s dishes. Indian food is famous for the use of numerous spices to create flavour and aroma. Pay 50 to 400 INR (0.7 to 5.7 Euro) for a sumptuous meal, which will appeal to all your senses.

Each region and each state has its own unique food. Among the popular dishes in North India are Mutter Paneer (a curry made with cottage cheese and peas), Pulao (fried rice), Daal (lentils), Dahi Gosht (lamb in yoghurt sauce), Butter Chicken, and of course Samosas. In South India you will not get around Idlis (steamed cakes made from rice batter), Dosas or Uttapams (pancakes made from a batter of rice and lentil flour). These are just a few examples, because fully covering the huge variety of Indian food probably would take hundreds of pages. So while in India, take every chance you get to sample and savour local food and specialties. Do not hesitate to also try out the street food stalls to spend some time with the locals.
Please also note that tap water in India is generally not safe to drink. We recommend that you purchase bottled water for your consumption (but make sure that the seal is not broken). You can also request your hosts to boil water for you to consume or request filtered water in hotels and restaurants.

Alcoholic drinks are always comparatively expensive. A bottle of local beer costs 20 to 50 INR (0.30 to 0.7 Euro) in the shop but restaurants, bars and clubs will charge you between 120 to 350 INR or even more. So going out (in the sense of Western nightlife) costs in India about the same as back home (although you mostly do not pay entrance fees), because clubbing usually is for higher income groups. Nevertheless, it is affordable for a growing number of people. Going to the movies, for example, will cost you around 20 to 250 INR (0.30 to 4 Euro). Besides, there are plenty of other cultural events, mostly for free.

At last you will also need a place to stay for your time in India. There is a big range of prices, depending on the location and interior. You get a very simple room in a shared flat for around 7,000 INR per month (about 120 Euro) but also a more luxurious, spacious shared-flat room for around 20,000 INR (about 330 Euro). But keep in mind that these prices can only be considered as broad guidelines, because prices differ immensely from region to region. See FAQ number 11 “How do I find an accommodation?” for further information.

8. Is India dangerous?

India in general is a very safe country as long as you avoid conflict areas. Therefore it is advisable to consult your embassy to request information about the latest political developments. Check with reliable sources and ask for local advice before heading to Kashmir or northeast India, as both areas have long-running insurgencies.
For all countries, there will always be some places where it is very safe and some where it is not. As in every other country in the world, savvy and caution are the best weapons against theft or worse. The role of women is different in Indian culture than it is for example in Western Europe. To avoid provoking the unnecessary, women should not wear revealing clothes like short skirts and tight tank tops and should keep in mind that an Indian man may understand certain behaviours or gestures differently than for example a man in their own country. Wearing local clothes will decrease the amount of attention you receive.

But please do not jump to early conclusions. India is generally safe for women; just make yourself aware of the cultural differences. Larger cities tend to be more modern and people are more used to seeing tourists and expats, so there is more flexibility in terms of what kinds of clothes are acceptable. Further, it is needless to say that you have to be careful of pickpockets in crowded places. Hygiene is a very important topic in India as well and diseases can be a serious danger to your health. But when you follow some simple hygienic rules you can reduce risks to a low level. Malaria and dengue can be a danger in certain areas but there are effective ways to protect yourself from mosquito bites and reduce the risk of an infection to a minimum. Ask your family doctor or a medical institute in your area for detailed information.

Foreigners in India often attract the attention of beggars, frauds, and touts. Beggars will often go as far as touching you and following you around. In what might be counterintuitive to you, we recommend that you do not show any emotions or even say out loud "No". The best response is to look unconcerned and ignore their behaviour. The more attention you pay, the longer they will follow you hoping for a payback. It will test your patience, but this strategy generally is the most effective.

Never carry your passport/visa, credit cards, traveller’s schedules or other travel documents in your shoulder bag or backpack – try to always carry them on your person or store them safely away in your hotel or home. Do not show off your wallet or valuable goods in public. Be particularly cautious about your possessions in crowded areas such as local festivals, markets, tourist sites, railways, bus stations, or on trains and buses.
Only keep enough money for your immediate needs in your pocket and hide the rest on your body or store it at a safe place. Ensure that you are aware of the values and appearances of different local banknotes to avoid being short-changed or handed duplicate money.

9. What if I get ill?

Medical care in India in general has lower standards than for example in Western Europe but it depends largely on the specific geographical area. If you get ill, your first choice should be a modern hospital, which you can nowadays find in every major city in India (for instance, Max Hospitals and Apollo Hospitals). Usually any hotel or landlord will know the safest and best clinic in case of need. The healthcare sector has witnessed an enormous growth and due to this, some Indian hospitals have very high international standards and so you should generally be in good hands there.

You will have to pay for the medical treatment in advance: A consultation is about 200 to 600 INR (about 3 to 10 Euro) but laboratory tests, with an amount of 500 to 3,000 INR (about 8 to 50 Euro) as well as staying in a hospital can be more expensive. Carrying sufficient funds is therefore absolutely essential, as your expenses for medical treatment are usually refunded by your insurance company only at the time you are back home. To avoid delays or trouble with being refunded, make sure you receive a receipt from the doctor who treated you, along with an exact diagnosis.

Next to modern medicine, India is a treasure trove for systems of traditional medicine. Ayurveda ("science of life") is the most famous of these, but also Siddha and Unani are very popular. These medical systems are based on thousands of years of experiential observation and for many ailments locals will rather employ a traditional remedy – they might also well work for you.

10. What kind of healthcare do I need?

Again it depends on multiple factors like your state of health, duration, and area of stay. In any case it is recommended to buy travel insurance, get immunised, and take along a medical kit. Which items might be necessary for a personal medical kit, you can find out by asking a chemist or doctor in your town. Please note that even if you currently have insurance, it most likely does not cover travel outside your homeland’s borders - no reason to despair as short- and long-term travel insurance is readily available and mostly very affordable.
Travellers to India mostly experience medical problems like upset stomachs and diarrhea. If these persist, you should seek medical advice. We suggest that you pay any costs up-front and then file a claim with your insurance company to get your medical expenses reimbursed once you are back home. For larger expenses, it is also possible to arrange for your insurance company to pay the hospital or medical provider directly, but this often takes a considerable amount of time and many phone calls.

You may feel that you need to purchase all medicines at home to bring with you such as Paracetamol, Immodium, and other emergency products. This is not really a necessity as all the basic remedies you could possibly need are available at local pharmacies at a fraction of the cost. Medicine is very cheap in India but please have in mind that some medicines which might be essential for you are not easily available in more remote places.

These basic vaccinations for travellers to India are recommendable: diphtheria, tetanus, hepatitis A and B, polio, and typhoid. Rabies and Japanese B Encephalitis immunisations are recommended for long-term travellers (longer than 3 months). In any case it is important to seek medical advice. Before leaving for India, another way of getting more information on immunisation is to go to an institute for tropical medicine in your area.

11. How do I find an accommodation?

In general there are several ways to find an accommodation in India. A first step could be to search the Web. There are multiple Internet forums you can check out, where different people exchange their experiences and useful advice. Some embassies are providing lists of people or agents who offer a place or at least assistance with finding an appropriate accommodation. Knowledge Must can also assist you in finding a shared flat or an individual flat for yourself. Due to our large network it is also possible to arrange a stay
with an Indian family, which could help you to adapt more readily to an unfamiliar set of values, habits of thought, and patterns of behaviour. We help you to find accommodation that meets your requirements. Please get in touch with us via our website www.knowledge-must.com.

12. Can I get financial support?

Generally, life in India is really cheap. Therefore volunteering, combined with an adventurous holiday to discover India, is really affordable. Even more, volunteering in India is probably more favourable than at home. Obviously, you still need to ensure to have access to sufficient funds during your stay in India in order to be able to cover your various expenses that (of course, heavily dependent on lifestyle) may average on 100 Euro per week. With this amount you can have a nice and convenient stay even in the most expensive cities like Delhi and Mumbai. There are usually plenty of stipends, grants, and travel allowances available, which stay mostly unknown to the broad mass of potential applicants. And, of course, you can always do your own fundraising back home for a worthy cause!

If you are an applicant from an EU country you have lots of opportunities to get financial support. Along with travel allowances, scholarships of 50 to 400 Euro can be obtained by applicants. Here you will find a listing of international scholarship programmes: www.internationalscholarships.com. If you are an applicant from the USA you can check out the website www.finaid.org/scholarships. The following database is also dedicated to listing scholarships for international applicants in specific countries: www.iefa.org.

For example, if you are an applicant from Germany you can check out the website www.stipendienlotse.de, a site supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. For German nationals, the most common way to get financial support is the programs of the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service / www.daad.de). They offer, for instance, travelling allowances or short-time scholarships and on their website you will also find a list of additional organisations offering financial support.

Depending on the organisation you are applying to for financial support, you will need to do some paperwork. To get all the necessary documents ready may take some time, so make sure to start the process of application as early as possible. Another option to get supported is an organisation called InWent (www.inwent.org), which works on behalf of the German Federal and State Governments offering a wide range of support programmes such as their programme called ‘Praxisqualifizierung Asien’.
Talk to us for further information! We will be happy to assist you in realising your plans to do meaningful volunteer work in India.

13. What to bring to India?

Light cotton clothes are advisable in the dry and wet period; for the cool season one has to keep in mind that it can get really cold in the northern regions of India. By and large, one is well advised to take just the most necessary pieces of clothing to India because clothing is very inexpensive. From tailor-made clothes to most international brands, if you want to take advantage of the almost infinite shopping opportunities, you should have enough space in your bags.

All kinds of cosmetics and toiletries are available in supermarkets and malls. Sun protection is not common and comparatively expensive. Insect repellent is always available and can be bought in India. Tampons are generally easy to buy in the cities. Generally, cosmetics and toiletry items are about the same price as they are in a Western country. Hygiene is important when you come to India. Therefore you may like to bring some disinfectant spray or disinfectant cleansing tissues, since bathrooms are not always clean or available. However, do not be too paranoid about falling sick. Psychology plays a central role in your staying healthy.

Electricity in India is 50 cycles (HZ) and 230-240 V and the outlets are two- or three-pronged. Some appliances you bring from home may need adaptors for the plugs, which are available in most supermarkets and hardware stores. Other essential items are: that book you really wanted to read, nail scissors, camera and all the cords, as well as cables and chargers you need for your electric devices. Since power cuts are common (especially in the hot period), bring a torch although you can as well buy one once you arrive.

Also do not forget to bring: engagement, curiosity, love for adventure, and – most importantly – patience. Spend a week before you leave building it up and hold it in reserve for those frequent times when you will have to wait for a train running late or when you bargain a shirt of 250 INR (4 Euro)
down to 100 INR (1.50 Euro), which sometimes takes long but thus can be even more fun. And don't worry too much about forgetting something at home. Most items can be purchased locally and often at cheaper rates than back home. However, please make sure that you pack all your key documents and papers – passport, copy of passport, transport tickets, credit/ATM cards, and optimally one additional form of ID.

14. How do I get from the airport into town?

Your employer may arrange an airport-pickup for you. If you will be staying in a hotel, you can ask there to be picked up as well or you can tell us to make arrangements for you. In case you want to try it on your own, the safest and most convenient way is to hire a prepaid taxi. You can find prepaid taxi booths at the airport. They are operated under the direct supervision of the traffic police. It helps to avert over-charging, refusal, misbehaviour or harassment by the drivers. You simply go there, tell where you want to go, and then a duly signed receipt indicating the taxi number, destination, service charges, and the fare will be given to you.

15. How do I get to know other people?

Getting to know other people in India will probably be the easiest part of your stay. Either by sharing a flat, socialising with colleagues at work, clubbing, cultural events or, for example, a movie-evening at an embassy, you will get to know a lot of interesting, open-minded people from almost all over the world – and especially from India – in a really short time. In India it is astonishingly easy to meet “important” people and to broaden your network. In any case, you will live in an Indian neighbourhood and will have plenty of opportunities to get to know people.

“The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity.”
- Dorothy Parker
Based on experience it is possible to say that you will meet new people nearly every day. Therefore make sure that you have enough space in your pocket for the dozens of business cards you will get from them. In addition, hospitality is a mantra for most people in India. The Sanskrit saying, ‘Atithi Devo Bhava’, which means ‘the guest is god’, underlines this priority very well, so it can happen very easily that you drive around with the auto-rickshaw and end up being invited by the rickshaw-wallah to his house where his wife serves you a cup of hot masala chai and the most delicious Indian food.

16. How do I find out about what’s going on in the city?

Newspapers including the Hindustan Times and The Times of India carry daily and weekly listings and information on interesting events. For Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore the famous Time Out magazine is published and gives you lots of ideas of what is up in the city. In Delhi, for example, there are other local magazines such as First City and Delhi Diary. Visitors from Germany, for example, can consult the website of the Goethe Institute (known as Max Mueller Bhawan in India) (www.goethe.de/Ins/in/ned/enindex.htm).

For applicants from France it is always useful to look at the website of the Alliance Francaise in India (www.afindia.org), which also offers the chance to take part in cultural activities. For major cities like Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata etc. you can check out the website www.burrp.com. This site provides you with the latest information about nightlife, shopping, events, exhibitions, and so on. Besides that, you will hear about a lot of events by word of mouth and never will have to worry what to do and whom to go with.

With our division Culture Must (www.culture-must.com) we offer you many opportunities for immersion, covering a wide range of culture-specific activities. These can be something as leisurely as
our regular cinema screenings of local blockbusters as well as art cinema or more strenuous as week-long rituals during religious festivities. Joining in festivals will give you a spectacular opportunity for firsthand glimpses of local celebrations and developing an understanding of the symbolism behind these events. During the evenings, you also get the chance to attend local receptions, parties, weddings, or concerts of contemporary, traditional, or spiritual music. Every culture is unique in its own special way. We can sense each other’s differences as we can taste spices in food.

With us you will access cultural realms through the arts and beyond, and celebrate cultures in all their diversity. For example, our venture Sound Tamasha is an event series promoting the exchange of determined artists from the music scenes of India, China, and Europe. Including musicians, DJs, performers, and other creative minds, the driving spirit of the collaboration is to connect across cultures through different forms of musical expressions.

Our websites, newsletters, and personal invitations will keep you updated about any upcoming sports event, music collaboration, art exhibition, film and photography project, intellectual discussion, or workshop. We are looking forward meeting you on one of our next immersion activities. Many new friends are awaiting you!

17. Do I have to speak any local language?

Communication is the key to good volunteer work. That is why we recommend you to learn at least a small amount of the local language. If you require specific language skills for your position and time allows, the host organisation will often teach it to you after you arrive.

Do note that many languages are spoken in India. In fact, there are 22 official languages in India. The most important is Hindi, which is widely spoken all over north India as well as in many regions in the western, eastern, and central ranges of the country. This language acquired its current form over many centuries and numerous dialectical variations exist. Hindi is based on the Khariboli dialect of the Delhi region and differs from Urdu (national language of Pakistan and an officially recognised regional language of India) only in that it is usually written in the indigenous Devanagari script of India and exhibits less Persian influence than Urdu, employing a more sanskritised vocabulary.

“Rashtrabhasha ke bina rashtra goonga hai.” (“A nation is dumb without a national language.”)  
- Mahatma Gandhi
Although English is popularly assumed to be a widely spoken and understood language in India, it is still far from sufficient for understanding Indian culture. Basic knowledge of a local language is a reasonably small task to achieve and should be included in anybody’s preparations. Learning a selection of key words or expressions specific to your sector or profession enables you to reach out and find or provide meaning in conversations.

Language Must, a division of Knowledge Must, offers you exactly this opportunity. You will get to know the Indian culture from a totally different perspective, widen your career choices, and express your thoughts more clearly. With our enjoyable and result-oriented language training programmes you will develop practical language skills. The innovative range of individual and group trainings teaches you the expressions for your chosen destination and soon you will realise that learning the local language means gaining access to the life world of the locals. Please visit www.language-must.com to learn more about our language offerings.

18. Why should I learn Hindustani?

For most of India, learning Hindustani language will be an excellent investment of your time, as it functions as the lingua franca and will allow you to communicate with the maximum amount of people in the country across most of India’s varied geography.

Hindustani, also known as "Hindi-Urdu", is a term covering several closely related dialects in Pakistan and India, especially the vernacular form of the two national languages, Standard Hindi and Urdu. Hindi and Urdu can be seen as a single linguistic entity, the key difference being that Urdu is supplemented with a Perso-Arabic vocabulary and Hindi with a Sanskritic vocabulary, especially in their more literary forms. Besides, the difference is also sociolinguistic. When people speak Hindustani, Muslims will usually say that they are speaking Urdu and Hindus will typically refer to themselves speaking Hindi, even though they are speaking essentially the same language.
Why study Hindustani?

- Depending on definition, Hindustani / Hindi / Urdu is the second or third most widely spoken language in the world, after Standard Chinese and maybe English. If second-language speakers are included, the combined number of Hindustani speakers rises to about 800 million.
- With its rapidly growing economy, India has opened the doors for many opportunities. There are many professionals wishing to connect to India and work there. Knowledge of Hindustani will pave the way to success.
- Since not many outsiders have yet mastered Hindustani, early movers command outstanding employment opportunities.
- In India almost every state has its own distinct cultural background, dances and music, prayers, rituals, languages and dialects. With the help of Hindustani you will be able to unravel this diversity in major parts of the country.
- Accessing India via English only will give you a heavily distorted picture. For instance, the picture of India depicted by the English-language media is incomplete and needs to be supplemented.
- India is also the birthplace of several great religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, and other religions such as Islam and Christianity have found an important new home there. Via Hindustani you will get a simultaneous exposure to this diverse range of religious traditions.
- Hindustani is an increasingly international language that is widely spoken in other South Asian countries (Pakistan, Nepal, and Bhutan) and also in other countries outside Asia (Mauritius, Trinidad, Fiji, Surinam, Guyana, and South Africa). Hindustani language also allows one to communicate with the growing South Asian diaspora all over the world.
- Studying Hindustani will not only increase your knowledge of South Asian culture, but will also open new horizons for you. Whether you want to enjoy some of the about 1,000 Hindustani/Hindi/Urdu films produced each year or study Hindustani to be able to conduct original research in India, Language Must will accompany you on your way to fluency. Whatever
your particular objectives, as citizens of a rapidly globalising world you will undoubtedly benefit from studying Hindustani.

Hindustani can provide the key to successful cultural immersion, since it is the true lingua franca of India. In order to grasp India, Hindustani is a must!

19. What do I have to know about Indian business life?

Generally speaking, business in India takes place in a much more relaxed and informal way. Still try to be punctual even if traffic in India is heavy and unpredictable. It is also advisable to confirm your appointments to make sure they were not cancelled at the last minute. Doing business in India involves building relationships. Indians like to establish social relationships first, so don’t dive immediately into business conversation. Critique has to be uttered very carefully and only in privacy, because otherwise your behaviour will be seen as disrespectful. Westerners, for example, are often found to be too direct/straight forward when it comes to business. Also carry heaps of business cards with you because everyone will ask for one and everyone will offer you his or hers.

20. What should I do/don’t do?

• DO consider buying a pair of cheap, comfortable sandals for your trip. Footwear is generally forbidden in places of worship, and some museums or historic monuments also require you to remove footwear. It is good to wear a cheap pair of sandals, since they are less likely to be stolen when visiting these places.
• DO carefully wash your hands before eating and keep your fingernails short.
• DO use your right hand while eating and receiving food. The left hand is considered unclean.
• DO be aware that physical contact between men and women can be a taboo in India. Men and women will usually not shake hands.
• DO put up a token friendly argument when it comes to who pays for purchases or bills at restaurants. This is considered good etiquette in India.
• DO be on time. Although Indians may not be punctual, they will probably expect a foreign guest to be on time.
• DO keep in mind that Indian hospitality obliges hosts to go out of their way to fulfil your requests, even if this means a strong inconvenience to them. It is your reciprocal obligation as a guest to take care of not being too heavy of a burden.
• DO respect the diverse customs of local ethnic groups (often vastly different from the Indian mainstream).

• DON'T give frangipani or white flowers. Those are used for funerals.
• DON'T take pictures at ports or in the metro. It’s not allowed.
• DON'T use your left hand to pass items, especially food.
• DON'T shake someone’s hand unless they extend their hand first.
• DON'T touch children on the head, because the head is considered a sacred part of the body.
• DON'T point your feet at a person. Feet are considered unclean.
• DON'T voice any opinions publicly that are contrary to India’s laws and code of ethics and morals.
21. Can I travel in India?

No visit to India would be complete without the experience of travelling and exploring the beauty of this extremely diverse country. Therefore you **should** travel around in India and discover the Himalayan mountains in the north by going on a trekking tour or just relax on South India’s golden beaches. Anyway, to travel around in India is very cheap. Either you want to go on a tight budget (rooms for around 100 to 500 INR per night / 1.5 to 8 Euro) or allow yourself a bit more if you like by staying in ancient palace hotels (rooms for around 1,000 to 5,000 INR / 15 to 80 Euro) which is again still very affordable considering what you get for the price.

On the one hand travelling by train or bus is very inexpensive but on the other hand it can be very time consuming. Reasons are the undeveloped infrastructure, delays and other unpredictable incidents like elephants, cows, and camels crossing the street. So be prepared and therefore also keep your camera always ready, because you will get extraordinary pictures. A faster way is travelling by plane with one of the many domestic air-carriers, which is, because of the intense competition in this sector, also affordable. Besides, a couple of weeks you should always plan in for travelling before or after your stint as a volunteer. You can also have weekend trips to places near your Indian home. Opportunities are almost infinite!

> “Certainly, travel is more than the seeing of sights; it is a change that goes on, deep and permanent, in the ideas of living.”
> - Miriam Beard

With our division Travel Must, we at Knowledge Must also offer unique travel services. All our trips are tailored according to your individual interests and will take you to places far beyond the usual tourist spots picked out of a travel guidebook. Years of experience, proven logistical capabilities, and exceptional knowledge of the most remote areas and cultures make Travel Must the ideal partner to consult you on possible destinations and activities, book your accommodation and transport, and conduct adventurous expeditions. All you have to do is enjoy your trip and have the time of your life. For further inspiration please have a look at: [www.travel-must.com](http://www.travel-must.com).
22. What are specific gender issues I should pay attention to?

India is a very traditional country and some foreign habits are perceived as dishonourable for women in Indian society. For example, Indian women do not smoke in public. A woman who smokes cigarettes or drinks alcoholic beverages in India is associated with loose moral character. Outside of the larger cities, it is unusual for people of the opposite sex to touch each other in public. This includes even married couples, who refrain from any public displays of affection.

We strongly suggest girls who are travelling alone in India to take utmost care. Please try to travel with other volunteers or friends. Please do not worry to appear as disrespectful if you tell an eager man that you do not want to talk to him, and if his behaviour makes you uncomfortable, say so firmly (but without getting agitated). Many Indian festivals are devoid of women but filled with crowds of inebriated men partying. Participating women can be subjected to groping and sexually aggressive behaviour from these crowds, so extra care and discreetness are advised.

In most Indian buses a few seats are reserved for women. Men occupying these seats are expected to vacate the place when a female expresses her intention to sit there. Note that friendly conversation with men is often misinterpreted by them as an invitation for flirting. This often results in unexpected sexual advances and very awkward, sometimes dangerous situations. Befriending Indian women, however, is a wonderful experience for female travellers. As many Indian women are shy you might try to initiate conversation and build up their confidence.

Maybe the most important advice for foreign women in India is to dress in traditional Indian clothes, such as the comfortable shalwar qameez. Dressing according to Indian traditions will gain foreign women more respect in the eyes of locals. Respect for the traditional Indian way of life will make most men treat you more like a 'lady' than an object. Shorts, short skirts (knee-length or above), sleeveless shirts, and tank tops are not considered to be appropriate pieces of clothing in Indian society. Whatever you choose to wear, you should try to cover as much skin as possible, including your shoulders. Also try to wear baggy clothes that less emphasise your contours.

It is important to keep in mind that India is an extremely diverse country and that in analogy the status of women in society differs from community to community and from place to place. Make it a point to closely observe the local scenario at all places you visit and adjust accordingly. While Indian society in general is highly dominated by men, there are also exceptions to this rule, for instance, in Northeast India, among tribal communities, or among urban elites.
Women in India often refrain from contact with men outside of their families. A foreign man approaching an Indian woman for something as innocuous as asking for directions can result in her withdrawing immediately. A good strategy is to keep more physical distance and being extra respectful. It is also advised that you do not shake hands with persons of the opposite sex unless the other person extends his/her hand first. The formal greeting among Hindus is to bring your palms together in front of your chest and uttering a greeting, such as 'Namaskar'.

23. Where should I visit?

From the majestic Himalayas and the stark deserts of Rajasthan, over beautiful beaches and lush tropical forests, to idyllic villages and bustling cities, India offers something unique for every individual preference. The country is a vivid kaleidoscope of landscapes, magnificent historical sites and royal cities, misty mountain retreats, colourful people, rich cultures, and festivities. Vibrant, mesmerising, completely absorbing, India stimulates all of your senses - often simultaneously. Luxurious and destitute, hot and cold, chaotic and tranquil, ancient and modern - India's extremes never fail to leave a lasting impression.

With a population of over one billion, no single country is so multi-faceted and laden with contradictions. Culturally India might very well be the most diverse place in the world. India’s immensely varied art, history, religions, and traditions are organically woven together into an intricate tapestry. Its infinite variety favours you with different facets of fascination every time you visit. To travel in India is to expand one’s notion of the possible configurations of human society.

Journeys to India can be complex and challenging, but they are always supremely rewarding. If there was ever a place that called for expertise in logistics, knowledge of culture, local connections, and insightful guides, this is it. Immerse yourself into Indian culture while enjoying Travel Must’s consistently excellent quality in guidance, lodging, transport, and support services for comfort and safety.
In India, you could:

- Ride on camels, elephants, and horses through the countryside
- Swim with dolphins in the Indian Ocean
- Practice yoga in a traditional Hindu ashram
- Act in a Bollywood movie
- Witness the largest congregation of mankind on the Hindu festival Kumbh Mela
- Conquer your first mountain in the majestic Himalayas
- Assist in meaningful community development
- Stay in palaces and discuss the good old times with the maharajas
- Strike up a conversation with wise sages and insightful scholars
- Get lost in a maze of alleys and make a new discovery behind every corner

24. How to blend in when visiting India?

Whether you backpack through rural areas or journey in royal style, blending in when visiting India is key to make the most out of your experience, be it in terms of enjoyment or learning. Local people generally are highly appreciative of visitors who take a genuine interest in their culture. Make an effort to reach out to them. Take a few lessons from the locals and feel yourself at home!

- Do research on your destination (background info on the culture as well as what is currently going on)
- Read up on the history of your destination (understand where the things you will see are coming from and how they came about)
- Talk to anyone in your personal network who travelled there (learn about the best and worst experiences and develop a feel for your destination)
- Learn key phrases in the language of your destination (make yourself understood and connect to the people)
- Absorb the culture using all five senses (listen to the symphony of sounds, watch the kaleidoscope of colours, feel the fabrics, smell the spices, and taste the delicacies)
• Observe carefully how locals eat, talk, move, and work (copy their behaviour and experiment with gestures)
• Dress according to local standards (respect sensibilities and show your cultural sensitivity)
• Buy local products (handy tools as well as works of artisanship)
• Explore local delicacies (home grown produce and regional flavours)
• Choose local lodgings (be it an ashram, a traditional inn, or an old palace)
• Take local transportation (such as subways in modern cities or bullock carts in the ancient villages)
• Have the courage to get lost (follow your instincts and travel beyond the trodden paths)
• Learn from insiders (eccentric taxi drivers or hipsters in stylish coffee houses, all can be great sources of information)
• Find the places popular with locals (might be a hole-in-the-wall food joint or a fancy lounge cafe)
• Make local friends (delve right into the local community and profit from expert tips)
• Stay away from what you know from home (multinational restaurant chains as well as big brands)
• Dare yourself to try things you have never done before (be prepared to embark on a journey to the unknown, immerse yourself, and broaden your horizons)

25. How to deal with culture shock?

Cultures entail differences in perspectives. They can be perceived as the personal baggage one brings into any situation. Since culture constitutes the cornerstone of our identities, that is who we think we are, the ways we make meaning, what is important to us and how, it is also a key source of conflicts between people. One of the detrimental outcomes is culture shock. It can profoundly affect a person, especially when they are living in another country for a long period of time, which is also referred to as “culture stress”. Culture shock and stress often result when an individual tries to work and live outside of their regular cultural context. Symptoms, including low self-esteem, ineffective work, and depression, are often denied or attributed to different causes. Ultimately only cultural immersion alleviates these symptoms, but this can be difficult to achieve without adequate study, training, exposure, and application.
A little cultural knowledge goes a long way. This truism however does not imply that a few tips here and anecdotes there, and a couple of pleasant exercises thrown in, do provide an effective method to learn about other cultures. Precise and relevant knowledge is needed to adapt and learn quickly when working in or with the target culture. Cultural immersion as simply being amongst people of another culture, with knowledge of local culture and language following naturally, appears rather naive. To successfully immerse yourself in another culture you need to develop cultural fluency, i.e. not only knowing, but doing the right things at the right time.

Ancient scholars already highlighted the importance of experiential education. For example, the Chinese sage Confucius is often quoted as: "I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand". Only personal experience through all senses results in a sustainable understanding of other cultures. Learning by doing is the ultimate in intercultural learning!

26. Why immerse yourself in Indian culture?

“Culture is the widening of the mind and of the spirit.”
- Jawaharlal Nehru

Immersing yourself in another culture is arguably one of the most rewarding efforts a human can undertake. Imagine yourself being a child again – comparably steep is the learning curve. By immersing yourself in another culture, you multiply your opportunities. By successfully functioning in a strange environment and under a different set of ground rules from those found in your own culture you tremendously expand your experience. It is for those individuals who have the courage and energy to make the most out of it.

- Opportunity to broaden your professional experience:
  - Build up a powerful CV
  - Gain exposure to different work streams
- Prepare for global developments
- Make more money
- Great way to network
- Endless career opportunities

- Experience a life in a different culture:
  - Fulfil your personal interests in another culture
  - Satisfy your curiosity and sense of adventure
  - Look for new challenges or simply a change

- Discover yourself:
  - Deeper awareness of your own strengths and weaknesses
  - Increased self-confidence
  - Train your resilience

- See things from another point of view:
  - Opportunity to increase cultural knowledge
  - Develop your own intercultural competencies for operating internationally
  - Heightened knowledge of effective approaches to other human beings
  - Broaden global perspectives
  - Acquire a new vision

27. What are the obstacles?

“Problems become opportunities if the right people come together” – Robert South

An alien cultural setting can be extremely demanding. You will have to communicate in a new language while finding new, culturally appropriate strategies to seek out interactions. What is common to one culture may seem strange, counterintuitive, or appalling to another. Language barriers and cultural differences will move you beyond your comfort zone and might result in feeling isolated and frustrated. However, by overcoming the following obstacles you will create borderless opportunities for yourself.
• Fear of:
  o The "other"
  o The "unknown"
  o Physical safety
  o Diseases
  o Nutrition problems
  o Being alone
  o Making mistakes
  o Loss of face
  o Leaving behind family, friends, job, and security
  o Loss of identity
  o Not being able to settle back to one’s own culture

• Hardships:
  o Stress, frustration, and anxiety
  o Unwillingness to change
  o Lethargy
  o Inconvenience

• Constraints:
  o Bureaucratic hurdles
  o Finances
  o Limited time

28. What is required?

“Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.”
- Thomas Edison

Success comes naturally when you realise your opportunities. In fact, your opportunities start to multiply as you seize them. To be able to pursue your desire and reach out to other cultures, tenacity and resilience are indispensable. If you bring along courage and flexibility, then you can prepare yourself for this challenge. Fear melts when you take action towards a goal you really want.
• Motivation:
  o Determination to pursue your particular goals
  o Awareness of the unique chance
  o Eagermess to learn
  o Curiosity to engage on a journey of knowledge discovery
  o Will to go beyond your comfort zone
  o Resoluteness to keep striving to immerse yourself further and further
  o Courage
  o Audacity to experiment
  o Resilience to deal with inevitable setbacks

• Respect:
  o Willing to engage other cultures and participate in them
  o Acceptance of other customs and traditions
  o Critical reflection on your own culture
  o Communicative awareness
  o Willingness to question yourself, make compromises, adapt, and integrate
  o Behavioural flexibility
  o Tolerance of ambiguity
  o Ability to deal with ambiguous situations constructively
  o Appreciation for otherness
  o Empathy

• Commitment:
  o Time
  o Patience
29. What about Internet access and phone services?

When you move into a shared flat, you usually will find an Internet connection there. In case you move into a flat that has no Internet, it could be most convenient to buy a wireless broadband solution (usually a small USB device) for fast and simple Internet access from providers like Airtel, Reliance or Tata Indicom. Besides, you will not have problems to find an Internet cafe in urban areas. If you have Internet access probably the best and cheapest way to call family and friends at home is software that allows users to make voice calls over the Internet such as Skype. Calls to other users of the service are free, while calls to landlines and mobile phones can be made for a fee, after buying some credit.

If you want to bring your mobile from your home country, you will want to contact your provider to make sure that your phone will work while you are in India. There is nothing complicated about it - if it is not locked to your home network or home provider (net/simlock). However, roaming charges will apply if you continue to use your home SIM and these are generally highly expensive. To avoid them, we advise you to buy a local SIM card to use with your cell, even if you plan to come to India only for a few weeks.

Simply take your GSM phone with you or purchase a new one in India. Mobile phone services are provided by major players including Airtel, Reliance, Vodafone, Idea Cellular, and BSNL. Choose one of the providers (depending on their charges and coverage in your particular destination) and get a prepaid SIM card, which is widely available in every mobile (accessory) shop across the country and which is also quite inexpensive, about 150 to 300 INR (2.50 to 5 Euro). You automatically get an Indian number with the card. The call and SMS charges are very low. In Delhi you can get a prepaid card right in the arrival area at the airport. Just bring two passport photos and your passport along for your application.

Please note that due to increased security concerns in India, some foreigners report difficulties in obtaining a SIM card or applying for their personal Internet connection. Showing a registration proof with the local FRO will usually be sufficient. In case you are not registered, you can also always ask for the support of an Indian friend or colleague.
International Direct Dialing from India is available in the cities. Phone cards are also widely available and calls can be made from post offices, hotels, and phone booths on the streets. Besides, using the regular landline phone services is reasonably cheap in India.

### 30. Can I do sports in India?

In India sports like cricket, football, field hockey, and golf are very popular and spread around the whole country. Visiting a fitness centre might be a good possibility for you to do sports. Jogging can also be done, even in the big cities like New Delhi or Mumbai. There are uncounted parks and gardens such as the beautiful and serene Lodi Garden in New Delhi which is really a jogger’s paradise. There you will be able to escape the chaos of the cities and have a moment of peace and quiet. Big cities also have large sports complexes with various facilities like swimming pools, tennis and squash courts, football fields, gyms, running tracks, etc.
1. What are the required qualifications for working as a volunteer in India?

“One of the great movements in my lifetime among educated people is the need to commit themselves to action. Most people are not satisfied with giving money; we also feel we need to work.”

- Peter Drucker

The skills required for your volunteer position depend largely on the specific work you want to do and the organisation you would like to volunteer in. Generally speaking, enthusiasm to work hand in hand with the locals, curiosity to acquire new skills, keenness to learn from a different culture, and flexibility to adjust to different environments are key requirements – almost above anything else. Relevant skills to the field you would like to work in are obviously an important advantage. If you bring along special applicable skills, such as pilots, doctors, mechanics, teachers, IT specialists, engineers, and lawyers, then you can put them to good use in India. However, do note that even professionally skilled international volunteers still cause considerable expenses to their hosts just as unskilled volunteers (e.g. regarding administrative requirements and on-site support). Projects requiring purely manual labour usually only use local labourers who do not require the same level of support as overseas volunteers. In addition, paying for local labour directly stimulates the local economy.

2. Why should I approach Knowledge Must for volunteering in India?

Many volunteer programmes declare themselves authentic and beneficial for local communities. However, these promises all too often are not held. Frequently your volunteer work cannot be sustained and will leave the lives of the needy untouched. In contrast, we place our volunteers in internationally recognised and self-governed NGOs and other charitable institutions where you can
truly impact the lives of local people – in a highly sustainable manner. You will be involved in the tangible improvement of the living conditions of your host culture.

At Knowledge Must we know what we talk about when we advise you on meaningful and satisfying volunteer work. We constantly do it ourselves and also offer pro-bono services to other organisations in the field. We fulfil our social obligations in numerous volunteer projects and initiatives designed to foster exchange across cultural boundaries and contribute to a world based on inclusion and mutual respect. An integral part of our values is to give back to the communities we work in. We are helping to empower and educate them and furthering positive change with respect for the dignity of their traditions.

We provide direct financial support, pro-bono services, and provide thought leadership across diverse issues. We believe that we can do best when we combine our expertise and skills in a common venture. This is why we provide pro-bono services using the specific skills of our professionals to provide services to other organisations with social objectives compatible with our own. We have thus contributed to creating awareness on HIV/AIDS in India, in addition to actively supporting interfaith dialogue and raising general education levels.

We put exactly that expertise into identifying and securing your volunteer opportunity, whether it will be in an Indian village or a megacity like Kolkata, in grassroots projects or global development initiatives. When the day’s tasks are done, you will have a tremendous sense of achievement and experience lasting satisfaction. The longer you stay, the higher the rewards as you see the fruits of your labour. And at the end of your volunteer work, you will receive a certificate describing your particular contribution.

3. How do you make sure I get a suitable and satisfying volunteer position?

While we are one of the prime placement agencies for outstanding volunteer opportunities in India, we are different from other volunteer organisations. Our volunteer placement solutions are carefully structured around your individual objectives and the needs of the community in question, all coordinated and supervised by experienced consultants, who have experienced other cultures the same way you are planning to. That is why our team has first-hand knowledge regarding the potential benefits, your expectations, your potential concerns as well as the problems that might ensue in the process.
We work closely with you to identify and pursue opportunities appropriate to your specific interests. Because of our expertise and proven track record, we are able to secure meaningful volunteer opportunities for virtually all of our applicants. Volunteer opportunities are available in a wide range of functions and geographies. We help you find the volunteer placement that you are looking for, whether in education, health, or agriculture, whether you would like to volunteer in reputed international organisations, regional NGOs, or local self-help groups.

The entire placement exercise is a joint effort between you and Career Must. What is most important to understand about our placement process is that you are in complete control at all times. You choose your field of interest, the organisations to which you would like to apply, and whether or not to accept each volunteer position offer you receive. Career Must even offers you a money-back guarantee. We guarantee that we will place you in a volunteer position in your field of interest. In the highly unlikely event that we do not succeed in finding you a volunteer position that meets your sole approval by the designated placement deadline, you will receive a full refund - no questions asked.

4. What volunteering opportunities are available?

There is a great variety of volunteering opportunities in India, whether you would like to work in NGOs, educational institutes, or government. You could be assisting in a jungle hospital among the tribals in Central India, teach street kids in the megacities like Delhi or Mumbai, or you could put your specific expertise to use in helping local farmers. We help you find the volunteer placement that you are looking for in order to promote your personal development and contribute to society in a meaningful way.
Samples of fields of work our volunteers chose in the past:

- Advertising
- Awareness Activism
- Arts
- Child care
- Design
- Development Work
- Education and Teaching
- Environment
- Event Management
- Fashion
- Film
- Finance
- Governmental
- Health and Medicine
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Legal
- Marketing
- Media
- Music
- Non-Profit
- Photography
- PR
- Publishing
- Real Estate
- Sports
- Technology

Career Must has successfully built up relations to leading organisations across different sectors. These are a few of the organisations where Career Must Alumni have been volunteering in the recent past:

- Anhad
- Butterflies - Programme with street and working children
- Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)
- Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group
- Fabindia
- Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)
- Himalaya Action and Research Centre
- Navdanya
- Salaam Balak Trust

Whatever your field of interest, we find you the best organisations in your segment!
5. Could my volunteering position be extended or become a paid job?

Obviously, the answer to this question depends on the job you have done during your stint as a volunteer, the organisation you have been with, and its needs for staffing. Based on experience, volunteer positions can often be extended after completing the agreed term. Since the Indian economy is growing rapidly and employers are very keen for highly qualified staff (also “foreign knowledge”), you might very well also be offered a paid position after finishing your volunteer work.

6. What are your accompanying services?

We are also able to offer you all-inclusive programmes, complete with accommodation, meals, transportation, travel arrangements, language training, and more. See our Integrated Solutions for further inspiration. But complimentary services can also be as specific as organising your transfer from the airport to your accommodation or assistance with getting access to the Internet. You pick the additional services you desire and we will take care of the logistics for you.

Take accommodation as an example. You can choose to handle your own accommodation or Career Must may assist you in securing appropriate accommodation, generally in the vicinity of your place of work. We can act as a coordinator between you and property owners, making firm reservations and payments on your behalf. Options include:

- Homestay accommodation (your own room with a host family where meals can be provided)
- Shared accommodation (your own room in a shared flat or house with local and international students or young professionals)
- Independent accommodation (your own flat or house)
Or if you would prefer something more unique in terms of accommodation, we are happy to arrange your stay in ashrams, monasteries, palaces, villages, or wherever you might like to live. When you tell us your budget and the type of accommodation you are looking for (homestay, shared, independent, or special accommodation), we will accordingly search for an adequate home for your stay.

Also our cultural activities are very popular. Travelling and experiencing your host culture is a crucial element in allowing you to explore all your new home has to offer. In order for you to gain additional cultural insight, we organise culture-specific activities to introduce you to the intricacies of your host culture. These are great opportunities to let loose after work or study, and they provide a fun way to meet like-minded people. You can look forward to guided tours of the locality, longer excursions, sport events, performing arts, and nights out in town. We invite you to our cultural activities, such as our famous Sound Tamasha series of music events.

7. What other services does Knowledge Must offer?

Knowledge Must is a leading intercultural solutions provider that assists students, professionals, and organisations to successfully cross cultural boundaries, mainly between East Asia, South Asia, and the Western world. Our team of highly qualified experts has the knowledge, experience, diversity, and passion to provide clients with the best customised solutions to achieve their individual objectives. Unlike other solutions in the market, Knowledge Must offers complete service packages with its five company divisions: Career Must, Language Must, Training Must, Travel Must, and Culture Must. Starting with career consulting, Knowledge Must provides work experience, language immersion, culture-specific and process-oriented training, individualised travel arrangements and cultural events, in order to fully equip our clients to work more effectively across a multitude of cultures.

Once you arrived in India, you may like to learn Hindi, or find out about the context and origins of “Indian quirks” with a cultural training. You may want to have some assistance in your travel planning and booking, because we at Knowledge Must, with our cultural expertise, can bring you to places away from the mainstream and take care of the sometimes stressful travel organisation, so you are enabled to fully focus on enjoying the beauty of India. Moreover, with our company weblog that you can find under blog.knowledge-must.com we offer you many interesting insights and valuable advice on intercultural issues, such as experiences of other volunteers in India.
With our division **Career Must**, we assist students and professionals to build an international career. Career Must's platform directly interlinks requirements to select highly qualified personnel for organisations and rewarding work prospects for outstanding job seekers. We help to bring the right people together, even across the largest cultural gaps, and handle the ensuing complexities in an effective and efficient manner.

With our division **Language Must**, we offer the best in language teaching. Whether you are working or studying abroad, effectively crossing cultural boundaries requires a considerable level of language proficiency. Students and professionals alike benefit from the Language Must Method of language training. We know that language is about communication. And that is exactly what we focus on. We equip you with the tools to effectively communicate with people from other cultures.

With our division **Training Must**, we offer a range of flexible and effective intercultural training solutions that are both practicable and tailored to each particular cultural challenge. In today’s increasingly smaller world, understanding the ways of other peoples’ cultures is an essential. Our specialised training solutions broaden your intercultural capacities in diverse areas. From process-oriented to culture-specific competencies, Training Must instils in you the ability to interact effectively across cultural boundaries.

With our division **Travel Must**, we offer the best in intercultural travels. Because travel is such a precious commodity, part education, part relaxation, part life-enriching experience, part adventure, Travel Must takes utmost care to fulfil your individual expectations. Our unique travel services cater to open-minded individuals from all walks of life. From executives to students, from urbanites to outdoor enthusiasts, Travel Must offers you great ways to immerse yourself in a foreign environment and culture.

With our division **Culture Must**, we make you experience the arts and beyond. To appreciate the strength in differences between us and find comfort where we overlap, Culture Must events let you experience the backbones of culture, be it music, visual arts, religion or festivities. With us you will get to know the best that human creativity and intellect has brought about. Connecting musicians, performers, designers, painters, writers, film makers, photographers, and other artists, Culture Must creates a platform that cultivates and promotes intercultural collaborations. Diversity is the true source of our inspiration. At Culture Must we celebrate diversity every day.
Knowledge Must takes a highly integrated approach to the complexity that is culture. Combining the expertise of our five divisions Career Must, Language Must, Training Must, Travel Must, and Culture Must into Integrated Solutions, we deliver truly comprehensive services for individuals to experience a new professional and private environment. Leveraging HR solutions, professional experience, language and cultural training, travel, and intercultural events, our Integrated Solutions provide the most effective way to cultural fluency. All our solutions reinforce each other providing increased efficiency and insight.

Knowledge Must is an organisation with strong social objectives. Through the prism of language, religion, ethnic identity, traditions, and other principal pillars of culture we apply our effective solutions for fostering intercultural understanding among individuals, organisations, communities, and countries. At Knowledge Must we understand that embracing diverse ideas, creating diverse opportunities, and developing diverse partnerships will positively impact the communities that we engage. In order to stay affordable to students and to live up to our philosophy to promote genuine cultural exchange, we are committed to keeping the fees of our Cultural Immersion Solutions as low as possible for all of our participants. The synergies generated when people of diverse cultures collaborate are truly borderless.

Join hands with us!
Thank you for your interest in Knowledge Must. We invite you to have a look at our division website [www.career-must.com](http://www.career-must.com) to find out more about our career services and visit [www.knowledge-must.com](http://www.knowledge-must.com) to learn what our entire organisation can do for you. Please contact us with any enquiries and bookings as well as with comments or suggestions you might have. For more information on how our intercultural solutions can benefit you, we would be happy to discuss your needs.

So what are you waiting for? Be proactive and trust in yourself to take the right decisions. Rather than just think about it, start to take action.

Whether you come with our support or just by yourself, we look forward to welcoming you in India!

Your Knowledge Must Team
Disclaimer

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