



# India Open Team

## Information Packet

**Location:** Saitual, India

**Project Dates:** February 22 – March 5, 2017

**Optional Excursion:** March 5–8, 2017

**Participation Fee:** \$970

**Excursion Fee:** \$650

*Flight to Aizawl, India is not included in the participation fee*



## Maranatha in India

Maranatha has been working in India since 1998. So far, more than 1,600 projects, which include churches and schools, have been completed. Yet even after completing so many projects, the need for places of worship and education continues to grow—thanks to the spread of the Gospel message.

India has a desperate need for schools, as many children and young people have no access to education. Through the support of generous donors, Maranatha has been constructing large campuses in rural parts of India. Volunteers have built both One-Day School campuses and Education and Evangelism Centers, which consist of six to ten classrooms and a large multi-purpose room. These structures provide Christian education to countless students each year. And through the children, many families come to know of Christ's love.

## Project Overview

### About the Project

Volunteers on this project will construct new classrooms for the Graceland Adventist School in the state of Mizoram in northeastern India. The school was established in 1967 as the only church-operated school for the whole region. They began with just a few students but now have an enrollment of 302 students, ranging from from nursery to 10th grade. The campus is located in the center of town and is instrumental to spreading the Gospel in this region, where 19 Seventh-day Adventist churches serve the community.

However, Graceland Adventist School faces two problems: not enough space and dilapidated infrastructure. The school has reached capacity and cannot accept any more students without building more space. In addition, it's hard to attract new students with a campus that is falling apart. The current classrooms are old wooden structures; holes in the floors and ceilings make the buildings structurally unsound. The conference is not in a position to rebuild, due to financial difficulties, so they have requested Maranatha's assistance.

## Project Schedule

**Wednesday, February 22**  
Arrive in Aizawl and travel to Saitual

**Thursday, February 23**  
Orientation and first work day

**Friday, February 24**  
Work day

**Saturday, February 25**  
Worship with local congregation

**Sunday, Feb. 26 – Friday, March 3**  
Work days

**Saturday, March 4**  
Worship with local congregation

**Sunday, March 5**  
Departure from Aizawl or continue on the optional excursion

## Optional Excursion

**Sunday, March 5**  
Fly to Guwahati and drive to Kaziranga National Park

**Monday, March 6**  
Full-day safari

**Tuesday, March 7**  
Travel to Guwahati and enjoy local sights

**Wednesday, March 8**  
Departure from Guwahati

Volunteers will meet this immediate need by constructing One-Day School classrooms on campus. The structures will have block walls on the bottom half, and the top half will be completed with panel sheeting. These classrooms will replace some of the old structures on campus and allow for future growth.



Graceland Adventist School is located in the mountains of northeastern India. It is an extremely remote area, and medical care is sometimes hard to come by. In an effort to connect more community members with the school, and meet a need in the community, we are hoping to offer a dental clinic for the Saitual community. We are looking for dentists wishing to lead out in this area.

In addition to construction and clinics, we would like to offer children's ministry programs and health education programs for the community.

If you are interested in helping to lead out in the dental clinics or outreach programs for this team, please contact Maranatha.

### Accommodations

This project will have very basic accommodations. Volunteers will be staying at Graceland School in a few One Day School classrooms that will have been constructed by a local Maranatha team. A cot, three-inch mattress, bed sheets, blanket, and pillow will be provided. You are also welcome to bring your own air mattress, sleeping bags, or pillows. The classrooms will be turned into basic dormitories for the project. We will try to accommodate couples in "rooms" divided by sheets. Temperatures could be cooler in the mountains, so please plan accordingly. Volunteers will need to bring their own towels and washcloths to use during the project. A kitchen will be set up in the existing school buildings, and skilled Maranatha chefs will provide all meals for volunteers.

### Optional Excursion: Kaziranga National Park - \$650

At the end of the project, volunteers can choose to extend their stay in India by joining an optional excursion to Kaziranga National Park and the city of Guwahati. This excursion has an additional fee of \$650. The excursion fee will cover three nights at a luxury hotel, food, ground transportation, a one-day safari, insurance, and all entrance fees and tour guides during the excursion days. Volunteers will be responsible for booking their own flight from Aizawl to Guwahati on March 5. This flight is not included in the fee. Details on the specific flight to book are listed in the Travel Information section of this packet. Also, in Kaziranga there is an opportunity to do an early morning elephant ride. The excursion price is for double occupancy rooms. If you would like a single occupancy room, the fee is \$850.

Kaziranga National Park is located on the borders of the Brahmaputra River in northern India, and it is home to the world's largest population of great one-horned rhinoceroses. Other animals in the park include water buffalo, elephants, Indian tigers, leopards, sloth bears, sambar deer, hoolock gibbons, Assam macaques, and the endangered Ganges river dolphin. On Monday, March 6, volunteers will have a morning and evening jeep safari to the eastern and western regions of the park. They will also have an opportunity for an early morning elephant ride that gets you up close and personal to the other animals.



The following day, March 7, volunteers will go to Guwahati, the capital of the Indian state of Assam. There, you will take in local sights including a silk emporium, the Kalakshetra, and a bazaar with shopping opportunities. The following morning, March 8, volunteers will depart home from Guwahati.

## Taj Mahal Information

Maranatha is not coordinating an official excursion to the Taj Mahal on this project. However, many volunteers enjoy visiting this famous Indian landmark. If you are interested in seeing the Taj, we recommend that you do so after the project and excursion. There are several overnight Taj excursions that fit after the excursion and allow you to depart home on the night of March 10. Alternatively, volunteers wishing to do a longer Taj and Jaipur excursion can do so by leaving Guwahati from the excursion on an evening flight (8 p.m.) from Guwahati on March 7. There will be no excursion fee adjustment for those wishing to depart on the 7. Maranatha has already communicated with Butler Travel about the project dates and Taj excursions available. They are willing to assist you in booking this on your own if you wish to add it to your trip. More information is available in the Travel Information section of this packet.

## Leadership

### **Rebekah Shephard | Project Coordinator**

Rebekah first became involved with Maranatha at 16 years old, when she joined the Ultimate Workout. She started joining the leadership team for projects, and, in 2012, she joined the Maranatha staff to help plan and coordinate volunteer opportunities around the world. Rebekah loves encouraging volunteers to get involved and providing opportunities for people to experience life change through service. In her free time she enjoys running, traveling, and cooking.



### **Lorin Rubbert | Construction Superintendent**

Lorin will be joining the group from North Dakota where he resides with his wife Luanne and works as a construction superintendent in the oil industry. He has also worked as a farmer and pilot for more than 40 years and owns a farm in Saskatchewan. He likes spending time in his remote wilderness cabin in northern Saskatchewan where he enjoys photography, flying, and hanging out with family and friends. Lorin became involved with Maranatha after reading a copy of Maranatha's magazine, The Volunteer. After his first trip, he fell in love with India and the people he met there. Lorin will be leading the construction aspect of the project as the construction superintendent.



### **Kris & Debbie Widmer | Spiritual Coordinator and Team Medic**

Kris and Debbie Widmer join the project from Northern California. Kris has served as a pastor for more than 25 years and especially enjoys pastoring on mission trips. Debbie works as a pre-op nurse at a surgery center. Kris first joined Maranatha in 1996 on a trip to Mexico, and since then, they both have joined several Maranatha projects around the world. In their free time, they enjoy traveling, creating poetry and art, and spending time with family. Kris will be coordinating the daily worship services for the group and Debbie will help keep the group healthy and safe.



### **Vinish Wilson | Maranatha Country Director**

Vinish has been working with Maranatha in India since 2001. His sunny personality, organization skills, and commitment to the mission of Maranatha has endeared him to many volunteers who have worked in India. Vinish will assist with in-country details and make sure everything flows smoothly behind-the-scenes. Vinish and his wife Rachel have two young children.



## We Need Your Help

The team is looking for a leader for the children's ministry program and health education program. If you would be interested in leading out in any of these areas, please contact Maranatha at (916) 774-7700 and join the India Open Team.

## Expenses

The participation fee of \$970 covers housing, three vegetarian meals a day, ground transportation to and from the airport and project site, translators, local excursions, secondary accident insurance, a Maranatha t-shirt, and luggage tags. There is an optional excursion to Kaziranga National Park available for an additional excursion fee of \$650.

Maranatha must receive all funds and forms by January 23 due to application processing time. Wait for confirmation of acceptance on the project before purchasing your airfare.

Maranatha participation fees are tax-deductible. For Canadian tax-deductible receipts, payments must be made by check to the Maranatha Association (address located at the end of this information packet). For US tax-deductible receipts, payments can be made by cash, check, or credit/debit cards.

If you are fundraising or receiving donations please either have them sent directly to you or work with your local church treasurer to collect funds and issue tax-deductible receipts, since it is difficult for Maranatha to track individual small checks. If your church will not work with you, please wait until you have collected the full amount of your participation fee before submitting your participation fee to Maranatha.

### Estimate of Additional Costs

- Flight to Aizawl \$800- 1500
- Passport \$130 or \$110 for renewal
- EVisa \$48-60
- Optional Excursion Flight \$65

## About India

The diversity of India's culture and history has made this country an intriguing place of contrasts. The beggar on the street wears a cheerfully vibrant sari. Hunger is widespread, but the air is thick with simmering spices. The country is crippled by illiteracy, but some of the world's brightest thinkers have emerged from India's cities and countryside. Blending modernity and antiquity, India is pushing forward to make social and economic progress while reconciling the future with its past. Yet these juxtaposed details are what make India a captivating country to visit and a fascinating place to work with Maranatha.

In its early history, India was the center of fiscal and cultural wealth as art and literature flourished and the trade of spices, ivory, and silk abounded. Hinduism became the dominant belief system, although Islam also wove its way into the region over the years. India's prosperity made it a desirable target, and the British began to colonize the region in the 1600s. Efforts to liberate India started 200 years later, but it wasn't until Mohandas Gandhi introduced a nonviolent approach did the Indians achieve independence from the British in 1947.

Today, India is the second most populous nation in the world with more than 1.2 billion people. The impact of this huge population is rampant poverty, which has caused illiteracy, inadequate access to drinking water, and widespread illness. Potentially contributing to the overall poverty is a cultural remnant from India's past: the caste system.



### Facts and Figures

**Capital:**  
New Delhi

**Population:**  
1.24 billion

**Language:**  
Hindi 41%, Bengali 8.1%, Telugu 7.2%, and various other languages

**Climate:**  
Humid and monsoon in southern India, temperate in the north.

**Religion:**  
Hindu 81%, Muslim 13%, Christian 2%, Sikh 2%  
**Currency:** Indian Rupee

Although discouraged by the government, this system of social stratification still dominates many rural communities. The caste system assigns class to individuals and offers no escape from this imposed category. For those subjugated to the lowest level of “untouchables,” life is a constant flood of prejudice, discrimination, and abuse.

India remains a country of diversity and beauty. The architecture of the Taj Mahal, the dances and music of Bollywood, the colorful saris and festival of colors, and the spicy curries—India remains a country rich in culture and full of life.

## Travel Information

Volunteers will purchase their own plane tickets to the city of Aizawl, India (see below). A Maranatha representative will meet you at the airport. Together volunteers will travel by bus to the project location, approximately three hours away on winding mountain roads.

Some flights will require a connection in Delhi or Calcutta. If you plan to transfer to a domestic airline, we recommend booking all the way to Aizawl on one itinerary if you can to take advantage of the international baggage allowances. The Delhi airport has a transit hotel where you can book a room if you have an overnight stay.

Please wait for confirmation from Maranatha before purchasing your airfare to ensure there is still space on the project.

**Arrival |** Please plan to arrive in Aizawl, India (airport code AJL) in the morning or afternoon of Wednesday, February 22. Please arrive before 2:30 p.m.

**Departure (Project Only)|** Please plan to depart from Aizawl (AJL) in the afternoon of Sunday, March 5.

**Departure (Optional Excursion)|** If you are planning to join the optional excursion, please book the following flights:

1. Jet Airways 7068 from Aizawl (AJL) to Guwahati (GAU) at 2:15 p.m. on Sunday, March 5. Be sure to book the correct flight.
2. Then, book your departure home from Guwahati (GAU) in the morning or afternoon of Wednesday, March 8. You can also book flights after 8 p.m. on Tuesday, March 7, but no excursion fee discount will be available.

### Arriving Early or Staying Late

India has some beautiful travel destinations. Some of you may choose to arrive early or stay beyond the project dates to explore the country on your own. Please make your own hotel and transportation plans for any days outside the Maranatha project and excursion dates.

### Travel Resources

**Butler Travel:** 503-879-5005 or by email with Nathanael at [nathan@butlertravel.com](mailto:nathan@butlertravel.com) or with Ellen at [ellen@butlertravel.com](mailto:ellen@butlertravel.com).

**Azumano Travel:** 800-454-4099 or by email with Erle at [edpenha@ciazumano.com](mailto:edpenha@ciazumano.com)

**Kayak:** [www.kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com)

When contacting the Azumano or Butler travel agencies, make sure you mention Maranatha to receive a discounted service charge.

## Entry Requirements

**Passport** | All passports must be valid for at least six months from the dates of intended travel (September 8, 2017). If you do not have a passport, U.S. citizens can apply at any U.S. post office or online at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov). Canadian citizens can apply online at [www.passport.gc.ca](http://www.passport.gc.ca). It can take up to two months to complete the entire process, so plan accordingly to give yourself enough time to receive your passport.

**Tourist Visa** | In addition to a passport, U.S. and Canadian travelers must also have a valid tourist visa for the country of India before traveling. A document with complete visa requirements and tips for filling everything out will be sent to you with your confirmation. There is an online EVisa for India, and we recommend using that option. The online visas must be used within 30 days of the date of issue, so please do not process your paperwork until January 25.

Citizens of other countries, please consult the Indian embassy or consulate in your home country for entrance requirements.

## Medical Requirements & Precautions

Maranatha requires that every volunteer have a current Tetanus vaccine (within the last 10 years). The Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also recommends vaccines for hepatitis A, typhoid, Japanese encephalitis, and an anti-malarial medication other than chloroquine.

Some of these you may already have and some of them you may deem unnecessary for this trip. You should schedule a consultation with a travel clinic doctor to talk about the medical risks in India and the ways to minimize them.

## How to Register

To register, please complete the online registration and pay the full participation fee or an initial deposit of at least half the total participation fee. You can make this payment by credit card online or over the phone or with a check made out to Maranatha Volunteers International and sent to the address below. If for any reason you need to cancel your participation, Maranatha will do their best to refund your deposit up until one month before travel. After that point, \$150 is non-refundable and the remainder will depend on the reservations and the project arrangements already made.

Register online at [Maranatha.org](http://Maranatha.org) or over the phone.

## Contact Information

**Phone:** (916) 774-7700

**Fax:** (916) 774-7701

**Email:** [volunteer@maranatha.org](mailto:volunteer@maranatha.org)

**Website:** [www.maranatha.org](http://www.maranatha.org)

**Mailing Address:**

Maranatha Volunteers International

990 Reserve Drive

Suite 100

Roseville, CA 95678

**Canadian Payments Only:**

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Association

c/o V06494C

PO Box 6494, Station Terminal

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The autosport water bottle by Contigo features a one-touch-button spout for convenient one-handed drinking. It also has a spout shield to protect the spout from debris and dirt when not in use—perfect for the project site.



\*All confirmed volunteers on an International Maranatha Open Team receive a Maranatha t-shirt as part of their participation fee.