

**Aum Pranava Ashram / Info for volunteers / Dec'18**

Thank you for your social concern and interest in volunteering at the Aum Pranava Ashram!

An increasing number of young people take the opportunity to spend some time in India to volunteer at an Indian NGO after finishing their school or college education, thus getting to know India's people and its multi-cultural landscape intimately. There are various NGOs throughout India which do lovely service to the society of India at large. A large number of people work in these organizations without expecting status and social privileges. They have committed their lives to the social cause, and it is essential to extend a helping hand to these people and organizations.

All these projects have their history; each place is "individual" in its structure, purpose, and atmosphere.

The Aum Pranava Ashram exists since 1996; the children's home of the AUM PRANAVA Ashram is one of the registered NGO children's homes/orphanages in Tamil Nadu (gen. info: Tamil Nadu is the eleventh largest state in India by area and the seventh most populous). People speak Tamil as their native tongue.

Here you will find some guidelines for a stay at the Aum Pranava Ashram:

**GENERAL INFO:**

The ashram is located in a remote area, surrounded by paddy fields. The ashram has around 100 residential members who stay in different buildings. Life is simple, busy, and full of social activities. The surrounding natural scenery is stunning and inspiring. A beautiful meditation and prayer hall invites the ashramites and guests for quiet reflection, contemplation, prayer, and yoga (if you are a yogi :)).

**INTERNET**

There is a computer for volunteers which can be used for e-mailing or browsing, if necessary. WIFI is available in some places within the premises.

**FOOD:**

The ashram is a purely vegetarian place; smoking and the consumption of alcohol are not allowed anywhere in the ashram.

All ashramites eat three times a day fresh and warm meals and tiffins (Indian breakfast). Tea is served three times a day.

For any other appetite or snacks, guests and volunteers are requested to supply themselves with the necessary food items. There are supermarkets in Tenkasi/Senggottai, towns just 6 km away from Ilanji, which can be reached easily by public transport or rickshaw.

**WORK:**

The ashramites live in a tightly knit social structure, similar to a big family. Life is pulsating, and work is plentiful. Independent acting / involving on one's own initiative/acceptance are necessary tools for a purposeful and happy stay at the ashram.

**Possibilities of involvement:**

**1) Childcare:**

- On workdays, we need help especially in the early morning and late afternoon until late evening. Sometimes it is also possible to help in the school where our small children are studying. This depends, however, on the situation at school and is possible only after discussion with the headmaster of the school. The biggest hurdle for volunteers is the language. Without some basic knowledge of Tamil, it is quite challenging to teach the children English or to communicate with them on a more purposeful level.
- Yoga teachers can teach Yoga in the morning/afternoon before/after children go to school. Adult classes can be organised according to the capability and experience of the yoga teacher.
- English courses for younger children/local staff members.
- Help the children with their homework in the evening.
- "Simple" child care at the weekend, when staff and other children are very busy with cleaning works. Volunteers are requested to take care of the very young children during

others' duty time. Logically, this point links up to the following one.

- Creative projects with the children at the weekend.

General information regarding child care: our children are open-minded and very friendly. If anybody wants to present the children with gifts, please contact the responsible persons and discuss suitable presents for the children community.

## **2) Kitchen**

A kitchen is a bustling place where helping hands are always welcome!

## **3) Cowshed and agricultural work**

The cowshed offers plenty of volunteering possibilities – from cleaning the cowshed in the morning, washing the cows, giving them hay or grass, and just watching over them happily when they are out for an "outing." It's a gratifying work to do. Cows are loveable and adorable creatures, and it is a beautiful experience to spend time with them in the cowshed. The manual labor on the fields is hard and challenging. Anybody with the desire to lose much weight and test his limits can opt for this volunteering chance. We are delighted and grateful for every single interested person 🙏

## **ACCOMMODATION**

We have rooms for volunteers, where gents and ladies stay in separate rooms, except married couples. In emergencies, we request the volunteers to share their room with other people, just in case all rooms are full which does not happen too often.

## **PICK-UP FROM THE AIRPORT**

If a volunteer would like to be picked up from the airport for coming to the ashram (from Trivandrum airport it is a three hours car drive to our ashram), kindly inform us well in advance so that we can order a taxi for you. It will cost approx. Rs. 2.800.- to Rs. 3.000.- (depending on the traffic).

Important note: Please, scan & mail a copy of your flight ticket (to us) with the exact date and time of your arrival at the destination airport (usually Trivandrum, Madurai or Trichy, i.e., Tiruchirappalli). For easy identification, the driver will then hold a paper with your name and arrival details on it at the exit of the airport building and bring you safely to the ashram.

### **VACCINATIONS**

Concerning inoculations, we advise all volunteers to get the necessary information in their respective country or through the internet.

We can only give very general advice to volunteers: as long as one stays in clean and dry places, where sanitary facilities and clean water are available, the health risks are limited. Traveling to many places in India increases the susceptibility to diseases considerably, but with an adequate first aid remedy box and some other essential medicines (also homeopathic remedies have proved to be very useful), you will be on the safer side.

### **MOSQUITOES**

As long as the climate is dry, we do not have a mosquito problem. However, the situation changes during the monsoon time when too many of these friendly little insects, who always try to be as close as possible to us, breed and hatch. You can buy powerful mosquito repellents locally if necessary.

### **DRESSING**

Apart from the Indian metropolises like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata or Chennai, India is a traditional country where people appreciate visitors' respect towards Indian culture and local dressing codes. Volunteers can buy a small collection of clothes locally which will surely arouse admiration and gratitude as well as a lot of positive reactions from locals. The shawl or scarf to cover shoulder and bust is a must for Indian ladies in the countryside (not in the cities) and highly recommendable for lady volunteers.

### **CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS COSTS / EXPENSES**

Due to continuous, enormous price increases, we kindly request volunteers to consider a minimum contribution by way of donation (at present ₹5000. - per month).

### **IMPORTANT NOTE TO ALL VOLUNTEERS!**

Usually, volunteers apply for a tourist visa which is the most uncomplicated procedure, technically speaking, the reason for your stay at the ashram being VISITING FRIENDS.

Whoever would like to stay for more than 6 months in India or at the ashram has to obtain a special voluntary visa from the Indian Embassy of the respective country he/she is living in and has to register within

14 days of arrival in India at the Foreigners Registration Office located at the respective local District Headquarters!

The residential permit thus obtained has to be surrendered on leaving India at the place where the volunteering work was done, i.e., the person would have to exit India from here. It would be wise to plan one week for these official procedures after arrival and before the exit of India.

We are looking forward to meeting you soon!

For further reading and information, please visit our website:  
[www.aumpranavashram.org](http://www.aumpranavashram.org).

For clarification of questions, please contact us at one of our e-mail addresses:[aumpranavashram@gmail.com](mailto:aumpranavashram@gmail.com) or [info@aumpranavashram.org](mailto:info@aumpranavashram.org).

With Love and best wishes from all of us at the Aum Pranava Ashram,

Traude Englert & V. Visvanathan  
Aum Pranava Ashram Family

Date: December 2018

Place: AUM PRANAVA ASHRAM, Ilanji