



# WORK EXPERIENCE: CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS SOUTH INDIA

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### India is a captivating country; buzzing with electrifying energy and culture!

Alive with dazzling colour, humming with noise and overflowing with a sensual overload of scents, sights and sound; you are sure to be drawn in by the warmth and hospitality of the Indian people and mesmerised by the unique beauty and magic of this enchanting country.

Officially Known as the 'Republic of India' (in Hindi known as Bharat or Hindustan), India is the seventh largest country in the world. With a mind-boggling population of 1 billion, India is an extremely vast country; full of hustle and bustle, with the unexpected at every turn. The constant multitude of humanity makes India a fascinating and inspirational travel experience which draws so many visitors back time and time again.

From the lush jungles, quaint waterways and sunny beaches in the South to the dusty red deserts of Rajasthan and the searing majestic Himalayas in the North, India really is a diverse land of contrasts.

### PROJECT LOCATION

All our projects in India are based in the southern state of Tamil Nadu in the bustling city of Madurai, also known as the "city of nectar". This historical town is famous for the Meenakshi temple; its 4 outer pillars creating dramatic silhouettes on the skyline at sunset. Adorned with colourful images of gods and goddesses, imaginative creatures and animals, this magnificent temple is the religious centre of attraction and a hive of activity which you won't want to miss. Madurai is also famous for its rich textiles and fabrics, impressive emporiums and superb quality gold and silver.

Madurai is located on the Vaigai River with three small but prominent hills marking its boundary. They are named after an elephant, cow and snake due to their supposed uncanny resemblance to these animals. The town oozes true Indian culture and if you want to immerse yourself completely in the Indian way of life; Madurai is definitely the place to be! It is also the gateway to many tourist attractions and close to the neighbouring state of Kerala.

If you're after an overwhelming experience, then Madurai certainly won't disappoint you!

## CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS PROJECT



The institute we work with was established in 1970 by Dr and Mrs Mary Thangaraj who believed that every child born into this world, irrespective of the conditions of their birth, have the right to live with self and human dignity. A lot of the children come from very underprivileged families, and so the love and care you can give them is even more important.

Students of all ages come to the centre – from babies to adults. An early intervention centre was set up in January 2008 to care for 50 children from birth until the age of 5. These children attend school from 10am – 3pm and their mothers (or grandmothers) stay with them throughout to gain a greater understanding of how to best care for their child.

Most of the children suffer from mental disorders like Downs Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy Microcephaly and Autism. Some of the children are epileptic, deaf and have learning disabilities or behavioural problems. The aim of the school is to help these students study; develop life skills; build their self-confidence and to raise awareness within society of the problems that these children face if they aren't given help.

The children speak very limited English so there will be a language barrier and it may make things a little difficult at times, however they are very enthusiastic about learning! Most of the teachers English is very good but again, are always willing to learn more!

The centre caters for 160 intellectually challenged students; some of the older children help to look after the smaller ones and the majority of the children are provided with residential care and only go home during the holidays. A handful of the children are orphans and stay at the home during the holidays, and some of the children have just been abandoned by their families and they stay behind too.

The staff are very friendly and the centre is run by the nuns of St Anne's with Sister Selvy in charge of the school and the home. The school are in desperate need of help in caring for the students here. The school is funded almost entirely by donations and the staff is all on very low wages. Your work here will be enormously valued and appreciated by both the staff and the students.

The children at the school are very creative and they make greetings cards, glass paintings, bags, envelopes, pots from clay and vases. At school functions they have these items on display in order to make a little bit of money, which is then used to purchase more materials.

As the centre deals with a large variety of ailments and has many 'areas', you will need to be extremely flexible in the work that you do. Some of the activities you may be involved in include:

- Getting involved in the vocational classes and helping the children with sewing and embroidery
- Helping with arts and crafts
- Helping the children with their hand-eye coordination skills
- Taking part in yoga classes with the children daily as part of helping with their flexibility
- Getting involved with music and dance classes
- Helping children eat or go to the toilet
- Helping children with their physical mobility exercises
- Teaching English to the staff
- Helping the older children in the garden
- Play throw ball with the children at playtime.



You must be comfortable with assisting in a variety of areas in any other activities the centre requires of you – the list above is by no means exhaustive. You must be prepared to get your hands dirty but it is impossible not to fall in love with these beautiful children. This is an excellent project which volunteers really enjoy, but it is very important to use your initiative. You should ask for work if you feel like you're at a loose end and generally make yourself helpful in any way you can. The staff are very busy and the volunteers can't always be their top priority, so you'll need to be prepared to put yourself forward for tasks! If you can do this, you'll get far more out of your project – you get out what you put in. You will benefit from a few Tamil lessons to help you to communicate a little with the children – please ask your Project Coordinator if you would like to do this and they can book you onto a course.

## QUALIFICATIONS

The most important qualifications for this placement are that you're self motivated, confident, have a love of children and a willingness to help out as much as possible.

If you have qualifications, that's great – you'll be able to help the teachers and nurses with the therapies at the centres. If not, that's fine too – any help that you can give is very welcome.

## OUR STAFF IN INDIA

We have a welcoming Indian Manager who lives in Madurai and is based close to your accommodation. He will collect you from Madurai airport (or the railway station), and provide you with a full induction including useful local information such as the important Indian customs, local banks, understanding the currency, how to use the telephones, take autos, as well as help with transport at weekends like the local buses and train systems etc. You will also be taken on a fascinating tour around the city to give you a glimpse into the sights, smells, scenes and way of Indian life. It won't take long to familiarise yourself with the town and you will soon be adapting to the Indian way of life!

We also have an Indian organiser who works alongside our Manager so we have a very strong and supportive staff network in India. They are here to help you settle into Madurai, check how you are getting on with your placement and give you travel and safety advice for weekends as well as after your placement!

## ACCOMMODATION & FOOD

Your accommodation could comprise of either staying with a host family or living in a Travellers flat. In either accommodation you may share a room with another Travellers volunteer. The accommodation you'll be allocated to will depend on which project you're doing and the number of volunteers there at the same time as you. However, if you have a preference for either a host family or staying in a flat, we will do our best to accommodate you.

### Host Family

For a complete Indian experience we can arrange for you to stay with one of wonderful host families. All of our hosts are very welcoming and not only will be made to feel part of the family you'll also gain a great insight into Indian culture and customs. Many of our volunteers remain friends with their host families long after they leave India and in some cases they return to the country later especially to visit their family.

You may share a room with one other volunteer; and you may have an en-suite western style bathroom. Most of the showers in our host accommodation are cold water only – however your hosts will boil water for you.



All of our host family houses are close together and just a few minutes' walk away from internet cafes, banks and snack shops and just a short auto ride into the centre of town. Our staff in Madurai also lives close-by.

All your meals will be provided and prepared for you by the family and it is mainly local fare allowing you to taste a varied selection of delicious south Indian dishes and exotic fruits. You'll also have access to the kitchen if you want to make snacks or drinks.

### Volunteer Flat

Our volunteer flat is situated close to all our host families. This option gives you the chance to live within the local community whilst at the same time retaining your independence. This newly built flat is very modern, spacious, light and airy. It has a well kitted out kitchen and large lounge area with satellite TV, DVD and a good selection of DVDs for your entertainment. DVD's however are extremely cheap to buy in the market at Rs 20 each! There is also a small balcony on which to relax with a cool drink and a book and gets a wonderfully refreshing evening breeze to keep you cool!

You will be provided with a food budget giving you the option to either cook for yourself or sample the local restaurants. Eating out is extremely cheap in Madurai. Opposite the flat is a tasty vegetarian restaurant with excellent south Indian Thali's and Dosa's. There is a supermarket just outside the flat selling everything from groceries to clothes and a meat shop below where non vegetarians can stock up on sausages! Many of the hotels in town have roof top restaurants offering incredible views across the town with the dramatic Sri Meenakshi Temple silhouetted on the skyline. Most restaurants are good quality and you can sample north as well as south Indian dishes along with a small selection of western food. Vegetarian food is in abundance! Bakeries and snack shops are on every street and

be sure to try the delicious fruit; there is so much choice; mango, pineapple, water melon, custard apples and jack fruit make a very refreshing option and coconut water is also delicious!

## CLIMATE

Mainly tropical with temperatures ranging from 10°- 40° C in most parts of the country. In the South daytime temperatures are usually around 30° C most of the year. India's seasonal cycle includes three main phases:

### WINTER

The cool, dry winter season begins around the month of November till March, with temperatures dropping quite steeply, specially, in the Northern and North-Eastern parts of the country. There is heavy snowfall in the Himalayas during this time. In Southern and in Eastern parts of India, however, these months are pleasantly cool and an ideal time to visit.

### SUMMER

The hot, dry summer season starts around the month of April and goes on till September. The temperatures in the northern plains and central India are generally high. The hill stations, towards the Himalayas, experience very comfortable weather. In the south, in Tamil Nadu, the summer peaks in Mid May when temperatures can rise to a staggering 42C!

### MONSOON

Advancing Monsoon (Southwest) - The Monsoon rains usually lies between the months of June to September. With the exception of the South-Eastern areas, India receives the major share of its rainfall at this time. It breaks on the southern peninsula around the 1<sup>st</sup> June and reaches Mumbai around the 10<sup>th</sup> June, bringing cooler but more humid weather.

Retreating Monsoon (Northeast) – The South-Eastern areas receive most of the rainfall from this monsoon between mid October and December end. This includes Tamil Nadu and temperatures can drop to around 24C during the day.

## THE NEXT STEP

We hope you take part in one of our extremely worthwhile and rewarding placements, with your help and enthusiasm we can really make a difference!

If you wish to join us on one of our exciting projects then please fill in either an online application form on our website [www.travellersworldwide.com](http://www.travellersworldwide.com) or a paper application form at the back of our brochure. Once you have booked and confirmed your place, we will send you detailed pack information regarding your placement and country.

Please call or email if you have any questions about any of our projects:

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