



09 Oct 2022 Letter 032 Ver 002

SICOGA 2022 - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about India and SICOGA 2022

Dear SICOGA 2022 friends

Any travel abroad requires quite a lot of study to get to know the visited country and what is important to know while preparing the visit and later also during the visit itself. To help you with that, the organizing team has gathered some information, which we hope you will find it helpful and practical.

Questions list

1. How do I get a Visa for visiting India?

Every visitor to India needs a visa. To attend a conference like SICOGA 2022, the type of visa you need to get is a “conference” visa. Just getting a “tourist” visa will not allow you to participate in SICOGA 2022 in person.

To apply for a conference visa, you need to submit documentation with your visa application. This documentation will be sent to you some time after your payment of the participation of USD 720 for the conference has been confirmed. It may take a while. There is no need to send reminders.

Helpful sites for getting visa information: [India Visa Online \(indianvisaonline.gov.in\)](http://indianvisaonline.gov.in)

Please note the following requirements to apply for a visa (Sourced from https://www.mha.gov.in/PDF_Other/Annex1_01022018.pdf):

Possession of travel documents

In terms of the provisions in the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, and the Rules made thereunder, every foreigner entering India must be in possession of a valid national passport or any other internationally recognized travel document establishing his/her nationality and identity and bearing - (a) his/ her photograph, and (b) a valid visa for India granted by an authorized Indian representative abroad

Period of validity of passport and visa Passport should have **at least six months validity** at the time of making application for grant of visa. It should have at least two blank pages for stamping by the Immigration Officer. The validity of all visas will commence from the date of issue of visa.

It is your own responsibility to study any additional requirements in your country and verify your own visa status.

2. What are the current Covid-19 restrictions and requirements for visiting India?

The latest information may be obtained from this portal:

[Air Suvidha Self Declaration Form | Fill Online \(newdelhiairport.in\)](http://newdelhiairport.in)



At the time this document was prepared, the rules require that a participant must be fully vaccinated and must carry the vaccination certificate (either in hard or in soft copy) to enter India.

The participant must also carry a hard printed copy of the Air Suvidha Self-Declaration Form and present it when required.

Your country may have different requirements regarding travel to India, and the Indian government may have different requirements from your country. These requirements may change from time to time. It is therefore your responsibility to check the up-to-date status before your arrival day. You may also consult your airline company, who usually are aware of the latest rules.

3. Is India safe to visit?

India receives millions of visitors each year and is safe to visit. However, as is the case in visiting any country, the traveler is expected to take all necessary travel precautions.

4. What languages are spoken in India?

India is a multi-linguistic country. Hindi and English are widely spoken. The SICOGA 2022 is held in the state of Maharashtra where Marathi is the native language, but Hindi and English are spoken widely in this region.

5. Which currency is being used in India?

The official currency of India is named Rupee (symbol: ₹; code: INR).

An up-to-date exchange rate of any currency can be found at <http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/>.

Another popular site is: [Currency Converter | Foreign Exchange Rates | OANDA](#)

At the time this document was prepared, the exchange rate was: 1 INR = 0.013 USD; ` USD = 77.738 INR.

It is pertinent to note here that the payments by Plastic Money obtained from your country of residence, in form of Credit / Debit Cards/ Travel Cards may have limitations for transactions in India, especially while paying for Taxi/ Auto rickshaw fares, Small Shop purchases, Eatables' Vendors etc. Hence it is advisable to carry some cash in INR while going around in India.

6. Where can I exchange money?

Money can be exchanged at currency booths or foreign exchange counters at the airport. Also, your Debit card may work at an ATM (if it is branded Visa or Mastercard) to withdraw cash from your own account. Most bank branches will not be able to change money for you. If you buy INR (₹) in your home country before you start your travel, please note that you are not allowed to bring more than ₹25,000 into India. It follows, that it would be best to obtain INR (₹) at the airport after landing in India, or bring up to ₹25,000 with you from your home



country.

7. Are credit cards accepted in most places?

Credit cards are accepted in many places, but most small establishments may ask for cash.

8. Does India have Global Tax- Free scheme?

India does not have a widely followed scheme of refunding VAT paid on goods purchased by tourists.

9. Is it safe to drink tap water in India?

Water directly from tap may not be safe. If it is purified (with a water purifier attached to the tap), it should be safe to drink.

10. Can I bring food into India?

Packed food and tinned items should be ok. Fresh meat and vegetable products are not allowed. Dry food is usually okay.

11. How is the food hygiene level?

Like in any other country, **you** need to check the hygiene level yourself and satisfy yourself that the food is safe to eat.

12. What type of power plugs, outlets (sockets) and voltage operate in India?

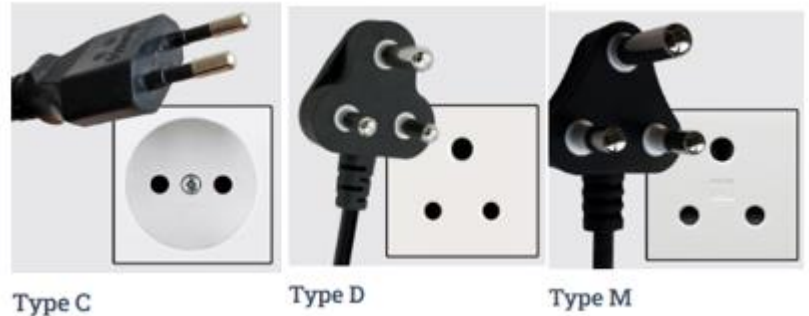
India operates on a 230V supply voltage and 50Hz.

In India can be found three different types of electric sockets:

- Type C – with two round pins.
- Type D – with three round pins in a triangular pattern.
- Type M – with three round pins.

More detailed info can be found at <https://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plug-voltage-by-country/>

The best would be to bring a universal adapter, which can cover all options.



Also bringing an extension cord with your home country type socket may be helpful since you may want to use more than one device at a time.



13. What weights and measures are used in India?

India uses kilograms (kg) and meters (m). All road signs are in kilometers (km).

14. Which side of the road do we drive on in India?

The driving is on the **Left** side of the road, like in Britain.

15. What kinds of accommodations are available in India?

As in any other country accommodations range from Homestay to Luxury Hotels.

16. What are the climate and temperatures like mainly around November in India?

India is a sub-continent and it is spread across 3.287 million sq. Kms. In terms of climate, India has a tropical climate. In northern parts there is a humid tropical climate and along the western coast lies wet tropical climate.

During November the average temperature in Panchgani ranges from a high of 84°F (29°C) and a low of 60°F (16°C). Some would describe it as pleasantly warm with a gentle breeze.

17. How can I fly into India?

The nearest airport from Panchgani is Pune (PNQ), but there are very few international flights coming to Pune. Most international flights to India come to Mumbai (BOM) or New Delhi (DEL). There are no direct flights from Mumbai to Pune. There are several flights a day from New Delhi to Pune. If you prefer to fly to Pune, you should route yourself via New Delhi or Bengaluru (BLR). If you fly to Mumbai, it is better to take a taxi from



Mumbai airport to your destination in Pune. This is a 3.5 hours' drive. Servas Foundation (Better known as Servas India) has arranged with a vendor (Ethecs Holidays) to enable you to order a private taxi to take you from Mumbai or Pune airport to your destination in Pune. This will be at your own cost. At your request, the vendor will arrange for a taxi to wait at the airport for you, holding up a placard with your name on it. Bookings should be done on the google form that was sent to all participants. The vendor also offers to book select hotels for you in Pune, if needed. For more information, check the email that was sent to all participants with this information.

18. How to purchase a sim-cards in India and which one is recommended?

The major mobile sim card operators in India are:
Reliance-Jio Airtel Vodafone-Idea BSNL

Though their tariffs and charges differ, they are quite affordable and fall in the same price range. For a 4G/LTE sim card, you could get 1.5 GB 4G data per day along with unlimited calls and SMS for 28 days. You could have this for a nominal rate of INR 150 (USD 2). **Reliance-Jio** and **Airtel** are considered the best networks throughout the country irrespective of the region or area.

The best place to buy local sim card with data is from the Reliance-Jio outlet, Airtel outlet, Vodafone-Idea outlet or local authorised vendors. It is best to get the sim cards at the airport kiosk.

Documents Required to buy an Indian SIM Card:

- Your original passport + a photocopy of the main information page with your photo.
- A photocopy of your Indian visa/ travel permit.
- 4 passport-sized photos of yourself (Normally one is fine, but it depends on the state).
- Your hotel information/contact details. Participants should provide information about the MRA centre for this purpose.

More info can be found at [How to Get a Sim Card in India! 3 Easy Ways for Tourists!](https://thewanderingquinn.com) Web site at <https://thewanderingquinn.com> >> [sim card India](#).

19. How to make domestic calls to a mobile phone within India?

If calling from local sim: dial direct mobile number.

If calling from international sim: dial +91 (India country code) in front of the mobile number.

20. How to make domestic calls to a landline phone within India?

if calling from within India: dial 0 + area code + landline number.

If calling from international sim: dial +91 (India country code) + area code + landline number.

A few main area land line codes are:

- 11 - Delhi
- 20 – Pune
- 22 – Mumbai
- 2168 – Panchgani



Mobile phones in India don't have area codes – so no need to add an area code while calling to mobiles.

21. How to Make International calls from India?

"+" , Country code and then international number. If calling from a land line, replace the "+" with "00"

22. How good is WIFI in India?

India has Wi-Fi through broadband Internet connection and also mobile phone Internet. Mobile Internet is quite cheap in India.

23. Is there free Wifi at the Airport?

Free Wi-fi is available at Major Indian city airports.

24. Are we expected to tip for services in India?

Tips are not obligatory. If service charges are not added in your bill, then you may choose to tip as you please.

25. How can I find out about tourism opportunities in India?

Info can be found at the Ministry of Tourism of India official website named **Incredible India** at <https://www.incredibleindia.org>

Or at Ministry of Tourism | Government of India - (State Tourism) at <https://www.tourism.gov.in>

Suggestions for recommended travel itineraries in India may be found here:
[India Itineraries - Rough Guides | Rough Guides](#)

Top Attractions in Panchgani

https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attractions-g297653-Activities-Panchgani_Satara_District_Maharashtra.html

<https://www.holidify.com/places/panchgani/>

https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attractions-g297653-Activities-Panchgani_Satara_District_Maharashtra.html

Top Attractions in Pune

<https://pune.gov.in/tourist-places/>

Some of the common tourist itineraries for Indian tourists are - (a) Golden Triangle – Delhi, Agra and Jaipur (or Udaipur or Jaisalmer). Visit to the mountains in Garhwal, Uttark and, Darjeeling. Visit beaches in Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu.

For more information on tourism, please refer to the document “SICOGA 2022 Information on India” that has been prepared for you by Servas Foundation in collaboration with SICOGA 2022 committee.



SICOGA 2022 – Servas and Conference venue questions

26. Where is the Conference being held?

The conference is being held at the Asia Plateau campus, which is located in Panchgani, Maharashtra. The nearest large city is Pune (distance 111 km, 2.5 hrs Drive). From Mumbai it is situated at a distance of 248 km (5.5 hrs Drive). Driving time can vary depending on the traffic.

27. Is transportation being provided from any place to the Conference venue site?

Servas International will be providing transportation by bus from Pune to the conference venue in Panchgani, on 22nd November in the morning. It is expected that the bus to Panchgani will leave around 8:00 in the morning on the 22nd.

- There is no need to register or save a seat. There will be places for everyone.
- The meeting point to catch the bus will be advertised later on.

A return trip to Pune from Panchgani will be offered in the morning of 28th November. The bus to Pune will leave Panchgani around 10:30 a.m. on the 28th. Participants wishing to travel on any other dates will have to do it at their own cost.

28. Is bedding provided at the Conference venue?

Yes, and the sheets and towels are being changed every second day.

29. Can special food requirements be served at the Conference venue?

In your conference registration form you can indicate if you eat vegetarian, non-vegetarian, vegan, or gluten-free food. Also, there is an option to indicate any sensitivity or restrictions. The kitchen staff will do their best to consider your needs but cannot guarantee. The non-vegetarian food served at the venue is usually goat curry or chicken. All meat at the conference is halal.

30. How can I get from the Pune airport (Center of Pune City) to the conference site in Panchgani?

If you are not taking the transport option provided by Servas International on the 22nd and 28th (See #27 above), the best option is by taxi. Your hotel or host will be able to provide you with an estimate of the cost of a taxi. There may be some bus routes but taking the bus is not recommended.

31. Is there free Wifi at the SICOGA 2022 conference venue?

There is a good Wi-fi reception at all the venue areas.

32. What activities will there be for those not involved in the General Assembly (GA) meetings?



Servas I Foundation is planning a number of activities in consultation with Servas International and Initiatives of Change (IofC). IofC is the organization that runs the Asia Plateau campus. More information on these activities will be made available when the Time-Table is published.

33. Will I need to bring with me a Servas Letter of Introduction (LOI)?

An LOI will be required in case you are looking to be hosted by Servas Foundation members.

34. Will there be transportation from Mumbai to Pune?

Servas Foundation has arranged with a vendor (Ethecs Holidays) to enable you to order a private taxi to take you from Mumbai or Pune airport to your destination in Pune. This will be at your own cost. At your request, the vendor will arrange for a taxi to wait at the airport for you holding up a placard with your name on it. Bookings should be done on the google form that was sent to all participants. The vendor also offers to book select hotels for you in Pune, if needed. For more information, check the email that was sent to all participants with this information.

35. Will I get a host if I arrive in India before 22 November, or stay after November 28?

Servas Foundation (India) will try to place you with a host in Pune if you arrive up to 2 days before or leave up to 2 days after the conference. If you need accommodation in other cities, you will have to arrange for it on your own.

Host accommodation in Pune is available for a maximum of 2 days before and 2 days after the conference. If you need hosting on other dates in any city including Pune, you will have to make your own arrangements.

To request hosting, you will need to fill section 07 of your registration record to inform Servas Foundation of your needs. **Only filled in requests in section 07 will be considered.**

Hosting requests should be made very soon. If you make your request in time, you will receive confirmation of host availability asap. Once the host details are shared with you, you may communicate directly with the host who will be entirely responsible for your stay with him / her. Servas Foundation will help and support in case any issues arise for your stay with the defined host.

If no hosts are available, Servas foundation will inform you. In that case, you have the option of either booking a hotel yourself or booking it through the vendor arranged by Servas Foundation (Ethecs Holidays). If you wish to book the hotel through Ethecs Holidays, you should fill up the form that was sent to you via email.



Servas International 32nd Conference and General Assembly - SICOGA 2022

Venue: Asia Plateau, loFC, Panchgani, Maharashtra, India

22 - 28 November 2022



Conference & General Assembly <https://www.servas.org/sicoga2022> Email sicoga2022@servas.org

36. Does the venue site have washing machines for personal laundry?

There are no laundry machines in the venue. There is an option to put your clothes in a bag (with the room number). The venue staff will collect and take them to a laundry in the city, and bring them back the next day.

Summary

The OT has done its best to gather the information above. Some things may change after we publish this document. We cannot guarantee that this document will be continuously updated. Therefore, it is highly recommended that you will do your own research and verify what is relevant for you.

Wishing you a pleasant trip and a wonderful stay in India.

The SICOGA 2022 Organizing Team

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