

india community challenge q&a MUF



why are these building programmes so important?

Every child deserves access to an education, regardless of their race, ability or economic situation. In India, approximately 40% of the population is illiterate and only 15% of children continue onto High School Education.

By taking part in this challenge and physically building a sports field with the local community, you will create more opportunities and your hard work will also help to lift the spirits of the local community and provide essential motivation. In addition part of the cost of the challenge will be handed over as sponsorship for MMF Project Evolution, our local charity partners.

where will I be working?

Teams are currently being sent to Pondicherry, in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. MMF Project Evolution has three projects under construction. Two are in schools and one is building a home for HIV+ toddlers and babies. The groups will be working on the Sports Field Project of the Nirvana School.



Current land

what is a typical day?

You will wake early in time for breakfast and will then be transferred to the building site from your hotel. Upon arrival, you will be put into smaller groups and allocated appropriate tasks. You will break for a packed lunch, normally at the same time the local workers break for lunch. You will typically finish at around 4-5pm and transfer back to the hotel. The evenings will be free to socialise, or on some evenings there may be organised entertainments such as cultural dance and music.

what kind of tasks might I be asked to do?

No previous building experience is necessary. You could be clearing rubbish and rubble, spreading soil, laying brick work for a drainage system, planting trees and painting. You will be working alongside the local people and you will be under the direction of MMF Project Evolution. It will be hard work, but you will certainly feel as though you will have earned your sponsorship.

how big is the group I will be travelling with and what will it be like?

We expect around 15-25 people on your challenge. The challenge is open to anyone over 18 years old. Each team member brings his or her unique experiences to the group, a unique personality and, sometimes, a unique personal challenge. During your challenge, you may face situations you have not encountered before. You are in strange surroundings, away from people you know. You will normally be sharing bedroom and bathroom facilities with another team member and travel to the work site as a group. Come with an open mind – the more you put into the challenge, the more you, your team and the community will get out of it. Make the most of each moment, it is a truly unique experience.

what is the luggage allowance and will I be carrying my own luggage?

As no formal clothes are needed, luggage should be kept to a minimum - details on what to pack are provided in your **Charity Challenge** Kit List. Restrictions on kit are limited to a prohibition on army/camouflage uniforms. Your rucksack or suitcases must not exceed a total of 23kg in weight.

Please note the hotel offers a reliable and cheap laundry service, so there is an opportunity to have clothing washed on a daily basis.

will my valuables be safe?

While we will do everything to provide adequate safety for the group and security for your possessions, the general rule is that if you don't need it, don't bring it. This includes jewellery, necklaces, rings and even watches. Your passport, money and camera should be kept in the safe at the hotel and you should carry a photocopy of your passport for ID.

what is the food and drink like?

Food and water will be provided throughout the challenge. However if you require soft drinks or alcohol you will have to purchase these separately. The food might not always be your favourite and a flexible approach will help. In the restaurants and hotel you will normally have a choice of meal- usually between Indian, Chinese and Western food. Please let Charity Challenge know prior to departure if you have any dietary requirements or allergies.

who will be leading the group?

We employ a first aid qualified, English-speaking challenge leader. The itinerary is subject to change. We will do our very best to keep to the set itinerary however we cannot be held responsible for any last-minute changes that might occur. In all such circumstances, your challenge leader will have the final say and will make all changes in your best interests.

Whilst you are on the building site, you will be under the supervision and directorship of the MMF Project Evolution representative and community challenge leader and the, who will also look after your health and safety requirements. On site there will be local engineers, builders/workers and local community members.

what will the accommodation be like?

The accommodation will be in twin rooms with en-suite facilities in a 3 star hotel in Pondicherry.

will I get the chance to do any sightseeing?

On your arrival you will have most of the day (or the next depending on flights) to relax, and become accustomed to your surroundings. On some evenings you will have the opportunity to visit local attractions and restaurants.

how fit do I need to be?

You will need to be relatively fit to take part in this event and it is designed to be demanding. You will be working for 5 full days on the project and it will involve activities such as digging foundations and lifting rubble. There are many different tasks involved; however, if one activity is too physically demanding for you (such as lifting) you can move on to another activity. You will not be asked to do anything you are not comfortable with.

what about health and safety / insurance?

On arrival you will be given a full health and safety briefing and the following day you will receive your site briefing. Any new tasks you are assigned or new tools you will potentially use will be fully explained and training given where necessary. All trips are supported by a first-aider and have good medical backup if needed. There is also vehicle transport on hand. In case of emergency all participants will be covered by a travel insurance policy that has been specifically designed for the nature of this challenge to include work on a building site. If there is any change to your medical condition or medication since booking on the challenge it is important that you notify challenges@charitychallenge.com

what is included in the cost?

Your international flights from London Heathrow airport to Chennai, India, all internal transfers, (except if travelling separately to the main group, in this instance additional costs will be advised), all accommodation, (except if additional to main group and again costs will be advised) all meals and drinking water, first aid supplies and medical backup, specialist insurance and Blood Care provision, an English-speaking Charity Challenge leader with full local backup and support team. We have also provided discounts from the UK's leading outdoor equipment and clothing retailers and vaccination specialists, Nomad Travellers Stores. We carbon offset your flights. Each participant will also be given 2 pairs of leather gloves, 1 high quality, ISI safety standard hard hat, face masks and goggles which will be purchased locally.



what is not included in the cost?

The following items are not included and will be at your own expense – Indian tourist visa (approx £30 plus visa agency fees), vaccinations, separate transfer and accommodation arrangements from the main group (if applicable), personal spending money, tips for the local support team and travel to and from UK airports.

what shall I do about spending money?

You will not need much spending money as you will be working on site most days and your meals are catered for. You should budget for your UK transfers, tips, gift shopping and any other personal items. We usually recommend around £200.

how much would you recommend for tips?

Tipping is personal and at your sole discretion. We recommend approximately £3 per person per day and this should be given to the charity challenge leader at the end of the week, who will distribute it evenly amongst the support team. This will include restaurant and hotel staff, drivers, security personal etc.

should i take gifts or clothes for the locals?

MMF Project Evolution have asked that we do not bring gifts such as clothes, money, or do any special favours for individual children. Such gifts can often create jealousy, imbalance and feelings of ill will. Donations that will benefit the whole community are better. MMF Project Evolution shall be able to advise what sorts of community donations are suitable. They understand, from their own personal experience, that volunteers wish to bring items for children, but would like to encourage supporting the local economy and businesses.

am I able to extend my trip?

For participants travelling from the UK extensions you will be able to extend your flights as long as there are at least 10 participants travelling on the group flights. There will be an £60 administration charge and possibly additional charges from the airline if your new flight is more expensive. This charge includes an automatic extension of your travel insurance to a maximum of 28 days.

can I fly direct to Chennai if I live outside the UK?

You have the option to make your own flight arrangements and travel to India independently. In this instance you would only pay for the ground costs. We

would require your flight details so we can arrange your transfers on arrival and departure if required. You will need to join the rest of your team at the hotel by late afternoon on Saturday to give you time to settle in before your briefing session.

what about keeping in contact with community members after the challenge?

Some volunteers have found the exchange of letters to be a very satisfying means of keeping in touch with the project. Others have found keeping in touch awkward, especially when asked for money to complete an extension or pay for some medical treatment. You will be working with people with real needs, facing real poverty and you must decide how you want to approach this. MMF Project Evolution has established relationships with each project and are happy to pass on communication and regular updates to volunteers.



Interact with the locals

NB: The information provided above was correct at the time of going to print.