

Guidelines for Visiting Hariharananda Gurukulam in Balighai



Please note: Traveling to Hariharananda Gurukulam ashram in Balighai requires flying into Bhubaneswar airport (BBI) in the state of Odisha (more details below). Upon arrival at Bhubaneswar airport the drive to the ashram is approximately 1.5 hours.

Address to use for visa application

Hariharananda Gurukulam
PO Chaitana
Balighai, Puri, Odisha, 752002
India
Telephone: 91-6752-246644

Travel from the Airport:

Please let us know if you would like the ashram to prearrange a taxi service for you.

(office@prajnanamission.org)

The taxi rate from the Bhubaneswar airport to the ashram in Balighai is approximately 1700 rupees for a taxi carrying 3 passengers; larger taxi for 4-6 people is 2200-2700 INR. The coolie (porter) in the airport is free, but you may give them Rs 100 as a tip if you want to. Do not encourage them with international currency. The tip must be given only after all the luggage is loaded into the taxi and securely fastened.

Directions for the Taxi Driver from Bhubaneswar airport to Balighai ashram:

Hariharananda Gurukulam in Balighai is located on the road from Puri to Konark, which is called Puri Konark Marine Drive. A landmark on this road is Hotel Toshali Sands, which most taxi drivers know. The ashram is located three kilometers after this hotel on the right hand side of the road. There will also be larger posters of Gurudev and Paramahansa Prajnanananda just before you reach the ashram.

☞ Travel Tips:

- **Pre-paid taxi:** The rates are pre-set according to kilometers and paid for before you ride in the taxi from the airport to the train station. This will eliminate any worry you may have about getting lost.
- The rate for loading and unloading your luggage from a taxi or train can range from 100 to 300 rupees.

- If you have vitamins or medicine that you need to take daily, pack them in your carryon bag instead of checked-in bag. **As soon as you land in India, drink only bottled water that has a sealed plastic cap until you reach the ashram.**
- It is good to travel with a person who has been to India before, if possible.
- There are many other websites that will help you to organize your trip. The following two sites may be of assistance:

<http://www.webindia123.com>
www.newdelhiairport.in
<http://www.calcuttaairport.com>

- Do not encourage any beggars by giving them money. If you want to donate money, give it to the ashram, which is doing a lot of charity work for poor people.
- Do not get excited by peddlers and entertainers who carry monkeys, bears, or snakes. Stay away from all until you reach the ashram.

☞ **Exchanging Money:**

It is best to convert foreign currency into Indian Rupees **at the international airports**, because only local currency (rupees) is accepted in most places, including the domestic airports (best exchange rate you may get on the ATM – Cash Machine). Please note that there is no currency exchange counter at the Bhubaneswar airport.

You will need rupees to pay porters, taxis, etc. At this time, approximately 100 Euro = 8380 INR and USD\$100 = 8000 INR is enough for your taxi fare at Bhubaneswar and other minor expenses. Some people found it helpful to have 10,000 INR to make other purchases.

After you arrive at the ashram, you can make arrangements to go to Puri (to CT Road) to convert foreign currency.

☞ **Useful Items to Bring:**

- Please keep in mind that this is a spiritual environment and accordingly dress should be modest. Clothes should be loose fitting and comfortable. We ask that you not wear shorts. Skirts (for women) should be calf length or longer. Shirts should have elbow length sleeves and should loosely and comfortably cover the upper half of the body. Please do not wear sleeveless shirts, or shirts/blouses with low-cut or revealing necklines. Tight fitting aerobics type clothing should not be worn.
- Cap or hat for protection from the sun.
- Some people prefer to bring a sleeping bag. However, bedding is provided.
- Towels (2-3). Thin towels (similar to dish towels) that dry faster are best – these can be purchased in India.
- Cotton handkerchiefs help during the hot summer days.
- Flashlight and extra batteries. Due to the heat and humidity, it is better to keep them in a metal can or box.
- Shoes and sandals. It is advisable not to bring leather shoes because they can easily get damaged. Shoes are always left outside buildings, even in some shops; therefore, do not bring expensive shoes or shoes you do not want to part with. Slip-on shoes and sandals are a must. Inexpensive sandals can be purchased in Puri. You should bring walking shoes.
- A bag or small backpack to carry personal items and notebooks, etc.
- It is better to bring shampoo and other personal hygiene items with you. If necessary, they are also available in Puri.
- Toilet paper (there is none at the ashram) and washing powder (laundry soap) are available in Puri. Please note that there is only cold water at the ashram, including for the washing machines. In some buildings there are hot water geysers.
- Although dishes for the meals are provided, some people prefer to bring their own metal cup, plate, spoon, and fork.
- A foldable mat is useful for sitting when waiting for a train or during trips.

- Bring a water bottle. Water is also available from a pump and water filter systems in many of the buildings. Bottled water is no longer permitted at the ashram in an attempt to be more ecofriendly by stopping the use/purchase of plastics.
- Purchasing items in plastic bags is also discouraged.
- Most ATM (bank withdrawal machines) and credit cards can be used in India.
- A compatible adapter or converter for electrical items. Please note that the voltage levels may be different in India than in your country. It is 220 volts in India.

☞ **Medicine to Bring:**

Although medical treatment is available at the Hariharananda Charitable Health Centre, situated right next to the ashram, you may find it easier to deal with minor health problems on your own.

Suggested medicine to bring:

- Plasters, blister patches and tape may be needed for the Prachi Walk
- Analgesic and antipyretic medicines for pain and fever (Tylenol is not available in India).
- Medicine for diarrhea, stomach disorders, and bacteria/stomach flu
- Cold and cough medicine
- Oxygenated water, band-aids, and cotton wool for minor injuries
- Medicine for insects bites
- Mosquito repellent
- Sunscreen
- Vitamins
- If you have problems with water retention or bloating, you may consider bringing water pills and fiber tablets. Puri is very humid.
- Although the ashram in Balighai is not in a “malarial region” some people prefer to take precaution and take medicine against malaria or get vaccinated prior to their trip.
- Some people prefer to get vaccinated against tetanus and diphtheria and hepatitis (A and B) before they start their journey to India.

**** Although most items can be purchased in India, it is best to bring what you need with you.**

Visa:

In order to travel to India you will need a valid visa.

For most countries E-visa (Tourist) is available up to a duration of 5 years for US Dollar \$80:

<https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/visa/tvoa.html>

The electronic travel authorization (ETA) is usually received within one day. After receiving the ETA confirmation, go again to the website above, login with your Application ID – and print the ETA document. This copy has to be shown in India at the immigration desk, and they will stamp your visa into your passport.

If this service is not available in your country, then contact the nearest Indian consulate or embassy in your area.

Please contact us if you require assistance in completing the visa application form.

Please note the Indian visa is valid beginning on the day it is issued and stamped in the passport, not from the date you arrive in India. So a six-month visa issued on January 1 would be valid until June 30.

Your passport must have a minimum validity of six months from the date of your departure from India to ensure your entry into India. It is your responsibility to check whether your passport is valid for your travel.

Travel to India:

There are various ways of traveling to India and then on to the ashram, depending on the level of comfort and cost desired. Below you will find several options. Please choose the one that best fits your needs.

✈ Traveling by Plane:

From Europe and North and South America: The best ways to reach the ashram is to fly to either Kolkata (Calcutta), Mumbai (Bombay) or Delhi and then fly on to Bhubaneswar. Flying to Chennai (Madras) is also possible.

From Australia: You can fly to Chennai (Madras), Delhi, or Kolkata (Calcutta) and then continue on to Bhubaneswar. There are nonstop connection flights throughout the day from Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi, and Chennai. There are also nonstop flights from Australia to Bhubaneswar.

It is advisable to be at the Delhi or Mumbai airports **at least 3 hours before your connecting domestic or international flight** so that there is time to claim your luggage, go through immigration and security, and purchase foreign funds. If the international flight starts from Bhubaneswar and is on one ticket, then immigration procedures are done in Bhubaneswar, and the baggage will be checked through to Bhubaneswar.

Often the flights from Bhubaneswar to Delhi are delayed or cancelled due to fog in December and January. So book an earlier flight to account for any delays.

It is best to book your flight directly to Bhubaneswar on the same ticket so that if there is a flight delay or cancellation, the airline will rebook your flight instead of you purchasing a new ticket, which could be costly.

At Delhi Airport:

www.newdelhiairport.in

Terminal 3 handles the arrivals and departures of both domestic as well as international flights.

The following domestic airlines depart and arrive also at Terminal T3 at the Delhi airport, which means you do not need to leave the airport in between flights: Terminal 3 is used by Air India, AirAsia India, Vistara, and select flights of SpiceJet and IndiGo.

Inter-terminal airport transfer:

From International Terminal T3 to Domestic Terminal T2:

T2 is just in front of T3, it is a 5-minute walk with trolley. If you are arriving by an international flight then change your domestic flight, consider at least 45 minute to come out of international and check in counter for domestic closes 45 minute before schedule departure.

From International T3 to Domestic Terminal 1: D

DIAL provides a complimentary shuttle bus service for passengers every 20 minutes between domestic and international terminals at the Indira Gandhi International Airport. However, it is important that you do NOT leave the airport terminal, as you will not be allowed back in and shuttle passengers are collected INSIDE the airport. Pre-paid taxis are also available between international and domestic airports at reasonable rates.

Although the baggage may be checked through to Bhubaneswar, you will need to collect the baggage at the international airports, go through customs, and then again check in the baggage for Bhubaneswar. But if you are holding an international flight from Bhubaneswar then the baggage will be automatically checked through to the final destination (no need to pick it up in Delhi).

Most international flights arrive in India late at night and the connecting domestic flights to Bhubaneswar do not depart until the next morning. Therefore, you may want to book a hotel for the night or find other accommodation near the airport (if you need help with this, please contact us).

Sleeping Pod Option for Longer Layovers: If you have a long layover in **Delhi Airport** you can plan to rest at SAM sleeping pod (<https://snoozeatmyspace.com/>). It includes a clean toilet and shower in the room. The cost is about 5300 INR for 6-8 hours. They have mostly women working at night, which makes it feel much safer. They are located on the 6th floor of terminal 3 parkade. It is convenient for international arrivals with domestic departures and vice versa.

Sleeping pods in **Mumbai:** <https://www.aviserv.co/aviserv-sleeping-pods>.

General information for accommodation nearby the Mumbai airport: <https://www.airportsdata.net/airport-BOM-accommodation/>

Airline Baggage Allowance: Before booking your domestic flight to Bhubaneswar, check the airline policy on baggage allowance. The domestic airlines in India have limited baggage allowance for both carry-on and checked baggage. If you have excess baggage weight, the fee can be quite high. If you plan to have more baggage, then consider booking with a domestic airline that permits more baggage allowance. Some domestic airlines allow paying for excess baggage online at a lower rate than paying at the airport.

When booking your flight you can choose vegetarian or Asian vegetarian meals if you so wish. Some airlines even provide Hindu vegetarian meals.

Please be aware that during the summer or holiday seasons ticket prices are higher.

✈ **Traveling by Train:**

When planning your trip take into consideration the cost of the flight as well as the cost and duration of the trip by train.

There is an official Indian railways website (www.indianrail.gov.in) where you can find all the necessary information, including train schedules and fare information. Print the necessary information and bring it with you to India.

You can book train tickets online. E-tickets can also be booked in advance from a travel agent in India. Train tickets cannot be booked more than three months in advance.

If you are staying at a hotel in Delhi or Kolkata, ask the hotel management if they can book a train ticket for you. They may charge a little for this service, but it will save you a lot of time and inconvenience. Please make sure that they book the ticket on a tourist quota, because there are special seat contingents reserved for tourists, which you can get immediately without having to wait for days for your reservation. Usually they will be able to get the train ticket the same day.

At www.indianrail.gov.in you can search for the availability, fares, and dates of the trains between the originating station and your destination. If you want to find connections from/to Kolkata (Calcutta) you may need to write Howrah JN (HWH), instead of Kolkata (Calcutta), otherwise the system will not find any trains for this route.

The trains available from Delhi to Puri are as follows:

- 1) **Purushottam Express** (super fast) leaves New Delhi on Day 1 usually in the late evening and arrives at Puri on Day 3 early in the morning (the distance is about 1866 kms).
- 2) **Puri Express** (super fast) leaves New Delhi on Day 1 usually early in the morning and arrives at Puri on Day 2 in the afternoon (the distance is about 1799 kms).
- 3) **Neelachal Express** leaves New Delhi on Day 1 usually early in the morning and arrives at Puri on Day 2 in the evening (the distance is about 1918 kms)

The following trains are available from Kolkata (Calcutta) to Puri:

- 1) **Howrah-Puri Express** (mail express) leaves Kolkata on Day 1 usually in the late evening and arrives at Puri on Day 2 in the morning (the distance is about 502 kms),
- 2) **Howrah-Puri SriJagannath Express** (mail express) leaves Kolkata on Day 1 usually in the early evening and arrives at Puri on Day 2 early in the morning (the distance is about 502 kms).

Please Note:

• To help the ashrams defray high shipping costs, please consider if you are willing to bring some Kriya books with you to the ashram in India, or to bring back books for the Kriya Yoga ashrams in Europe or USA. Please contact the ashram near you, if you are willing to carry some books, and they will give you more information.