

Mysore, India Cincinnati Sister City Student Ambassador Program Parent Guide

Youth Ambassador Program



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Overview of Program

India-Mysore Sister City Association is launched their first student exchange program with Mysore in 2016. The program has been created in conjunction with Kautilya Vidyalaya a leading k-12 private school in Mysore. Students will be exposed to India 's rich culture, history and immense diversity of its peoples. In Mysore, students will learn about Mysore's influence in India and the world through its literature, art, theatre. Students learn and explore in a safe environment. Students will be accompanied by chaperones. They will stay together in University accommodations and spend time with host families and students their age. Our chaperon ratio is 1:8. Both Program directors will always accompany students.

The Cincinnati students' visit will be reciprocated by the Mysore students' visit to Cincinnati. The schedule for Mysore Students visit is still being worked out. We know they are looking forward to their visit to Cincinnati.

Meetings

After a student has been accepted into the exchange, there are a series of meetings with the Cincinnati students and their families, the exchange organizers including the chaperon/s who will accompany the Cincinnati students on their trip. These meetings/ discussions help to arrange the activities, settle on payments, and give the Cincinnati students a chance to get to know each other.

Students going to India for the first time have an idea of the cultural differences between US and India, but many are not aware of the day-to-day life expectations. Students will get an hour of cultural training and you are expected to attend the session. We will set up timings of these activities at our first meeting.

At the meetings, students and families will have the opportunity to learn and will receive great advice on how to have a successful exchange.

Typical Day in India

While in India, American students will always be chaperoned by either by the host families or by the India Sister City arranged coordinator plus chaperons. They will attend planned activities during the day. Students will usually travel by host arranged transportation accompanied by host students/parents. During the day, students are always part of a large group supervised by the chaperones. In the evenings, the students will retire early. All outings will be supervised.

Cost

The cost includes the price of the airline tickets and any other transportation as well as the cost of tickets and meals. The school in Mysore as well as the coordinator and chaperons will make the necessary arrangements. Students bring their own spending money for extras such as souvenirs. We recommend about 200\$

Airline and other transportation costs and costs of events (are estimated to be \$2900. This may vary from year to year depending on what activities the exchange decides to participate in. Fees cover:

Transportation: Airline costs from Cincinnati to Bangalore, transportation to Mysore, return travel to Bangalore, Transportation to and in Coorg and return to Mysore. Flight out of Bangalore to Cincinnati.

Admission Fees: to all attractions, museums, game parks, etc.

Accommodations: All accommodations will be covered

Meals. Students meals will be covered.

Speaking local languages

The medium of instruction in Kautilya School is **English**. Communications with the Indian students will not be an issue. India is a multilingual nation. Over 28 official languages are spoken in the different regions. Each of these languages has a separate script. Just imagine the diversity of India!

English is the official language. It is also widely used in schools and colleges, airports and train stations, shopping centers, banks, and industry offices.

The official language of Karnataka where Mysore is located is Kannada. American students do **not** have to know how to speak local languages to participate in the exchange. Many Indian students are fluent in English and many people in India that our American students interact with can speak basic conversational English.

Schoolwork/ Time Management

We will have a planned agenda for students. Students will be accompanied to different activities. Our students will have the opportunity to spend time in the classroom. Some days will be spent in service learning and learning about the regions industries, culture and business.

What Parents Need to Know: FAQs

Q: Will my child be safe?

A: Yes! Mysore is a very safe city. The American students are always accompanied by American chaperones, and either by the host students and their families or by the Sister City arranged Indian coordinator. Many Indian students are fluent in English. And many people in India the American students will interact with can speak basic conversational English.

Q: How Does Communication Work?

A: While in Cincinnati, American students and families communicate with each other through text, e-mail, Facebook, or phone tree. The same goes for the American students when they are in India. Remember, WIFI is not frequent in India, however, when we visit schools for example, we will have access to WIFI, and students may skype you. If you want to contact your child while they are in India, you can usually do this for free by e-mail or Facebook, but the best option to reach them at all times is WhatsApp. This is a texting service for close to free and does not cost any money or charges. Download the app for free on your phone. We advise students to put

their phones on airplane mode when in India because roaming charges are very high. It is rather expensive to text using your regular service while abroad.

Q. Things to Tell Your Student: What should they know?

A. Participating in an exchange will present challenges and opportunities to learn about how other people live. Part of the opportunity is to experience the cultural differences between India and America. For example, difference in demeanors or attitudes, expectations about something as simple as how the shower or toilet work, or how to ask for something you need are all part of these learning experience. Also, customs such as praying before meals or types of foods may differ between individuals.

Forms and Signatures

Three forms will be available on the web Page for completion.

www.indiacincinnati.org

1. A Physician's Report. This form must be completed by May 20.
2. A Release Agreement that must be notarized prior to April 25.
3. A Medical Authorization that must be completed prior to April 25.
4. Additional releases for activities in Mysore such as leadership course. This may include activities like zip lining. The Organization will make sure that any activity a student takes part in is optional and it is safe.

Passport - your son or daughter cannot fly to India without this. Please begin the process of getting a passport immediately if you do not have one. In addition, at least one parent of a minor child travelling must have a passport.

Visa: You need a visa to travel to India. This can be done online. You must apply immediately as it takes time (few days).

Also included is one set of instructions on how to enroll in the Kroger's Reward Program. This is a voluntary enrollment that assists us in providing this opportunity for students at the lowest cost possible.

Hosting a student from Mysore. (Optional)

Q. About hosting an Indian student. What do I need to Know?

A. When your Indian student first arrives, you will want to give them a detailed tour of your house and explain how everything works (the faucets, lights, electronics, etc.).

If you have house rules, make sure the student understands what they are. Curfews and telephone use should be discussed. Expectations about your privacy should be discussed. Part of your mission is to help your guest be comfortable in your home. Articulating your expectations will facilitate that for them and for you and your family. Expectations you have for your son or daughter are also expectations you should have for your Indian guest. The more you communicate with your Indian guest the better their visit will be for all of you. If misunderstandings occur, please

involve the chaperones or committee members. Cultural differences are part of the learning experience in each exchange. You are not expected to change any of your normal routines while the student is in your home as they are here to experience American culture and home life. We will offer a class on building cultural competencies before your guest student arrives.

Q: What am I responsible for if I decide to be a host parent in Cincinnati?

A: Generally, host families must provide their student with a place to sleep. Many of the students from Mysore, live in apartments or flats and are used to sharing rooms. Host families provide their student with breakfast, lunch, and dinner. While the students often will eat breakfast and dinner at your home, you must pack them a lunch or give them money to buy lunch during the day. Host families are also responsible for transporting their students to and from the daytime activities. The students usually meet at a central location (such as the Kenwood mall) around 9 a.m. You also must pick them up from the meeting point at the end of the activity, which is usually around 4 or 5 p.m. To assist with the pick-up and drop-off participating parents arrange carpools to and from events. The students often plan their own group activities in the evenings (such as Laser tag or watching a movie together). Students are not required to attend evening activities. Participation at the time is entirely up to the host family.

One weekend during the exchange in Cincinnati is designated as a family weekend, during which there are no planned activities. Activities during this time are at the family's discretion.

If you have any questions, please call 513 886 5817 or email me at cincinnati@iscastudentexchange.org