

Ramana's Garden Children's Home – Volunteer Information

"We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results". Herman Melville

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Creating our future together

Ramana's Garden Children's Home operates with the motto "Creating Our Future Together". Our children engage in a multitude of creative activities from painting, singing and dancing, to acting, sculpting and jewellery making. You name it and they've tried it. From all over the world volunteers have brought their creative talents and ideas, working with the children to allow them to explore their imagination and expand their skills. We encourage you to bring yours and share them with our children also.

Affordable volunteering

Here at Ramana's Garden we are interested in the amount of love, energy and desire you have to make a change in the world, not in the amount of dollars in your pocket. For that reason we keep our volunteering fees at a minimum, just enough to cover your basic living expenses while you stay and share with us. The cost for room and board, including three meals per day and clean drinking water, is 8000 rupees per month (approximately USD\$130/month).

Rewards of volunteering

Volunteering here is a commitment to the children and to yourself. Whatever you give you will receive back tenfold in love, hugs, smiles and fulfilment. Volunteering requires patience, motivation, energy and initiative. From the day you arrive and for the rest of your life you will be part of our family.

Your commitment

We ask volunteers to commit to a minimum of three months at Ramana's if you are going to live here with us. If you commit to stay four months or longer, there is no charge for your room and board. **Warning:** Ramana's Garden is Hotel California – you can check in at anytime but you can never leave. Your heart will be stolen :)

If you aren't able to commit to three months but would still like to help, you can arrange your own accommodation nearby and come daily to Ramana's. The minimum commitment if you choose this option is for one month. We are looking for volunteers who enjoy working with children and have the patience, love and understanding to support them on their journey towards being self-sufficient, independent and productive adults. Our goal is to find creative ways to inspire the children to enjoy learning and acquiring creative skills that will help them throughout their lives in character development and productive living, so we are always interested in people with creative skills and experience. During the high tourist season (approximately October – April) we also run a popular organic vegetarian cafe within the grounds, so part of your volunteering experience will most likely include helping within the cafe. All profits from the cafe help to support and maintain Ramana's Garden Children's Home and School.

Please be aware that if you are volunteering during these months this will be one of your assigned duties.

Challenges of volunteering

While volunteering is a rewarding experience, it is not for everyone. Ramana's Garden is located in rural India and the conditions here are very basic. Volunteers can live in the compound or arrange their own nearby accommodation. If you are living at Ramana's, you will have your own room if possible, but depending on the number of volunteers here at the time of your stay, you may have to share with one other person. Bathrooms are separate and shared. Although the rooms have ceiling fans, there is no air conditioning.

The children at Ramana's Garden are orphans or other children who are at risk and need support and attention from caring individuals who do not have the distraction of physical or mental challenges of their own. We require volunteers who will be excellent role models for our children. As such you will need to consider the language you use when around the children and the topic of your conversations with and around the children, remembering that Indian culture is more modest and traditional than western culture. We do not tolerate the consumption of drugs, alcohol or smoking of any kind while you are a volunteer here at Ramana's Garden. While you are with the children, they will look to you as an example, and while you are out in the local village you will be REPRESENTING the children and Ramana's Garden, so at all times your behaviour and appearance must reflect the morals and values we are working to instil within the children.

Dress code

While volunteering at Ramana's Garden we request you to respect the local culture, community and *yourself* by dressing appropriately. This means, for women, loose fitting clothes that hide cleavage and cover at least to below the knees and over the shoulders, even during the hotter months. A scarf is always a good option to cover your shoulders and help you to feel more comfortable. You may also choose to wear a traditional kurta top or Punjabi suit. These guidelines will help to keep you safe and avoid unwanted attention or harassment from men. You will also find that the locals and the children will treat you with more respect if you dress with respect.

Daily routine for volunteers

While what you do will be largely based on the children's routine, it will also be determined by the current number of volunteers, special circumstances (sick children) and any projects you become involved in to help with the overall running of Ramana's Garden. For these reasons your daily routine is very much dependant on what is happening in the current moment. However, your primary role while at Ramana's Garden will be to support the children in their daily activities; making sure they get ready for school in the mornings, that they do their homework, take their medicines if needed, have

their dinner and are ready for school the next day. If you are volunteering between October-March you may also be required to work in our organic café.

Our children are in school from 8:30am- 2:00pm Mon – Sat. After school there is 1.5 hrs of tuition in which volunteers assist with homework and reviewing the day's lessons. The children are free from school on Sundays, which is also room cleaning and laundry day. Sometimes volunteers are needed to oversee these activities. The school year is from July 1st – May 5th. During the months of May and June we take the children up to our [Ambiya Mountain Project](#) for summer vacation. There we have tuition in the mornings and activities all afternoon, including working in the organic gardens, playing in the forests and lots of outdoor games.

In between all of this, there is plenty of opportunity to have time to yourself, read a book or take a walk, however looking after children is a 24 hour job and therefore you must also be prepared to jump in at any time of day or night and help when needed.

Suggested supplies

There are some things which may help to make your stay in India more comfortable. While many of these are available locally if you wish to pick them up after you arrive, there are a few things you should plan to bring with you.

These are of course only suggestions:

- Vitamins/minerals/food supplements
- Mosquito repellent and/or net
- Lice shampoo (sorry, but it can happen and better to be prepared)
- Flip-flops or other weatherproof shoes which are easy to take on and off.
- Pillow
- Ear Plugs (Ramana's is very quiet, but if you are a light sleeper these may be useful)
- Sanitary products

Bring / buy locally

- Portable battery-operated light (torch / flashlight)
- Cup, plate, fork, spoon (if you prefer to have your own)
- Towel, soap, etc.
- Toilet tissue
- Shampoo/Conditioner (local choice is limited)

Things you can bring to help the children

If you feel you would like to bring gifts for the kids, below is a list of things we always need. Our children are just like all children! When they are young they love toys and playing games. When they become teenagers, they care a little more about how they

look and enjoy having nice things. So please only bring items that you would be happy to give to children in your own family. Secondhand items that are in good condition are always appreciated also.

- Good quality clothes for children aged 5 to 18 (keep in mind our children are petite)
- Vitamin C (preferably "Emergen-C" brand)
- Board games
- Sports toys (marbles, frisbees, cricket sets, footballs, etc.) – NO guns or stuffed toys please
- If you have a particular craft (knitting, crochet, embroidery, jewellery making, origami, stenciling, sculpting, etc.) please bring your supplies
- Gifts for adding to our 'present box' (these gifts will be given to children on their birthdays)
- Lice shampoo.

Local accommodation

If you choose to volunteer at Ramana's Garden for less than three months and would like to stay nearby, Dewa Retreat – luxury hotel, is just around the corner from Ramana's Garden and offers generous discounts on all rooms for Ramana's Garden friends and volunteers.

www.dewaretreat.com

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