

USA SAI PILGRIMAGE 2010 - Frequently Asked Questions

Aum Sri Sai Ram

The Pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam is open to members of US Sai Centers and devotional groups.

Please refer to the FAQ section below. We are hopeful that most of your questions will be answered here. In case of additional questions, please visit [Contact us](#) page to send specific question, comment, or concern. You will be contacted directly with a response.

Group Expectations:

Everyone Must:

1. Have faith with no expectations!
2. Be united and have Swami as focus
3. Adhere to the discipline of the group
4. Participate in all the group [spiritual practice](#) unity-building activities
5. Participate in [service](#) opportunities, as applicable
6. Be with the group in Prashanthi Nilayam for the ENTIRE trip
7. [Register](#) by registration deadline, 15 February 2010
8. Attend Pilgrimage preparation meetings in your local area
9. Attend mandatory mini-retreats in local areas, dates forthcoming
10. Learn group songs provided by the committee
11. Make sure the passport and visa status is valid for travel dates

Additional Requirement to Be Part of the Presentation:

1. Attend all Pilgrimage preparation meetings mini-retreats in your area.
2. Attend additional small group practice sessions as needed (i.e. dance, singing, instruments)

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. **Why are we going as two Groups from the USA and not as a separate Region?** [\[Top\]](#)
The goal of these pilgrimages, organized under the auspices of the International Sai Organization, is to promote unity while we strive to learn about the Sai Ideal and what Swami has come to offer us: Self-realization. The overall idea of zonal and regional and country pilgrimages has been blessed and approved by Bhagavan.
2. **Why are we not able to choose a preferred time for the Trip?** [\[Top\]](#)
There is a limit of 1200 per group. The council will take this into consideration as it assigns the Regions to one of the two groups.
3. **What is the tentative timeline we will be going to Parthi?** [\[Top\]](#)
The following are the dates to be in Prasanthi Nilayam:

Group 1: June 23 to July 2.
Group 2: July 5 to July 14.

These dates were selected because they must take place after school is out, for the children attending the US Pilgrimage, and *well* before Gurupurnima 2010.
4. **When do we know which group our Region is going in?** [\[Top\]](#)
All devotees are encouraged to go along with the Group that their Region will be a part of. Group assignments for the Regions will be done after Registration is complete. If there are devotees going

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from a region that is not part of a pre-formed group, then the registration committee will assign them to a group leader based on their travel date and within the 1200 limit.

5. **Can devotees join the group in Prashanthi Nilayam for only a portion of the group trip dates? (i.e. arrive late or leave early) [Top]**
The full group must be together for the entire trip, beginning from evening darshan on day-1 and ending after morning darshan on Day-10. If you wish to be part of the group, please make your travel plans accordingly.
6. **Can a devotee's family join them in Parthi? [Top]**
Family members may choose to be in Prashanthi Nilayam at the same time as group members, however, they cannot be considered as part of the group. The group will not be able to include devotees' families for accommodations, group activities, or group seating for darshan. Group members will still be expected to adhere to all group discipline and participate in group activities.
7. **Can devotees from outside the US Sai Organization join the trip? [Top]**
This US Sai Organization group trip is only for devotees who are members of the Sai Organization.
8. **Is there a rough estimate for the costs of the group trip? [Top]**
Besides airfare, there is (1) the cost of travel from Bangalore airport to Prashanthi Nilayam and back, (2) cost of accommodations (relatively inexpensive --\$2 per day?) and (3) cost of food (less than \$2-3 per day). Women will need saris (see below), and men need white suits (see below).

Ladies (ages 16 and older) will be required to wear saris and will need three or four saris. Details on them will come later. Girls ages 15 and under should wear white Punjabi suit with shawl.

Additional costs may be accrued on an individual basis by those needing to obtain visa, passport, immunizations, etc.
9. **Can I or my family stay outside of the ashram? [Top]**
Since we are going as a group we should all stay at the ashram. But if your family has outside accommodations, you may stay outside of the ashram, provided that you will be in the ashram and with the group for all group activities during the day. Staying in hotels is highly discouraged.
10. **How do I get accommodations if I arrive in Prashanthi Nilayam before the group trip dates? [Top]**
If you arrive before Day-1, you should follow standard ashram accommodations procedures and get accommodations for the entire length of your stay (including group trip dates).

Devotees staying after the group trip should notify the logistics team ahead of time, so that we can inform the accommodations office. However, due to other events in Prashanthi Nilayam, group accommodations after the end of our trip dates are not guaranteed.
11. **Can I be part of the presentation if I cannot attend the required number of practice sessions? [Top]**
Participation in the presentation requires consistent attendance and dedicated practice, in order to bring our best offering to Swami. Missing practice sessions may jeopardize the role you are able to play in the presentation. Anyone who cannot attend the mandatory dress rehearsals will not be considered for a lead role in the presentation.
12. **Can I be part of the group if I am unable to commit by the deadline on account of Visa/Immigration issues? [Top]**
If you are interested in being part of the group, please register before the deadline prescribed, and participate in all preparations and activities for the group trip. Please keep the planning team informed of the progress with your Visa/Immigration status, in case there is any change in your plans.
13. **Can I join the group directly in Prashanthi Nilayam if I am unable to participate in the pre-trip meetings or preparations? [Top]**

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All group participants must be able to meet the minimum requirements, in order to be considered members of the group, including participation in pre-trip meetings, [spiritual practice](#), and other activities. The journey is as important as the destination.

14. Can non-Sai devotees be considered for participation in the group trip? [\[Top\]](#)

In order to meet the minimum requirements for eligibility on the group trip, participants must be associated with a Sai Center/devotional Group. Non-Sai devotees may be considered eligible for group participation by one of two ways:

1. Actively participate in weekly Sai Center activities until the group trip;
2. Directly get approval from the Regional President of your region.

15. I will be leaving in April/May for India. Can I join the group directly in Prashanthi Nilayam? [\[Top\]](#)

Please refer to question [13](#).

16. Can I bring my infant or small children on the trip? [\[Top\]](#)

Children of any age are allowed to join the trip. However, when you make your decision please consider carefully the crowds and heat during the time of travel.

Please be aware that parents are responsible for participating in the necessary group activities as well as for taking care of their children. Parents with children may not be allowed to join group seating for darshan, depending on the [ashram](#)/sevadal restrictions.

17. We are part of an informal bhajan group but are not a registered or official Sai Center. Can we still participate in the group trip? [\[Top\]](#)

Your group must directly seek approval from the Regional President of your region.

18. What is the decision-making process to determine who will be part of the final group? [\[Top\]](#)

Everyone interested in being considered as a member of the group trip must [register](#) their commitment by the deadline, and begin participating in all group activities, [spiritual practice](#), and meetings.

Each group will have a limit of 1200 folks and registration will be on a first come first served basis.

19. Will there be help provided for first-time or infrequent travelers with regards to visa, passports, immunizations, and other travel details? Can we get help traveling between the airport and Puttapparthi? [\[Top\]](#)

The logistics team can provide some basic information about visa, passport, and immunization requirements for travel to India. However, these details will be the responsibility of each individual to secure prior to traveling.

The logistics team will provide help with information for transportation between Bangalore International Airport and Puttapparthi for anyone traveling with the group. It is the responsibility of devotees to make their own travel arrangements. The chapter on Logistics in the guidelines document provides more information about transportation in India, under Section D.

20. What is the dress code for the pilgrimage? [\[Top\]](#)

Please see the [dress code](#) for general guidelines. Further details on the dress code for each trip will be provided by the regional committee during the final mini-retreat

21. What service project will we undertake in Parthi? [\[Top\]](#)

The ashram does not want us doing service projects at Prashanthi. Some opportunities might arise, for example help in Western canteen and in staffing a medical clinic for devotees who face health problems. The service team will be responsible for researching and finalizing options for service activities, which will include all participants, regardless of age, skills, or prior experience.

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22. **What are my options for getting the white pants?** [\[Top\]](#)

In the USA, there is no one specific store in which to get the white clothes. Try the following places:

1. Medical supply stores (where they sell scrubs)
2. Uniform stores
3. Kohl's or JC Penney's

If you are going early to India/Parthi, you can buy either ready-made clothes or get them sewed in India. It is best to have at least three sets: 1 you are wearing, another is being washed by the dhobi, and the third is available in case the dhobi does not have them the next day (rarely occurs).

23. **How do I register?** [\[Top\]](#)

You can register by visiting the [Register for Pilgrimage page](#) on this web site. Please note that the registrations will close on 15 February 2010.

More Questions?

Please visit [Contact us page](#) and send in specific question, comment, or concern. You will be contacted directly with a response

Jai Sai Ram!