



# NEWSLETTER

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## AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES United States Consulate General. Chennai, India

### **Americans Traveling Abroad**

Traveling abroad doesn't have to be confusing if you know the right things before you go. The link below provides country information and requirements for Americans traveling abroad.

[http://travel.state.gov/visa/americans/americans\\_1252.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/americans/americans_1252.html)

### **Follow Us**

[U.S. Consulate, Chennai website](#)

[Facebook Page](#)

[Twitter](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Flickr](#)

Check out the new Consular Team  
India ACS Facebook page [here](#).

### **American Citizen Service Unit Hours:**

By appointment: 9:00am-12:30pm,

By telephone: 9:00am-4:30pm

Monday through Friday, excluding  
holidays



### **Happy New Year 2014 A Message from the Consul General**

Happy New Year! I wish you all a very healthy, happy, and prosperous 2014.

This past year was a busy and productive one. We saw the continued expansion of American businesses and brands in our consular district, with the opening of a JW Marriott and Starbucks in Bangalore, and Pinkberry, California Pizza Kitchen, and Hard Rock Café in Chennai. Our American Citizen Services Unit continued to provide monthly passport renewal services for minors in Bangalore, and made outreach trips to Kochi, Bangalore, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Our consular officers also traveled extensively throughout South India meeting with Indian businesspeople, students, and tourists to demystify the U.S. visa application process -- efforts contributing to the vigorous and growing travel and exchange between the citizens of our two nations.

On the topic of people-to-people ties: January 2014 also brought to a close the year-long celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Swami Vivekananda, who embodies a great example of the long-standing relationship between the citizens of India and the United States. Swami Vivekananda (1863 – 1902) first came to the U.S. in July 1893 to meet with western philosophers and address the Parliament of the World's Religions which opened on September 11, 1893 in Chicago. He returned to the U.S. in June 1899, established Vedanta Societies in San Francisco and New York, and founded a Shanti Ashram in California. Swami Vivekananda promoted the idea that all religions are different paths to the same goal, and celebrated the common ground among people with different beliefs. I was delighted to participate in a commemorative event on December 30 in Chennai alongside many Indian civil society partners to celebrate this historic figure linking our countries.

– Jennifer McIntyre

## We Need Your Help!

The warden program is a system for maintaining communications with the American community and providing important, timely safety or security information to U.S. citizens living or traveling in our consular district. If you live in Chennai's consular district and want to help, consider volunteering! Please email us at [chennaics@state.gov](mailto:chennaics@state.gov).

### *Districts Where We Need Wardens:*

#### Karnataka

Chamrajpet  
Chandra Layout  
Davanagere  
Gulbarga  
Hassan  
Kolar  
Manipal  
Museum Road  
Anand Nagar  
Nandhini Layout  
Electronic City  
HSR Layout

#### Bangalore Rural

Bidadi  
Channapatna  
Devanahalli  
Doddaballapur  
Dodda Gubbi  
Hoskote  
Magadi  
Neelamangala  
Ramnagara

#### Tamil Nadu

Ambattur  
Chrompet  
Cuddalore  
Kanchipuram  
Kanyakumari  
Kodambakkam  
Nagapattinam  
Padi  
Park Town  
Perambur  
Porur  
Pudukottai  
Red Hills  
Salem  
Thiruvarur  
Tirunelveli  
Tirupur  
Tiruvannamalai  
Trichy  
Vellore  
Villupuram  
Washermanpet

#### Kerala

Kollam  
Kozhikode

Pondicherry,  
including  
Auroville

## Health Corner: Food Safety

Unclean food and water can cause travelers' diarrhea and other diseases. Reduce your risk by sticking to safe food and water habits.

The Centers for Disease Control (<http://www.cdc.gov/>) recommends:

### Eat

- Food that is cooked and served hot
- Hard-cooked eggs
- Fruits and vegetables you have washed in clean water or peeled yourself
- Pasteurized dairy products

### Don't Eat

- Food served at room temperature
- Food from street vendors
- Raw or soft-cooked (runny) eggs
- Raw or undercooked (rare) meat or fish
- Unwashed or unpeeled raw fruits and vegetables
- Unpasteurized dairy products
- "Bushmeat" (monkeys, bats, or other wild game)

### Drink

- Bottled water that is sealed
- Water that has been disinfected
- Ice made with bottled or disinfected water
- Carbonated drinks
- Hot coffee or tea
- Pasteurized milk

### Don't Drink

- Tap or well water
- Ice made with tap or well water
- Drinks made with tap or well water (such as reconstituted juice)
- Unpasteurized milk

**An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!**

## Selective Service

All U.S. citizens who are subject to Selective Service Registration should register with that agency if they have not already done so. Current information on registration is available in the ACS section. All males must register within 30 days of their 18th birthday. For more information, you may contact the Selective Service System, P.O. Box 818, North Chicago, U.S.A. 60197-4638. Or you may register on-line at the [Selective Service Web Page](#).



## Victim's Assistance

If you or your U.S. citizen relative or friend has been a victim of crime while in India, please contact the U.S. Consulate in Chennai (or closest Embassy or consulate if not in Chennai's consular district) at 044-2857-4000.

You should file and request a copy of a local police report, called a First Information Report (FIR), as soon as possible. You should request the FIR from the police station closest to the scene of the crime.

[U.S. Embassy, New Delhi](#)  
[U.S. Consulate, Hyderabad](#)  
[U.S. Consulate, Kolkata](#)  
[U.S. Consulate, Mumbai](#)

### Emergency Services:

We can assist when a U.S. citizen in India is arrested, missing, is a victim of violent crime, becomes ill or dies, or when there is otherwise a need for immediate help.

- 24-hour duty officer for emergencies involving American citizens in the Chennai consular district: call **(+91-44) 2857-4000**
- Updates about crisis situations
- Information on local resources
- Contacting family members in the United States

## U.S. Visa Inquiries

The American Citizen Services unit is unable to assist with information regarding visas to the United States. For visa information, please visit the [visa](#) page or send an inquiry to [support-india@ustraveldocs.com](mailto:support-india@ustraveldocs.com). Please visit <http://www.ustraveldocs.com/in> for questions about visa appointments.

## Leaving India?

If you are departing from India after a long stay and you notified the Embassy or closest U.S. consulate of your presence in India through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), please be sure to "cancel" your registration when you leave. You can cancel your registration on this [website](#).

## Passport Renewal

Adult passport holders may renew their 10-year U.S. passports in person or by mail. We reserve the right to request an interview with respect to any passport application. If choosing to apply in person, appointments are required. Please visit our [website](#) for more information.



## Notarial Services

Consulates abroad provide a full range of notarial services. Notary functions performed by consular officers have the same requirements as in the United States: the person must appear before the officer, establish his/her identity, show that he/she is not acting under duress, and that he/she understands the nature, language, and consequences of the documents. Please visit our [website](#) for more information.

## Join the American Library!

The American Library at the US Consulate Chennai offers over 14,000 fiction and non-fiction books, 140 scholarly journals, online research resources and much, much more. Visit the [Library website](#) for Library hours and membership information to enjoy the many resources available!

Join us at the Library for American Saturday Matinee movies! Upcoming showings include The Prestige, Dinosaur, Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days, Message in a Bottle, Mulan II and many others! Check the [Library website](#) for show times and procedures for entry to the Consulate.



## STEP - Smart Travelers' Enrollment Program

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency. STEP also allows Americans residing abroad to get routine information from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

You can enroll in STEP online in a few easy steps. Visit <https://step.state.gov/step/> for more information



## Social Security Information

The Consulate does not process claims for Social Security but can assist you with forms and other information.

The [Social Security Office](#) at the American Embassy in Manila, Philippines, provides direct services to Social Security beneficiaries living in India.

For more detailed assistance, please contact the Social Security Administration directly using one of the methods listed below.

### General Enquiries:

05-632-301-2000, ext.: 5 then ext.: 2  
Mondays to Fridays 5:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Indian Standard Time (08:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Manila Time)

Email: [FBU.Manila@ssa.gov](mailto:FBU.Manila@ssa.gov)

### Mail: Social Security Division

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office  
American Embassy  
1131 Roxas Boulevard  
Ermita 0930 Manila, Philippines

## Social Security Information (Continued)

### Benefit Checks

The Consulate distributes Social Security and other Federal Benefit checks to eligible recipients living in India. We usually receive the checks from the Department of Treasury between the 10th and 15th of each month. Although Social Security checks are typically distributed to beneficiaries by mail, you can request to pick up your check by hand. If you have not received or lost a Social Security check, please inform the American Citizen Services Unit of the Consular Section. We will work with the Department of Treasury to track down the check. E-mail us at [chennaics@state.gov](mailto:chennaics@state.gov) or call (0)44-2857-4000. (When dialing from the U.S. remember to dial 011-91-44-2857-4000.)

To ensure that you receive your benefits as soon as possible, we encourage you to consider signing up for Direct Deposit of your benefits into a U.S. bank account. It is currently not possible to directly deposit your benefits into an Indian bank account.

For up-to-date information from the Social Security Administration, please visit the SSA [website](#).

### Other Benefit Information

For additional information on Federal Benefits overseas, please visit

[http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/living\\_1234.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/living_1234.html)

For Department of Labor benefits, please visit

<http://www.dol.gov/>

For Railroad benefits, please visit <http://www.rrb.gov/>

For other Federal Employee benefits, please visit

<http://www.opm.gov/retire/index.aspx>



## January: National Human Trafficking Prevention Month

Human trafficking endangers the lives of millions of people around the world. Trafficking networks operate in every country and affects men, women, and children of all ages. Each January, the United States government and Americans rededicate themselves to stopping one of the greatest human rights abuses of our time. Bollywood actors **Amitabh Bachchan** and **John Abraham** have joined U.S. actors **Mira Sorvino**, **Nicholas Cage**, and many others in speaking out against human trafficking.

## February: Black History Month

During February each year, the history, heritage, and contributions of African Americans are celebrated and honored during Black History Month. The theme for Black History Month in 2014 is "Civil Rights in America," chronicling the important milestones by African-Americans and others in the battle for civil rights and equal treatment under the law. Famous African-Americans involved in the struggle for equal rights include:

- **Rosa Parks**, called "the first lady of civil rights" and "the mother of the freedom movement";
- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**, an American clergyman, activist, humanitarian, and leader in the African-American Civil Rights Movement;
- **Justice Thurgood Marshall**, the first African-American Supreme Court justice and former lawyer, best known for his victory in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the decision that desegregated public schools.

## March: Women's History Month

Women's History Month highlights the contributions of women to events in history and contemporary society. It is celebrated during March in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, corresponding with International Women's Day on March 8<sup>th</sup>. In 2014, the National Women's History Project is honoring 12 women, including:

- **Tammy Duckworth**, an Iraq War veteran and Congresswoman, recognized for her service to veterans with disabilities;
- **Lisa Taylor**, a civil rights attorney who has worked to enforce the rights of HIV victims, autistic children, and educational opportunities for minority students; and
- **Jaida Im**, founder Freedom House (2010), the first residential shelter for adult female survivors of human trafficking in Northern California.

## Did You Know...?

President Ulysses S. Grant created America's first national park - Yellowstone National Park - on March 1, 1872. The National Park Service was created on August 25, 1916 by President Woodrow Wilson. The National Park Service is a bureau of the Department of the Interior.

The national park system has 401 areas covering more than 84 million acres in every state, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. These areas include national parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House!

The largest area is the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve in Alaska (13.2 million acres) and the smallest is the Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial in Pennsylvania (0.02 acres). There are 22,000 permanent, temporary, and seasonal employees in the National Park Service and another 221,000 volunteers.

Over 282 million people visited America's National Parks in 2012. The Smoky Mountains National Park is the most visited park in the National Park System.

On July 20, 1951, the Secretary of the Interior designated the arrowhead as the official emblem of the National Park Service. The Sequoia tree and bison represent vegetation and wildlife, the mountains and water represent scenic and recreational values, and the arrowhead represents historical and archeological values.





# NEWSLETTER YOUTH SECTION

AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES

United States Consulate General, Chennai, India

## America's National Parks!



## National Park Trivia Quiz

Read the article on p. 5 to find the answers to the trivia questions below!

- 1) What government agency oversees the National Park Service?
- 2) How old is the national park system?
- 3) How many areas are there in the national park system?
- 4) What is the smallest national park site?
- 5) What is the largest national park site?
- 6) How many people visit the national parks each year?
- 7) How many employees are in the National Park Service?
- 8) What is the National Park Service official emblem?

ANSWERS: 1) Dept of the Interior; 2) 98 years old; 3) 401; 4) Thaddeus Kosciuszko National Memorial, PA - 0.02 acres; 5) Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, Alaska, 13.2 million acres; 6) more than 282 million; 7) 22,000; 8) The Arrowhead