**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**For students, parents/guardians, and teachers**

### About the School Immersion Programme

Since 2003 HOPE has worked closely with Irish secondary schools to offer transition year and fifth year students the unique opportunity to travel to Kolkata, making a real difference to the lives of street and slum children, their families and communities.

Supported throughout their time in India, students are introduced to the themes of international development, while directly witnessing an NGO working in the field in Kolkata. A weeklong programme is prepared for the students, who spend time visiting a wide range of projects across all HOPE's programme areas. Students will get to interact with children and adolescents who are supported by these projects, learn about the project's background and how they operate, as well as immersing themselves in Indian culture.

### Where Will Students Stay?

Students will reside in the HHI Hotel for the duration of their stay. The Hope Foundation has an ongoing relationship with the hotel, which is safe, secure, and value for money. Students will receive breakfast each morning and an evening meal each night (included). Lunch is an additional cost to the student, for example, lunch in the HOPE Life skills cafe is around €3. Private buses are used to take the group to and from the HOPE projects each day. Students remain in the hotel after dinner and activities are organised for the evenings within the hotel, including henna tattoo, Indian dance class and sari draping. Participating in the evening activities is optional, and the cost is additional but minimal (for example, sari draping costs around €3). Wifi is available free of charge and we insist all students contact home each day.

### How Can Students Take Part?

Students who are interested in the Programme can contact their year coordinator or school Principal, who can arrange for a HOPE staff member to give a talk on HOPE, India and the School Immersion Programme at the school. After this, the coordinating teacher will arrange for the selection process (this differs from school to school) of students. Participating students, along with their parent/guardian will then meet with their HOPE group leader for sign up and orientation. Students, together with their parents /guardians must read through all HOPE orientation literature including our fundraising best practice guidelines to make sure everyone understands the Immersion process and requirements. Parents/guardians must sign and agree to the T&C’s of the Parental Consent HOPE Form. A passport copy and flight deposit (approximately €100) when requested will be needed in order to confirm their flight to Kolkata.

### How Much Will It Cost To Take Part?

There are two costs to be aware of. Firstly, fundraising for HOPE via public fundraising is a minimum of €2400. This amount must be lodged to the HOPE bank account. A small part of this cost will cover the student’s accommodation, breakfasts & lunches, transport in Kolkata and daily drinking water, while the remainder will go directly to HOPE’s projects. Secondly, private expenses for flights, vaccinations, bus transfer to Dublin airport, travel insurance and visa application fee cannot be fundraised for publicly, and are **not** to be lodged into the HOPE bank account.

**Approximate** break down of additional costs (subject to change):   
Flights: €1,200 – payable direct to Lee Travel, however HOPE will provide full details on this.  
Vaccinations: €130-€230  
Bus Transfer to and from Dublin Airport: €35  
Travel Insurance: €20-€40  
Visa Application: €50. Note it is the responsibility of the person travelling to ensure their passport has a validity of at least 6 months from the date of return from India.   
  
Finally, we would recommend spending money for the week of between €150 and €200

### Will Students Be Safe?

Students will be accompanied at all times by their teachers/supervising adult and a HOPE group leader for the duration of their trip. Students are not permitted to travel anywhere unaccompanied and will remain in the hotel in the evening. At all times students will be on private buses for travel between projects and the hotel. All accompanying adults are Garda Vetted.

### What Will The Group Do In Kolkata?

The Hope Foundation will design a full timetable for the group which will include visits to HOPE’s education centres, protection homes, the HOPE hospital and a visit to a slum. There will also be tourist and cultural visits, including a city tour, Mother Theresa’s former home, Jain Temple, Birla Temple and Dashkinipan Market for shopping. In the evenings we will be in the hotel, and activities including henna tattoo, Indian dance class and sari draping will be arranged.

### Are There Group Meetings Prior To Travel?

A HOPE Representative will organise a parent/student orientation session upon receiving all applications. There will be ongoing email and phone contact with all group participants and their parents and schools. Finally, there will be a final group orientation meeting 8-12 weeks prior to departure to answer any questions and discuss Visa Applications and Departure details.

### Will Students Be Exposed To Negative Conditions?

HOPE is very aware of the effects of over exposure to conditions within Kolkata’s street and slum communities. We are guided by our own experience, our social workers and our ground staff in relation to age-appropriate exposures. Group meetings take place each evening and students are encouraged to speak about the day’s activities, to explore their emotive responses and to seek additional supports if needed.

### Is Medical Support Available?

Yes. We have our own HOPE hospital in Kolkata which is accessible 24/7 for all students and volunteers. There is a wide range of experienced medical professionals available for consultation. HOPE will need to know of any medical or dietary issues which will be relevant to a student’s time with us in Kolkata. This information should be included in their sign up forms, or by private email to your HOPE group leader.

### Are There Fundraising Deadlines?

Yes. All monies to HOPE must be in and finalised 2 weeks before departure in order to travel. We cannot let any student who has not met the fundraising requirement to travel. Additionally, your group leader will set out key dates for recommended fundraising amounts along the way. The fundraising aspect, while challenging, is quite achievable given some motivation and effort from the students. There will also be a due date for the flight deposit and a due date for the flight balance which must be met in order for the seat to be secured.

***Thank you for your interest in The Hope Foundation.***

***Please contact*** [***sheila@hopefoundation.ie***](mailto:sheila@hopefoundation.ie) ***if you have any further questions or queries.***

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