

SECOND CIRCULAR

23rd International Congress of
Arachnology (ICA 2026)
15–21 November 2026
Kochi, Kerala, India



23rd INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF ARACHNOLOGY

Kochi (Cochin), India
15-21 November, 2026

Welcome

The Organizing Committee is pleased to issue the **Second Circular** of the **23rd International Congress of Arachnology (ICA 2026)**, to be held from **15–21 November 2026** in **Kochi, Kerala, India**.

This circular provides **updated and detailed information** regarding the scientific programme, plenary speakers, symposia, registration, abstract submission, accommodation, and logistics.

Participants are kindly requested to **refer to the First Circular** for comprehensive background information about the congress, host institutions, venue overview, travel guidance, and general information about Kochi and Kerala.

Deadlines

Early Bird Registration: 31 May 2026

Regular Registration: 31 August 2026

Abstract Submission: 31 July 2026

ISA Student Travel Grant Application Submission: 30 April 2026

HOST STATE: KERALA – INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Kerala continues to receive strong international recognition as a leading destination for sustainable tourism, culture, and wellness:

- **World’s Top Travel Destinations for 2026 (Rough Guides):**
Kerala was ranked **16th among the World’s Top 26 Travel Destinations for 2026**, and was the **only destination from India** to feature on this prestigious list. The recognition highlights Kerala’s natural beauty, rich culture, sustainability initiatives, and appeal for immersive “slow travel” experiences such as backwaters, hill stations, rainforests, and Ayurvedic retreats.
- **India’s Best Wellness Destination (Travel + Leisure India Awards 2025):**
Kerala was recognised as **India’s Best Wellness Destination**, reflecting its global reputation for Ayurveda and holistic well-being.
- **Global Digital Presence:**
In 2025, the official **Kerala Tourism website** ranked as the **second most visited state tourism portal worldwide**, after Thailand’s tourism website.

HOST CITY: KOCHI – A GLOBAL DESTINATION IN 2026

Kochi (Cochin), fondly known as the “**Queen of the Arabian Sea**”, has also gained international recognition:

Top 10 Global Travel Destinations for 2026 (Booking.com): Kochi was listed among the **Top 10 trending global travel destinations for 2026**, and was the **only Indian city** included. The recognition highlights Kochi’s unique blend of historic trade heritage, colonial architecture, contemporary art (including the Kochi–Muziris Biennale), culinary diversity, and its role as a gateway to Kerala’s backwaters, beaches, and biodiversity hotspots.

CONGRESS VENUE

The congress will be held at the **Gokulam Park Hotel and Convention Centre**, located in the heart of Kochi. The venue offers state-of-the-art conference facilities, spacious meeting halls, high-speed internet connectivity, and comfortable accommodation. Its central location ensures easy access to major transport hubs, city landmarks, and cultural attractions.

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME

Confirmed Plenary speakers & Titles:

1. **Charles Haddad** (University of the Free State, South Africa): ***Darkest Africa? Shining light on the spider biodiversity of the world’s most understudied continent***
2. **Jutta M Schneider** (University of Hamburg, Germany): ***Dangerous liaisons: causes and consequences of monogynous mating systems***
3. **Rodrigo Hirata Willemart** (University of São Paulo, Brazil): ***The sensory biology of Opiliones, with a comparison with other arachnids***
4. **Siddharth Kulkarni** (CSIR-Center for Cellular and Molecular Biology, India): ***Ancient gene linkages and ultraconserved elements disentangle recalcitrant branches in Arachnida***
5. **Suresh Benjamin** (National Institute of Fundamental Studies, Sri Lanka): ***Chance, Curiosity, and Spiders: Revealing Hidden Diversity in a Tropical Mountain Hotspot***
6. **Xin Xu** (Hubei University, China): ***Living fossils revisited: Systematics and biogeography of the primitively segmented spiders***

Three Symposia are featured:

Symposium 1: How to make Arachnology collections data accessible for research?

Coordinators: Kaïna Privet (Muséum national d’Histoire naturelle Paris, France), Janet Beccaloni (Natural History Museum, London, U.K.), Paula E. Cushing (Denver Museum of Nature & Science, U.S.A)

Symposium 2: Spatial Orientation in Arachnids: from Mechanisms to Behaviour

Coordinators: Ajay Narendra (Macquarie University, Australia), Dinesh Rao (Universidad Veracruzana, México)

Symposium 3: Parasitoids and Parasites of Arachnids: Hidden Players in Terrestrial Food Webs

Coordinators: Michal Segoli (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel), Yael Lubin (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel)

REGISTRATION

Registration for ICA 2026 is available through the official congress website:

Registration Link: <https://ica2026.in/final-registration.asp>

Participants who have already **pre-registered** may complete their registration by using the **same email address provided during pre-registration**. New participants are required to complete the registration form and proceed with payment as per the applicable category. Registration will be confirmed only after successful submission of the registration form and receipt of payment.

Participants are encouraged to register early to avail the **early bird registration benefits** and to facilitate timely arrangements for accommodation and visa processing.

REGISTRATION FEE

Registration Fee in USD (18% GST Inclusive)

Registration fee includes: Airport pick-up and drop, Welcome Reception, lunch and coffee breaks on all congress days, mid-congress excursion, conference kit, and Congress Dinner.

For accompanying persons, the fee covers the Welcome Reception, mid-congress excursion, specially curated activities such as guided city tours, heritage walks, cultural immersion experiences etc, and the Congress Dinner.

Category	Early Bird (Till May 31, 2026)	Regular (June–Aug 31, 2026)
ISA member	400	460
Non-ISA member	460	510
ISA student/retired member	320	360
Non-ISA student/retired member	350	390
Accompanying person (Adult)	250	250
Child Dependent (12-17 years)	200	200
Child Dependent (<12 years)	No Fee	

Registration Fee for Indian Participants in INR (18% GST Inclusive)

Category	Early Bird (Till May 31, 2026)	Regular (June–Aug 31, 2026)
ISA member	25000	30000
Non-ISA member	27000	32000
ISA student/retired member	18000	23000
Non-ISA student/retired member	20000	25000
Accompanying person	16000	16000
Child Dependent (12-17 years)	10000	10000
Child Dependent (<12 years)	No Fee	

Congress T-Shirts

Official ICA 2026 congress T-shirts will be available for purchase during registration. Participants who wish to order a congress T-shirt will be requested to indicate their preferred size in the registration form. The cost of the congress T-shirt, if selected, will be added to the total registration fee payable by the participant.

T-shirt Options



Round Neck T-shirt Cotton White . Price: USD 12/ INR 1000

Collar T-shirt Cotton White . Price: USD 12/ INR 1000

Round Neck T-shirt Cotton Black. Price: USD 12/ INR 1000

Collar T-shirt Cotton Black. Price: USD 12/ INR 1000

T-shirt Size Options

XS, S, M, L, XL, XXL and XXXL (Please refer to the size chart)

Measurement	Unit	XS	S	M	L	XL	XXL	XXXL
Chest	Cm	91	96	101	106	111	116	121
	Inch	36	38	40	42	44	46	48
Length	Cm	64	66	68	70	72	74	76
	Inch	25	26	27	27.5	28	29	30

Variation: ±5%

Length measured from center back neck

REGISTRATION FEE PAYMENT

Modes of Payment

Accepted payment methods will include:

International Payments

- Bank Transfer
- PayPal

*A small **payment processing fee** will apply to PayPal and international card payments to cover transaction and currency conversion charges imposed by the service providers.*

Payments from India

- UPI
- Bank transfer

Instructions for Payment

1. Bank Transfer (International / Domestic Wire Transfer-IMPS&NEFT)

Bank Details:

Account Name: ICA 2026 -BMC

Bank Name: South Indian Bank

Account Number: 0313053000010020

IFSC Code: SIBL0000313

SWIFT Code: SOININ55XXX

Branch: Kakkanad, Kerala, India

Important:

- All bank transfer charges must be borne by the participant.
- Please ensure the participant's name is mentioned in the transaction remarks/reference.

After completing the payment:

- Save the **transaction receipt**.
- Enter the **transaction ID** in the registration form and email the receipt to:
ica2026kochi@gmail.com

2. PayPal

Participants may pay the registration fee securely using PayPal. Please use the following payment link: <https://paypal.me/ica2026>

International participants may pay in **USD**.

Note: PayPal may require users to log in or create a PayPal account to complete the payment.

Payment Instructions

1. Click the payment link above.
2. Enter the **registration fee corresponding to your category**.
3. In the **“Add a note”** field on PayPal, please include:

ICA2026 – Registration – [Participant Name] – [Registration Category]

Example: ICA2026 – Registration – Maria Silva – Student Early Bird

4. Complete the payment process.

After completing the Payment

- Save the **PayPal transaction receipt**.
- Enter the **transaction ID** in the registration form and email the receipt to: ica2026kochi@gmail.com

Important Notes

- Please ensure that the **correct registration amount** is entered before completing the payment.
- Any **PayPal transaction charges or currency conversion fees**, if applicable, should be borne by the participant.
- Registration will be confirmed only after the payment is successfully received.

3. UPI (Only for remittances from India)



Payment Instructions

1. Open any UPI-enabled app (e.g., Google Pay, PhonePe, Paytm, BHIM).
2. Scan the QR code.
3. Enter the registration fee corresponding to your category.
4. In the remarks/message field, please include:
ICA2026 – Registration – [Participant Name] – [Registration Category]
Example: ICA2026 – Registration – Maria Silva – Student Early Bird
5. Complete the payment.

After Completing the Payment

- Save a screenshot or transaction receipt.
- Enter the transaction ID (UTR number) in the registration form.
- Email the payment proof to: ica2026kochi@gmail.com

Policy on Accompanying Persons and Child Dependents

ICA 2026 welcomes delegates who may travel with accompanying adults or children. An accompanying adult (spouse, partner, or family member not participating in the scientific programme) may register under the Accompanying Person category, which provides access to social events, cultural activities, excursions (where applicable), and designated common areas. Accompanying persons will not have access to scientific sessions, poster areas, delegate kits, or conference materials.

Children below 12 years may accompany a registered delegate free of charge, while those aged 12–17 years may register under a subsidized Child Dependent category (USD 200). Child dependents will not receive delegate materials and may access only social and public areas. Attendance at scientific sessions or poster presentations is permitted only if they are separately registered as student delegates.

A feeding room will be available at the venue for participants traveling with infants and young children. Children must remain under parental or guardian supervision at all times.

Conference lunches and coffee/tea breaks during the scientific programme days are provided only to registered scientific and student delegates. Accompanying persons and child dependents (except children below 12 years) are not included in conference-day catering but may participate in official social events such as the welcome reception, mid-congress excursion, and congress dinner. During conference days, accompanying persons may use hotel or external dining facilities at their own expense.

The Organizing Committee reserves the right to make minor modifications to this policy if required for operational or safety reasons.

Registration Fee Refund Policy

Cancellation before 31 July 2026: Full refund of the registration fee minus an administrative fee of USD 40 (or INR equivalent), applicable GST and any non-refundable transaction charges.

Cancellation between 1 August and 30 September 2026: 50% refund of the registration fee (inclusive of GST). Non-refundable transaction charges will apply.

From 1 October 2026 onwards: No refund will be possible due to confirmed congress commitments.

Visa Rejection: Participants whose visa applications are officially rejected may request a refund by submitting documentary proof. Refunds in such cases (until 31 October 2026) will be processed minus the administrative fee, applicable GST and any non-refundable transaction charges.

Accompanying Persons: The same cancellation and refund policy applies to accompanying person registrations and child registrations where fees are applicable.

Congress T-Shirts: T-shirt orders are non-refundable after 30 September 2026, as production will be initiated based on confirmed orders. Refunds requested before this date will be processed minus applicable transaction charges.

Transaction Charges: Payment gateway fees, bank charges, and currency conversion costs are non-refundable.

Processing Time: Approved refunds will normally be processed within 4–6 weeks after confirmation.

Force Majeure: In the unlikely event of congress cancellation or postponement due to circumstances beyond the organizers' control, refunds (full or partial) will depend on recoverable expenses already incurred.

TRAVEL AND LOCAL TRANSPORT

Kochi is well connected nationally and internationally through Cochin International Airport (COK), which has direct flights to major cities across Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, as well as frequent domestic connections to all major Indian metropolitan cities. The city is also accessible by an extensive rail network and well-developed national highways. Within Kochi, delegates can conveniently travel using app-based taxis (such as Uber and Ola), prepaid airport taxis, local buses, and auto-rickshaws. The Kochi Metro provides an efficient and economical mode of transport across key parts of the city. Further details regarding the venue and directions are available on the congress website: <https://ica2026.in/venue.asp>.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation at the conference venue hotel is limited and will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Participants are therefore strongly encouraged to make their bookings as early as possible, particularly if they wish to stay at the venue hotel.

All accommodation rates are quoted in Indian Rupees (INR). International delegates are kindly requested to check the prevailing currency exchange rates at the time of booking and payment.

Gokulam Park Hotel & Convention Centre, Kochi (Conference Venue)

Category: Four-star

Website: <https://www.sarovarhotels.com/the-gokulam-park-kochi/>

Special ICA 2026 Rates (CP – Breakfast included): Single Occupancy: INR 4,000 + 5% GST per night; Double Occupancy: INR 4,500 + 5% GST per night; Triple Occupancy: INR 5,500 + 5% GST per night

Payment Mode: Direct payment by the guest to the hotel.

Reservations: Participants are requested to contact the hotel directly and mention “**23rd International Congress of Arachnology (ICA 2026)**” to avail the special conference rates.

Email: kpo@sarovarhotels.com or fom.kochi@gokulamhotels.com

Partner Hotels (Special Conference Rates)

Due to limited room availability at the conference venue, the Organizing Committee has also negotiated special rates with selected partner hotels in Kochi. For details, please visit the congress website: <https://ica2026.in/accomodation.asp>

Participants are encouraged to complete their reservations at the earliest, as November is a peak tourism season in Kochi and rooms may sell out quickly, with possible increases in rates closer to the conference dates.

MID-CONGRESS EXCURSION

On the designated mid-congress break, delegates are invited to choose one of two primary excursions designed to showcase Kerala’s unique biodiversity and tranquil landscapes.

Details of the available options can be found on the congress website:

<https://ica2026.in/mid-congress-excursions.asp>

PRE- AND POST-CONGRESS TOURS

Pre- and post-congress tours are optional and provide additional opportunities to explore Kerala and other destinations in India before or after the congress. We warmly invite delegates and accompanying persons to make the most of their visit by arriving a little early or extending their stay after the congress to experience the region's remarkable natural beauty, biodiversity, culture, and heritage. A range of thoughtfully curated tours has been arranged to help you explore Kerala's serene backwaters, the lush Western Ghats, wildlife habitats, historic sites, and vibrant local traditions at a relaxed pace—offering a perfect blend of scientific engagement and memorable travel.

For detailed itineraries, personalized customization, or to secure your booking, delegates are requested to contact our official travel partner. More information is available at:

<https://ica2026.in/pre-post-tours.asp>

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Abstracts should be submitted as a Word document (.docx) using Times New Roman, 11-point font, with justified text and 1.5 line spacing, and should follow the format described below.

All abstracts must be written in **English**.

Submission Method:

Abstracts should be emailed to ica2026kochi@gmail.com before the announced submission deadline. Please ensure that the file naming guidelines provided below are followed.

Title: should not exceed 20 words, in bold.

Authors: name surname¹; name surname²; name surname³; etc. The presenting author should be underlined.

Affiliations: institutional names and full addresses of each author should be provided and indicated using superscript numbers corresponding to the author names.

Corresponding author: the email address of the corresponding author should be provided on a separate line below the affiliations.

Abstract text: maximum 300 words.

Keywords: provide 3–5 keywords, separated by commas.

Presentation mode: please indicate one of the following: - oral / poster / symposium (please indicate symposium title) / plenary

Student presentation (optional): please indicate whether the presentation is intended for student award consideration: student presentation: yes / no

Only presentations delivered by registered student participants will be eligible for Best Student Oral and Best Student Poster awards. Proof of student status may be requested.

Thematic area

Please select one primary thematic category from the list below and include the corresponding 3-letter code in the file name.

Thematic Areas and Codes

BEH: Behavior

ECO: Ecology and Community Interactions

EVB: Evolution and Biogeography

STM: Systematics, Taxonomy and Morphology

PHY: Physiology, Neurobiology and Functional Biology

GEN: Genetics, Genomics and Molecular Biology

VSM: Venom, Silk and Functional Materials

CON: Conservation, Biodiversity and Environmental Change

MED: Medical and Applied Arachnology

MET: Methods, Modelling and Emerging Technologies

The Organizing Committee reserves the right to reassign abstracts to a different category if required for programme organization.

File naming guidelines: please name your file using the following format:

code_firstname_surname.docx. Example: BEH_Mathew_Joseph.docx

For multiple authors, use the first (corresponding) author's name only.

Registration requirement: the presenting author must be registered for the congress.

Abstracts will be included in the final programme only after registration of the presenting author is completed.

Template: a model abstract is provided and may be used as a template for preparing your submission. Download the model abstract here:

https://ica2026.in/assets/docs/beh_mathew%20m%20joseph.docx

ISA STUDENT TRAVEL GRANTS

The ISA Student Travel Grant is intended to generate a positive impact on the arachnological research careers of students and postdoctoral researchers by supporting their participation in the 23rd International Congress of Arachnology (ICA 2026).

Eligibility Requirements:

Applicants must, at the time of application, be:

- A university student (Undergraduate, MSc or PhD), or
- A Postdoctoral researcher with a research project focused on arachnology.

Grant Details

The ISA Student Travel Grant includes:

- **Exemption from the congress registration fee,** and
- **Financial support of USD 750.**

Application Procedure

To apply, candidates should send an email to ica2026kochi@gmail.com by **30 April 2026**, including the following:

1. Email Subject: The subject line should include: **ISA Student Travel Grant_Name_Surname**

2. Email Body: The applicant should: Briefly introduce themselves; explain the relevance of ICA 2026 to their research; provide an estimated and itemised budget for attending the congress, and; describe any financial constraints (e.g. lack of funding, limited institutional support, salary constraints, etc.). **All applications must be submitted in English.**

3. Attachments (PDF format)

Applicants must attach:

- A **short curriculum vitae** (maximum 4 pages),
- **Proof of student or postdoctoral status**, and
- The **abstract** of the work intended for presentation at ICA 2026.

Deadline: Last date for receipt of applications: 30 April 2026. Only complete applications received before the deadline will be considered.

VISA INFORMATION

All international delegates traveling to India are required to obtain a valid visa. India offers a convenient e-Visa facility for citizens of most countries, which can be applied for online. For participation in ICA 2026, registered participants must apply under the Conference Visa category, as this is the appropriate visa type for attending scientific meetings and congresses. Accompanying persons are advised to apply for a Tourist Visa. Delegates holding a Conference Visa may also undertake personal travel and sightseeing within India, subject to the validity and conditions of their visa.

Participants are strongly encouraged to initiate the visa application process well in advance, as processing times may vary depending on the country of residence. Official invitation letters will be issued to registered delegates who have completed payment of the registration fee, upon request, to support visa applications.

During the registration process, delegates are requested to carefully enter accurate passport and personal details, including: Full Name (as in passport), Nationality, Country of Birth, Passport Number, Passport Issue Date and Expiry Date, and Credentials/ Professional details and parent organization details. Please note that the same information will be used by the Organizing Committee to obtain the necessary clearances from the relevant Government of India ministries and authorities.

For detailed instructions, guidance, and updates regarding visa procedures, delegates are requested to refer to the official congress website: <https://ica2026.in/visa.asp>

IMPORTANT COMMITTEES

Organizing Committee

Rev. Abraham Oliyapuram, Bharata Mata College, India

Rev. Sebastian Kallungal, Bharata Mata College, India

Johnson K. Mathew, Bharata Mata College, India

Soumya Thomas, Bharata Mata College, India

Mathew M. Joseph, Bharata Mata College, India (**Convenor**)

Sunil Jose K., Devamatha College, India

Jithin Johnson, Bharata Mata College, India

Devi Priyadharsini, Regional Museum of Natural History (Eastern Region), India

Scientific Committee

Anita Aisenberg, Instituto de Investigaciones Biológicas Clemente Estable, Uruguay
Charles Haddad, University of the Free State, South Africa
Cor Vink, Lincoln University, New Zealand
Jason Dunlop, Museum für Naturkunde-Leibniz Institute for Evolution and Biodiversity Science, Germany
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Manju Siliwal, Wildlife Institute of India, India
Manoj Borker, Carmel College for Women, India
Mark Harvey, Western Australian Museum, Australia
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Souvik Sen, Zoological Survey of India, India
Stephanie Loria, University of Central Oklahoma, USA
Sudhikumar Ambalaparambil, Christ College, India
Sunil Jose K, Devamatha College, India (**Convenor**)
Suresh Benjamin, National Institute of Fundamental Studies, Sri Lanka
Uniyal VP, Graphic Era University, India
Yael Lubin, Ben-Gurion University, Israel
Yury Marusik, Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia

Closing Note

ICA 2026 offers a unique opportunity to engage in cutting-edge arachnological science while experiencing one of the world's most celebrated regions for biodiversity, culture, and sustainability.

We warmly invite you to join us in Kochi in November 2026.

With best wishes,

**The Organizing Committee, 23rd International Congress of Arachnology – ICA 2026
Kochi, India**

Congress website: <https://ica2026.in/> | Email: ica2026kochi@gmail.com

For queries, please contact the Organizing Committee

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Annexure I

Specimen Collection/Fieldwork in India: What Visiting Researchers Need to Know

This brief guide outlines the key regulatory and practical considerations for **international researchers** planning to conduct biological fieldwork in India.

1. Regulatory Framework

Biological fieldwork in India is governed by the **Biological Diversity Act, 2002** and the **Biological Diversity Regulations, 2025**. These laws apply to all **foreign nationals, Non-Resident Indians (NRIs)**, and **institutions with foreign participation**, regardless of whether the research is academic or non-commercial.

2. Prior Approval from the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)

Before collecting any biological material (including spiders and other arachnids), visiting researchers are legally required to obtain **prior written approval** from the **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)**.

- Applications must be submitted online via the NBA portal using **Form I**
 - Approval involves entering into **Mutually Agreed Terms (MAT)** under the **Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS)** framework
 - Processing may take several months; early planning is essential
- 🔗 NBA website: <http://nbaindia.org/>

3. Collaboration with Indian Researchers

Fieldwork by international researchers is strongly encouraged to be conducted **in collaboration with Indian scientists or institutions**. Such collaborations are typically formalized through:

- Institutional **MoUs**
- Joint research projects
- Co-supervised studies or long-term collaborations

Local collaborators often assist with logistics, permits, and compliance with national regulations.

4. Forest and Protected Area Permissions

If fieldwork involves **forest areas, wildlife sanctuaries, or protected habitats**, additional permissions are required.

- A **Research & Collection Permit** must be obtained from the **State Forest Department**
 - In Kerala, this is issued by the **Kerala Forest Department (Wildlife Wing)**
 - Approval from the NBA **does not automatically grant access** to forest or protected areas
- 🔗 Kerala Forest Department: <https://forest.kerala.gov.in>

5. Specimen Deposition and Export

- **Voucher specimens** of any newly discovered species must be deposited in an **Indian Designated Repository**
- Export of biological specimens outside India requires **explicit NBA permission**
- Transporting specimens without authorization is prohibited

6. Genetic Data and Digital Sequence Information (DSI)

As per current regulations:

- Any **genetic or genomic data** (including DNA barcodes or sequence data) derived from Indian biological material is subject to the same ABS framework
- Use, publication, or sharing of such data must comply with approved terms

7. Legal Compliance

Unauthorized collection, transport, or export of biological material is treated as a **serious legal offense** under Indian law and may carry **substantial penalties**, including fines and imprisonment. Researchers are therefore strongly advised to ensure **full compliance** before undertaking any field activities.

