



23rd INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF ARACHNOLOGY (ICA 2026)

15–21 November 2026 | Kochi, Kerala, India

THIRD CIRCULAR – IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

CONGRESS VENUE

Gokulam Park Hotel & Convention Centre

Banerji Road, Kaloor, Kochi, Kerala – 682017, India

Hosted by Bharata Mata College, Kochi, in association with Devamatha College, Kuravilangad, on behalf of International Society of Arachnology (ISA)

1. CONGRESS DATES, VENUE & KEY PROGRAMME

We are delighted to welcome you to the 23rd International Congress of Arachnology (ICA 2026) in Kochi, Kerala.

Congress Dates: 15–21 November 2026

Venue: Gokulam Park Hotel & Convention Centre

Banerji Road, Kaloor, Kochi, Kerala – 682017, India

The Congress venue is centrally located in Kochi and is particularly convenient for public transportation. It is approximately:

- 200 metres from Kaloor Metro Station
- 350 metres from Town Hall Metro Station

Key Programme

15 November	Arrivals, Registration, Welcome Reception
16 November	Inauguration, scientific programme, Beringian (Russian) Party
17 November	Scientific programme, Congress Group Photo, Arachno-Olympics
18 November	Mid-Congress Excursion
19 November	Scientific programme, Congress Dinner
20 November	Scientific programme, ISA General Assembly, Cultural Programme
21 November	Scientific programme and Congress closing; the programme is expected to conclude by noon

The detailed scientific programme will be circulated/updated as it is finalized.

2. SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME & PRESENTATIONS

Participants presenting oral or poster contributions are requested to carefully check the final programme for their presentation date, time and session. The mode of presentation as well as presentation guidelines will be intimated to each participant through email communication in a short while. Please be present at the designated session well in advance of your presentation.

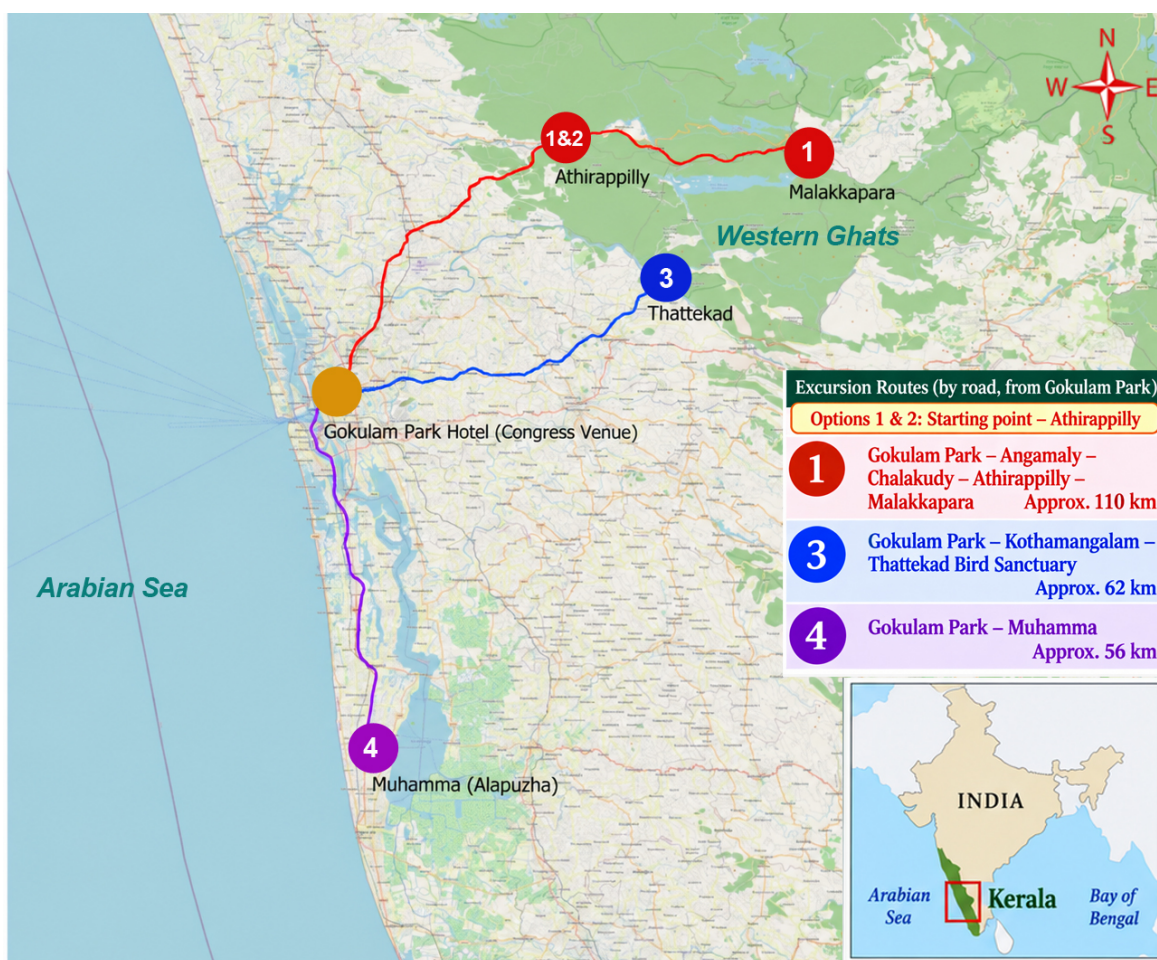
Programme updates will be available on the Congress website: <https://ica2026.in/tentative-programme.asp>

3. MID-CONGRESS EXCURSION – IMPORTANT UPDATE

The Mid-Congress Excursion is scheduled for 18 November 2026.

Here is an important update regarding the Western Ghats excursion. The originally proposed Athirappilly–Vazhachal–Malakkapara itinerary has presented some logistical challenges of late. The journey involves approximately 2 hours of driving each way through dense forest and hilly terrain. Recent road construction in some sections has complicated the travel, and large, long-chassis buses may have difficulty negotiating certain curves and sections with limited road clearance. With an anticipated departure around 7:00 a.m. and return around 7:30–8:00 p.m., the itinerary would also involve a relatively long and travel-intensive day.

Three Western Ghats options are now being offered to participants who selected the Western Ghats excursion during registration. Participants who selected the Kerala Backwater Houseboat Cruise do not need to make a new selection.



Location of the Congress venue and excursion destinations in relation to Kochi city and the Western Ghats. Coloured lines indicate the approximate road routes from the Congress venue. Options 1 & 2: Starting point – Athirappilly; Option 3: Thattekad Bird Sanctuary; Option 4: Kerala Backwater Houseboat Cruise – Muhamma

Option 1 – Athirappilly–Vazhachal–Malakkapara (Approx. 110 km by road)

Starting point: Athirappilly

Approximate distance from Congress Venue to Athirappilly: 68 km

This is the original Western Ghats excursion, covering the spectacular Athirappilly and Vazhachal waterfalls and continuing towards the forested mountain landscapes of Malakkapara. The journey offers scenic views of the Western Ghats, waterfalls, forests and mountain landscapes and provides an opportunity to experience the beauty of Western Ghats.

Physical demand: Low–Moderate

Special highlight: Scenic Western Ghats mountain and forest landscapes

This is the longest and most travel-intensive option, and participants should be prepared for extended road travel through hilly and forested terrain.

Option 2 – Western Ghats Hard Trekking Experience

Starting point: Athirappilly

Approximate distance from Congress Venue to Athirappilly: 68 km

This option is designed for participants seeking a more active experience in the Western Ghats. The programme will involve a hard trek of approximately 12 km each way through forest terrain, conducted with the support and guidance of the Kerala Forest Department

Participants should be physically fit and comfortable undertaking substantial walking over uneven and potentially challenging terrain. Lunch will be minimal/basic, appropriate for a trekking excursion.

The forest environment may also provide opportunities for participants to observe and photograph spiders and other arachnids in their natural habitat.

Physical demand: High

Special highlight: Guided Western Ghats forest trekking experience and possible arachnid observations

Participants selecting this option should bring proper trekking shoes, comfortable outdoor clothing, rain protection, drinking water and a small backpack.

Option 3 – Thattekad Bird Sanctuary

Approximate distance from Congress Venue to Thattekad: 62 km

The Thattekad Bird Sanctuary, located in the lowland Western Ghats, is one of Kerala's important birding and forest habitats. This option combines birdwatching with a forest walk, making it particularly attractive to bird lovers, naturalists and participants interested in Kerala's biodiversity.

Compared with the Athirappilly–Vazhachal–Malakkapara itinerary, this option involves less driving and a shorter forest walk, making it a more balanced nature experience. Participants may also have opportunities to observe and photograph spiders and other arachnids in the forest habitat.

Physical demand: Moderate

Special highlight: Birdwatching, forest biodiversity and possible arachnid observations

Participants are encouraged to bring binoculars/cameras, comfortable walking shoes, insect repellent, rain protection and a small backpack.

Important Note on Arachnid Collection

The natural habitats visited during the excursions may provide interesting opportunities for observing spiders and other arachnids. Participants are welcome to observe and photograph wildlife encountered during the excursions. However, collection of spiders or any other arachnids, plants, animals or biological material is strictly prohibited during all Congress excursions. Participants must not handle, capture, remove or disturb organisms encountered in their natural habitats.

Final Selection – Western Ghats Excursion

Participants who selected the Western Ghats excursion during registration are requested to make their final selection from the three Western Ghats options (Options 1–3) through the online form provided.

Selection form: <https://forms.gle/BuJTAAvtgicxBqEQA>

Deadline for final selection: September 22, 2026

As transportation and other logistical arrangements will be made based on the final number of participants for each option, participants are requested to make their selection carefully. Changes after the deadline may not be possible. The Organizing Committee may cancel one or more options if the minimum required number of participants is not met. In such cases, the affected participants will be informed individually and given the opportunity to change their selection to one of the remaining options.

4. PROGRAMME FOR ACCOMPANYING PERSONS

A separate programme is being planned for accompanying persons. Details of the programme will be communicated individually to delegates with registered accompanying persons.

5. ACCOMMODATION

Participants who have not yet arranged accommodation are strongly advised to book at the earliest, as November is a busy travel period in Kochi and hotel availability may become limited.

The Congress Organizing Committee does not arrange or book accommodation for participants.

For the convenience of delegates, a selection of hotels in and around the Congress venue has been identified. Participants may contact the hotels directly and make their own reservations. A limited number of rooms are currently still available at the venue hotel at the special Congress rates. Participants are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity and make their reservations at the earliest.

6. VISA & TRAVEL INFORMATION

International participants should ensure that they have the appropriate visa for travel to India.

Participants travelling to India specifically to attend the Congress should apply under the appropriate visa category for conference participation, as applicable to their nationality and circumstances. Participants should not apply for a tourist visa when their purpose of travel is participation in the Congress.

The Congress Organizing Committee has initiated the required government clearance process for eligible foreign participants. Once the relevant clearance is approved, the formal invitation letter and clearance document will be issued for visa purposes.

Special government clearances are mandatory for delegates from the following countries/categories: Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, Iraq, Sudan, Foreigners of Pakistani origin and Stateless persons

In addition, special administrative permissions may be required for visits by foreign nationals to designated Restricted or Protected Areas, including Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Lakshadweep, and the North-Eastern States of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. Depending on the area and traveller, such permissions may include a Protected Area Permit (PAP) or Restricted Area Permit (RAP).

Participants are advised not to include these areas in tourism or independent travel plans before or after the Congress unless they have obtained the necessary prior permissions. The government clearance issued for participation in ICA 2026 should not be assumed to constitute permission to visit such Restricted or Protected Areas.

Participants are advised not to make non-refundable travel arrangements until their visa and necessary clearances are in place, wherever applicable.

Official Indian e-Visa information is available through the Government of India e-Visa portal:

<https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html>

7. ARRIVAL IN KOCHI

Kochi is well connected by air, rail and road.

Cochin International Airport

Cochin International Airport (COK) is the principal airport serving Kochi. The airport has three main passenger terminals:

- Terminal 1 (T1) – Domestic Terminal: All domestic flights are handled through T1.
- Terminal 2 (T2) – Business Jet Terminal: Used for business and private jet operations.
- Terminal 3 (T3) – International Terminal: Handles international passenger flights.

Important Information for International Participants

Participants should pay particular attention to the terminal from which they will arrive.

- Direct international arrival: Passengers flying directly from an international destination to Kochi will arrive at Terminal 3 (T3 – International).
- Arrival via another Indian airport: Passengers travelling to Kochi via another Indian airport, where they transfer from an international flight to a domestic flight, will normally complete immigration and customs formalities at the first Indian airport and then continue to Kochi as a domestic passenger, arriving at Terminal 1 (T1 – Domestic).

Please check your complete flight itinerary carefully and confirm your arrival terminal before making airport pickup arrangements.

Airport pickup arrangements will be coordinated closer to the congress. Participants will be requested to submit their flight and arrival details to the Congress Secretariat at a later stage. Further instructions regarding the submission of these details will be provided in the Fourth Circular.

Railway

Kochi has two major railway stations: Ernakulam Junction (South) & Ernakulam Town (North) – Nearest to the Congress venue (900 metres). The Congress venue is located in the Kaloor/Town Hall area and is readily accessible from the railway stations by road, taxi, auto-rickshaw and Metro.

8. GETTING AROUND KOCHI

Kochi offers several convenient options for local transportation.

Kochi Metro: The Congress venue is particularly convenient for Metro travel, being approximately 200 metres from Kaloor Metro Station and 350 metres from Town Hall Metro Station. The Metro provides a convenient way to travel to several parts of Kochi while avoiding road traffic.

App-Based Transport: App-based transportation services are widely available in Kochi. Participants may use services such as **Uber, Ola, Rapido** etc. These services are convenient for point-to-point travel. Fares

and availability may vary depending on time, traffic and demand. Participants are advised to check the fare and destination in the app before confirming a ride.

Auto-Rickshaws and Taxis: Auto-rickshaws and conventional taxis are readily available throughout Kochi. For short-distance travel, auto-rickshaws can be particularly convenient.

City Buses: Kochi is served by KSRTC and private city buses, connecting major areas of the city. The state-owned Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) provides free travel to women and transgender persons on designated ordinary services under the Priyadarshini Scheme.

Language: Malayalam is the local language of Kerala. English is widely understood and used in hotels, restaurants, tourist areas, and other places commonly visited by international participants. Participants may therefore use English for most travel and day-to-day communication in Kochi.

Travel Tip: Traffic can be heavy during peak hours. Participants should allow sufficient travel time, particularly when travelling to or from the airport, railway stations or scheduled Congress activities.

9. WEATHER & CLIMATE IN KOCHI DURING NOVEMBER

November in Kochi is generally warm and humid, with the possibility of occasional rain.

Participants should be prepared for:

- Warm and humid daytime conditions
- Warm evenings
- Occasional rain or showers
- Cooler conditions in the Western Ghats, particularly during early morning or evening

10. WHAT TO BRING

For the Congress, participants are advised to bring comfortable formal or semi-formal clothing, comfortable footwear, congress registration documents, passport and visa documents where applicable, and any personal medication they may require. For excursions, participants are advised to carry comfortable walking shoes, rain protection, sun protection, insect repellent, a small backpack, and a camera or binoculars. Participants undertaking the Hard Trekking Experience should bring appropriate trekking footwear and clothing.

11. CULTURAL PROGRAMME

The Congress Cultural Programme will be held on the evening of 20 November, following the ISA General Assembly.

The programme will showcase a selection of cultural performances and provide participants with an opportunity to experience aspects of rich cultural traditions of India and Kerala.

Further details regarding the programme and timings will be announced in due course.

12. EXPLORE KOCHI & KERALA

Participants who have additional time before or after the Congress may explore Kochi and other parts of Kerala. In and around Kochi, places of interest include Fort Kochi, Mattancherry, Jew Town, Marine Drive, Kerala Folklore Museum, Hill Palace Museum, Cherai Beach, and Bolgatty Island. Elsewhere in Kerala, participants may consider visiting Munnar, the Alappuzha backwaters, Kumarakom, Thekkady, Varkala, Kovalam and Wayanad. Participants making independent travel arrangements are advised to allow sufficient travel time and consider local traffic and weather conditions.

13. IMPORTANT REMINDERS

Participants are requested to keep the following in mind:

- Check the final scientific programme carefully once published.
- Ensure that your registration and payment formalities are complete.
- International participants should ensure that their visa and required government clearances are completed well in advance.
- Confirm your accommodation as early as possible.
- Submit or confirm any outstanding scientific presentation information requested by the Scientific Committee.
- Complete the final Western Ghats excursion selection by the announced deadline, if applicable.
- Participants joining excursions should follow all instructions given by the organizers and local guides.
- No collection of spiders, arachnids, plants, animals or other biological material is permitted during Congress excursions.
- Participants are encouraged to carry suitable clothing and footwear for Kerala's warm climate and outdoor activities.
- Allow sufficient time for transportation because traffic conditions in Kochi can vary considerably.

14. WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU TO KOCHI

We hope that this information will help participants make the necessary arrangements for their visit to Kochi and enjoy both the scientific programme and the cultural and natural attractions of Kerala.

A Fourth Circular will be issued closer to the congress with further updates, including airport pickup arrangements and other practical information.

We look forward to welcoming arachnologists, researchers, students, accompanying persons and friends of the International Society of Arachnology to Kochi for ICA 2026.

With warm regards

Mathew M. Joseph

Convenor – Organizing Committee

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Convenor – Scientific Committee

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