



23rd International Congress of Arachnology (ICA 2026)

15–21 November 2026 | Kochi, Kerala, India

First Circular

Dear Colleagues,

Namaste and Welcome to India!

On behalf of the International Society of Arachnology (ISA), we are delighted to invite you to the 23rd International Congress of Arachnology (ICA 2026), to be held from 15–21 November 2026 in Kochi, Kerala, India.

The congress is being organized under the auspices of the International Society of Arachnology and will be hosted by Bharata Mata College, Kochi, and Devamatha College, Kuravilangad, both affiliated with Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala.

This marks the first time the ICA will be hosted in India — a land of extraordinary cultural diversity, scientific traditions, and ecological wealth. As one of the world's recognized **megadiverse nations**, India encompasses ecosystems ranging from the majestic Himalayas to the tropical Western Ghats, and from arid deserts to lush rainforests. With its long tradition of scholarship, discovery, and innovation, India offers an inspiring backdrop for international scientific exchange.

Within this vibrant nation, Kochi — the “Queen of the Arabian Sea” — provides a unique setting where heritage meets modernity, offering delegates not only rich opportunities for scientific dialogue but also immersive cultural experiences.

We warmly welcome the global arachnological community to India and look forward to your participation in making ICA 2026 a memorable celebration of science, culture, and collaboration.

Host City: Kochi & Kerala

Kochi (also known as **Cochin**), fondly called the “*Queen of the Arabian Sea*”, is a historic port city that has welcomed travelers and traders from across the world for centuries. A vibrant blend of heritage and modernity, Kochi is known for its iconic Chinese fishing nets, colonial architecture, bustling spice markets, and thriving arts and cultural scene.

Kochi is situated in the state of Kerala — **internationally celebrated as *God's Own Country*** — a land of unmatched natural beauty, ranked among *TIME Magazine's 50 Greatest Places* and featured by *National Geographic* and the *New York Times*. With tranquil backwaters, lush rainforests, tea plantations, pristine beaches, spectacular waterfalls, and rich biodiversity, Kerala offers visitors a unique combination of natural wonders and cultural traditions. Delegates will also have opportunities to experience Kerala's world-famous Ayurveda, cuisine, and classical performing arts.



Iconic Chinese fishing nets against the Kochi skyline

Congress Venue

The congress will take place at the Gokulam Park Hotel and Convention Centre, located in the heart of Kochi. This modern venue offers state-of-the-art conference facilities, spacious meeting halls, high-speed connectivity, and comfortable accommodation. Its central location ensures convenient access to major transport hubs, city landmarks, and cultural attractions. The venue has successfully hosted numerous international conferences, ensuring smooth logistics and a professional environment. Delegates can look forward to a seamless blend of academic engagement and warm Kerala hospitality.



Gokulam Park Hotel & Convention Centre

Congress Logo

The logo of the 23rd International Congress of Arachnology combines symbolic elements that reflect the identity and culture of the host city. On the right, a blue ship symbolizes the city of Kochi (Cochin), a historical port city known for its international spice trade and maritime significance. This ship emphasizes Kochi's vibrant role as a gateway for trade and cultural exchange. The palm tree on the left represents the state of Kerala, often referred to as the "Land of Coconuts." The state's name is derived from "Keram," meaning coconut palm in Malayalam language, which highlights Kerala's rich connection to coconut palms, its lush landscapes, and its agricultural prominence, justifying its epithet as "God's Own Country." At the center, a stylized spider web focuses on the congress's arachnological theme. The colors saffron, white, and green at the bottom reflect the Indian national flag, symbolizing the congress's location in India and its connection to the broader Indian identity. Thus, the logo blends Kochi's maritime legacy, Kerala's natural beauty, and India's national identity with the scientific focus of the International Congress of Arachnology.



Congress Logo

Visa Information

All international delegates traveling to India will require a valid visa. India offers a convenient e-Visa facility for citizens of most countries, which can be applied for online. The conference visa category is applicable for participation in scientific congresses. Hence, it is mandatory that all participants, except accompanying persons, must apply for the conference visa.

We recommend initiating the visa application process well in advance, as processing times may vary depending on the country of residence. The congress organizers will provide official invitation letters to registered delegates upon request, to assist with visa formalities. Detailed instructions and guidance will be made available on the congress website.

Excursions and Tours

Delegates will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of enriching excursions. The mid-congress excursion will offer a choice between a guided biodiversity field trip to the majestic Western Ghats or a serene houseboat cruise through the iconic Kerala backwaters. In addition, optional pre- and post-congress tours will allow participants to further explore Kerala's extraordinary natural and cultural heritage. Highlights include visits to the lush Munnar tea gardens, the wildlife-rich Periyar Tiger Reserve, the breathtaking Athirappilly Waterfalls, the tranquil Alappuzha backwaters, and immersive experiences in Kerala's world-renowned Ayurveda wellness traditions. For those seeking coastal beauty, excursions will also feature some of the most famous beaches of South and Central Kerala, including Varkala with its dramatic cliffs, Kovalam known for its crescent-shaped shores, and Marari with its pristine golden sands, offering delegates a chance to experience Kerala's scenic coastline and vibrant seaside culture.

Accompanying persons' activities include heritage walks, cultural immersion activities, cooking classes, and Ayurveda and wellness experiences, etc.



Western Ghats - a UNESCO World Heritage Biodiversity Hotspot



Houseboat - A floating retreat through Kerala's iconic waterways

Specimen Collection in India

Foreign individuals or entities intending to access, use, or obtain biological resources and associated knowledge from India are required to obtain prior approval from the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) under the provisions of

the Biological Diversity Act (BDA), 2002. The NBA is mandated to regulate access to biological resources and/or associated knowledge for a range of activities, including research, bio-survey and bio-utilization, commercial utilization, securing intellectual property rights, transferring research results, and transferring accessed biological resources. Applications may be submitted by non-Indians, NRIs, foreign entities, or Indian entities with foreign participation in their share capital or management. Detailed guidance and application forms for specific activities are available on the NBA website: <http://nbaindia.org/content/26/59/1/forms.html>.

In addition to NBA approval, prior permission from the State Forest Departments and State Biodiversity Boards is mandatory for specimen collection within the respective states. Compliance with these legal requirements is essential, and delegates are strongly advised to initiate the process well in advance of their intended activities.

Registration Fee in USD (18% GST Inclusive)

Registration fee includes: Airport pick-up and drop, Welcome Reception, lunch on all congress days, coffee breaks, 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	Regular
	(till May 2026)	(June–Aug 2026)
ISA member	400	460
Non-ISA member	460	510
ISA student	320	360
Non-ISA student	350	390
Accompanying person	250	250

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

Category	Early Bird	Regular
	(till May 2026)	(June–Aug 2026)
ISA member	25000	30000
Non-ISA member	27000	32000
ISA student	18000	23000
Non-ISA student	20000	25000
Accompanying person	18000	18000

Accessibility and Local Transport

Kochi is well-connected by air, rail, and road. The Cochin International Airport (COK), located about 25 km from the city center, offers direct connections to major international hubs in Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Regular trains link Kochi (Ernakulam Town and Junction Stations) to other Indian cities. Within the city, participants can use taxis, app-based cab services, buses, and the modern Kochi Metro for convenient transport.

Accommodation

A limited number of rooms will be available at **special rates at the congress venue (Gokulam Park Hotel and Convention Centre)**. These will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Booking details will be available on the congress website. Additional options include luxury hotels, boutique stays, and budget accommodations nearby. Delegates may also book through trusted online platforms such as Booking.com, Trip.com, Agoda, and MakeMyTrip.

Climate Information

During November, Kochi experiences pleasant tropical weather, making it an ideal time to host the congress. Daytime temperatures typically range between 24–33°C, with comfortable evenings. As the southwest monsoon season ends by October, the skies are generally clear; however, occasional light showers can still be expected. Delegates are advised to carry an umbrella or raincoat for possible showers.

Call for Symposia and Short-Course Proposals

We invite proposals for symposia and short courses to be held during the congress. Symposia proposals should include the symposium title, names and affiliations of conveners (one to three), a brief description of approximately 250 words outlining the scope and objectives, and, where possible, a list of potential speakers. Symposia should typically have a duration of 90 minutes and 4-5 speakers.

Short courses may last from one to four days, scheduled immediately before or after the congress, and proposals should indicate the title, coordinator(s), tentative program and schedule, learning objectives and maximum participants.

Proposals for both symposia and short courses should be submitted by 31 October 2025 by email to the Organizing Committee at ica2026kochi@gmail.com, with the subject line clearly indicating whether it is a symposium or short-course proposal. All submissions will be reviewed by the Scientific Committee, and accepted sessions will be announced in the Second Circular (November/December 2025). Coordinators will be responsible for finalizing content, arranging invited speakers or instructors, and coordinating logistics with the Organizing Committee.

What to Expect in the Second Circular

The **Second Circular (November/December 2025)** will provide detailed information on:

- Registration process and payment options
- Various Committees and contact persons
- Transportation and local travel options
- Accommodation Options
- Abstract submission guidelines and deadlines
- Provisional congress program
- Plenary speakers
- Grants and financial support opportunities
- Detailed excursions for delegates and accompanying persons
- Cultural and social activities during the congress
- Other relevant information

Pre-Registration

Please fill the Pre-Registration Form at <https://ica2026.in/registration-form.asp> to help us plan better and keep you informed of important updates. We strongly encourage all interested participants to pre-register at this stage. Pre-registration is free and non-binding, but it will ensure you receive all circulars, announcements, and key deadlines directly in your inbox. Pre-registration will also help speed up visa processing

Contact

For queries, please contact the Organizing Committee:

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Join us in Kerala — *Spinning Connections and Weaving Knowledge*

ICA 2026 promises to be a vibrant tapestry of science, culture, and camaraderie

We look forward to welcoming you to Kochi!

