



## Guide to Visiting a Gurdwara

Visiting an unfamiliar house of worship can be intimidating. Here are some tips to help you be respectful in your approach to visiting a gurdwara:

- All attendees should **cover their head with a bandana, cloth, or scarf** before entering the structure. If you don't remember to bring one, just ask someone—most gurdwaras keep extras on hand for visitors.
- All attendees should **remove their shoes and wash their hands** before entering the prayer hall.
- If it is the first time in the day that you are entering the prayer hall, it is customary to **acknowledge the *Guru Granth Sahib*** (Sikh scripture). Most do this by walking up to the front and bowing before it. If you do not feel comfortable bowing, it is appropriate to simply walk directly over to your seat and sit down.
- Try to **avoid turning your back or pointing your feet toward the *Guru Granth Sahib*** if at all possible.
- Be conscious of your use of **flash photography** inside the prayer hall. Gurdwaras do not typically prohibit photography, but it is polite to ask.
- **Do not walk up onto the podium or stage** inside the prayer hall.
- **Do not drink alcohol or use/have tobacco or any drugs** (controlled substances) on the gurdwara premises, including parking lot.
- Any person can take part in ***langar*, the free community kitchen** and meal prepared by volunteers and typically served in the gurdwara after services.

In general, know that you can always approach someone at the gurdwara for assistance or with questions—folks are usually more than happy to help, and even give you a tour!



Sikh Americans have been an integral part of our nation's society and history for more than 125 years, and there are an estimated 500,000 adherents of the faith living in the United States today. Many of these Sikhs gather weekly at the approximately 280 gurdwaras, or Sikh houses of worship, located throughout the country.



If you have questions about visiting a gurdwara or anything else pertaining to the Sikh American community, please reach out to the Sikh Coalition at [community@sikhcoalition.org](mailto:community@sikhcoalition.org).

Learn more about the traditions, history, and culture of the Sikh American community for free at [sikhcoalition.org/about-sikhs](https://sikhcoalition.org/about-sikhs)

