

Welcome to the Gurdwara!

The Sikh congregational place of worship is called gurdwara. The literal translation of the term gurdwara is “the Guru’s door,” but it also means “by means of the Guru’s grace.” The prerequisites for entering a gurdwara are removing one’s shoes and covering one’s head with either a ramaal (handkerchief), scarf or some other cloth.



We hope you enjoy your visit to the gurdwara!

Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru and founder of the Sikh religion, established the first gurdwara in the early 1500s. The Sikh Gurus established gurdwaras as places where sangat (congregation) could come together to worship as a community by reciting and reflecting upon hymns in the Guru Granth Sahib. Gurdwaras are not only a religious institution for the Sikhs where they can learn about their religion and pray, but it is also a political institution where Sikhs can discuss important social, local and global issues.

Sikhs at a Glance

- 99 percent of people wearing turbans in the U.S. are Sikhs from India
- Sikhs have been in the U.S. for over 100 years
- There are roughly 700,000 Sikhs in the U.S. today
- Sikhism is the world’s fifth largest religion with 25 million adherents worldwide
- Sikhs believe in one God, equality, freedom of religion, and community service
- Sikhs cover their uncut hair with a turban
- The Sikh turban represents a commitment to equality and justice
- Sikhism is a distinct religion, separate from Hinduism and Islam

Sikh gurdwaras across the world run a free community kitchen called langar, where a communal meal is served and eaten together by everyone visiting a Gurdwara. One of the earliest institutions of the Sikh faith, langar exemplifies an important Sikh teaching: all human beings are

equal regardless of their socioeconomic status, race or religion. It was mandatory for all visitors to partake in langar before having an audience with the Guru, so that kings and paupers alike, would sit together and eat the same meal.

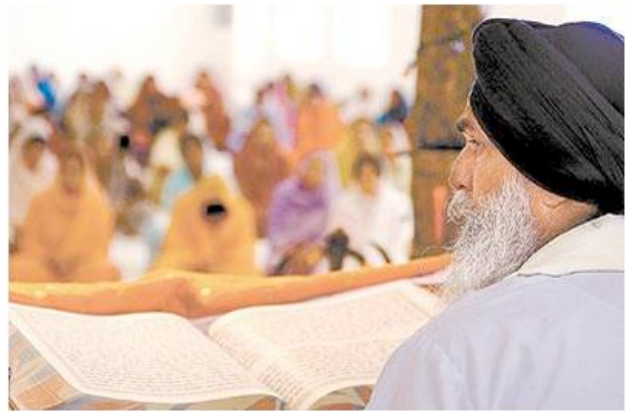


Gurdwara Protocol

- Wear modest attire
- Remove shoes when entering the congregation hall. This is a sign of respect to the sovereignty of the Guru Granth Sahib. All gurdwaras have shoe racks.
- Cover your head at all times as a sign of respect to the Guru Granth Sahib.
- You will see Sikhs bow in front of the Guru Granth Sahib upon joining the congregation. Non-Sikhs are not required to bow, but should enter and quietly join the congregation.
- Most attendees will sit on the floor during the services, barring any medical or physical impairment. Men and women are often seated separately in many gurdwaras, however, this is not required religiously.
- Stand up during Ardas (supplication prayer to God)
- Sit on the floor during langar and keep head cover
- No alcohol, tobacco, or smoking on the gurdwara premises.

Chronological Outline of a Typical Day at the Gurdwara

- Prakash– A short ceremony performed when the Guru Granth Sahib is formally opened each day
- Nitnem– Daily prayers
- Keertan– Hymns and religious sermons that are often sung
- Ardas– Prayer to God: everyone stands facing the Guru Granth Sahib, this prayer is said on several occasions.
- Hukam– The thought or passage of the day that is randomly selected and not determined beforehand.
- Community announcements and discussion, if any.
- Langar– sharing a communal meal from the community kitchen
- Nitnem– evening prayers
- Sukhasan– A ceremony to formally close the Guru Granth Sahib that signal the end of the services.



Terms and Traditions

- Chaur– A flowing wisk that is respectfully waved over the Guru Granth Sahib to indicate its sovereignty.
- Diwan Hall – this is the main hall in the gurdwara in which the religious services are held, with the Guru Granth Sahib placed at the front.
- Giani– Someone learned in the Sikh religion (like a Rabbi)
- Granthi– Caretaker or loosely 'minister'.. A Granthi's prime duties include arranging daily services, reading, teaching and explaining the Sikh scripture. Anyone can read scriptures or hymns and lead in prayer. More generally, a Granthi is responsible for the care of the gurdwara, the Guru Granth Sahib, and also to teach and advise community members.
- Gurbani– the contents of the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib containing the revealed wisdom of the Sikh Gurus, in their own words.
- Guru–Divinely inspired spiritual prophet–teacher. Refers to one of the ten founders of the Sikh faith, the Sikh scripture.
- Guru Granth Sahib– The Sikh scripture, written mostly in the form of hymns and poetry, it includes the writings of six of the Sikh Gurus as well as the devotional writings of 36 other saints, both Muslim and Hindu. It is 1,430 pages long and is the embodiment of the spiritual knowledge and authority of all the Gurus, and is treated with the utmost reverence by Sikhs.
- Karah Prashad– a dish of scard pudding prepared and served at all religious ceremonies conducted in the presence of the Guru Granth. It is served after the reading of the Hukam. By accepting the karah parshad, Sikhs symbolically accept the hukam as the sweet blessing of their Guru and agree to take it to heart.
- Tabla & Harmonium– Musical instruments, a set of small drums and a piano-like instrument respectively, used to perform Keertan.
- Waheguru– The name for God most commonly used by Sikhs. Meditating on the name of God is paramount to Sikhs, and the name Waheguru is considered by Sikhs to be the culmination of all aspects of God.

- Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh–Literally meaning “The Khalsa belongs to Waheguru (God), Victory belongs to Waheguru (God).” This is the traditional Sikh greeting. It is said before the beginning of and at the conclusion of programs at the gurdwara.

