



Essence of India I

5th – 11th February, 2009

Event Letter #2 for Participants

Greetings from Sangam!

We hope you are getting excited about your journey! We are busy planning to make this an unforgettable event in which you are able to learn about Indian culture, meet friends from around the world, and learn more about the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

This letter gives you an update on the activities planned for your event at Sangam, as well as information on what to prepare.

Written Material

Please make sure that you (or your group leader) have already submitted all complete enrolment and health forms, plus travel details and payment. If this has not been done, promptly forward these to our Event Administrator at info@sangamworldcentre.org.

Travel Reminders

If you have not already done so, find out the procedures for getting the mandatory 6-month Tourist visa, which *starts from the date of issue*. Also, remember that your passport needs to be valid for six months *beyond* the date of departure from India, so renew your passport if necessary! Some countries are experiencing significant delays in processing of both these documents, so check current timelines at your nearest Indian Consulate/Embassy (<http://www.india-visa.com/>.)

You may also want to consider getting travel insurance for your trip. These policies often cover lost luggage, expenses incurred in emergencies, or the financial loss from a cancelled trip.

If you have not already done so, please consult with your doctor about any immunizations or medications that may be recommended for your trip.

Arrival

Ideally, you will arrive the day before your event begins in order to rest at least a bit and begin full of energy. If this is not the case, we will try to plan for a slower start.

Travel arrangements directly to Sangam must be made, whether on your own or with our help. Regardless of if you arrive by train, bus, car, or plane, we need all such details to ensure your Indian World Centre is ready for you!

If you are flying from outside the country, be aware that many international flights arrive in the middle of the night – this is normal and our transport companies are used to this! After disembarking, you will go through immigration, claim your baggage, pass customs, and change money if desired. You then proceed through the doors and out into India. The heat and humidity are often a shock to foreign travellers. Here, rows of people may be offering to

carry your luggage or get a taxi for you. As you can imagine, this may be overwhelming after a long and tiring journey.

The most common way to travel from Mumbai (Bombay) is by bus or hired car (with driver.) It takes about four hours from the airport to Sangam. A pre-arranged driver can meet you outside of the arrival area holding a sign with your name on it. Again, our Event Administrator will be happy to help you with these or other arrangements.

Programme Activities

Your event is designed to ease you into India and provide a variety of experiences during your stay at Sangam. This is done by planning programme activities focused on Girl Guiding/Scouting and Indian culture, including handicrafts and performances.

Sangam Traditions

The following sessions and activities are traditions at Sangam that give us a chance to enjoy the friendship of International Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting. Many of these sessions also provide an opportunity to explore Indian culture by getting to know local people and places.

Flag Ceremony

Please bring ideas for flag ceremonies that are done in your country to share with all of us. Sangam has resources for this – and we encourage creativity in designing your own ceremony!

Reflections

The opportunity to explore the spiritual dimension in Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting can be a unifying factor, bringing together people of different faiths to share, discover, and learn, making the world a more open, accepting place. With this goal in mind, please bring readings, poems, songs, etc. to share with the group; we also have many resources for this here at Sangam. We hope these reflections honour and respect all different religions, including references to many or to none in particular. They should last about five minutes and may be combined with the daily flag ceremony.

Welcome Ceremony

Please wear your formal uniform for this special ceremony that encompasses Indian and Guiding/Scouting traditions.

International Evening

Please come prepared to share a folk dance, song, legend, etc. from your country or community. Please prepare it so that it can be shared in 5-10 minutes. Wear your national costume as you help create a fun and multi-cultural gathering. You also have a chance to share your own local or regional snacks. As we will still eat a full meal beforehand, bring food that requires minimal preparation and will be enough for about 20 people to sample. You may also decorate your food display table, as well as a 75cm x 120cm cloth banner provided by Sangam. This is an ideal time to exchange swaps too – small items such as badges or pins from your association.

Visit to a Community Partner

This is an opportunity to learn about social issues in India. You will learn about social work in Indian society and what the obstacles are to achieving health and prosperity for all. You may have the chance to share games and songs with the community you are visiting, so please bring some of your favourites for all ages. You may wish to budget for a small financial donation to the organisation you visit.

Visit to Indian Families

A great way to get to know local people and learn first-hand about daily life in a foreign country is to have dinner with a family. We will arrange small mixed groups of 2-4 people to visit Sangam friends, so please prepare for this individually: Bring a few photos of your family, hometown, etc., and a small optional gift representing your country or region (they will not expect one.)

Maharashtrian Dinner

Dressed in typical Indian clothes, sit down to enjoy a typical traditional wedding feast from our state of Maharashtra. Eaten with hands from a banana leaf plate, this meal features multiple kinds of rice, curries, chutneys, breads, and a traditional dessert.

Campfire/Sari Sangeet (depending on weather):

We look forward to hearing favourite songs, fireside stories or skits/sketches from your country and local Guide/Scout unit; come prepared to share with the rest of the group. You can also bring a small sample of ashes and their history from a previous campfire to add to Sangam's fire ring, taking some of our own ashes and their history when you leave.

In the Future...

A final Event Letter will be sent to you a few months before your event with more detailed information about specific activities. Between now and then, feel free to contact us if you have questions and we'll try our best to answer them!

Yours in the Spirit of Sangam ~

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