



# 'Tis the Season

Tuesday 22 – Monday 28 December  
2009

## *Event Letter #1 for Participants*

### **Greetings from Sangam!**

If you have booked onto this event or have made an enquiry this letter gives you background information on India, Sangam and your event, as well as information on what to prepare towards sessions. We look forward to getting to know you and expect to share a fun, adventurous, thought-provoking and maybe life-changing time!

### **Event Objectives**

The 'Tis the Season WAGGGS International Event will develop a participant's potential through:

1. Learning about WAGGGS, its Member Organizations, themes, projects, regions and World Centres, sharing the international friendship that Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting offers.
2. Experiencing the unique culture of India through its traditions, history and people.
3. Participating in activities and workshops related to leadership, advocacy and other topics relevant to the event or seminar.

### **Theme**

Come and join in the celebrations of the holiday season. Share traditional and new activities with staff and friends as we come together at this special time of year. In an informal atmosphere of international fun and friendship, participate in various rituals from religions and cultures around the world. Reflect on the significance of these practices, both personal and in the context of societies as a whole. Be welcomed by the warm hospitality of our community and experience the Sangam spirit!

### **Participation**

Already enrolled in this event are representatives from the United Kingdom. Guides and Scouts from other countries have also expressed interest in sending participants. At Sangam, you will also meet twenty-four local and eight international staff members. Spaces are still available in this event if you know others who would be interested in attending.

### **Language**

This Sangam event will be conducted in English.

### **Written Material**

Contact Sangam at [info@sangamworldcentre.org](mailto:info@sangamworldcentre.org) (or your group leader) if you have not received health forms, travel details and arrangements request form or the 'Coming to Sangam' document; this contains information on accommodation, weather, dress, currency, food, what to bring, and more. Please read this information carefully. The health forms and travel details and arrangement request form should be completed and sent to Sangam ([info@sangamworldcentre.org](mailto:info@sangamworldcentre.org)) as early as possible.

## **Travel Reminders**

If you have not already done so, please consult with your doctor about any immunizations or medications that may be recommended for your trip. Also, you need a passport that is valid for six months beyond the date of departure from India in order to apply for the required 3 or 6-months Tourist visa (which starts from the date issued; more details provided in the next letter.) Do check when your passport expires and renew if necessary!

## **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. Please note that events begin with lunch on the first day (22/12/09) and end after lunch on the last day (28/12/09).

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 (recommended). 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. The driver will often stop during the journey from Mumbai to Pune to have a short chai (Indian tea) break. Again, our Event Administrator will be happy to help you with these or other arrangements.

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.

## **A Different Culture**

India is a large country in which each region has its own language, food, customs, and dress. There is a great diversity of religion, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, and Zoroastrianism. While here, you will be introduced to many aspects of Indian culture. Taking time to learn about India's people, history, and geography before coming will enrich your visit and prepare you for the experiences you will make.

Travelling to India can be quite overwhelming. Your eyes, ears, nose and tongue will experience many new sensations, some of them might be enjoyable, some may seem distressing. Be aware that many things will be different to the ones at the place you call home. Keep your senses open to the new tastes which you are able try and to the experiences you will make – only if you do, you have a chance to find out about the new culture which you will meet! You will find that things which might seem strange at the beginning are not so foreign after all when you have tried them, asked people about it and explored Pune and its surroundings yourself.

Remember that culture is not created to entertain visitors; it is there to suit people's needs and situations. There are reasons for why cultures are the way they are – even if it is not apparent to the visitor. When we use words like "strange" "funny" or "weird" we are judging. When you hear yourself use these words, stop and rephrase the thought in a non-judging way. Do not oversimplify – exotic and not, wealth and poverty, east and west. Especially, be careful of comparing two countries in this way. Nothing is ever this simple!

There are many books which are interesting to read and give you a good idea about Indian society, some we would recommend are Rohinton Mistry's Tales of Firozsha Baag, Salman

Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Gregory David Roberts' *Shantaram*, Suketu Mehta's *Maximum City: Bombay Lost & Found* or William Sutcliffe's *Are You Experienced?* which all tell very different tales of India seen with different eyes in different times. A non-fictional but nevertheless easy and very interesting read is *Culture Shock! India* which is available in different languages, as well as different authors depending in which language you prefer to read it.

At Sangam your event schedule is designed carefully to gradually introduce you to the unique culture of India and to help you to enjoy and learn about local specialities, making your stay at Sangam a perfect beginning of a longer trip in India. Or, if you choose to finish your Indian visit with a Sangam event, you will find that it provides a relaxed closure and deepen your knowledge.

At Sangam, you will have the opportunity to get insight views of Indian life and culture, which might challenge your views of your own culture too. The peacefulness of Sangam is a wonderful base to explore the diversity of India and we are looking forward to sharing it with you!

If you would like further information on travelling in India or staying longer at Sangam please contact our Event Administrator ([info@sangamworldcentre.org](mailto:info@sangamworldcentre.org)), who has information of tours that participants often use.

### Dress Code

You will need multiple changes of comfortable clothing, shoulders and knees should be covered out of respect to the local community around Sangam. A sunhat is handy when out and about in Pune. Although days are warm early mornings, evenings and air conditioned areas may require a jumper, sweater or cardigan. A one piece swimsuit should be worn when using the pool. You will also need to cover up when walking between your room and the pool. Shoes should be comfortable and supportive, slip-on sandals are convenient for inside Sangam and when visiting homes and temples where we remove shoes.

There is a Dhobi man Service available for participants as well as hand washing facilities.

### Sangam's Daily Routine

<u>AM</u>	
8.15	Server Patrol sets Dining Room tables, Flag & Reflection patrol(s) set-up Snapshot patrol writes a few words about the previous day
8.30	Continental Breakfast – choice of egg, porridge, toast, cereal, and fruit
9.30	Flag & Reflections – the spiritual element of our Movement, preferably not specific to a particular religion, or else incorporating aspects of various religions
9.45	1 <sup>st</sup> morning session
11.00	Morning Tea & Biscuit Break, shop at Sangam's Yahdei
11.30	2 <sup>nd</sup> morning session
12.50	Server patrol sets tables
<u>PM</u>	
1.00	Vegetarian Indian Lunch – chapatti (whole wheat flat bread), rice, dhal (lentil sauce) and assorted vegetables safely prepared with filtered water and minimal spice
2.00	'INDIAN SIESTA' - swim, explore, read your event book, write in your journal...
3.00/3.30	1 <sup>st</sup> afternoon session
4.30	Afternoon Tea & Biscuit Break, shop at Sangam's Yahdei
5.00	2 <sup>nd</sup> afternoon session
5.50	Server patrol sets tables
6.30	International Dinner – often non-vegetarian (though always with vegetarian option) Italian, Chinese, Mexican, etc.
8.00	Evening session
9.15	Evening Tea & Biscuit Break

At Sangam event participants are assigned to patrols, mixing travel and dorm groups as much as possible. Patrols have daily tasks such as clearing tables at meals, presenting the daily flag ceremony, reflections, etc.

## **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, Indian culture, and theme-related workshops and activities.

### **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 10-15 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.

#### Maharashtrian Dinner

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

### **Fundraising and Donations**

If you are interested in bringing something to give away, the most useful item is money! Our community partners find that the most effective donations are financial ones, since they are able to make any amount go a long way by purchasing items here in Pune, which also supports the local economy.

You might have donors sponsoring part of your trip and thus wishing to know detailed information about your event. This is very hard to give so much ahead in time in India. Do share with them all you already know and direct them to our website ([www.sangamworldcentre.org](http://www.sangamworldcentre.org)).

Use the WAGGGS website ([www.wagggsworld.org](http://www.wagggsworld.org)) and your national Association's resources to learn more about our World Movement. You may discover common traditions that unite us and aspects that make each Association unique. You can also sign up to receive the WAGGGS quarterly newsletter 'Our World News' by going to the WAGGGS website ([www.waggggs.org](http://www.waggggs.org)), as well as Sangam's quarterly Sangelee Spirit ([www.sangamworldcentre.org](http://www.sangamworldcentre.org)).

### **In the Future...**

We will send an additional event letter approximately one month before your event. This will give more information such as who else will be participating in your event and updates about programme activities. In the meantime, please begin researching Indian culture a bit, as mentioned above, as well as reviewing information about the Guiding/Girl Scouting Movement in your country to share with others.

Further information about events and staying at Sangam can be found on our website. We look forward to welcoming you to Sangam. Please feel free to contact us if you would like any additional information - we are always happy to help if we can!

Yours in the Spirit of Sangam

*Eszter Tóth*  
Programme Manager  
[pm@sangamworldcentre.org](mailto:pm@sangamworldcentre.org)

*Sara Malyon*  
Programme Assistant  
[pa@sangamworldcentre.org](mailto:pa@sangamworldcentre.org)

Sangam World Centre  
Alandi Road, Yerawada – Pune 411 006 – INDIA  
[info@sangamworldcentre.org](mailto:info@sangamworldcentre.org)  
[www.sangamworldcentre.org](http://www.sangamworldcentre.org)  
Telephone: +91-(0)20-2669-3252  
24 Hour Sangam Cell Phone: +91-99-7007-1392

## **'Tis the Season**

### **9 months prior arrival - checklist**

- Share about your participation with friends and see if anybody still would like to join
- Check if you have received the travel details and arrangements request form, health form and the travel arrangements document
- Fill in and mail back your health form and travel arrangements document as soon as possible to [info@sangamworldcentre.org](mailto:info@sangamworldcentre.org)
- Consult with your doctor about any immunizations or medications
- Check validity of your passport – to obtain a 6 months tourist visa, your passport needs to be valid at least 6 months beyond the date of departure from India
- Think about ideas for flag and reflection and the international evening
- Begin to learn about India!