



COMING TO SANGAM

Namaste! We're very happy that you have decided to visit Sangam – your world home in India. The following booklet is designed to help you prepare for your trip. Included is information regarding what to expect both at Sangam and in India, how to get here, what preparations you should make, and more! If you are coming to attend an event, you will receive information from the Programme Manager nine months, six months and three months prior to your trip. This will include an idea of what activities to expect during your event along with any specific preparations that are recommended for you. For those individuals who are not attending an event, but still wish to come visit Sangam, you should find information within this document helpful.

The team at Sangam are very pleased that you will be coming to share in the Sangam Spirit and look forward to welcoming you. If at any time you have questions about the information found here or in general about your trip, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sangam World Centre,
Alandi Road, Yerawada,
Pune 411 006 INDIA

Tel: + 91 (0) 20 2669 3252
Mobile: +91 98 5084 5724
Fax: + 91 (0) 20 26692354

Email: sangamwaggs@vsnl.com
Website: www.sangamwaggs.org.uk



A LITTLE BACKGROUND....

Sangam is one of Four World Centres of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS). The Centre is situated on the banks of the Mula River in Pune, 190 km. (120 m.) from Mumbai (formerly Bombay), in the state of Maharashtra, India.

The word Sangam means 'Coming Together' in the ancient language of Sanskrit. Since the Centre's beginning in 1966, Sangam has been a safe, neutral place for members of Guiding and Scouting to come together to share their experiences as well as the culture and traditions of their homelands and member organisations. Sangam events allow participants to explore India by meeting Sangam's neighbours, visiting community projects and places of interest, and shopping in the colourful markets of Pune.

Our international events are scheduled throughout the season, which starts in July and runs until the following March. The event topics vary but all emphasise cultural sharing, common Guiding/Girl Scouting links and the rich cultural heritage of India. Many focus on United Nations' issues and WAGGGS Goals. These events are open to all members of Guiding and Scouting, both female and male, their families and friends. An adult must accompany

participants under the age of 18 years. Special events can be organised for large groups who have particular programme requests. Space permitting, accommodation is available year round for Girl Guides/Scouts and their friends to stay at Sangam while travelling in India.

Regardless of age, you will find that Sangam is WAGGGS in action. All programmes aim to carry out Sangam's Mission :

"To provide outstanding international opportunities for training and self-development in a multi-cultural environment."

Friendship, fun and laughter provide the basis for these dynamic events.

Sangam's working language for correspondence and events is English.

EVENT ENROLMENT

All event participants are asked to complete an enrolment form which should be returned to Sangam as early as possible. This will ensure that participants receive all necessary correspondence and gives them sufficient time to complete preparations before their arrival at Sangam.

Enrolment forms are available in electronic or hard copy format directly from Sangam, or can be downloaded from the Web Site. www.sangamwaggs.org.uk

TRAVEL

For assistance in planning your travel to India, it is suggested that you contact a travel agent in your home country. The closest International Airport is in Mumbai, and flights arrive daily from cities around the world. Most flights arrive between 11 pm and 3 am. You can choose to stay at a hotel in Mumbai for the night, or you can travel directly to Sangam.

Travel information is available from Sangam giving all the details about ways of travelling between the international airport in Mumbai and Pune. It is appreciated if you can inform Sangam of your arrival details once known. Sangam can provide assistance in booking some services.

When planning your travel, please remember:



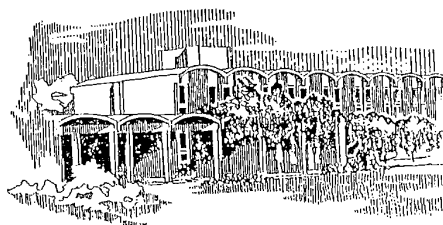
- A visa is necessary to enter India. If you arrive without one you will be sent back. Apply for a tourist visa from an Indian Consulate, Embassy or High Commission. They are usually granted for 6 months with multiple entries permitted. You should ensure that your passport will be valid for at least 6 months after your departure date from India.
- Events begin at 8:00am on the advertised first day and will finish by 1:00pm on the last day. Please arrive at Sangam on the day prior to the event commencing. It is important to have this time to rest

after a long trip. You may depart in the afternoon or evening of the final day of the event, or are welcome to stay longer pending availability. Any meals after lunch the day after the event ends and additional nights will be charged at independent guest rates.

- Prepaid taxis and buses are available at the airport to transfer you to various points in Mumbai or straight to Pune.
- Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (Mumbai) is located 1½ hours from Chhatripatti Shivaji Terminus (also called CST), which is the station in Mumbai where you board the train to Pune.
- Travelling time between Mumbai and Pune is at least three hours one way by taxi or bus, four hours by train.
- Sangam is located about 20 minutes by auto rickshaw from the airport, bus or train station in Pune. Auto Rickshaws are small three wheeled vehicles that operate like taxis. They hold up to three people and operate on a metered price system. They are used during events to transport participants in Pune.
- Travel light. You should be able to carry your luggage at all times. Remember that Sangam has basic washing facilities.
- Watch your luggage at all times and never let go of your travel documents and money.
- Carry a photocopy of all your important documents: passport, visa, tickets, itinerary and emergency contacts. It is also a good idea to leave a copy of these documents with someone at home.
- All airline tickets must be reconfirmed once you are in India for your outward journey.
- A departure tax is to be paid at the airport when leaving the country. More often than not, this tax is already paid for in your ticket, however you should check with your travel agent to be sure.
- You need to check in at Chhatrapati Shivaji Airport (Mumbai) three hours prior to your scheduled departure. There are lounges at the airport where you can wait in safety.

FACILITITES AND ACCOMMODATION

Sangam can accommodate up to 40 people in dormitories and 12-18 people in single, double or tripple rooms depending on the time of year. Unless otherwise requested, participants attending an event will be staying in refurbished dormitories, sharing with people from other groups and countries. The event fee includes all room and board charges for dormitory accommodation. If however a participant prefers a double or single room, this may be requested for an extra fee. During your stay here, there may also be people who are visiting for a time and not taking part in your event.



All bed linen, blankets and towels are provided by Sangam. You may want to carry a small towel if you are travelling further.

Sangam has basic washing (by hand) and ironing facilities so you do not need to bring a clean change of clothes for every day. Washing powder is sold in our shop. There is also a dhobi (washerman) service available. The dhobi will come and collect your clothes, wash and iron them and deliver them back the next morning, all for a small fee.

Sangam has both Western and Asian flush toilets. Toilet paper is provided.

FOOD AND WATER

The food served at Sangam is a mixture of Indian and Western, and both vegetarian and non-vegetarian is available. Usually lunch is a typical Indian meal and dinner is a Western meal. Breakfast is Western with an Indian dish included occasionally.

Food in India varies greatly as you travel from state to state. As Pune is in the state of Maharashtra, the Indian meals served at lunchtime are traditional to this area. They are vegetarian and include rice, local vegetables, dahl (form of curry), chapatti (Indian flat bread), and fruit, along with other specialities. Spices are served separately so that people may add as much or as little as they want to suit their own taste. Your programme will include the opportunity to eat meals out at one of the many restaurants in Pune - South Indian, Punjab, Tander and Goan), Italian, Thai, Fast Food, Iranian, Chinese etc., so you will have the opportunity to experience different foods.

If you have any special food requirements, please ensure that they are listed on your enrolment and health forms. Sangam will cater to your needs wherever possible.

Snack foods and other treats are widely available at grocery and convenience stores for your onward journeys. There is no need to bring a lot of food with you from home. There is a refrigerator available for guests to store drinks, snacks, medications etc. while they are here.

All of Sangam's drinking water is filtered and safe, and filtered water is used to wash all fresh fruits and vegetables served at the Centre. Bottled water is available to buy throughout India, and you will be able to fill your bottle from a water cooler at Sangam.

COMMUNICATION

Telephone

The most efficient way to make calls home is by using direct dial international telephone booths located all over India (ISD/STD booths). There is one located just outside the Sangam gates. It is open 8 am - 11 pm and calls can be made direct. The charges are approximately Rs1.50 per second and the total is paid when the call is completed. The phone has a meter so the cost can be seen instantly.

Unless there is an emergency, please discourage family members from calling you at Sangam. In emergencies, the number is +91 (0) 20 2669 3252 / 4240.

It is possible to make telephone calls using some overseas telephone credit cards from most hotel phones and some public phones, although there are often surcharges. Reverse charge calls can be made to some countries, check with your home phone company before departure.

Calling long distance over the internet is increasingly an option at internet cafes, however at times, connections may be unpredictable.

Email

Participants may receive printouts of email messages sent to the Sangam Email Address (sangamwaggs@vsnl.com) for a fee of Rs 10/- per message. Please ensure your name is clearly indicated in the subject line. At this time, it is not possible for participants to send email messages or access the internet on site.

There are internet cafés in the local area, which although sometimes slow, are affordable and have multiple terminals.

Fax

Sangam has a fax machine, which is used for official Sangam business. It is not available for guest use unless it is a case of EXTREME URGENCY. Please inform your family about this policy. If faxes are received, you will be charged a small fee.

GIFTS AND DONATIONS

Gifts for Sangam

Many people ask what gifts can be brought for Sangam. Money is the most useful gift as it allows us to purchase goods in India. All gifts and donations however are most welcome and we do thank participants and supporters for their generosity.



Sangam has a notice board which lists various items that we currently requires. Participants can choose what they would like to help support and make a donation towards that. Sangam updates it's fund-raising board each season.

Organisations

Most events include a visit to a social organisation. These organisations often rely on donations for much of their income. There is no expectation that you must make a donation, however if you would like to then any amount will be gratefully received.

It is preferred that rather than giving money to beggars, participants make a donation to an organisation working with people in need. Often if you give money to just one beggar, then many more will appear and will hassle you. Beggars often work in groups and the money doesn't necessarily end up in the hands of the child or person you might give it too.

It is also not recommended that you bring gifts or toys to hand out on the street. Handing out goods on the street often causes fights and commotion in the community as there will always be more children and people than you are able to give to. If you would like to bring items, please contact Sangam for advice on what to bring but again, for many of the organisations money is by far the most useful gift as many items are now readily available here in India.

EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE

The equipment available for you to use is as follows:

Audio cassette player, slide projector, overhead projector, video cassette and DVD player (as in Europe, Africa and Asia Pacific, not in the Western Hemisphere), and colour TV. Photocopies can be made at a shop just outside of Sangam's gates or at Sangam for a small fee.

The voltage for electricity in India is 220/240 V. Ensure that you bring appropriate adaptors and voltage converters for any electrical appliances you wish to use here.

WHAT TO BRING?

Sangam is located in a conservative area of Pune and therefore we observe some guidelines which help us to maintain a good relationship within the local community. The guidelines for what you might like to wear both in and out of Sangam are as follows:

- Shorts, sleeveless blouses and low neck lines are allowed only inside of Sangam. When going out participants are asked to wear skirts, dresses, trousers or Capri style pants that come to below the knee; blouses with sleeves, modest neck lines and a petticoat if the fabric of a skirt is thin.
- The weather is often warm, so materials such as cotton, that are cool and dry quickly are useful, particularly if you plan to do your own washing.
- If you have one, it is recommended that you wear your Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting scarf when out and about in Pune as it will help you to be recognised as a Sangam participant.
- Full uniform is worn at the Welcome Ceremony and for some events it is also worn at the Closing Ceremony.
- If you have space and it is available, bring your National Costume / traditional clothes from your home country. When an event has an International dinner or supper, this will be suitable and it is a good way to share the customs of your country.
- It is often beneficial to travel in uniform as a group or even alone.

When packing, along with clothes suitable for your stay (remember you can have laundry done here!) we suggest bringing the following items:

- 1 full / official uniform (for members of Guides and Scouts)
- National Costume (if available)
- An outfit to wear out for a casual evening meal
- Sweater / jumper or jacket (even in the hot season this is necessary in air-conditioned places)
- Raincoat and/or umbrella, if coming between June and September
- 1 pair of walking shoes
- 1 pair lightweight sandals
- 1 water bottle, insulated if possible
- Mosquito repellent
- A torch or flashlight and spare batteries
- Toiletries including sanitary requirements, necessary medications etc.
- Sun hat, sun cream, sun glasses
- Camera film and spare camera batteries
- Swimming suit (one piece) and spare towel if an avid swimmer
- Swap items. You may have the opportunity to swap badges with other participants. Badges, stickers and small Guiding/Girl Scouting items are useful for swapping

- Toilet paper for use on your journey here

CULTURE AND ETIQUETTE

Just as we would ask you to dress in a conservative manner, we would also ask you to observe and respect some of the local behavioural customs. The following are some helpful hints on how to act while travelling in India:

Feet

Feet awareness is an important part of Indian culture. It is important not to point your feet directly at a God or deity in a temple, and you must always remove shoes before entering someone's home or a temple. You may often see people bend to touch the feet of their elders when greeting or thanking them. You are not expected to do this. It is a sign of respect in some cultures.

Eating

It is common to eat food only with the right hand as the left hand has traditionally been used for body cleansing. Increasingly knives and forks can commonly be found and people are moving to eating with both hands.

Taking Photographs

When travelling around India, there will be many beautiful scenes and people that you want to photograph. Please ask people for permission before doing so. This shows respect and gives people the opportunity to refuse if they are not comfortable. You may get asked to pay people for their photograph, this is up to you. Often people, especially children, will ask you to take their picture. Again this is up to you but if you take one, you may end up taking many!



Meeting People

People in India are often very curious to know your name and where you are from, and may approach you on the street when you are walking. It is polite to answer them, however you do not have to feel pressured to speak to everyone. One way to greet people if you are passing is to say "Namaste" and hold your palms together as though praying. This respects and acknowledges them, but allows you to keep walking if you need to get somewhere.

Shopping and Bargaining

Shopping in India is a combination of fixed rate pricing and bargaining. Stores where prices are fixed will often have signs telling you or prices will be clearly marked. In markets, at roadside stalls and in some stores bargaining is common. When negotiating it's important to remember that both sides need to get a fair price. You shouldn't begin bargaining seriously unless you have decided you want the item. To determine a price and then walk away is not good practice. There are no hard and fast rules for bargaining, but often people start at half the offered price then work upwards. Once the store owner knows you are really attached to an item then it will be more difficult. Try to shop around a bit for items in order to determine what a reasonable and fair price is.

Alcohol Consumption

Drinking alcohol is considered anti-social by many sections of the community. If you wish to drink alcohol at Sangam, please be discreet both in its storage and consumption.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Pune is a large but relatively safe city and we at Sangam feel very comfortable living here. However, you should follow all safety precautions that you would take in any large city. Common sense should be your guide. It is not advisable to go out on your own late at night, and it is always recommended to let others know where you are going. A sign in / out register is located at the front doors and all guests are requested to use it.

Sangam has a watchman on duty from 8pm to 8am every night to assist with emergencies and watch the door. There is no curfew at Sangam.

All valuables including passports, money and tickets can be stored in a small lockable cupboard located next to your bed.

HEALTH

Each event participant is requested to complete a health form that should be returned to Sangam at least one month prior to your arrival. This information is kept confidential and held by the Sangam First Aider. It may be needed if a visit to the doctor is necessary during your stay.

As far in advance as possible before departure, (ideally 6 months), it is strongly recommended that you consult with a travel health specialist regarding what immunisations and medications you should consider for your trip. Sangam is not able to provide any advice on this issue.

Mosquitoes abound all year round and insect repellent is strongly recommended along with appropriate clothing to wear at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are the most active. Plug in repellents are provided in all rooms and nets are available on request. If you are particularly sensitive to insect bites, please bring your own antihistamine cream and tablets.

As well as a member of staff acting as First Aider, Sangam has contacts with very well trained and reliable doctors (both western and traditional methods) who are easily available. Illnesses here can progress very quickly so it is important if you are not feeling well during your stay that you let someone know. Most medicines are easily purchased from pharmacies here, however for convenience and comfort, we advise you to bring your own medicines for ailments such as diarrhoea, constipation, colds, menstrual cramps, allergies, etc.

It is strongly recommended that you take out a travel health insurance policy as all expenses related to any health problem or accident will be your own responsibility. Sangam will not be liable for injury, damage or loss to person or property.

CLIMATE

Pune has a generally pleasant climate all year round. Days are warm enough to swim, even in winter. A sun hat and sun cream are necessary throughout the year.

JULY TO SEPTEMBER: This is the rainy season. The monsoon is unpredictable and it is essential to bring an umbrella or raincoat. It is also important to bring a good pair of shoes suitable for the rain. During the monsoon it could rain constantly or the rains could be light, with sunny days. Temperatures range from 25° - 30° Celsius (77° - 86° Fahrenheit).

OCTOBER: This month is relatively warm. As the winter approaches the weather changes so anything can be expected from nice warm afternoons to chilly, cool days.

NOVEMBER TO FEBRUARY: During these winter months, the days are warm and sunny and the evenings and early mornings are cold. A sweater or jacket is recommended. Temperatures range from 5° - 28° C (41° - 82° F).

MARCH: This is a month of changes as spring passes in a flash and summer approaches. The days and nights become warmer. Temperatures range from 15° to 32° C (59° -89.6° F).

APRIL TO JUNE: Summer arrives and the days are extremely hot with evenings a bit cooler. Highest temperatures reach 42 C (104 F). Sangam does not schedule events in the summer as the weather is extremely hot, however guests are still welcome.

CURRENCY

The unit of currency used in India is the Indian Rupee. One hundred paise make up one rupee. The notes are Rs. 500, 100, 50, 20, 10 and sometimes Rs. 5. There are coins for Rs. 5, 2 and 1.



It is difficult and often expensive to purchase Indian currency outside the country and it cannot be taken out of India when you leave. Travellers' cheques are the best and safest way to carry your money and US dollars and Pounds Sterling are the easiest to cash although most other currencies are fine. It is also possible to get cash advances on Visa and Master Card and access chequing and savings accounts with debit cards. Automatic Teller Machines are available in many areas of the city.

When changing money it is helpful to ask for some smaller notes to pay for small costs such as porters, rickshaws or refreshments on the train. Most tips should be in the range of Rs. 5/- to Rs. 15/-. Often people will not have change and you will end up paying too much. It is also important to check that notes are not too ripped up or damaged as people will refuse to accept them. Banks will exchange dirty or torn notes for new ones.

It is necessary to keep all encashment certificates issued when changing your money. If you have money left at the end of your stay, you will be able to change this back only at the airport and you must present the encashment certificates.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI AIRPORT (MUMBAI) PLEASE CHANGE ENOUGH MONEY TO LAST ONE WEEK. The rates at the airport are usually quite good and there are several counters.

It's impossible for us to tell you how much money will last you one week, and suggest that you have a look at several travel guides for India to get an idea of budgets. India really is a land of extremes, travel is possible here on everything from £10.00 to £1000.00 and beyond a day. Most people find between £25-£80 for the duration of the event, as accommodation etc. is covered at Sangam, however this is just an estimate and many individuals change money part way through the event.

It is possible to use some credit cards in tourist shops and hotels but not all are accepted (Visa and Master Card are the most commonly accepted).

EXPLORE INDIA TOUR

There are six tours for groups to take that Sangam staff, in partnership with Adventure World India PVT LTD can help co-ordinate for groups and individuals. These tours are for a variety of lengths and see an array of locations throughout India. Southern Splendours of India,

Classical India, Majestic India, Treasures of India, East Indian Experience and Images of Western India. Each of these tours is a unique opportunity to experience and see some of the treasures that India has to share. All of the tours begin on the last day of the event and are a wonderful opportunity. The cost is dependant upon the tour selected. Please contact Sangam for more information about these exciting adventures.

FURTHER PREPARATIONS...

India is a land of contrasts; it is exciting, different and stimulating. India is a sensual experience - an appeal to the emotions and all senses. Your encounter with it will weave a kaleidoscope of colours, sounds and impressions in your mind. We recommend learning more about India and International Guiding and Scouting before you arrive. There are a variety of movies and literature including fictional novels and travel books available on India, and further information will be provided in the correspondence sent from the Programme Team ahead of your event.

