


FESTIVAL: SEASON



Spotlight on
Pagan Spirit Gathering's
25th anniversary bash



Combine a Forth of July parade, a three-ring circus, an old-fashioned drive-in movie theatre, and a Renaissance fair, you'll have some idea of what Pagan Spirit Gathering is about. Add a liberal sprinkling of fairy dust, some moonbeams and rainbows, and, well, you get the picture. It is simply impossible to get bored at PSG. Overwhelmed, yes; amazed, definitely; needing to kneel in the red clay Ohio mud and ground out the intense surge of magickal energy, more than likely. But you'll never, ever get bored.

Even though I've gone to numerous Pagan festivals for over two decades, I'd never attended a PSG before last year. It was just too big; in fact, the festival site and population are both larger than my hometown. Of course, I'd heard all the negative rumors: "PSG is full of snobs", "you have to be a Wiccan to attend," "you're gonna feel like the country mouse in the big city, as lost and out of place as Pocahontas on her fateful excursion to England."

But last summer, our family made the decision to finally try PSG, as we were invited as part of the Pentacle Quest victory celebration. If you've been hiding in a cave for the five years, you might not know that Rev. Selena Fox, along with Circle Sanctuary and other Pagan churches, and several service members' families, collectively sued the Department of Veterans Affairs for the right to have the Pentacle symbol displayed on deceased Wiccan veterans' monuments. Rather than have all of their dirty political tactics exposed to public scrutiny, the Veteran's Administration capitulated, and the Pentacle Quest was won. This theme was planned to dominate the 2007 Pagan Spirit Gathering, with the slogan "Lights of Liberty", a concert by folk artist Celia featuring her "Symbol" anthem, a 20-foot-tall statue of Lady Liberty complete with flaming torch, and plenty of flag-waving patriotism.

Country Mouse, Meet Festival City

Thus, the fateful decision was made: we would go to PSG. Upon arrival, I admit I was a little overwhelmed: the site was swarming with over a thousand attendees, everyone from veterans and firefighters in full dress uniform, to scholars documenting the historic event for posterity, to Lady Liberty League

legal-types, right alongside the usual rainbow warriors, witches, flower children and fairies. There were displays of military pomp and circumstance. There was a screening of Dr. Todd Berntson's documentary *A Hero Denied* and an appearance by the gracious, dignified war widow Roberta Stewart, who actually spearheaded the Pentacle Quest.

It was *sooooo* cool.

But that wasn't all, not by far. Concerts! Fire-eaters! Belly-dancers! Parades! Bagpipers! Pirates! While I did feel a bit like the rural rodent of the story, it was more like I'd landed in the Emerald City of Oz.

The music at PSG is simply incredible. There was a concert every afternoon and evening on either the main stage or at Caffeina's, a sort of Pagan coffeehouse/diner/karaoke bar. Performers ranged from trance-rockers Incus to folkabilly One Hat Band to the hauntingly soulful Kellianna. The talent show gave amateurs their chance to shine; real electricity helped improve the sound quality to above the usual garage-band quirkiness endured at most Pagan gatherings. There were wakeup songs at the morning meetings to get your creativity flowing; drums punctuated each ritual, and vibrated soothing rhythms to lull you to a restful sleep. Roving musicians serenaded the encampment; even the volunteers on the garbage and recycling collection trucks were singing a merry tune. Best Moment: hearing famous *Drawing Down the Moon* author Margot Adler sing "Try to Remember." All that, and great pipes, too.

I admit, I was a slacker at this festival. I didn't attend many workshops, not a single book signing, and I only dragged my lazy butt to one night of drum and dance at the bonfire. (Hey, it was our 25th wedding anniversary, so we was chillin'). Of course no one could possibly participate in everything at PSG — there are only two scheduled slots per day, and there were dozens of events to choose from scheduled for each slot. Yet the workshops that we did attend were university-quality. The subject matter of classes ranged from divination, altering perception, physical and energetic healing, and various Pagan traditions, to art-crafts such as clay sculpting and leather mask making. Several courses were more practical, including fire safety, (required before learning to spin

10 STEPS TO SURVIVING (AND ENJOYING!) YOUR FIRST PAGAN FESTIVAL!

As you read this, North America is in the throes of Pagan Festival Season, and a lot of people who are new to Paganism, new to the Pagan festival scene, or both, are packing up their ritual finery, camping gear, myrrh beads, altar cloths, tent banners and organic bug spray and heading out the door to commune with their people in the bosom of Nature for a weekend – or even a week.

This sounds a lot easier than it is. If my experience is any indication, surviving your first Pagan festival with your psyche, your body, your spiritual self *and* your metabolism intact is a rare event. I'm now going to tell you some things I wish someone had told me.

1 Remember to eat. This is the most important advice I can give you. Many times, the sheer intensity of energy at a Pagan gathering is so sustaining that new attendees forget to eat meals — they simply aren't hungry — and pay for it later, sometimes with a trip to the nearest emergency room. If the festival offers a meal plan, buy it *and use it!* If you're a vegan, or vegetarian, ask; many if not most allow for that option. All workshops, rituals and other activities stop at mealtimes, so you're not going to miss anything by eating. Plus, it's a great chance to sit down and get to know your fellow attendees.

If the festival doesn't offer a meal plan, take some time before you leave to plan and shop for simple, nutritious meals. Attendees who show up on site with a loaf of bread, a jar of peanut butter, a box of raisins and plans to live off just those items for four or five days are just asking for health trouble. Trust me. I've seen it. Borrow a

camp stove if you don't have one and learn how to use it *before* you go! Make sure you have the necessary equipment and supplies to thoroughly wash and sanitize your dishes. Don't count on there being a picnic table or other eating surface available.

2 Drink lots of water. Whether the festival offers a meal plan or not, bring lots of non-caffeinated (caffeine will dehydrate you) drinks. My favorite Pagan festival treat is pink lemonade. It rehydrates me and there's enough extra "stuff" in it to keep my electrolytes happy. Oh, and stay away from alcohol. You'll probably be high enough on the Pagan energy you won't need it.

3 Pack a basic first aid and outdoor kit. Bug repellent, **SUNBLOCK**, Band-aids, antibiotic cream, and anti-itch cream are essential. Even if the festival is being held on a completely wooded site, you'd be surprised how much sun gets through the canopy. You may get into the spirit of the gathering and decide to wear a bit less clothing (or more revealing clothing) than you usually do. Please sunscreen those "whiter than white" areas. Pack a roll or two of toilet paper; you never know. If you are on any sort of regular medication, even stomach acid pills or over-the-counter allergy tabs, don't forget them! Pack ibuprofen or aspirin. And did I mention sunblock?

4 Don't try to do everything. Just because there are six workshop sessions and two major rituals scheduled per day, it doesn't mean you have to attend them all. After all, now that you've actually come to a festival, you can always come back next year and do everything you missed. Give

yourself a break once or twice a day (aside from mealtimes) to sit, rest, and assimilate what you've learned or experienced. If you're not used to attending ritual on a regular basis, you may want to limit your ritual attendance to one per day or less. Yes, sweat lodges count as rituals.

5 Get some sleep. It's tempting to stay up until three or four a.m. at the drumming circle. If you're determined to do so, save it for the last night of the festival. Try to get at least 75% to 80% of the amount of sleep you normally get at home. If you're a light sleeper, pack earplugs. With you or without you, the drumming and fire dancing will go on until almost dawn — at which time the birds get *really* loud. If there are cabins available, especially cabins with electricity, try to reserve sleeping space in one. Cabins keep out the rain, most of the bugs, and if they have electricity, a small fan may make the difference between being too hot to sleep and sleeping comfortably. Most cabins offer at least a camp bed, which, if you're over thirty, is a major improvement.

6 Ground, ground, and ground again. Before the entire festival experience overwhelms you, find a quiet place, maybe at the foot of a particularly friendly tree, and ground yourself. If you don't know how, or if you're having trouble, find a staff member to help you. That's what they're there for — to help attendees have a good *and safe* time. If they can't help you, they *will* find someone who can. If you can't find anyone on staff, grab a workshop presenter, or even a fellow attendee. Grounding during festival is a necessity that will greatly improve your experience.

those little flaming tennis balls. There were planning meetings for sweat lodges, the sacred Hunt and something called the Bornless Rite, which I didn't quite understand but has to do with Enochian ceremonial magick. In fact, the planning that goes into each and every area of PSG is meticulous. (Especially when you consider that so many Pagans can't manage to plan a trip to the corner grocery. Anyway.) Many of the workshops were presented by experts, including authors Christopher Penczak, Donald Michael Kraig and Diana Paxson. There were advanced seminars for those seeking to become clergy, chaplains or community leaders. Some of the classes and events were geared toward a specific age group – a party for Tweens (age 7-12) included a trance-working, and the littlest kids had their very own fairy procession. Everything my family attended was informative and well done. Best moment – the Celtic Parade, complete with bagpipes, authentic garb, Highland dancers and blue ribbons awarded to the kilted men who went “regimental”.

And there was the Rainbow Camp's very fabulous Tea Party. Words cannot describe. If the Otherworld has a Gay bar, or if Neverland has a Rave. The lights! The dancing! The high-octane fruit punch! The Beautiful People costumed as Pan, Aphrodite, bikers, forest animals and Strawberry Shortcake. Anybody here old enough to remember Studio 54? Well, if that famed hall of revelry was managed by Dionysus and staffed by satyrs, that's what the Tea Party is like. Sorry, kids, you gotta be at least 21, because the Guardians card you. But despair not, for the Teens had pizza and music up the street.

This is a good time to acknowledge the **Guardians**, the wonderful security and first-aid volunteer workers who keep PSG safe for democracy. They are the most helpful, professional, compassionate people on the planet. After nearly a week of treating bee stings, splinters, sunburns and various other festival boo-boos, they still managed to haul scantily-clad partiers back to their home tents in golf carts without even complaining too much if they got barfed on. Next morning, they were still smiling! It was the Guardians' 25th anniversary too, so we take a moment to heartily applaud them. *YAAAaaay!*

People feel safe at PSG. It's not just because of the Guardians and Psychic Ninjas (although their contribution cannot be ignored) it's the overall accepting attitude. You can wear your favorite ritual attire, run around naked, express yourself through elaborate dress and makeup, and nobody raises an eyebrow. Little kids can freely cavort in the cascade of bubbles; gay couples can share a smooch; poly-families can enjoy a public group hug. You might receive applause, but no static. You can leave the fifteen-year-old bottle of scotch on your picnic table, your keys in the ignition, and your wallet on the dashboard, and expect stuff to stay right where you left it. Longtime festival-goers aren't surprised by this phenomenon, but for newbies, it takes some getting used to. At my house, I feel safe because I use warding spells, own a big dog and pack a shotgun. At Pagan gatherings, I just plain feel *safe*.

Which brings us to the subject of material goods: When you go to PSG, bring lots of money, or at least the magic piece of plastic. You'll be attacked by a furious case of the “I wants” at the dozens and

dozens of vendors' booths and service tents. It's better than Wal-mart meets Diagon Alley, without any of corporate guilt. You can get a massage or pedicure, next door to a shop selling drums, next to a store brimming with hand-made incense, near the ritual clothing department, across from the merchant with the Japanese swords. Most of the products were quite high-quality. Prices ranged from very reasonable to eye-popping outrageous – *caveat emptor* – but it sometimes it helps to actually heft the wand to see if it fits your aura, rather than buying an unknown commodity on the web.

Despite too many evenings spent with Mr. Jack Daniels, we did manage to attend several of the delightful religious ceremonies at PSG. At some Pagan festivals, the rituals seem to be either over-processed, or an eBay collection of methods and traditions cobbled together by lots of magickal duct tape. Yet every ritual, every chant, each working at PSG had that “Wow” effect. The rites we attended were nearly seamless. The handfasting performed by Rev. Selena successfully combined military customs, Native American traditions, and Celtic overtones. The happy couple was radiant and thoroughly blessed as they walked beneath the arch of spears held by Guardians in full Medieval splendor. The warrior ritual honoring service members past and present left not a dry eye in circle. There were cronings, rainbow rites, comings of age, morning and evening ceremonies, a sunrise Solstice celebration, trance drumming, cleansings, the famous transformative Labrynth

– a journey through a circling path of lighted candles which seems like a trip to Faerie and back – and of course, the astounding Main Ritual.

Folks have told me that previous PSG main rituals haven't gone so good: invocations read in a grade-school monotone, elements forgotten or not properly dismissed; pyrotechnics that fizzled, chants that choked. After all, a circle made up of several hundred Pagan people can be woefully unfocused. Hey, you can't have everything, right? It's rather like the last day of the county fair, when the prize-winning bouquet is drooping and the blue-ribbon pie is getting awfully grody. The PSG main ritual is on Saturday night, when everyone has been partying, ritualizing, shopping and seminarizing for an entire week, and one more event almost seems like a chore, not an experience of profound enchantment. I was bracing myself for a bout with mediocrity, but was very pleasantly surprised.

Keeping with the theme “Lights of Liberty” but also making a concession to the anti-war movement, the PSG main ritual in 2007 incorporated soldiers' honor rites with hymns to Justina and invocations for peace. And it *worked*. We were privileged to have a small part in the ceremony, holding a candle aloft to represent the Light of Liberty. (My personal chant: “Please Goddess, don't let me fall on my butt in front of five hundred people, thank you very much.”)

Priestesses wearing flowing Grecian robes circumnavigated the fire, avataring the goddesses Liberty and Justice, bearing swords, books, and scales as a metaphor of freedom. Tibetan bowls rang their eerie melody as the facilitators summoned “Peace, responsibility, life, justice, liberty, let it begin with me...” Attendees participated by manifesting their own concept of universal justice. You could feel the energy rising like a crescendo in the stone circle, until it was released by a sparkling flame from Lady Liberty's torch, which swooped down to ignite the ritual bonfire. This was *the* most powerful ritual I have ever witnessed.



7 Don't be a jerk. If a tarot deck, necklace, crystal, drum or athame is sitting on a merchant's table, it's okay to touch. If any of these items is sitting in someone's campsite or cabin, it's *not* okay to touch. And don't even ask to. If the owner offers to let you touch it, even if he or she is physically handing it to you, ask, "May I?" before you even reach for it. Don't go around saying, "Well, in my coven, we..." Let me be the first to tell you: no one cares. Don't touch another person's necklace if he or she is wearing it. Period. If you stumble across a couple having sex in the woods, remove yourself from the area; no giggles, or gawking. Soap and deodorant are *still* your friends. Keep your less-than-flattering comments about other peoples' bodies or other peoples' ritual or festival garb (or lack thereof) to yourself. Which brings me to –

8 Keep an open mind. A lot of people wear next to nothing — or nothing whatever — at a Pagan festival. And I don't just mean in ritual. It's possible you could turn to ask a fellow shopper in the merchant area a question, only to find that he or she is stark naked. Q: What's the polite thing to do? A: Treat them as if they were fully clothed. I will never forget my first festival: Early on the first day I met a gentleman who, at that time, was a rather prominent member of a national Druid organization. His festival attire of choice was a neon green calf-length cape and knee-high black leather biker boots. And that was it. He was also the first uncircumcised male I had ever seen. Considering his outfit, it was kind of hard to miss. A very loud "Oh my GOD" escaped my mouth before my brain kicked in. Needless to say, said gentleman always remembered *my* name every year when we re-met at the same festival...

Also, be aware that gay and lesbian couples, as well as people in three-way (or more) relationships will likely feel more comfortable expressing affection in public at

a Pagan gathering than they are on the streets of your home town. You may very see two men or two women holding hands or kissing, or three people of any combination being affectionate. If you've never seen it before, it can take a wee bit of getting used to. Be nice and don't say anything.

9 Wear a waterproof watch. At my first Pagan gathering, I sweated so much that I shorted out my watch on the second or third day. Ever since then I've only owned waterproof watches. Now I not only don't have to worry about sweating, if I happen to jump into the swimming pool or the pond, I don't have to worry about my watch fritzing out on me.

10 Leave Nature alone. Yes, you're in the middle of it. Yes, you worship it. This does *not* mean you should do stand outside during a major thunderstorm or try to commune with a snake that's lying across your path. If they tell you water moccasins live on *that* end of the pond, don't go over there! Don't try to make friends with the wasp nest in the corner of the dining hall. The skunk may be your totem animal. For the sake of your fellow attendees, *leave it alone!* Clean up your campsite before you leave. Be nice and clean up the one next to you, too.

As you become accustomed to attending Pagan festivals, and get used to the demands put on your psyche and your energy, you can relax *some* of the above self-care suggestions: feel free to get a little less sleep and attend a few more workshops.

The most important thing, though, is to have fun. Most of us don't spend all day, every day, in "Pagan space." With a little care and pre-planning on your part, you can have a festival experience wonderful enough and fulfilling enough to last until it's time to go again next year! 🍷

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Country Mouse goes to the Summerland and returns with a fantastic tan

Many PSG attendees describe the festival as a life-changing experience. They joke about the "fifty-one week supply run" until the next gathering. Facilitators who are in charge of such areas as weather-working, recycling, and children's programming are superbly organized and dedicated; as are the staff of Wisteria and of Circle. As for Selena herself – well, I half-expected a spoiled case of Priestess Privilege who required kowtowing subservience. While I imagine that she can be less than tolerant of the incompetent, I found Selena to be a warm, devoted, enthusiastic woman who manages a daunting workload with grace and aplomb. She gives praise and positive acknowledgment to everyone, while juggling her enormous responsibilities. (No, she's *not* paying me to say this.)

Whoosh, there goes Selena, overseeing the women's moon rite! There she goes again, teaching the ministers' intensive! She can remember every name, date and detail of the Pentacle Quest, without consulting a score card. Selena, if you are reading this – *take a nap*, already! You've surely earned it.

Not to say that PSG doesn't have its faults. Like, say, the half-dozen or more pages devoted to "guidelines and etiquette" in the program book. There are rules for drumming; rules for land use, not collecting downed wood and not peeing in the woods. There are even rules for sexuality. (Perhaps at past gatherings they caught a few sods scrumpin' up on the stage, but come on.) We're all reasonably educated folks; are so darn many regulations really that necessary?

Although I do appreciate rituals that happen on time, and events that function as advertised, PSG is almost *too* organized. Me, I truly enjoy drumming that breaks out in the in the middle of the road or an impromptu workshop on communing with butterflies, just because the swallowtail who landed on your water bottle gave you the notion. At PSG, course descriptions must be submitted and approved months in advance. Did somebody once do an unplanned seminar on Sadistic Sex with Satan, or what?

One more thing – PSG is the land of the Winnebago Pagan. It is really, really, really ex-pen-\$ive. For what we spent on this gathering, we could've taken the family to Disney World, no lie. There aren't any group discounts. No rebates for working. No scholarships. No on-site registration. For

middle-income family folk like us, it was a serious financial stretch. Young working-class families with children, or people living on a fixed income, or college students, probably cannot afford to attend this festival. Which is a shame, because Pagan Spirit Gathering is beyond awesome. How about letting a few attendees apply for work shifts, to cut back on the festival fee? (There were several jobs that went undone, including child care and guarding the gate.) How about day rates or on-site registrations, so that people with uncertain work schedules can attend?

All right, enough griping: PSG really *is* worth the money. Where else can you learn about neurofeedback, dowsing, yoga, Kabbalah, organic farming and ecstatic dance, all in the same week? Where else can you dress like a kitycat and join the procession to the temple of Bast? Where else can you experience Afro-Cuban drumming and Alchemy and Asatru honor rites, Tai-Chi and Tipi setup and Tarot, just by walking a few yards? Some of the nicest people in the nation go to this gathering: we met folks from New Orleans, California, Wisconsin, New Jersey, Ohio and surprise, someone we didn't yet know from our home state. The kids' MySpace friends list expanded by the dozens. We also got to catch up with the fun people we'd met at other gatherings. That's the best thing about Pagan festivals: you meet the most interesting people in the whole wide world. Many describe the PSG community as an extended family.

I fully expect that Country Mouse will return to the big city of Pagan Spirit Gathering again this year.

Details for 2008

When: Sunday June 15th to Sunday, June 22nd, 2008

Where: Wisteria Nature Preserve, south of Athens Ohio.

Contact: (608) 924-2216, Circle, PO Box 9, Barneveld WI 53507

www.circlesanctuary.org/psg

Cost: No on-site registration. Pre-registration is \$225 for adults, \$90 for teens, \$75 for children under 12. See website for deadlines.

Vendors: 100 merchant slots 12' x 24' at \$75 each.

Special Considerations: There are camps set aside for various needs – Amethyst camp for those in recovery, Disability camp for those with special physical needs, a quieter area for those who require less noise. There are also camps based on lifestyle and areas of interest, including drum camp, music camp, rainbow camp, etc. Wear hard-soled shoes, the rocks are sharp. Bring a camp stove for cooking, raingear and plenty of tarps for bad weather, and gallons of sunscreen. A cart to haul stuff, a stroller for young children, and a bicycle can be helpful – the site is huge, and mostly up-and-down hill. Passes are required for vehicles parked at your campsite. ☺

– A.C. FISHER ALDAG *has written articles for the Llewellyn Online Journal, Circle Magazine, and a Pagan history series on the Witches' Voice website. She was recently named a finalist in the Pagan fiction award contest sponsored by Llewellyn and PanGaia magazine. She is a founder of Caer na Donia y Llew and also helps to sponsor Pagan-stock, Kalamazoo Pagan Pride, and a bunch of other stuff. Her store is www.ThreeSistersShop.net. Most of the Redneck Pagan jokes really do apply to her.*

26 Pagan & Pagan-friendly Events Summer 08

Gaia Gathering (National Canadian Pagan Gathering)

Where: Ottawa, Ontario, 2008 (Victoria Day weekend)

When: May 16-19, 2008

Canadian Pagans gather and discuss their unique community.

Contact: www.gaiagathering.ca

Reclaiming Witch Camps

Where: Europe and North America. Locations include British Columbia (BC Witchcamp), Missouri (Dreamweaving); Northern California (California Witchcamp and *Witchlets in the Woods); Ontario (*Wild Ginger); Washington State (*Cascadia Village and Reclaiming Free Witchcamp), Vermont (Vermont Witchcamp); West Virginia (Spiral Heart); events marked with a * "family-friendly."

When: various, see websites

Reclaiming style, Earth-based spirituality and magic; more like a magical bootcamp than a laid-back vacation. Can be transformative.

Contact: Reclaiming, P.O. Box 14404, San Francisco, CA 9411,

www.witchcamp.org.

Rites of Spring

Where: Southwest Massachusetts

When: May 21-May 26, 2008

Large, community-based Pagan festival.

Contact: (413) 238-4240; www.earthspirit.com.

Heartland Pagan Festival

When: May 22-26, 2008

Where: McClouth, Kansas (near Kansas City)

Big, beautiful Pagan gathering in the heartland of America.

Contact: www.kchsa.org, Heartland Spiritual Alliance, P. O. Box 3407, Kansas City, KS 66103, (816) 813-8167.

Moondance

When: May 22-26, 2008

Where: Carrollton, Georgia

*Another, big, beautiful Pagan gathering – this one in the Deep South. Oh, and this one is *darn* cheap!*

Contact: Linda Kerr, 334-332-3065. www.faeriefaitth.net/Moondance.html

Womongathering

When: June 12-18, 2008

Where: Carbondale, PA

Large, womyn-and-girls-only gathering of Goddess spirituality.

Contact: P.O. Box 559, Franklinville, NJ 08322.

www.womongathering.com.

8th Annual Midsummer Gather

When: June 15-22, 2008

Where: Blue River, WI

Celebrate the Summer Solstice with a Pagan family party.

Contact: (877) 538-4121, P.O. Box 141251, Minneapolis MN 55414, www.earthhousemn.org

Pagan Wilderness Gathering

When: June 27-29, 2008
Where: Boonville, North Carolina
Camping, workshops, drumming, food, fellowship, fun.
Contact: NCPO c/o 381 Grant Houck Rd, Todd, NC 28684
www.geocities.com/dragonzma-jick/AnnualPWWINFO.html

Paganstock

When: June 6-9, 2008
Where: Bangor, Michigan
National Pagan music festival. Rustic, family-friendly campsite.
Contact: (269) 214-8976
www.myspace.com/paganstockfestival, paganbeergod@gmail.com

Rainbow Gathering(s)

Where: World Family Gathering, Wyoming; and Gathering of the Tribes, South-Central Missouri
When: July 1-7, 2008
Pagan-friendly Tribal festival dating to 1972, always occurs on National Forest Land. Welcome home.
Contact: <http://welcomehere.org>.

Summerstar

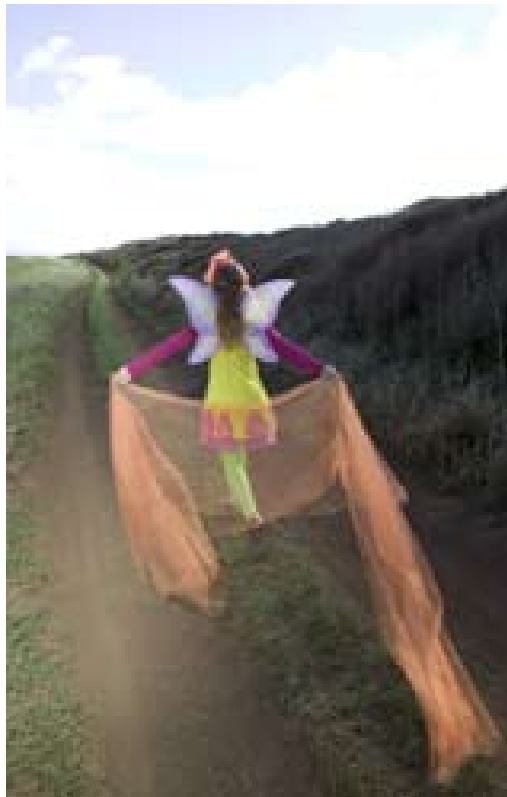
Where: Columbia River Gorge, Washington-Oregon border.
When: July 18-20, 2008
Direct descendant of Starwood; a small festival with approximately two hundred or so attendees. Primitive wilderness site.
Contact: registration by mail only, to: Summerstar, P. O. Box 12146, Olympia, WA 98508. www.summerstar.org/

Pagan Leadership Skills Conference

Where: Richmond, Virginia
When: July 24-27, 2008
Four-day gathering for networking, resource sharing, and in-depth training in the "nuts and bolts" skills for creating vibrant local Pagan communities. Open to all, regardless of official "leadership" status.
Contact: Carolina Spirit Quest, PO Box 61335, Durham, NC 27715. www.paganleadership.org.

Starwood 28

Where: Upstate New York
When: July 22-27, 2008
Largest Pagan/Magickal/Consciousness gathering in North America (perhaps the world). More "resort" (read, running water, swimming pool, hot tubs) atmosphere than many other festivals.
Contact: www.rosencomet.com/starwood/index.html, 216-932-5421



FaerieWorlds

Where: Eugene, Oregon
When: August 1-3, 2008
Huge fantasy festival, massively Pagan-friendly.
Contact: www.faerieworlds.com

PanPagan Festival

Where: Knox, Indiana
When: August 6-10, 2008
Description: *Grand-daddy of all Pagan summer festivals.*
Contact: www.midwestpagan-council.org, 708-795-9660.

DragonfestColorado

Where: Colorado
When: August 6-10, 2008
A large, regional, neopagan retreat held in the mountains of Colorado each August. This is a camping retreat, with primitive facilities (outhouses, fire rings, water pump, picnic tables). Workshops, rituals, drum circles, etc.
Contact: www.dragonfest.org, 303-628-4662.

Merry Meet

Where: Cherry Valley, CA
When: August 14-17, 2008
Merry Meet encompasses multiple events; the first event is the Leadership Institute; the next day is both Merry Meet itself as well as Grand Council. Merry Meet is the a Pagan Convention filled with workshops, lectures, vendors, and entertainment. Grand Council is the national business meeting of the Covenant of the Goddess.
Contact: www.merrymeet08.org, Merry Meet 08, P.O. Box 1554 San Bernardino, CA 92402

Burning Man

Where: Gerlach, Nevada
When: August 25 - September 1, 2008
An annual art event and temporary community in the Black Rock desert of Nevada. Pagan-friendly, not Pagan-centric. Truly challenging conditions; almost 50,000 people.
Contact: www.burningman.com. Burning Man, P. O. Box 884688, San Francisco, CA 94188.

Don't forget: Pagan Pride Events

Where: Worldwide
When: All year, centering around Autumn Equinox.
Contact: www.paganpride.org.

(Editor's note: all information gathered from publicly-available sources in mid-March; please contact events in question for complete details before planning to attend.)