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Journeys



# Festivals Calendar 2018 & 2019

India is an intoxicating country that brims with a mind stirring mix of landscapes and cultural traditions. India is known to be a country where festivals are more than the number of days in a year, and the Indian calendar is one long procession of festivals with every month embracing innumerable festivals. As a land of many religions, each festival has its own signature style of celebration. But always with great pomp and show!

While it is difficult to feature all the festivals, this calendar gives you a glimpse into some of the most significant and exciting ones.

We hope you can join us in celebrating a few of them.

Note- The festival dates are tentative and subject to change.

# 1 JANUARY

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JANUARY

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APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

# Island Tourism Festival

Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar Islands  
January 05 – 14, 2018 / To be advised

Island Tourism Festival is a 10-day long event, set in the beautiful former colonial island city of Port Blair. The festival showcases dance, drama, music and exhibits art and craft, with the backdrop of a rich flora and fauna, and marine life.

Organised by the Andaman & Nicobar Administration, the festival showcases performances by the tribes of the island and renowned cultural troupes, along with the artists of national and international fame, who are invited to perform during the festival. Government agencies and private entrepreneurs from across India attend the exhibition organised as a part of the festival. The exhibition highlights the developmental aspects of these islands.

The festival aims at projecting the islands as eco-friendly tourist destinations and is attended by travellers from all over the world. With something in store for everyone, the festival gives adventure enthusiasts an opportunity to enjoy aqua sports and parasailing while also giving them a flavour of the Island Tourism Festival in Andaman. As the kids enjoy puppet shows and participate in baby shows, other activities such as Canoe Race, Scuba Diving competitions, Nicobari Hodi race and Dog shows entertain one and all!

With the island being turned into nothing less than a carnival, tourists enjoy a sumptuous dinner in a floating restaurant, as they bask in the picturesque backdrop and splendid surroundings.



# Camel Festival

Bikaner, Rajasthan

January 13 – 14, 2018/ January 19 – 21, 2019

The shining rays of the sun, cool sands and the camel enliven the orange hues of the desert. For centuries, the camel has served as a means of livelihood to being the traditional mode of transport in Rajasthan. Yet, the bond of camels and their owners runs deeper- the Bikaner Camel Festival celebrates this glorious animal and its relationship with the people of desert.

Camels at the Bikaner Festival are a vision! The festivities begin with a camel procession in the red milieu of Junagarh Fort. In a unique pageant show of camels draped in vibrant weaves of Rajasthan, they live up to the beauty standards of long, slender necks, thick eyelashes and swaying bodies. In this two day treat, the camels literally dance to the tune of their masters, performing acrobatic stunts and graceful movements with their feet. While the spectacle itself is mesmerising, you will be enticed to become a part of the ongoing frenzy of camel races, camel safari, contests including tug of war and camel milking amidst other activities. Those who cannot help but splurge can spend on exquisite handicrafts of Rajasthan. Take a break from such flamboyancy, with musical concerts, puppetry and folk performance of skirt twirling dances as well as Bikaner's famed fire dance, which can now only be seen during the festival. At the Bikaner Festival, revere the bejewelled camel throughout the day, and watch the festive frenzy comes to an end with colourful fireworks embellishing the night sky.



# Gangasagar Mela

Sunderbans, West Bengal

January 13 – 15, 2018/ January 13 – 15, 2019

Away from the hustle bustle of the city life, located on an island in the Sunderbans, Gangasagar offers both – the pilgrims and adventure lovers an awaited tourist destination with the charms of an un-spoilt beach on the estuary of the river Ganges.

Among the acres of silver sand and under the infinite clear blue sky and sea, Gangasagar provides an ideal destination for visitors looking for a weekend getaway. The many tales of Hindu Mythology and ancient Indian literature such as the Ramayana and works of Tagore and Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay mention Gangasagar. One of the most famous Hindu pilgrimage centres in India, also known as Sagardwip, Gangasagar is still an unexplored and therefore, unexploited territory.

Every year on Makar Sankranti, in mid- January, pilgrims from all over India, gather at Gangasagar for a holy dip at the confluence of the river Ganga and the Bay of Bengal. After the refreshing and cleansing holy dip in the river, the pilgrims offer ‘Puja’ or worship at the Kapil Muni Temple.

The Gangasagar Mela (Fair) held during Makar Sankranti, boasts of being one the biggest fairs in West Bengal.



# Pongal

Kerala

January 14, 2018/ January 14, 2019

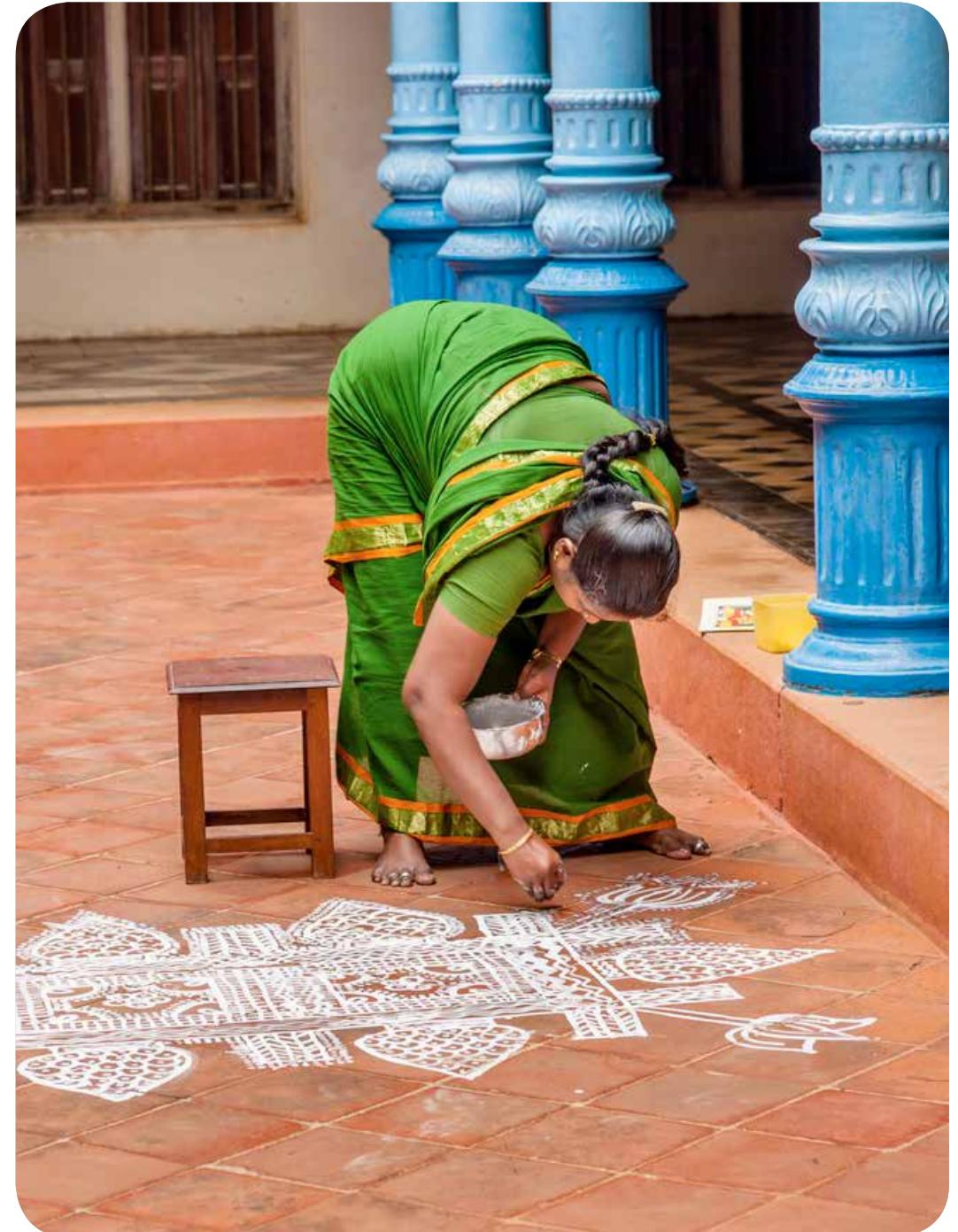
In an earthen pot, almost brimming over with milk simmering atop a fire, rice and other cereals are added, to create Pongal, a thanksgiving feast. This is the offering to the Sun God, the life-giver of all that exists.

Decked in traditional attire, men and women and children sing and dance, expressing profound joy as they thank the rain God, Lord Indra. Cattle bedecked with multi-coloured beads, tinkling bells, sheaves of corn and flower garlands too are worshiped. Into the fire are cast token useless household articles during Bhogi Mantalu, so that what was unwanted is put to use, providing warmth during the last lap of winters. For an agrarian society, nothing compares with the joy of a good harvest.

All over India, the harvest season is celebrated with gusto, in its various regional flavours. Celebrated over four days in the state of Tamil Nadu, in the Hindu calendar month of Thai which falls in January-February, Pongal celebrates the rice harvest.

Along with rice, other cereals sugar-cane, and turmeric (an essential ingredient in Tamil cooking) are also harvested. Each of these is an essential component of the sweet and savoury ritual dishes that are prepared over the four days. Join us as we celebrate the cycle of life, of regeneration and nature's infinite bounty.

Through mesmerising landscapes and bewitching architecture, let us also be your guide to age-old customs and traditions, which celebrate nature and human dependence on the cycles bound by it.



# International Kite Flying Festival

Jaipur, Rajasthan

January 14, 2018/ January 14, 2019

The International Kite Festival is celebrated on the day of Makar Sakaranti, i.e., January 14, and is organised by the Jaipur Tourism Development Corporation. The festival of Makar Sankranti is marked by the transition of the Sun into the Northern Hemisphere and to commemorate this day, kite enthusiasts from all across the world, come down to the pink city – Jaipur – to participate and display their kite flying skills.

In lively colours and myriad shapes and sizes, kites flutter high above in the sky, while those down below controlling them compete over cutting one another's kite strings.

Women prepare special dishes of *til papdi* and *laddoos* with sesame seeds and sugar, to mark the festival. The day is also characterised by many helping for a cause, giving to the poor and the needy.

The festival is held at the Polo Ground of Jaipur and Jodhpur. A kite market is setup, comprising food stalls, accompanied by cultural performances and special kite displays at night, such as illuminated kites or Tukals, being. In no less than a few years, the International Kite Festival has become one of the most awaited and grand festivals of Rajasthan, living up to its expectations of adding colour to the lives of the people.



# Magh Bihu Festival

Assam

January 15, 2018/ January 15, 2019

The Assamese culture is acutely different from the rest of India when it comes to the traditions and the festivals. Bihu, the most popular as well as the national festival of Assam, occurs more than once a year with three different festivals being a part of it. Associated with farming, these festivals are namely Rongali Bihu, Kaati Bihu and Magh Bihu.

Also known as Bohag Bihu, the festival of Rongali Bihu signifies the beginning of the Assamese New Year that falls around April 15, every year during the spring season. The Rongali Bihu festival begins with giving a bath to the cattle and livestock in nearby ponds by applying a paste of freshly harvested turmeric or black gram. The cows and bulls are later worshipped, thus giving way to the name goru (cow) bihu.

The goru bihu is followed by the Manuh (human) Bihu where the people take a bath and get dressed in new clothes. Traditional food called *Larus* is made using coconut and rice, along with sweet *Jolpan* and *Pitha* that have their own charm. The third day marks the Gosai (Gods) Bihu. Statues of Gods are worshipped on this day and asked for blessings.

Songs and dance are performed by young boys and girls wearing traditional *dhoti*, *gamosa* and *saadar mekhela*. It is accompanied by orchestra of *dhol*, *pépa* (buffalo hornpipe) and *gagana*.

The Bihu Festival is one festival where people from various communities participate irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, faith or belief.



# Modhera Dance Festival

Modhera, Gujarat

January 19 – 21, 2018 / January 18 – 20, 2019

The 11<sup>th</sup> century CE Sun Temple at Modhera in the Mehsana District of Gujarat in western India may be in ruins, but it is one of the finest examples of ancient Indian architecture. Built in 1026-27 A.D. during the reign of King Bhimdev I of Patan, the temple is dedicated to *Surya* or the Sun God. The remarkable temple is so scientifically constructed and positioned that at the equinoxes, the rays of the rising sun illuminate the deity in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. The outer walls of the temple are covered with stunning sculptures, most of which are of *Surya*. The gorgeous canvas on the walls and pillars depict scenes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

It is in the premises of this stunning temple that the spectacular Modhera Dance Festival is held every year in January. Organised by Gujarat Tourism, the three day visual extravaganza celebrates dance, music, and art – reviving the state's glorious royal heritage, and recreating the ambience of centuries gone by.

Classical and traditional dance forms from all over the country set the stage on fire, with the incredibly beautiful Sun Temple acting as the backdrop to this celebration of India's beautiful traditions and culture. The biggest highlight of the Festival is the Garba dance of Gujarat. People dressed in colourful clothes perform the vibrant Garba dance. Lights, colours, entertainment, glimpses of culture, and the exquisite setting of an ancient temple make the whole festive experience simply perfect.



# Jaipur Literature Festival

Jaipur, Rajasthan

January 24 – 29, 2018/ To be advised

Bursting at its seams, for five days every year in January, is the quaint and resplendent little property of Diggi Palace, as it plays host to the ‘largest free literary festival on earth’.

From a modest beginning of about a 100 participants in 2006, today it attracts around 250,000 footfalls from book enthusiasts, culture lovers, elderly and the youth to the very youngest in the special kiddie sections or just those wanting to be a part of the ‘it’ scene. Some of the best writers from the Indian subcontinent and the works of regional writers are showcased across numerous simultaneous sessions held over five days. From fiery debates, to raucous laughter, musical renditions under the star lit sky, tales which move the most stone hearted to tears, workshops for budding writers, book signings, and serious exchanges on socio-political issues, all of this and more happens here.

Walk into the gates, into a *mela* (fair) with a difference, for a *mela* it is in every sense. People dressed in their best rushing to get the prime seats near the stage where their favourites are speaking. Those torn between two simultaneous sessions, bemoaning the inability to double their selves, and those trying to capture the camera’s eye, are jostling with those content with wandering in the grounds for a quick break as they wander through stalls, or catch a quick bite. The festival is a must for book lovers, for those who want to interact with some of the best minds, be it literature or serious political issues, for those who love a good laugh and also who want an informed sense of the subcontinent. But, it is also for those who love a crowd. Be part of its jubilant enthusiasm, for where better to experience it than in breathtaking Rajasthan? We can say one thing for certain, no-one goes away disappointed.



# The Kala Ghoda Arts Festival

Mumbai, Maharashtra

January 27 – February 2, 2018/ To be advised

The Kala Ghoda Arts Festival is a unique kaleidoscope of culture and art. Art lovers from all over the country visit Mumbai during the festival that exhibits an extensive array of art, literature, music, dance, cinema and theatre.

Formed on October 30, 1998, the festival is aimed at preserving and maintaining the art culture of Southern Mumbai. The festival was started in 1999 and continues to serve an assortment of arts to its audience. World renowned artists display their pieces of art during the festival in the visual arts section. There is also a literature section that works as a platform for book launches, discussions and workshops with popular authors. Eminent artists and groups in the field of dance, music and drama engage their audience with spell binding performances. The culinary section which is most popular among food lovers, offers a live food demonstration experience on a variety of cuisines. Art installations in the festival are eye catching and intriguing and develop a sense of curiosity in the viewer.

The festival commences in the first week of February every year and is extremely popular among tourists and participants. An eagerly awaited event, the Kala Ghoda Festival is not just meant for the adults but also offers various events for the children to engage themselves. It is held across different venues including the auditorium at the National Gallery of Modern Art, the garden at the David Sassoon Library, the lawns and auditoriums at the CSMVS, The Museum, Mumbai, and the Cross Maidan, among others.



# The Desert Festival

Jaisalmer, Rajasthan

January 29 – 31, 2018/ January 17 – 19, 2019

The Desert Festival or the Jaisalmer Desert Festival is held annually in February every year. Exciting events such as cultural events, camel races and even turban tying competitions take place at the festival every year. The golden sands of the Thar Desert add an enchanting charm to the festival. This is a three day long extravaganza where the cultures of Rajasthan are on display. It takes place in the Golden Fortress of Jaisalmer.

The festival attracts performers such as folk artists who sing and dance expressively to the triumphs and tragedies of this land and even local nomadic acrobats known as Kalabaz or Nat's as well as snake charmers take part in the festival. During the Desert Festival, the city and the people start glowing with joy and activity. It also attracts a number of tourists, especially from other countries and is organised by the Rajasthan State Tourism Corporation.

The longest moustache competition is the most anticipated event during the festival. Here, even the guests and tourists are invited to judge the man with the longest moustache. Visitors can be seen posing for pictures with the man who wins this competition. This picture they believe is a moment worth remembering. The other most popular highlight of the festival includes the performances by famous Gair and fire dancers. The Jaisalmeri camels also take part in a series of events such as camel races, camel polo and camel dance. The Desert Festival is an extensively colourful festival that also offers a shopping experience while focusing on just local heritage and customs.



# Baneshwar Fair

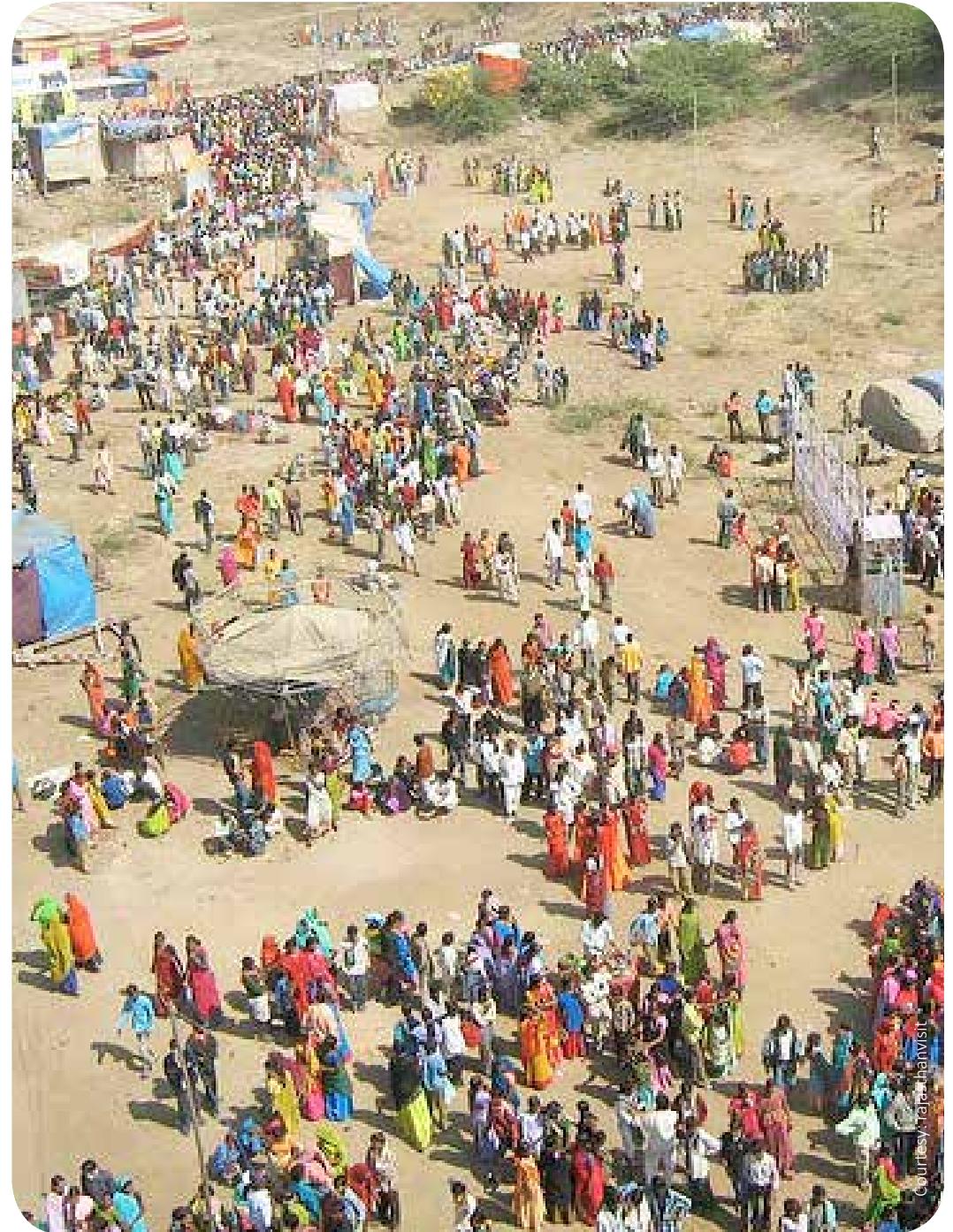
Dungarpur District, Rajasthan

January 31 – February 02, 2018/

January 16 – 19, 2019

A colourful palette to die for, the Baneshwar Fair is a spectacle due to its shades of saffron, early morning skies and the sunsets. A fair, predominantly for the Bhils, tribals from the districts of Dungarpur, Udaipur and Banswara, it also includes the worship of the sacred Shiva Linga kept in the Mahadev Temple in Dungarpur.

Located in a small delta 50 km away from Dungarpur, the fair held in Baneshwar from 0500 – 2300 hours, resonates with the gaiety of songs, graceful folk dances, exciting magic shows, animal shows and incredible acrobatic feats. The joy rides on the merry-go-rounds and swings form the cherry on the cake, which add to the excitement and spirit of the festival. The proceedings begin in the morning, where saffron is applied to the Shiva Linga, following which, it is bathed and a ceremony of aromatic burning incense is waved before it. In the evening, bhabhut (ash) is applied to the Linga and another ceremony with a fine-wick lamp is performed. The devotees worship both Baneshwar Mahadev and Mavji. The offerings include wheat flour, pulses, jaggery, ghee, salt, chillies, coconut and cash. The highlight of the celebration is when all the Bhils sit together, singing traditional folk songs sitting around a bonfire every night. Adding to the spirit, groups of villagers are also invited to participate in the programme.



# 2 FEBRUARY

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01 Surajkund Crafts Mela

16 Sufi Festival

18 Taj Mahotsav

22 Nagaur Cattle Festival

25 Braj Festival

25 Khajuraho Festival of Dances

TBA Elephanta Festival

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

# Surajkund Crafts Mela

Faridabad, Haryana

February 01 – 15, 2018 / February 01 – 15, 2019

As the time for the annual fest, popularly known as Surajkund Crafts Mela draws near, the ancient reservoir known as Surajkund (located at a distance of 8 km from the city of Faridabad not far from Delhi) gets ready to be decked up for the various events to mark an unforgettable fiesta. The beating of drums, splash of colours and the handicraft items best describe this event. The *mela* is known to create an ambience of its own and is eagerly awaited by the Indian and international tourists alike.

Surajkund Crafts Mela aims to promote the various traditional handicrafts in India. Each year the organisers come up with a theme that is based on culture and the arts of any particular state. The rural setting of this place encourages hundreds of award winning artists from every corner of India to come and be a part of this celebration. It also serves as a major platform for the new and upcoming artists who wish to showcase their skills in the field of arts and crafts. Undoubtedly the biggest craft fairs of India, Surajkund Crafts Mela, which is held in February every year, has marked its place on the Indian tourism calendar in the last 26 years.

A shopper's paradise by its own, the Surajkund Crafts Mela offers exquisite paintings, pottery, apparels, ethnic jewellery, toys, and many other things. For people who come to witness the brilliant showcase of entertainment, a fan shaped open air theatre called Natyashala is the venue for witnessing soulful music and dance performances. Mouth-watering cuisines from different SAARC countries is an added bonus to those attending the fair.



# Sufi Festival

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

February 16 – 17, 2018/ To be advised

A silent breeze carries into the deserts the hypnotic voices of Sufi masters, while the spellbinding swirls of the mystics' gowns and dim lights transform the corridors of Ahhichatragarh Fort, into an ethereal bliss. Delightful music, pleasant weather, dancers swaying in a devotional trance; we welcome you to the World Sacred Spirit Festival. Lying between Jodhpur and Bikaner, is the ancient habitation of Nagaur which finds its earliest probable mention in the Mahabharata. A spot which provided comfort to lonely wanderers and traders it grew into a multicultural township with a rich tapestry of inter-religious life. Islam had arrived in India with the simple message of equality in the teachings of Sufi saints long before and with greater success than the more well-known, so called 'Islamic invasions'.

In this long inhabited town there are innumerable temples, and also the dargah (final resting place of Muslim saints) of the widely revered Haminuddin Chishti which is about 700 years old. The shrines of the saints embody the syncretism of religious life of the masses, made popular by the Sufi tradition. It is this Sufi mysticism that is brought to life at the music festival which celebrates voices from India and beyond, in musical renditions of the masters, by the most talented performers.

Do join us on this spiritual journey which takes off in resplendent Rajasthan.



# Taj Mahotsav

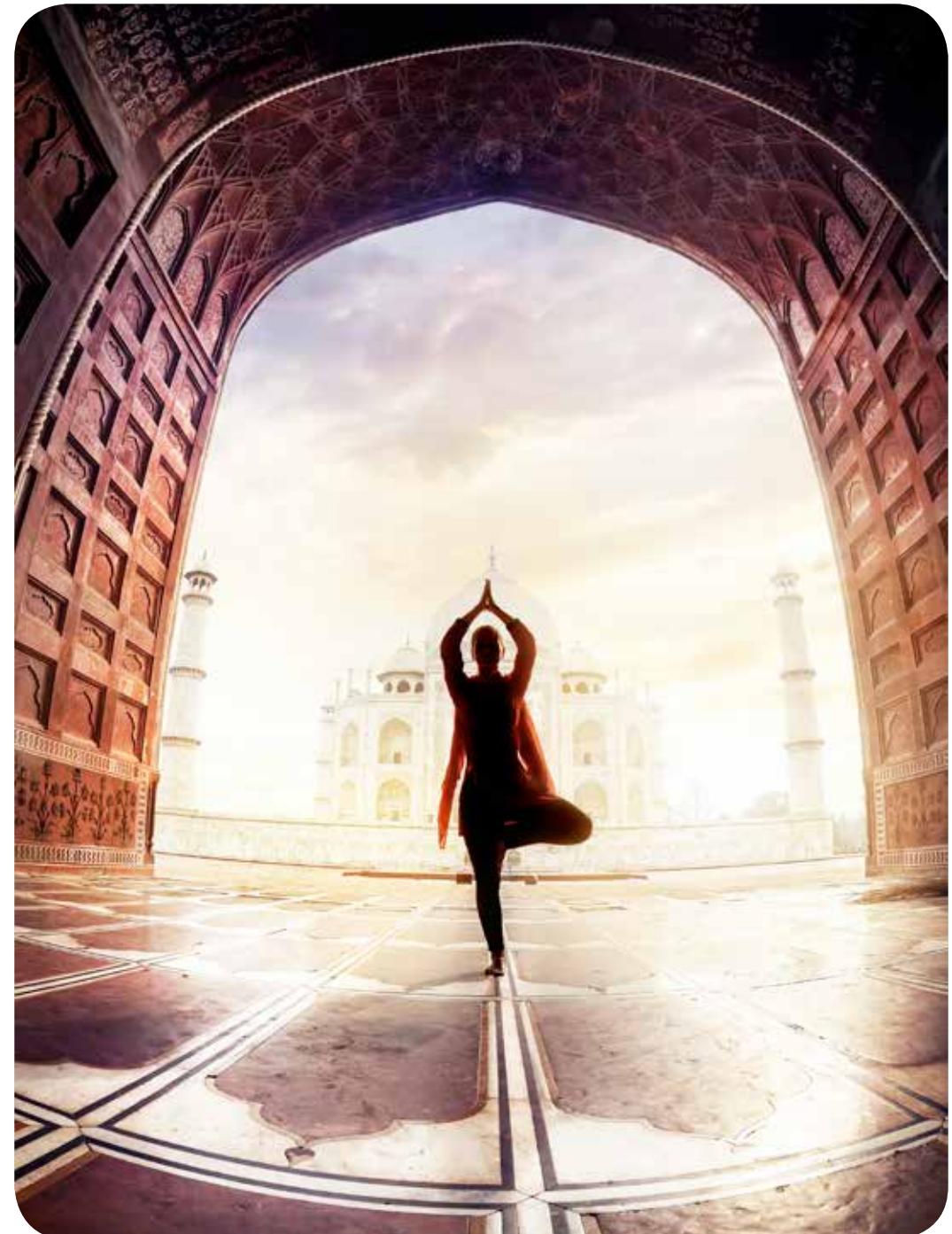
Shilpgram, Uttar Pradesh

February 18 – 27, 2018/ February 18 – 27, 2019

The Indian cultural diversity that has been spread over for almost 5000 years while being finely coated with history and mythology comes alive during the Taj Mahotsav.

An extravagant 10 day event, the Taj Mahotsav is a much awaited annual event that serves as a common ground to bring together the finest of Indian crafts and cultural specimens. Beginning from February 18, each year, the mahotsav is organised by the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department and is held at the Shilpgram. The event gives a glimpse of the history and its vast diversified significance through a potpourri of performances. Difficult to miss, the Taj Mahotsav is the perfect venue where one can witness the best of India's arts, crafts, culture, cuisine, dance and music, all under the same roof. An aristocratic ensemble of 400 Indian musicians, folk artists, dramatists ensures that the event leaves a mark in the memory of the spectators, especially those who have a soft corner for folk and classical arts. Along with the charming artists, the Taj Mahotsav also serves as a unique shopping destination among everything else. Shoppers can shop for a variety of antiques, handicrafts, wood and ivory work while enjoying the appetising cuisines.

Offering a wide spectra of folk music (shayari), dance performances, camel and elephant rides, relatively liked by the Indian and international tourists, Taj Mahotsav offers a spectacular experience and remains a major tourist attraction for the city of Agra. Each year, it is celebrated with a theme that sends out a message to the whole world.



# Nagaur Cattle Festival

Nagaur, Rajasthan

February 22 – 25, 2018/ February 10 – 13, 2019

Colourful twirling ghagraas (skirts) and beautiful veils drawn half across faces, enormous turbans (men's traditional head gear), gorgeously massive jewellery, outrageous moustaches; camels, horses, oxen, donkeys, cows, and bullocks, together numbering in tens of thousands all from part of the Nagaur Cattle Festival. Adding to this extravaganza are pretty birds squawking from brightly painted cages, dogs and cats, merchandisers and craftswomen and men. Bright hues of red hot chilli, set ablaze under the bright golden sun, set off a sharp pungent smell ,which tickles the nostril. This is the scene in Rajasthan, at one of the largest cattle fairs in the world held in the small town of Nagaur.

Lying between Jodhpur and Bikaner, is this ancient habitation which finds its earliest probable mention in the Mahabharata. A spot which provided comfort to lonely wanderers and traders, it grew into a multicultural township with a rich tapestry of inter religious life.

The annual cattle festival attracts people from nearby areas. Along with the trading, fairs give the rare opportunity to local people for outings with family and friends. Everywhere there is excitement, with singing and dancing, haggling over prices, and crowds of giggling women trying on bangles and footwear, eating food they have not had to cook. Adding to the merriment are games and activities such as tug of war, camel racing, bullock races, cockfights, juggling, puppet performances, camp fires, ballads sung by traditional story tellers. Join in this festive atmosphere and take back memories of an Indian village and an experience of a lifetime.



# Braj Festival

Bharatpur, Rajasthan

February 25 – 26, 2018/ To be advised

Come witness a splash of cultures with vibrant colours. An occasion celebrated with such zest, the Braj Festival is rejoiced every year before Holi. It is the time of the year when people from the Bharatpur district in Rajasthan paint their houses in bright colours and the entire region is engulfed in the spirit of dance and rejoicing celebrating Lord Krishna who spent his childhood in Brij.

Also known as 'Brij Mahotsava', the festival is celebrated for three days in the first fortnight between the New Moon and Full Moon nights in Shukla Paksha, as per the Hindu calendar. It is a visual treat to watch the villagers dancing in their traditional attires with the melody of their folk music playing in the background. Don't miss the *Raslila*, a dance, which is said to have been performed by Radha and Krishna in their moments of deep intimacy and affection. The festival has also proved to be a platform to popularise folk dance and opera by several professionals and amateurs. The villagers celebrate this occasion by exhibiting their culture and giving an opportunity to people all over the world to come and enjoy the local hospitality by opening the doors to their humble homes to guests.



# Khajuraho Dance Festival

Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh

February 25 – March 03, 2018 /

February 25 – March 02, 2019

Khajuraho Dance Festival is organised by the Madhya Pradesh government to promote the cultural heritage of the land and traditional dances of India. The festival is held at the famous temples of Khajuraho which provides a backdrop of stunning architecture.

Classical dancers from all over India and also world-over participate in the week-long festival against the backdrop of marvellously illuminated Khajuraho shrines. A variety of classical dances, such as Kathak, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Bharatnatyam, Manipuri and Mohiniattam, are performed at the festival and attract tourists from world over. The festival celebrates the heritage of India and is one of the most important cultural events in the state of Madhya Pradesh.

As a result, the festival has earned a global recognition for itself from different renowned dance schools across the world. Providing an opportunity for international display of local talent and art, the festival witnesses tourists from abroad, giving it the culturally extravagant hue that makes it one of a kind.



Courtesy: Khajuraho Dance festival



# Elephanta Festival

Mumbai, Maharashtra

To be advised/ To be advised

A culmination of various classical performances can be witnessed under the starry-lit sky, where the performances urge the audience to involve themselves completely into the grand portrayal of Indian culture. Renowned dancers and musicians come together to showcase an extravaganza of stunning dances and enchanting ragas outside the caves of Elephanta.

A festival for dance and music organised by the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC), the Elephanta Festival presents a culturally and spiritually uplifting experience for the people. Festival special lunch services and catering arrangements are also provided for visitors that include a variety of local and delicious food stalls highlighting the traditional cuisine of the area. This art-oriented festival is dedicated to all forms of classical dance and music of India. It is the most preferred one for art and culture lovers. One can imbibe the surreal feeling right from the entrance, till the spectacularly illuminated Maheshmurti cave, where the stage is set for the performances.

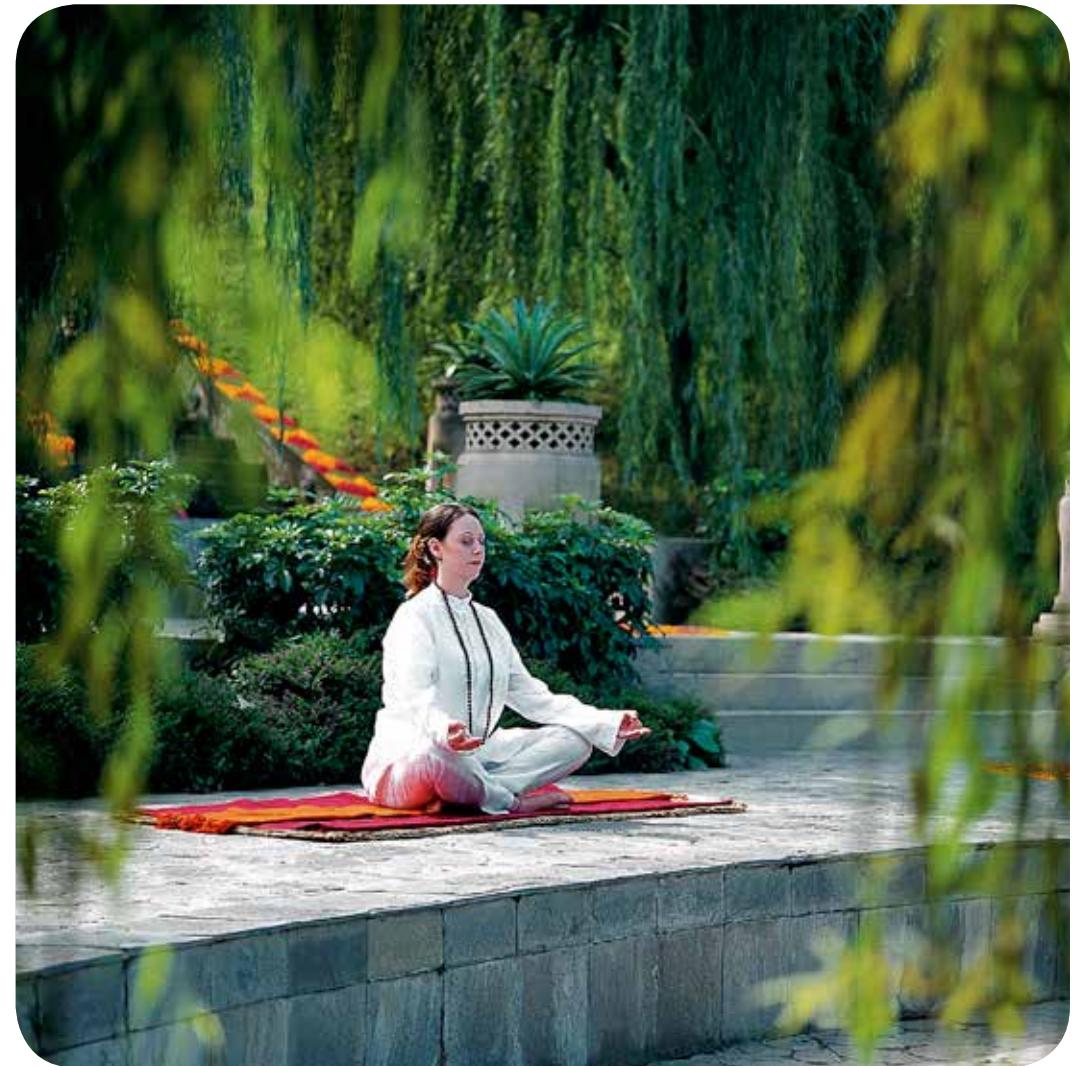
This festival brings back the golden and most-remembered moments of the glorious Indian past.

One of the attractions of this festival is the Shehnai program held at the gateway of India from where tourists can take ferries and boats to the Elephanta caves. The name 'Elephanta' was given by the Portuguese when they found a monolithic stone elephant here. Just an hour and a half hour drive away from Mumbai, the Elephanta Festival should definitely be on the bucket list.



# 3 MARCH

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01 International Yoga Week

02 Holi

02 Hola Mohalla

02 Holi at Diggi Palace

02 Attukal Pongala Festival

05 Paripally Gajmela

18 Mewar Festival

22 Peruvanam Pooram

29 Arattupuzha Pooram

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

# International Yoga Festival

Rishikesh, Uttrakhand

March 01 – 07, 2018/ March 01 – 07, 2019

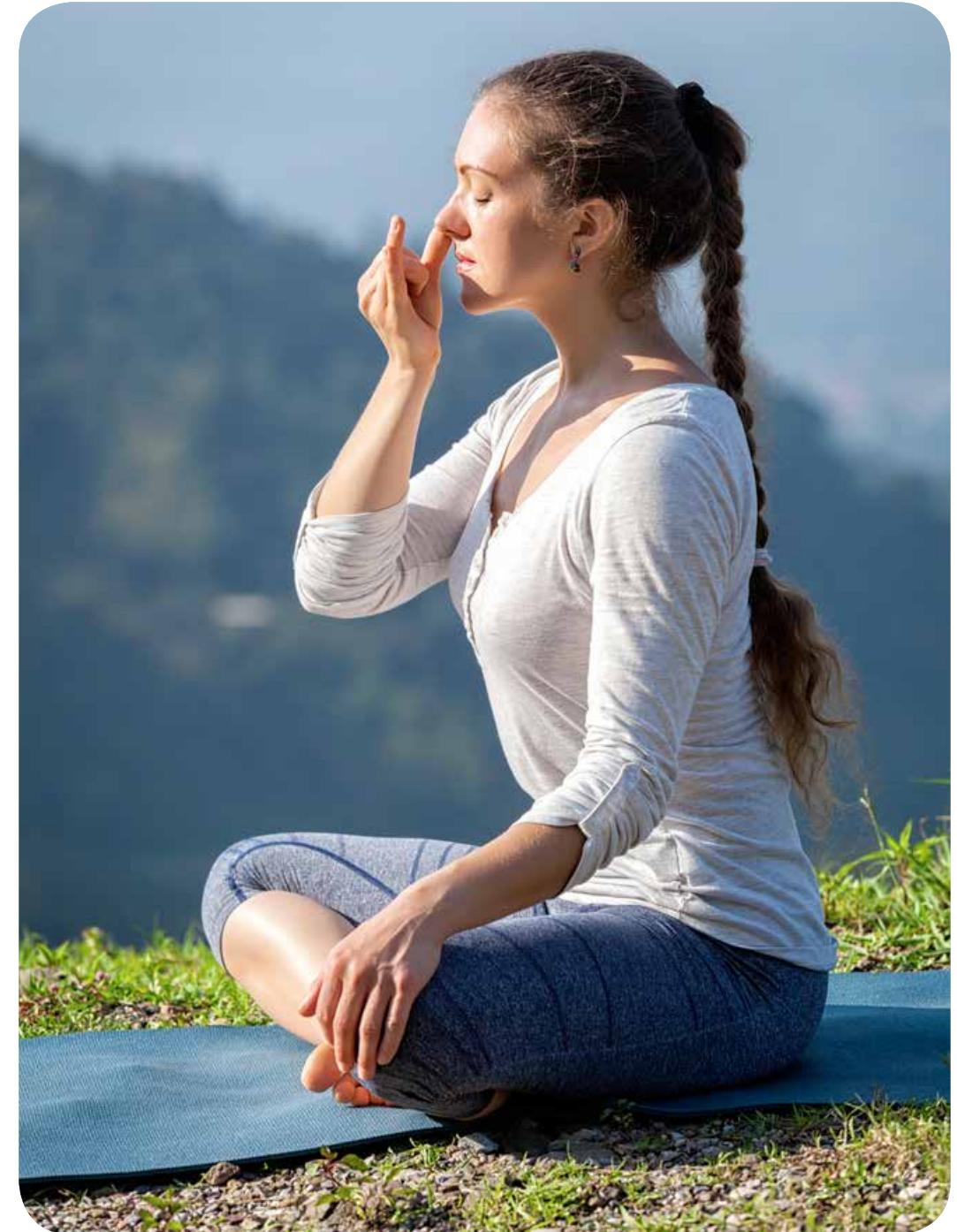
To celebrate Yoga as a form of living, the Parmarth Niketan Ashram, located in Rishikesh, India, organises the week-long annual International Yoga Festival.

Yoga, literally meaning the union of mind, body and soul with the divine, is not a religion, but a practice, that does not favour idol worship or chanting of certain mantras. An ancient science, Yoga is a form of communication that helps one connect with the spiritual realm and leads to a healthy body, peaceful mind and liberation of the soul.

During the one week event, Yoga followers learn about yoga through comprehensive lectures and demonstrations of a wide range of yoga styles and *asanas*, conducted by distinguished proponents of Yoga. The sessions are conducted along the banks of the sacred river and preach the form of living as the celestial unity of the mind, body and soul.

Spiritual masters from India, such as the likes of H H Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji and H H Radhanath Swamiji, bless the participants with their presence, satsang and divine words of wisdom.

The event is hosted across Rishikesh, and Hotel Ganga Kinare is at the forefront of this prestigious event. The hotel has taken it upon itself to present all visiting yoga and meditation enthusiasts, and seekers, with a week-long window into this 1000 year old traditional art form and way of life.



# Holi

## All over India

### March 02, 2018 / March 21, 2019

Colours splashing everywhere, people spraying water with water guns and throwing water balloons on each other, laughter, commemorate the festival of Holi. Popularly observed as the festival of colours, this festival has been shaped by different countries in their own way. However, in India it first begins with burning the Holi bonfire a day before the water Holi, which symbolises the killing of Holika. Mythological stories reveal that the sister of Hrinyakashyapu, Holika was burnt alive on this day hence the name 'Holika Dahan'. The festival also marks the beginning of the summer season and the end of winters. It also celebrates Radha's eternal love for Lord Krishna.

The festival of Holi is known by different names in different parts of the country. In Bihar it is called Phagwa, Dol Purnima in Bengal and Punjab recognises it by the name of Hola Mohalla. However, the most glorious of all is the Holi of Mathura that lasts for 16 days and is predominantly played with flowers.

With Holi comes the preparation of sweets and delicacies, where Ghujia is the most relished of all. Bhaang is also an important aspect of the food preparations.

It is believed that Holi is the day when one gets rid of past errors and ends conflicts. On this day, people pay the debts that have been long waiting to end. It is the beginning of the spring season and for many it is also the beginning of a new year.



# Hola Mohalla

Anand Pur Sahib, Punjab

March 02 – 04, 2018/ March 21 – 22, 2019

Join crowds of friendly cheerful faces as they break into a spontaneous dance to the beat of dhols (drums). Get seduced by the colours of bright new clothes adorning children, women, and men. Be lured by blaring loudspeakers, vying for attention, as they issue invitations to partake in a langar (free community meal). Ogle at the nihangs (Sikh warriors) in their outrageously oversized headgear and blue attire, or simply turn your attention to the hyperbolic displays of masculinities in the sporting arena - we are at the Hola Mohalla.

For seven days in the month of March, the holy town of Anandpur Sahib hosts an unusual festival celebrating the martial skills of the Sikh community. In the midst of fighting, the tenth Guru began the custom of organising morale-boosting mock demonstrations by his regiments. Recitation of beautiful folk poetry from the region dreaming of a new religious ethos offset these militant displays to produce the edifice of the Sikh faith.

Today the tradition continues as a living reminder of the ethos of a spiritual revolt by the common people. Teachings of saints have always emphasised the spirit of giving back to the community; at the Hola, a unique competition between organisers of langar stalls encourages this spirit. No one will go hungry if people share- that, is the message of the langar. Amidst the display of martial skills, it is this message which will no doubt leave a lasting impression.



# Holi at Diggi Palace

Jaipur, Rajasthan

March 02, 2018/ March 21, 2019

Spring in Jaipur is simply enchanting. Come March and a delightful time is in store for those who want to celebrate the beautiful festival of Holi in an especially earthy and homespun yet regal ambience.

Come with us as we take you away from the noise and crowds of the streets outside...in through the majestic wooden doors...and enter the vast, lovely lawns of the quietly elegant Diggi Palace. As the doors shut behind you, the garden is transformed into a riot of brilliant colours!

Welcome to the Diggi Palace!

The Diggi Palace is iconic of Jaipur and is renowned as the perfect setting for some of the city's finest cultural events – it is, in fact, the ideal place to celebrate Holi and enjoy the bounties of spring.

With traditional drums and folk dancers, shimmering mounds of organic colour, tubs of cool water, and classic preparations of sweets, eats, and local brews, Holi at the resplendent Diggi Palace, is literally an affair to remember! So go on, wear your immaculate whites and join us at the Diggi Palace, to play Holi...

Experience pure joy as you watch the first burst of colour transform your clothes into a multi-hued canvas, feel the shower of petals, and the smear of coloured powder, as you soak in the superbly intimate, old-worldly surroundings and make new friends...join in the song and dance, taste fabulous foods, and savour every unforgettable moment of your special time here.



# Attukal Pongala Festival

Attukal Bhagavathy Temple,

Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

March 02, 2018/ February 20, 2019

Discarding all beliefs related to caste, creed or religion, Attukal Pongal welcomes all the women of the world to a grand and huge gathering at the renowned Attukal Devi Temple. Pongala, literally meaning ‘to boil over,’ is a ritualistic offering of a sweet dish consisting of rice porridge, sweet brown molasses, coconut gratings, nuts and raisins.

One of the few festivals of the world, celebrated only by women, the grandeur and exuberance of the Attukal Pongala Festival has to be seen to be believed. Thousands of women, irrespective of their faith, offer Pongala to appease the presiding deity of the temple; Goddess Attukalamma. It is a spectacle of true devotion, where devotees from across the country and abroad participate in the ritual. The Guinness Book of World Records' lists this celebration because of the high number of women coming together to make this event a success.



# Paripally Gajamela

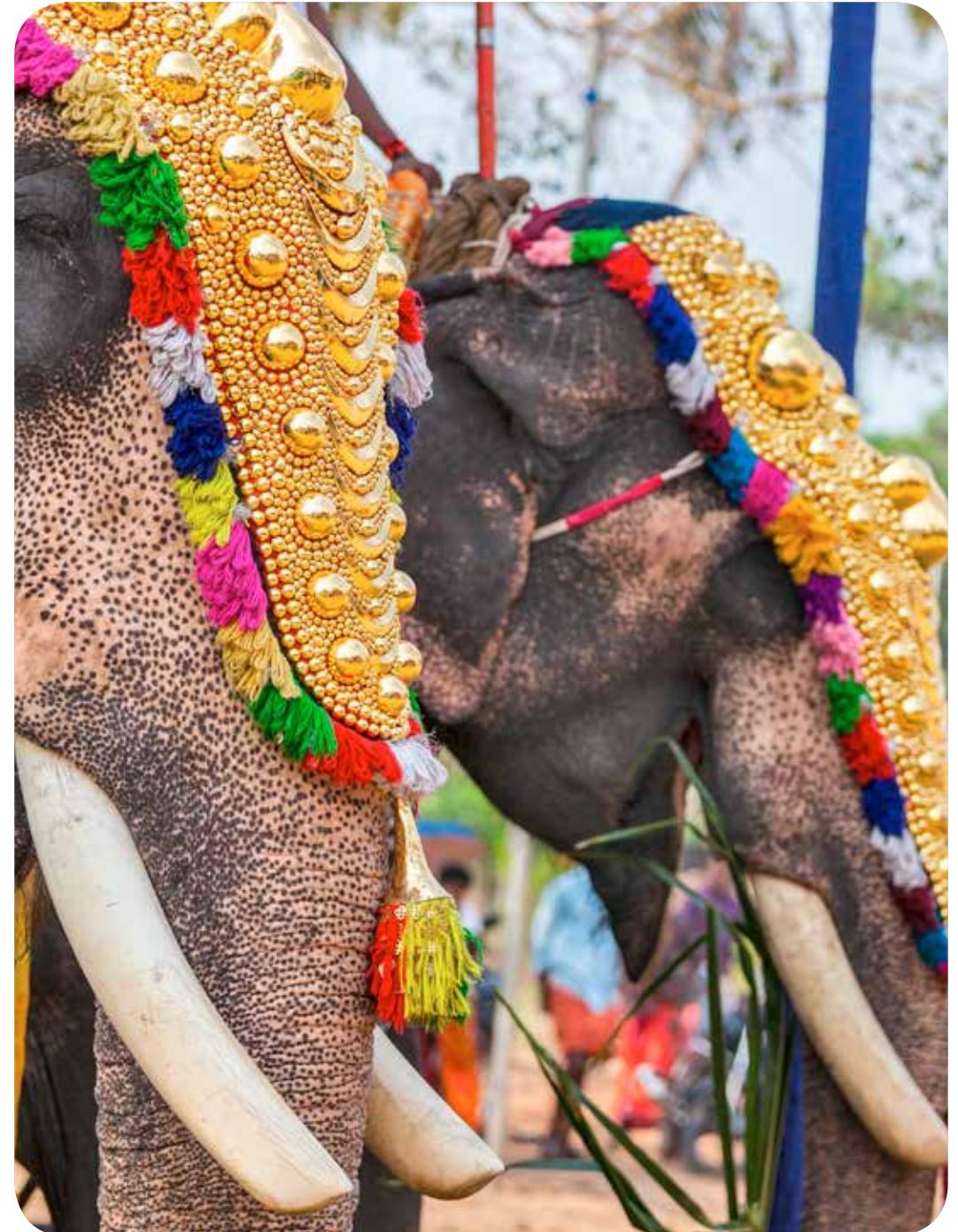
Parippally, Kerala

March 05, 2018 / To be advised

Majestic, magnificent and richly decorated in colourfull fabrics and ornaments – this is how the elephants look during the Paripally Gajamela in Kerala. Also known as the ‘festival of elephants’, 50 of these tuskers are a treat to behold during the 10-day festival, which is held at the annual festival of the Kodimoottil Sree Bhagavathi Temple at Paripally in the Kollam district. These elegantly decorated animals share their space with mahouts who sit atop them holding a colourful muthukuda (silk parasols) aalavattom (peacock feather fans), and venchamaram (white tufts). The festival is a tribute to the Goddess Bhadrakali and it takes place during the month of Kumbham (February to March).

The procession of all the elephants together on the final day of the festival is complete with Thalappoli i.e. women in traditional attire holding lighted lamps in decorated platters. The ninth day of the festival marks the event of Kuthiyottam, a ritual in which the devotees attach metal rods to their body. This ritual is a symbolic representation of *bali* or sacrifice (human).

There are several cultural programmes that are also arranged in the premises of the temple during the duration of the festival. Percussion instruments are a highlight of the festival as they are played with great delight and enthusiasm. The festival sends out a message of togetherness, devotion and faith.



# Mewar Festival

Udaipur, Rajasthan

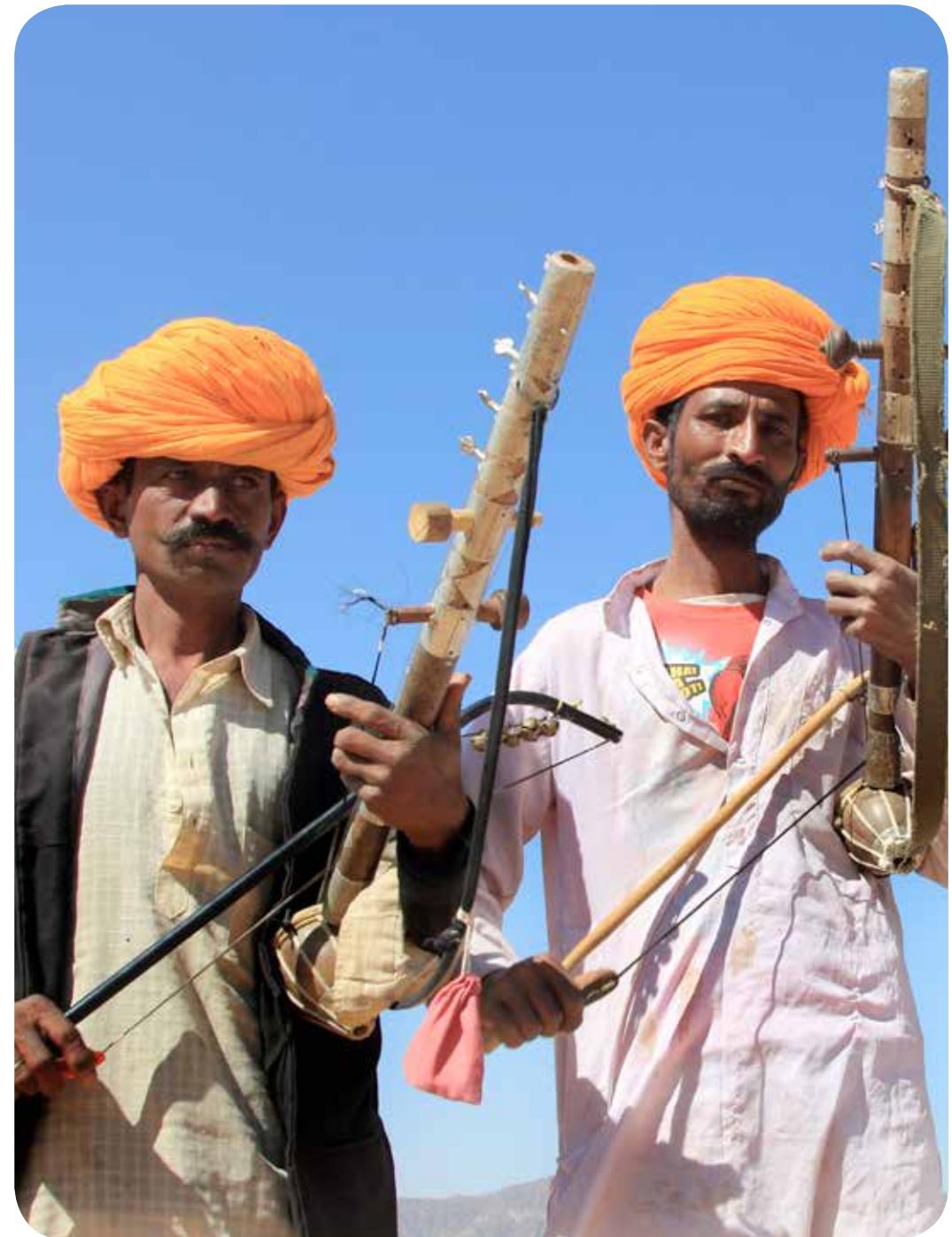
March 18 – 20, 2018 / April 06 – 08, 2019

The beautiful and romantic city of lakes, Udaipur, in Rajasthan in western India celebrates the long awaited arrival of spring with the Mewar Festival. The festival is so named after the Mewar kings who ruled Udaipur, and is one of the significant festivals of Rajasthan. It also coincides with the Gangaur Festival, which is especially important to the women of Rajasthan since it honours the Goddess Parvati, the consort of Siva.

Udaipur is resplendent with lights and decorations, and radiant with the colours of celebration during the Mewar Festival. The festival is a visual extravaganza brought alive with Rajasthani folk music, dance, drama, processions, devotional music, and firework displays.

Gangaur is revered in Rajasthan as the Goddess of marital happiness and conjugal bliss. Rajasthani women, dressed in their finest and most colourful clothes and wearing the most stunning jewellery, assemble to dress the idols of Isar (Siva) and Gangaur (Parvati). Once the idols are dressed, they are carried by the women in traditional processions through different parts of the city. The women sing and dance as they make their way to the Gangaur Ghat at Lake Pichola. Here finally, the idols are carried in special boats and immersed in the lake, making it the perfect finale for a splendid celebration.

To finish in truly spectacular style, the Mewar Festival lights up the skies with a fantastic show of fireworks.



# Peruvanam Pooram Festival

Thrissur, Kerala

March 22 – April 02, 2018 / To be advised

The Peruvam Temple in the Cherpu district of Kerala receives a larger than life charm as it prepares itself during the Peruvanam Pooram Festival. This festival takes place during the months of March and April or the Malayalam month of Meenam.

The festival is considered to be one of the most popularly celebrated temple festivals in the state of Kerala whose commanding deity is Lord Shiva and is considered to be a silent spectator than a participant. While history witnessed 108 temples, currently, around 23 temples participate in the procession, also known as Ezhunnallippu.

Legend says that the present sreekovil (sanctum sanctorum) was primitively a tree on which Lord Shiva used to meditate. The current version of the festival is considered to have been existing for 1428 years.

As the tradition goes, worshipping elephants in Kerala during an important festival is considered to be sacred. In the same way, during the Peruvanam Pooram festival, the cavalcade includes a deity atop a grandiose elephant along with six other majestic elephants. Panchari melam is an enchanting feature of the festival that starts past midnight and is followed by spell-binding fireworks.

The visual treat of the procession and the mesmerising beats of the music played on percussion instruments by locals make this an awe-inspiring sight.



# Arattupuzha Pooram

Thrissur, Kerala

March 29, 2018/ To be advised

Witness the mother of all Pooram festivals, with the grandeur and spirit of an incredible magnitude. The Sree Sastha Temple, dedicated to Lord Ayyappa is prepared for the festivities and is said to have housed him for over 3000 years. This festival is believed to celebrate Lord Ayyappa's rendezvous with the Gods and Goddesses of the neighbouring villages.

Visitors from all over reach the village of Arattupuzha, 15 km away from Thrissur, to be a part of this significant seven-day celebration in Kerala. The devotion and excitement reaches its pinnacle especially during the last two days. An assembly of caparisoned elephants and the staging of percussion ensembles form a part of the ceremony called Sasthavinte Melam in the evening prior to the last day of the festival. Brightly lit traditional lamps and huge flame bearing staffs, known locally as 'theevetti,' further illuminate the evening.

At the end of the ceremony, by early morning, the crowds cheer the elephants that proceed to the adjoining paddy field carrying the deities. It is nothing less than a grand spectacle; with about 50 odd elephants lined up to further proceed to the river for the Aarattu Ceremony. A ceremonial cleansing process, involving the immersing of the idol in the river by chanting of mantras and floral offerings, the Aarattu ceremony welcomes crowds from neighbouring temples to join the ceremony at sunrise marks the end of this celebration.



# 4 APRIL

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14 Baisakhi

26 Thrissur Pooram

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# Baisakhi

Punjab

April 14, 2018/ April 14, 2019

A gentle breeze swaying through the yellow green treasures of the village brings joy to an agrarian community. A good harvest ensures prosperity and plenty for the coming months, and a thankful community offers prayers to its Gods. Every year in the month of April, the spring equinox is celebrated with gusto all over the country. However, it acquires a special significance for the people of Punjab, as they celebrate not just the Rabi crops but the institution of the Sikh Khalsa in 1699.

Prayers at the gurudwara start early in the morning after ritual bathing and are followed by langars (free community meals). Chants of gurbaani can be heard in joyous celebrations. Communities, localities, families and friends gather to sing and dance to the beat of dhols (drums). The langars remind of the basic tenets of the faith- simplicity, the importance of community and the ethic of sharing. When the first Guru, Guru Nanak had preached a new faith he attracted the masses by the simplicity of its message. Inspired by the Sufi and Bhakti traditions, it spoke of a direct communion with God, a simple life and the spirit of community.

Experience the message of this simple faith in the celebration of Baisakhi. The offer of thanks for the harvest amidst massive celebrations, crowds thronging the streets, a general festive atmosphere of singing and dancing, provide a vision of the hearty spirit of Punjab.



# Thrissur Pooram

Thrissur, Kerala

April 26, 2018 / May 13, 2019

Thrissur Pooram is considered as the most colourful of all temple festivals in Kerala. Thrissur/Thrissivaperoor Pooram is frequently also referred to as “the pooram of all poorams”. It is celebrated every year on Pooram – the day when the moon rises with the Pooram star in the Malayalam Calendar month of Medam. The Vadakkumnathan Temple situated on the famous kkinkadu maidhanam which is a hillock right in the centre of city, serves as the venue for the festival. People believe that the Gods and Goddesses of the neighbouring temples descend from the heavens to be a part of the celebrations in this temple.

These Gods and Goddesses visit the temple premises sitting atop giant and unusually decorated elephants along with grand ensembles of Chenda melam and pancha vadyam. Around 50 elephants wearing Nettipattam (decorative golden headdress), beautiful bells and ornaments, impressive Kolam with umbrellas perched atop, beautify the festival more.

The festival is a 36 hours of unbroken pooram while serving as a place of major tourist attraction. The Thiruvampadi and Paramekkavu temples or Dewasoms are the major points of attraction of the festival. These two temples compete with each other in display of spectacular fireworks.

The festival signifies the coming together of different communities to promote communal harmony. The Muslim community provides the craftsmanship of the Pandals, while the material for the umbrellas called Kudamatton is offered by the members of the church. Thrissur Pooram was started in 1798 by Raja Rama Varma the Maharaja of Cochin from 1790–1805.



# 5 MAY

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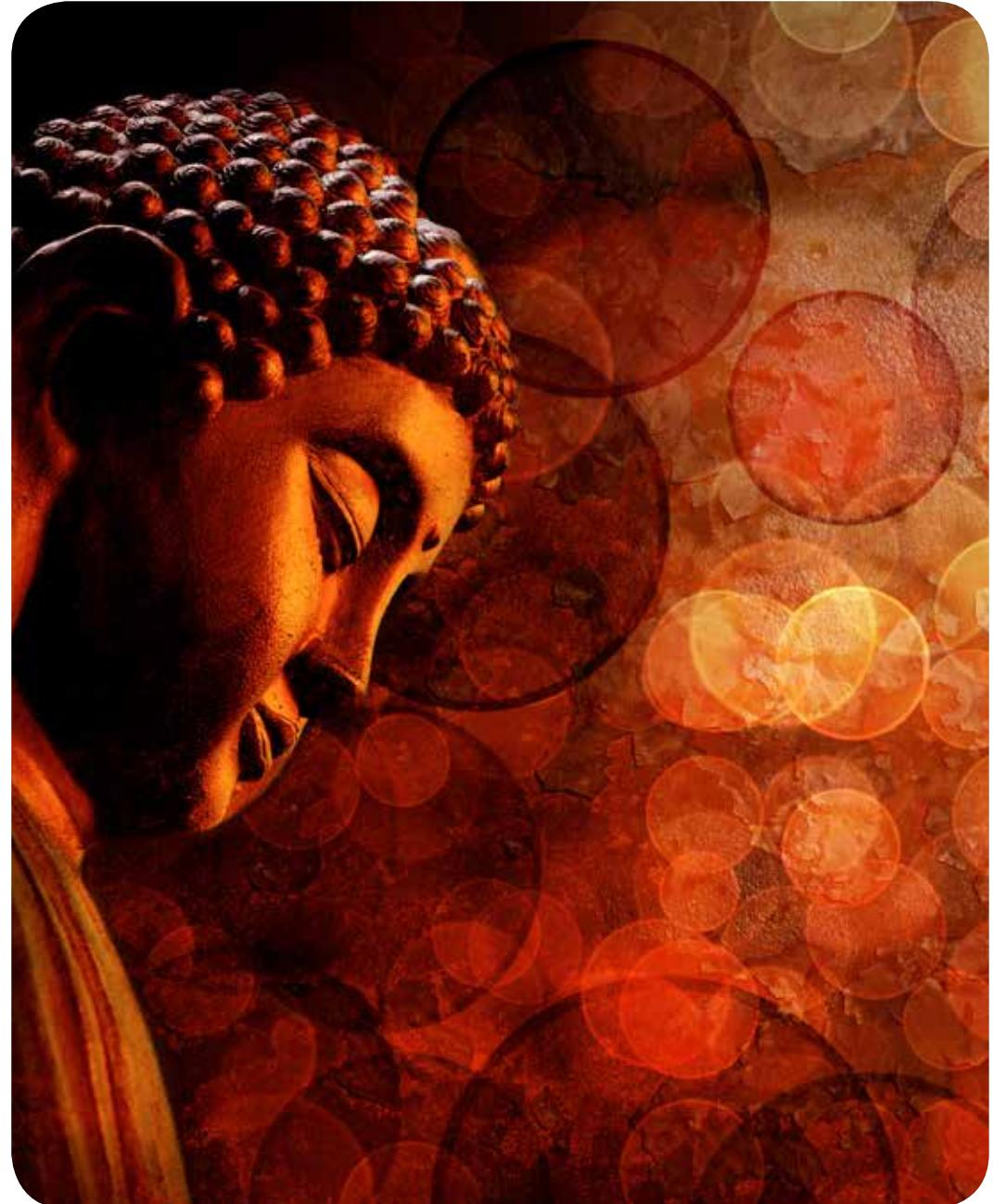
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29 Buddha Purnima

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# Buddha Purnima

All over India

May 29, 2018/ May 18, 2019

Known by different names in different parts of the world, Buddha Jayanti or Buddha Purnima is celebrated to commemorate the three most significant events that influenced Buddhism. Known as Vesak or Visakah Puja in India, Visakha Bucha in Thailand, Waisak in Indonesia and Wesak in Sri Lanka and Malaysia, this festival commemorates the birth, enlightenment and death of Gautam Buddha.

A divine celebration, it includes prayers, sermons and continuous recitals of the sacred Buddhist scriptures before the statue of Buddha. Aromatic incense, flowers and candles are offered to the statue along with fruits. As part of the celebrations, people sprinkle milk and scented water on the roots of the Banyan tree, better known as the Bodhi tree and illuminate them by lighting rows of lamps around them.

Celebrated every first full moon day in May, it is herd in June every leap year all over South-east Asia, Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh and Bodh Gaya in Bihar. Thailand celebrates it with sacred chants, fasting and other practices, while in Singapore, the devotees make donations to the temples. Various festivities take place in Indonesia and the Flower Festival is celebrated in Japan to commemorate the birth of Buddha. At the same time, Hong Kong, Macau and South Korea observe Buddha's birthday as a public holiday.



# 6 JUNE

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23 Hemis Festival

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# Hemis Festival

Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir

June 23 – 24, 2018 / July 11 – 12, 2019

The birth of Guru Padmasambhava is celebrated as the Hemis Festival in Ladakh. Celebrated in the courtyard of Hemis Gompa, which is known as the largest Buddhist monastery in Ladakh, the Hemis Festival is regarded as the most famous Monastic festival, celebrated in Ladakh.

The festival is a two day celebration that falls on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the Tibetan Lunar month. It is considered that Guru Padmasambhava is a representative reincarnate of Buddha. Every year, the Hemis festival attracts a large number of Tibetans as well as tourists who come to watch and celebrate the festival as they watch the Lamas called Chamms perform masked dance and sacred plays. The performances are accompanied by cymbals, drums and long horns. Every 12 years, the festival takes an auspicious direction when the Tibetan year of the Monkey is celebrated. During this time, the two storey high ‘Thanka’ or a religious icon painted or embroidered on cloth depicting Padmasambhava is displayed.

Lamas can be seen dressed in colourful brocades and masked attire while they perform the dance where the underlying theme is good defeating the evil, i.e. Gods defeating the Demons. The different Mudras performed as a part of this dance symbolise the various aspects of the dance drama. Some other performers wear masks representing different divinities of religious or historical importance. Local people become a part of the festival by wearing their finest traditional apparel for the occasion.



# 7 JULY

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

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14 Rath Yatra

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# Rath Yatra

Puri, Odisha

July 14, 2018 / July 04, 2019

Enormous chariots built to specification, in bright colours and with elaborate decoration, pulled by a frenzied crowd through the streets of Puri - the three sibling Gods, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Goddess Subhadra are off to visit their aunt. The term 'Juggernaut' comes from 'Jagannath'. This annual ritual journey that takes place between Puri's main temple, Jagannath Temple and the Gundicha Temple and attracts millions of devotees. For non-Hindus and any foreigners including those entering into the Hindu fold this is a single opportunity to get close to the temple Gods whose *darshan* (viewing) itself will provide moksha (freedom from the cycle of rebirth).

The Ratha Yatra takes place on the second day of the waxing cycle of the third month in the Lunar Calendar, but preparations begin months in advance. Strict rules prescribe every aspect of the yatra, from the approved moment of beginning work on the chariots, to the number of workers and hours involved to minute details regarding dimensions, wheels, colour and decor. The deity is also different, a half body carved out of wood which is changed periodically. Mythological tales explain the incomplete body as the will of Lord Jagannath himself.

Join the numbers which flock to Puri. Be astounded by the sheer size and energy of the procession.



# 8 AUGUST

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11 Nehru Trophy Boat Race

13 Teej Fair

24 Onam

24 Tarnetar Mela

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# Nehru Trophy Boat Race

Alapuzha, Kerala

August 11, 2018 / August 10, 2019

The serene backwaters overflowing, the green earth bursting with life freshly washed by unrelenting rains, and the melody of the birds is matched by the joyous song of the farmer, grateful for the paddy harvest. Preparations gain momentum for the Nehru Trophy Boat race, to win the coveted rolling trophy that will bring joy to the winning village for many months to come. The teams, crossing over a hundred members each, have been living together for weeks, toiling to get into the rhythm which will keep the giant boats afloat. As the participants work under strict rules of diet, daily regimens of exercise, and practicing celibacy to preserve their vital strength, the villagers are busy rooting for their favourite team. On the day of the race, one can safely say that all roads lead to the waters. Large groups of people rush in the morning to grab their favourite spot, on banks and staircases, on roofs and the balcony seats- trees overhanging the channels from which the boats will pass. The Kali-Vallangal (racing boats) start lining up, decked up in bright colours, the snakes open hood gleaming in the sun, umbrellas held aloft add to the spectacle, but it is the sound and sight of the boats, as they race across the Punnamada Lake which is truly mesmerising.

Tranquil waters burst into shower, sliced by hundreds of oars held by sinewy arms working in tandem with the rhythm of the drums and songs.

Join us for a mesmerising experience.



# Teej Fair

Jaipur, Rajasthan

August 13 – 14, 2018/ August 03 – 04, 2019

Women wearing colourful *lahariya* saree and bangles, along with a *bindi* on their forehead, vermillion, dark henna on their hands, and *ghevar* (sweet) together symbolise the festival of Teej.

One of the most widely celebrated festivals of Rajasthan, the festival of Teej is dotted with swings, traditional songs and dancing. This day marks the coming together of Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva. It is also believed that it took Goddess Parvati 108 births on earth before she was accepted as his wife. Due to these reasons, the festival is considered auspicious for attaining blessing of marital bliss.

The most important aspect of this festival is that women fast during the day without drinking or eating anything. At night, they eat the food prepared by the men. Swings decorated with flowers play an important part during the festival as the women wear green clothes and swing while singing traditional Teej songs. The festival is also considered as the beginning of the monsoon season and thus Teej also gets its name as the Saawan Festival and Hariyali Teej.

Due to a number of fairs, the festival of Teej also attracts a good amount of tourists. Although the exact date of the festival keeps changing, it is precisely celebrated on the third day of the bright half of the North Indian Lunar month of Shraavana.



# Onam

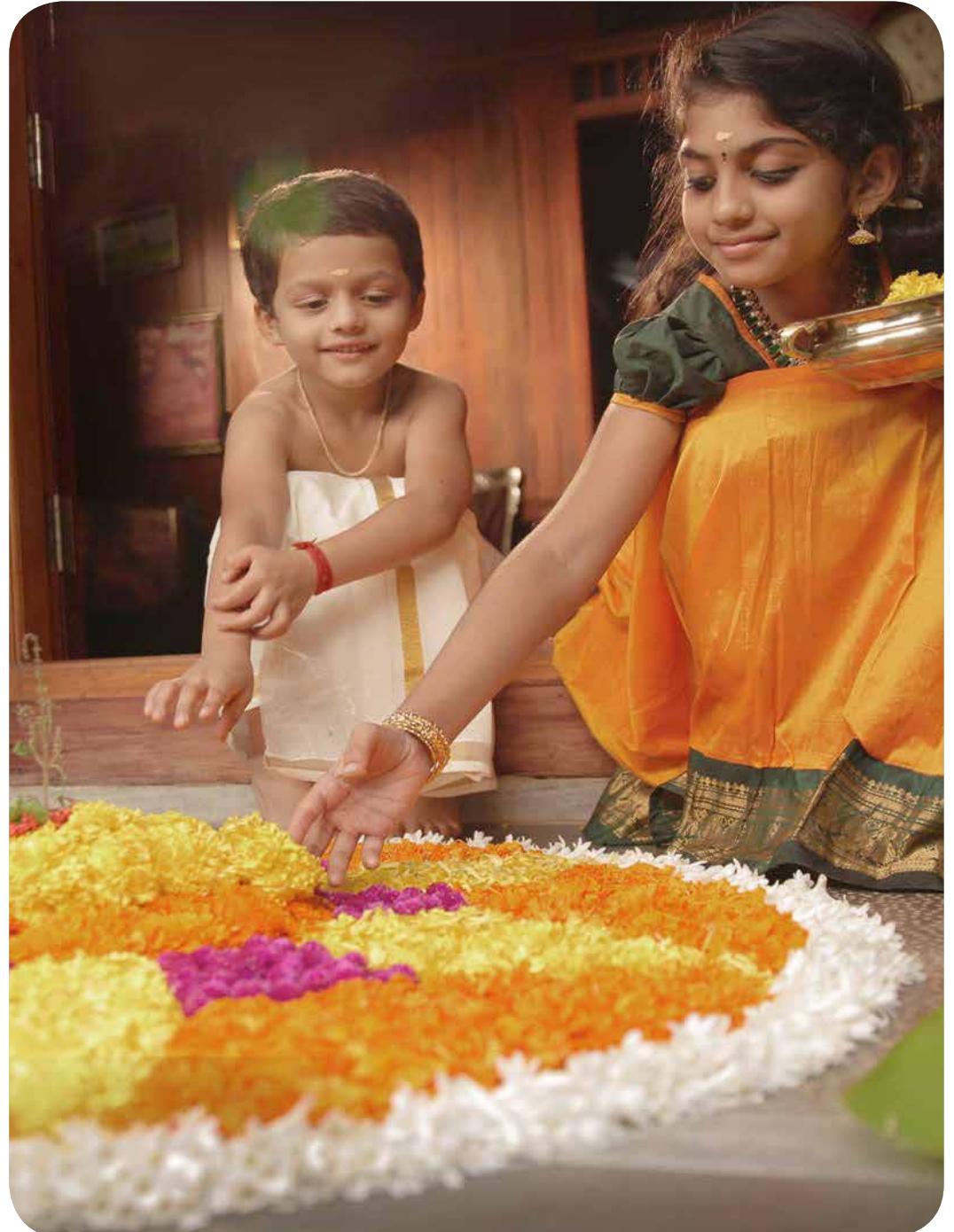
Kerala

August 24, 2018 / September 11, 2019

The southern state of Kerala springs to life in the months of August-September as heavy rain clouds recede, giving way to lush greens. Ebbing waters leave behind abundant crops of rice, the staple food of the region. Resplendent in its natural abundance the predominantly agrarian culture celebrates Onam, the annual visit of the mythical King Mahabali. Ten days of feasts and festivities mark the welcome of the beloved king who is blessed with the boon of a yearly visit to his people, a boon he asked from Lord Vishnu as he willingly gave up his entire kingdom. His visit brings with it prosperity and a reminder of times when, under his rule, people lived in harmony and fulfilment.

The natural wonder is rendered divine by feasts and festivities and colourful processions comprising beautifully decorated floats and heavily caparisoned elephants, grand display of flowers, enchanting snake boats gliding down river waters. The exaggerated makeup worn by the folk dancers, the exquisite finesse in the tiger faces painted on the bellies of the tiger dancers are offset by men, women and children dressed in simple white and gold. Markets overflowing with new things provide an exhilarating frenzy and in homes it is customary to buy and use new clothes, utensils, and food items.

Welcome to captivating 10 days in 'God's Own Country' which provide a rich montage of all aspects of life of the Malayali (inhabitants of Kerala) people.



# Tarnetar Mela

Thangadh, Gujarat

August 24 – 27, 2018 / To be advised

Popularly known as the Trinetreshwar Mahadev Mela or in other words the Tarnetar Mela, the *mela* (fair) is organised in a village called Tarnetar, which stands 39 km from Chotila in Surendranagar District of Gujarat. The festival and the mela are celebrated together to ceremonialise the wedding of Arjun and Draupadi. The fair is held at the grounds of the temple, which is known as Trinetreshwar Mahadev Temple. The temple also has a *kund* or a reservoir by the name of papanshu (the destroyer of sins). It is believed that taking a dip in the waters of the *kund* is as holy as taking a dip in the sacred river Ganga.

According to numerous mythological tales, Prince Arjun had accomplished the unimaginable task of piercing the eye of a fish in the pond located in Tarnetar itself, following which, his famous swayamvar with Draupadi took place here. The tradition of holding a swayamvar continues here even today. Unmarried men and women from tribal communities, such as, Bharwad and others visit the fair looking for a prospective match. The custom goes about that men stand under embroidered umbrellas looking for a bride while the women go around with an umbrella looking for a groom.

The Trinetreshwar Mahadev Mela is a vibrant affair. From ethnic Gujarati costumes to the folk dance to music and the glittering jewellery, everything is a part of the fair. A cattle exhibition and an event called Rural Olympics along with bullock cart and horse race give it a picturesque appeal in itself.



9

## SEPTEMBER

SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT

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JANUARY

FEBRUARY

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# 10 OCTOBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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10 Navratri Sangeetholsavam

14 Durga Pooja

18 Dusshera

19 Mysore Dasara

19 Kullu Dussehra

23 Marwar Festival

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

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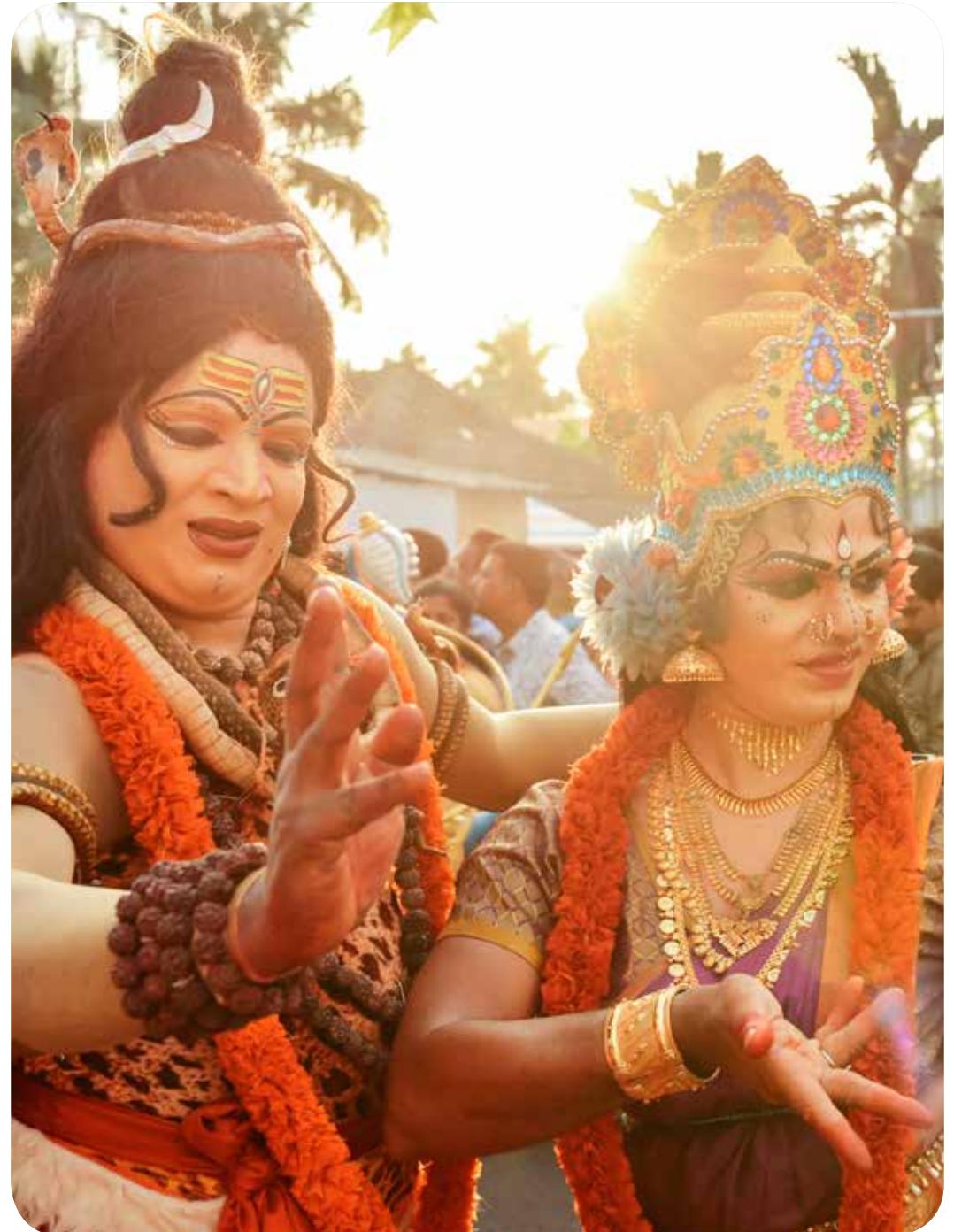
# Navaratri Sangeetholsavam

Trivandrum, Kerala

October 10 – 18, 2018 /  
September 29 – October 07, 2019

The nine days of the auspicious Navaratri Festival in Kerala comes alive with music in the Navarathri Mandapam at the Fort Palace complex in Thiruvananthapuram. The compositions featured belonged to the music maestro, Swathi Thirunal, who was a former king of the Travancore dynasty. The festival is known to adhere to its traditions – be it music or technology, used to amplify the sound. This ancient acoustic technology uses earthen pots of multitudinous sizes and thicknesses that are put up on the ceiling by the means of coir ropes while their mouths face the ground. Even the mouths of these pots are of different measurements. Technically, the pots are placed in such angles that they pose as sound reflectors and thus prevent echoes.

Apart from featuring exquisite Indian classical music, the audience also gets a chance to be mesmerised by traditional dance performances. The atmosphere is filled with soulful music and a distinct smell of sandalwood and flowers that lingers in the air. Even the ambience on the stage is settled by the oil lamps that burn as the beautiful performances takes place offer the other.



# Durga Puja

West Bengal

October 14 – 19, 2018 / October 03 – 07, 2019

The *ulu-dhwani* (a sound made by rolling the tongue) and *shankh-dhwani* (sound of blowing a conch) pierce the dark nights, warding off evil from wherever the sound carries. The streets are over-flowing with men resplendent in their *dhoti's* (unstitched garment for lower body) and women in their distinctive white and red saris. The nights are a glittering affair with light shows of the elaborate arrangements and the crowds that throng the cityscape. For five days every year in October, the city of Kolkata takes on a new visage as the city celebrates Durga Puja, the largest and most vibrant festival of Bengal.

The lanes and parks of Kolkata transform into an open art exhibition as various committees compete to set up lavish and innovative pandals (makeshift prayer arrangements), each displaying an interpretation of Goddess Durga. The ten-armed Goddess saved the world from evil when she slayed the demon, Mahishasur. A deity that embodies the power of the feminine both destructive and nurturing, today, Durga is a symbol of woman power. In her modern incarnation, she brings a message of destroying evil in its many forms - hunger, poverty, gender discrimination, ecological change and even terrorism.

Come, join us as we go pandal-hopping and treat yourself to a sensory organza. Take delight in the beauty of a city turned into a gallery; be surrounded by silks and muslins, extravagant clothes, jewellery and makeup. Listen to the fascinating sounds that fill the air. Tantalise your taste buds with the offerings of Bengal. We promise you an unforgettable experience!



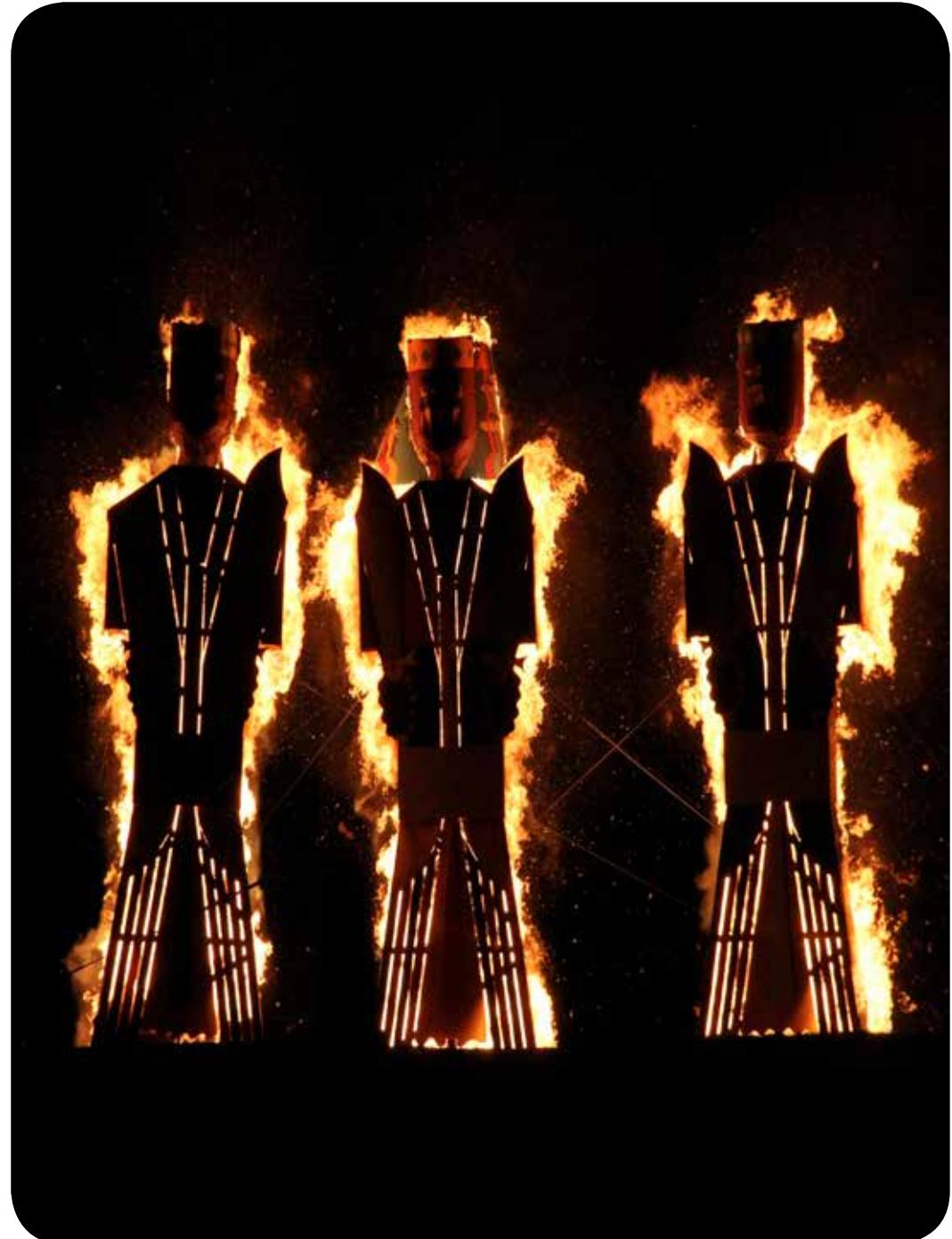
# Dussehra

Kota, Rajasthan

October 18 – November 05, 2018 /  
October 08, 2019

What better way can there be to witness the win of good over evil, of light over darkness than at the celebration of the festival of Dussehra in Kota? A riot of colours, this festival imbibes the spirit of good among the people and celebrates the victory of Lord Rama over the evil Raavan.

Celebrated with gusto and energy, Dussehra is held in the Hindu month of Ashvin, which is usually in September or October. The people enjoy the excellent theatrical performances and enactments from the Ramayana. Although celebrated all over the country, The Kota Dussehra Mela is unique as it is much more than just the win of good over evil. Well-decorated shops, cultural performances and traditionally clad locals are the things to look out for; right from the time you enter the fair. It is the most important event in the cultural calendar of the city as the history of this Dussehra fair goes back to 1723 AD. More than 75 feet tall effigies of the demons Raavan, Kumbhakarana and Meghnad are burnt on Dussehra day to symbolize the victory of good over evil. Usually these effigies are filled with crackers. A young child dressed as Lord Ram is made to shoot an arrow of fire at Ravana and the huge figure is burnt. Rich in courtly splendour and archaic traditions, the Dussehra festival here is marked by a glittering procession that attracts thousands from the surrounding villages and brings together communities looking to celebrate greatness.



# Mysore Dasara

Mysore, Karnataka

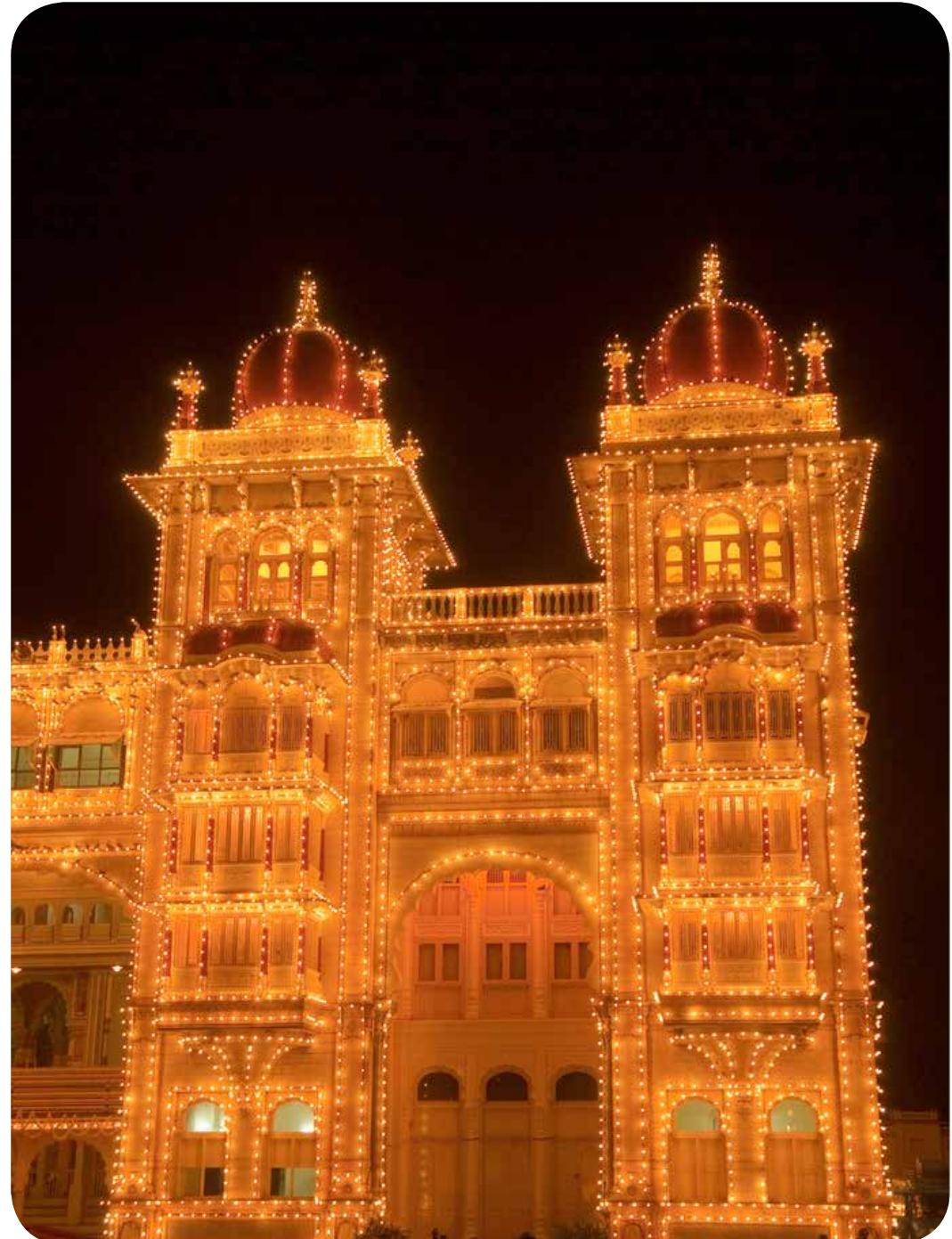
October 19, 2018/ October 08, 2019

Intricately woven with legends and mythology, the city of Mysore is a storehouse of history and cultural festivities. Local narratives reveal that this place was once ruled by a buffalo-headed demon, Mahishasura. The people prayed to the Gods to free them from his reign when Goddess Parvathi came to their rescue by taking the form of Chamundeshwari in a battle that lasted for nine days till he was vanquished. The city derives its name from this demon and celebrates this legend with the Dasara Festival, a tradition started by the Vijayanagar kings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

During the festivities, the Mysore Palace is adorned in lights and the streets become vibrant with procession of decked-up elephants carrying the idol of Goddess Chamundeshwari in the golden howdah, to be worshipped by the royal family and masses alike, along with colourful tableaux, ecstatic dancing groups and music bands, horses and camels.

Across the illuminated Mysore Palace is the local Dasara exhibition for clothes, kitchenware, cosmetic products, exquisite handicrafts and local eatables.

The nine nights are a celebration of Goddess Durga in all her incarnations with special pujas or prayers leading up to the tenth day, Vijayadashami, to celebrate the victory of good over evil, a day when the Goddess Chamundeshwari slayed Mahishasura. Let's see this city in its full galore and fervour with decorated elephants, garlanded idols, folk dance performances, doll shows, food and film festival, wrestling and other sports, fireworks and much more.



# Kullu Dussehra

Kullu, Himachal Pradesh

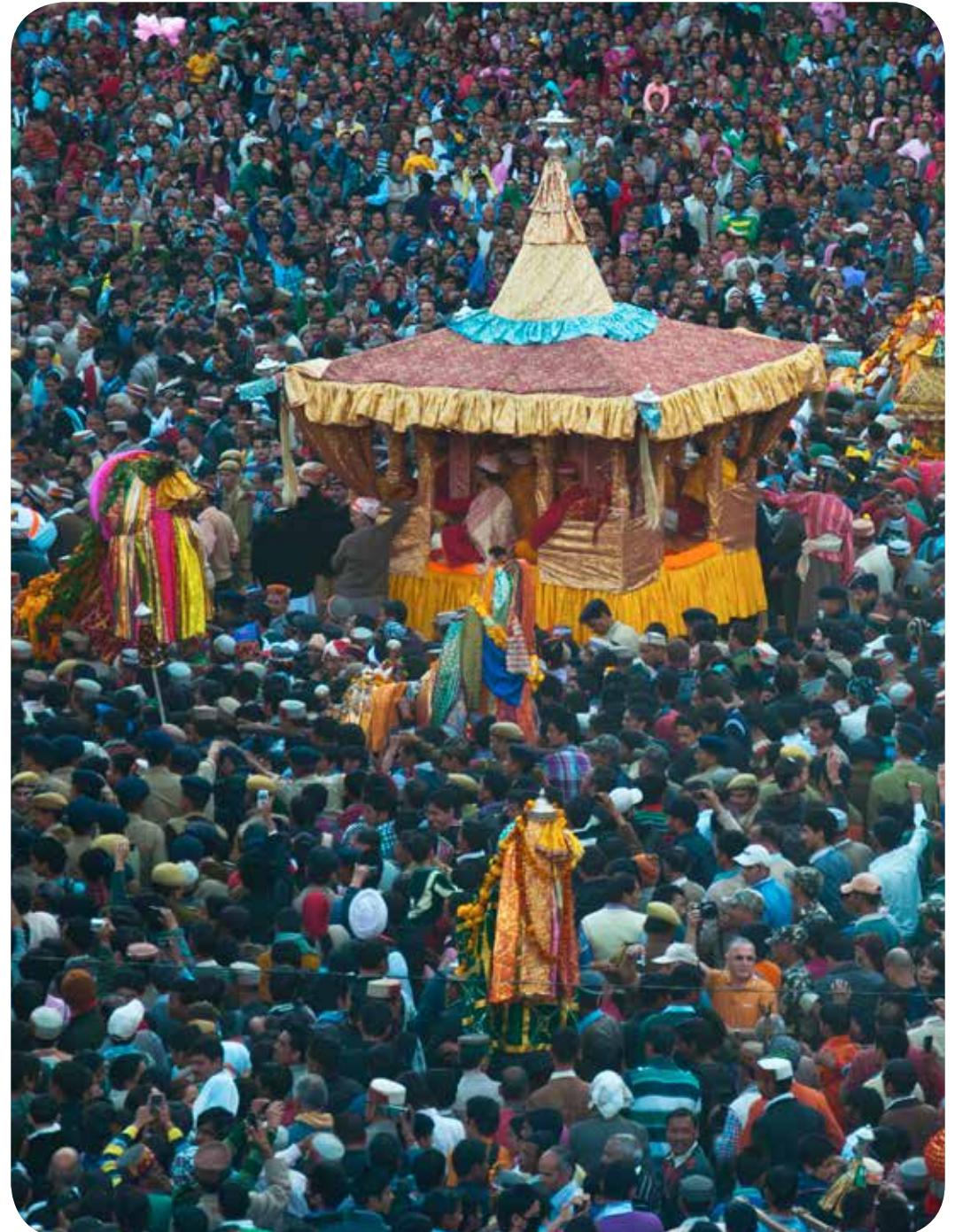
October 09 – 25, 2018 / October 08 – 14, 2019

In a land where myths, legends and age old practices continue to influence the way people organise their lives, Dussehra at Kullu, forms one such tradition. Dussehra is celebrated in numerous ways across India and the mountains of Himachal echo yet another tale.

Its origin dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century when King Jagat Singh was put under the curse of a Brahmin who was tortured for the precious pearls he was believed to own. A sage advised the king to bring the idol of Ram to Kullu from Ayodhya to lift the curse. Legends recount different ways in which the idol was brought back eventually lifting the curse, and the King declared Lord Raghunath as the ruling deity of the Valley. Since then, every year in October, Dussehra is celebrated, offering visitors a peek into Kullu's unique history and culture.

The festival commences at Dhalpur Maidan, with a spectacular procession known as the Rath Yatra of the idol of Lord Raghunath. Known as the 'Valley of Gods', more than 200 local deities offer homage to Lord Raghunath. The cool mountain breeze plays with the tinkling of bangles, anklets and trinkets as village people perform folk dances. At night, you can also enjoy the enthralling performances at the Kala Kender International dance festival along with an Open Theatre. On the last day, the chariot of Lord Ragunath is taken near the banks of the River Beas, and a pile of thorn bushes is set ablaze symbolising King Ravana's defeat, as referred to in Hindu mythology.

Join these Gods at Kullu in yet another celebration of defeat of the evil.



# Marwar Festival

Jodhpur, Rajasthan

October 23 – 24, 2018 / October 12 – 13, 2019

The ancient state of Marwar was founded in 1459 A.D. by Rao Jodha who was the chieftain of the Rathore tribe of Rajputs. The Rajputs were famed not only for their valour and courage on the battlefield but also for the strong chivalric code of conduct they adhered to, lifelong. These warriors were icons of loyalty, integrity, strength, independence, hard work, and exceptional military and strategic intelligence.

Centuries later, Jodhpur, in the deserts of Rajasthan in western India, celebrates the memory of these medieval heroes every year for two days between the months of September - October, during full moon.

The Marwar Festival was originally known as the Maand Festival. *Maand* is a traditional style of folk music that sings to the romance and chivalry of the Rajput rulers. The Rajputs are important figures in India's vast history; their deeds continue to inspire to this day. In Rajasthan, tales of how they lived and died are passed on from generation to generation through beautiful and moving folk songs.

The Marwar Festival showcases the rich and vibrant culture of Jodhpur with the folk music and dance of the Marwar region. With their enthralling performances, the wonderful folk artists bring to life the myths and legends of Rajasthan's warriors, and recreate the spirit of a bygone royal era.

Other events include the camel tattoo show, horse riding, magic shows, puppet shows, and horse polo. The Umaid Bhawan Palace, the Mehrangarh Fort, and Mandore (8 km from Jodhpur) are the venues for the festival.



# 11 NOVEMBER

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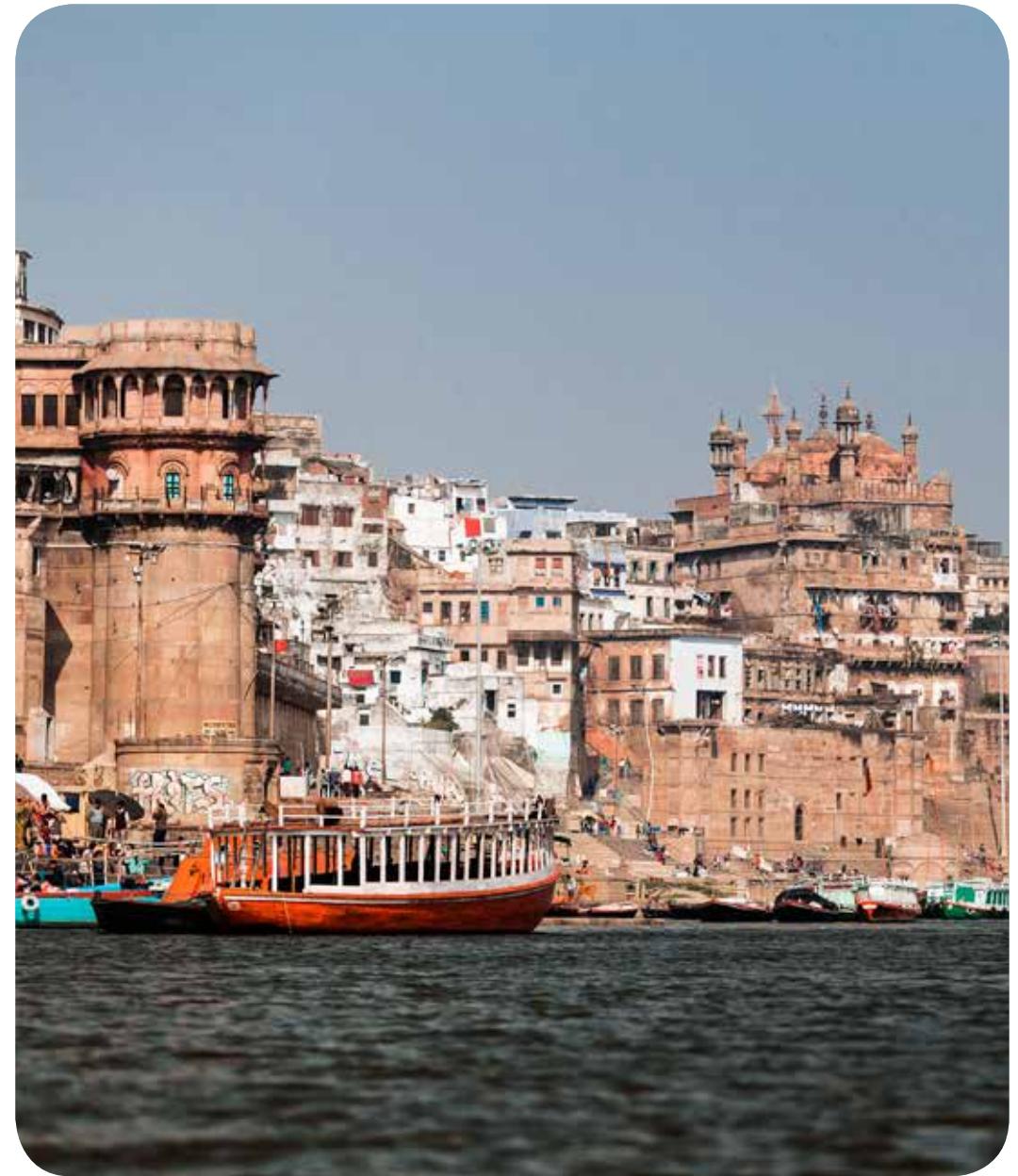
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07 Deepawali at Diggi Palace

15 Pushkar Fair

22 Dev Deepawali

TBA Sonepur Mela

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

# Deepawali at Diggi Palace

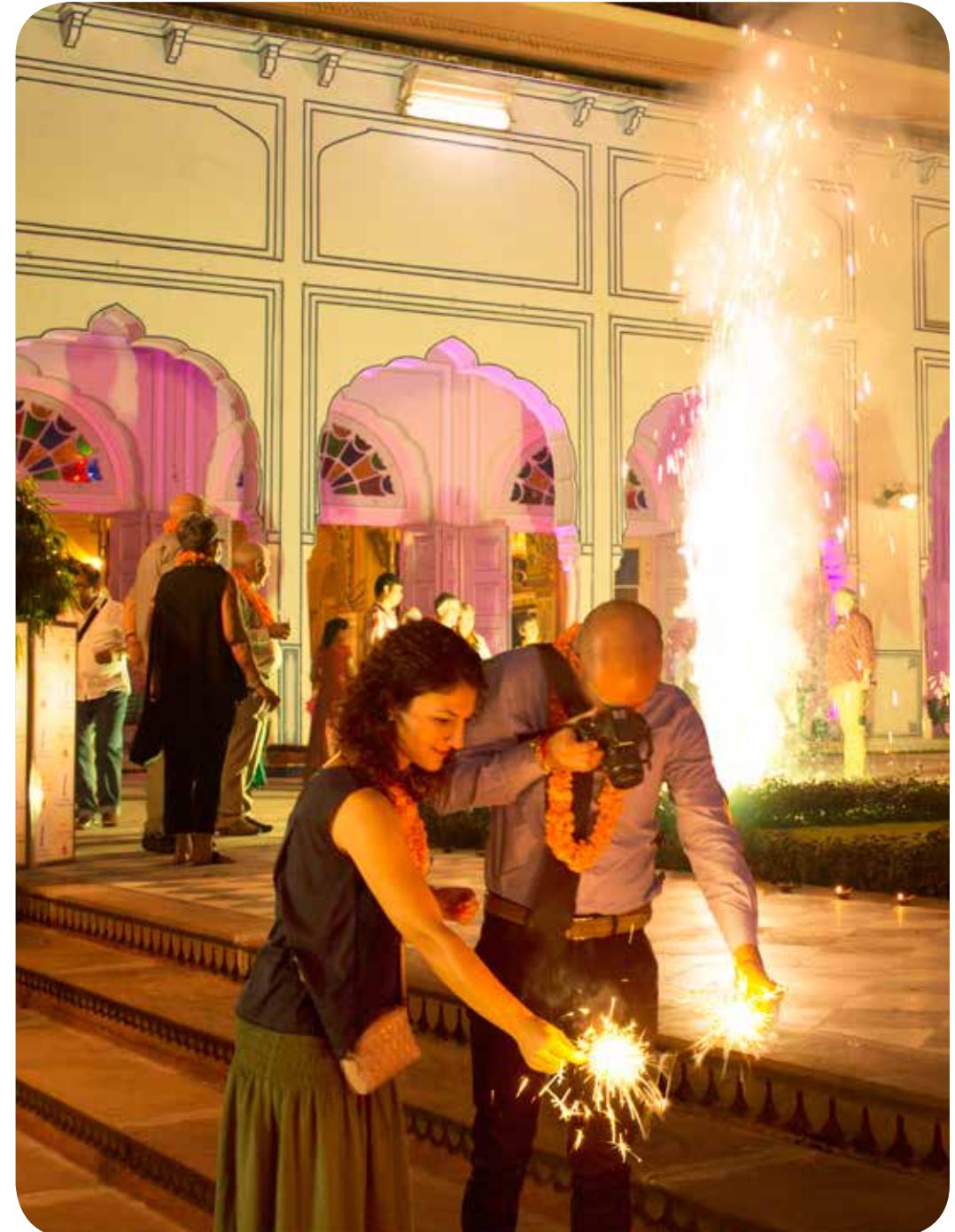
Jaipur, Rajasthan

November 07, 2018 / October 27, 2019

The flickering flames of millions of tiny lamps dispel the darkness of the night. Cascades of light outline every contour and corner, flames of light leap up into the sky only to burst in an extravagant display in the pitch black night sky. Join us on this first and darkest night of the Hindu calendar month of Kartika, to celebrate the victory of light over darkness, of good over evil. At the small and charming property of Diggi Palace in Jaipur, Rajasthan, step into an ethereal world as you walk past decorated elephants, horses and cavalrymen. Aglow with lights, decorated with lavish rangolis (decorative patterns made on the floor), alive with the rustle of silks, the tinkle of jewellery and the sounds of music and laughter, we welcome you to the most important festival of India.

As with most festivals, Deepawali too is bound in many myths and legends, of which the most important is that of the homecoming of the righteous king and dutiful son, Lord Rama after a 14 year exile. The festival falls immediately after the summer harvest, marks new beginnings, and welcomes prosperity in the form of Goddess Lakshmi. Festivities go on for five days which witness frenzied shopping as it is considered auspicious to make purchases during this period. Gifts are exchanged, and sweets distributed amongst not only the near and dear ones but also neighbours and acquaintances.

Participate in a *puja* (religious ritual) with the Diggi family, to please the goddess of wealth and prosperity. Receive gifts from the family, a token of our cultural tradition, and a reminder if you need any of this memorable evening. Join in the festivities, dance to the beat of *dhols* (drums), and enjoy a mesmerising performance by the fire-pot dancers. Listen to live music as you enjoy a scrumptious traditional meal, or as you roam around through the *aatish-baazi* (fireworks). Try a hand at the *phool-jhari* (sparklers) or just sit back and enjoy the aerial displays as our evening draws to a close in a blaze of lights.



# Pushkar Fair

Pushkar, Rajasthan

November 15 – 23, 2018 / November 04 – 12, 2019

Winding their way down tracks across hills under the blazing sun and onto the yellow shifting sands arrive merchants, herders and traders, on camels, horses, and on foot to one of the largest camel fair in the country. Pushkar is a small town, believed to be one of the most ancient surviving cities of India, and one of the five, held most sacred by Hindu religion. The beautiful lake emerged where the rose petals from Brahma's (the Supreme Creator) flower fell. Innumerable temples including the only Brahma temple surround the enormous pool of water. The clear skies in their varying hues of blue, white, yellow, and gold giving way to pitch black darkness reflected in the tranquil waters, bestow a calm mesmerising serenity in this otherwise harsh desert land.

The Pushkar Fair is held every year, on the full moon of Kartik month of the Hindu calendar. Although the largest camel fair, horses, cows, goats and sheep are also sold here. Bedecked in bright cloth, dyed, printed and embroidered, wearing outrageously oversized jewellery of tinkling bells, the animals manage to shine over their human competition. Proud owners astride their elegant camels sashay down the runway, showing off their beloved's beauty made resplendent by careful and painstaking effort. Yet others are more interested in showing off their favourite animal's prowess in carrying the maximum numbers on its back. When people gather in Rajasthan, can the dancers and musicians, the folk singers, and craftspeople be far behind!

Do be a part of this exuberant, colourful and boisterous five-day fair.



# Dev Deepawali

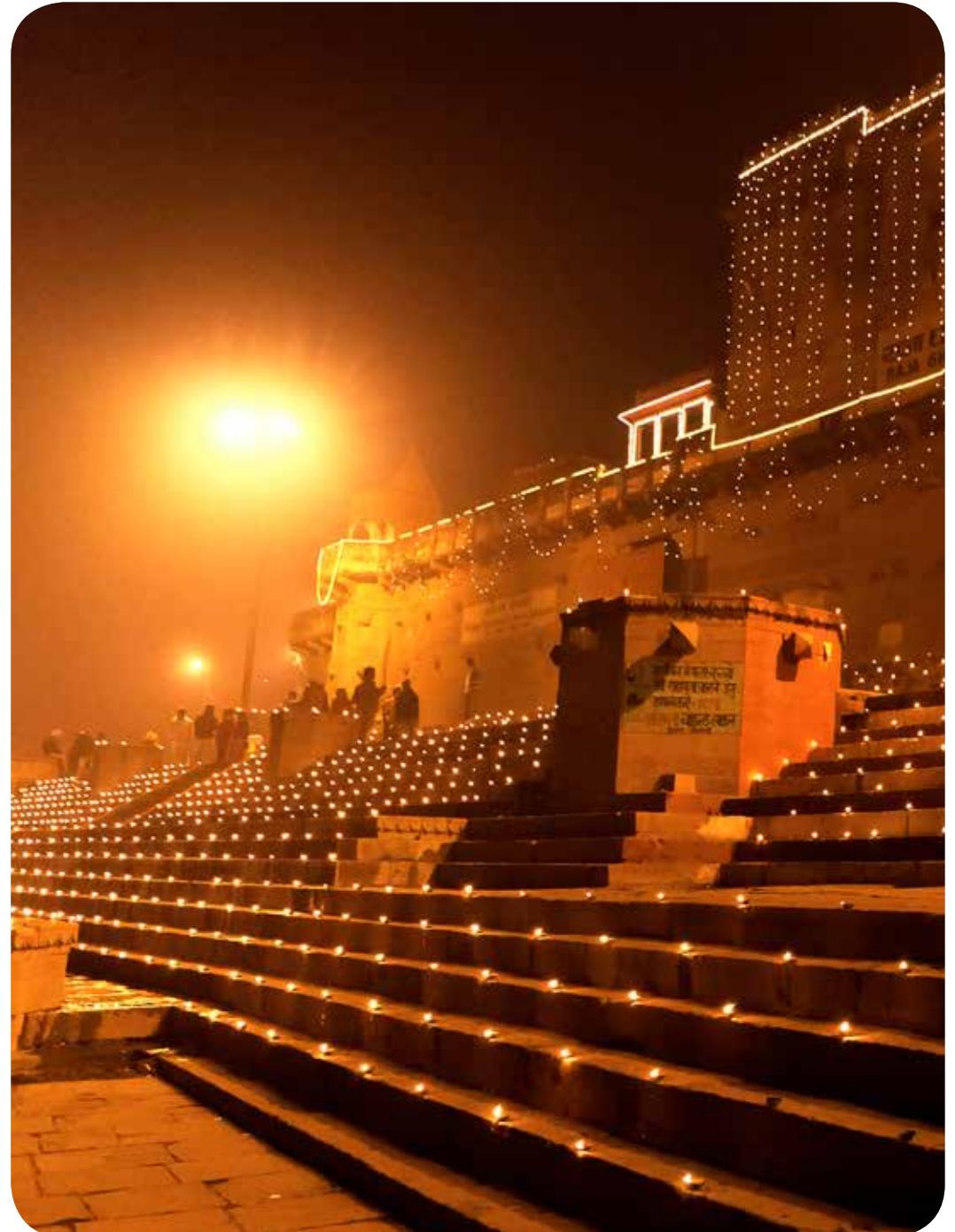
Banaras, Uttar Pradesh

November 22, 2018 / November 12, 2019

Dev Deepavali, which is celebrated every year on Kartik Poornima, falls 15 days after Diwali, and is more like an extended celebration of the biggest festival of India! It is celebrated in Varanasi, which for most travellers is nothing less than a dream destination. The traditional ceremony is an elaborate affair starting with offering prayers to Lord Ganesha, followed by the *deepdaan* or offering the *diyas* (earthen lamps) at each and every ghat while the priests chant vedic mantras in the background. It is magnificent and a sight to behold leaving the visitors spellbound!

This is the day when people celebrate *Tulsi Vivah* which signifies the birthday of Matsya or the fish avatar of Lord Vishnu and that of Vrinda – the representation of the tulsi plant. Also, the Ganga Aarti, performed on the evening of Dev Deepavali is the most elaborately performed one throughout the year! Picture this- devotees taking a holy dip in the river Ganges, a ritual that is believed to help wash off the sins, alongside the ghats with continuous chants and prayers being offered in the backdrop, with beautiful diyas floating in the water and sparkling fireworks decorating the sky. The actual sight is divine and is sure to leave a lasting imprint in everyone's minds.

Don't miss out on visiting this spiritual, peaceful city of lights during the festival of Dev Deepavali and take in the elements culture, tradition, spirituality and inner peace.



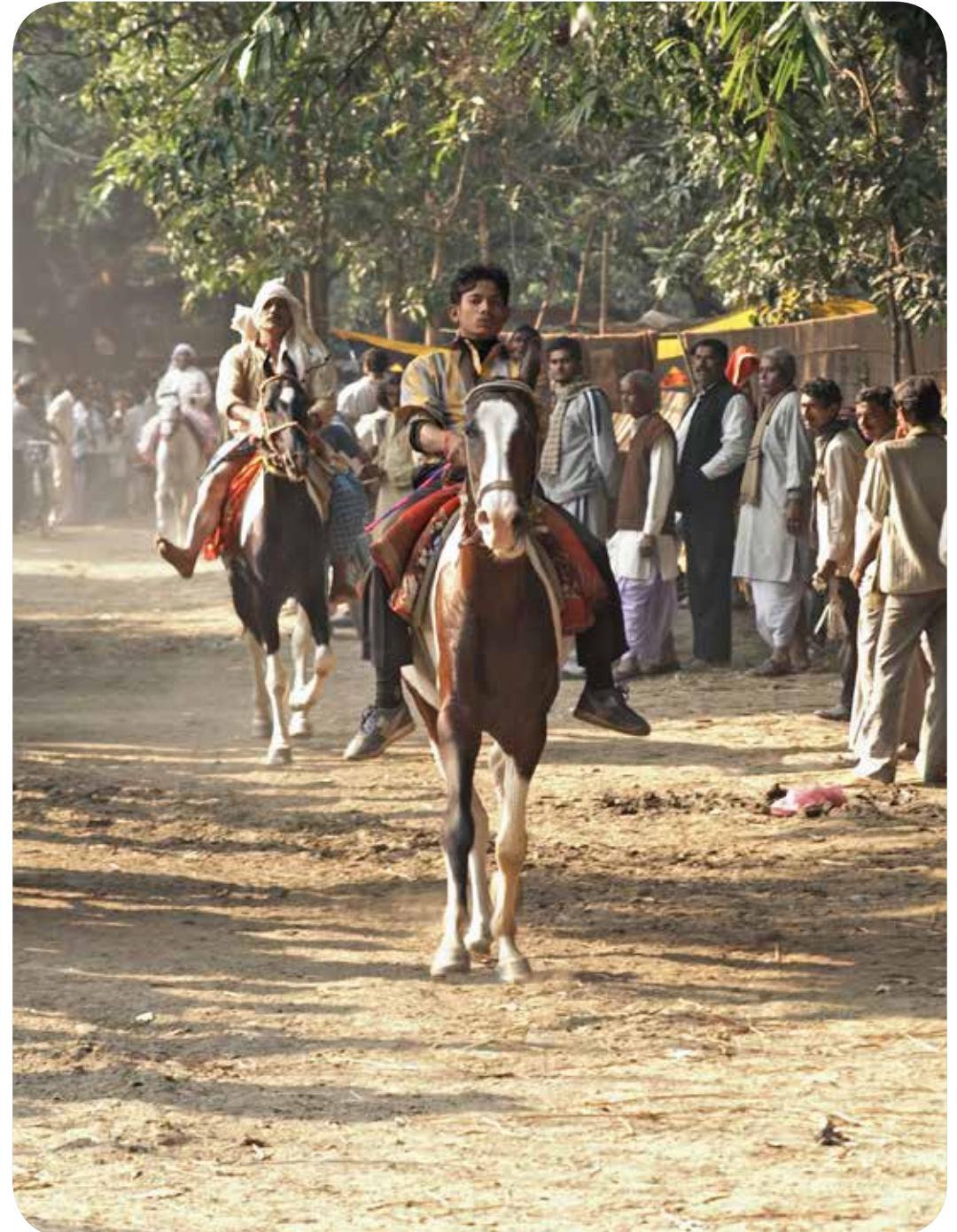
# Sonepur Mela

Saran District, Bihar

To be advised / To be advised

When the moon is in full bloom, shining brightly on the waters where River Ganga and River Gandak meet, some thousands of people, and all kinds of animals and birds flock the grounds of Sonepur, near Patna. The Sonepur Cattle Fair, the biggest cattle fair of Asia, is celebrated on Kartik Poornima (full moon) and continues to attract visitors from all over Asia. It began under the reign of King Chandragupta Maurya (322 B.C.) who used to buy animals from across the River Ganges attracting traders from places as distant as Central Asia. Today, all kinds of animals are on display, from the majestic elephants, baby camels, and horses to donkeys, dogs, buffaloes, and an amazing array of colourful birds. Amidst the symphony of animal noises, excited chatter of people, and booming loudspeakers everywhere, you will find yourself walking on the dusty ground through stalls selling bangles, bags, trinkets, toys, spices, and local eateries.

A thrilling source of entertainment at the fair includes the exhilarating performance at the *Maut ka Kuan* or Well of death. Here bikers and car drivers, interestingly including women, perform deathly stunts in the most bizarre ways possible. You will have to watch this to believe it!



12

## DECEMBER

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01 Hornbill Festival

01 Kumbhalgarh Festival

14 Lumbini Festival

25 Christmas

25 Chennai Music Festival

25 Mamallapuram Dance Festival

27 Rajgir Dance Festival

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

# Hornbill Festival

Kohima, Nagaland

December 01 – 10, 2018 / December 01 – 10, 2019

The earthen colours and a treasure trove of history and culture bring together the Hornbill Festival, celebrating the diversity of customs in warrior tribes of Nagaland. These tribes, traditionally organised, fought each other but came together during World War II to fight against the invading Japanese army. The week long annual fest is named after the colourful bird, Hornbill, which is widely respected and depicted in Naga folklore.

With the longing to revive the rich Naga heritage, all tribes dress in their traditional battle-gear and bring alive the age-old traditions at the heritage village Kisama. It displays delicately carved hutments along with remarkable cultural dances, indigenous sports, paintings and sculptures expressing headhunting, and decorated morungs or unmarried men's communal houses amongst other interesting things. One can hear the melody of the log drums, once used to announce the approach and retreat of an enemy. During the lunar and solar eclipse, it is still beaten to mourn for the sun to rise again.

We will take you to this traditional memorabilia which includes events like adventure car rally, world war peace rally, flower shows and fashion shows, and interesting contests of eating king chilli and pork fat. Indulge your whimsical side with the story tellers at the Hornbill Literature Festival here and as the sun goes down each day, tap your feet and let your body sway to the biggest music fiesta of the country while listening to some eminent as well as budding rock-bands from India.



# Kumbhalgarh Festival

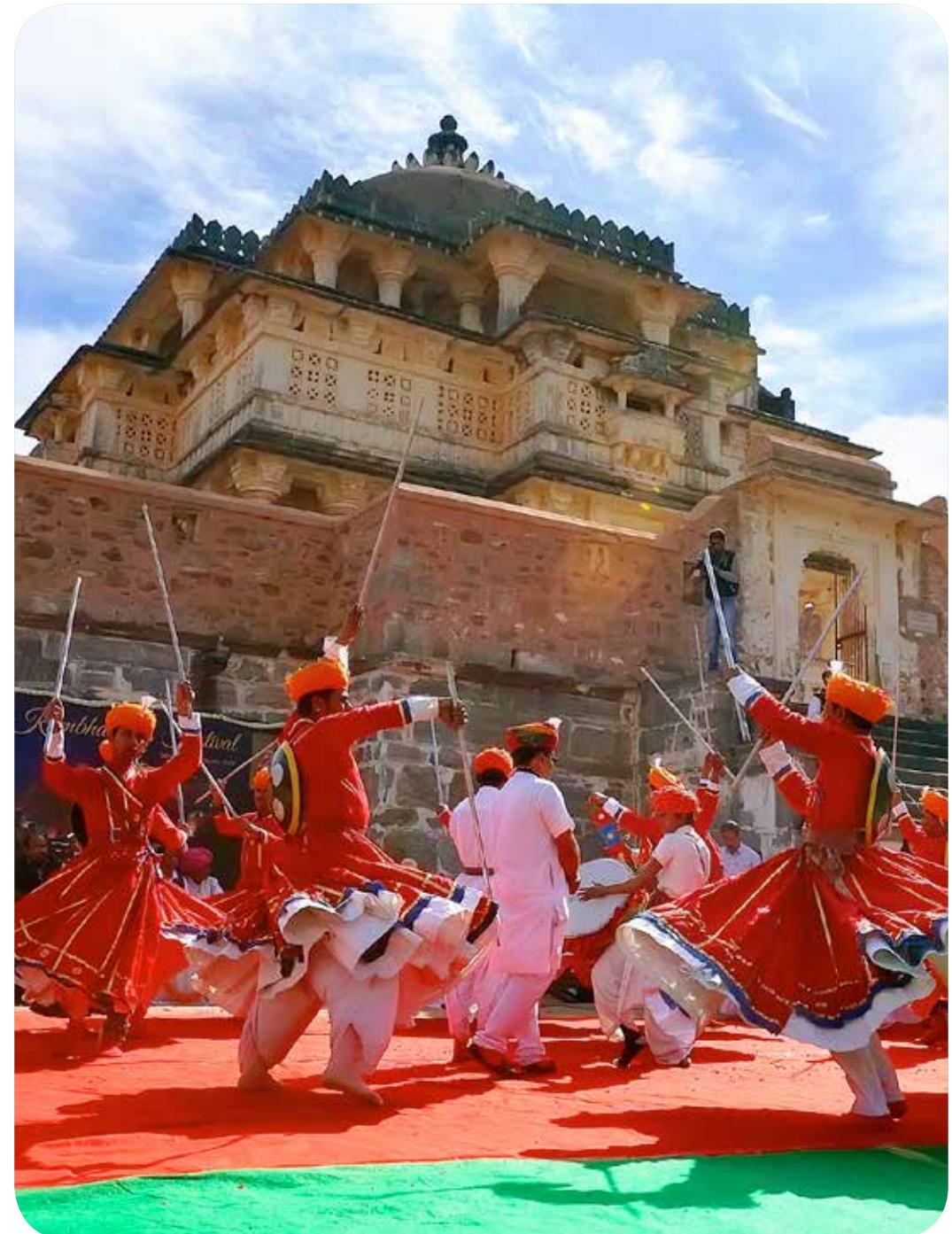
Kumbhalgarh, Rajasthan

December 01 – 03, 2018/ December 01 – 03, 2019

The Kumbhalgarh Classical Dance Festival was started in order to promote tourism in Kumbhalgarh, Rajasthan. The place is named after its creator, Maharana Kumbha, who was a great patron of Indian martial and fine arts, architecture and learning.

The festival brings together India's art forms and the finest artists – musicians, dancers performing classical dance recitals – set against the backdrop of the magnificent citadel. Local artists also get a boost as they deliver the best of their performances, backed with support from world over. Younger audience are also taken care of with organisation of games, such as, the musical chairs and tug of war.

The festival is divided into two parts – day and night. During the day time folk artists of Rajasthan deliver folk performances accompanied with interesting competitions for tourists from archery to *rangoli* and *mehendi*. While the tone and mood of the festival is subtle by the evening, however, the scintillating and bedazzling explosion of sound, light, colour and dance lights up the ambience with a spectacle unseen at Kumbhalgarh, to celebrate the days of Maharana Kumbha.



# Lumbini Festival

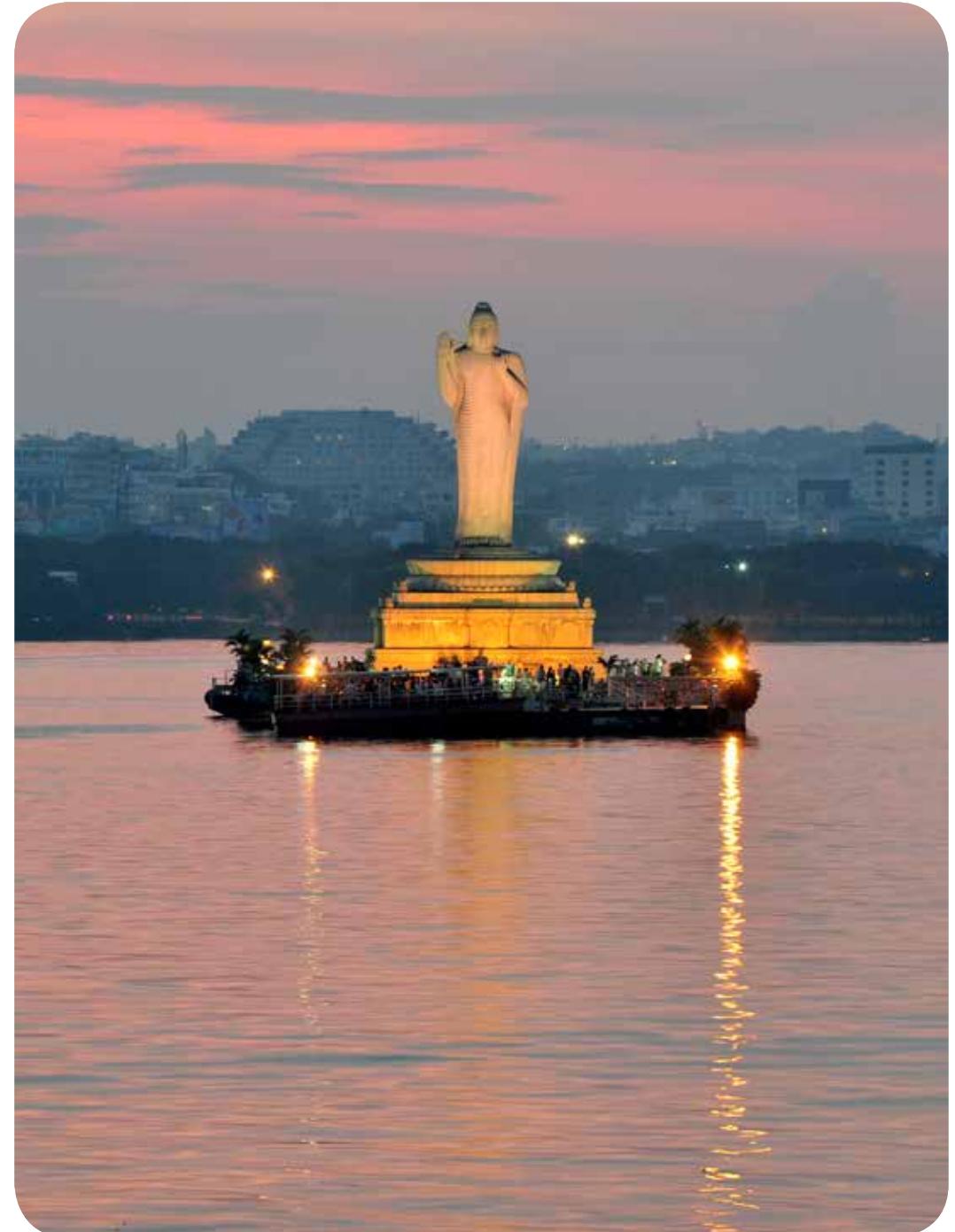
Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh

December 14 – 16, 2018 / To be advised

Lumbini or Lumbini Grove is the birth place of Gautam Buddha, the founder and preacher of Buddhism, and is one of the most important Buddhist pilgrimage sites in the world. The Buddha preached love, serenity, compassion, forbearance, peace, and freedom from all desire – universal messages that are practiced and revered by millions of Buddhists all over the world even today.

2000 years later, the significance, and ancient heritage of Buddhism is honoured every year with the Lumbini Festival, aptly named after the Buddha's birth place. Organised by the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation, the festival is celebrated every year in Nagarjunasagar in Hyderabad, which is the capital city of Telangana, in south India. The festival takes place over three days in the month of December, and especially marks the importance of Buddhism in the state. Remembering and commemorating the simple yet beautiful teachings and philosophy of the Buddha, the festival organises activities, theatre events, plays, music; also making adequate arrangements for the thousands of tourists and pilgrims who come from all over India and the world to attend it with great faith.

The entire Nagarjunasagar Dam is specially illuminated during the festival. Festivities take place with great grandeur and joy. The three day celebration is also a chance for local painters, artisans, craftspeople, and sculptors to showcase their skills. The exquisite works on display here not only represent outstanding workmanship but also take visitors back in time – into ancient Buddhist history; to an era of great peace and prosperity.



# Christmas

## All over India

### December 25, 2018/ December 25, 2019

Christians across India celebrate their faith and hope on 25 December with Christmas – the festival that marks the birth of Jesus Christ.

Called 'Bada Din' (Big Day) in Hindi, Christmas is a national holiday in India. Even people of other faiths join their Christian friends to celebrate the festival.

Church services play a big role in the celebration. Preparations typically start on Advent Sunday. Churches start planning their celebrations and masses, and families start preparing weeks in advance.

Traditionally decorated Christmas trees, giant stars, fairy lights, streamers, flowers, and paper lanterns adorn homes and streets, welcoming all at Christmas time.

Beautifully decorated Christmas cribs hold nativity statues of baby Jesus and others.

Carolling processions on streets and singing in homes is a lovely sight on Christmas Eve. But the most enduring and memorable tradition of Christmas Eve is the Midnight Mass. Churches start their services with carol singing, after which the Mass is held. After the service, everyone socialises; feasting together, and wishing each other a Merry Christmas.

On Christmas morning, churches hold mass; families and friends enjoy Christmas lunches and dinners; celebrating the end of another wonderful year and the beginning of the New Year.



# Chennai Music Festival

Chennai, Tamil Nadu

December 25 – Onwards, 2018/

December 25 – Onwards, 2019

Spanning into an extravagant event of six weeks, the Chennai Music Festival, more popularly known as the ‘Madras Music Season’, is held from mid-December to mid-January at various venues in Chennai. The music festival is a grandiose event that showcases a number of grand and small Carnatic music concerts. Not just music – vocal and instrumental but performances in the field of dance, both solo and group are also held. Eminent Indian and international artists grace the festival with their presence. It is a mixture of experienced artists as well as the artists who are looking for a chance to perform with these experienced personalities. The festival was started in 1927 by a group of individuals who later established the Madras Music Academy. Apart from auditoriums, temples and heritage bungalows are also used as venues for the event.

Musical instruments, such as, flutes, *veena*, *goottuvadyam* (similar to Veena but without frets), *nagaswaram* (pipe), *thavil* (percussion instrument), *mridangam* (drum), and even *ghatam* (a mud pot), take the centre stage in the Madras Music Festival. Right after this month long celebration of music, the stage shifts to a place near Tanjore called Tiruvaiyaru. Here, a weeklong music festival begins to celebrate the birth of Thyagaraja, who is regarded as one of the greatest Carnatic music composers.

The favourable weather conditions during this season attract a huge number of tourists. Considered to be the largest music festival in the world, almost 1500 individual renowned and amateur artists are spotted performing during the festival.



# Mamallapuram Dance Festival

Mamallapuram, Tamil Nadu

December 25, 2018 – January 15, 2019/

December 25, 2019 – January 15, 2020

Once the ancient seaport of the mighty Pallava dynasty, Mamallapuram (earlier called Mahabalipuram) in Tamil Nadu, south India, was also renowned as the centre for Pallava art and culture. It is now world famous for its exquisite shore temples, built during the reign of the Pallava King Narasimhavarman, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE. The UNESCO World Heritage listed temples and monuments stand solidly beautiful, facing the sea.

It is against the magnificent backdrop of these monuments and the outstanding monolithic rock sculptures, that the Mamallapuram Dance Festival is held every year. The four week long dance festival, held during December-January, is organised by the Department of Tourism, Government of Tamil Nadu.

Paying tribute to Tamil Nadu's rich and ancient heritage of music, dance, art, and culture, the vibrant Mamallapuram Dance Festival also celebrates different dance forms from all over India. Renowned exponents of the classical dance forms of Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Kathak, Odissi, Mohini Attam, and Kathakali perform here during the festival. Folk dances are also performed at the festival.

The stage for the dancers is Arjuna's penance, a stunning bass-relief sculpted on the face of two enormous adjacent rocks. The monolithic rock sculptures provide an amazing backdrop. This remarkable natural open-air stage was created about thirteen centuries ago. Dancers, dance lovers, and tourists from all over the world come to Mamallapuram to watch the finest dancers of India perform on this stage under open skies. The ambience is one of an ancient open-air theatre next to the sea!



# Rajgir Dance Festival

Rajgir, Bihar

December 27 – 29, 2018/ To be advised

Lord Buddha and Lord Mahavir are considered equally sacred in the ancient capital of the Magadhan Empire in Bihar – Rajgir. Due to the association with Lord Buddha and Lord Mahavir, Rajgir is considered to be a centre for pilgrimage and holds an immense historical importance along with being a popular tourist destination.

The Rajgir Dance Festival takes place every year in the last week of October and brings forward an array of entertainment in the field of music as well as other forms of entertainment. Instrumental music, opera, folk dance, ballet and many different schools of classical dance and music, create their own magic and an almost heavenly experience during the festival. Unusually colourful and full of life, the Department of Tourism, Bihar holds this festival with an aim to encourage the distinct folk and classical cultures of India to come forward on a common platform.

Nothing less than a carnival of dance and music, the Rajgir Dance Festival has not just attracted tourists and performers from all over the country but even famous celebrities have often made their presence felt here. This event fills up the entire place with creative energy and the performers look forward to perform in this joyous event primarily because the Rajgir Dance Festival is seen as a platform where the legacy of Indian dance and music is taken to new heights each year.

