

FESTIVALS IN INDIA & THE SUBCONTINENT

The colorful mosaic of Indian festivals and fairs - as diverse as the land, is an eternal expression of the spirit of celebration. Every season brings along new festivals, each a true celebration of the bounties of the rich traditions followed since time immemorial. Observed with enthusiasm and gaiety, festivals are a time for prayer, pageantry and procession – a time to rejoice.

FESTIVAL	LOCATION	MONTH	DESCRIPTION
Camel Festival	Bikaner, Rajasthan	January	The festival begins with a colorful procession of bedecked camels against the red sandstone backdrop of the Junagarh Fort. The festivity advances to the open sand-spreads of the grounds, followed by the best breed competition, the tug-of-war contest, camel dance, acrobatics, etc.
Hampi Mahotsava	Hampi, Karnataka	January	This festival is a celebration of traditional music, dance, theatre and other artistic performances. Attractions include puppet shows to flamboyant parades. Finishing each day with a fireworks display, this is a lively event that attracts visitors from all over.
Desert Festival	Jaisalmer, Rajasthan	February	A 3-day long extravaganza of color, music and festivity. Fire dancers swaying to traditional tunes, a turban-tying competition and a Mr. Desert contest are part of the fun and frolic. Camel rides and folk dances at the sand dunes are an added attraction.
Nagaur Cattle Fair	Nagaur, Rajasthan	February	Nagaur bustles with life during the annual cattle fair - one of the largest in India. The Nagaur bulls are renowned for their fleet footedness and attract buyers from all over. Exciting games, tug of war and camel races create a joyful atmosphere.
Khajuraho Dance Festival	Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh	February	This week-long festival is a celebration of the cultural heritage of Khajuraho amid the backdrop of Western group of temples. It highlights the richness of the various Indian classical dance styles.
Holi	All over India	March	This popular festival of colors is celebrated during spring and embodies all the festivity, liveliness and exuberance of the season. Spraying colors, dancing on traditional Holi songs, rhythmic drum beats and wild processions are the highlights of this festival.
Elephant Festival	Jaipur, Rajasthan	March	The Elephant Festival is a unique event where elephants are groomed to perfection – glittering in gold! There are elephant processions, races and the regal game of Polo. Prizes are given for the most beautifully decorated elephant.
Hemis Festival	Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir	June	This colorful festival commemorates the birth of Guru Padmasambhava – founder of Tantric Buddhism in Tibet. It is held at Hemis Gompa – a monastery with links to the Ladakhi Royal Family. Dressed in dramatic red robes and tunics and blasting out tunes on large horns, the monks make this festival an incredible spectacle.
Onam	Kerala	September	Kerala's most important festival is marked with elephant processions, Kathakali dances, fireworks and water carnivals. A major attraction is the famed snake boat races along the backwaters at Champakulam, Aranmula and Kottayam.
Navratri	Gujarat	October	Navratri is a festival of worshipping Goddess Durga – celebrated with dance and music over nine nights. Gujaratis perform their traditional dances; the women-folk dance in a circle, singing 'Garbas' and Dandiya-Raas is played with wooden sticks.
Dussera	All over India	October	Dussera symbolizes the triumph of good over evil. 'Ramlila' – an enactment of the life of Lord Rama, is held during the nine days preceding Dussera. Larger than life effigies of Ravana, his son and brother, Meghnath and Kumbhakarna, are set alight on the day tenth day.
Pushkar Cattle Fair	Pushkar, Rajasthan	November	Pushkar is transformed into a spectacular fair ground for twelve days as it hosts the largest cattle fair in the world. Trading of cattle, camel races and dazzling displays of bangles, brassware, clothes, camel saddles and halters, folk entertainment are the major attractions.
Diwali	All over India	November	This festival of lights is one of the most lively and colorful festivals in India. The flickering lights of the traditional clay lamps or 'diyas' illuminate houses and fireworks resound through the night. Exchanging of gifts and sweets among friends is an integral part of the celebrations.
Festivals in Bhutan	In Bhutan, in addition to the standard Buddhist festivals, there are yearly festivals celebrated with great fanfare in each district. The most renowned annual festival in Bhutan is the Tshechu, an event honoring Guru Rinpoche through religious dances. The dates and duration of the Tshechu festivals vary among dzongkhags (districts) but they always fall on or around the 10th day of the month in the Bhutanese calendar.		
Festivals in Nepal	For the Nepalese, festivals are not merely the annual spectacles, but also are a living part of their rich cultural heritage, binding together people of diverse cultural backgrounds and beliefs. Most Nepalese festivals are related to different Hindu and Buddhist gods and goddesses and they are celebrated on such days consecrated for them by religion and tradition.		
Festivals in Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka's deep-rooted and ancient civilization endows the island with a legacy of colorful ethnic and religious festivals, relating to the Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian religions. Some of the popular festivals are the Navam Maha Perahara held in Colombo in February and the Kandy Perahara held in August in Kandy.		
Festivals in Tibet	The colorful and exotic Tibetan Festivals are spread throughout the year and are often rituals, farming events, commemorations or social gatherings which reflect the historical roots of the Tibetan ethnic people, their religious belief and closeness to nature.		