

Festivals of India - January 2011

Camel Fair

When: 18 - 19 January 2011

Where: Bikaner, Rajasthan

The Camel Festival is an event organized in Bikaner by the Department of Tourism, Art and Culture, Government of Rajasthan, every year in the month of January.

The festival starts with the procession of beautifully decorated camels. Colorful bridles, bejeweled necks, jingling anklets and long, lanky camel shadows on dusky sands, cast a magical spell.

On the second day, the fleetest camels of the region take part in the camel races. The competition is fierce as the best camels vie for the honors. Thousands of excited tourists and locals cheer the favorites.



On both days, the evening ends with a rendezvous with the renowned folk artists of Rajasthan. The jubilant, skirt swirling dances, the awe inspiring fire dances and many other equally interesting performances entertain the visitors. The grand finale is a magnificent display of fireworks which illuminates the desert city of Bikaner.

Shiva Temple Festival

When: 11 -19 January 2011

Where: Kochi, Kerala

This festival takes place at the Shiva Temple and Durbar Hall Ground, famous for its ten elephant parade and host of cultural activities. The last day of the festival, Pakalpooram, is famous for its traditional Kerala percussion ensemble, a huge display of fireworks and a 21 gun salute by the Indian Navy and Kerala Police.



Kite Festival

When: 14 January 2011

Where: Jaipur, Rajasthan

14 January is celebrated in India as Makar Sankranti - heralding the transition of the sun into the Northern hemisphere. It is also a big kite day in most parts of India when children from 6 to 60 can be seen with their heads turned to the sky. In Jaipur kites virtually blot out the sky.

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The three-day festival starts with an inauguration at the Polo Ground, which is the venue for some serious kite flying and fighting for the three days of the festival.

The festival is divided into two sections. One is the Fighter Kite Competition and

the other is the more sober Display Flying and there are prestigious trophies to be won in both categories. Every evening participants are provided with dinner at an exotic location.

On the final day the venue of the festival shifts to the exquisite lawns of the Umaid Bhawan Palace, the royal residence of the Maharaja of Jodhpur. The finals of the Fighter Kite Competition and the final judging of the Display Kites are followed by the prize distribution ceremony, the valedictory function, and a farewell dinner with the Maharaja.

Thaipusam

When: 16 - 20 January 2011

Where: Tamil Nadu

Thaipusam is one of the most important Tamil festivals and is observed in the Tamil Month Thai. Pongal takes its name from the famous traditional Tamilian food of the same name and is



dedicated to Lord Surya or the Sun God. The present Tamil Nadu government has also made Thai Pongal the Tamil New Year day.

It is the auspicious day when the Sun enters the Makara Rasi and heralds the arrival of the spring.

Thai Pongal is a four day festival. The most important event on the day is the cooking of Pongal dish, which is done during the auspicious moment when the Thai month begins. The Pongal is prepared in a fresh earthen vessel, which is adorned with flowers, turmeric leaves and roots.

Music & Dance Festival

When: December - January 2011

Where: Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Chennai music and dance festival is a celebration of classical music and dance of South India (Carnatic Music) held during mid December to mid January in the capital city of Chennai. The festival is held at a number of venues around the city by various sabhas or organizations.

The 'Margazhi festival of dance and music' started early back in 1927, to commemorate the anniversary of Madras Music Academy every December was later adopted by various organizations which held



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art festivals in different parts of the city.

The city comes alive with the festival which has now developed into a cultural extravaganza with more than 2000 participants. Performances include Vocal and Instrumental music, Dance - solo and group, both by junior and senior artists. Even upcoming artists get a chance to perform along with well-established artists

Jallikattu Bull Fight

When: 20 January 2011

Where: Tamil Nadu

On the 4th day, Kanya Pongal, colored balls of the pongal are made and are offered to birds. A kind of bull-fight, called the 'Jallikattu' is held in Madurai, Tiruchirapalli and Tanjore in Tamil Nadu and several places in Andhra Pradesh. Bundles containing money are tied to the horns of ferocious bulls, and unarmed villagers try to wrest the bundles from them. Bullock cart races and cock-fights are also held. In Andhra Pradesh, every household displays its collection of dolls for three days. Community meals are held at night with freshly harvested ingredients.



SUGGESTED

South India

ITINERARY:

Day 1: Fly to Chennai

Day 2: Chennai – Arrive and transfer to your hotel

Day 3: Chennai: City tour

Day 4: Chennai - Excursion to Kanchipuram & Mahabalipuram

Day 5: Chennai/Madurai - Fly to Madurai

Day 6: Madurai: Explore the Chettinad region

Day 7: Madurai / Periyar – Drive to Periyar Wildlife sanctuary

Day 8: Periyar/Kumarakom – Visit the spice plantation in the morning. Drive to Kumarakom (5 hours)

Day 9: Kumarakom – At leisure

Day 10: Kumarakom/Cochin – 3 hours backwater cruise with lunch to Alleppy and then 1 hour drive to Cochin

Day 11: Cochin – Tour of Fort Cochin. Afternoon at leisure

Day 12: Fly home via Mumbai or Chennai

