

FESTIVALS IN KERALA

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Abstract

Kerala is sandwiched between the Lakshadweep sea and the western Ghats. It is a bustling little green and silver, coconuts and water state on the west coast of India. Every district in Kerala has its own unique culture and characteristics. Kerala is land of colourful festivals, which have a long history and traditions behind them. Kerala's innumerable festivals however stand out because of their uniqueness. The fairs and festivals of Kerala, South India are an expression of the deep traditional and cultural roots, religious beliefs and the underlying spirit that have cascaded down the generations and are still alive in the hearts and minds of the people of Kerala.

Keywords: Kerala, Culture, Festival, Onam

Kerala is sandwiched between the Lakshadweep sea and the western Ghats. It is a bustling little green and silver, coconuts and water state on the west coast of India. It is bounded by Karnataka to the north, Tamil Nadu to the east and the Arabian Sea to the west.

Every district in Kerala has its own unique culture and characteristics. Thiruvananthapuram is known for its beach Kovalam, the Sri Padmanabhaswamy temple and various museums and palaces, Alapuzha for its backwaters, Kottayam for its ancient churches, and Thrissur-the cultural capital.

The phrase "God's own country" is perhaps the most apt way of describing Kerala. Kerala with its crisp and fresh air, its absolutely pure and green environs and the nature trails that take to a strikingly beautiful world, as though God picked up his painting brush and palette and created this wonderful and soothing painting for you to realize and appreciate the fact that Life is beautiful. Coconut pieces are served with Tasty kadala curry and fish curry. Appam are soft pancakes made out of rice and coconut milk and served with the Kerala chicken stew, while iddiappams are noodle like rice cake served with sweet coconut milk or vegetable stew. Other specialties of Kerala cuisine are sadya, karimeen pollichathu, fish moilee and malabar biriyani'. Sadya and malabar biriyani are widely enjoyed and are hot favorites for tourists visiting Kerala. Sadya is mainly prepared for marriages and festivals and comprises as many as 40 vegetarian items. Its unique characteristic is that it is served on

a plantain leaf. Malabar biriyani is the fried rice mixed with spicy meat, chicken, fish or prawn and topped with hot spices. Dosa and idly are also commonly enjoyed in Kerala

Festivals in Kerala

Kerala is land of colourful festivals, which have a long history and traditions behind them. Kerala's innumerable festivals however stand out because of their uniqueness. The fairs and festivals of Kerala, South India are an expression of the deep traditional and cultural roots, religious beliefs and the underlying spirit that have cascaded down the generations and are still alive in the hearts and minds of the people of Kerala. India is known for her festivals. Kerala celebrates a number of festivals almost all through the year though they occur in a quicker succession in one part of the year than the other.

Christmas, Easter, Good Friday are celebrated with much fanfare by the Christian community here and the exchange of greeting and wishes among the Christians and their Hindu and Muslim brethren is a common sight. Muslims, have their heyday during Bakrid and Ramadsan. The air is filled with serenity as they observe fasting during Ramadsan month. The celebrations are coupled with piety and society. Warm greeting exchange kind hearts regardless of religion or caste.

Hindus make merry of number of festivals. Apart from the functions like Diwali, Dasara etc which are celebrated with equal pomp and show throughout the nation and with hearty greeting, gifts and wishes being conveyed among kith and tins and to the friends belonging to other religions, with equal zest, there are a few unique to the state.

Onam

This is celebrated in the month of August-September. It commemorates the region of the legendary king Mahabali in the Hindu mythology. It is obviously celebrated with enthalling pomp and show.

Attukal pongala

The Attukkal Bhagavati Temple dedicated to the Goddess Bhagavati temple dedicated to the Goddess Bhagavati is situated in Thirvanathapuram city. The name 'Pongala' means to 'boil over and refers to the ritualistic offering of porridge made of rice, sweet brown molasses, coconut gratings, nuts and raisins.

Kodungallor Bharani

Kodungallor, 50km north of Kochi, was the ancient port town of Muziris of Cranganore. Goddess Bhagavathi is the presiding deity of the ancient temple here. The Bharani festival, which falls in the Malayalam month of Meenam (March/April) attracts the largest congregation of 'velichappadu' including women from different parts of the state.

Vishu

Falls on the first day of malayalam month madam (april) which is the astronomical new year when the sun crosses the equator. Though vishu is identified with hindus religious beliefs, it is not in any way a religious festival. As per popular belief, the first thing people see on vishu, the 'vishukani' is decisive to the year's become a ritual arrangement of auspicious articles like raw rice, fresh line, golden cucumber, betel leaves, arecanut, metal mirror, the yellow flower konna and a holy text coins, in a bell metal vessel called uruli. A lighted bell metal lamp called nilavilakku is also placed alongside.

Aranmula Uthraittathi

It is a special festival that is held in Aranmula in Kerala, is celebrated with a lot of good spirit and enthusiasm. Snake boat races that mark the celebrations are the main attraction of the Aranmula uthraittathi festival.

UTSAVAM:THE KERALA ARTS FESTIVAL

"Utsavam", Kerala tourism's latest venture is much more than an initiative aimed marketing the destination among tourists. It is part of a grand plan to revive art forms that are fast vanishing, revitalize the unsung artist who have dedicated themselves to perfecting their vocation and open up Kerala's wealth of art forms not just for the visitors but also for every keralite to discover.

A first of its kind venture in the country, Utsavam was officially inaugurated by Mr. Kodyeri Balakrishnan, vigilance and tourism at a colourful ceremony held at Bekal on November 19, 2007. This unique cultural festival is being organized with the support of the government and the local community. The district tourism promotion councils are the executing agencies for the event that ensures the participation of the local bodies, non-governmental organizations, tourism clubs and youth clubs which were involved in the selection of the art forms and venues. The state has fostered a variety of art forms and its dance, music, folk arts, temples arts and rituals have enriched the cultural heritage of India and have always fascinated and intrigued people the world over. Apart from well-known classical art forms like kathakali, mohiniyattam, nangiarkoothu and koodiyattam, Utsavam throws light on several lesser-known folk art forms of the state like kolanthullal, poorakalli, kuruvarkalli, kaikottikali, kummi, Thopavakkothu, Parichamuttukali, pavakathakali, paakanaar thullal etc.

The stages have been arranged mostly at the tourism sports in the state. There are four venues in Thiruvananthapuram, three each in Kottayam, Ernakulam, Thrissur, palakkad, Malappuram and Kannur and two each in Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Idukki, Kozhikode, Wayanad and Kasargod districts. Utsavam is in many ways a celebration of God's own country and a reaffirmation of the fact that, tourism for Kerala is not just a tool for enhancing the economy.

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