

India Festival Calendar Guide

A practical overview of India's major festivals and how they shape travel — what to expect, what changes, and how to plan a trip around the calendar.

WHY THIS GUIDE

India's festival calendar is rich but largely lunar and regional, which makes exact dates shift every year and vary by state — most travel guides either skip this complexity or bury it in confusing detail. This guide gives you the planning framework without claiming false precision on dates.

MAJOR FESTIVALS & WHAT THEY INVOLVE

These are some of the most significant celebrations travelers are likely to encounter, though regional and local festivals run year-round.

- Diwali — the festival of lights, marked by lamps, fireworks and family gatherings, typically falling in autumn
- Holi — the festival of colors, with public color-throwing and water play, typically falling in early spring
- Navratri/Durga Puja — multi-day celebrations of the divine feminine, with elaborate processions and pandals especially prominent in eastern India
- Eid celebrations — major Islamic festivals observed widely, with community gatherings and festive meals
- Regional harvest festivals — celebrated under different names across states, often involving specific foods, dances and rituals
- Republic Day and Independence Day — national civic holidays with parades and public events in major cities

Most Hindu festival dates follow the lunar calendar and shift each year — always confirm exact dates for your travel year closer to booking.

WHAT CHANGES DURING FESTIVAL SEASON

- Hotel and train availability tightens significantly around major festivals — book well ahead
- Many businesses, government offices and some tourist sites close or operate reduced hours on major festival days
- Cities can feel both more vibrant and more crowded — processions and gatherings may affect traffic and walkability
- Prices for accommodation and transport often rise in the days immediately around big festivals
- Some festivals (like Holi) involve public participation that affects what you wear and how you move around that day
- Air quality and noise levels can increase during fireworks-heavy festivals like Diwali

BOOKING AROUND FESTIVALS

- Decide early whether you want to experience a festival directly or avoid the crowds — both are valid trip designs
- If attending, book accommodation in the festival city itself months ahead, not just for the festival day but the days around it

- If avoiding crowds, consider a region not central to that particular festival's celebrations
- Build flexibility into transport bookings around festival dates, as schedules can be disrupted or in higher demand
- Ask your hotel about any festival-specific events or closures that might affect your planned activities
- Check the lunar-calendar-based date for your specific travel year before finalizing any festival-timed trip