

Le Passage
to India

Festivals Calendar

2025 & 2026

Nepal

Discover the breathtaking Himalayan kingdom of Nepal, the Abode of Mt. Everest, as we highlight major festival celebrations of this mystical country through this desk calendar. The people of Nepal are deeply immersed in their traditional religious beliefs and life seems to be one big festival, which must be celebrated with great enthusiasm and fervour round the year.


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


1 JANUARY 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

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2 FEBRUARY 2025

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26 Maha Shivratri

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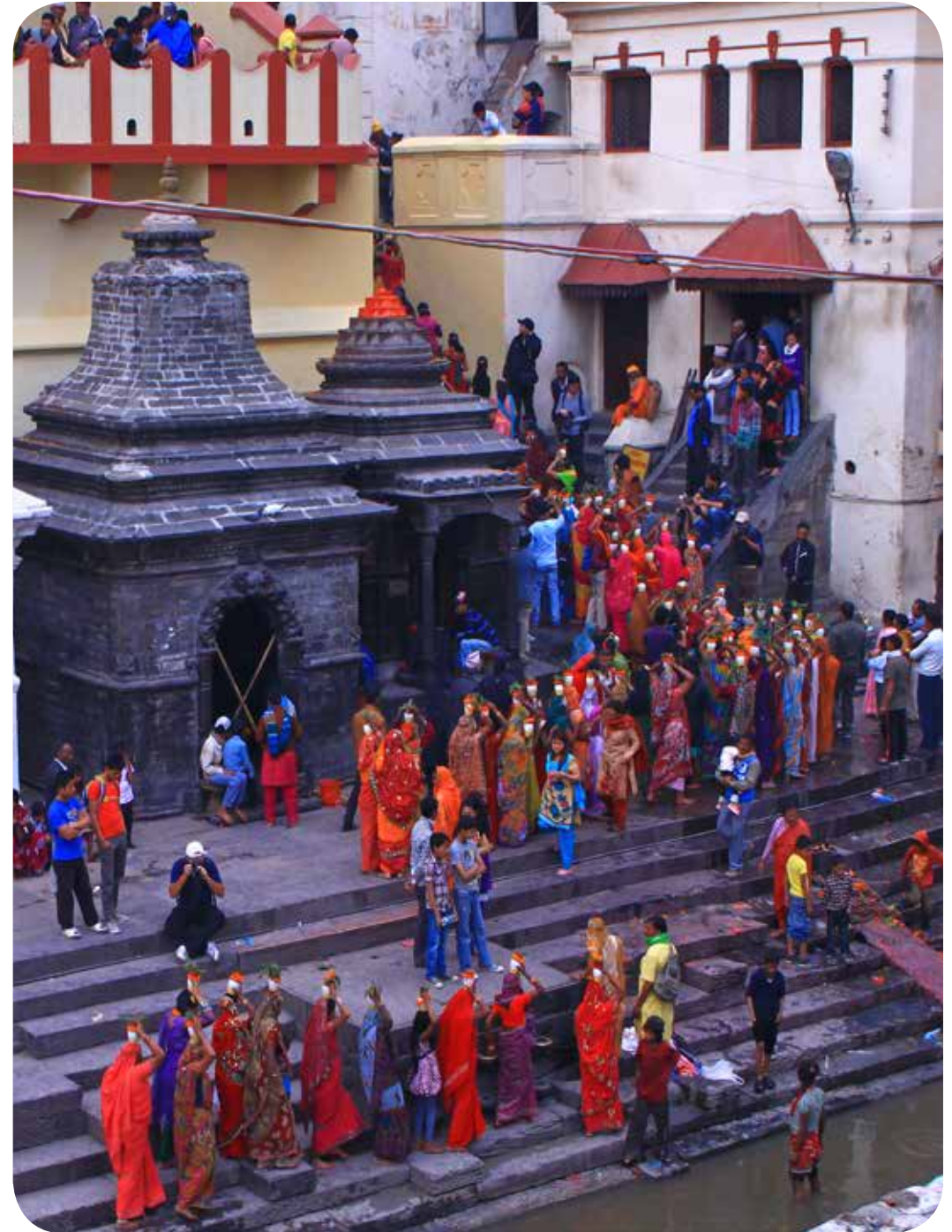
Shivaratri

Pashupatinath Temple

February 26, 2025/ To be advised

Maha Shivaratri or 'Night of Shiva', symbolic of the union of Shiva (yin or male energy) and *Shakti* (yang or female energy) falls on the 14th day of the month of *Magha* (as per the Hindu lunar calendar) in the *Krishna Paksha* (the dark phase of the month when the moon is on the wane). It is believed that the Universe throbs with high levels of powerful spiritual energy on this night caused by the fortuitous planetary alignment in the Northern Hemisphere, which makes it most beneficial for meditation and mantra chanting. It is also believed that this is when Lord Shiva performed the *Tandav* (the divine cosmic dance of creation and destruction).

Kathmandu's Pashupatinath Temple is one of the holiest Hindu shrines dedicated to Lord Shiva (believed to be the guardian and protector of Nepal) and held in deepest reverence. Devotees, holy men and naked ash-smeared *sadhus* (ascetics) congregate here in multitudes on Maha Shivaratri as chants of 'Om Namah Shivaya' and 'Mahamrityunjaya Mantra' (mantras seeking the removal of ignorance or darkness and prayer for enlightenment) ring out in unison throughout the 4 phases (*prahars*) of the night. Special arrangements for *puja* (prayer) and *darshan* (paying obeisance) are made on this occasion.



3 MARCH 2025

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14 Holi

JANUARY

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DECEMBER

Holi

Nationwide

March 14, 2025/ To be advised

Celebrate the spirit of the mountain kingdom with Holi, the robust and vibrant Hindu festival of colours. Plan your Everest Base Camp trip to coincide with Holi, which officially flags off the advent of spring. A night before, bonfires are lit to uphold the victory of good over evil (*Holika dahan*: as per the legend, the demoness Holika perished in a rite of fire). The next morning, people smear *abeer* and *gulal* (red-coloured powder), squirt coloured water with *pichkaris* (water guns) and throw water-filled balloons on each other, amidst much merriment and cheer. Earlier, natural dyes, turmeric, sandalwood or *ittar* (perfume) and rose petals were used to greet each other.

Celebrations include the customary consumption of *bhang* (marijuana) with *lassai* (green paste made of herbs, milk and clarified butter) or *thandai* (sweet drink made of almonds and milk) and *gujiya* (sweet dumplings stuffed with dry fruits and milk reduction). People dress up in white which accentuates the colours they are smeared with. There's plenty of song and dance in the streets. If you're out on the streets (late morning up to late afternoon is the best time), your clothes are likely to get dirty! Also, cameras are safe in waterproof bags during this time.



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APRIL 2025

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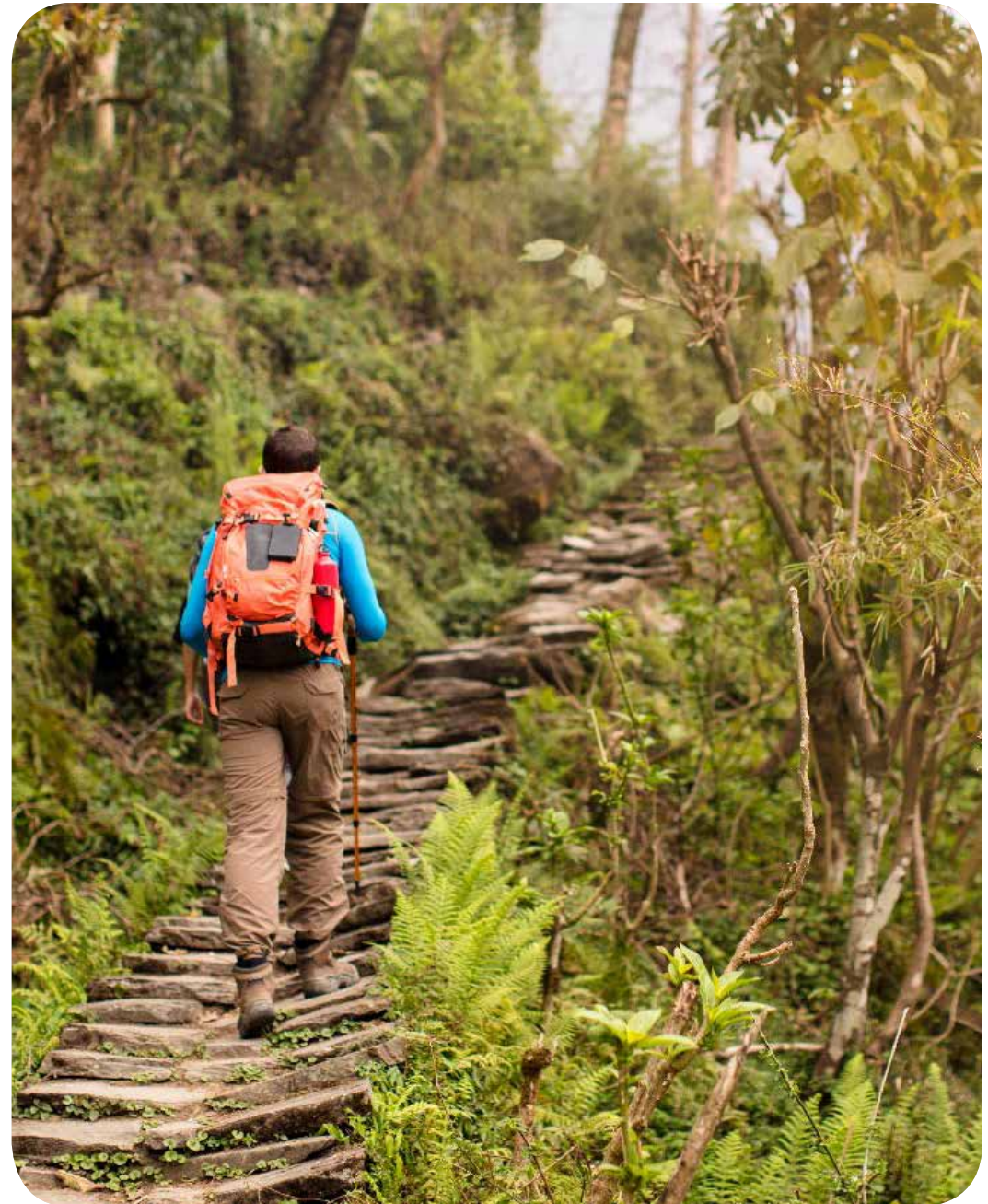
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14 Bisket Jatra (Nepali New Year)

JANUARY

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DECEMBER

Bisket Jatra (Nepali New Year)

Bhaktapur

April 14, 2025/ April 14, 2026

Bisket Jatra (or *Navavarsha*, literally meaning 'new year') is celebrated with great pomp and splendor at Bhaktapur Durbar Square, though it is also celebrated in smaller towns with a slight difference in the rituals. Images and idols of Lord *Bhairab* are carried out in a huge wooden chariot pulled by thick ropes by hundreds of devotees in a ceremonial procession, to nearby Khalna Tole where a tug of war ensues between the easterners and westerners (people from east and west part of town). A huge *Yoh si* or *lingam* (sacred phallic symbol) about 25 m high is erected at Khalna Tole, with a *yoni* (sacred female genital symbol) built in stone as its base. This pole-like structure is then pulled down the next evening after another tug of war, and as the pole falls to the ground, the new year is officially flagged off.

Celebrations in Timi village are marked by a parade of images of gods, with villagers throwing vermilion powder (called *sindoor jatra*) as the parade passes through. In Bode village, a chosen villager roams the streets all day with an iron spike piercing his tongue, carrying a lit torch, in a procession.



5 MAY 2025

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12 Buddha Jayanti

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DECEMBER

Buddha Jayanti

Nationwide

May 12, 2025/ To be advised

Buddha Jayanti (Buddha Purnima and Swanya Punhi) is a celebration of the three most significant events of the Buddha's life: his birth, his death and the day he attained *nirvana* (enlightenment), all of which fall on the same day. Buddha was born in Lumbini, Nepal in 543 BC, on a full moon day (*purnima*) of the month of *Baisakh* (as per the Hindu calendar).

Buddha Purnima celebrations are centred at Swayambhunath Stupa (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), a deeply revered sacred Buddhist shrine at Kathmandu. Devotees throng here to practice ritual circumambulation of the shrine and offer prayers with butter lamps, flowers, rice and coins as offerings. Religious paintings on scrolls of silk (*Pabha*) and images and idols of the Buddha are displayed at prominent temples and monasteries.

At Boudhanath Stupa (another world heritage site in Kathmandu), a procession is carried out with Buddha's statue mounted on an elephant, which visits Chabahil, another Buddhist Stupa. Stupas are painted with saffron- coloured lotus petals (symbolic of enlightenment).

Buddha's relic (purportedly a sliver of bone of Buddha's body) housed in Anandakuti Vihara is put out on display on this day. All Stupas, Viharas and houses are lit up with lamps on this day, the illumination symbolic of enlightenment.



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JUNE 2025

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7 JULY 2025

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AUGUST 2025

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09 Janai Purnima

27 Ganesh Chaturthi

26 Hartalika Teej

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Janai Purnima

Nationwide

August 09, 2025/ To be advised

Janai Purnima or *Raksha Bandhan* (sacred thread festival) occurs on the full moon day (*purnima*) in the month of Shravan (as per Hindu calendar), and is a popular Hindu festival wherein sisters tie a sacred thread on their brothers' wrist to reaffirm the bond of affection and protection and exchange gifts and sweets.

Men of Brahmin and Kshatriya (Chhetris) castes change their sacred thread on this day annually. *Janai* is a mandatory cotton thread worn by males of these communities around the upper body, on the day of their religious initiation ceremony upon attaining manhood (*Bratabandhan*). They are bestowed with a *guru mantra* to control each knot in the *janai* which symbolizes body, mind and speech.

A day before, men and boys undergo a ritual bath, shave and haircut in preparation, and observe a fast, consuming only one simple *satvik* (pure or virtuous) meal all day (a *satvik* meal is prepared without meat, garlic and onions). On the morning of *Janai Purnima*, men visit the nearest river or water body, take three ritual dips, break the old *janai* thread and wear a new, purified one, all the while chanting the *guru mantra*. In the cities, however, a *pandit* (priest) helps with the *janai* ceremony and is given *daan dakshina* (gifts of money, grain and new clothes).



Hartalika Teej

Nationwide

August 26, 2025/ To be advised

Teej or *Haritalika Teej* festival is observed over 3 days and is an occasion for Hindu women to pray for their husbands' long life, marital bliss and harmony. Thereafter, the womenfolk gather together, and sing and dance.

On the first day (*Dar Khane Din*), the women folk, dressed in traditional red and green finery (called *Saubhagya*: fortunate), adorn themselves with their customary wedding jewellery (*lagan kopote*, *nathhi*, and *chadketilahari*) or wear garlands and bracelets made of flowers, to welcome the monsoon season by putting up swings from trees amid much rejoicing and song and dance, and visit their parents' homes, followed by a grand feast called *Dar*.

On the second day, they observe strict fasting and visit the temple of Goddess Parvati (Lord Shiva's consort). At Kathmandu, they offer prayers to the *lingam* (phallic symbol of Lord Shiva) along with sweets, flowers and money at Pashupatinath temple and light a butter lamp given by their mother in law.

On the third day, women folk make offerings of bananas and *tulsi* (holy basil) to Goddess Parvati, after which they break their fast with local greens cooked in clarified butter and take a ritual purification bath with red mud and sacred roots of *datiwan* plant, which is said to absolve them of all their sins.



Ganesh Chaturthi

Kathmandu

August 27, 2025/ To be advised

Falling on the fourth day of *Bhadra* (as per the Hindu calendar), Ganesh Chaturthi is celebrated over 10 days with great enthusiasm to observe the birth of Lord Ganesha, the clever and wise son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. Ganesha is the god of auspicious beginnings, remover of obstacles, and a patron of arts and sciences. Worshippers root for the Ashok Binayak and Chandra Binayak temples in Kathmandu, and Surya Binayak and Kamal Binayak in Bhaktapur, to offer prayers. The Newar community of Nepal in particular, celebrates this festival with great enthusiasm. A clay idol of the lord is enshrined in the home on the first day, and his blessings are invoked with prayers and offerings of sweets. On the tenth day, the idol is carried out in a crowded procession, with loud chants renting the air, and immersed in the river with much fanfare.



9 SEPTEMBER 2025

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06 Indra Jatra

22 Dashain

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

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DECEMBER

Indra Jatra

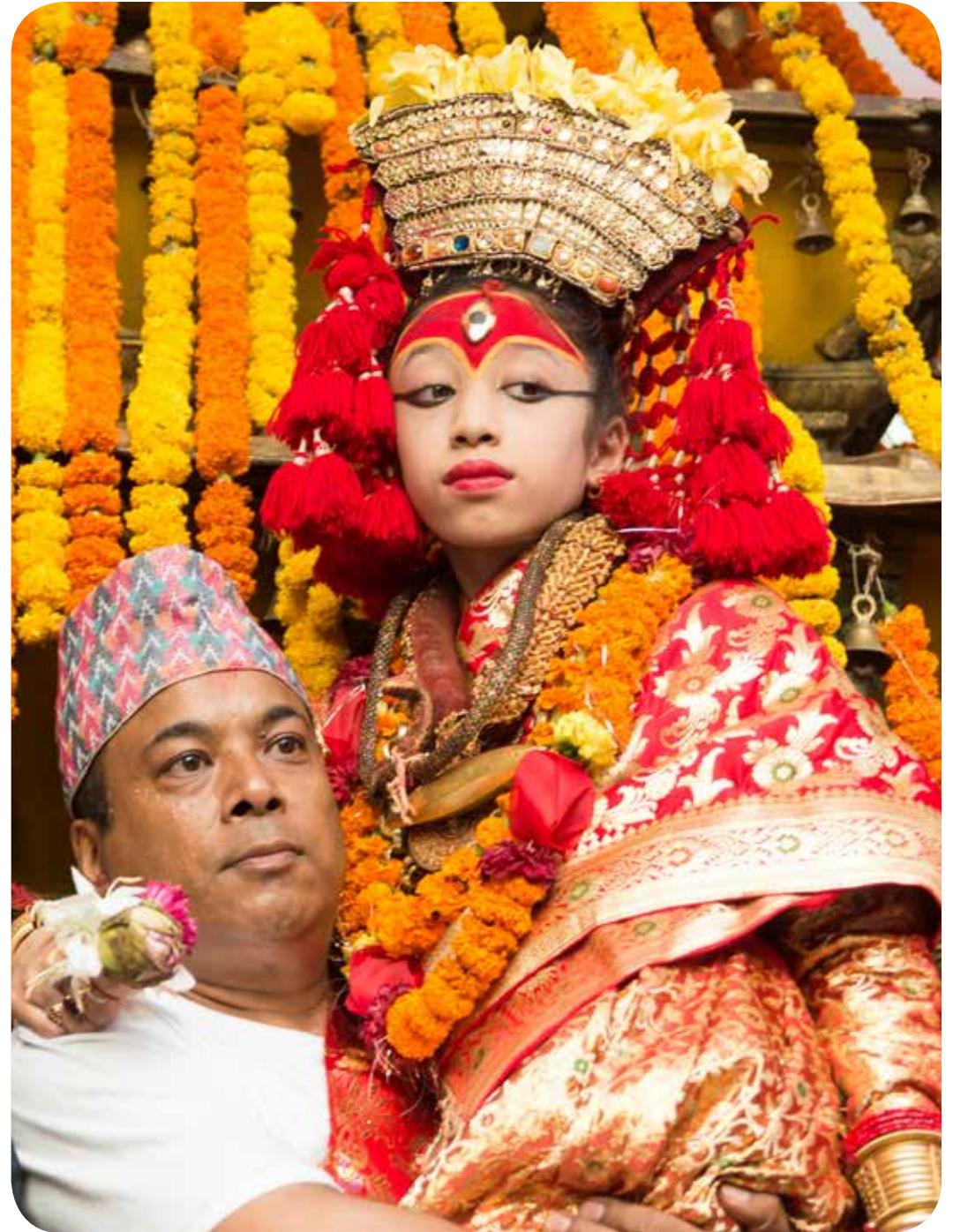
Kathmandu

September 06, 2025/ To be advised

Indra Jatra (*Yanya Punhi*) is the largest and most significant of Nepal's festivals, as it is several festivals rolled into one. The 8-day spectacle is held to propitiate Indra, the god of rain and heaven, and Bhairab, another form of Lord Shiva, as also to hail Kumari, the living goddess.

On the 7th day (the last day of summer as per the Hindu calendar), crowds congregate at Hanuman Dhoka Square and there is much music and dance, to the accompaniment of cymbals and drums. A 36-foot pole with a flag is erected in the square (called *Yasingh* – symbolic of Lord Shiva's *lingam* or phallus), balanced by a man. Masked dancers enact scenes from mythical tales, the overriding theme being the triumph of good over evil. Huge colourful statues of Indra and Bhairab laden with flower garlands are unveiled, with alcohol pouring from Bhairab's mouth. The crowds try to get a drop as Prasad (god's blessing). Men dressed as a white elephant (*Tana-kishi*, symbolic of Indra) run around in the crowd.

Kumari Jatra, the procession of the resplendent, garland bedecked young girl or the Living Goddess Kumari seated atop a rope drawn chariot, commences as she blesses the crowds with handing out carnations, which is truly a mesmerizing sight to behold.



Dashain

Nationwide

September 22 – October 05, 2025/ To be advised

Dashain, one of the longest and the most auspicious festivals in the Nepalese annual calendar, is celebrated during the month of Kartik (late September and early October). People of all castes and creeds celebrate this festival with great aplomb throughout the country. The 15 days of celebrations occur during the bright lunar fortnight and end on the day of the full moon. All the manifestations of Goddess Durga are worshipped with numerous holy rituals.

Dashain commemorates the great victory of the gods over demons. One of the victory stories is of the slaying of the demon king Ravana by Lord Rama. The main celebration glorifies the triumph of good over evil and is symbolized by goddess Durga slaying the demon Mahisasur. The first nine days signify the nine days of battle between goddess Durga and the demon Mahisasur and finally the goddess slew him on the 10th day. The last five days celebrate the victory with the blessing of the goddess.

The festival is a fun-filled time for the people of Nepal and gives them a chance to come together with friends and families. Everyone seems to be in a joyous mood and most organisations shut down for 10 to 15 days. To prepare for Dashain, people clean and beautifully decorate their houses to invite the goddess for her blessings.



10 OCTOBER 2025

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20 Tihar

27 Chhath Parva

JANUARY

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DECEMBER

Tihar

Nationwide

October 20 – 23, 2025/ To be advised

Tihar or Diwali the festival of *lights*, falls on the no moon night of the month of *Kartik* (as per Hindu calendar). Celebrations are spread out for five days, during which people buy and don new clothes and ornaments, clean and paint their homes and invite Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, to visit their homes, and illuminate their homes with *diyas* (oil lamps). They appease their ancestors by feeding dogs and crows on the 1st and 2nd days (*Kaag Tihar*, *Kukur Tihar*). On the 3rd day, they pray to the Goddess Laxmi and cows (Gai Tihar, Laxmi Puja) to bless them with wealth and prosperity. On the 4th day, they worship the Ox (*Goru Puja*, *Goverdhan Puja*). The Newari New Year also falls on this day (*Maha Puja*) and there is much rejoicing and feasting, exchanging gifts and sweets with family and friends. On the 5th day on *Bhai Tika*, brothers and sisters apply vermilion *tika* on each others' foreheads in a show of affection to celebrate their bond.



Chhath Parva

Nationwide

October 27, 2025/ To be advised

Chhath Parva is celebrated to propitiate Surya, the Sun God. Devotees offer thanksgiving prayers for being the harbinger of life and prosperity, for wellness and longevity. The 4-day long celebrations commence on the 4th day after Tihar (on *Kartik shukla chaturthi* as per the Hindu calendar) and are marked by elaborate rituals. On day one, at dawn, devotees bathe in the river, and bring holy water of the river home for cooking (*Naha Kha*). On day 2 (*Kharna/Lohanda*), strict fasting is observed and devotees make offerings of rice pudding (*kheer*), bananas and deep fried Indian flatbread (*puri*). On the 3rd day (*Chhath*), offerings are made to the setting sun (called *arghya*). In Kathmandu, devotees gather at Rani Pokhari for this. This is followed by folk music and dance programs. In the night, lamps are lit under a canopy of 5 sugarcane sticks, symbolizing the 5 Elements (*Panch tattva*) and the sun energy, as part of the rituals (*kosi*). On day 4 (*Paran*), offerings are made to the rising sun at the river, followed by breaking of fast and distributing *prasad*.





11 NOVEMBER 2025

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12 DECEMBER 2025

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25 Christmas

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

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APRIL

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AUGUST

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OCTOBER

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DECEMBER

Christmas

Nationwide

December 25, 2025/ December 25, 2026

Christmas is celebrated in Nepal not just by Christians but people of all faiths. In keeping with the Season's spirit of warmth and cheer the world over, here too, families congregate and reunite, Christmas trees are decorated and lit up, and gifts exchanged. After attending midnight mass, celebrations continue with friends and family sitting down to a traditional Christmas feast of roast turkey, pumpkin pie, roast chicken with vegetables followed by Christmas pudding and rum cake.

Thamel market area in Kathmandu is decorated with lights and is abuzz with activities, shops crowded with locals and tourists alike, music from bands and artists playing at street corners fill the air vying for your attention amidst the laughter and gaiety. Similar celebrations take place in the other cities too like Pokhara.

It truly is a most wonderful time of the year!

