

ISKCON Educational Services Twelve Important Festivals

Name of festival	Dates	Details
1. Sarasvati Puja	19/01-17/02	Worship of Sarasvati, the goddess of learning; it coincides with <i>vashant-panchami</i> , which marks the start of spring; Hindu celebrants dress in yellow cloth
2. Maha Shiva Ratri	12/02-12/03	Shiva's birthday is the most important festival for his worshippers. In India, festivities often continue throughout the night. The image of Shiva is offered milk and bilva leaves.
3. Holi	28/02-28/03	Hindus douse each of with coloured water and powders; also connected to the half-man/half-lion incarnation of Vishnu; and bonfires are lit to commemorate the story.
4. Rama Navami	24/03-23/04	The birthday of Rama, one of the two principal avatars (incarnations) of Vishnu, whose exploits are retold in the Ramayana. His wife, kidnapped by Ravana, is called Sita.
5. Hanuman Jayanti	29/03-28/04	Birthday of Hanuman, the monkey warrior and devoted servant and Rama and Sita. He is also worshipped in his own right, especially by soldiers and sportsmen.
6. Raksha Bandana	01/08-30/08	A family festival in which girls tie lucky amulets on the wrists of brothers (and other male relatives), who promise to protect their sisters in return.
7. Janmashtami	12/08 – 10/09	A festival in honour of the birth of Lord Krishna, perhaps the most popular of all deities. Hindus fast until mid-night, the time of Krishna's birth, when there is a gorgeous <i>arti</i> ceremony.
8. Ganesh Chaturthi	24/08-22/09	A widely popular festival celebrating the birth of Ganesh, one of the Shiva and Parvati's two sons. Huge images are paraded through the streets and finally immersed in water.
9. Navaratri	18/09-17/10	The festival of nine nights. Hindus gather each evening to honour Parvati (Shiva's wife) and other goddesses, and to perform the famous circle and stick dances.
10. Durga Puja	24/09-23/10	Durga is a warlike form of Shakti, especially popular in Bengal. She is worshipped in a form with ten arms, carrying an assortment of weapons and riding upon a lion.
11. Dussehra	27/09-26/10	This festival celebrates Rama's victory of the ten-headed and king called Ravana. It involves burning huge effigies of this anti-hero.
12. Diwali	17/10-15/11	Diwali is celebrated by decorating houses and temples with rows of <i>divas</i> (lamps). It is associated with Rama, and with Lakshmi, goddess of wealth, who is worshipped at this time.

Notes: 1. The dates vary each year according to the Gregorian calendar and shown here are the earliest and latest possible dates. In the case of a festival spanning several days, these usually refer to the first day.

2. Some communities have their own predominant, more exclusive festivals. For example, for the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, this is the appearance day of Lord Swaminarayan; for ISKCON, the appearance day of Chaitanya; and for the Ramakrishna Mission, the birthdays of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.