



Onam

— A Celebration of —
the Quintessential Richness of Kerala

Handbook to experience the state festival of Kerala



BEST TIME TO VISIT Kerala

Onam is the biggest festival season in Kerala. It falls on the Malayalam month of 'Chingam' and is celebrated by Malayalees, irrespective of their social, economic and religious backgrounds. For every Malayali, Onam is a nostalgia which brings back memories from childhood and the simple ways of life that prevailed in the villages back in the day. It is the celebration of the myth of Mahabali – the demon king who once ruled the land and is believed to visit his old subjects every year around this time. Onam is also an agricultural festival that celebrates the rich harvest of the land, thus symbolising joy and prosperity.

Today, Onam is celebrated the world over among Malayali communities as a grand cultural extravaganza. A variety of events and activities including 'Pookkalams' (floral carpet), games, feasts, cultural entertainments and etc. are a part of the 10-day long festival season. This is a perfect time to visit Kerala and know more about the affluent cultural richness of the God's Own Country. It's beyond just sights and sounds, it's a fulfilling experience that connects you with the soul of the destination.

The Legend of Mahabali



| A powerful demon & kind king, Mahabali was a ruler who loved his people. The fame of this benevolent ruler spread all over the universe.



| Devas started to fear Mahabali's popularity. Aditi, the mother of Devas, conveyed the concern to Lord Vishnu who decided to test Mahabali.



| Mahabali started a 'yaga' called 'Vishwajith' to conquer the entire universe. Lord Vishnu took the Vamana Avatar & came as a Brahmin kid.



| To test the generosity of the king, Vamana request him for three steps of land. Mahabali instantly agrees to the request of Vamana.



Vamana grew in size. With his two steps, he covered the heaven and the Earth. He put the third on Mahabali's head and pushed him to netherworld.



The lord granted Mahabali's wish to come back and see his subjects once a year. Malayalees believe that this happened on Thiruvonam day.

Contents



The dates given for events covered in this e-Brochure are for the year 2022. The exact dates can be confirmed from [the festival calendar](#) or with the local authorities.



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DAYS OF
Festivity



Making of Onavillu

Onam Festivals

Take part in at least one & you will remember them for a lifetime



Pakal Pooram at Thrikkakara

The 10 days that follow the day of 'Atham' in the month of 'Chingam' are a period of big festivities in Kerala. On the day of Atham, the festival season gets a symbolic takeoff with the famous 'Athachamayam' – a procession that features art forms, tableaus and so on, held in Tripunithura, Ernakulam. The Thrikkakara Vamana Temple has a 10-day Onam festival. Yet another event on the Uthradam day happens at the Aranmula temple. 'Thiruvonathoni', a boat carrying Onam delicacies will reach the temple from Kattur Mana.

Explore Festival Calendar

Mark Your Dates

Thripunithura Athachamayam
(cultural fiesta), Ernakulam

📅 **August 30, 2022**

Festival at Thrikkakkara Vamana Moorthy
Temple, Ernakulam

📅 **August 30 - September 8, 2022**

Vanara Sadya (feeding of monkeys) at
Edailakkadu, Kasaragod

📅 **September 7-8, 2022**

Dasavatharam Charthal (decoration of idols) at
Vamanamoorthi Temple, Thiruvananthapuram

📅 **August 29 - September 7, 2022**

Kazhchakulasamarpanam (offering bananas)
at Guruvayoor Srikrishna Temple, Thrissur

📅 **September 7, 2022**

Thiruvonathoni (cruise carrying food) at
Sree Parthasarathy Temple, Pathanamthitta

📅 **September 8, 2022**

Offering of Onavillu (ceremonial bow) at Sree
Padmanabhaswamy Temple, Thiruvananthapuram

📅 **September 8, 2022**

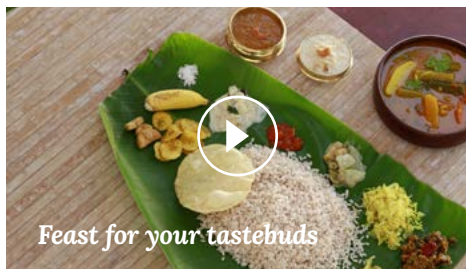
THE Grand Feast





Onasadya

Malayalis at any part of the world won't miss this!



you will find the inclusion of non vegetarian delicacies like chicken and fish in the Onasadya. For those who can't cook the elaborate sadya with many delicacies, there are caterers and restaurants across Kerala who prepare the feast and deliver.

There is no way that a Malayali will like to miss an 'Onasadya' (Onam feast). The legend is that every Malayalee will welcome Mahabali and then celebrate with a grand feast. This feast is an important aspect of Onam. Apart from homes, these feasts are also conducted in various parts of the state including the Aranmula and Thrikkakara temples in a grand manner. Feasts are also conducted in Guruvayoor.

The Aranmula temple feast is known as 'Vallasadya' and includes up to 60 items that are all vegetarian. When you go to the northern parts of Kerala, especially destinations such as Kannur,

[Explore More](#)

Don't Miss Sadyas

Thrikkakkara Vamana Moorthy Temple,
Ernakulam

 **September 7 & 8, 2022**

Aranmula Vallasadya, Sree Parthasarathy
Temple, Pathanamthitta

 **August 4 to October 9, 2022**

Sree Krishna Temple,
Guruvayur, Thrissur

 **September 8, 2022**

KTDC Hotels & Resorts

 **September 7 & 8, 2022**



SETTING THE
Backwaters on Fire



Snakeboat Races

Crowd frenzy & competitive spirit create an enthralling ambiance



Saturday of August. The Champions Boat League, an annual sporting event, includes all the major boat races in the State.

[Explore More](#)

The excitement of the Onam season is best captured in 'Vallam Kali' or snake boat race. One of the prime destinations to see these boat races in its euphoric best is Kuttanad. The Chambakulam Jalsavam is one of the oldest boat races of its kind and is considered to be a 400 year old tradition. However, the most famous of the boat races in Kerala is the prestigious Nehru Trophy Boat Race held in the Punnamada lake of Alappuzha. The frenzy of the crowd and the competitive spirit of the participating teams create an enthralling ambiance that one will remember for a lifetime. The Nehru Trophy Race will be held on the second

Major Boat Races

Nehru Trophy Boat Race, Punnamada Lake, Alappuzha

 **September 4, 2022**

Mannar Mahatma Boat Race, Alappuzha

 **September 6, 2022**

Uthradam Thirunal Pamba Boat Race River Pamba, Neerattupuram, Alappuzha

 **September 7, 2022**

Payippad Boat Race, Alappuzha

 **September 8 - 10, 2022**

Kumarakom Boat Race, Kottayam

 **September 10, 2022**

A BOUNTIFUL
Harvest of Joy



Farming Rituals

The month of Chingam is also the season of harvest in Kerala



Lush, golden fields

Legends and myths are a rich part of Onam. However Onam is also Kerala's harvest festival. The first harvest occurs during the month of Chingam and is known as 'Chingakoythu'. As it extends to the month of 'Kanni', it is also referred to as 'Kannikoythu'. In places such as Kuttanad and Palakkad, harvest follows the rainy season. The lush fields of Kuttanad are all set to welcome the harvest season.

Illam Nira is a tradition that falls on the first Sunday after 'Karkidaka Vavu'. Rice is harvested and taken to homes and filled on the worship rooms. It is still religiously observed

in old households. Puthari is another observance of making rice dishes using the fresh harvest. Niraputhari observed in Guruvayoor temple is famous. Sabarimala temple also opens for Niraputhari that falls on August 4.

In the northern Malabar region, this extends from Karkkidakam to Uthradam days. 'Onakkazhchakal' is yet another ritual observed in temples where devotees make offerings. On the day of Uthradam, one can see rows of Kazhchakulas or bunches of banana offered at the Guruvayoor Temple.

Key Rituals

Illam Nira (ritual with fresh paddy spikes)

📅 **July 31, 2022**

Niraputhari (rice offering) at Sabarimala

📅 **August 4, 2022**

Onakkazhchakal (offerings at temples)

📅 **August 30 - September 8, 2022**

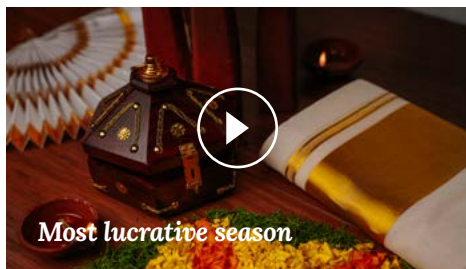
A woman with long dark hair is seated in a dark wooden chair, looking towards the camera with a smile. She is wearing a white saree with gold borders and a red inner lining. Her accessories include a gold necklace, large gold earrings, and a gold bangle. The background is a dimly lit room with a lamp on a side table and a large drum on a stand to the right.

WEAVING
Happiness



Onakkodi

'Kasavu' dresses are most preferred attire during the season



Most lucrative season

There is no Onam without 'Onakkodi', or new cloths bought in association with Onam. In earlier times, Onam was the only season when most Malayalees would buy new dresses. Times have changed, however the concept of buying new cloths in this season hasn't changed. 'Kasavu' dresses are the most preferred kinds of attires in this time. Kasavu Mundus and Kasavu Sarees are sold across the State in large quantities. Onam is also the most lucrative season for the garment sector in Kerala.

In Thiruvananthapuram, Balaramapuram Kaithari is the popular choice for Kasavu dresses. Kochi prefers

Chendamangalam Kaithari and Thrissur goes for Kuthambulli Kaithari. Kannur Kaithari and Kasargode Sarees are also much famed for the same.

Best Buy

Kerala State Handloom Weavers Co-operative Society Ltd (Hantex), Thiruvananthapuram

☎ **+91 471 233 0797**

Kerala State Handloom Development Corporation Ltd (Hanveev), Kannur

☎ **+91 497 2701804**

🌐 **www.hanveevs.com**

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☎ **+91 471 2471696, +91 471 2471695**

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IT'S
Game Time!



Onam Games

Festive spirit goes to the next level with these exciting events



The festive spirit of Onam is enkindled with a number of Onam games that are played locally. Kerala has various such games and one of the most popular ones played during Onam time is the 'Pulikkali'. Though there are various versions of Pulikkali, the most popular one is played in Thrissur.

'Kummattikali', an exciting Onam game, is also popularly practised in Thrissur. Sometimes Kummattikali can be seen in between Pulikkali. 'Thiruvathirakkali' is also a much-performed dance form that is held across the State during Onam. One of the more traditional Onam games is the 'Onathallu'. Being an agricultural

festival, Onam also brings with it various games related to the fields. 'Maramadi' is one of these games and is practised among agricultural communities. Apart from these popular games, Onam is also a time when various other not-so-common ethnic games such as Thalapanthukali, Kaduva Kali, Karadikkali, Kilithattu Kali, Kuttiyum Kolum, Manikya Chembazhukka etc. are played.

Don't Miss

Pallassana Onathallu at Meenkulathi Bhagavathi Temple, Vadakkethara, Palakkad

 **8 September 2022**

Pulikkali at Swaraj Round, Thrissur

 **11 September 2022**

Kummattikali, Thrissur

 **12 September, 2022**

Kalavela at Ochira Parabrahma Temple, Kollam

 **5 October 2022**



Onam Games



Kummattikali

THE Blooming Ecstasy



Pookkalam

Floral carpets are a symbol of prosperity and joy



Pookkalam (floral carpet) can rightly be described as one of the faces of the Onam celebration. Athappokkalam is symbolic of prosperity and joy. Starting from the day of Atham, pookkalams are created in Malayali households across the State. It is believed that these pookkalams are made to welcome Mahabali. In earlier times, only locally available flowers were used to create pookkalams. These days, flowers from far and wide also find their place in these pookkalams, making them visually stunning.

The designing of these pookkalams are a popular recreational event

these days. There are several regional differences in the way these pookkalams are created. On the first day, only one row of flowers will be created. On the second day, two rows will be created. The size of the pookkalam will keep increasing this way. On the day of Moolam, the Pookkalam will be square-shaped and will be known as 'Moolakkalam'. The largest Pookkalam will be designed on the day of Uthradam. These days, several clubs, offices and associations conduct Pookkalam competitions, adding to the zest of Onam celebrations.

Global Pookkalam Competition

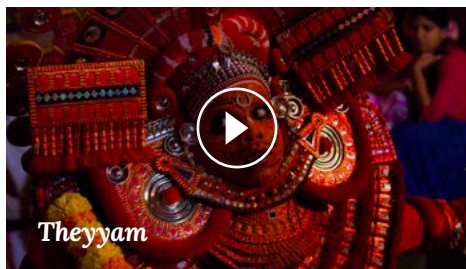


STORIES & BELIEFS
Come to Life



Ritual Arts

It's Padayani in southern Kerala while it is Theyyam in the north



The northern parts of Kerala are much famed for practising ritualistic art forms during the Onam times. This is a region where the art form of Theyyam is practised widely. Onam is the season of Kutti Theyyams in these areas. In Kolathunadu, 'Adivedan' (a form of Lord Shiva) visits households to welcome Chingam with joy and prosperity. Kids are usually selected to perform this. Another Theyyam that eliminates the evils of Karkkidakam and brings in prosperity is the Sheepothi. Again, kids are the ones who perform this Theyyam, but as goddess Mahalakshmi. 'Onathar' is another traditional folk art performed

in Kannur and Kasargod districts from the day of Atham and it announces the coming of Thiruvonam.

Considered to be a representation of Mahabali, 'Onapottan' is also a folk art figure who visits households during Onam. The Parappana temple in Kozhikode is dedicated to Onapottan. Neelamperoor Padayani is a famous 16-day event that begins from the day of Avittam and ends on the day of Pooram.

Common Ritual Arts

Neelamperoor Padayani, Alappuzha



August 28, 2022

Seepothi Theyyam, North Kerala



July 17 – August 16, 2022

Onathaar, Kutti Theyyams, North Kerala



September 7 & 8, 2022

Onapottan Theyyam, North Kerala



September 7 & 8, 2022



Onapottan

A still life composition featuring a wooden treasure chest, a lit diya, a folded sash, and a flower bed. The treasure chest is dark wood with gold-colored metal fittings and a small bell. The diya is red and lit. The sash is white with gold stripes. The flower bed is made of yellow and orange petals, with a large pink flower in the foreground.

WHEN
Businesses Thrive

Shopping Season

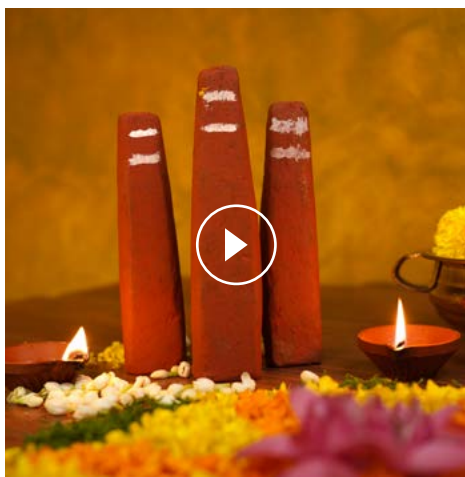
People throng shops during the time of discounts & schemes



Cash registers ringing

There is no bigger shopping season in Kerala than Onam. It is literally a celebration in the market place as people shop in large numbers. From garments to household items and electronics to automobiles, there is hardly any sector that doesn't gain from the grand Onam sale. This also allows them to offer attractive discounts and schemes. The busiest day of the season is often Uthradam. 'Uthradapachil' is a term commonly referred to denote this bustling activity in the markets. This Onam is special for Kerala as stringent covid restrictions have been lifted. So, the Onam celebrations will be grand and in full swing this year.

Apart from these festivities, Onam is also celebrated in the tribal communities of Wayanad. 'Kambala' galas are held in the paddy fields to celebrate the rich harvest. Kambala is performed accompanied by the rhythm of 'Thudi'. They observe the Thiruvonam day as 'Lakshmi Vilayattam Day'. They also worship cattle specially during the Thiruvonam day. The common Onam rituals of Malayalees are not prevalent among the tribal communities.



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A chronicle of Kerala's Cultural Richness



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Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala,
Park View, Thiruvananthapuram,
Kerala, India - 695 033

+91 471 2321132



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info@keralatourism.org

Toll-free No: 1-800-425-4747 (within India only)

