



NEW VRINDABAN
THE LAND OF KRISHNA

Our Festivals to Delight Your Heart



Festival of Colors

It is said that in the spiritual world every word is a song, every step is a dance, and every day is a festival. What can be truer for the Krishna festivals celebrated worldwide in the Vaishnava tradition? We experience the spiritual world through these celebrations of divine love, peace, and harmony.

Just as many worldwide traditions or faiths celebrate holy days that commemorate an important personality, a historical or significant event, or the beginning of something auspicious, followers of Lord Krishna commemorate His many manifestations in the world—His different incarnations that establish religious principles and attract us to Him—and significant events that stir our remembrance of the Lord.

But what makes Krishna festivals so special? Together with having fun and uniting with loved ones, they are meant to take you on an inward journey—to access the part of you that normally stays hidden and undiscovered. That spiritual essence is experienced during these festivals.

For Vaishnavas, followers of Lord Krishna, dozens of festivals throughout the year give the opportunity to celebrate our unique relationship with God, to remember Him and His pastimes, and to worship and serve Him with love. On these festive days, we sing Krishna's

holy names, dance, partake of sumptuous vegetarian feasts, and come closer to Krishna by personally serving Him in the form of the Deity, a spiritual form of God described in the holy Vedic texts.

We invite everyone, from any faith or background, to experience the flavor and mood of these colorful festivals, which are unique to the Western world.

This booklet describes some of these festivals. We hope they will captivate you and enliven your spirits.

* The festivals listed appear in month order and are celebrated annually according to the Vedic lunar calendar (months may slightly differ every year). Most of these festivals are celebrated in every ISKCON temple in the world.

* “Appearance Anniversary” refers to the birth celebration of the personality. Since God or His representatives are not born in mundane ways or for ordinary purposes, we refer to their birth in this world as “appearance” and their death anniversary as “disappearance.”

Nityananda Trayodashi

Appearance Anniversary of Sri Nityananda Prabhu

FEBRUARY

In the sixteenth century Lord Nityananda Prabhu graced the earth together with Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to give freely the treasure of God's love. These two effulgent personalities were compared to the sun and moon, who would dissipate the darkness of the world. They taught people the fundamental process of connecting with God in this age: the chanting of Krishna's holy names. Nityananda Prabhu captivated the people of Navadvipa, West Bengal, while he danced and chanted in the streets. As an incarnation of Lord Balarama, Lord Krishna's brother, Nityananda Prabhu is described as the most compassionate personality, who non-discriminately gives his blessings and kindness to all.



Gaura Purnima

Appearance Anniversary of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

MARCH

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is described in the Vedic scriptures as a covered incarnation of Lord Krishna, known as the Golden Avatar ("Gaura" or "Gauranga"). With the complexion of molten gold and the mood of an unparalleled devotee of God, he descended to earth on a full-moon night (Purnima) in the month of Phalguna more than five hundred years ago. Through his life and teachings, he epitomized that the essence of spiritual thought and enlightenment is love of God, which he widely broadcast through his disciples and followers. He initiated the sankirtan movement ("sanga" meaning group or community, and "kirtan" meaning chanting of God's names) to encourage people to come together to glorify the Lord, which would be more potent than praying or chanting on one's own. Through his campaigning efforts and desires to propagate Lord Krishna's message, Lord Chaitanya transformed the lowest of men into servants of God. Therefore, it is easier to approach the Lord through His merciful incarnation of Lord Chaitanya.

Rama Navami

Appearance Anniversary of Lord Rama

Rama Navami, the anniversary of Lord Rama's descent into this world, is celebrated in great excitement and splendor. Lord Rama, the renowned incarnation of God held in great awe by Hindus and people worldwide, exemplified the perfect human being. His tales in the Ramayana are not mythical fiction but have been accounted by the sage Valmiki Muni thousands of years ago, who witnessed Lord Rama's brave and wondrous deeds. Till today, the story of the Ramayana touches people from all walks of life and inspires them to live an exemplary life like that of Lord Rama. The day is spent glorifying the pastimes of Lord Rama and singing His holy name.

APRIL



Happy Cow Festival

New Vrindaban has achieved more than fifty momentous years of cow protection, making it the first and longest-running cow-protection program in the West. It has been the home of Lord Krishna's cows since its first cow, Kaliya, came to New Vrindaban in April 1969. Now with a herd of more than 67 cows, bulls, and oxen, the New Vrindaban cow sanctuary is making steady progress in training, medical care, and various facilities for the cows.

An annual two-day festival commemorates the cows and their caregivers. Guests are engaged in special cow activities, like making cow dung patties (natural fertilizer and fuel), butter, cow soaps and incense, and interacting with the cows—by milking, brushing, petting, and feeding them while receiving loving reciprocation from these beautiful, peaceful animals.

APRIL



KIRTAN

FROM
APRIL TO
OCTOBER

First Friday Kirtan

at the Palace
of Gold

Every Friday evening during the summer months, you will hear the powerful sound vibrations of God's holy names emanating from the Palace of Gold. In such a spiritually surcharged environment, you can feel the presence of God through kirtan, the chanting of His holy names. In every faith and tradition, the utterance of God's holy names is encouraged to connect with Him and purify the heart. The chanting of the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra* (the great chant for deliverance) is not a reclusive, monotonous activity but a joyous celebration of the Lord in our lives:

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare
Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare



24+ Hour Kirtan

Imagine a festival that goes on for 24 hours nonstop—it is usually so blissful that many pilgrims and guests wish to stay the entire time. Usually held twice a year, this nonstop 24-hour kirtan, the chanting of Krishna's holy names, invokes world peace, auspiciousness, and sublime joy in our lives. In this age there is no other way to attain spiritual perfection than by immersing ourselves in God's holy names, which purifies the heart and connects us with the Lord.

JUNE &
OCTOBER



Swan Boat Festival

Every Saturday night from
June to September

FROM
JUNE TO
SEPTEMBER

If you want to experience something extraordinary, almost out of a fairytale, come to the Swan Boat Festival, which will mesmerize you every Saturday summer night. A magical torch-lit procession makes its way from the temple to Swan Lake amid Kirtan (singing of Krishna's names) and dancing. The deities of Sri Sri Radha Vrindaban Chandra are worshiped and then taken on a ride on the lake in a beautifully decorated swan boat, culminating in a small fireworks display.



Nrsimha Chaturdasi

Appearance Anniversary
of Lord Nrsimhadeva

Lord Nrsimhadeva (*Nara* meaning “man,” *simha* meaning “lion,” and *deva* meaning “god”) assumed the form of a half-man half-lion to protect His devotee Pahlada Maharaja. Pahlada’s father was an evil king who wreaked havoc in the world and was inimical to God and His devotees. Pahlada, however, was a devoted believer of God, which enraged his father to the point of his trying to kill his own son. Lord Nrsimha appeared from a pillar to protect Pahlada from the wrath of his father. The Lord was so pleased with Pahlada’s devotion and faith that He manifested in this unusual form to reciprocate with his love. On Nrsimha Chaturdasi we seek the blessings and divine protection of this unique incarnation of God.

MAY/
APRIL



Snana-yatra

Bathing Festival of Lord Jagannatha

In preparation of our annual Ratha-yatra Festival (Festival of India) in July, Lord Jagannatha, the Lord of the Universe, is given a bath (snana) with ambrosial waters and milk ingredients and worshiped in great splendor.

Lord Jagannatha is a form of Lord Krishna with wide eyes and a broad smile, who goes out on the streets every year on a magnificent chariot to give His audience to everyone.



JUNE/JULY

Festival of Chariots

Ratha Yatra

JUNE/JULY

Hundreds of smiling faces greet Lord Jagannatha, the Lord of the Universe, as He and His brother and sister, Balarama and Subhadra, ride upon a colorful chariot down the streets of Wheeling every year. The annual Festival of India in Wheeling, more commonly known as the Ratha-yatra (chariot festival) in India and many parts of the world, grace the people of Wheeling with its message of “Culturally Many Spiritually One,” demonstrating that universal peace and brotherhood can be achieved by celebrating our oneness as children of God.

As throngs of spectators, devotees of Lord Jagannatha, and curious visitors join the grand chariot parade, the atmosphere is filled with exotic chants, joyful singing and dancing, the sound of Indian musical instruments, and a wave of excitement. Ladies dressed in colorful saris and decorated with henna and face paint dance in a rhythmic formation while men with dhotis and turbans play on Indian drums and cymbals. The people of Wheeling receive the spiritual culture of India, with its color and charm, in great wonder and reverence.



At the festival site, different stands and booths showcase various activities and cultural practices, from yoga and mantra meditation to questions and answers at the “Ask a Monk” booth, from face painting to the India Fashion booth, which are usually full of excited ladies trying on saris and leaving feeling beautiful and special. The men try on turbans too, and the children are entertained with fun activities. The mayor and important municipal dignitaries attend and appreciate the event, and live media coverage and TV broadcast the event.

And no festival is complete without food—sumptuous Indian cuisine from the Govinda’s restaurant is normally sold out, and everyone savors and appreciates the free three-course dinner that is served.

The onstage entertainment keeps the audience enraptured—soulful singing by national and international artists, traditional music by live bands, and classical Indian dancing transports everyone to India.

In fact, by feeling God’s presence and the harmony that prevail, you could imagine yourself not only in India but in the spiritual world.



Pushpa Abhishek

Flower-bathing Festival

The annual Pushpa Abhishek is quickly becoming a favorite festival in New Vrindaban. The deities of Sri Sri Radha Vrindaban Chandra are showered with flowers of all types and colors, 10,000 of which are used from the temple gardens. While marigolds, rose petals, and other colorful flowers cascade on the radiant forms of the Lord, soul-stirring kirtan is sung accompanied by the cheering of devotees. In the grand finale Their Lordships are usually showered with lotus petals from the lotus pond. And as multi-colored flower petals rain on the Deities at the end, the crowd roars with delight. Then the flower petals are showered upon the audience, who in turn throw them on one another, creating a fun and memorable occasion.



Balarama Purnima

Appearance Anniversary of Lord Balarama

Lord Krishna and His expansions descend to earth and display activities that attract us to the spiritual realm where we eternally belong. Lord Balarama, the elder brother and direct expansion of Krishna, gives spiritual strength and blessings by which we can accelerate our spiritual progress and love for God. On this full-moon night (Purnima) we celebrate His appearance in this world and in our lives by praising His activities and divine qualities and remembering His unique role in Krishna's pastimes.



Jhulan-yatra

The Swing Festival

AUGUST



In Vrindavan, Lord Krishna's holy land, Krishna swings on a magnificent swing with Radharani, his most intimate devotee, and His loving cowherd girlfriends (gopis), enjoying the cool breezes of the humid monsoon season. To commemorate this pastime, for five days we swing the Deities of Radha and Krishna on an ornate gilded swing (jhulan) decorated with colorful, fragrant flowers, leaves, and creepers. A sweet atmosphere is created, transporting everyone to Vrindavan.

Sri Krishna Janmashtami

Appearance Anniversary of Lord Krishna

The ringing bells of New Vrindaban resound loudly, announcing the most auspicious event of the year—Lord Krishna's divine birthday celebration—and inviting everyone to attend. This is a two-weekend celebration, prayer, worship, spiritual discussions, chanting of Krishna's names, yoga, fun activities, and a host of other engagements that connect us with the Lord. Visitors enjoy the "the Janmashtami Journey," a magical walk around the torch-lit lake, watching vignettes of Lord Krishna's pastimes enacted in the form of skits. A special midnight arati (worship ceremony) of the Deities in a splendid new outfit attracts a large crowd; a maha-yajna (fire sacrifice ceremony) invokes auspiciousness; and a Kalash Abhisheka (bathing of the Deities with sacred liquids) with golden pots is a special event. The festivities continue the following weekend with another Kalash Abhisheka, fun children's activities, yoga, worship of the cows, a swan boat festival, and another feast, among other exciting events.



AUGUST/
SEPTEMBER

Sri Radhastami

Appearance Anniversary of Srimati Radharani

Srimati Radharani is the feminine counterpart of Lord Krishna, His incarnation of love and compassion. Only by Her merciful sidelong glance can we get the blessings of Krishna.

A two-part celebration usually takes place at two locations in New Vrindaban: at Radha Kund, Govardhana Hill, at noon; and at the Radha Vrindaban Chandra Temple in the evening. After the morning program and darshan of Sri Sri Radha Vrindaban Chandra in their new outfits, the noon festival begins with bhajans and kirtan at the Radha Gopinath Temple at Radha Kunda. Thereafter, Srimati Radharani's pastimes and qualities are extolled, and a lunch feast is served.

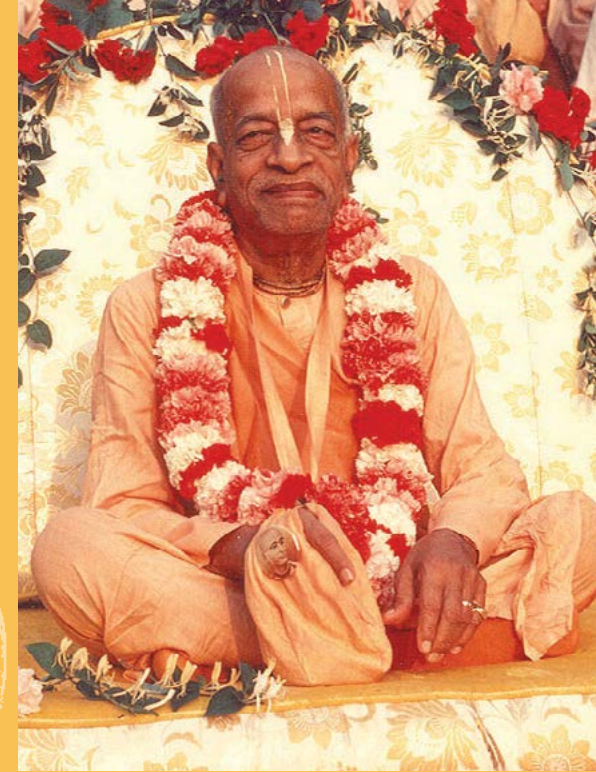
Then a special evening celebration further increases everyone's absorption in Sri Radha's qualities and pastimes. We offer balloons with names of Radha at the lotus feet of the Queen of Vrindavan together with our wishes and prayers. Each person also offers a rose, ghee wick, and incense to Srimati Radharani—a precious opportunity to receive her blessings and shelter.



Srila Prabhupada's Appearance Day

AUGUST/
SEPTEMBER

The day just after Sri Krishna Janmashtami is the divine birthday celebration of Krishna's pure devotee, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder-acharya and spiritual master of ISKCON. Affectionately known as Srila Prabhupada, he traveled alone from India at an elderly age, taking great risks to bring the teachings of Lord Krishna to the West in 1965. Within a short time, he propounded Vedic thought and wisdom on a massive scale through his travels, lectures, and hundreds of volumes of books. Appreciating his monumental efforts, his disciples and followers celebrate his birthday with deep appreciation and love, recalling how he has touched their lives and given them the treasure of Krishna consciousness, the process to deepen our relationship with God.



Festival of Colors

There is nothing like a family-fun event that encourages social cohesion, spiritual revival, and positive stimulation for our youth. The Festival of Colors, traditionally known as Holi with roots in ancient India, is such a festival that creates harmony by uniting people of different colors, nationalities, cultures, backgrounds, and races in spiritual brotherhood as children of God.

From throwing colored powder on one another to dancing to the rhythmic beats of a live band, everyone becomes fascinated with the line-up of free entertainment and exciting activities.

There is also mantra meditation, yoga, henna tattoos, nonstop live music by expert musicians, traditional Indian dance, gift shops and stalls, and lots of sumptuous vegetarian food.

Guests are delighted to visit the Krishna temple; the cow barns to pet the cows and calves or stay for the evening milking session; and the Palace of Gold, described by leading networks as “one of the eight wonders of the US.”

SEPTEMBER



Kartik

A whole month dedicated to a festival every day! The month of Kartik or the month of Damodar celebrates Lord Krishna's pastime of breaking the butter pots and being bound with ropes by his mother. Thus, He became known as Damodar, the Lord who is tied with ropes around the waist. If God is all powerful, how is this possible? This Damodar pastime illustrates that although God is supreme and never entangled in this mundane world, He is willing to bind Himself to anyone who approaches Him with pure love.

Every day, devotees and visitors offer a ghee lamp to Lord Damodar with devotion, remembering that the Lord comes under the control of His devotee's love.

OCTOBER/
NOVEMBER

Diwali

OCTOBER/
NOVEMBER



Diwali or Dipavali (meaning “a row of lamps”) is synonymous with light and divinity. It is a jubilant occasion celebrated by Hindus and Vaishnavas throughout the world, signifying the triumph of light over darkness, of goodness over evil. It was first celebrated by the citizens of Ayodhya many thousands of years ago to welcome Lord Rama back to His kingdom after His fourteen-year exile. At another time, this was the day when Lord Krishna broke pots of yogurt and was chastised by His mother, Yashoda. She then caught Him and bound Him to a grinding mortar, signifying that Krishna is only bound by the pure love of His devotee. On Diwali many extravagant food preparations are offered to the Lord, fireworks are ignited, and lamps and candles are lit as a symbol of divine peace and joy.

Govardhana Puja and Go-puja

OCTOBER/
NOVEMBER



At the center of Lord Krishna's spiritual abode lies Govardhana Hill, the majestic mountain that is a manifestation of Krishna Himself, held by Lord Krishna on His little finger for seven days and nights to protect His devotees from a devastating rainstorm. Govardhana Hill is simultaneously the greatest servant of Lord Krishna and His devotees, providing all the necessities for their livelihood in Vrindavan.

Govardhana Puja commemorates this pastime of Krishna's lifting Govardhana Hill and Govardhana's extraordinary position as the master and servant. Go-puja is also celebrated on this day by worshipping the cows and bulls who are dear to Lord Krishna.

Krishna devotees celebrate by building a replica of Govardhana Hill with delectable sweets and other foods and by joyously circumambulating the hill and singing Krishna's names and glories. The hill of sweets is then distributed to everyone as prasada, the mercy of God.

Srila Prabhupada's Disappearance Day

Srila Prabhupada, our eternal guide and spiritual master, left this world in November 1977. On this solemn yet joyous occasion when Srila Prabhupada returned to the spiritual world, we remember the countless sacrifices he made to bring the message of Krishna to the West, and the valuable contribution he has made to innumerable lives. Devotees meet at Srila Prabhupada's Palace of Gold for an evening of chanting Krishna's names and glorifying Srila Prabhupada, without whose grace we would have not known about Krishna or His holy land of Vrindavan.

OCTOBER/
NOVEMBER

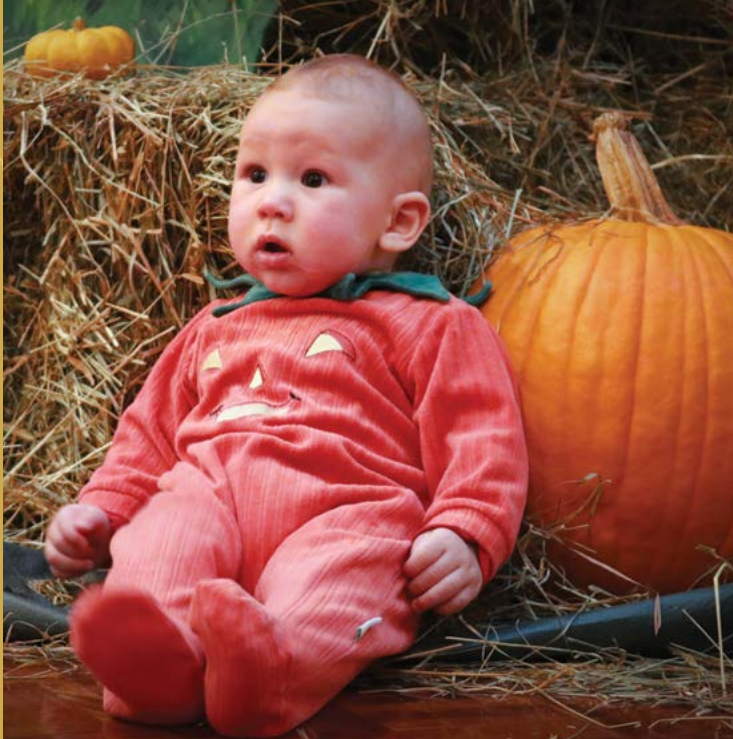


Thanksgiving Festival

NOVEMBER

Thanksgiving was originally celebrated as a harvest festival in 1789 in the US, similar to the harvest festivals celebrated in India like Makara Sankranti and Holi. The aim is to offer gratitude to the Lord who provides us with grains and other necessities of life and to lovingly offer Him back whatever He has given us.

When we are grateful for the Lord's bounteous gifts, His blessings, and divine presence in our lives, we no longer live in anger, fear, doubt, or anxiety but experience contentment, abundance, and fulfillment. A special Thanksgiving lunch is served in honor of the Lord.



Gita Jayanti

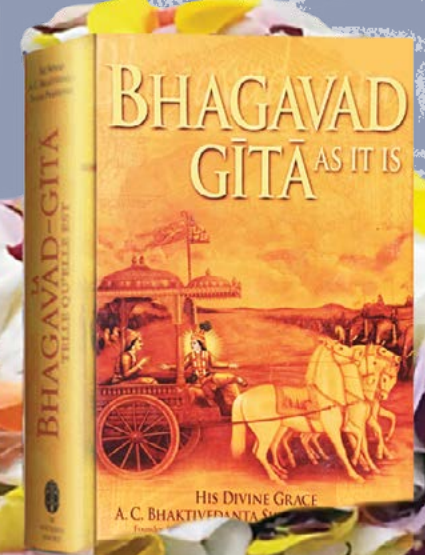
Anniversary of the Advent of Bhagavad-gita

The anniversary of the day when Lord Krishna spoke divine knowledge to his disciple Arjuna is a sacred day in the Vaishnava calendar.

When the Supreme Lord speaks, it is like music or poetry. When He instructs and teaches, it is for the benefit of humanity, and when He dispels ignorance by His profound words, it is out of divine love and compassion. In this way Lord Krishna spoke the Bhagavad-gita to His dear devotee Arjuna, and through him, to all of us. This sublime “song of God” is renowned as the jewel of the Vedas, the essence of all Vedic scriptures, and the supreme guide to spiritual perfection.

Srila Prabhupada presented the Bhagavad-gita As It Is without the slightest change or adulteration—as Lord Krishna spoke it five thousand years ago and as Arjuna understood it.

The occasion is celebrated by reciting the 700 verses of the Bhagavad-gita.



DECEMBER

In addition to these colorful, vibrant festivals, New Vrindaban's annual retreats attract many guests and pilgrims, meant to intensify their spiritual practices and experience. Participants find peace and inner joy spending time in the idyllic setting of New Vrindaban, free from the distractions and routines of everyday life—a wonderful opportunity to experience nature and God. Children are also kept enlivened during the summer holiday with the Summer Kids' Camp.



If you would like to experience these unique retreats, camps, and events, please see our website and Facebook Page for more information.

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Prabhupada's
Palace of Gold

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Palace Lodge

palacelodge.com





Festival of Colors



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