

VISHU



TIME

DATES

April

FREQUENCY

Annual

DURATION

1 Day

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL (Legend/History/Myth)

Vishu is a harvest festival of Kerala and is marked by the transit of the Sun into Aries. Legends associate Vishu with the worship of Lord Vishnu, the Lord of Time. As the transit indicates the start of the zodiac new year, it is considered an appropriate time to offer oblations to the Lord. Vishu falls on the first day of the Malayalam calendar month of *Medam*. Vishu celebrations are believed to have begun in Kerala during the reign of Sthanu Ravi who ruled the region between AD 844 and 855. In parts of Northern Kerala, it is customary for two boys to dress up in dried banana leaves representing Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi during the festival. These characters visit ancestral houses and bless the families as divine beings. The festival of Vishu is symbolic of prosperity and is hence complemented by rituals to invite good fortune and material and spiritual abundance.





EVENTS/PROGRAMS

Vishukkani
Vishukaineettam
Traditional Feast
Firework

DESCRIPTION (*How festival is celebrated*)

The most significant of rituals related to Vishu celebration is the viewing of the *Vishukkani*, which literally means 'the first thing seen on the day of Vishu'. *Vishukkani* consists of a sacred ceremonial preparation of all auspicious items considered to be the omen of good luck and prosperity. These include coconut, betel leaves, arecanut, *Kanikkonna* flower (Golden Shower), raw rice, golden cucumber, jack fruit, a traditional metallic mirror, gold jewellery, a holy book, new cotton dhoti and coins or currency notes. All these articles are placed in an *Uruli* (a special vessel made of bell metal). A traditional metal lamp called '*Nilavilakku*' is also lighted and placed alongside the *Vishukkani* before the deity of Lord Krishna (representing Lord Vishnu). The lamp is lighted by an elder female member of the family in the early hours on the day of Vishu and the others are led with their eyes closed to get the sight of *Vishukkani* as the first thing in the morning. Verses from the Ramayana are recited and firecrackers are burst. People sport new clothes and enjoy grand traditional feasts with family and friends.

