Onam
A Celebration of the Quintessential Richness of Kerala
Handbook to experience the state festival of 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 Malayalee, 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.
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.
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.
DAYS OF Festivity
Onam Festivals
Take part in at least one & you will remember them for a lifetime

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, tableaux and so on, held in Thripunithura, Ernakulam. Thrikkakara Vamana Moorthy 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.

Mark Your Dates

- Thripunithura Athachamayam (cultural fiesta), Ernakulam
  📆 August 30, 2022
- Festival at Thrikkakara 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
- Offering of Onavillu (ceremonial bow) at Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple, Thiruvananthapuram
  📆 September 8, 2022
- Thiruvonathoni (cruise carrying food) at Sree Parthasarathy Temple, Pathanamthitta
  📆 September 8, 2022

Explore Festival Calendar
THE Grand Feast
Onasadya
Malayalis at any part of the world won’t miss this!

There is no way that a Malayali would 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, 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.

Don’t Miss Sadyas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thrikkakara Vamana Moorthy Temple, Ernakulam</td>
<td>September 7 &amp; 8, 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aranmula Vallasadya, Sree Parthasarathy Temple, Pathanamthitta</td>
<td>August 4 to October 9, 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sree Krishna Temple, Guruvayoor, Thrissur</td>
<td>September 8, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KTDC Hotels &amp; Resorts</td>
<td>September 7 &amp; 8, 2022</td>
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SETTING THE 
Backwaters on Fire
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 their euphoric best is Kuttanad. The Chambakulam Jalolsavam is one of the oldest boat races of their 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 Saturday of August. The Champions Boat League, an annual sporting event, includes all the major boat races in the State.

**Snakeboat Races**

Crowd frenzy & competitive spirit create an enthralling ambiance

**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
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.

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.

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**Key Rituals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ritual</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illam Nira (ritual with fresh paddy spikes)</td>
<td>July 31, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niraputhari (rice offering) at Sabarimala</td>
<td>August 4, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onakkazhchakal (offerings at temples)</td>
<td>August 30 – September 8, 2022</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Happiness

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

Onakkodi

‘Kasavu’ dresses are most preferred attire during the season

There is no Onam without ‘Onakkodi’, or new cloths bought in association with the festival. 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 Kuthampully 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
+91 487 2701804
www.hanveevs.com

Kerala Khadi and Village Industries Board, Grama Soubhagya, Thiruvananthapuram
+91 471 2471696, +91 471 2471695
www.kkvib.org

Responsible Tourism Units
+91 471 2334749
www.keralatourism.org/responsible-tourism/rt-units/59
IT’S

Game Time!

Onam 11
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 and Manikya Chembazhukka are played.

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.

‘Kummattikkali’, an exciting Onam game, is also popularly practised in Thrissur. Sometimes Kummattikkali 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

**Onam Games**

**Festive spirit goes to the next level with these exciting events**

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**Don’t Miss**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pallassana Onathallu at Meenkulathi Bhagavathi Temple, Vadakkethara, Palakkad</td>
<td>8 September 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulikkali at Swaraj Round, Thrissur</td>
<td>11 September 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kummattikkali, Thrissur</td>
<td>12 September, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalavela at Ochira Parabrahma Temple, Kollam</td>
<td>5 October 2022</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Kummattikkali
The Blooming Ecstasy
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

Floral carpets are a symbol of prosperity and joy
STORIES & BELIEFS

Come to Life
Ritual Arts

If it’s Padayani in south Kerala, then 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Ritual Arts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neelamperoor Padayani, Alappuzha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seepothi Theyyam, North Kerala</td>
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<tr>
<td>Onathaar, Kutti Theyyams, North Kerala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onapottan Theyyam, North Kerala</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Onapottan
WHEN

Businesses Thrive
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.

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 in 2022.
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A Chronicle of Kerala’s Cultural Richness

Fort Kochi: Where History Sleeps, Serenely

Kerala, Hotspot of Adventures