

Gujarat springs to life with a riot of colours with its many vibrant festivals. Throughout the year various regional festivals and state festivals bring people together. Festivals are marked by food, fun, dance and song, bringing not just the state's people together but drawing visitors from India and abroad to join in.



COVER IMAGE UTTARAYAN FESTIVAL IS MARKED BY KITE FLYING **LEFT TO RIGHT** WITNESS GARBA AND DANDIYA RAS DURING NAVRATRI; A CRAFT STALL AT RANN UTSAV; THE TARNETAR MELA IS AT THE TRINETRESHWAR MAHADEV MANDIR GROUNDS

COVER IMAGE © SHUTTERSTOCK/STOCKIMAGEFACTORY.COM **LEFT & CENTRE** © GUJARAT TOURISM BOARD **RIGHT** © SHUTTERSTOCK/ BY IMAGESOFINDIA

* UTTARAYAN- THE INTERNATIONAL KITE FESTIVAL

Gujaratis associate the Uttarayan festival, celebrated on 14th January, every year to mark winter solstice or Makar Sankranti. It is dedicated to flying kites on rooftops and spirited battles of cutting each other's strings in festive competitions. Kite festivals during Uttarayan are held all over the state including Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot and Nadiad. Topping them all is the International Kite Festival in Ahmedabad. It is held with great fanfare where participants from Malaysia, Indonesia, USA, Japan, Italy, China among other congregate for kite flying competitions with enthusiastic crowds cheering them on. You can find 24-hour kite markets like Dariapur, Kalupur, Sarangpur and Patang Bazaar in Ahmedabad swing into action days ahead as people rush to buy colourful, and sometimes uniquely designed kites. Undhiyu, jalebi, chiki-tal papdi combo, khichdo, sherdi, bor, shingoda and jamfal are some of the sweet and savoury snacks that are essential to the Uttarayan menu. The sight of the skies, awakening at dawn, dotted with thousands of colourful kites is brilliant to behold. www.ikf.gujarattourism.com; Ahmedabad

* TARNETAR MELA

This annual fair of colours, music and folk dances, magicians and tattoo artists is held for three days in Bhadarya Sud of the Hindu calendar (August-September). The Tarnetar Mela is based on the legend of swayamvara or groom-seeking-ritual by Draupadi, the queen in the epic Mahabharata. Women wearing black zimi (skirt) are taken, while those wearing red zimi are seeking partners. The fair is held on the temple grounds of Trinetreshwar Mahadev Mandir. In the 21st century the fair's whirl of music, dance and ethnic tribespeople gathering allow young people to meet. For visitors and travellers who gather here, the fair's combination of folk performances, handicrafts stalls and food and local colour is a big draw. Large group folk dances like ras, hudo, rahado (a circular dance by Rabari women of the Zalawad tribe), jodiya pavas (double flutes), bhajans (hymns) are performed here with great ardour.

Surendranagar, 8km from Thangadh (nearest railhead is the Ahmedabad-Hapa); tented accommodation provided by Gujarat Tourism (www.gujarattourism.com)

* SAPUTARA

This annual monsoon festival is held in August-September, at the Lake Area in Saputara, Gujarat's prominent hill station along the Western Ghats. Various nature activities are included alongside the festival like picnics and boating in the Saputara Lake, treks up to the Sunset Point, walks around the Rose garden and visits to the Saputara Tribal Museum and Aquarium. The festival is marked by folk dancers and musicians in colourful ethnic costumes and food and craft stalls around the lake area. **Saputara is 409km from Ahmedabad by road; railway stations are Waghai and Billimora; nearest airport is Vadodara**

* NAVRATRI

Nine nights of dancing are what the visitor would find during the Navratri festival in Gujarat held in autumn (September-October). The festival commemorates the mother goddess Durga, who slayed the evil demon Mahishasur. In Gujarat, Navratri is synonymous with endless feasts and organised dance sessions of garba and ras in city fairgrounds in Gujarat. The evening's celebrations are marked by community pujas followed by garba and dandiya ras dances. Head to Gheekanta Road, Swaminarayan Temple, Nagori Sharda and Madhupura

Market in Ahmedabad and also the Vibrant Gujarat Navratri in Ahmedabad. The United Way of Garba is in Vadodara which is called the cultural capital for its grand Navratri celebrations.

Vadodara, Ahmedabad among others

* RANN UTSAV

Held from November to February, craft, design, art, music and dance of a people are showcased in a brilliant festival on the white desert of Kutch. The three-day festival is held in winter across various locales of the region near the banks of the lake or by the beachside. Visitors can expect folk music and dance performances, textile crafts, cuisine with the evenings lit up by the full moon (www.rannutsav.net) **Bhuj, Mandvi, Dholavira, Narayan Sarovar, Lakhpat**

Festival Clock

January Uttarayan (Kite Festival)
August/September Tarnetar Mela/
 Saputara Monsoon Festival
September/October Navratri
November to February Rann Utsav



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Festivals in Gujarat