

1. Onam Celebration at the Ancestral Home

The family gathered in their ancestral tharavadu in Alappuzha for Onam after many years. The old home, with its red-tiled roof and inner courtyard, was cleaned and decorated with intricate pookalams (floral rangolis) by cousins of all ages. Everyone wore traditional attire — men in mundus and women in kasavu sarees — and the aroma of banana chips, avial, and payasam filled the house as the Onasadya was prepared by the grandmothers and aunts.

In the afternoon, they played traditional games like tug-of-war, uriyadi (pot breaking), and kaashum-paaram, with uncles cheering loudly and children tumbling with laughter. A mini tug-of-war broke out between generations, sparking mock arguments and loud laughter. Even the most reserved elders were coaxed into joining the dance when someone started playing “Thiruvathirakali” on a loudspeaker.

As the sun set, everyone gathered around for a family photo — a rare moment where nearly four generations were present. Later, sitting together under the mango tree, the elders recounted stories of past Onams, comparing how times had changed yet the essence remained. It was a day that rekindled bonds and reconnected everyone with their roots.

2. Family Pilgrimage to Sabarimala

A spiritual journey brought the men of the family together when they decided to undertake the Sabarimala pilgrimage. After weeks of vratam (austerity), they began their journey dressed in black, chanting “Swamiye Saranam Ayyappa” as they climbed the 18 sacred steps. Cousins, uncles, and even the older boys joined hands, literally and metaphorically supporting each other through the challenging trek.

The pilgrimage wasn’t just about religion; it became a moment of bonding and reflection. Long conversations under the forest canopy led to previously unspoken confessions, jokes, and shared memories. They camped under the stars, and for the first time, the younger ones heard personal stories of their fathers and uncles from their younger days.

On returning home, the family welcomed them with turmeric water and lamps. The women of the household had kept fasts in solidarity. The experience left everyone changed — more connected, spiritually refreshed, and grateful for the journey that was as much inward as it was physical.

3. Cousin’s Wedding in Kochi

It was the first grand wedding in the family in years, and it brought members from across the country to Kochi. The bride's side, led by Arjun and his cousins, orchestrated every detail — from mehndi ceremonies to the grand Nair wedding rituals. They took turns decorating the stage, welcoming guests, and managing the photographers.

The sangeet night was a surprise hit. Normally shy uncles danced to old Hindi classics, while the younger ones broke into choreographed routines. There were tears of joy during the 'kaikottikali' dance by the bride's cousins and nostalgic speeches that made everyone laugh and cry. The wedding itself was a fusion of tradition and elegance, held near a serene backwater temple.

After the rituals ended, the entire family took a boat ride through the Vembanad Lake, dressed in their post-wedding finery. Laughter echoed across the quiet waters, and even the groom's normally stern grandfather shed a smile as he watched the bride joke with her new brothers-in-law. It was a celebration of not just union — but reunion.

4. Road Trip to Wayanad

When the family decided to take a road trip to Wayanad, it was more about the journey than the destination. Three cars packed with siblings, parents, and grandparents set off before dawn with snacks, music playlists, and playful arguments over who would control the speaker. The winding ghat roads led to both motion sickness and endless laughter.

They stayed in a rustic homestay surrounded by coffee plantations. Days were spent trekking to waterfalls, climbing Edakkal Caves, and boating in Pookode Lake. At night, they sat around a campfire, sharing roasted peanuts, childhood stories, and songs in multiple languages. Even the teenagers who were usually glued to phones were laughing freely with grandparents.

One evening, it rained heavily, trapping them indoors. They turned the power outage into a candle-lit talent show, with impromptu mimicry acts, skits, and musical duets. That night, with wet clothes drying on every railing and the sound of rain outside, everyone agreed this was one of the best trips they'd ever taken.

5. Pongal Festival at a Relative's Farmhouse

The extended family gathered at a cousin's farmhouse in Tamil Nadu for Pongal. Early morning, the children ran around chasing cows and helping set up the traditional mud stoves for the Pongal preparation. Women tied mango leaves and turmeric stalks around the kitchen, while the men tried lighting the fire with more ambition than success.

The cooking began with singing, clapping, and someone rhythmically shouting “Pongalo Pongal!” as the sweet rice boiled over. Everyone took turns stirring the dish, adding jaggery, ghee, and raisins. When it was ready, they offered it to the sun god and then feasted under a tree. Farmers from neighboring fields joined in with their drums, and an impromptu dance erupted.

In the afternoon, bullock cart rides were arranged, and the children were given a lesson on farming tools and techniques by the elders. Later that evening, as they sat watching the sunset over the fields, the family felt an unusual sense of peace and gratitude — for food, for tradition, and for being together.

6. Family Temple Visit and Picnic at Guruvayur

The family planned a day trip to Guruvayur temple — one of their most cherished pilgrimage spots. Everyone dressed in traditional wear, and the women applied jasmine in their hair while the men helped guide the elders through the crowd. They stood in long queues together, talking about life, marriages, and childhood mischief. When they finally had darshan of Guruvayurappan, the shared silence and reverence made the moment feel sacred.

After the temple visit, they headed to a nearby park with banana leaves, homemade snacks, and insulated containers full of idiyappam and stew. The kids ran around chasing squirrels while the older ones caught up on gossip, marriage prospects, and work updates. A cousin played the flute under a banyan tree, drawing others into a reflective mood.

Later, the group took a small detour to the elephant sanctuary nearby. Watching the majestic creatures bathe in the river sparked conversations about nature, reverence, and childhood visits. By the time they returned home, their feet were tired, but their hearts were full — it was more than a religious trip; it was a memory woven with laughter, devotion, and shared silences.

7. Surprise 60th Birthday Party for Grandfather

It began as a secret operation — the cousins forming a WhatsApp group named "Operation Appa's 60th". Over weeks, they coordinated guests, designed custom posters of his life in photos, and prepared a mock award ceremony. On the day, the unsuspecting grandfather was led into the backyard, which had been transformed with fairy lights, marigolds, and live tabla music.

What followed was an emotional rollercoaster. Each child and grandchild came up with a personal tribute — from poetry and songs to a skit about his army days. His wife, who usually stayed out of the spotlight, spoke about their decades together, causing a few tears to fall openly. The highlight was a slideshow of his life narrated by his youngest grandson in pure Malayalam.

Dinner was traditional — his favorites: appam, stew, mutton curry, and pineapple payasam. As he blessed each person individually, he said something unique about them — proving his memory was sharper than anyone expected. The entire family, across generations, left that night feeling closer than ever before.

8. Monsoon Staycation at Home

With torrential rains flooding the roads, travel plans were canceled. But instead of disappointment, the family decided to treat the week as a monsoon staycation. They cooked together, watched old Malayalam movies, played carrom, and spent entire afternoons wrapped in shawls with tea and banana fritters.

The power went out frequently, but that only added to the charm. Candlelit dinners turned into storytelling sessions. Grandmother shared ghost stories from her village days, while the children made shadow puppets on the walls. A torrential night brought a game of "Antakshari" that went on for hours, with everyone joining in, from the tech-savvy to the technophobic.

One morning, they stepped out in the light drizzle and had a barefoot walk in the yard, jumping over puddles. They planted a few saplings together, symbolically rooting their bond further. Despite never leaving home, the family remembered this monsoon more vividly than any vacation they'd taken.

9. Republic Day Kite Flying and Brunch

On Republic Day, the family gathered on the terrace with colorful kites in hand. The sky was a canvas of motion, with each cousin trying to outdo the other in maneuvering their kite the highest. Elders cheered from the sidelines while toddlers held thread reels, pretending to "guide" the kites with serious concentration.

The atmosphere was festive, with patriotic songs playing in the background, and someone even painted the tricolor on everyone's cheeks. After the kites came down, they moved to the lawn for a homemade brunch. There were tricolor idlis, pav bhaji, cutlets, and fruit salads. The older cousins quizzed the younger ones on India's constitution, tossing sweets for every correct answer.

The day ended with a quiz show led by the youngest aunt, where stories of independence-era relatives were shared with pride. What began as a simple holiday turned into a celebration of roots, nationhood, and the bonds that flew stronger than the kites.

10. Sunday Evening Cultural Night at Home

On one casual Sunday, someone joked about starting a "Family's Got Talent" evening — and the idea spiraled. By 6 PM, the living room was transformed into a stage with dupattas for curtains and fairy lights looped on curtain rods. A program list was prepared, and the youngest cousin was appointed as the enthusiastic anchor.

One by one, each person performed something — classical dance, mimicry, a flute recital, even a magic trick with playing cards. Uncles sat tapping the rhythm with spoons, grandmothers clapped through every performance, and the children made elaborate 'judging' scorecards. When one aunt recited poetry written during her college days, everyone was stunned into respectful silence.

Dinner was served in front of the 'stage' — biryani with curd raita and mango ice cream. No one noticed how late it got. The laughter, the applause, the gentle roasting — it made that Sunday feel like a festival of family and self-expression. It was unanimously decided this would now be a monthly tradition.