

MAJOR HOLIDAYS & CELEBRATIONS

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness follows an annual calendar that is filled with holy days and celebrations. Observance may include worship or meditation, voluntary fasting, and festivities. Festivals often include special discourses, dramatic performances, and grand vegetarian feasts for members and guests.

Krishna temples, following tradition, determine the dates of their holidays by using the lunar calendar. Therefore, dates will vary from year to year when compared to the Western, or solar calendar. All events are open to the public.

Prominent holidays are listed below. For a more thorough list of holidays, please visit:
www.iskcon.com/culture/festival_year/fest_days.html

**KRISHNA
JANMASTAMI**

— celebrated late
August or early
September.

Janmastami, the birthday of Lord Krishna, is the most holy day for ISKCON devotees. In India, Janmastami is a major holiday as well, celebrated by Hindus of all denominations.

ISKCON temples celebrate the day with special worship and programs including traditional dances, congregational singing, theater, and feasting. Devotees fast until midnight and then have a multi-course feast to commemorate the Lord's appearance on earth.

**BIRTH
ANNIVERSARY OF
SRILA
PRABHUPADA**

— celebrated the day
following Krishna
Janmastami.

The birthday of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada is a day where devotees observe services to express their gratitude and appreciation of Srila Prabhupada, who crossed the ocean at the age of 69 to spread knowledge of Krishna throughout the world.

Krishna devotees gather to remember Srila Prabhupada and serve an elaborate mid-day feast in his honor.

RADHASTAMI

— observed in
September.

The appearance day of Radha, who is the feminine aspect of the Godhead and Krishna's eternal loving consort, is also celebrated with special songs, worship and feasting.

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THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY *for* KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

Founder-Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

RATHAYATRA

— celebrated mid-summer.

This joyous event is modeled after the ancient “Festival of Chariots” celebrated annually in the Indian city of Jagannatha Puri. That celebration has been held for thousands of years, and is the largest annual religious festival in the world, attracting millions of pilgrims yearly.

Since 1967, local ISKCON chapters have been holding this event in dozens of cities worldwide every year, including New York, London, Moscow, Calcutta and Sydney. In Los Angeles, more than 50,000 people take part in the colorful walk, pulling three giant 40-foot tall chariots. Exhibitions and stage performances often accompany the parade.

GAURA PURNIMA

— observed in March.

The appearance day of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the 16th century saint who pioneered the chanting of Hare Krishna as the primary method of attaining love of God, is a major holiday for ISKCON. ISKCON members worship Chaitanya as the incarnation of Krishna for this age. This celebration also coincides with Holi, the Hindu “festival of colors” and is a celebration of Spring and the triumph of new life over death.

Special worship services and chanting go on throughout the day culminating in an elaborate feast in the evening.

DIWALI

— observed in early November.

Diwali (also known as Dipavali) is the dual celebration of the New Year and the triumph of Lord Rama, an incarnation of Krishna, over the demon king Ravana. Sometimes known as “the festival of lights,” it is a celebration of good over evil, and is sacred to Hindus of all denominations and traditions.

ISKCON temples host large crowds of worshipers who come to celebrate this auspicious day with chanting, the lighting of ceremonial lamps, fellowship, and feasting.

GOVARDHANA PUJA

— observed in early November.

This unique celebration commemorates the legendary act of Lord Krishna lifting a sacred mountain called Govardhana to shelter His devotees from the wrath of a celestial rainstorm. Devotees recount the miraculous pastime, believed to have occurred more than 5,000 years ago in India, and depict it through song, classical dance, and dramatic performance. In many ISKCON temples, devotees also build a large mountain of *halava* (cake) as a symbol of Krishna’s protection.

Some ISKCON temples celebrate this in conjunction with Diwali.

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