

WELCOME TO MEGHALAYA

The Abode of Clouds

Meghalaya's festivals are vibrant expressions of life, deeply rooted in age-old traditions and bursting with energy. The spirit of this enchanting land comes alive in a spectacular display of colour, music, dance, and heartfelt rituals. Every celebration tells a story—of abundant harvests, ancient folklore, and the enduring connection between people and nature. The diverse tribes of Meghalaya—the Khasis, Jaintias (Pnars), Garos, and others—each have their own unique festivals, reflecting their distinct cultural identities and ways of life. From rhythmic dances to soulful songs and sacred ceremonies, every element of these celebrations is steeped in meaning. They honour the past, embrace the present, and inspire hope for the future. Meghalaya's festivals offer a vivid window into its rich cultural mosaic. We invite you to explore this vibrant world—where tradition meets celebration—through stories, music, rituals, and cuisine that are as unique as the land itself.



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Greetings from Beautiful ...

MEGHALAYA
A guide to our Cultural Festivals



**2025
Travel
Guide**

Festivals of the Khasi Hills



Shad Nongkrem

October-November

In the month of October or November, in the sweeping hills of Shillong a palpable energy builds— it's the Shad Nongkrem. It is a five-day celebration held in Smit, the royal capital of the Khyrim Syiemship. The heart of the festival lies in the symbolic dance, making it a profound spiritual event.

Central to the festivities is a ritual of offering gratitude to the ancestral spirits and the presiding deity. The sacrifice of goats, known as *Pomblang*, takes place in this festival. It's a solemn act believed to ensure the prosperity and protection of the Khyrim Syiemship and its people.



Shad Suk Mynsiem

April

The arrival of spring is a time of renewal and a promise of a bountiful harvest. This is the season for the Shad Suk Mynsiem, a festival that translates beautifully to "Dance of the Joyful Heart". Unmarried men and women, adorned in their traditional finery, take centre stage, with rhythmic accompaniment of traditional drums, *ka nakra* and *ka ksing*, flutes, *ka sharati*, and other local instruments filling the air with festive spirit. The dance of the 'joyful heart' aspect of the festival's name truly resonates in the overall ambience of the festival.

Festivals of the Jaintia Hills



Chad Sukra

April

This festival marks the arrival of spring, echoing the spirit of hope and renewal before the sowing season begins. Chad Sukra, an agrarian festival, is deeply interwoven with the cultural practice, identity and agricultural traditions of the Pnar and War tribes of Meghalaya. Brimming with anticipation for the season

ahead, it signifies the close tie of the people with nature. It is a form of paying tribute to Mother Nature, seeking her blessing for prosperity, and expressing heartfelt gratitude for her constant nurturing.



Behdienkhlam Festival

July

As the monsoon clouds begin to recede, leaving behind a land cleansed and refreshed, the Behdienkhlam festival is celebrated, marking the end of the sowing season. The name of the festival directly translate to "drive away the plague". It is a collective effort to ward off evil spirits and diseases.

The epicentre of this grand celebration is Jowai, Jaintia Hills District of Meghalaya. The most iconic part of the festival involves the creation of elaborate and towering structures called "Raths" and smaller, colourful effigies known as "Symbons". It intertwines ancient beliefs with modern practice.

Festivals of the Garo Hills



Wangala Festival

September-December

The Wangala Festival, also known as the 100 Drums Festival, is celebrated by the Garo tribe of Meghalaya. The most significant harvest festival, it expresses heartfelt gratitude to *Misi Saljong*, the Sun God and giver of fertility. Traditionally, the festival stretches for days, even up to a week in some villages. The heart of Wangala beats with the rhythm of the *Dama*, a long, oval-shaped drum. Lines of men moving their hands in skilled unison create a powerful and unique soundscape. Joining them are women adorned in their finest traditional attire. The celebration features an array of rituals such as *Rugala* and *Kakkat*. Beyond the captivating dances and music, Wangala is a testimony to community bonding together in a festive spirit. For the younger generation, it is a vital opportunity to connect with their roots and witness the vibrant expressions of their cultural heritage.

