

What is Kumbh Mela?

Taking a holy dip/bath is the most important of all rituals. The Hindu community believes immersing oneself in the sacred waters will absolve them of one's sins. The name Kumbh is derived from the immortal pot of nectar which the Devas and the demons fought over as described in ancient scriptures known as the Puranas. Mela is a Sanskrit word meaning to gather or to meet.

The Kumbh Mela pilgrimage happens every 12 years and is the largest religious and cultural gathering. The exact time and place depends on astrological predication of planetary movements and religious considerations. The four sites of Kumbh Mela are based on where the Nectar of Immortality was dropped during an epic battle between the gods and the demons. It takes place on the dates when the nectar is said to have fallen in the holy river. The dates are calculated according to the combination of Jupiter, the Sun and the Moon's zodiac positions. The four sites are as follows:

- Haridwar on the Ganges in the Uttarakhand
- Ujjain on the Shipra river in Madhya Pradesh
- Nashik on the Godavari river in Maharashtra
- Prayagraj at the confluence of three rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati in the Uttar Pradesh.

Every three years there is a *mela* (festival) at one of these places to commemorate the devas' victory in wresting the kumbh from the asuras. It is a victory of light over dark; truth over ignorance; positivity over negativity. On the occasion of these Kumbh Melas, Devout Hindus come in pursuit of purging their souls and washing their sins away by taking a holy dip in the sacred waters of the rivers, on the banks of which the abovementioned places are located. It is believed that during this time the water from these rivers turns into purifying nectar allowing the devotees to cleanse their souls as they bathe.

One of the four drops fell where the sacred city of Haridwar is located in north India and this is where Kumbh Mela 2021 will be held.

Mythological Significance

According to Hindu Mythology, it is believed that who take a dip in the holy water they are eternally blessed. Not only this, but it also washes away the sins. It is believed that, a few drops from the Kumbh fell at four places – Allahabad, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nasik, these are the holy waters that Kumbh Mela is celebrated.

Astrological Significance

The dates of Kumbha are determined in accordance with methods which majorly include the planetary positions. When the planet Brihaspati (Jupiter) enters the astrological sign Vrishabha (Taurus), it coincides with the Surya (Sun) and Chandra (Moon) being in Makara (Capricorn), these changes affect the water and air which results in a totally positive atmosphere. Different planets take different amounts of time to complete one revolution around the sun. Jupiter completes this revolution in around eleven years and ten months (approximately twelve years), that indicates the fact that in every twelve years the Jupiter moves into the same position. This decides the occurrence of Purna (Full) Kumbha Mela which is held once in every twelve years. The position of Sun, Moon and the planet Jupiter in different astrological signs determine the site at which Kumbh will be held. The Kumbh Mela is held in Haridwar when the Sun enters the Aries and the Jupiter enters the Aquarius.

Social Significance

Kumbh Mela is the largest peaceful congregation of pilgrims on earth. The congregation includes ascetics, saints, sadhus, aspirants-kalpavasis and visitors. The event encapsulates the science of astronomy, astrology, spirituality, ritualistic traditions, and social and cultural customs and practices. It involves different social and cultural activities, making this a culturally diverse



Hindus gather in India as festival goes ahead amid Covid fears

Many religious gatherings across the world have been cancelled over concerns for COVID. Kumbh Mela 2021 has not.

In late December 2020, government officials announced the event would be only a 48 day event instead of the three and a half months. It would also start in February instead of January due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trusting in their faith, hundreds of thousands descended on the banks of the Ganges river on January 14th (Not in February). Most were not masked and social distancing is not possible. Bathing in the Ganges is considered a sacred rite by Hindus.

 <p>First Shahi Snan Thursday, 11 March 2021 Mahashivratri</p>	 <p>Second Shahi Snan Monday, 12 April 2021 Somvati amavasya</p>
<p>Mahashivratri: Ganga's presence on earth is attributed to Lord Shiva, who held her in his matted locks as she descended from the heaven with an enormous force. A holy dip on this day is believed to be unique spiritually experience.</p>	<p>Somvati Amavasya: Ganga bath has special significance on Somavati Amavasya. It is believed that the moon is the factor of water, the attainment of water and Somanasha is considered as Amrit on Amavasya.</p>
 <p>Third Shahi Snan Wednesday, 14 April 2021 Mesh sankranti & Baisakhi</p>	 <p>Fourth Shahi Snan Tuesday, 27 April 2021 Chaitra Poornima</p>
<p>Mesh Sankranti: On this auspicious day, the water of rivers turns into nectar. According to astrology, a holy dip in the holy Ganges on this day can undo the sins of many lives.</p>	<p>Chaitra Poornima: This is one of the most important days for bathing in the holy Ganges and is popularly referred as the day of 'Amrit Yoga'.</p>

Bathing Dates for Kumbh Mela 2021:

- January 14: Makar Sankranti
- February 11: Mauni Amavasya
- February 16: Basant Panchami
- February 27: Maghi Poornima
- March 11: Maha Shivratri (first *shahi snan* — royal bath)
- April 12: Somvati Amavasya (second *shahi snan*)
- April 13: Chaitra Shukla Pratipada
- April 14: Baisakhi (third *shahi snan*)
- April 21: Ram Navami
- April 27: Chaitra Purnima (fourth *shahi snan*)

Kumbh Mela 2021: The bathing *ghats* at Haridwar

- Har Ki Pauri
- Asthi Pravath Ghat
- Subhash Ghat
- Gau Ghat
- Saph Sarover Kshetra Ghat
- Sarvanand Ghat
- Pantdweep Ghat
- Kangra Ghat
- Roode Bale Wala Ghat
- Ganesh Ghat
- Varagi Camp Ghat
- Sati Ghat
- Daksheshwar Ghat
- Singh Dwar Ghat
- Sita Ghat



Kumbh 2021 is planned to cover four districts of Uttarakhand; Haridwar, Dehradun, Tehri Garhwal and Pauri Garhwal.

Kumbh 2021 would be spread over 150 sq. KM and divided into 41 sectors. This will be one of such event in India which will organize bathing on the main river front of holy Ganga by developing temporary ghats, riverfronts and barricades.

For more information: <https://www.haridwarkumbhmela2021.com/>

A first-hand experience of transformation at Kumbh Mela from journalist Mariellen Ward
<https://breathedreamgo.com/ardh-kumbh-mela-indian-festival/>