Harmonious festivals of August

Posted on

In Sri Lanka, the month of August is special. The most vibrant of cultural phenomena from each community take place this month, reflecting the harmony and rich diversity of the country.

Words Roomini Wijayarathne.

Photographs BT Images.

Esala Perahera

The Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy is revered by the Buddhists of the island, marked by regular pilgrimages to ‘Dalada Maligawa.’ Perhaps the most vibrant tradition of all time performed on behalf of the Sacred Relic, Dalada Perahera (Pageant of the Tooth Relic) spans the month of August and culminating on the full moon Poya day.



Esala Perahera is a pageant that reflects the rich heritage of the country.

Five days of Kumbal Perahera – a modest pageant with tuskers and drummers – are said to drive away ill will. And then, the Randoli Perahera parades the hill capital for five days, amidst the rhythmic beat of drums and the musical notes of Hevisi. Maha Randoli Perahera, the central and final pageant that illuminates the streets takes place on the August full moon day, as thousands of onlookers murmur ‘Sadhu Sadhu’ in worship. Whips lash and fireballs spin, creating a magnificent sight. Traditional dancers in elaborate costumes step lightly on their feet, moving the procession forward. The caparisoned tusker, adorned with precious stones and vivid lights and bearing the Sacred Relic, is the most anticipated sight of the entire procession. As the revered tusker approaches, the air thrums with fervent calls of ‘Sadhu,’ a mark of steadfast faith that devotees have towards the Sacred Tooth Relic.

Information provided by Dalada Maligawa Media Division.

August 1, 2019: Kap Situvima

August 5-9, 2019: Kumbal Perahera

August 10-13, 2019: Randoli Perahera

August 14, 2019: Maha Randoli Perahera (Main Pageant)

August 15, 2019: Water Cutting Ceremony

Feast of Our Lady of Madhu

The Shrine of Our Lady of Madhu in Mannar is a holy site of utmost reverence. As August draws near, thousands of devotees camp in the holy grounds in anticipation of the magnificent Feast of Our Lady of Madhu celebrating the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.



The procession dedicated to Our Lady of Madhu is venerated by devotees of diverse faiths.

Festivities begin with the hoisting of the flag and span across ten days. Novenas for Mother Mary are held daily. Mass is held in Sinhala and Tamil, reflecting the harmony of the island. Grand Feast of Assumption of Our Lady to Heaven is revered with a High Mass and a procession. The statue of Our Lady, decorated in the calm colors of blue and white is taken in a procession amidst calls of ‘Hail Mary!’ Holy hymns fill the air as thousands of worshippers recite in harmony.

Information provided by Rev Fr Luckston de Silva, Diocese of Mannar.

August 6, 2019: Flag Hoisting

Service with Rosary: Daily at 6pm

August 14, 2019, evening: Vespers and Procession

August 15, 2019, morning: First Mass at 5 am,

Festive Mass at 6.15am

Mahotsavam of Nallur Kandaswamy Kovil



Nallur Kandaswamy Kovil becomes a sea of devotees venerating God Skanda and his two consorts.

Nallur Kandaswamy Kovil in Jaffna is a famous and vibrant Kovil with elaborate gopurams and detailed artistry, its history dating back to 1734. Dedicated to Lord

Murugan, also known as Lord Kandaswamy and God Skanda, the Kovil celebrates its annual festival in August. Hindus from all over the world, as well as devotees of diverse faiths flock to Nallur, as the festival initiates with flag hoisting. The vibrant festivities continue with Mancham when the idols of God Skanda and his consorts are taken in procession. Ther (Chariot festival), the culmination of the month long celebration, is a trance of devotion. The idols of God Skanda and his consorts are carried on a silver ‘Simhasana’ (throne) upto the chariot, which is then drawn by the strength of manpower fueled by devotion. The day of Ther sees Nallur becoming a sea of devotees, singing sacred chants in utmost veneration.

Information provided by Shayan Kumaradas Mapana Mudaliyar, Custodian Heir-Apparent, Nallur Kandaswamy Kovil.

August 6, 2019: Flag Hoisting

August 15, 2019: Mancham

August 28, 2019: Sapparam

August 29, 2019: Chariot Festival

August 30, 2019: Theertham

August 31, 2019: Holy Wedding

September 1, 2019: Vairava Pooja

Hajj Festival



The largest annual gathering of Muslims happens during Hajj, making pilgrimage to Mecca.

Hajj, also known as Eid-Ul-Adha, is dedicated to the life of Prophet Ibrahim, his wife Hajar, and his son Prophet Ismail. It is the largest annual gathering of Muslims all over the world, making pilgrimage to Mecca . Thousands of devotees worship Ka'Ba, the holiest site of Islam, walking around it seven times, counter clock-wise. In Sri Lanka, Muslims make the pilgrimage to Mecca, as a journey that has to be made at least once in a lifetime. While many visit Mecca, Muslims in Sri Lanka and across the world celebrate the festival at home and in mosques. This year, celebrations in Sri Lanka begin on August 12, with morning prayers as a family. Festivities continue till August 15.

Information provided by Ash Sheikh Ahmadh Yasir.

These spiritual festivals that hold the essence of rich Sri Lankan culture take place annually, and during your holiday in Sri Lanka, plan to experience one or all of these unique and vibrant festivals. It would be a truly remarkable memory.




