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2020 Sikkim Festival Calendar

Many of Sikkim’s festivals & holidays take place in line with Tibetan Buddhist tradition, following the lunar cycle. Particularly the monastic mask-dance-festivals called “Chams” are popular amongst locals and tourists. They take place in different monasteries of Sikkim from November through January, towards the end of the 10th, 11th and 12th month of the Tibetan Lunar Calendar.

For devotees these festivals are an important annual affair where they consider it a blessing to be able to watch the dances. Apart from the monks, community dancers also participate in the local festivals. During mask-dances Sikkimese pass on values, mythology and spiritual beliefs through the dance dramas. The Cham at Pemayangtse monastery culminates with a rare display of a giant silk applique thankgkha depicting the Buddha.

Throughout the year there are also many special “holy days” when ceremonies take place in monasteries throughout Sikkim: The 8th, 15th and 30th day of the Tibetan Lunar Calendar are considered especially auspicious days and sometimes relate to life-events of the Buddha.

In the end of August or beginning of September the Sikkimese honor their sacred mountain, Mt. Kanchenjunga during Pang Lhabso.

Sometimes dates for monastic festivals may differ from the usual dates as per Tibetan Lunar Calendar, for example if the head-lama decides for some reason to change the date. This can happen even short-of-notice.

Every year on August 8, the indigenous Lepcha-people of Sikkim celebrate the "Tendong Lho Rum Faat", giving thanks to the mountain Tendong for the salvation of their people during the great flood.

Festivals of the Hindu- and other traditions/religions of India are also celebrated by the respective communities. The most important Hindu-festivals celebrated in Sikkim is “Diwali”, the festival of lights in honour of the goddess of wealth, Laxmi.

FESTIVAL	DATE*	
	Western calendar (Gregorian)	Tibetan calendar*
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		15th day of the 11th month
LACHEN CHAM Mask-dances are performed at Lachen monastery.	13. & 14.01.2020 01. & 02.01 2021	18th – 19 th day of the 11 th month.
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		30th day of the 11th month
LOSOONG / SONAM LOSAR This thanksgiving-festival marks the end of the harvest season and is celebrated by the Lepcha- and Bhutia community. Mask-dances (Cham) are held at monasteries in Gangtok (Tshuklakhang), Phodong and Rumtek. The dances symbolize victory of good over the evil spirits. Archery competitions also take place amidst feasting and merry making.	Main day: 25.01.2020	1st day of the 12th month
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		8th day of the 12th month
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		15th day of the 12th month



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<p>GUTOR CHAM RUMTEK & PEMAYANGTSE "Gutor" is "house cleaning day" according to Tibetan and Sikkim custom: The negativity is expelled and good influences are invited to welcome the New Year. Dances symbolize the expulsion of the evil spirit and invite the good spirits into the New Year. Essentially, the victory of good over evil is being symbolized. Spectacular mask-dances (Chaams) are held in monasteries of Rumtek and Pemayangtse.. At Pemayangtse the festival is referred to as "Drag-Dmar Chaam". Pilgrims visit to witness mask-dances performed during the first two days. On the last day, a giant embroidered Buddha-scroll (Thankga) is displayed. Fireworks to drive away evil spirits conclude the function.</p>	21. 02. - 22.02.2020	28th - 29th day of the 12th month
<p>Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries</p>	23.02.2020	30th day of the 12th month
<p>LOSAR / TIBETAN NEW YEAR The Tibetan New Years Day is celebrated at home.</p>	24.02.2020	1st day of the 1 st month
<p>Buddhist auspicious days – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries</p>	24.02. – 09.03.2020	1st to 15th day of the 1st month
<p>BUMCHU Ceremonies & blessings at the Tashiding monastery in West-Sikkim. The ceremony begins in the full moon night. "Bumchu" is holy water that is kept throughout the year in a vessel. The level and condition of the water predicts about happiness in the coming year. It is opened by the lamas of the monastery every year during the Bumchu ceremony and interpreted. Part of water is being distributed amongst the assembled faithful. After the ceremony, the vessel is filled up with water and sealed up until the following year.</p>	09.03.2020	15th day of the 1st month
<p>Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries</p>		30 th day of the 1st month
<p>Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries</p>		8 th day of the 2 nd month
<p>Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries</p>		15 th day of the 2 nd month
<p>Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries</p>		30 th day of the 2 nd month
<p>Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries</p>		8 th day of the 3 rd month
<p>Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries</p>		15 th day of the 3 rd month
<p>Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries</p>		30 th day of the 3 rd month
<p>Buddhist auspicious days – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed by the monks in monasteries It is considered especially powerful during this time to perform wholesome deeds such as generosity (Dana), virtue (Sila) and meditation (Bhavana)</p>	29.04. – 05.06.2020	8 th – 15 th day of the 5 th month
<p>SAGA DAWA DUECHEN – TRIPLE AUSPICIOUS DAY On this fullmoon-day occurred in different years important events in the life of the Buddha: birth, enlightenment, unification in Nirvana. That is why this day is considered especially auspicious and triple-blessed.</p>	05.06.2020	15 th day of the 5 th month
<p>DRUKPA TSHESHI / TSHECHU After the Buddha's enlightenment, he held back in silence for several weeks. Encouraged by Indra and Brahma, he eventually taught the four noble truths in Sarnath to his first five disciples. Ceremonies in all the monasteries of Sikkim are organized. In Muguthang, in the extreme north, traditional horse races take place.</p>	24.07.2020	4th day of the 6th month
<p>Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries</p>		8th day of the 6th month





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Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		15th day of the 6th month
GURU RIMPOCHE THRUNGHAR TSHECHU CHAAM Birthday of Guru Rimpoche Padmasambhava, the founder of Tibetan Buddhism. Spectacular "Black Hat" dances are performed in honor of the birthday of the Guru. According to Tibetan Buddhism Guru Rumpoche Padmasambhava's birthday signifies the reincarnation of the historical Buddha Shakaymuni. Ceremonies take place in all the monasteries of Sikkim. In Gangtok a procession with display of a statue of Guru Padmasambhava and holy scriptures takes place, from the royal monastery Tshuklakhang throughout Gangtok. In the evening dramas and concerts on the life of Guru Padmasambhava are performed.	29.07.2020	10th day of the 6th month
TENDONG LHO RUM FAAT Thanksgiving festival of the Lepchas in honor of the mountain Tendong. According legend, this mountain is said to have saved people during a time when the earth was flooded. Bongthings (shamans) perform shamanistic ceremonies. Ceremonies take place on Tendong mountain, at Kabi Long Chok and in Gangtok.	08.08.2020 Yearly on August 8th	
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		30th day of the 6th month
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		8th day of the 7th month
PANG LHABSOL – OFFERING TO ALL PROTECTORS This festival is unique in Sikkim and was introduced by the third king of Sikkim. The protecting diety, Mt.Khangchedzonga is revered for his unifying forces. Singing & folkdance takes place in Gangtok. One week prior, prayers for wealth and peace by the Lamas of Pemayangtse at the royal monastery Chuklakhang, Gangtok are offered. Mask dances and ceremonies take place in the monasteries Tshuklakhang, Pemayangtse, Ralang; Ceremonies in the monasteries Rabong, Phodong and Tashiding.	02.09.2020	15th day of the 7th month
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		30th day of the 7th month
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		8th day of the 8th month
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		15th day of the 8th month
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		30th day of the 8th month
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		8th day of the 9th month
DASAIN / DASHIN / DURGA PUJA Hindus give homage to the supreme goddess Durga. Family members receive a "Tika" (a mark with red powder) on the forehead. Display of the Goddess Durga in Hindu temples.	26.10. – 30.10.2020	Hindu calendar: 10th day of the month of Ashwin
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		15th day of the 9th month
LHABAB DUECHEN – BUDDHA'S RETURN FROM DEVA-LAND Symbolizes the return of the Buddha from the kingdom of the 33 gods. Sikkimese celebrate the anniversary of the brotherhood between the Lepchas and the Bhutias with ceremonies at Kabi Long Chok. Ceremonies in all the monasteries. No mask-dances.	07.11.2020	22nd day of the 9th month
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		30th day of the 9th month
DIWALI / LAXMI PUJA / TIHAR – HINDU FESTIVAL OF LIGHT Hindus decorate their homes with oil-lamps in order to welcome Laxmi, the goddess of wealth into their homes. Display of the goddess Laxmi in Hindu temples; children have fun with fire crackers; at night display of lots of fireworks.	16.11. – 18.11.2020	Hindu calendar: 3 weeks after Dasain in the month of Kartik

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Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		8th day of the 10th month
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		15th day of the 10th month
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		30th day of the 10th month
KAGYED CHAMS / BLACK HAT DANCE AT RUMTEK MONASTERY Being celebrated is the destruction of evil by the burning of effigies / sculptures. A new and promising year is being invited. Masked-dances (Chaams) are performed in the monasteries of Lingdum in Ranka, old Rumtek, Enchey in Gangtok, Ralang, Tashiding, Pemayangtse and Phodong. Ceremonies and festivals of the Lepchas take place on Tendong Hill, in Nampik (Dzongu) and at the confluence of Tista & Rangit.	13.12.2020	28 th & 29 th day of the 10th month. Main day is on the 29 th day.
NYNGMA GUTOR CHAAM / NYEMPA GUZOM This festival is celebrated within the Monasteries of Sikkim. Common people visit and offer gifts of fruits, sweets and even donations and pray for the goodwill of their family and beloved ones.	20. – 21.12.2020	6 th – 7 th day of the 11 th month
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		8th day of the 11th month
Buddhist auspicious day – ceremonies (Pujas) are performed in monasteries		15th day of the 11th month

**All information without guarantee / Tibetan Calendar nr. of months per Gregorian calendar year vary between 12 – 13.*

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