

The Kandy Esala Perahera



The Kandy Esala Perahera is Sri Lanka's largest and most famous national cultural and religious festival. It is held every year at the **Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic (Sri Dalada Maligawa)** in Kandy to honor the Sacred Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha.

This festival is highly important to Buddhists in Sri Lanka and around the world because the Sacred Tooth Relic symbolizes the Buddha's teachings, peace, and the country's Buddhist heritage. The Perahera is also considered a national festival because it preserves Sri Lanka's history, culture, and traditional arts.

The procession is unique for its beautifully decorated elephants, traditional Kandyan dancers, drummers, fire performers, whip crackers, and cultural performances. The Sacred Tooth Relic casket is respectfully carried on the chief tusker, making it the most important part of the procession.

The Kandy Esala Perahera is celebrated annually over a period of ten nights, usually during July or August (the

Sinhala month of *Esala*). This period was traditionally selected because it coincides with the end of the dry season and the beginning of the rainy season. In ancient Sri Lanka, people believed that religious ceremonies and blessings performed during this time would bring timely rainfall, agricultural prosperity, peace, and protection to the country. The festival also commemorates the Sacred Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha, which symbolizes the nation's Buddhist heritage and unity.

The procession is divided into **two main stages**: the **Kumbal Perahera** and the **Randoli Perahera**.

Kumbal Perahera

The Kumbal Perahera is held during the first five nights of the festival. It is relatively simple and modest compared to the later processions. During these nights, the ceremonial traditions begin, allowing dancers, drummers, whip crackers, flag bearers, elephants, and other participants to prepare for the grand celebrations. The Sacred Tooth Relic casket is respectfully carried on the chief tusker, symbolizing devotion and reverence.

Randoli Perahera

The final five nights are known as the Randoli Perahera, which is the most magnificent stage of the festival. The streets of Kandy are beautifully illuminated, and the processions become larger and more elaborate. Hundreds of traditional dancers, musicians, decorated elephants, fire performers, and cultural groups participate, creating a spectacular display of Sri Lanka's cultural heritage. The final Grand Randoli Perahera attracts thousands of local and international visitors each year.

The Kandy Esala Perahera is not only a religious festival but also an important cultural celebration that preserves Sri Lanka's traditional music, dance, craftsmanship, and

Buddhist values. It provides younger generations with an opportunity to appreciate the country's rich history and strengthens national identity through the preservation of living traditions.

The Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic is one of the holiest Buddhist sites in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site located within the ancient city of Kandy.

Every year, thousands of local and international tourists visit the Esala Perahera to experience its rich cultural heritage, colorful performances, and spiritual atmosphere. It is one of the world's most spectacular cultural festivals.

Quick Facts

- **Location:** Kandy, Sri Lanka
- **Festival Period:** July/August (Esala)
- **Duration:** 10 Days
- **Religious Significance:** Honors the Sacred Tooth Relic
- **UNESCO Status:** Intangible Cultural Heritage Tradition
- **Key Events:** Kumbal Perahera, Randoli Perahera & Diya Kepeema Ceremony



- Tesheema Chammi -

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