

the festive fervour!

Rivers in India are places of great cultural and religious significance. So, what better way to celebrate the River Krishna than with a river festival that takes place once in 12 years? **Bindu Gopal Rao** tells us what to expect at Vijayawada's grand Krishna Pushkaralu that's happening this month.

The mighty
Prakasam
Barrage!

In a country where rivers are a lifeline and revered, it is but natural that festivities tied to a river attract much attention in terms of tourists, pilgrims and even curious onlookers. Whatever be the reason for you to attend, there is an unmistakable lure of water in the form of the river...

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The Krishna Pushkaram (or Pushkaralu as it is known locally), a festival of the River Krishna is truly unique as it takes place only once every 12 years. For the uninitiated, Pushkaram refers to an Indian festival dedicated to the worship of rivers and is celebrated at shrines along the banks of the 12 major

sacred rivers in India. This is typically observed for 12 days from the time of the entry of Jupiter into Virgo. Each river is linked with a zodiac sign and is based on which sign Jupiter is in at the time!

The festival takes place in Vijayawada which is located on the banks of the River Krishna and devotees queue up to take a dip in the river in the hope of washing away their sins. Incidentally, the Pushkaram has been an age-old practice especially in the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana. The Krishna spreads along 1,300 km and is the fourth largest river in India. Originating in Mahabaleswar it finally joins the Bay of Bengal at

Hamsaladeevi.

The festival lasts as long as Jupiter remains in the Virgo zodiac sign and the first and last 12 days when the Jupiter enters and leaves the zodiac sign respectively are considered as the most auspicious. The best part of this festival is that it attracts all kinds of people irrespective of caste, creed, and religion. The main activities are centred in Vijayawada which is the main centre of the festival. This festival was last held in August 2004 and attracted a whopping 30 million plus footfalls including pilgrims and tourists. This year, the festivities will be held between August 12th and 23rd.

