

RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL EVENTS FOR 2016



Spiritual Health Victoria

JAN	5 th January Birth of Guru Gobind Singh Ji 10 th Guru of the Sikh faith who sacrificed his life & family for human liberty, equality and fraternity.	6 th January Epiphany	7 th January Nativity of Christ	14 th January Makar Sankranti On this day, the Sun enters the auspicious Capricorn sign. Several states in India celebrate this day as per their own tradition. Taking a dip in the confluence of the rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati waters on this day is considered to be very auspicious.	14 th January Maghi Remember the bravery of the '40 Immortal Ones' that fought to protect Guru Gobind Singh for freedom of religious belief. Guru Ji then blessed these men with Mukti (Liberation or Salvation).	24 th January Mahayana New Year	26 th January Australia Day / Survival Day (public holiday)	30 th January Birthday of Guru Har Rai Sahib Ji Celebrates the birth of the 7 th Guru of Sikhs, Guru Har Rai. His message to humanity is about the care of flora and fauna, animals and nature.				
FEB	1 st Feb – 7 th Feb UN WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK UN resolution for a worldwide week of interfaith harmony to promote harmony between all people regardless of their faith, proposed in 2010 by King Abdullah II and Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan.		10 th February Ash Wednesday First day of Lent. 40 days of fasting and reflection leading up to Easter.	11 th February Ganesh Jayanti Birthday of Lord Ganesh, the God of Wisdom.	13 th February National Apology Day Recalling Australian government's 2008 apology to the Aboriginal Stolen Generations.	8 th Feb – 18 th Feb Lunar New Year (Chinese New Year / Vietnamese New Year) Year of the Monkey (Chinese Zodiac)		15 th February Parinirvana / Nirvana Day Commemorating the death and final enlightenment (Parinirvana) of the Buddha.				
MAR	7 th March Maha Shivaratri Great festival of convergence of Shiva and Shakti. Also considered their wedding day.	17 th March National Close the Gap Day Raise awareness about the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.	12 th March – 20 th March CULTURAL DIVERSITY WEEK	20 th March Naw Ruz (Baha'i New Year) Coinciding with Spring Equinox in the Northern hemisphere.	21 st March UN International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (known in Australia as Harmony Day)	23 rd March Magha Puja (Thai, Cambodian, Lao) Commemorates the Buddha's visit to Veruvana Monastery.	23 rd March Holi (Festival of Colours) Full moon day. Celebration of the beginning of spring season in the tropics.	24 th March Purim Reading of story from Scroll of Esther with celebrations of survival and gifts to others.	25 th March Good Friday Solemn remembrance of Christ's suffering.	27 th March Easter Resurrection of Christ reflecting the central idea of Christianity.		
APR	14 th April Vaisakhi Celebrates the creation of the Khalsa Panth (Sikh Nation, Brotherhood of the Pure), donning 5 articles of faith. This community of the Pure was initiated by Sri Guru Gobind Singh, the 10 th and last human Sikh Guru.	15 th April Ram Navami Birthday of Lord Rama.	18 th April Birthdays of Guru Angad Dev Sahib Ji & Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib Ji Celebrates the birthdays of the 2 nd and 9 th Guru. Guru Nanak Dev Ji took an unusual step and selected 'Bhai Lehna' as the 2 nd Guru and called him 'Angad' his limb. He then bowed to him.	20 th April Mahavir Jayanti	20 th April First Day of the Festival of Ridvan Marking Baha'u'llah's declaration of His mission as a Messenger of God. This is the most important holy day and is the start of the twelve-day Festival of Ridvan.	22 nd April Hanuman Jayanti Full moon day. Birthday of Lord Hanuman, the reincarnation of Lord Shiva in the form of a Ruda.	22 nd April Theravada New Year	23 rd Apr – 1 st May (sunset) Pesach (Passover) Celebrating deliverance and freedom from slavery, and exodus from Egypt.	25 th April Anzac Day	28 th April Ninth Day of Ridvan	29 th April Eastern Orthodox Good Friday	
MAY	1 st May Twelfth Day of Ridvan	1 st May Eastern Orthodox Easter	5 th May Isra and Mi'raj Night journey to Jerusalem and ascension of the Prophet Muhammad.	15 th May Pentecost Gift of the Holy Spirit, birthday of the Christian Church.	20 th May Buddha Day / Vesak Day (UN observance)	20 th May Narasimha Jayanti Lord Narasimha is a reincarnation of Lord Vishnu, who appeared in the form of half lion and half man, to kill demon Hiranyakashyapu.	21 st May Laitat al Bar'ah Night of extra worship and forgiveness, followed by fasting the next day.	23 rd May Declaration of the Báb Celebrates announcement of His Mission in 1844 by the Báb, Forerunner of Baha'u'llah.	23 rd May Birthdays of Guru Amar Das Sahib Ji Celebrates birthday of the 3 rd Guru of the Sikhs. He rendered selfless service, and took extensive steps to promote equality of women appointing them as missionaries.	26 th May National Sorry Day Renewal of reconciliation efforts.	27 th May – 3 rd June NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK Anniversaries of 1967 Referendum (May 27 th 1967) and landmark Mabo decision (3 rd June 1992)	28 th May Ascension of Baha'u'llah Commemorates passing of Baha'u'llah, Prophet-Founder of the Baha'i Faith.
JUN	6 th June Ramadan Begins Holy month of fasting (begins sunset 5 th June). Fasting commemorates revelation of the Qur'an to Prophet Mohammed. Prayers, spiritual and physical cleansing.	12 th June Shavuot Combined harvest festival and celebration of the gift of Torah.	16 th June Martyrdom of Sri Guru Arjan Dev Sahib Ji To commemorate and honour the 5 th Guru of the Sikhs and the first Sikh martyr. He constructed Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) and compiled the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.	19 th June Eastern Orthodox Pentecost	1 st July Laylat al Qadr Night of Destiny, commemorates the night when Angel Gabriel brought down the first verses of the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad.	3 rd July – 10 th July NAIDOC WEEK Celebrating history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.	6 th July Rath Yatra Festival Chariot Procession festival for Lord Jagannath.	6 th July – 8 th July Eid al-Fitr End of Ramadan, celebrated with a festive meal, charity and good deeds.	9 th July Martyrdom of the Báb Commemorates the execution of the Báb in 1850.	19 th July Dharma Day Commemoration of the Buddha's first Teaching.	19 th July Guru Purnima Full Moon Day. Celebration of the birth anniversary of the great sage Maharshi Vyasa, who edited and reconciled all the holy Vedic Scriptures. Celebrated all over to symbolize a Guru-Shishya (Preacher – Student) tradition.	23 rd July Birthdays of Guru Har Krishen Sahib Ji Birthday of the 8 th Guru. He became Guru at age 5. He stressed humility and wisdom, and took care of the sick during smallpox epidemic in Delhi.
AUG	9 th August International Day of the World's Indigenous People Recognises the first UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations meeting in Geneva in 1982 to promote and protect the rights of the world's indigenous population. This event recognises the achievements and contributions that indigenous people make to improve world issues such as environmental protection.	15 th August Assumption / Dormition of Mary Commemorates the death, burial and ascension of the Virgin Mary.	17 th August "Hungry Ghost" Festival (Yu Lan / Ullambana) (Vietnamese / Chinese) Ancestor Day. Celebrate lives of ancestors with food offerings to relieve the sufferings of the ghosts while it's said the spiritual gates are open.	18 th August Raksha Bandhan Full moon day. Symbolises the strong and healthy relationship between a brother and sister when a brother vows for her protection.	25 th August Krishna Janmashtami Birthday of Lord Krishna, the narator of the "way of life" in the Bhagavad Gita.	5 th September Ganesh Chaturthi 10 day festival of Lord Ganesh begins on this day.	10 th September Waqaf Arafat / Waqf al Arafah (Hajj) Season of pilgrimage to Mecca. Islamic observance day during Hajj when pilgrims pray for forgiveness and mercy.	11 th Sep – 14 th Sep Eid-al-Adha Four days of the Festival of Sacrifice as it commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son to God; he was replaced with a ram.				
OCT	2 nd October Hijira (Islamic New Year) First day of Muharram, first month in the lunar Islamic calendar, marks Prophet Mohammed's move from Mecca to Medina.	2 nd October Navaratri Beginning of 10-day festival of Navaratri.	3 rd Oct – 4 th Oct Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) Celebrates the birth of the world marked by the sound of the Shofar (ramshorn), prayer and 10 days of repentance.	9 th October Birthdays of Guru Ram Das Sahib Ji Birthday of 4 th Guru of the Sikhs. He founded the City of Amritsar and started the construction of the Pool in which stands the Harmandir Sahib – the Golden Temple.	11 th October Ashura Sanni Muslims: Fasting recommended, the day that Moses was saved from the Pharaoh's tyranny. Shi'a Muslims: The day that Husayn, the grandson of Muhammad was martyred.	11 th October Vijaya Dashami / Dussehra One of the most auspicious days. King Ravana was killed in the great war by Lord Rama on this day.	12 th October Yom Kippur Day of Atonement. The holiest day of the Jewish calendar; Yom Kippur consists of a 25 hour fast while praying with the themes of atonement and repentance.	16 th October Pavarana / Kathina (Thai & Burmese) End of rainy season retreat for Theravada Buddhists.	17 th Oct – 24 th Oct Sukkot Feast of Tabernacles: Celebrates fall harvest and commemorates 40 years in the desert – often celebrated on the first and last 2 days – Last day is an opportunity to give thanks to ancestors, and final chance to atone for sins committed in the last year.	20 th October First Parkash Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the 10 th Sikh Guru took an extraordinary step in ordaining Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji the Sikh Holy Scripture as the Eternal Guru of the Sikhs. The line of person Gurus came to an end and the Shabad ('Word') became the Guru.	25 th October Simchat Torah A joyful holiday marking a time to celebrate the completion of the annual cycle of weekly Torah readings.	30 th October Diwali / Deepavali Hindu Festival of lights over 5 days, celebrating victory of light over darkness. Festival can include the Govardhan Puja. Sikhs celebrate Guru Hargobind Sahib's release from prison. He also secured the release of 52 Hindu kings. Others before self.
NOV	1 st November All Saints Day Honouring saints known and unknown, who led lives of holiness and devotion to God.	1 st November Birth of the Báb Celebrates the birth of the Prophet-Herald of the Baha'i Faith in 1819.	2 nd November Birth of Baha'u'llah Celebrates birth of the Prophet-Founder of the Baha'i Faith in 1817.	11 th November Remembrance Day One minute silence and services held in memory of those who have served and died in all wars.	24 th November Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Mahadur Sahib Ji This commemorates the day when Guru Tegh Bahadur was martyred by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Guru Tegh Bahadur stood for the freedom to worship for all religions.	25 th November Guru Nanak Dev Sahib Ji Parkash This day celebrates the birth of Guru Nanak (1469-1539), founder of the Sikh faith. Considered one of the most auspicious days. Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs celebrate this day.	25 th November Day of the Covenant Commemorating Baha'u'llah's appointment of his son, 'Abdu'l-Baha, as the Centre of His Faith.	27 th November Advent Advent is a period of reflection, repentance and belief in Jesus Christ.	27 th November Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Baha Commemorates passing of 'Abdu'l-Baha, son of Baha'u'llah in 1921.			
DEC	8 th December Bodhi Day Commemorates the day that the historical Buddha attained awakening, "enlightenment", or "Bodhi" (Sanskrit & Pali language).	10 th December Human Rights Day (UN Observance) The date was chosen to honour the United Nations General Assembly's adoption and proclamation 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).	12 th December Mawlid an-Nabi Birthdays of Prophet Mohammed's.	25 th December Christmas Day Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus, holiness through prayer and carols, themes of peace and goodwill, and the sharing of gifts.	25 th Dec – 1 st Jan (2017) Chanukah Chanukah celebrates the recapture and rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem in the time of the Greeks.	Spiritual Health Victoria acknowledges that this calendar was put together on the lands of the Wurundjeri and Bunwurrong people of the Kulin Nation. We honour all Aboriginal ancestors and Elders past, present and to come. Please note: Jewish festivals begin at sundown on the previous stated day and, except for Day of Atonement, are celebrated for 2 days. Muslim & Buddhist festival dates are estimated and may vary depending on sighting of the lunar crescent/moon, and are sometimes decided throughout the year. Only major religious and cultural dates are included in this calendar. There may be others of importance to individuals of particular faiths or communities. It is recommended that personal explanations and memories of traditions are sought and shared.						