

Pongal Festival

Thai Pongal is a three-day festival which according to the Gregorian calendar is normally celebrated from January 13 to January 16, but sometimes it is celebrated from January 14 to January 17.

Pongal festival is on January 14, 2017 and January 14, 2018

Special Arrangement for visiting foreigners:

Every year, Tamil Nadu Tourism department arranges Pongal festival in a local village on the day after Pongal day (January 15). The festival lasts for half a day with foreigners participating in cooking sweet rice, entertainment with local folk dances and finally followed by a typical vegetarian lunch. Every year about 100 to 150 foreigners enjoy the festival. The entire program is free including transport if individuals do not have transport facility. We at Fortune Pandiyan Hotel also celebrate Pongal festival where guests are given an experience of their life time.

The TTD also organizes trip to nearby village to witness Jallikattu when it is conducted.

Thai Pongal is one of the most important festivals celebrated by Tamil people in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the Indian Union Territory of Puducherry, Sri Lanka, as well as Tamils worldwide, including those in Malaysia, Mauritius, South Africa, USA, Singapore, Canada and UK. Thai Pongal corresponds to Makara Sankranti, the winter harvest festival celebrated throughout India.

The day marks the start of the sun's six-month-long journey northwards (the Uttarayanam). This also corresponds to the Indic solstice when the sun purportedly enters the 10th house of the Indian zodiac Makara or Capricorn. Thai Pongal is mainly celebrated to convey appreciation to the Sun God for providing the energy for agriculture. Part of the celebration is the boiling of the first rice of the season consecrated to the Sun. The festival is celebrated to thank the Sun, the nature and the cattle for giving the farmers a good harvest. Pongal is one of the major festivals of Madurai and is celebrated with great pomp and show. On the first day, known as Bogi, the houses are freshly painted and clutter is removed. In the Tamil language the word *Pongal* means "overflowing," signifying abundance and prosperity.

The second day is the main day on which large-scale celebrations take place. During the Pongal festival, milk is cooked in a vessel. When it starts to bubble and overflows out of the vessel, freshly harvested rice grains are added to the pot. At the same time other participants blow a conch called the *sanggu* and shout "Pongalo Pongal! They also recite

"Thai Pirandhal Vazhi Pirakkum" ("the commencement of Thai paves the way for new opportunities"). This is repeated frequently during the Pongal festival. The Pongal is then served to everyone in the house along with sugar cane , savories and sweets.

Tamilians decorate- their homes with banana and mango leaves and embellish the floor with decorative patterns drawn using rice flour. kolams/rangolis are drawn on doorsteps. Family elders present gifts to the young.

Maatu Pongal- is celebrated the day after Thai Pongal. Tamils regard cattle as sources of wealth for providing dairy products, fertilizer, and labor for plowing and transportation. On Maatu Pongal, cattle are bathed, decorated and sweet pongal is fed to them.

Jallikattu- is more of a sport than a festival and is held mostly in villages. It is a part of the Pongal celebrations. People in huge numbers throng the open grounds to witness the game of strength. The sport is basically a show of courage and valor expressed by the means of taming wild bulls. It has been banned recently but efforts are still being made to restore the sport as it dates back to many centuries.