

Mahakumbh 2025: A Seamless and Spiritually Enriching Journey Awaits Devotees in Prayagraj, India

The world's biggest religious festival is taking place in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India from January 13 to February 26, 2025. Under the leadership of Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, the Uttar Pradesh Government has made extensive preparations to ensure that Mahakumbh 2025 in Prayagraj is a grand, safe, and spiritually enriching experience for all.

The Maha Kumbh Mela is a major Hindu festival, one of the largest and most revered religious gatherings. Festival's origins are rooted in Hindu mythology, symbolising the victory of gods over demons. It is celebrated every twelve years at four sacred locations in India: **Prayagraj (formerly Allahabad), Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik**. The confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati rivers at Prayagraj is particularly revered as a site for attaining salvation. Devotees believe that taking holy dip at the confluence would cleanse sins and help attain Moksha or spiritual liberation. Main rituals and activities during the Mela include:

1. **Shahi Snan: Shahi Snan** or the royal bath, is the central ritual where millions of pilgrims immerse themselves in the holy rivers on auspicious days and times.
2. **Ritual Bathing:** Devotees take ritual baths at designated times on auspicious days throughout the Mela.
3. **Sankirtan and Bhajans:** Pilgrims engage in singing hymns and devotional songs, perform yajnas (fire rituals), and chantings.
4. **Yoga and Meditation:** Yoga and meditation are conducted for physical, mental, and spiritual well-being among attendees.

Beyond its religious implications, the Maha Kumbh Mela serves as a vibrant cultural festival bringing together diverse groups of people, including the ascetics (sadhus), pilgrims, tourists, social scientists, artists, journalists, seekers, and devotees. In the rituals practiced together, the gathering fosters a sense of unity amongst the participants, transcending differences of caste, colour, creed, age, nationality, believer or non-believer. It is a platform for communal gatherings where pilgrims share experiences and strengthen their faith together. Scholars and spiritual leaders deliver sermons and talks, providing insights into Hindu teachings and practices. Maha Kumbh is a story of India's rich traditions and customs passed from one generation to other from generations; of cohesion and inclusivity bringing the people of all faiths immersing together in the lap of the sacred rivers; and a life-time experience for all who are part of it. Expected to host over **40 crore devotees** from across the globe, this **45-day festival**, highlights India's age old cultural heritage and spiritual traditions. It was added to UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2017.

The Maha Kumbh Mela has traditionally been also an event associated with significant economic activity in the region where it is held. For Mahakumbh 2025, a budget of around ₹6,382 crore has been allocated for the event's infrastructure and services. According to Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), the Maha Kumbh Mela is also expected to garner an estimated amount of ₹2 lakh crore to ₹2.5 lakh crore (\$25 billion to \$30 billion), which may account for about 0.8% of India's GDP.

Glance at the statistics and scale of Maha Kumbh 2025

Maha Kumbh Mela, is not only a significant religious event but also a testament to India's ability to manage large-scale gatherings. It is a case-study of meticulous planning and management with the use of advanced technology and robust infrastructure ensuring seamless organising of multiple activities in large-scales. The city of Prayagraj hosting Maha Kumbh Mela is estimated to receive:

- i. 400 to 450 million **devotees** over the 45 days.
- ii. An estimated 1.5 to 2 million **Kalpvasis** (those staying for the entire duration).
- iii. **Peak Days**, the key bathing dates, particularly during Mauni Amavasya, estimates suggest 80 to 100 million visitors to participate.

To meet the demands of vast numbers of pilgrims and tourists, the Uttar Pradesh Government has made substantial efforts to enlarge the bathing area. An overview of infrastructure and arrangements for the Mahakumbh Mela 2025:

1. Key Infrastructure Development

Temporary City Setup: More than 2 hectares of land at Triveni Sangam has been reclaimed allowing two lakh devotees to bathe at once. Mahakumbh Nagar is transformed into a temporary city with thousands of tents and shelters, including super deluxe accommodations like the IRCTC's "Mahakumbh Gram" luxury tent city which offers deluxe tents and villas with modern amenities.

Roads and Bridges:

- Renovation of 92 roads and beautification of 17 major roads.
- Construction of 30 pontoon bridges using 3,308 pontoons.
- A total of 800 multi-language signages (Hindi, English, and regional languages) installed to guide visitors.
- Public Utilities: Over 2,69,000 checkered plates have been laid for pathways. Mobile toilets and robust waste management systems will ensure hygiene.

2. Security Arrangements: Seven-Tier Security Framework is put in place from the outer perimeter to the core areas, with the deployment of:

- **Advanced Surveillance:** Intensive inspections of hotels, restaurants, street vendors, and unauthorized settlements has been conducted. Vehicles entering Prayagraj and the Mela grounds are thoroughly checked.
- **Expanded Infrastructure:** Prayagraj Police has set up 57 police stations, 13 temporary stations, 23 checkpoints, and deployed over 10,000 personnel, along with PAC, NDRF, and CAPF units.
- **Comprehensive Force:** Over 700 flagged boats staffed by PAC, NDRF, and SDRF ensure 24/7 safety.
- **Advanced Surveillance includes:**
 - ✓ AI-powered crowd density monitoring with over 340 experts at key locations.
 - ✓ Over 2,700 AI-enabled CCTV cameras and drones for aerial surveillance
 - ✓ Facial recognition technology at entry points for enhanced safety
 - ✓ **Fire Safety:** Deployment of four Articulating Water Towers (AWTs) capable of tackling fires up to 35 meters high, 30 metres wide. The AWTs are equipped with advanced technologies, including video and thermal imaging systems, to prevent fire incidents and enhance safety.
 - ✓ **Underwater Drones:** For the first time, underwater drones capable of diving up to 100 meters will provide round-the-clock surveillance at the Sangam area.
 - ✓ **Cybersecurity:** A team of 56 cyber warriors will monitor online threats. Cyber help desks are being set up in all police stations.

- ✓ Deployed State-of-the-art Multi-Disaster Response vehicles are deployed to enhance safety and disaster readiness. Capable of handling situations ranging from natural disasters to road accidents.
 - ✓ Police Deployment: Over 50,000 personnel deployed, including paramilitary forces.
- **Enhanced River Security**: Security along the Ganga and Yamuna rivers, particularly in the Sangam area is enhanced:
 - ✓ **Underwater Monitoring**: Advanced drones and sonar systems provide continuous surveillance.
 - ✓ **Increased Personnel**: 3,800 Water Police personnel, equipped with life-saving tools like life jackets and diving kits, ensure safety.
 - ✓ **Patrolling and Rescue**: 11 FRP speed motorboats and strategically placed water ambulances enhance readiness.
- 3. Health Services and Medical Infrastructure**
- ✓ Temporary hospitals equipped with surgical and diagnostic facilities.
 - ✓ Deployment of "Bhishma Cube," capable of treating up to 200 people simultaneously.
 - ✓ Eye Care Initiative: A "Netra Kumbh" camp aims to conduct eye tests for over 5 lakh pilgrims and distribute more than 3 lakh eyeglasses, towards setting a Guinness World Record
 - ✓ An eye donation camp has been set up to encourage donors.
 - ✓ Special Care for Vulnerable Groups: Dedicated health camps for elderly pilgrims and children will focus on mobility assistance, hydration support, and emergency care.
- 4. Environmental protection and sustainability:**
- ✓ **River Protection**: 3 temporary sewage treatment plants (STPs) are being installed to ensure clean water in the Ganga and Yamuna rivers.
 - ✓ **Eco-Friendly Measures**: Use of solar power for lighting, promotion of reusable materials, and a ban on single-use plastics.
- 5. Tourism and Cultural Events:**
- ✓ **Uttar Pradesh Pavilion**: Spanning 5 acres near Nagavasuki Temple, it highlights UP's tourism circuits and features a handicrafts market along with cultural programs.
 - ✓ **Cultural Events**: Performances of classical music, dance, and exhibitions on India's spiritual heritage will highlight the state's cultural richness.
- 6. Lost and Found Centres**: Tech-equipped Lost and Found centres will provide digital registration for missing persons and help reunite them with their families. Information on lost individuals will be displayed at all centres, and announcements will be made. Social media platforms will also be utilized to aid reunions.

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Source: Ministry of External Affairs, Uttar Pradesh Government