



# Kedarnath Temple Opening & Closing Dates 2024

The rhythmic heartbeat of devotion to Lord Shiva finds one of its most powerful expressions in the sacred pilgrimage to Kedarnath. Each year, the doors of the ancient temple, nestled at 3,583 meters amidst the snow-clad peaks of the Garhwal Himalayas, open and close in accordance with celestial rhythms and age-old tradition. For the planning pilgrim, understanding the 2024 schedule is the first spiritual step, framing a journey dictated not by human whim, but by divine ordinance and the formidable will of nature.

The opening of the Kedarnath temple is a momentous event, heralded with profound ceremony. The date is not fixed on the Gregorian calendar but is determined by the auspicious occasion of Mahashivratri, observed on March 8, 2024. Following this, priests and astrologers consult the Hindu Panchang to select the most favorable day, typically occurring in late April or early May. For 2024, the sacred portals of Kedarnath are scheduled to swing open for devotees on May 12, 2024 (Akshaya Tritiya). This day is considered highly auspicious, marking the beginning of the Char Dham Yatra season. The ceremonial opening, or *Kapat Opening*, involves elaborate rituals at the Omkareshwar Temple in Ukhimath, where the deities reside during winter. The Utsava idols are then carried in a grand, colorful procession to Kedarnath, symbolizing the return of Lord Shiva to his Himalayan abode.

The pilgrimage season that follows spans approximately six months, a window of accessibility granted by the Himalayan climate. During this period, hundreds of thousands of devotees undertake the challenging yet spiritually rewarding journey, either by trekking the traditional 16-kilometer path from Gaurikund or via helicopter services. The temple remains accessible through the summer months, with the peak season often seeing long queues of devotees waiting for a glimpse of the sacred *Shiva Lingam*.

The closing of the temple is an equally significant and poignant event, deeply intertwined with the onset of the harsh Himalayan winter. The closing date is fixed around Diwali, specifically on the day of *Bhai Dooj*. In 2024, Diwali falls on November 1, and Bhai Dooj will be observed on November 2. Consequently, the formal closing ceremony of the Kedarnath temple is scheduled for November 2, 2024. The rituals, known as *Kapat Closing*, are conducted with great solemnity. Priests perform special *pujas* seeking the deity's permission to close the temple. The Utsava idols are then ceremoniously transported back down to their winter seat at the Omkareshwar Temple in Ukhimath, where worship continues uninterrupted through the snowbound months. Following this, the temple doors are sealed, and the main deity is believed to enter a state of deep meditation, or *Yoga Nidra*, while the valley is blanketed in snow.

