

A YEAR OF FESTIVALS

HOW TO HAVE THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE

01.

02.

03.



04.

05.

06.

MELBOURNE | LONDON | OAKLAND

lonely planet

↶ A YEAR OF FESTIVALS

↶ JANUARY

WEEK.01

Junkanoo	6
Kaapse Klopse (Cape Minstrel Carnival)	7
Carnaval de Blancos y Negros (Carnival of Blacks & Whites)	9
Bikaner Camel Festival	9

WEEK.02

Festival in the Desert	10
Voodoo Festival	11
Yamayaki	13
Black Nazarene Procession	13

WEEK.03

Ati-Atihan	14
Camel Wrestling Festival	15
La Tamborrada (Drum Festival)	17
Timkat (Epiphany)	17

WEEK.04

Chūn Jié (Spring Festival/Chinese New Year)	18
Up-Helly-Aa	19
Duruthu Perahera (Kelani Procession)	21
Kiruna Snow Festival	21

↶ FEBRUARY

WEEK.01

Tet Nguyen Dan (Festival of the First Day)	22
International Ice & Snow Festival	23
Thaipusam	25
Québec (Winter Carnival)	25

WEEK.02

Carnevale Venezia (Venice Carnival)	26
Pasola	27
Argungu Fishing Festival	29
St Valentine's Day	29

WEEK.03

Saidai-ji Eyō (Naked Festival)	30
Carnaval de Binche	31
Battaglia delle Arance (Battle of the Oranges)	32
Art Deco Weekend	33

WEEK.04

Oruro Carnival	34
Jenadriyah National Festival	35
Maslenitsa	37
Viareggio Carnevale	37

↶ MARCH

WEEK.01

Noche de Brujas (Night of the Witches)	38
Festival de Tango (Tango Festival)	39

Iditarod	41
South by Southwest Music & Media Conference (SXSW)	41

WEEK.02

Holi	42
Maulid	43
Ben Aïssa Moussem	44
Calle Ocho (Eighth Street)	45

WEEK.03

Las Fallas	46
Starkbierzeit (Strong Beer Time)	47
Spring Equinox	49
St Patrick's Festival	49

WEEK.04

Nyepi (Balinese New Year)	50
Hanami (cherry blossom viewing)	51
Crucifixion re-enactment	53

↶ APRIL

WEEK.01

Semana Santa (Holy Week)	54
Holy Week	56
World Marbles Championships	57

WEEK.02

Kumbh Mela	58
Sisters' Meal Festival	60
Bisket Jatra (Nepali New Year)	61

WEEK.03

Songkran Water Festival (Thai New Year)	62
Feria de Abril (April Fair)	63
Feria de San Marcos (Festival of St Mark)	65

WEEK.04

Walpurgisnacht (Witches' Night)	66
New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival	67
Fiesta de Moros y Cristianos (Moors & Christians Festival)	69
Queen's Day	69

↶ MAY

WEEK.01

Processione dei Serpari (Festival of the Snakes)	70
Naghol (Land Diving)	71
Cheung Chau Bun Festival	72
Feria del Caballo (Horse Fair)	73

WEEK.02

Romería del Rocío (Pilgrimage of El Rocío)	74
Rose Festival	75

Kattenfestival (Cat Festival)	77
Pooram	77

WEEK.03

Festival de Cannes (Cannes Film Festival)	78
Waisak	79
Corsa dei Ceri (Candles Race)	81
Bun Bang Fai (Rocket Festival)	81

WEEK.04

Cooper's Hill Cheese Rolling	82
Pèlerinage des Gitans (Pilgrimage of the Gitans)	83
Usaba Sambah	85
La Ducasse	85

↶ JUNE

WEEK.01

Duanwu Jié (Dragon Boat Festival)	86
El Colacho (Baby-Jumping Festival)	87
Isle of Wight Festival	89
Lajkonik Festival	89

WEEK.02

The Dreaming	90
Feast of St Anthony	91
Sónar	92
Riding of the Marches	93

WEEK.03

Summer Solstice	94
Regatta of St Ranieri	95
Bloomsday	97
Pride Week	97

WEEK.04

Inti Raymi (Festival of the Sun)	98
Battala dos Vinos (Battle of the Wines)	99
Glastonbury Festival	101

↶ JULY

WEEK.01

Kirkpinar Oil Wrestling	102
Fiesta de San Fermin (Running of the Bulls)	103
Rath Yatra (Festival of Chariots)	105
Wife-Carrying World Championships	105

WEEK.02

Camel Cup	106
Naadam	107
Calgary Stampede	109
Marrakesh Popular Arts Festival	109

WEEK.03

Gion Matsuri	110
Festa del Redentore (Festival of the Redeemer)	111



Hemingway Days Festival	111
World Bodypainting Festival	113

WEEK.04

Mwaka Kogwa	113
Beer Can Regatta	114
Womad	115
Heiva	115
Fiesta de Santa Marta de Ribarteme (Festival of the Near-Death Experience)	117
Gilroy Garlic Festival	117

◀ AUGUST

WEEK.01

Crop Over	118
Pjóðhátíð (The People's Feast)	119
Esala Perahera (Tooth Festival)	119
Qi Xi (Seven Sisters Festival)	121

WEEK.02

Edinburgh International Festival	122
La Pourcailhade (Pig Festival)	123
Chung Yuan (Hungry Ghost Festival)	124
Bumba Meu Boi	125
Love Parade	125

WEEK.03

Il Palio	126
Elvis Week	127
World Bog Snorkelling	127
Mezinárodní dudácký festivalu (International Bagpipe Festival)	129
Famadihana (Turning of the Bones)	129

WEEK.04

Burning Man	130
La Tomatina (Tomato-Throwing Festival)	132
Notting Hill Carnival	133

◀ SEPTEMBER

WEEK.01

Regata Storica (Historic Regatta)	134
Henley-on-Todd Regatta	135
Giostra del Saracino (Joust of the Saracen)	135
Umhlanga (Reed) dance	137
Braemar Gathering	137

WEEK.02

Cure Salée (Salt Cure)	138
Horn Dance	139
Janmastami	141
Mid-Autumn Festival	141

WEEK.03

Imilchil Wedding Moussem	142
Egremont Crab Fair	143
Dasain	143

Cow Ball	145
----------	-----

WEEK.04

Les Fêtes de la MercÉ (Festival of the Virgin of Mercy)	146
Galway Oyster Festival	147
Farm Aid	147
Atlantic Antic	149
Hermanus Whale Festival	149

◀ OCTOBER

WEEK.01

Oktoberfest	150
Combat des Reines (Fight of the Queens)	151
Durbar	153
Ghadames Date Festival	153

WEEK.02

Vegetarian Festival	154
Matchmaking Festival	155
Círio de NazarÉ	157
Entenrennen (Duck Race)	157

WEEK.03

River festivals	158
Bridge Day	159
El Señor de los Milagros (Lord of Miracles)	161
MassKara Festival	161

WEEK.04

Jidai Matsuri (Festival of the Ages)	162
Halloween	163
Moulid of Sayyed Ahmed al-Badawi	163
Divali (Festival of the Lights)	165
Fantasy Fest	165

◀ NOVEMBER

WEEK.01

Día de Muertos (Day of the Dead)	166
La Diablada	169
Fete Gede	169

WEEK.02

Bonfire Night	170
Festa del Cornuto (Festival of the Horned One)	171
Pirate Festival	173
Räbechilbi Turnip Festival	173

WEEK.03

Pushkar Camel Mela (Pushkar Camel Fair)	175
Surin Elephant Round-Up	176
Tori-no-Ichi (Day of the Rooster)	177
Mombasa Carnival	177

WEEK.04

Nanak Jayanti	179
Perang Topat (Rice Cake War)	179
LopBuri Banquet	180
Thanksgiving	181
Cooper Capers	181

◀ DECEMBER

WEEK.01

National Finals Rodeo	182
Quema del Diablo (Burning of the Devil)	183
Santarun	184
Klausjagen (Chasing the Claus)	185

WEEK.02

Mevlâna Festival (Whirling Dervishes Festival)	186
L'Escalade	187
Día de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe)	189
Chaumos	189

WEEK.03

Chriskindlesmarkt (Christmas Market)	190
Procession of San Lázaro (Procession of St Lazarus)	191
Dewgal (Crossing of the Cattle)	193
Fiesta de Santo Tomás (Feast of St Thomas)	193

WEEK.04

Hogmanay (New Year)	194
Festival of the Sahara	195
Reveillon (New Year's Eve)	197

◀ FEATURES

CARNIVAL / MARDI GRAS 200

Rio de Janeiro Carnaval	201
New Orleans Mardi Gras	202
Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras	202
Tenerife Carnaval	203
Trinidad Carnival	203

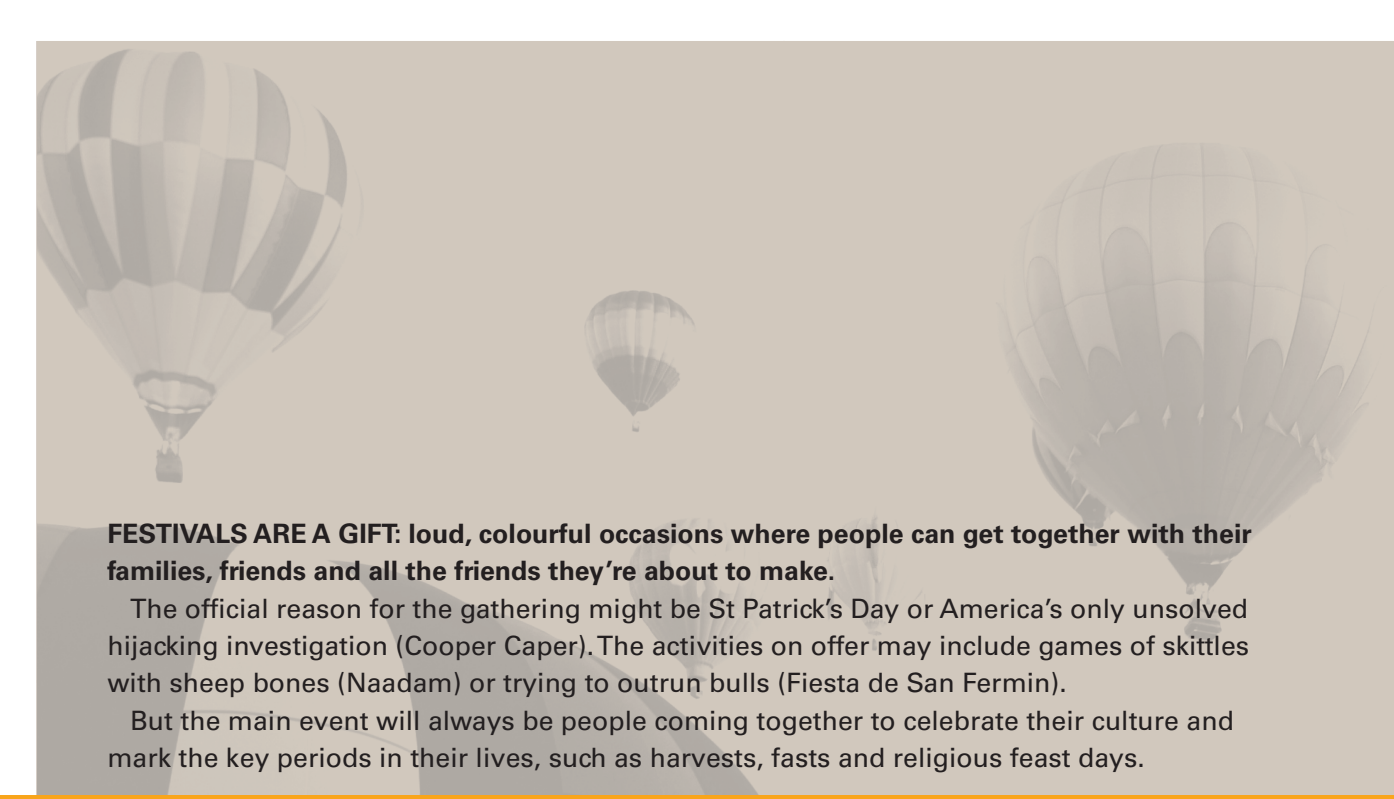
FESTIVALS & RELIGION 204

FESTIVALS & FOOD 206

TOP FESTIVAL LOCATIONS 208

FROM THE TRAVELLER 210

◀ INDEX

The background of the top section features several hot air balloons in various colors and patterns, including stripes and solid colors, floating against a light, hazy sky. The balloons are semi-transparent, allowing the text to be overlaid.

FESTIVALS ARE A GIFT: loud, colourful occasions where people can get together with their families, friends and all the friends they're about to make.

The official reason for the gathering might be St Patrick's Day or America's only unsolved hijacking investigation (Cooper Caper). The activities on offer may include games of skittles with sheep bones (Naadam) or trying to outrun bulls (Fiesta de San Fermin).

But the main event will always be people coming together to celebrate their culture and mark the key periods in their lives, such as harvests, fasts and religious feast days.

HOW TO PLAN THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE!

For this reason, festivals are a living, dancing museum of cultures and traditions in an increasingly globalised world. There is no better place for travellers to understand a country than an event where it proudly celebrates its individuality, whether through music, camel races or monumental food fights.

Not only do tribes converge and carry out traditional practices, which they might forego in favour of the TV on a normal night, but everyone feels happier than a long-tailed macaque at Lopburi's monkey banquet. The upbeat environment is the perfect place to meet both locals and likeminded travellers.

To help plan your year's travel, we've organised the festivals in this book by week and by month. However the events are such a multicultural bunch that many of them don't fit into the Gregorian calendar. Many are timed according to lunar and lunar-solar calendars, so are 'moveable feasts' as far as the solar Gregorian system is concerned. Such festivals take place on slightly different dates each year, often corresponding to the moon's phases.

But we've dealt with the conundrum by reviewing each festival in its most logical place and, having celebrated with a go on the roller disco at Glastonbury Festival, we've compiled almost 300 festivals. These range from quirky, obscure events to heavyweight happenings such as Kumbh Mela and Day of the Dead. Because several of the world's biggest shindigs celebrate Mardi Gras, in the lead-up to Lent, we've given the best of these their own special section.



The reviews are generally divided into sections such as Level of Participation, in which 1 is the lowest level, where you'll be a spectator only, and 5 indicates total immersion in the party.

At the end of each write-up, the Essentials and Local Attractions sections will help you tackle the festival like an old hand and discover the surrounding area. In most cases, travellers are in luck because the areas take on a whole new beauty during the festivities.

There was another conundrum we had to confront before we could hop on an 'art car' at Burning Man and zip off into the sunset. Namely, there are 52 weeks in the year, yet 12 four-week months add up to only 48 weeks.

There's obviously a shadowy conspiracy at work here, but true to the communal festival spirit, we're giving those four 'missing' weeks back to you. There are four special sections covering festival food, religious events, 10 top festival locations, and a selection of great photographs from travellers.

If this book inspires you, don't charge off without making a few plans. The missions involved in preparing for and getting to festivals are part of the experience, and might involve a Jeep ride through the Sahara or tracking down a mask – of the protective or the decorative kind.

And when the party's over and the last bull has been outrun, factor in a 'come down' period, to re-acclimatise to a world where boogeying until dawn and chatting to random passers-by isn't considered normal. Burning Man diehards even organise 'decompression parties' to cheer themselves up...



JANUARY

WEEK.02

Benin's most vibrant and colourful festival, is a showcase of its other qualities.

Since 1997, one year after the government officially decreed voodoo a religion (one practised by around 60% of Benin's 7.4 million residents), thousands of believers have flocked to Ouidah, the historic centre of voodoo worship, to receive blessings from the city's voodoo chief. The celebrations begin when the supreme voodoo priest slaughters a goat to honour the spirits, and are marked by much singing, chanting, dancing, beating of drums and drinking of gin. The beach also briefly becomes a racehorse track.

ESSENTIALS Ouidah is 42km west of Cotonou, Benin's major city. Bush taxis and occasional buses between the cities take around one hour. Good background reading is Bruce Chatwin's evocative *The Viceroy of Ouidah*.

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS The Musée d'histoire d'Ouidah delves into voodoo history. There is a film festival (www.festival-ouidah.org) held in Ouidah at the same time as the Voodoo Festival.

MORE INFO Benin Tourisme (www.benintourisme.com)



➤ MARCH

WEEK.02

↘ HOLI

LOCATION Throughout northern India and Nepal **DATES** Three days around the March full moon **LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION** 5 – prepare to dust and be dusted **DESCRIPTION** The most boisterous of Hindu festivals, Holi waves goodbye to winter and welcomes in spring in a rainbow of colours. In India it's predominantly celebrated in the north of the country, and is quite rightly known as the Festival of Colours for the raucous events on Holi's final day, when children and adults take to the streets throwing colourful *gula* (powder) over each other. Dyed water is shot from syringes, thrown from buckets and poured into balloons, which are then tossed at people. It's sanctioned anarchy and, as a visitor, you'll be a particular target so expect to finish the day looking like *gula jamun* (a red, sticky Indian sweet). Authorities urge the use of natural dyes, so they can be easily cleaned off, but you could be a mobile colour chart for days or weeks after.

Though it runs for three days, Holi is mostly condensed into this final mad day. The night before, huge bonfires are lit at major crossroads in towns and cities and



➤ MARCH

WEEK.03

time when brewers parade their most lethal amber ales, the *doppelbocks*, which have alcohol contents above 7%. The festival harks back to the ground-shifting work of Paulaner monks in the 17th century, who brewed the first thick and near-chewy *doppelbock* to help them through their Lent fast. Lent may be less rigorous today but that's apparently no reason to give up the tradition.

Starkbierzeit's first keg is tapped at Paulaner Keller, the event's traditional watering hole, and you'll find stone-lifting contests – a staple event of the festival – taking place in the Löwenbräukeller beer hall. Just follow the grunts.

ESSENTIALS Come with good beer legs – *doppelbocks* are going to really test them.

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS Grab a board and surf an inland wave on the Eisbach waterway in central Munich. Pay further homage to beer at the Bier & Oktoberfestmuseum.

MORE INFO Munich tourist office (www.muenchen.de)

GLASTONBURY FESTIVAL

LOCATION Worthy Farm, Pilton, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, England **DATES** Last weekend in June **LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION** 3 – groove on down in wellie boots

DESCRIPTION Welcome to Glasto. The colossal summer knees-up in King Arthur country is the world's biggest and best music festival. It's like Woodstock, except it takes place pretty much every year. The list of performers who have rocked the venue's muddy fields reads like a who's who of popular music: Dylan, Bowie, Oasis, Blur, Massive Attack, Orbital, Björk, Radiohead, The Cure.

And what a place to play. More than 175,000 revellers descend on 900 acres of farmland, bringing tents, 3L bottles of local West Country cider and, if it's one of the 'muddy years', Wellington boots. As if following the local ley line, the atmosphere courses along the tree-lined tracks; often with more direction than festivalgoers navigating both altered states of consciousness and the route to that amazing noodle van.

Much of the entertainment has nothing to do with the headline acts on the Pyramid Stage, which is the epicentre of a busy area nicknamed 'Babylon' by old hands. At the other end of the site, beyond the Jazzworld Stage, the circus and the tipi field, the Sacred Space is a focus for the spiritual, pagan aspects of the post-summer solstice event. Watching the sun rise above the stone circle in the hillside meadow is the perfect comedown from a night of electronica-powered crazy-dancing in the Dance Area or the Glade.

Nearby, Lost Vagueness is a theatrical alternate reality, where you can join a mass marriage in the Chapel of Loathe or Loathe, before hiring a ball gown or period suit so you look the part in the Lost Luck Casino and Slip Roller Disco.

This quarter of Glastoville also contains the green areas. Unlike many large gatherings, the festival has environmentalism high on its agenda – not least because the site serves as a dairy farm for the rest of the year.

If you won't let anything as trifling as a roller disco drag you away from your beloved music, Glastonbury might make you feel like a pilgrim arriving at a temple. By catapulting scores of bands to fame, it has shaped 35 years of musical history. One such band is The Smiths, booked in 1984 on the recommendation of the late, great DJ John Peel, who now lends his name to the new bands' stage.

Critics accused organiser Michael Eavis, now a CBE (Commander of the British Empire), of selling out when he recruited the Mean Fiddler group to help in 2002. Certainly, the tightened security has altered the tone: tickets now bear holders' faces. Offerings like the Paradise Lost Trailer Park, which has a butler service and Can Can dancers, are a far cry from the festival's uncommercial, rural roots. But Glastonbury had to evolve. It was in danger of imploding, in the manner of the old Isle of Wight Festival, and anyway, the hippies who used to jump the fence have found a new way in as stall-holders.

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS Can't deal with consensus reality after a long weekend at Worthy Farm? Climb Glastonbury Tor for a 360° view and yet more King Arthur associations.

MORE INFO www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk



BOI BUMBA (PARINTINS, BRAZIL; LAST WEEKEND IN JUNE)

www.boibumba.com

On an Amazonian island, headdress-wearing dancers tell the story of the Boi (ox)



FESTIVAL OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (QUEBEC CITY, CANADA; 23 JUNE)

www.snqc.qc.ca in French

Celebrating Québec's distinct culture, this statewide party is loudest in the capital



GAME OF THE BRIDGE (PISA, ITALY; LAST SUNDAY IN JUNE)

Two teams try to push a 7-ton wooden trolley to the opposite side of a bridge



FESTA DO SÃO JOÃO (PORTO, PORTUGAL; 23-24 JUNE)

Porto's denizens celebrate St John's Day by bonking each other on the head with squeaky hammers and racing wooden boats



➤ SEPTEMBER

WEEK.01

crusaders and the streets fill with costumes from an era predating even Giorgio Vasari, the Renaissance heavyweight who grew up here.

Following a blessing by the bishop on the steps of the 13th-century cathedral, the parade ends in the Grande Piazza, the venue for the afternoon's archaic fun. Proceedings are begun by the *sbandieratori* (flag wavers), touting the standards so loved by territorial medieval types. The jousts and their horses sport the colours and symbols of Arezzo's four districts, which are all hoping to win the Golden Lance. Rather than aiming their lances at each other, contestants score points by hitting a wooden target held by a carving of a Saracen (Islamic) king.

The tradition possibly derives from a jousting display held to honour a knight in the late 13th century, and was certainly going strong by the early 19th century.

ESSENTIALS Wear a doublet or tunic for that heraldic look.

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS Arezzo was bombed heavily in WWII but many buildings still stand. The Chiesa di San Francesco contains frescoes by Piero della Francesca.

MORE INFO www.lagiostradelsaracino.it in Italian



OCTOBER

WEEK.01



OKTOBERFEST

LOCATION Theresienwiese, Munich, Germany **DATES** 16 days from late September to early October **LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION** 5 – messier than a stag night
DESCRIPTION In 1810, a horse race was held to celebrate Bavarian Crown Prince Ludwig's wedding. The jamboree was such a riproaring success that it became an annual event and morphed into today's famously large and ribald party. The horse race was dropped in 1938, because everyone was only interested in one thing: beer. The amber nectar is enthusiastically quaffed by more than six million Lowenbräulovers, from local, lederhosen-clad gents to antipodean gangs. Sitting at long trestle tables with thousands of other beer monsters in huge, multifloored tents, the international inebriants work their way through more than 6.5 million golden litres. The festival's healthy diet also includes some 500,000 chicken, 104 oxen and more than 50,000 pork knuckle servings.

The merriment begins with the Brewer's Parade, which proceeds through the city centre from Sonnenstrasse to the festival meadow at Theresienwiese, nicknamed



OCTOBER

WEEK.04

Crusaders in the 13th century. Some two million pilgrims arrive from across the Arab world to pay their respects at the main mosque, which holds al-Badawi's tomb.

In the resulting chaos, snake charmers induce cobras out of baskets, barbers perform mass circumcisions and hawkers flog *tartours* (cone-shaped hats) and *fanous* (lanterns). Children are presented at the shrine to be blessed and the sick to be cured. It's like a funfare with religious intensity thrown in.

While munching some of the popular sugar-coated nuts called 'hubb el Azziz' ('seeds of the Beloved Prophet'), you might pass a hypnotic Sufi *zikr* ceremony. Hoping to achieve oneness with god by chanting and clapping their way into a trance, participants stand in swaying lines with their rhythmic hand-claps gradually increasing in intensity.

ESSENTIALS Women should be escorted by men and valuables kept in a safe place. If you don't fancy bedding down in the Sufi tent city, day-trip from Cairo, 90km south.

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS Egypt's largest camel market is held at Birqash, 35km northwest of Cairo.

MORE INFO www.egypt.travel