

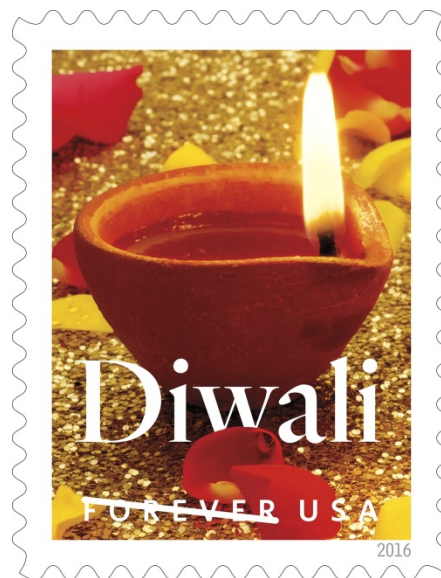


## POSTAL NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### **U.S. Postal Service Commemorated Festival of Diwali with a Forever Stamp Today** *Hindu Holiday Celebrated in Late October*

NEW YORK CITY — The U.S. Postal Service commemorated the joyous Hindu festival of Diwali by dedicating the [Diwali Forever stamp](#) today. The first-day-of-issue dedication ceremony took place at the [Consulate General of India](#) in New York City.

The public is asked to share the news using the hashtag **#DiwaliStamp**.

“The Postal Service is honored to issue this Forever stamp that celebrates the Festival of Diwali,” said U.S. Postal Service Vice President of Mail Entry and Payment Technology Pritha Mehra. “We hope these stamps will light up millions of cards and letters as they make their journey through the mailstream.”

Joining Mehra in the dedication ceremony were: Ambassador Riva Ganguly Das, Consul General of India; Diwali Stamp Project Chair Ranju Batra; India’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Member of the United Nations Security Council (Ret.) Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri; Sand Hill Group Managing Director M. R. Rangaswami; and Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY). Ravi Batra, Esq., Chair, National Advisory Council South Asian Affairs served as emcee.

"I am very honored to be part of history as the United States Postal Service releases the Diwali Forever stamp at the consulate today," said Das.

"Since the start of the American Revolution, destiny has beckoned the United States and India to be the closest allies," said Ravi Batra. "The Diwali Forever stamp represents nothing short of respectful inclusive indivisibility: *E Pluribus Unum* — within America and between two sovereigns."

"While this journey may have taken years, the Postal Service has issued a Diwali stamp that will continue to resonate forever," said Ranju Batra. "Now for the first time there is a stamp that celebrates Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists as Americans forever. Our heartfelt thanks to all of those who have supported this stamp. The Diwali stamp will be a matter of pride for generations to come."

The stamp design is a photograph featuring a traditional diya oil lamp beautifully lit, sitting on a sparkling gold background. Diya lamps are usually made from clay with cotton wicks dipped in a clarified butter known as "ghee" or in vegetable oils.

[Sally Andersen-Bruce](#) of New Milford, CT, photographed the diya. [Greg Breeding](#) of Charlottesville, VA, designed the stamp and William J. Gicker of Washington, DC, served as the project's art director.

Also known as Deepavali, Diwali celebrates the triumph of good over evil. Spanning five days each autumn, Diwali is considered by some to be the start of the new year.

On the Hindu calendar, Diwali falls on the eve of, or on, the new moon that occurs between mid-October and mid-November. In 2016, the main day of the festival will be celebrated Oct. 29 for South Indians and Oct 30 for North Indians.

Diwali is a shortened version of the Sanskrit word *Deepavali*, which roughly translates as "a necklace of lights." During Diwali, the flickering oil-wick diyas sprinkle the homes of observers around the world.

Before the festival, many Hindus traditionally go shopping, clean their homes, open their doors and windows, create intricate rangoli — a vibrant floor pattern traditionally made from materials such as rice powder, colored sand and flower petals — and light diyas with hopes that Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, will visit. In some regions of India, people play games, just as Hindu lore says that the god Shiva did. On the festive main day of the holiday, families pray for Lakshmi, dress up in their best clothes, enjoy lavish feasts and sweets, exchange gifts and light fireworks. Diwali also marks the new year for people in Gujarat and a few other states of India. Diwali also is celebrated as a major holiday by followers of the Jain and Sikh faiths.

The Diwali stamp is being issued as a Forever stamp. This Forever stamp is always equal to the value of the current First Class Mail 1-ounce price.

The Postal Service receives approximately 40,000 suggestions for stamp ideas annually from the public. Stamp subjects are reviewed by the [Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee](#). Of that, approximately 25 topic suggestions for commemorative stamps are selected by the committee for the Postmaster General's approval.

Visit this [link](#) for information on upcoming stamp events.

### **Ordering First-Day-of-Issue Postmarks**

Customers have 60 days to obtain the first-day-of-issue postmark by mail. They may purchase new stamps at local Post Offices, at The Postal Store website at [usps.com/shop](https://usps.com/shop) or by calling 800-782-6724. They should affix the stamps to envelopes of their choice, address the envelopes to themselves or others and place them in a larger envelope addressed to:

Diwali Stamp  
Stamp Fulfillment Services

Cancellation Services  
8300 NE Underground Drive, Pillar 210  
Kansas City, MO 64144-9998

After applying the first-day-of-issue postmark, the Postal Service will return the envelopes through the mail. There is no charge for the postmark up to a quantity of 50. There is a 5-cent charge for each additional postmark over 50. All orders must be postmarked by Dec. 5, 2016.

### **Ordering First-Day Covers**

The Postal Service also offers first-day covers for new stamp issues and Postal Service stationery items postmarked with the official first-day-of-issue cancellation. Each item has an individual catalog number and is offered in the quarterly "USA Philatelic" catalog, online at [usps.com/shop](https://usps.com/shop) or by calling 800-782-6724. Customers may request a free catalog by calling 800-782-6724 or writing to:

U.S. Postal Service  
Catalog Request  
PO Box 219014  
Kansas City, MO 64121-9014

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