



Eat your Cheesecake!

ational Cheesecake Day is one of the creamiest days of the year! It's a day to indulge in the decadence of this dessert, and sample some of the tastiest flavours. From the humble plain baked to the tangy key lime, or maybe, a chocolate one would hit the spot. Whatever grabs that sweet tooth, it is certain that today is the day for some cheesecake! Celebrating National Cheesecake Day is super easy. Just eat, bake and enjoy cheesecake of any variety. Over the centuries, cheesecake moved around the world and popped up as different expressions in different regions. But no matter the variation, cheesecake is a tasty invention that has developed and evolved over time into something that almost everyone in the world loves to eat!

#SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS

Ancient Volcanoes Erupt In Iceland

The Reactivation of Iceland's Reykjanes Volcanic System



After lying dormant for nearly 800 years, Iceland's Reykjanes Peninsula has entered a period of renewed volcanic activity, surprising scientists and reshaping our

understanding of long-term tectonic cycles. Since March 2021, the region has experienced a sequence of fissure eruptions, most recently in July 2025 near Sundhnúkur, that signify the reawakening of a complex and long-slumbering volcanic system.

Tectonic Setting

The Reykjanes Peninsula lies atop the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, a divergent tectonic boundary where the North American and Eurasian plates are slowly pulling apart. As the plates drift apart at a rate of about 2 cm per year, magma rises from the mantle to fill the gap, occasionally resulting in surface eruptions. Unlike

central Iceland's explosive stratovolcanoes (like Eyjafjallajökull), Reykjanes is dominated by rift-associated fissure eruptions, which are generally effusive and non-explosive. These eruptions produce low-viscosity basaltic lava, which spreads easily across the surface and forms lava fields rather than ash clouds.

Geophysical Indicators

The July 2025 eruption near Sundhnúksgrár followed weeks of elevated seismic activity and ground deformation. Using GPS data, InSAR (Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar), and micro-seismic monitoring, the Icelandic Meteorological Office detected magma intrusion at shallow depths as early as June 2025. The data showed horizontal expansion of the crust, clas-

sic signs of dyke formation, where magma forces its way through rock layers, cracking them apart. At the height of the eruption, lava fountains reached up to 100-150 meters, and a fissure over 2 km long opened up. Gas sensors recorded elevated levels of sulfur dioxide (SO2) and carbon dioxide (CO2), common volcanic gases that provide insight into magma depth, composition, and temperature.

Volcanic System Reactivation

What makes this ongoing sequence of eruptions scientifically remarkable is its episodic nature. Since 2021, at least a dozen eruptions have occurred, most lasting days to weeks. This pattern resembles the Reykjanes Fires period between 1210-1240 CE, during which multiple eruptions were separated by months or years, suggesting that the region may be enter-

ing a new multi-decade volcanic cycle. Recent petrological studies of erupted lavas indicate a primitive basalt composition, sourced directly from the upper mantle. The chemical uniformity suggests that the magma reservoir is relatively shallow and not significantly evolved, which aligns with the fast and frequent eruption style observed in the region.

Implications for Hazard Assessment

From a scientific and civil protection standpoint, the reactivation of the Reykjanes system presents both challenges and opportunities. While these eruptions are not currently explosive, they threaten infrastructure such as the Svartsengi geothermal plant, Grindavik town, and the Blue Lagoon resort. The Icelandic government has responded by constructing lava

diversion walls and improving early warning systems. For volcanologists, the Reykjanes events offer a rare chance to study plate-boundary volcanism in real-time, from magma migration to eruption forecasting. These insights are vital for understanding not just Iceland's geology but also rift zones worldwide, including those in East Africa and under the oceans.



Next to the haunting pillars of the Akbari Mosque is a one-grave shrine, maintained as a living legacy by the locals of Kalanaur.



Adil Ahmad

Kalanaur is a village in Punjab that few have heard of, let alone visited. Yet, this small settlement, close to the border with Pakistan and about an hour's drive from Amritsar, has made an oversized contribution to Indian history. For it was here, on February 14th, 1556, that a young and unruly boy-prince, the fourteen-year-old Jhalaluddin Muhammad Akbar, was crowned the King of Hindustan.

Akbar badshah's brick coronation platform, the *Takht-i-Akbari*, still stands among the swaying wheat fields of Kalanaur as a mute reminder that this is where it all began for one of India's most famous rulers. Not in the celebrated corridors of Delhi or Lahore or Agra, all of the cities associated with Akbar, but here, in the rural heart of Punjab. Kalanaur is difficult to reach when treated as a one-off. But, if combined with a visit to Amritsar and the Golden Temple, it makes for a perfect itinerary. Specially for history buffs like me. I could hardly wait to touch and connect with arguably the greatest king my country has produced. What a bonus, barely an hour's drive from Amritsar.

So, on a bright April morning with a slight winter nip in the air, my driver, Simranjeet, and I had left Amritsar for Kalanaur. Within a few minutes, we were on to the wide

highway for Pathankot, Punjab's pop blaring from the car radio. One of the pleasures of driving in Punjab is the soothing view of lush fields stretching to the horizon. It was Spring, a few days before Baisakhi, and the wheat had turned ripe golden yellow, being ready for harvesting. As we drove, Simranjeet kept up a constant chatter.

"Sirji, did you know that Baisakhi is celebrated even in Canada?"

"Sirji, farmers have now banned the lighting of fires at Spring. Because their dry crops could get burnt."

"Sirji, earlier we had eucalyptus trees lining these highways. Now, it is poplar, much better for making plywood and matchsticks."

Occasional brick kilns dotted the landscape, standing erect in the yellow-green fields, emitting lazy plumes of smoke into a pale blue sky. Simranjeet had ready information on this too.

"Sirji, these kilns are very valuable for farmers for an extra income. The kiln owners buy clay for bricks from their fields."

Just before reaching Batala, we came off the highway on to a narrow country road, driving past small communities with names like Faragah and Dharamkot. This was typical rural Punjab; villagers gossiped at hand pumps while filling water into their vessels, chickens for sale clucked from behind wire-mesh cages, impatient kids gadding around sugarcane juice stalls doing brisk business. By mid-morning, after a pleasant hour's drive from Amritsar, we entered Kalanaur.

The villagers of Kalanaur clearly knew their legacy. I was quickly pointed the way to the Takht-i-Akbari, and also informed of the village's other attractions; a famous Shiv Mandir, and the

Akbar The Great's Simple Coronation Platform

The villagers of Kalanaur clearly knew their legacy. I was quickly pointed the way to the Takht-i-Akbari, and also informed of the village's other attractions; a famous Shiv Mandir, and the Gurdwara Banda Bahadur. We drove on to a *kuchcha* track, leaving the village behind us and lurching through waist-high wheat fields. In the middle of the fields, we passed the haunting ruins of the once-imposing *Akbari Masjid*, which from the size of its massive pillars and the fine carvings still visible, must have been an impressive structure in its prime. Besides its broken remains was a small shrine with a single grave draped in a green cloth. I stopped to have a look, and the villagers told me that this was part of the Akbari Masjid and was now looked after by the locals.



Kalanaur's little-visited heritage, The ASI protected Takht-i-Akbari.

#HISTORY



Shiv Temple's unique horizontal Shivalingam, in a lying position.



Gurudwara Banda Bahadur, with Banda Bahadur's mural on the entry gate.



Harbhajan Singh and his son.

father's death, he broke down and wept 'as much for himself as for his lovable, though, eccentric father. The burden of the empire was on him suddenly, and he was not yet done with childhood.' Akbar was fourteen at the time.

Bairam Khan wasted no time in formalizing Akbar's ascension. A masonry platform was built, with a brick throne on top of it. Within a few days of Humayun's death, by midday on Friday the fourteenth of



The single-domed old Shiv temple at Kalanaur.

February 1556, at a time and date considered astrologically auspicious. Akbar was crowned Emperor of Hindustan. Right here in Kalanaur, without any elaborate ceremony!

Nevertheless, this was after all the Mughal Empire. Whatever be the need for haste, some pageantry, style and grace was mandatory. There is a water feature in the middle of the Takht-i-Akbari. A square water tank, about five feet deep, is



Carved masonry for the Coronation Platform's water feature; some Style and Grace to befit the occasion.



Akbar's Coronation Platform: Where the fourteen-year-old Boy-King was crowned King of Hindustan.



The gurgling sound of fresh water, a farmer's *tabela* now adjoins Akbar's Takht-i-Akbari.

maintaining the Takht-i-Akbari. He does a fine job. The enclosure was neat and well swept, with no litter. I complimented Harbhajan and his son on their excellent work, and signed the red coloured ASI visitor's register he had with him.

The sun was now hot in a cloudless sky as I returned to the air-conditioned comfort of Simranjeet's Innova. There were still the other attractions of Kalanaur to visit; Gurdwara Banda Bahadur and the Shiv Mandir. Simranjeet, who, when we started the journey, had no idea about this historical gem in his own backyard, asked me how I was liking the visit. What could I say? I was a bit overwhelmed and still taking it all in. Just the thought that where I was standing, events that had shaped the history of India had been created, left me in awe. Is there any other place in the world where one could sit on the coronation throne of the country's most famous ruler? And, be so close to historical legacy as to actually touch it and feel it for oneself.

I was due to visit two religious places in the next hour at Kalanaur, and I knew exactly what to pray for; that these remarkable monuments, which dot our country, remain forever protected and cared for. Not only for our benefit but for the future generations as well; to visit and to recognise and love the richness of their own heritage and history.

Praying at Kalanaur
Opposite Kalanaur's hectic bus station is an arched gateway to the village's old Shiv temple, famous locally for its Shivratri mela. According to legend, Lord Shiva had rested in Kalanaur; so, the Shivalingam in the temple lies horizontal instead of vertical, which

makes it unique. The temple's white marble courtyard was empty when I visited, apart from the temple-workers washing it down. Buckets of water were splashed on to the cool marble floor as big brooms scrubbed it clean. I took off my shoes, and left footprints on the wet marble as I entered the mandir. There was nobody inside the temple, and I was left undisturbed. By the time I emerged, a few other devotees had entered the compound. Temple bells were being rung, each with its own distinct sound. I tipped the cleaners washing the temple, and then rang the temple bells as well.

Not far from the Shiv Mandir and at the end of an upward sloping lane, was the Gurdwara Banda Bahadur. In 1715, the heroic Banda Bahadur and his Sikh forces had staged their last great stand against the Mughals, at the famous battle of Gurdas Nangal, just a few miles from here. He had been captured and taken to Delhi in an iron cage, where he was executed in a particularly cruel manner. This Gurdwara is located on the spot where Banda Bahadur had built a well. I took off my shoes to enter the Gurdwara, but hesitated as I hadn't carried a handkerchief to cover my head. An elderly *sardar* offered to give me his, but his wife mentioned that there were head coverings available at the entry gate. As indeed, there were. I pushed open the mesh doors to enter the Gurdwara. Inside, there were about twenty devotees seated on a red carpet, women on one side and men on the other. The holy *Guru Granth Sahib* was under a golden canopy. I sat in a corner of the Gurdwara, and once again, I prayed.

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The Emperor's View; the scene from top of Akbar's Throne.

#HERITAGE

One Of The World's Best-Jaipur!

Jaipur ranked 5th Best City in the World by Travel + Leisure's 2025 Survey



In a moment of pride for India, Jaipur has been ranked the 5th best city in the world in the prestigious Travel + Leisure World's Best Awards 2025. Known globally as the Pink City, Jaipur earned the accolade for its rich cultural heritage, iconic architecture, vibrant shopping experiences, and renowned hospitality.

The city's historic charm and architectural grandeur are amplified by its three UNESCO World Heritage Sites, a rare distinction shared by very few cities worldwide. These include the *Walled City of Jaipur*, recognized for its exceptional preservation of medieval urban planning; the *Amber Fort*, a hilltop marvel showcasing Rajput architecture; and the *Jantar Mantar*, an 18th-century astronomical observatory of global significance.

Rajasthan's Tourism Minister, Diya Kumari, who is also a former princess of Jaipur, expressed her delight over the ranking. "It is a matter of pride not just for Rajasthan but for the entire nation," she said. "Jaipur continues to be a favourite on the global tourism map. Though Jaipur has previously achieved such recognition, this year, Jaipur is the only Indian city on the list, reaffirming Rajasthan's global tourism appeal." She further emphasized civic responsibility, urging residents to maintain cleanliness and preserve the city's charm. "We must all take ownership of our surroundings. A cleaner, more welcoming Jaipur will not only attract more tourists but also boost investments and create new opportunities."



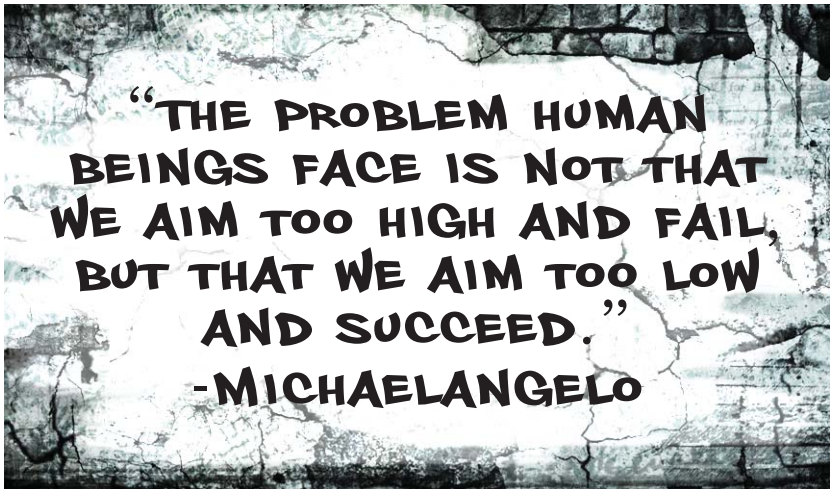
Local tour operators welcomed the news, with Sanjay Koushik of Rajasthan Holiday Makers calling it a well-deserved recognition. "Jaipur has always held a special place in the hearts of travelers worldwide. This award reinforces its status."

Tourists echoed the sentiment. "Jaipur is my favourite city in India. The culture, the food, it's all unforgettable. I would return in a heartbeat," said an Argentinian tourist visiting the iconic Hawa Mahal.

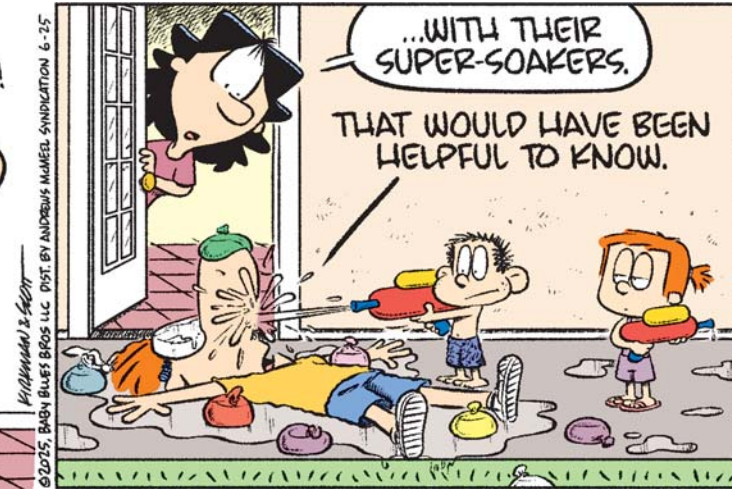
Jaipur now stands alongside global favourites like San Miguel de Allende (Mexico), Chiang Mai (Thailand), Tokyo (Japan), and Bangkok, while even surpassing the Italian city of Florence, which ranked 11th.



THE WALL

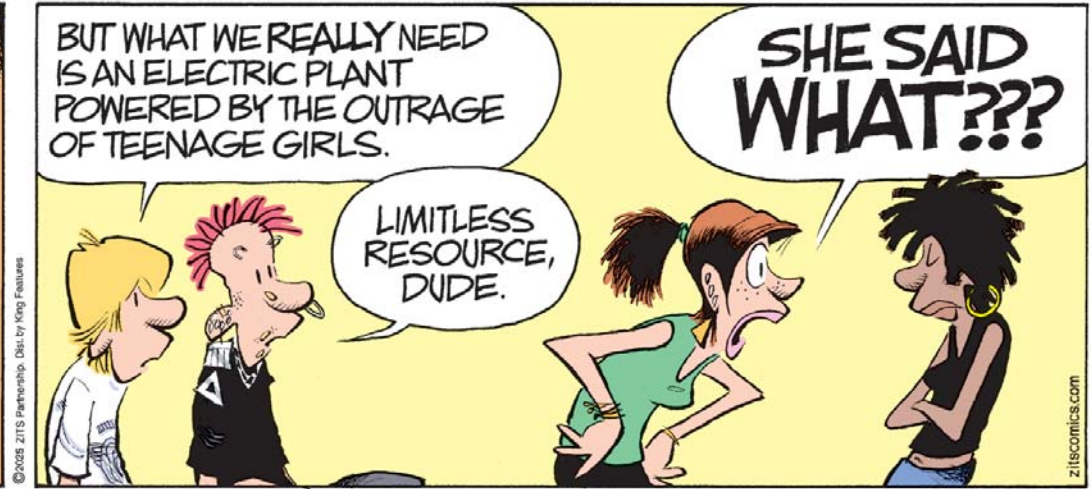
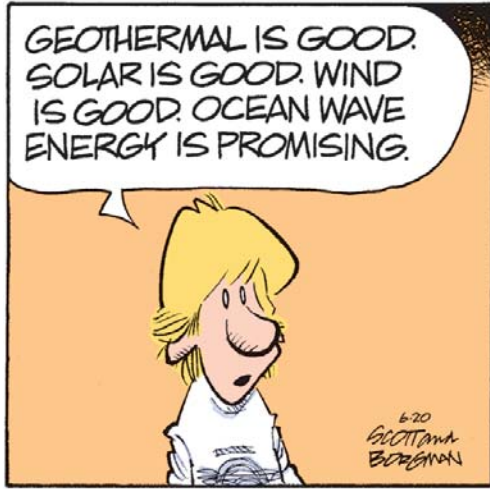


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman