



Celebrating Chinese New Year



新年快乐!



Also known as the Spring Festival, Chinese New Year is the longest and most important festivity in the Chinese calendar.

The Chinese New Year celebrations traditionally last almost a month.

The Chinese New Year tradition is to reconcile and sincerely wish peace and happiness for everyone.

DID YOU KNOW?

The term “Pass Year” is used for the Spring Festival (Chinese New Year).

The word “Year” in Chinese characters used to mean ‘a horrible beast’. To combat the beast, the Chinese would hang “good luck” wishes on red paper on their door and use fireworks in the belief because the beast fears red and fire. This is the origin of the name “Spring Festival”.

KEY DATES



Many ceremonies and activities are observed throughout the month-long celebration. Here is some of the most important activities and customs various activities and customs:

Please note that the dates listed here are based on the Chinese Lunar Calendar.

8th December

Drink December congee.

23 & 24 December

Clean up the house and send Kitchen God to heaven to sweep away any bad luck.

25th December

Welcome the Emperor God coming to earth.

30th December

Known as the 'Eve of the Passing Year', people decorate their house with red couplets and paper-cuts; make dumplings; eat the annual family reunion dinner; and set off firecrackers, to scare away evil spirits.

New Year

Wish Happy New Year to relatives.

2nd January

Wish Happy New Year to relatives and friends or provide sacrifice to ancestors and treasure God.

5th January

Break five, no more taboos. People in the South will do sacrifices to treasure God.

15th January

Known as the Lantern Festival, people light lanterns and eat stuffed rice ball. It also marks the end of the celebrations and the holiday.

PRELUDE OF CHINESE NEW YEAR



The 23rd December (in Chinese lunar calendar) marks the beginning of Chinese New Year.

Zao Wang Ye, the Kitchen God, is said to be the head of every household. He is in charge of the kitchen and protects and monitors the entire family.

Every household must have a shrine of Zao Wang Ye on the East or North of their kitchen. If for some reason a shrine is not possible, a portrait of the Kitchen God either on his own or with his wife should be hang on the wall.

On the 23rd December, the Kitchen God will leave the family and ascend to Heaven. There, he will report to the Emperor of the Gods. In his report, he will make a list of the deeds of each member of the family (similarly to Father Christmas' ordeal on Christmas Eve to make sure no children has been naughty). The Gods then determine whether to bless the family with extra income, promotion, good harvest, and good health or to punish them with unexpected sickness and loss of fortune.

As most will have conducted bad deeds in the past year, they do sacrifices for Zao Wang Ye to ensure that his report is positive. Therefore, at dusk, the entire family will come to the kitchen, burn some incense and provide sugar melon and paper horse. The sugar melon is made by malt sugar and is therefore very sticky, so that Zao Wang Ye's mouth might get sealed and can not be opened when it is his turn to report. Should he be able to open his mouth anyway, the candy's sweetness will make him say good words only.

In some places, people even put some honey around the mouth at the time of sacrifice. After the ceremony, Zao Wang Ye will be burned together with the paper horse. Ideally, the god will rise to Heaven with the smoke, by riding the paper horse.

DID YOU KNOW?

Traditionally, the governments and royal families officially did sacrifice for the Kitchen God on the 23rd December. Everybody else did the same on the following day. It is said that those who rely on water for their life (i.e. fishermen) did it on the third day. Nowadays, the government does not practice this anymore, but many people still celebrate the date to honour the tradition.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sugar melon does not necessarily take the shape of a real melon; it can be a stick, a drum or a pyramid.

CLEAN UP FOR THE NEW YEAR



The end of the year is an excellent time to clean up both your body and your house.

On the 23rd December, before sending the Kitchen God to Heaven, the entire house should be cleaned. The furniture should be dusted, the floor should be cleaned, and unused, unnecessary items accumulated over the past year should be thrown away.

This customs serves two purposes: on the one hand, it helps to forgive and forget about the past; on the other, it helps to give the Kitchen God a great last impression, for him to report on to the Emperor of Gods.

On the 26th and 27th December, it is traditional to take a bath and wash all your clothes. This brings luck and wealth, making the wisdom “dress to success” not just valid in the workplace.

DID YOU KNOW?

Red is the emblem of joy, and this colour also symbolises virtue, truth and sincerity. Red symbolises fire which frightens evil spirits; this is why people dress head-to-toe in new red clothing.

HAPPY CHINESE NEW YEAR!



Happy Spring Festival!

春节好！

New Year's Greeting!

拜年了！

Wish you make a fortune!

恭喜发财！

CELEBRATING CHINESE NEW YEAR



Chinese New Year is the most important day of the year.
It very much reflects how the rest of the year will be.

The first day of the year should be spent to improve your relationship with people around you - including family members, relatives, friends, colleagues, neighbours, and business relationships, as well as anyone you meet on the street and on the internet - and share good wishes such as good luck, good health, or prosperity in business with them.

As a single day is not long enough to meet and greet everyone, people are often divided into groups and are arranged to meet different days depending on their relationship. The New Year's Day is most important, so it is reserved for the relatives of the husband. The second day is for the relatives of the wife; it is also called "returning to the mother's home".

For business people, or someone with a large circle of friends, it is impossible to meet and greet every one of their friends and colleagues. Traditionally, people would place a bag on their front door, so that well-wishers could put cards inside it, instead of actually meeting with the person and chatting.
Nowadays, people simply send greeting cards.

More and more, people also do what is called 'group greeting': this is especially popular among people working for the government, schools and businesses. Everyone within the circle agrees on a common time and place to meet and greet. Generally, only tea and some light snacks (typically peanuts and sunflower seeds) are served.

At the time, even people who consider themselves enemies will be kind and share good wishes.

CELEBRATING CHINESE NEW YEAR, CONTD



For adults, New Year's greetings is a very important occasion as it reinforces and strengthens their social network, both personally and professionally. For children though, the day is not very exciting, as they must dress up and behave. They will usually be relieved after the first two days, or after having met with the most important people (i.e. grand-parents and close relatives).

To entertain the children, they are often given generous portions of candies and snacks, as well as red envelopes with banknotes in it. Traditionally, the bills should be in small denomination since the goal was to make the day happy and interactive, and not actually to give money, but with the increased wealth among Chinese families, the focus has changed and now concentrates on the monetary value.

In the afternoon, it is traditional for the children to be taken to the Temple Fair. As well as praying Gods in temples, the fair includes parades where people can watch dragon dance, lion dance and other performances, as well as eat plenty of snacks, such as sugar coated fruit skewer found traditionally in Beijing. The Temple fair usually lasts seven days.

DID YOU KNOW?

Chinese New Year greetings vary depending on who you are talking to: The words most commonly known in the world today is “gung hay fat choi” (in Cantonese), meaning “wish you make a fortune”. However, this is generally reserved for the people with business relation or who are not very close. For the relatives and close friends, the preferred greeting is simply “greeting of the year” plus something specific to the person. In Chinese tradition, the money is often considered the source of all evil, and people often are shamed to mention the name of it in front of close relatives and friends.

TRAVELLING ON CHINESE NEW YEAR



Chinese New Year is very family-orientated,; it is a time when people rejoin their local communities. Many Chinese parents do not live with their children, so Chinese New Year is sometimes the only time they can see them.

Millions of Chinese people travel before and after the Chinese New Year to rejoin their families in every city, town and village, before going back to their schools, working places or their own homes.

Due to the sheer size of population and the concentration of travel time, the transportation industry sees an overload of passengers every year before and after the Spring Festival. This phenomenon has been given the name of 'spring transportation'.

ZODIAC SIGNS



The Chinese zodiac features twelve animals in the sequence of Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig. Each animal represents a different “personality”.

2012 is the year of Dragon, which is well known to be the luckiest zodiac, but also very unpredictable.