

Lunar New Year

What Is Lunar New Year?

Lunar New Year or Chinese New Year is celebrated every year by millions of people and is the longest and most important holiday for a lot of Asian countries, such as China, Singapore and Malaysia.

It has also become a very popular celebration for people all over the world with many visiting their local Chinatown to take part in the festivities.

The new year doesn't happen on the same day each year, nor is it on what you might know as New Year's Day on 1st January.

It usually falls somewhere between 21st January and 19th February. In 2024, the new year falls on Saturday 10th February.



Celebrations

There are certain traditions that are very likely to occur during new year festivities. Here are just a few:

Red Envelopes:

The colour red is considered to be very lucky as it represents fortune, good luck and joy. People give each other money in small, decorated red envelopes. It is usually older people who give them to the young in amounts of even numbers.

Food and Families:

Food is very important at this time of year. Chicken and prawns represent happiness while noodles represent long life. Dumplings are also eaten. Like Christmas, friends and family all gather together to eat and enjoy each other's company.

Firecrackers: Firecrackers are usually made of lots of red paper rolls strung together. When lit, they explode very quickly one after the other and create loud popping noises as well as a cloud of red paper shards in the air. However, they are quite dangerous and have been banned in a lot of countries, except for some villages in China.

Spring-Cleaning and Paying Back Money: It is believed that spring-cleaning your home will sweep away the bad fortune of the old year and any money should be paid back to anyone who it is owed to.

Lion and Dragon Dances: These dances are often performed by skilled acrobats under lion and dragon costumes. Loud music consisting of drums and cymbals is also played to chase away the evil spirits and bad luck. The dragon dance is often the highlight of a parade in a Chinatown and people flock to see the magnificent show.



Legends

It is said that Lunar New Year started a very long time ago when the Chinese people were being hounded by a strange beast called the 'Nian'. The Nian would visit every New Year's Day to gobble up all their animals, crops and even people!



Scared and frightened, the villagers left food outside their houses for the Nian in the hope that it would leave them be once it had been fed.

One day, the villagers noticed that the Nian













was afraid of a small child wearing the colour red. From that day on, red lanterns, firecrackers and scrolls were used to frighten the Nian away and it never came back.

The Chinese Zodiac and its 12 animals all link to certain years of the Lunar calendar. Last year (2023) was the year of the rabbit, 2024 is the year of the dragon and 2025 will be the year of the snake.



In a very famous legend, these animals all came to be ranked by a race they all took part in by crossing a river. The rat won the race through trickery and people who are born in the year of the rat are said to be very clever.

From first to last, the animals finished in this order: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig.

 Rat 2020 2008 1996	 Ox 2021 2009 1997	 Tiger 2022 2010 1998	 Rabbit 2023 2011 1999	 Dragon 2024 2012 2000	 Snake 2025 2013 2001
 Horse 2026 2014 2002	 Goat 2027 2015 2003	 Monkey 2028 2016 2004	 Rooster 2029 2017 2005	 Dog 2030 2018 2006	 Pig 2031 2019 2007