

# HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS IN CHINA

## National Holidays in China

- January 1-3 New Year's Day.
- New Moon Spring Festival , Chinese New Year.
- May 1-7 Labor Day.
- October 1-7 National Days

Note: In addition to the above, certain groups have official public holidays on the following dates (other holidays may be observed locally):

- March 8 International Women's Day (Women only).
- May 4 National Youth Day.
- June 1 International Children's Day.
- August 1 Army Day.
- September 10 Teachers Day (Teachers only)

## About Holidays and Vacations:

Legal holidays in China are New Year (January 1st), a national one-day holiday; Spring Festival (New Year by the lunar calendar), a national three-day holiday; International Working Women's Day (March 8th); Tree Planting Day (March 12th); International Labor Day (May 1st), a national three-day holiday; Chinese Youth Festival (May 4th); International Children's Day (June 1st); Anniversary of the Founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army ("PLA") (August 1st); Teacher's Day (September 10th); and National Day (October 1st), a national three-day holiday.

China's major traditional festivals include the Spring Festival, the Lantern Festival, Pure Brightness Day, the Dragon Boat Festival and the Mid-Autumn Festival. Ethnic minorities have also retained their own traditional festivals, including the Water Sprinkling Festival of the Dai people, the Nadam Fair of the Mongolian people, the Torch Festival of the Yi people, the Danu (Never Forget the Past) Festival of the Yao people, the Third Month Fair of the Bai people, the Antiphonal Singing Day of the Zhuang people, the Tibetan New Year and Onghor (Expecting a Good Harvest) Festival of the Tibetan people, and the Jumping Flower Festival of the Miao people.

## Spring Festival

Spring Festival is the most important festival for Chinese people. It is a time when all family members

get together, very much like Christmas in the West. Those living away from home return home for this holiday, making it the busiest time for transportation systems of about half a month. Airports, railway stations and long-distance bus stations are crowded with people returning home. Spring Festival falls on the 1st day of the 1st lunar month, often one month later than the Gregorian calendar. It originated in the Shang Dynasty (c. 1600 BC-c. 1100 BC) from people's sacrifice to gods and ancestors at the end of an old year and the beginning of a new one. Strictly speaking, Spring Festival starts every year in the early days of the 12th lunar month and will last till the mid 1st lunar month of the next year. Of these days, the most important are Spring Festival Eve and the first three days. The Chinese government has established a three-day holiday around Spring Festival or the Chinese Lunar New Year. Many customs accompany Spring Festival. Some are still followed today, but others have weakened. But most people in China attach great importance to Spring Festival Eve. At that time, all family members eat dinner together. The meal is more luxurious than usual. After dinner, it is customary for the whole family to sit around, chatting and watching TV. In recent years, the Spring Festival party broadcast on China Central Television Station ("CCTV") is essential entertainment for Chinese both at home and abroad as Chinese family stay up to see the New Year in. The lively atmosphere during Spring Festival also permeates the streets and lanes. Activities such as lion dancing, dragon lantern dancing, lantern festivals and temple fairs are held for days. Spring Festival comes to an end when the Lantern Festival ends.

## Lantern Festival

During the Spring Festival, people visit each other, with a great deal of exchanging of gifts. Then the festive atmosphere of New Year begins to wind down 15 days later as the Lantern Festival sets in. This festival, believed to have Daoist origins, is for people to just have fun Ñ carrying lanterns into the street, watching lions or dragon dancing, playing Chinese riddles and games, and lighting firecrackers. A typical food is *tangyuan* , a kind of dumplings made of sweet rice rolled into balls and stuffed with sweet fillings. The Lantern Festival marks the end of the New Year season and afterwards life returns to its daily routine.

## Pure Brightness Day

Pure Brightness Day falls around April 5th every year. Traditionally, this is an occasion for people to offer sacrifices to their ancestors. In recent years, many people go to the tombs of revolutionary martyrs to pay their respects. At this time of year the weather has begun to turn warm, and the flowers are beginning to bloom. People like to take walks, fly kites and appreciate the beauty of spring.

## Dragon Boat Festival

The fifth day of the fifth lunar month, Dragon Boat Festival is celebrated everywhere in China. This festival dates back to about 2,000 years ago with a number of legends explaining its origin, but the best-known story centers on a great patriotic poet named Qu Yuan (c. 340-278 B.C.), who lived in the State of Chu during the Warring States Period. In despair at not being able to halt the decline of the state, he drowned himself in the Miluo River in modern Hunan Province on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month after the capital of Chu fell to the State of Qin. Legend has it that after Qu Yuan's death, people living on the banks of the river went out in their boats to try to find the corpse. Every year thereafter, on this day people would row their boats out onto local rivers, throwing sections of bamboo filled with rice into the water as an offering to him. Today, the memory of Qu Yuan lives on, *zongzi* (pyramid-shaped dumplings made by wrapping glutinous rice in bamboo leaves) remains the traditional food and dragon-boat races are held.

## Mid-Autumn Festival

The Mid-Autumn Festival falls on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month, which comes right in the middle of autumn, hence its name. In ancient times, people on this day offered elaborate cakes as sacrifices to the Moon Goddess. After the ceremony, the family would enjoy sitting together to eat the pastries known as "moon cakes." The festival came to symbolize family reunion, as did the "moon cakes," and the custom has been passed down to today.

## Understanding National Holidays and Vacations in China.

### Spring Festival Vacation

Reason: To celebrate start of New Year and advent of Spring.

Other names: Lunar New Year, Chinese New Year

Starts at first New Moon of the Year and finishes with the Lantern Festival.

The New Year festivities and official vacation last for 14 days from New Moon until first full moon, which is called the Lantern Festival.

### May Vacation

Reason: To celebrating the Workers of the world.

Other names: Labour Day, International Workers Day.

Starts 1st May.

### National Day Vacation

Reason: Celebration of founding of the People's

Republic on 1 October 1949

Other names: October Vacation

Starts 1 October

The National Vacations in May and October are officially for three working days, May 1-3 & October 1-3; however, beginning in 2001 the Central Government introduced a system that allows for the vacation period to be extended to seven days.

By working the weekend before the vacation period, and adding those two days to the three official days, plus adding the weekend that would fall after this period extends the Vacation to seven days.

3 Days (Official National Holiday)

+

2 Days (the Weekend before)

+

2 Days (the weekend after)

= 7 Days

### Note for Foreign Experts:

Foreign Experts are allowed a further two days per year to celebrate their religious festivals/ holidays. See *Notice for Foreign Cultural and Educational Experts working in China* for full details.

The foreign expert shall enjoy the following holidays and festivals in China:

- New Year's Day, Spring Festival, Labour Day, National Day and other holidays stipulated by laws and regulations
- The foreign expert may enjoy such festivals and holidays as the followings according to other nationalities and religions two days for Christmas, three days for Butcher Day (Corban Day), one day for Meat Diet Resume Day and one day for Water-splashing Festival.
- The foreign expert may enjoy the annual holiday with payment where the contract term of the foreign expert is one year, the holiday with payment shall be four weeks. Where the expert works in an educational institution and the contract term is one academic year, he may enjoy one holiday (winter holiday or summer holiday) in the institution with payment.

Many organisations in China; government instrumentalities, commercial offices, manufacturers and educational institutions work Saturdays and Sundays as part of a normal work week. If your religion precludes work on Saturdays, and you refuse

to work on an occasional Saturday, you should seek employment other than China.

## About Chinese Festivals and Events

**New Year's Eve:** In cities throughout China; dances, music, acrobatics, comedy, folk customs and visits to historical sites.

**January 1st:** Striking Bells To Welcome The New Year, Hangzhou (Zhejiang), bells are struck to welcome New Year, dragon and lion dances, decorated boats on beautiful West Lake.

**January - February:** Harbin Ice And Snow Festival, Harbin (Heilongjiang): giant ice sculptures, lit with colored lanterns standing in city square and along river, winter/ice swimming, ice hockey, skiing, film festival, folk ceremonies on ice.

**January (Early):** Jilin Rime Festival, Jilin (Jilin): colorful ice lanterns, ice and snow games, fireworks, parade of boats, Manchu and Korean dances.

**January 15 - February 28:** Beijing Longqing Gorge Ice and Snow Festival, Longqing (Beijing): ice lanterns, fireworks, ice fishing.

**February (Early):** Spring Festival Flower Fair, Guangzhou (Guangdong): flower markets throughout the city.

**February (Early):** Spring Festival: ushering in the lunar new year.

**February (Mid):** Buddhist Assembly At Labrang Monastery, Xiahe (Gansu): Monks of the Gelug Sect of Tibetan Buddhism perform ritual dances, chant scriptures.

**February (Late):** assemblies In Taper Lamasery, Huangzhong (Qinghai): Tibetans celebrate Destruction of Death, display large Buddhist images, butter flowers exhibition, Buddhist scriptures chanted, ritual dances.

**February-march:** Lantern Festival, Zigong (Sichuan): lanterns of bamboo, silk, paper, porcelain dragons, glass peacocks.

**April (Early):** Hainan International Coconut Festival, throughout Hainan Island: lantern festival, dragon boat races, martial arts contests, Miao and Li ceremonies.

**Third Day Of The Third Lunar Month:** Li people of Hainan in archery contests, singing bamboo dancing.

**April (Early):** Dragon Boat Festival Qintong Town, Yangzhou City (Jiangsu): boat races, Operas, lion and dragon dances.

**April (Month Long):** Guizhou Azalea Festival, Qianxi and Dafang Counties(Guizhou): bonfires, minority folk dances visit Huangguoshu Waterfall.

**April (Mid):** Water Splashing Festival Of Dai People, Xishuangbanna (Yunnan): dragon boat races, fireworks, dances and splashing with water.

**April (Month Long):** Peony Fair, Luoyang (Henan): 350 varieties of peony on display in place where peonies first cultivated 1,400 years ago. Exhibitions of lanterns, paintings, calligraphy and photographs of the flowers.

**April (Late):** Chang'an Annual International Calligraphy Meeting, Xi'an (Shaanxi): Chinese and foreign calligraphers display work, discuss four treasures, visit historic carved stones.

**April(late):** Weifang International Kite Festival, Weifang (Shandong): kite contests, demonstrations, visit to Kite Museum.

**April(late):** (Also Early October) Fijian Mazu Festival, Meizhou island (Fujian): birthday of goddess of the sea Maze, prayers and offering at shrines.

**April (Month Long):** Guangxi International Folk Song Festival, Nanning City or Liuzhou City (Guangxi): folk songs, contests and fair.

**May (Late):** Dalian Chinese Locust Blossom Festival, Dalian (Liaoning): flower viewing, folk performances, sports.

**June (Mid):** International Dragon Boat Festival, Yueyang (Hunan): crews from around the world compete in dragon boat races on South Lake.

**June (Late):** Torch Festival of Yi Minority, Shicun Town & Chuxiong City (Yunnan): archery, horse races, bullfights, wrestling, bonfires, performances of Yi instruments.

**June - July:** Carnivals in Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and 17 holiday resorts stage dances, operas, acrobatics.

**June - July:** Daxing County Watermelon Festival, Daxing (Beijing): watermelon tasting, folk performances, visits to farmers' houses.

**July (Early):** Double Six Folk Song Fair, Xining (Qinghai): thousands of ethnic musical groups perform folk songs.

**July (Mid):** Jiayuguan Pass International Hang Glider Festival, Jiayuguan Pass (Gansu): hang gliding and Gobi Desert.

**July 15 - August 30:** Nadam Grassland Tourist Festival, Inner Mongolia, Mongolian games with horse races, archery, wedding ceremonies, optional visit to Genghis Khan mausoleum.

**July (Late):** Torch Festival Of Yi Minority, Liangshan (Sichuan): horse races, singing contests, torch-light parade, bonfire.

**July 25 - August 25:** Mt Wutai International Tourist Month, Taibuai, Wutai County (Shanxi): mule and horse fair, Buddhist activities folk entertainment.

**July - August:** China Guizhou Famous Liquor And Wine Festival. Zunyi City & Shizhang Caves (Guizhou), museum of wine, Maotai brewery, visit to caves and waterfalls.

**August (Late):** Xinjiang Grape Festival, Turpan (Xinjiang): Uygur minority ceremonies and dances, hami melon contest, visits to vineyards.

**August (Late):** Tibetan Horse Race Festival, Nagqu (Tibet): horse races, mounted archery and horsemanship.

**August (Late):** China Changchun International Film Festival, Changchun (Jilin): Chinese and foreign films shown and appraised.

**August (Mid):** Qingdao International Beer Festival, Qingdao (Shandong): beer tasting fair, fireworks, fashion shows, sports contests.

**August (Mid):** Temple Fair, Jinhua (Anhui): Buddhist ceremonies and symposium, produce fair.

**August:** Tibetan Shotan Festival, Lhasa (Tibet): display of Buddhist images, operas, yogurt banquets.

**August - October:** Shopping Festivals in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Symphony Concerts performed by foreign and Chinese orchestras, in Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven, Summer Palace and on the Great Wall.

**September (Mid):** Zhangjiajie International Forest Festival, Zhangjiajie (Hunan): nature trails, white-water rafting, rock climbing.

**September (Late):** Suzhou Silk Tourist Festival, Suzhou (Jiangsu): silk exhibitions, trade talks.

**September (Late):** Shanghai Tourist Festival, Shanghai: parade of floats, open air concerts, symposiums, tea cure exchange, Shanghai Citizen for a Day.

**September - October:** China Tourist Festival in Guangzhou: city festival, dance and stage entertainment, contests, shopping tours.

**September - October:** Hubei Three Gorges Art Festival, Yichang (Hubei): tours of Three Gorges, culture exhibitions, trade fair.

**September - October:** Qufu International Confucius Culture Festival, Qufu(Shandong): birthday of Confucius, memorial service, ancient music, exhibitions, seminars, visits to Confucian tombs.

**September:** Xi'an Ancient Culture Art Festival, Xi'an(Shaanxi): exhibitions, folk performances, trade fair.

**September:** International Qiantang River Tide-observing Festival, Yangguan, Hangzhou (Zhejiang): watch water reverse and thunder Lip river.

**September:** Zhengzhou International Shaolin Martial Arts Festival, Zhengzhou(Henan): martial arts demonstrations, displays and contests, folk art and customs.

**September:** Dalian International Fashion Festival, Dalian(Liaoning): fashion shows, trade fair, design competition, exhibitions.

**October (Mid):** Jingdezhen international Pottery And Porcelain Festival, Jingdezhen(Jiangxi): World Pottery Technique Competition, exhibition of pottery and pottery making, porcelain making techniques, contests, demonstrations and crafts for sale.

**October:** Huangshan Mountain International Tourist Festival, Huangshan(Anhui): lantern festival, tour of mountains, folk performances, trade fair.

**October:** Baoding Health Building Festival For Seniors, Baoding(Hubei): senior citizens do Tai Ji exercises in parks, visit Qigong hospital, Martial Arts Hall and Medicine King Temple, taste traditional health foods.

**November:** Guilin Scenery Festival Guilin(Guangxi): lantern festival on Li River, bonfire party, traditional song and dance.