



CHINA · YUNNAN



FOCUS

Chinese New Year: Tradition and changes

Spring Festival (Chinese New Year), a day for family reunion, is the most important festival in China. These days, however, Chinese people are celebrating this traditional festival in new ways.

With Spring Festival around the corner, the largest annual human migration begins in China: the Spring Festival travel rush. Hundreds of millions of Chinese people rush home for family reunions, like migratory birds. During this year's Spring Festival travel rush from January 10th to February 18th, the Chinese public transport system is expected to handle three billion passengers, which means that every Chinese person will on average make two trips.

Chinese people now have more options for travelling home. Some choose to travel by train. Travelling by plane has become much more affordable, even for ordinary people. The Chinese railway network has an operating mileage of nearly 139,000 kilometres, including 35,000 kilometres of high-speed railways. The high-speed railways have linked an increasing number of cities, thus enabling people to travel faster and more comfortably. As the number of car owners grows, fellow townspeople can also share rides home.

Meanwhile, many parents living in rural areas choose to join their children in the big cities during Spring Festival. Over the past four years, the number of these travellers has seen a nine percent increase year on year. In some areas, the railway authorities have even introduced fare discounts to encourage the trend. Spring Festival is also the time when Chinese people are the most willing to spend, especially on food,

Spring Festival, or Chinese New Year, usually lasts from the 23rd day of the 12th lunar month to the 15th day of the first lunar month. It reaches climax on the day that marks the last day of the 12th lunar month and the first day of the first lunar month. Spring Festival is the most important festival for Chinese people. It symbolizes unity, prosperity and people's best wishes for the coming year. Historical records show that Spring Festival has a history of more than 4,000 years. The 2020 Spring Festival holiday will last from January 24th to January 30th.



“Red” is an auspicious color of China, especially during the Spring Festival. Photos from Yunnan Daily and Xinhua

gifts and festive decorations. Over recent years, as the internet and infrastructure continue to develop at a fast pace, many e-commerce platforms have launched Spring Festival shopping events so that people can purchase as they wish from the comfort of their home. On the first day of the 2020 Tmall Spring Festival shopping event by Alibaba, fruit dealers in Yuncheng, Shanxi, sold 1,000 tons of red Fuji apples with rock candy cores.

China's further opening up has added more imported foods to the Spring Festival shopping lists. In early January, the sales of imported fruits increased by 2.2 times, as compared to last December, on the Chinese online shopping platform JD.com. The best sellers are bananas, cherries and longan.

Change is also happening in the ways people celebrate Spring Festival. Today, many people choose to hold the family reunion dinner party at a restaurant instead of at home. People used to stay at home or visit their relatives during the Spring Festival holiday. Nowadays, many take the opportunity to go travelling. During the 2019 Spring Festival, some 7 million Chinese travelled abroad. Japan and Southeast Asian countries are the most popular destinations for Chinese tourists.

The new ways of celebrating Spring Festival can be attributed to changes in Chinese society—smaller families, a more dynamic economy, a wider range of choices and a faster-paced lifestyle. What remains unchanged however are the warmth of family reunions and the best wishes for a better life.

CHINA IN THE EYES OF EXPATS



Green is the color of nature. I have always said that green mountains and lucid waters are indeed mountains of gold and silver, and that environmental improvement means greater productivity. A sound environment promises great economic potential, generates good returns, and contributes to economic and social sustainability.

—Excerpt from speech by President Xi Jinping at the opening ceremony of the International Horticultural Exhibition 2019 Beijing

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema: Yunnan offers beauty of biodiversity

“I hope the convention will give everyone an opportunity to witness the beauty of biodiversity in China and Yunnan,” said the Acting Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, at a press conference on January 10th. She told the reporters that the Fifteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 15) will be held in Kunming, Yunnan in October 2020.

According to Mrema, China has taken many practical measures to build an ecological civilization and established many effective mechanisms of green development. China is always willing to share its experience with and learn from other countries, which will undoubtedly further promote the protection of global biodiversity.

Mrema said the fact that COP15 will be held in China reflects the international recognition of the country's achievements in biodiversity conservation. China can provide the world with many valuable lessons in protecting the biodiversity and building an ecological civilization.

Mrema said that Yunnan harboured the most distinctive biodiversity of China and the world. She expressed the hope that the attendees to COP15, who are coming from all over the world, will be able to witness what Yunnan has done and achieved in building an ecological civilization, as well as how biodiversity has contributed to the happiness of the people. She also expressed the hope that the attendees would share their new ideas regarding the protection of global biodiversity.

(Liu Ziyu, Han Chengyuan)

Special ways of celebration in Yunnan

Hot spring bathing

Every year, from the first to the third day of the first lunar month, when the kapok flowers are in full bloom, the Lisu people in the Nuijiang Grand Canyon of western Yunnan celebrate their own important festival—Spring Bathing Festival. Families visit the hot springs to bathe together. In the open-air hot spring pools, people can soak their bodies in the hot water while enjoying the surrounding landscape. The Lisu people believe that the annual Spring bathing can wash away their fatigue and troubles and bring health and good luck.

Munao Zongge dance



Munao Zongge dance is also regarded as ten-thousand-people dance. (Yunnan Daily)

In the Jingpo ethnic minority language, “Munao Zongge” means “dancing together”. The Jingpo people sing and dance to welcome Spring Festival. When the Jingpo men start beating wooden drums that are loud enough to shake the square, the Munao Zongge Festival is ready to begin. Two lead dancers

walk to the front with a solemn expression, carrying long knives and wearing hornbill-shaped hats. The other Jingpo people in their festive costumes step one by one onto the square. Then they begin to rhythmically dance, hand in hand. Tens of thousands of people join as the dance continues.

Pumi coming-of-age ceremonies

On the north-western plateau of Yunnan, Pumi children who have just turned thirteen are particularly excited when Spring Festival comes. It is time for their coming-of-age ceremonies. On the eve of Spring Festival, the 13-year-olds play all night in groups of boys and girls. When the Spring Festival day breaks, they have to stop their playing and go home. Mothers hold the coming-of-age ceremonies for the girls by dressing their daughters in skirts. Maternal uncles hold the coming-of-age ceremonies for boys by dressing their nephews in trousers. After the coming-of-age ceremony, the child's parents will hold a family banquet for their relatives and friends. Each person will receive a bowl of bone soup, a chunk of pork and some slices of pig's heart and liver, symbolizing their connection by flesh and blood.



2020 is the year of rat.



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