

4

# China's Spring Festival, A Global Celebration

Editor's Note:

The Spring Festival, while rooted deeply in Chinese culture, has transcended borders to become a global symbol of unity and renewal. In 2024, it was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This recognition not only honors the centuries-old tradition, but also highlights the festival's role in promoting cultural exchange, social cohesion and economic growth worldwide. With the Year of the Snake approaching, we extend our warmest wishes to our readers for a year filled with wisdom, prosperity and peace. May the cautious and insightful nature of the Snake guide you to make thoughtful decisions and seize the opportunities that come your way.

## Global Embrace of Warmth and Tradition

The Chinese may be familiar with the following rhyme:  
"On the 23rd day of the 12th lunar month, make sticky candy;  
On the 24th, sweep the house;  
On New Year's Eve, stay up all night;

And on the first day of the Chinese New Year, dance joyfully."  
However this time, surprisingly, it was not a native Chinese speaker but an Italian, Francesco Faiola, who recited this rhyme fluently in the vernacular. The rhyme captures the essence of the

Spring Festival, "an enduring celebration of tradition" and togetherness that has resonated across generations.  
Last December, the festival reached a historic milestone. It was included in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of

Humanity.  
The success of this recognition not only honors a cherished cultural practice, but also elevates its significance on the global stage. What does this mean for the Spring Festival, and why does it matter?

### UNESCO recognition: a cultural milestone

"The Spring Festival encapsulates the essence of Chinese spirituality and cultural expression," said Professor Yang Hong from the Intangible Cultural Heritage Communication Research Center at Communication University of China, adding that its successful inscription on UNESCO's list demonstrates a growing international recognition of Chinese culture.  
"Through the Spring Festival and intangible cultural heritage, we can tell China's story more effectively to the

world," Yang noted.  
For many, the festival embodies values that transcend borders. Young Danish scientist Nick Y. Larsen, who came to China seven years ago, shared his perspective with *Science and Technology Daily*. "The Spring Festival is more than just a celebration. It's about family coming together, passing down traditions, and experiencing the vibrant energy of the whole nation. It's a fantastic way to connect with Chinese culture."

Today, nearly one- fifth of the world's population celebrates the Spring Festival. Apart from China, communities across East Asia, Southeast Asia, North America and Europe light up their neighborhoods with parades, dragon dances and red decorations.  
As Faiola observed, "These international celebrations reflect the universal values of the festival: peace, harmony and unity."  
He also sees the cultural and social impacts exerted by the Spring Festival.

val. Its recognition has not only boosted tourism in China but also enriched cultural industries worldwide. The Spring Festival's economic contributions further underscore its relevance in a globalized world.

### Memories of reunion and tradition

For centuries, the Spring Festival has been an important part of Chinese culture, symbolizing renewal, hope and the joy of reunion. "The festival provides spiritual sustenance, emotional strength, and a deep sense of connection to home and family. Its traditions evolve, but its core values endure," Yang said.  
Faiola echoed this sentiment, highlighting how even the simplest traditions, like the rhyme he recited, carry profound cultural weight. They not only preserve history but also foster a shared identity, uniting people across generations.  
The festival's emphasis on family reunion is particularly impressive. For Faiola, his first encounter with the

Spring Festival came in 1996, when a Chinese neighbor in Rome shared a plate of dumplings, sparking his fascination with the holiday. Years later, while experiencing the annual holiday's travel rush in China, known as the world's largest annual population migration, he was moved by the determination of millions journeying home for the festival.  
Cameroonian teacher Kenne Michel Olivier from Tianjin University described his own unforgettable experience in Qufu, Shandong province last year, where he immersed himself in the festival's traditional customs. "From artisans writing the Spring Festival couplets to families sharing festive meals, every custom emphasized reunion and community," Olivier said.

### Spring Festival culture going global

UNESCO's recognition of the Spring Festival is more than an acknowledgment of its historical importance; it is an invitation for the world to experience its vibrant customs and values. "The best way to promote cultural exchange is to invite the world to participate in the Spring Festival, taste its food, and embrace its traditions," Yang remarked.  
Larsen highlighted how the festival fosters trust and understanding. "Making dumplings as a family was chaotic but deeply meaningful. Even though I didn't see fireworks, being surrounded by loved ones made it special."  
Mark Levine, an American teacher and musician in China, has spent the Spring Festival with a welcoming, large Chinese family in a village in Hubei province in 2009 and 2010.  
For Levine, it was more than a celebration; it was a bridge between cultures. He added, "The hospitality and warmth of my host family made me feel at home." Levine even composed songs

inspired by his experiences, using music to share the festival's spirit with the world.  
According to Olivier, although their experiences may differ from those of local Chinese families, many foreigners find meaningful ways to celebrate and connect with the holiday's spirit.  
As Faiola put it, "In a rapidly modernizing world, the Spring Festival reminds us of the strength of tradition and its ability to connect us to our roots and to one another."  
Perhaps this is the essence of cultural exchange: to experience diversity and warmth. As the Spring Festival continues to touch hearts worldwide, it

shows the power of cultural exchange to inspire innovation, protect diversity, and promote cooperation across borders, bringing people closer through shared joy and tradition.

## Things to Know About Spring Festival

As the most important and widely celebrated holiday in China, the Spring Festival symbolizes the Chinese people's hopes for a better life, strong ties to family and country, and the values of harmony between humans and nature.  
Now being recognized globally, the Spring Festival was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in December 2024.  
Featuring a variety of traditional rituals, including prayers for good fortune and family reunions, the Spring Festival also includes activities planned by the elders and festive public events organized by communities.  
According to UNESCO documentation, traditional knowledge and customs associated with the Spring Festival are passed on informally within families and communities, as well as formally through the education system. Meanwhile, craftsmanship and artistic skills associated with the festival are passed on through apprenticeships, promoting family values, social cohesion and peace, while providing a sense of cultural identity.

**Why is it called the Spring Festival?**  
According to the traditional Chinese solar calendar, the year is divided into 24 solar terms. During the first solar term (known as the "beginning of spring"), the Sun takes its position in the celestial longitude that begins the gradual warming of the year. It's halfway between the winter solstice and the spring equinox.  
On the Gregorian calendar, the "beginning of spring" begins between January 21 and February 20, when the Spring Festival typically takes place.  
**Chinese New Year traditions and celebrations**  
Regional customs and traditions vary widely, but share the same theme: bidding farewell to the old year and welcoming the good fortune and prosperity of a new one. Major Chinese New Year activities include:  
※Hanging decorations,  
※Making offerings to ancestors,  
※Eating and reuniting with family on New Year's Eve,  
※Giving red envelopes with cash and other gifts,  
※Watching fireworks displays,  
※Cheering during lion and loong

dances.  
**2025 Chinese zodiac animal: Snake**  
The Chinese zodiac is a repeating cycle of 12 years, with each year being represented by an animal and its reputed attributes. In order, the 12 Chinese zodiac animals are: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Loong, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig.  
The 2025 Chinese zodiac animal is the Snake. The Snake is a cautious, introverted observer, cool and mysterious in behavior owing to its suspicious and insecure nature, yet its armor conceals abundant sensitivity, wisdom and passion that will surely surprise their few confidants.  
The general consensus is that the Chinese zodiac originally had something to do with the worship of animals. This tradition has already existed in Chinese culture since the Qin Dynasty, more than 2,000 years ago.  
Over time, the Chinese zodiac became more and more integrated into everyday life, with different meanings and characteristics assigned to each animal. It is said that they may have something to do with your fortune, marriage and career decisions.



①



②



③



④

① The loong dance is a traditional Chinese New Year performance, symbolizing good luck, peace and joy.

② During the Spring Festival, all the family members will gather together to celebrate the upcoming new year, and give gifts among the family members.

③ The Lion Dance is another traditional Chinese New Year performance. Two performers mimic a lion's movement in lion costumes. It is believed to bring good luck and fortune to the public.

④ Setting off firecrackers is a traditional Chinese custom. The Chinese believes the sound of firecrackers can get rid of the bad luck from the past year, and welcomes the wealth in the coming new year.

PHOTOS: VCG



Written by BI Weizi, LONG Yun, ZHONG Jianli



Edited by LI Linxu, YU Haoyuan, SONG Ziyao



Planned by WANG Junming, HE Yi, FANG Linlin