

Cultural News

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Chinese New Year: 2015 Year of the Goat

Chinese New Year Day's date is calculated according to the Chinese lunar calendar, hence the date is different each year on the Gregorian (internationally used) calendar, but always falls in the period between January 21 and February 20.

In 2015 it's celebrated on Thursday, February 19.

When Chinese New Year is Celebrated

Officially Chinese New Year is celebrated on Chui (初一 /choo-ee/) the very first day of the new year, Chinese New Year's Day, and Chuxi (除夕 /choo-sshee/), the last day of the previous year, Chinese New Year's Eve.

Traditionally though celebrations can start much earlier than the Chinese New Year's Eve. Some people start to celebrate as early as three weeks before. The date is called Laba (腊八 /laa-baa/) the eighth day of the twelfth Chinese month, while more people celebrate from one week before — the 23rd of the twelfth month.

There are also two different closing dates. Officially it is the day when the one week holiday ends, usually the sixth day of Chinese New Year. Traditionally the ending day is the fifteenth day of the first Chinese calendar month.

2015 — Year of the Goat

"Goats" are said to like being in groups. They are honest, intimate, and can be easily moved by the misfortune of others.

Chinese New Year Dates for the Next Chinese Zodiac Cycle

Year:	Chinese New Year Date	Zodiac Animal
2015	February 19	Goat
2016	February 8	Monkey
2017	January 28	Rooster
2018	February 16	Dog
2019	February 5	Pig
2020	January 25	Rat
2021	February 12	Ox
2022	February 1	Tiger
2023	January 22	Rabbit
2024	February 10	Dragon
2025	January 29	Snake
2026	February 17	Horse



JANUARY 2015 CALENDAR

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER BLOOD DONOR MONTH

NATIONAL STALKING AWARENESS MONTH

BIRTH DEFECTS MONTH

CELEBRATION OF LIFE MONTH

- 1 - Gantan-sai (New Years) (Shinto)
- 1-7 - New Year's Resolutions Week (International)
- 5 - Mahayana New Year (Buddhist)
- 6 - Nativity of Christ (Orthodox Christian)
- 7-10 - Elvis' Birthday Celebration Week (US)
- 8 - Earth's Rotation Day (International)
- 10 - National Cut Your Energy Costs Day (US)
- 11 - Baptism of the Lord Jesus (Christian)
- 12 - National Clean Off Your Desk Day (US)
- 13 - Maghi (Sikh)
- 14-18 - Soccer Coaches of America Week (US)
- 15 - Humanitarian Day (US)
- 16 - Religious Freedom Day (US)
- 18 - World Religion Day (Baha'i)
- 19-23 - Healthy Weight Week (US)
- 20 - Inauguration Day (US)
- 25-31 - National Nurse Anesthetists Week (US)
- 27 - Holocaust Memorial Day (World)



"Txiv Neeb" Hmong Shamanism

The Soul-Calling

The Hmong religion is traditionally animist (animism is the belief in the spirit world and in the interconnectedness of all living things). At the center of Hmong culture is the Txiv Neeb, the shaman (literally, "father/master of spirits"). According to Hmong cosmology, the human body is the host for a number of souls. The isolation and separation of one or more of these souls from the body can cause disease, depression and death. Curing rites are therefore referred to as "soul-calling rituals". Whether the soul became separated from the body because it was frightened away or kidnapped by an evil force, it must return in order to restore the integrity of life.

The Trance

A shaman is transported to another world via a "flying horse," a wooden bench usually no wider than the human body. The bench acts as a form of transportation to the other world. Buffalo horn tips are thrown to the ground to determine which way the soul has gone.

The shaman wears a cloth mask while he or she is reaching a trance state. The mask not only blocks out the real world, so the shaman can concentrate, but also acts as a disguise from evil spirits in the spirit world. During episodes when shamans leap onto the flying horse bench, assistants will often help them to balance. It is believed that if a shaman falls down before his soul returns to his body, he or she will die.

String-Tying

One way in which a shaman returns the soul to the body is through a string-tying ritual. White, red, black or blue strings are tied to shield the person from evil spirits in the form of sickness. These strings signifying the binding up and holding intact of the life-souls.

The Hmong Funeral

When a Hmong dies, his or her soul must travel back to every place the person lived until it reaches the burial place of its placenta. Only after the soul is properly dressed in the "placental jacket" can it travel on to be reunited with ancestors and to be reincarnated as the soul of a new baby. The Hmong revere their elders, and believe that anyone who is not accorded the proper funerary rites - being washed, dressed in special clothes, honored with animal sacrifices, verbally guided back to where the placenta is buried, lamented with musical instruments and laid to rest will have a lost, naked and wandering soul. Funeral rituals often last three to four days.

Animal Sacrifice

Shaman attempts to heal illnesses through offerings to the spirits, such as meals or a sacrifice of a chicken, pig, cow or other animal. In Hmong culture, the souls of sacrificial animals are connected to human souls. Therefore, a shaman uses an animal's soul to support or protect his patient's soul. Often healing rituals are capped by a communion meal, where everyone attending the ritual partakes of the sacrificed animal who has been prepared into a meal. The event is then ended with the communal sharing of a life that has been sacrificed to mend a lost soul.

<http://www.pbs.org/splithorn/shamanism1.html>

World Religion Day

The third Sunday in January is annually celebrated as World Religion Day. It was established by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States in 1950 as a way to encourage interfaith understanding.

Celebrate World Religion Day

Many organizations celebrate the day by holding interfaith events, where faith leaders get together to give talks and lectures. People are encouraged to talk to and listen to people from faiths different than their own and to understand the basic tenants of other religions.

Public life

World Religion Day is not an official holiday so businesses, schools and government offices are open.

About World Religion Day

Bahá'í is a form of faith that emerged in 19th century Persia and follows three core principles: unity of God, religion and humankind. The Bahá'ís believe that there is a single God and the spirituality of all religions in the world stem from this single God. They also believe that all humans are born equal and have the same rights and duties irrespective.

Keeping in line with this philosophy, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States announced the institution of World Religion Day in 1949. The first such day was observed in 1950. The day calls for members of all religions in the world to recognize that all religions have common spiritual goals.



<http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/world/world-religion-day>