

INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

The Department of Intercultural Communication and International Tourism

February, 2023



What's new?

International Women's Wrestling Team Tournament was held in Minsk on the 18th of February.

Among the 80 participants from Belarus, Russia, Kyrgyzstan and other countries were students of the Faculty of Physical culture of Francisk Skoryna Gomel State University Arina Martynova and Natalia Bielskaya. Incredible fights, the intensity of emotions did not give rest to the spectators. The final turned out to be no less intense, where the national teams of Belarus and Russia were fighting for gold medal. Belarusian “Беларусь-1” (“Belarus-1”) and Russian “Россия-1” (“Russia-1”) reached the final with the result that Belarusian team got a silver medal.

Congratulations to our brave and strong girls and wish them good luck!



Chinese lantern festival



On the 15th day of the first lunar month, two weeks after Chinese New Year, another important traditional Chinese festival, the Chinese Lantern Festival or Yuan Xiao Jie or Yuanxiao Festival (元宵节), is celebrated. It marks the first full moon of the new lunar year and the end of the Chinese New Year (Spring Festival) period. Chinese Lantern Festival 2023 was celebrated on **February 5th in 2023**.

On the night of the Chinese Lantern Festival, streets are decorated with colorful lanterns, often with riddles written on them. People eat sweet rice balls called tangyuan, watch dragon and lion dances, and set off fireworks.



Chinese Lantern Festival can be traced back to 2,000 years ago. There are many origin stories about it. Here are the most interesting ones:



There is one legend that states that it was a time to worship Taiyi, the God of Heaven in ancient times. The belief was that Taiyi controlled the destiny of the human world. He had sixteen dragons at his beck and call and he decided when to inflict drought, storms, famine or pestilence upon human beings. Beginning with Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China, all the emperors ordered splendid ceremonies each year. The emperor would ask Taiyi to bring favorable weather and good health to him and his people.

Another legend associates the Lantern Festival with Taoism. Tianguan is the Taoist deity responsible for good fortune. His birthday falls on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. It is said that Tianguan likes all types of entertainment, so followers prepare various kinds of activities during which they pray for good fortune.

According to another version, ruling the beginning of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220), Emperor Hanmingdi was an advocate of Buddhism. He heard that some monks lit lanterns in their temples to show respect to Buddha on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month.

Therefore, he ordered that all the temples, households, and royal palaces should light lanterns on that evening. This Buddhist custom gradually became a grand festival among the people of China.

How Do Chinese Celebrate the Chinese Lantern Festival?

The most popular traditions to celebrate Yuanxiao Festival are enjoying lanterns, guessing lantern riddles, eating tangyuan, and lion/dragon dances.

Lighting and appreciating lanterns is the main activity of Yuan Xiao Jie. Lanterns are seen everywhere including in houses, shopping malls, parks, and streets. The (traditional) lanterns are almost always red to invoke good fortune.

Lighting lanterns symbolize "illuminating the future". It is a way for people to pray that they will have smooth futures and to express their best wishes for their families. In the Taiwanese Mandarin dialect, the Chinese word for lantern (灯 dēng) is pronounced similarly to (丁 dīng), which means 'to have a new-born baby', so in Taiwan putting up lanterns could even express a wish for couples to have a baby!

During the Lantern Festival, many big lantern fairs are held in China, such as Qinhuai International Lantern Festival in Nanjing and Shanghai Yuyuan Lantern Festival. The lanterns' artwork vividly illustrates traditional Chinese imagery and symbols, such as fruits, flowers, birds, animals, people, and buildings.



Guessing (solving) lantern riddles started in the Song Dynasty (960–1279), and it is one of the most important and popular activities of the Lantern Festival. Lantern owners write riddles on paper notes and paste them on the colorful lanterns. People crowd round to guess the riddles. If someone thinks they have the right answer, they can pull the riddle off and go to the lantern owner to check their answer. If the answer is right, there is usually a small gift as a prize.



Eating tangyuan is an important custom of the Lantern Festival. Tangyuan (汤圆 tāngyuán /tung-ywen/ 'soup round'), also called yuanxiao in the north, are balls of glutinous rice boiled in a sweet soup. As *tangyuan* is pronounced similarly to *tuanyuan* (团圆 /twan-ywen/ 'group round'), which means 'reunion' and 'completeness', Chinese people believe that the round shape of the balls and bowls symbolize wholeness and togetherness. The popular lucky saying when eating tangyuan is 团团圆圆 (/Tuántuán yuányuán/ 'group-group round-round'): 'Happy (family) reunion!'



As two of the most outstanding traditional folk dances in China, dragon and lion dances are common during the Lantern Festival. Chinese people (traditionally) regard the lion as a symbol of bravery and strength and believe that its appearance can drive away evil and protect people and their livestock. Chinese people worship the dragon and regard it as a symbol of good luck.



Is Yuanxiao Jie the Real Chinese Valentine's Day?

China's Lantern Festival is one of the romantic traditional Chinese festivals. In ancient times, unmarried women were not allowed to go out of the house. The Chinese Lantern Festival provided an opportunity for them to stroll freely, lighting lanterns, playing games, and interacting with men. This is why some say that the Chinese Lantern Festival is the true Chinese "Valentine's Day", rather than Qixi Festival (七夕 'Double Seventh').



To be continued

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