

**Chinese New Year**

A festival celebrating the start of the traditional Chinese calendar. It is commonly known as the Spring Festival – spring season traditionally starts with LICHUN, the first of twenty-four solar terms. It marks the end of winter and start of spring. The first day of Chinese New Year begins at new moon which has a changeable date from year to year.

The celebrations end on the 15th day of the first lunar month with a ‘Lantern ‘festival.

Chinese New Year is a major celebration in many parts of Asia where Chinese people live. The evening preceding Chinese New Year’s Day is widely celebrated by families as a time to unite for a ‘reunion dinner’.

Families sweep clean their homes, sweeping away ill fortune and welcoming good luck for the coming year. Windows and doors are often decorated with red paper cuts that represent good fortune, wealth, happiness and longevity.

Giving money in red paper envelopes is another popular tradition, as is lighting firecrackers.

2020 was the year of the RAT – the first of the 12 Chinese Zodiac signs.

The Chinese Zodiac is a 12 years cycle with approximation to the 11.85 years orbital period of Jupiter. The 12 animals of the Chinese Zodiac are reputedly chosen from a tale of the Jade Emperor.

Each animal has specific attributes though as with the Western Zodiac the complete fortune of a person born in a specific year is more complex than just an initial animal.

