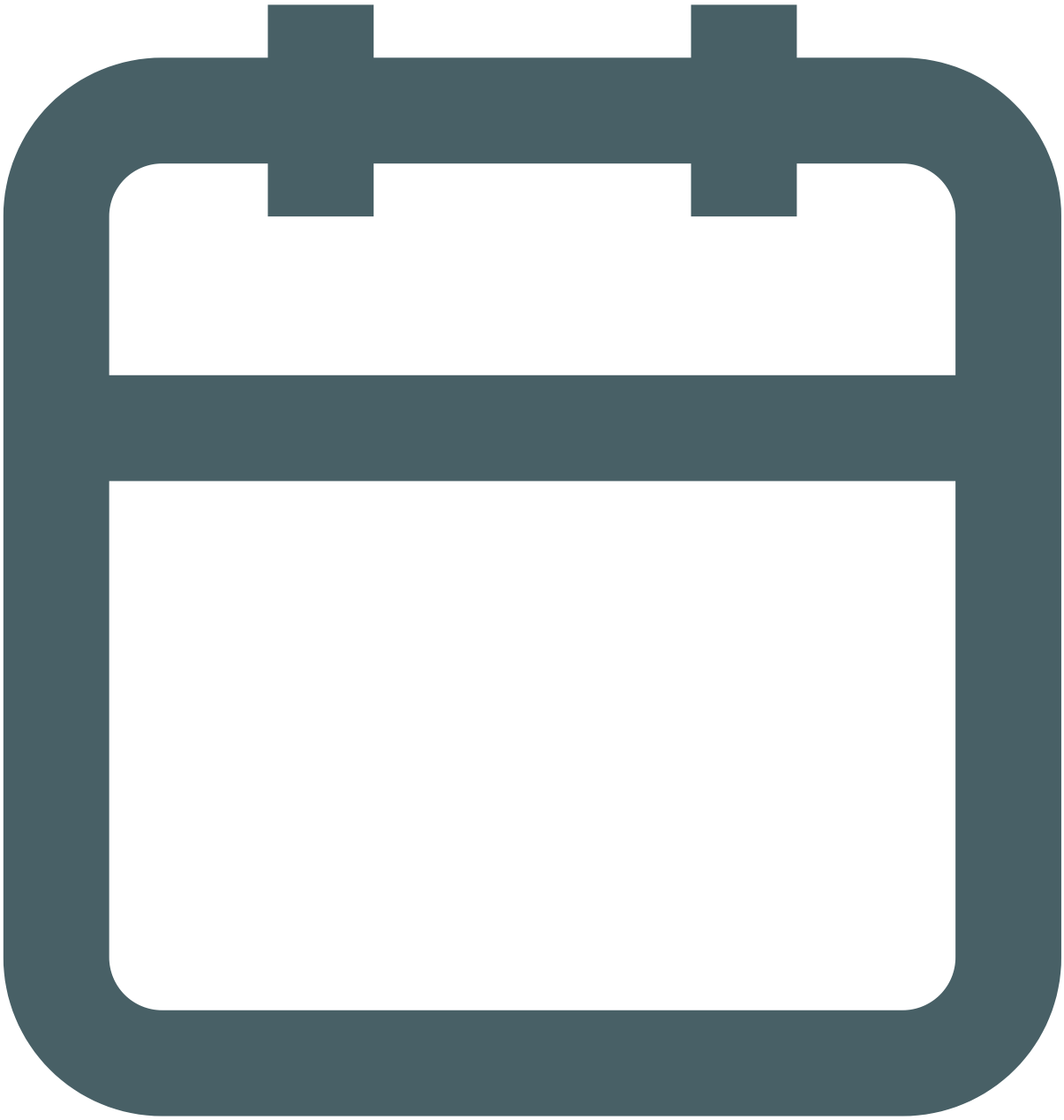
Your Comprehensive Guide to China's Seven Major Holidays (2026)



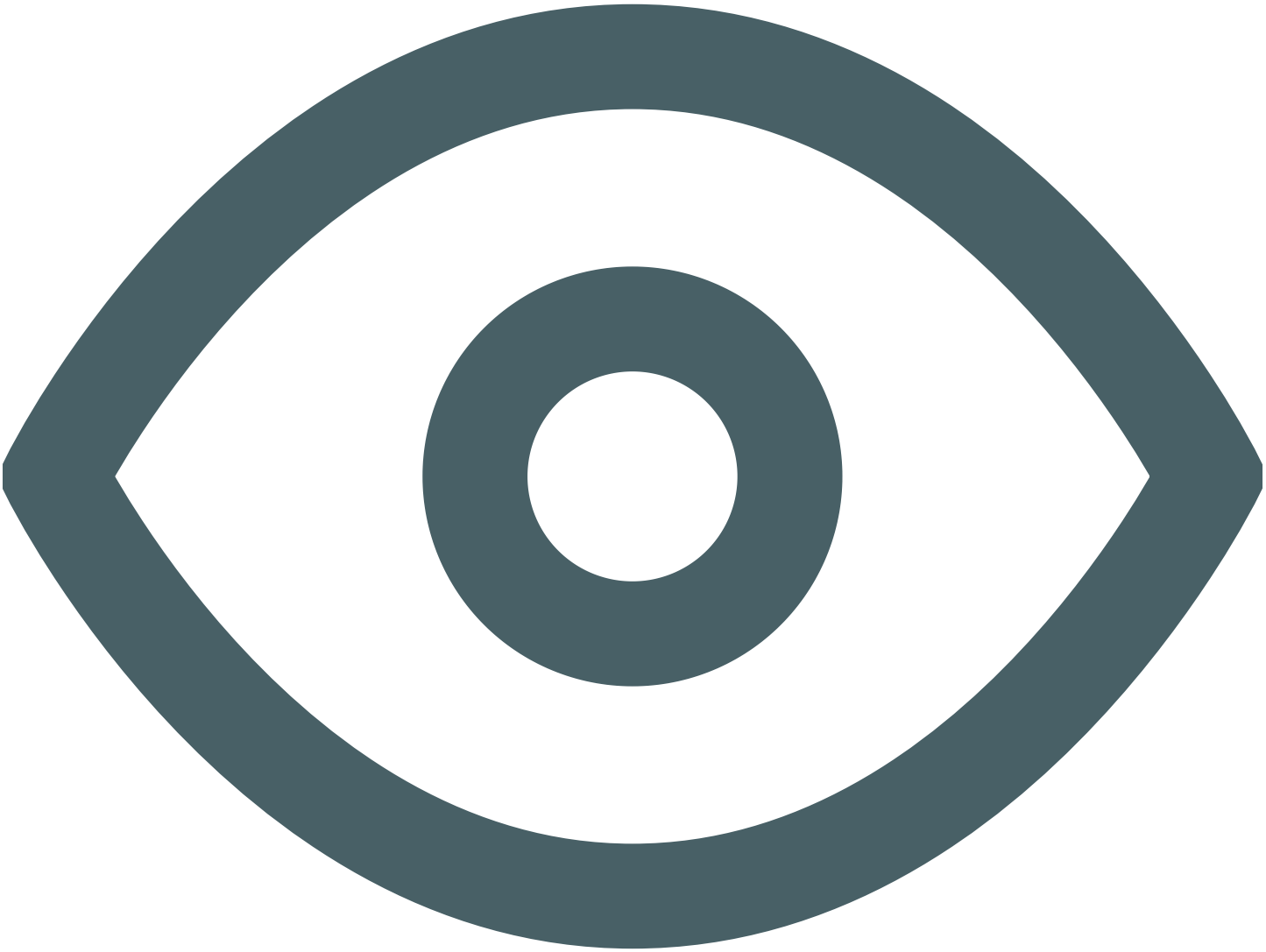
Anne Meredith
Contributing Editor



April 16, 2020

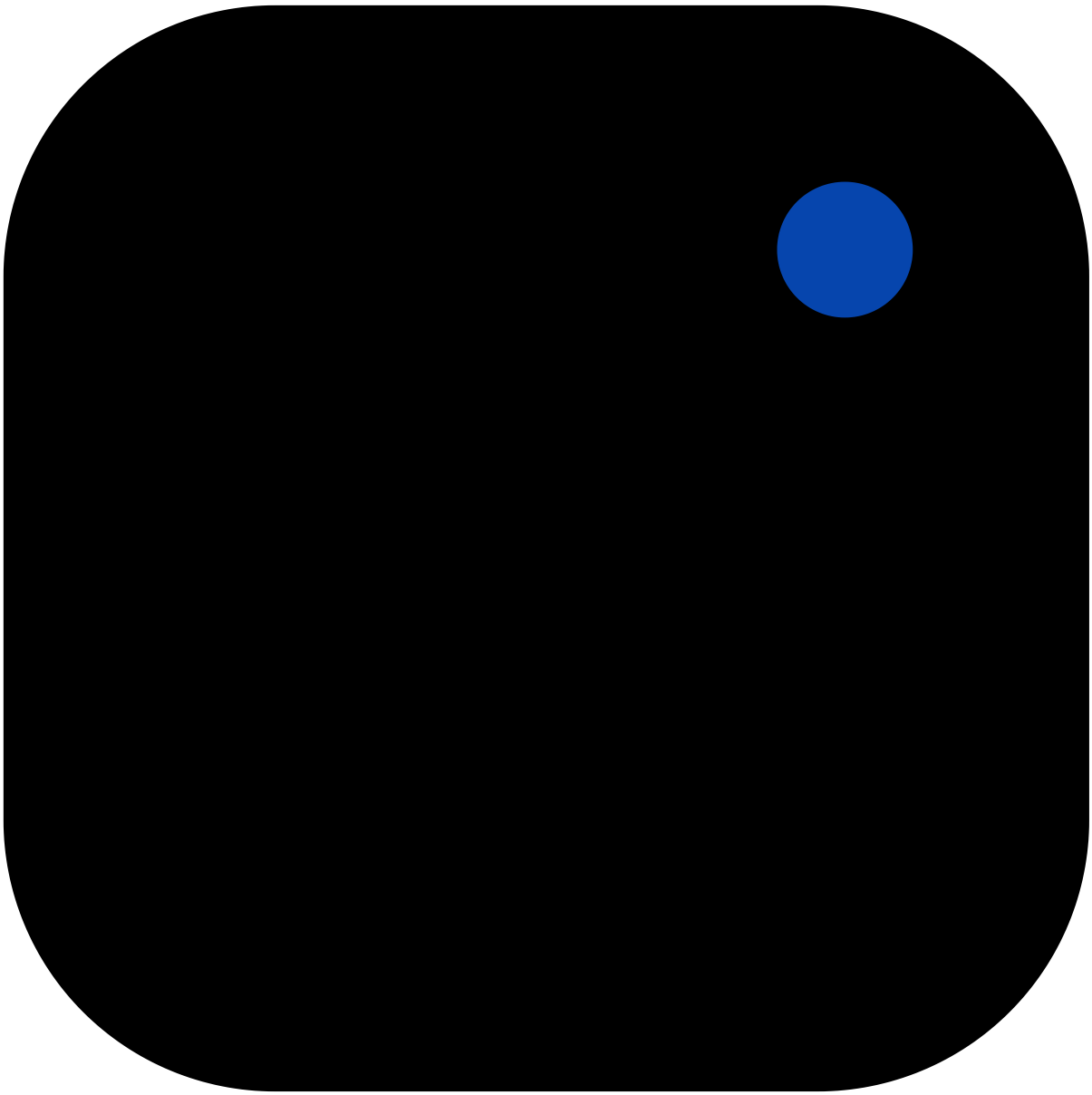


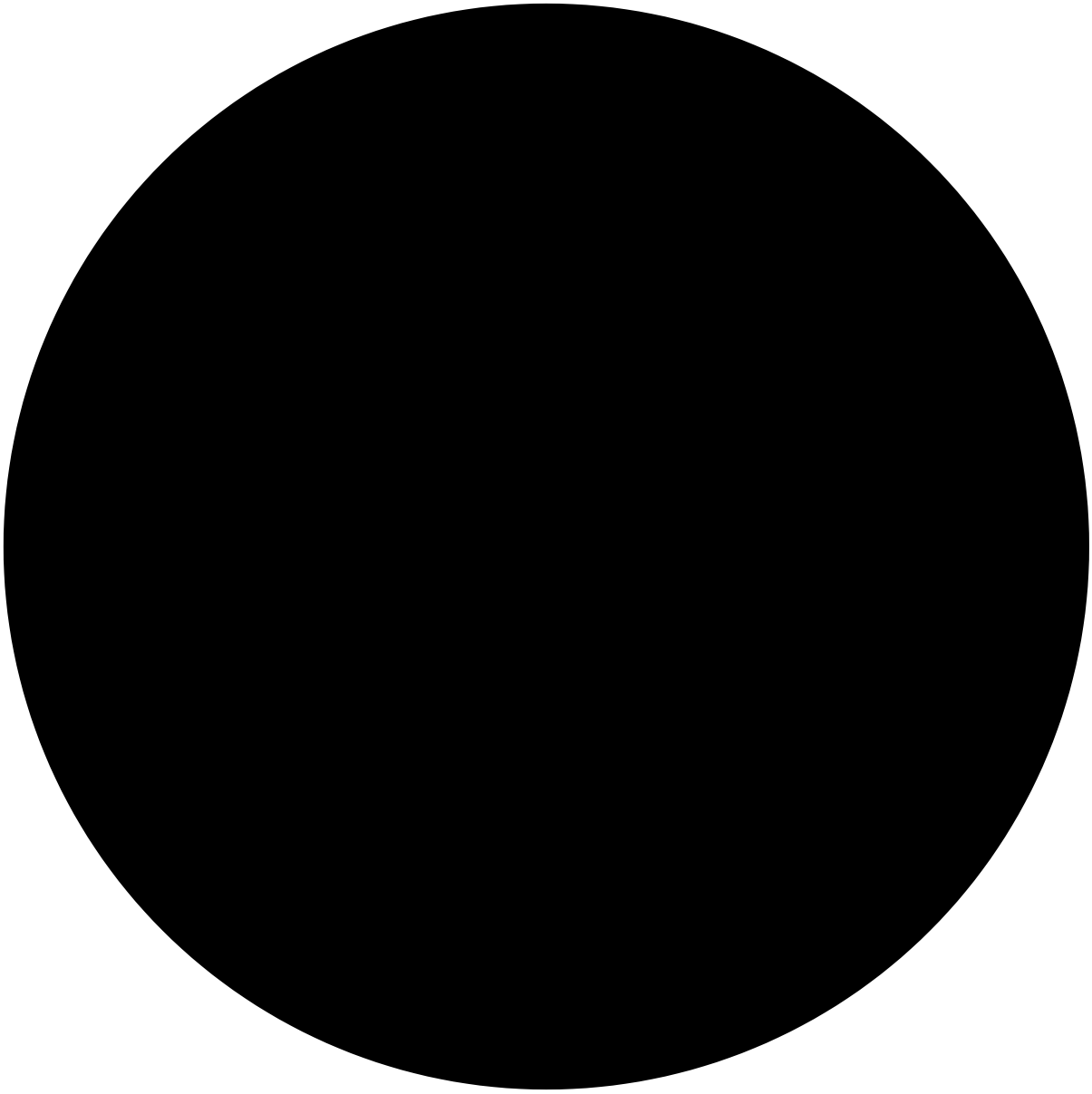
15 min read



3,799 views







Link copied!

Contents

1. 01 Chinese Holidays Explained: Ancient Origins and Shifting Dates
2. 02 What Are the 7 Major Chinese Public Holidays?
3. 03 Chinese Public Holiday Dates in 2026 (Official Schedule)
4. 04 How Long Do Chinese Holidays Last? Golden Week Explained
5. 05 Is China Closed for Chinese Holidays? Shops, Banks, and Offices
6. 06 Does China Celebrate Christmas and Thanksgiving?
7. 07 Chinese Holiday Vocabulary in Mandarin
8. 08 Chinese Holidays FAQ
9. 09 Plan Your Trip Around Chinese Holidays



Key Takeaways

- China has seven statutory public holidays: New Year's Day, Spring Festival, Qingming Festival, Labor Day, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and National Day.
- Four of the seven follow the Chinese lunisolar calendar, which is why their Gregorian dates shift by several weeks from one year to the next.
- In 2026 these holidays add up to 13 statutory days off, and the General Office of the State Council extends several of them into longer breaks by swapping in weekend workdays.
- Spring Festival and National Day produce the two "Golden Week" travel peaks, when trains, flights, and hotels fill up weeks in advance.
- For language learners, holidays are among the richest windows into Chinese culture — and one of the best reasons to Learn Chinese in China rather than only from a textbook.

Chinese holidays (节日, jiérì) are where language, history, and family life meet. They are the moments when hundreds of millions of people travel home at once, when cities fill with red decorations, and when a foreign visitor sees Chinese culture at its most concentrated.

Dragon dances remain one of the most recognizable public performances during major Chinese holidays.

China observes seven statutory public holidays each year, plus a long list of festivals that are culturally important but do not close offices. This guide covers all seven in order, along with the official 2026 dates, how long each break actually lasts, and what stays open while the country celebrates.

Alongside the seven, China also marks occasions such as International Women's Day, Children's Day, Qixi (Chinese Valentine's Day), the Ghost Festival, and Army Day. None of these is a national day off, so the focus below stays on the seven that are.

史

01 Chinese Holidays Explained: Ancient Origins and Shifting Dates

China is one of the world's oldest continuous civilizations, and several of its festivals grew out of ancient agricultural and ancestral rites. Some were already established observances by the time of the Qin dynasty (221–207 BCE), the first dynasty of a unified Chinese empire.

Most of these festivals look very different today than they did two thousand years ago. Ritual observance has thinned in places, while travel, shopping, and family reunions have taken on a much larger role.

Why Chinese Holiday Dates Change Every Year

Three of the seven holidays sit on fixed Gregorian dates: New Year's Day, Labor Day, and National Day. The other four follow the Chinese lunisolar calendar, so their Gregorian dates move by up to several weeks each year.

That is why Spring Festival can land anywhere from late January to late February. It is also why the Chinese zodiac animal changes on Spring Festival rather than on January 1.



Practical Tip

Never plan travel from a previous year's holiday calendar. The General Office of the State Council publishes the following year's official dates each November, and the exact days off change every time.

节

02 What Are the 7 Major Chinese Public Holidays?

The seven holidays below are the only ones that close government offices nationwide. They appear here in calendar order, starting on January 1.

1. New Year's Day in China (元旦, Yuándàn) — January 1

The first Chinese holiday of the year is the same one much of the world marks: New Year's Day, on January 1. Some people call it "International New Year" to distinguish it from the lunar new year that follows weeks later.

Based on the Gregorian calendar, Yuándàn is the least traditional of the seven. It has nonetheless grown into a commercial occasion, with malls decorated and major discounts on offer.

Fireworks are most associated with Spring Festival, but they are a common sight on New Year's Eve as well.

2. Chinese New Year / Spring Festival (春节, Chūnjié) — February 17, 2026

Chinese New Year, known in China as Spring Festival, is the most important holiday of the year by a wide margin. Because it follows the lunisolar calendar, it usually falls between late January and late February.

In 2026 it begins on **February 17**, opening the Year of the Horse. New Year's Eve (除夕, Chúxī) falls the evening before, on February 16.

The festival's roots reach back thousands of years, and it is now celebrated across much of Asia, including in Vietnam and Singapore. Red dominates the visual palette, since Chinese culture treats it as both lucky and festive.

Red envelopes, or hongbao (红包, hóngbāo), change hands throughout the holiday. They are typically given by married adults to children and unmarried relatives.

The Nian Monster and the Color Red

According to folklore, a beast called the Nian (年兽, Niánshòu) once emerged at the turn of the year to raid villages for food. Wearing red was said to drive it off and invite good fortune for the year ahead.

The Nian was also described as terrified of loud noise, which is one traditional explanation for setting off firecrackers. Many large Chinese cities now restrict or ban private fireworks on air-quality and safety grounds.

In folklore, the Nian monster is repelled by loud noises and the color red.

Spring Festival Superstitions and Taboos

Much of the holiday's etiquette is organized around securing good luck for the coming year. Negative talk is discouraged, and references to death or illness are avoided entirely.

The number four (四, sì) is also avoided, because it sounds close to the word for death (死, sǐ). Traditionally the wider festival period does not end until the Lantern Festival, on the 15th day of the first lunar month.

The reunion dinner (团圆饭, tuányuánfàn) is the emotional center of Spring Festival.

3. Tomb Sweeping Day / Qingming Festival (清明节, Qīngmíngjié) — April 5, 2026

The third public holiday is the Qingming Festival, also translated as Pure Brightness Festival or Tomb Sweeping Day. It expresses one of the most durable values in Chinese culture: respect for ancestors.

Qingming falls on the 15th day after the spring equinox, which places it on April 4, 5, or 6 depending on the year. In 2026 the festival falls on **April 5**, with an official break from April 4 to 6.

The observance is genuinely ancient. Britannica traces tomb maintenance and ancestral worship on this date to the Zhou dynasty, notes that Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang made it an official holiday in 732 CE, and records that the People's Republic restored it as a public holiday in 2008.

Families visit ancestral graves to clear weeds and sweep the stone. Many also burn imitation paper money so that relatives can make purchases in the afterlife.

Despite the solemn framing, Qingming is not a day of mourning alone. Once the tomb sweeping is finished, families often spend the rest of the day on outings, picnics, and kite flying.

Burning incense at the graveside is a central Qingming ritual.

4. Labor Day in China (劳动节, Láodòngjié) — May 1

China's fourth public holiday is Labor Day, which coincides with International Workers' Day on May 1. It is also known as May Day, or 五一节 (Wǔyījié).

Labor Day now carries two statutory days off, and the State Council routinely bridges it into a longer break. In 2026 that break runs from May 1 to May 5, with Saturday, May 9 designated as a make-up workday.

Labor Day falls on May 1 every year and honors workers of all kinds.

5. Dragon Boat Festival (端午节, Duānwǔjié) — June 19, 2026

The fifth public holiday is the Dragon Boat Festival, held on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. On the Gregorian calendar that usually means late May or June — in 2026, **June 19**.

Britannica dates the festival back at least 1,500 years and groups it with Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn as one of the three "festivals of the living." It also carries more folk superstition (迷信, míxìn) than almost any other Chinese holiday.

Two Origin Stories

The fifth lunar month was traditionally considered unlucky, and its fifth day the most dangerous of all. One explanation for the festival is therefore protective: it exists to drive off illness and malign spirits.

The better-known account is historical. It commemorates Qu Yuan (c. 340–278 BCE), a poet and statesman of the state of Chu.

By legend, Qu Yuan was accused of treason, banished from office, and drowned himself in despair in the Miluo River. Local people who admired him raced out in boats to save him, or at least to recover his body.

That rescue is the origin story behind the festival's signature event: dragon boat racing. The boats themselves connect to the wider symbolism of Chinese dragons as bringers of water and good fortune.

Dragon boat racing demands real strength and near-perfect crew coordination.

What People Eat and Hang on the Door

The defining food is zongzi (粽子, zòngzi), pyramid-shaped sticky rice dumplings wrapped in bamboo leaves. Realgar wine is the traditional accompaniment, though it is rarely consumed today.

Households also hang mugwort and calamus over doorways and carry scented pouches. Both customs are meant to repel insects and, by extension, disease.

Zongzi, wrapped in bamboo leaves, are the signature Dragon Boat Festival food.

6. Mid-Autumn Festival (中秋节, Zhōngqiūjié) — September 25, 2026

The sixth public holiday is the Mid-Autumn Festival, held on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month, when the moon is full. In 2026 it falls on **September 25**.

Mid-Autumn is China's harvest celebration, and family reunions are its core. The comparison to American Thanksgiving is imperfect but useful: relatives gather, eat together, and give thanks for a good year.

Paper Chinese lanterns are the festival's most photographed feature. Some are carried, while floating versions are released into the sky.

The other icon is the mooncake (月饼, yuèbǐng). Britannica describes the traditional form as a thin, lightly sweet pastry around a lotus seed paste filling, often with a salted egg yolk standing in for the moon.

Boxed mooncakes are exchanged with colleagues, clients, friends, and neighbors in the run-up to the festival. If you will be in China at the time, it is worth reading up on Chinese gift-giving etiquette first.

Floating lanterns are treated as a fire hazard today and are restricted in many Chinese cities.

7. China National Day (国庆节, Guóqìngjié) — October 1

The seventh and final public holiday is National Day, on October 1. It marks the founding of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949.

The government stages concerts, fireworks displays, and a national flag-raising ceremony in Tiananmen Square. Large-scale civil and military parades are held in milestone anniversary years rather than annually.

Patriotic decorations go up nationwide, and the seven-day break makes this the year's second great travel wave. It is the reason the phrase "Golden Week" is most often used.

National Day puts patriotic display front and center across the country.

历

03 Chinese Public Holiday Dates in 2026 (Official Schedule)

The General Office of the State Council published China's 2026 holiday arrangement in November 2025. The seven holidays add up to 13 statutory days off, extended into longer breaks by rescheduling nearby weekends.

Holiday	2026 Festival Date	Official Days Off	Make-Up Workdays
New Year's Day	January 1	January 1–3 (3 days)	January 4
Spring Festival	February 17	February 15–23 (9 days)	February 14, February 28
Qingming Festival	April 5	April 4–6 (3 days)	None
Labor Day	May 1	May 1–5 (5 days)	May 9
Dragon Boat Festival	June 19	June 19–21 (3 days)	None
Mid-Autumn Festival	September 25	September 25–27 (3 days)	None
National Day	October 1	October 1–7 (7 days)	September 20, October 10

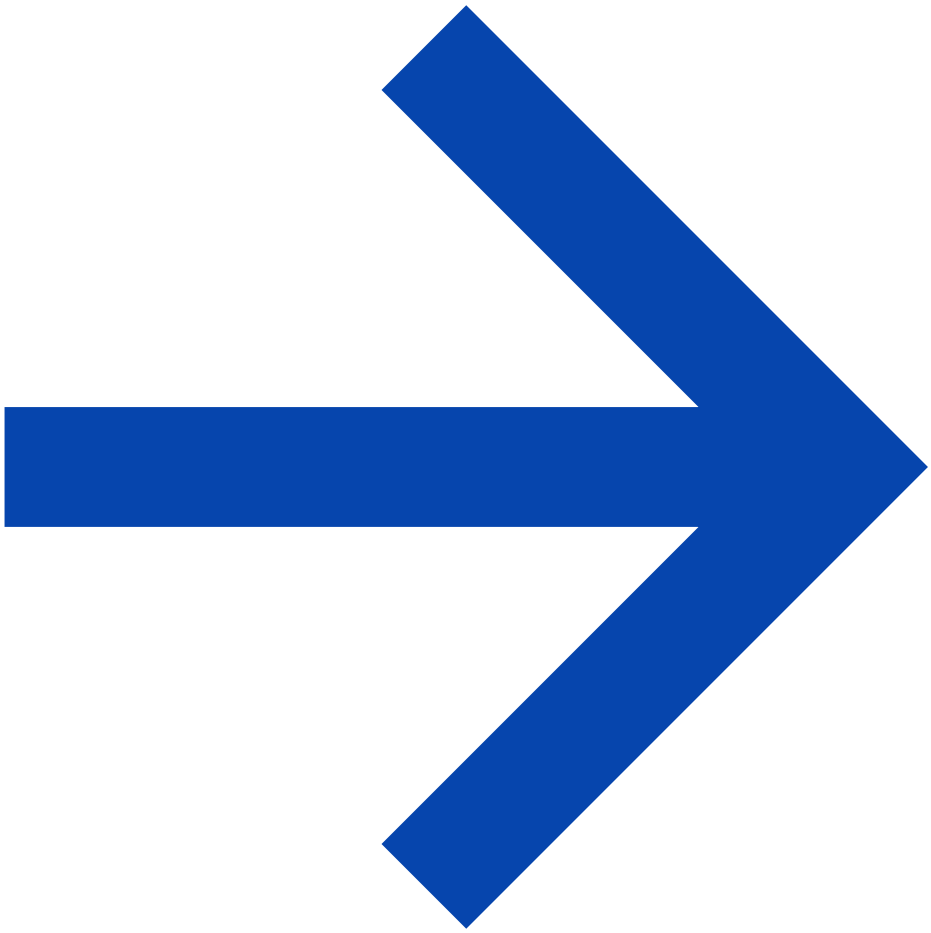
The 2026 Spring Festival break is the longest in the history of the People's Republic, at nine consecutive days. Mid-Autumn and National Day fall close together but stay separate this year, rather than merging into a single extended Golden Week as they did in 2025.

Year-by-year breakdowns are published separately for planning further ahead. See 2026 Chinese holidays, 2027 Chinese holidays, and 2028 Chinese holidays.

Experience Chinese Holidays for Yourself

CLI offers personalized Chinese instruction built around your goals, in a city where festivals are still celebrated the traditional way. Join our Immersion Program in Guilin or begin from anywhere with a free Chinese lesson .

Explore the Immersion Program



Learn Chinese Online

金

04 How Long Do Chinese Holidays Last? Golden Week Explained

Holiday length in China is not fixed by the festival itself. It depends on how many statutory days that holiday carries and how the State Council arranges the surrounding weekends.

Statutory Days vs. Actual Days Off

The 13 statutory days in 2026 are distributed unevenly: four for Spring Festival, three for National Day, two for Labor Day, and one each for New Year's Day, Qingming, Dragon Boat, and Mid-Autumn. Those numbers are the legal minimum, not the length of the break people actually take.

To turn a one-day holiday into a three-day weekend, the government shifts rest days around. The mechanism is called tiaoxiu (调休), and it is the single most confusing feature of the Chinese holiday calendar for newcomers.

What Is Golden Week in China?

"Golden Week" (黄金周, huángjīnzhōu) refers to the week-long breaks built around Spring Festival and National Day. These are the only two periods long enough for most people to travel far from home.

The result is the largest annual human migration on earth. Trains and flights sell out weeks ahead, and hotel rates in popular cities commonly double or triple.



Practical Tip

If your dates are flexible, build a buffer of at least five days on either side of Spring Festival and National Day. Travelling in the shoulder period gets you the same destinations at a fraction of the crowding and cost.

Make-Up Workdays and Six-Day Weeks

Long breaks are partly paid for in advance. A Saturday or Sunday next to the holiday is reclassified as a normal working day, which can produce a six- or even seven-day working stretch.

In 2026, February 14 and February 28 were both designated workdays to offset the nine-day Spring Festival break. Company and school schedules can deviate from the national calendar, so confirm directly if a deadline depends on it.

Most Chinese public holidays carry only one or two statutory days off, then get extended by rescheduling weekends.

市

05 Is China Closed for Chinese Holidays? Shops, Banks, and Offices

Visitors often assume a national holiday means a shuttered country. In practice the opposite is true: holidays are among the busiest and most commercially active periods of the Chinese year.

What Stays Open

Tourism, restaurants, malls, and attractions all thrive during major holidays, especially around Chinese New Year. Expect long queues at famous sites rather than locked gates.

Small family-run shops are the main exception. Some close for several days over Spring Festival while the owners travel home.

What Closes

Government offices, courts, customs, and visa bureaux shut for the full duration of the break. This matters most during Golden Week, when a closure can run seven or nine days.

Banks mostly close too, though central branches often keep limited hours. Your best chance of finding an open branch is a city's main financial district.

Planning a Trip Around Chinese Holidays

If you are heading to China, check the holiday calendar before booking anything. Our guide to the best places to visit in China pairs well with a look at current entry rules in the China visa-free travel guide.

A little language goes a long way when the whole country is on the move. Learning a handful of Chinese travel phrases makes ticket counters and crowded stations far less stressful.

Domestic travel surges during Chinese public holidays, filling historic districts and lantern displays alike.

诞

06 Does China Celebrate Christmas and Thanksgiving?

Neither Christmas nor Thanksgiving is a public holiday in China, and neither is traditionally celebrated there. Their status today is quite different, though.

Thanksgiving in China

Thanksgiving (感恩节, Gǎn'ēnjié) is essentially a North American observance and is not celebrated in China. The nearest cultural equivalent is the Mid-Autumn Festival, which shares the themes of family reunion and gratitude for the harvest.

Christmas in China

Christmas (圣诞节, Shèngdànjié) has gained real commercial traction in recent years, particularly among younger people drawn to Western culture. It functions more as a shopping and date-night occasion than a religious one.

One custom is distinctly Chinese: gifting red apples on Christmas Eve. The word for Christmas Eve (平安夜, Píng'ān Yè) opens with the same sound as the word for apple (苹果, píngguǒ), and the wordplay stuck.

There is much more on how the holiday is observed in our full guide to Christmas in China. For a traditional Chinese observance with no Western counterpart, see the Chinese winter solstice.

Christmas is not a traditional Chinese holiday, but it has become popular with many younger Chinese people.

词

07 Chinese Holiday Vocabulary in Mandarin

The words below cover the seven holidays plus the practical vocabulary you will hear around them. They are useful whether you are reading a holiday notice or wishing a neighbor well.

Chinese	Pinyin	Translation
节日	jiérì	holiday, festival
元旦	Yuándàn	New Year's Day (January 1)
春节	Chūnjié	Spring Festival, Chinese New Year
除夕	Chúxī	Chinese New Year's Eve
清明节	Qīngmíngjié	Qingming Festival, Tomb Sweeping Day
劳动节	Láodòngjié	Labor Day
端午节	Duānwǔjié	Dragon Boat Festival
中秋节	Zhōngqiūjié	Mid-Autumn Festival
国庆节	Guóqìngjié	National Day
元宵节	Yuánxiāojié	Lantern Festival
黄金周	huángjīnzhōu	Golden Week
调休	tiáoxiū	rescheduled rest day, make-up workday
放假	fàngjià	to have time off, to be on holiday
假期	jiàqī	holiday period, vacation
团圆饭	tuányuánfàn	family reunion dinner
红包	hóngbāo	red envelope containing money
烟花	yānhuā	fireworks
月饼	yuèbǐng	mooncake
粽子	zòngzi	sticky rice dumpling in bamboo leaves
龙舟	lóngzhōu	dragon boat
灯笼	dēnglong	lantern
扫墓	sǎomù	to sweep a tomb, to visit a grave
祖先	zǔxiān	ancestors
迷信	míxìn	superstition
新年快乐	Xīnnián kuàilè	Happy New Year
节日快乐	Jiérì kuàilè	Happy holidays

问

08 Chinese Holidays FAQ

What is the biggest holiday in China?

Spring Festival, or Chinese New Year, is by far the largest. It carries the most statutory days off, the longest total break, and the heaviest travel volume of any holiday in the world.

How many public holidays does China have?

China has seven statutory public holidays. In 2026 they total 13 statutory days off, which the State Council extends into longer breaks by rescheduling weekends.

What does "Golden Week" mean in China?

Golden Week describes the week-long breaks around Spring Festival and National Day. Both are national travel peaks, so book transport and accommodation well in advance or avoid them altogether.

Why do Chinese holiday dates change every year?

Four of the seven holidays follow the Chinese lunisolar calendar rather than the Gregorian one. Their dates therefore shift annually, sometimes by several weeks.

Is it a bad idea to visit China during a public holiday?

It depends on your priorities. Holidays offer unmatched cultural atmosphere, but expect crowds, higher prices, and closed government offices — so leave a buffer around Golden Week if your schedule allows.

游

09 Plan Your Trip Around Chinese Holidays

Chinese holidays are among the oldest continuously observed celebrations anywhere, and they are one of the most rewarding ways to encounter the culture directly. A single Spring Festival reunion dinner will teach you more about Chinese family life than a chapter of any textbook.

Get the timing right and you gain access to traditions that are difficult to experience any other way. Get it wrong and you spend the week in a queue — which is reason enough to check the calendar first.

Related Guides

- Chinese New Year (Spring Festival)
  The full guide to China's most important holiday, from reunion dinners to taboos.
- Qingming Festival (Tomb Sweeping Day)
  Origins, rituals, and modern observance of China's ancestral remembrance day.
- Dragon Boat Festival
  Qu Yuan, zongzi, and the superstitions behind the Double Fifth.
- Mid-Autumn Festival
  Mooncakes, moon gazing, and China's great autumn family reunion.
- China National Day
  What happens on October 1, and why it produces the year's second Golden Week.
- The Chinese Lunisolar Calendar
  How the calendar works, and why holiday dates move every year.
- Hongbao (Red Envelopes)
  Etiquette, amounts, and digital hongbao on WeChat.
- Best Places to Visit in China
  Build an itinerary around — or safely away from — the Golden Week peaks.

Contents

Collapse

1. Chinese Holidays Explained: Ancient Origins and Shifting Dates
2. Why Chinese Holiday Dates Change Every Year
3. What Are the 7 Major Chinese Public Holidays?
4. 1. New Year's Day in China (元旦, Yuándàn) — January 1
5. 2. Chinese New Year / Spring Festival (春节, Chūnjié) — February 17, 2026
6. 3. Tomb Sweeping Day / Qingming Festival (清明节, Qīngmíngjié) — April 5, 2026
7. 4. Labor Day in China (劳动节, Láodòngjié) — May 1
8. 5. Dragon Boat Festival (端午节, Duānwǔjié) — June 19, 2026
9. 6. Mid-Autumn Festival (中秋节, Zhōngqiūjié) — September 25, 2026
10. 7. China National Day (国庆节, Guóqìngjié) — October 1
11. Chinese Public Holiday Dates in 2026 (Official Schedule)
12. How Long Do Chinese Holidays Last? Golden Week Explained
13. Statutory Days vs. Actual Days Off
14. What Is Golden Week in China?
15. Make-Up Workdays and Six-Day Weeks
16. Is China Closed for Chinese Holidays? Shops, Banks, and Offices
17. What Stays Open
18. What Closes
19. Planning a Trip Around Chinese Holidays
20. Does China Celebrate Christmas and Thanksgiving?
21. Thanksgiving in China
22. Christmas in China
23. Chinese Holiday Vocabulary in Mandarin
24. Chinese Holidays FAQ
25. What is the biggest holiday in China?
26. How many public holidays does China have?
27. What does "Golden Week" mean in China?
28. Why do Chinese holiday dates change every year?
29. Is it a bad idea to visit China during a public holiday?
30. Plan Your Trip Around Chinese Holidays

0% read

Anne Meredith
Contributing Editor · Chinese Language Institute · Guilin, China
Anne Meredith holds an MA in International Politics and Chinese Studies from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), where she wrote and defended her Master's thesis entirely in Chinese — one of three recognized "with distinction" at commencement. As CLI's former Head of Content, Anne led a team of content creators and Chinese language teachers to produce online Mandarin learning resources, including CLI's Chinese Graded Readers series. She has lived in China for over a decade, is fluent in Chinese, and currently resides in Shanghai.

Continue Reading

Chinese Holidays

What Is the Sanyuesan Festival and How Is It Celebrated?

Sanyuesan is one of Guangxi's most important traditional festivals. Learn when it takes place, how the Zhuang people celebrate it, and why mountain songs, five-colored rice, ritual, and traditional dress remain central to this vibrant spring holiday.

Chinese Holidays

What is Children's Day (儿童节) in China?

Curious to learn more about the eighth year in the Chinese zodiac calendar: the Year of the Goat? Read on to learn how people born during the Year of the Goat have great capacity for deep affection, prefer stability and peace, and above all, follow the mandate of heaven.

Chinese Holidays
Your Comprehensive Guide to the Chinese New Year (春节 Chūnjié)
Chinese New Year, also called the Spring Festival (春节, Chūnjié), celebrates the beginning of the Chinese year based on the traditional Chinese lunisolar calendar. The Chinese calendar starts each new year with 立春 lìchūn, which officially marks the first day of spring.

Chinese Holidays
What is Chinese Labor Day (劳动节 Láodòngjié) and how is it celebrated?
Explore Chinese Labor Day: the history of May Day in China, the official May 1–5 holiday, Golden Week travel, and modern 996 work culture.

Contents

1. 01 Chinese Holidays Explained: Ancient Origins and Shifting Dates
2. 02 What Are the 7 Major Chinese Public Holidays?
3. 03 Chinese Public Holiday Dates in 2026 (Official Schedule)
4. 04 How Long Do Chinese Holidays Last? Golden Week Explained
5. 05 Is China Closed for Chinese Holidays? Shops, Banks, and Offices
6. 06 Does China Celebrate Christmas and Thanksgiving?
7. 07 Chinese Holiday Vocabulary in Mandarin
8. 08 Chinese Holidays FAQ
9. 09 Plan Your Trip Around Chinese Holidays

Stroke Order

Stroke Animation
▶ Animate ⟳ Loop
Stroke Breakdown

PROGRAMS
Immersion Program
Study Abroad
Learn Chinese Online
Custom Travel
Teach in China

ABOUT
Our Story
Our Team
What is CLI?
Why CLI?
FAQ

EXPERIENCE
Testimonials
Guilin
The CLI Center
Photo Gallery
Resources

CONTACT
info@studycli.org
WeChat: Study-CLI
US (+1) 888-783-8383
EU (+49) 0179-612-4100
CN (+86) 0773-759-9367

★★★★★ 4.95 / 5 GoOverseas · Students from 50+ countries · 17+ year GXNU partnership

© 2009–2026 Chinese Language Institute | Terms & Conditions | Privacy Policy
31 Chaoyang Xilu, Guilin, Guangxi 541004