

# Nanjing Celebrates Annual Dragon Boat Festival on June 22

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Take in one of China's oldest traditions with dragon boat races, festival food, and outdoor fun

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Every year on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month, the ancient Chinese capital city of Nanjing comes alive with colorful dragon boats racing through the city's most popular waterways in a tradition dating back 2,500 years. The Dragon Boat Festival pays homage to the important Chinese figure, Qu Yuan, a famous poet and government officer. Locals celebrate by eating traditional foods while cheering on the dragon boat races held on Xuanwu Lake, Mochou Lake, the Outer Qinhuai River in the downtown area, and Gucheng Lake and Jinniu Lake in the suburbs.

Here are a few ways visitors can take part in traditional Dragon Boat Festival activities happening throughout Nanjing from June 22 -24: [Get Immersed in the Festival's History](#)

Though there are many legends surrounding the origins of the Dragon Boat Festival, the most popular involves Qu Yuan, (340–278 BC), a patriotic poet and exiled official during the Warring States Period of ancient China. When his beloved Chu State fell, Qu Yuan is said to have drowned himself in the Miluo River. Locals rowed out into the river to search for him to no avail. The Dragon Boat Festival honors themes of patriotism and sacrifice that are synonymous with the poet. It is also thought to have been observed to appease the rain gods and ward off illness. For Nanjing locals, the Dragon Boat Festival also signals the official start of summer, a time to enjoy family gatherings, enjoy seasonal food, and pass along Qu Yuan's patriotic spirit to the younger generations.

[Watch a Dragon Boat Race](#)

Dragon boat races are one of China's oldest traditions, dating back more than 2,500 years. Spectators line the waterways each summer to watch the long, colorfully decorated wooden boats race at Nanjing's Mochou Lake Park, along with the surrounding lakes and rivers. During the races, teams with as many as 60 rowers paddle quickly and harmoniously to the beat of drums. It is said that the winning team will have good luck and a happy life in the following year.

### Take Part in Local Customs

With a history spanning centuries, the Dragon Boat Festival is steeped in tradition. Prior to the celebrations, parents prepare cloth perfume pouches for their children, filled with perfumes or herbal medicines that are strung around the neck with silk threads to ward off evil. It is also customary for people to clean their houses on festival day and hang mugwort and calamus plant on a beam above their door to keep away disease and bring good luck to the family.

### Enjoy Traditional Foods

Traditional festival foods are by vendors near the main events include zongzi, a rice dumpling flavored with nuts and wrapped inside bamboo leaves. Local restaurants also serve up these delights, along with other favorites such as green bean cake and salted duck eggs.

There's no better place to experience one of China's oldest celebrations than in Nanjing, one of the four great ancient capitals in Chinese history. Learn more about this captivating destination and its culture at [GotoNanjing.com](http://GotoNanjing.com).

### About Nanjing

Nanjing, the capital of Jiangsu Province, is situated in the Yangtze River Delta area 190 miles northwest of Shanghai. Recognized as one of the four great ancient capitals of China, Nanjing has served as the capital city of 10 Chinese dynasties and regimes for a total of more than 1,800 years. A sophisticated metropolis and a modern center of history, education, and culture, Nanjing is home to some of the country's most significant historical attractions such as the Xiaoling Tomb of the Ming Dynasty, a UNESCO World Heritage Site; Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Mausoleum; The Presidential Palace; and a City Wall that dates back more than 600 years. Popular attractions also include China's oldest public library and one of the country's first museums, the Nanjing Museum. Nanjing is accessible by Nanjing Lukou International Airport (NKG) with daily flights from North America. Three train stations – Nanjing Railway Station, Nanjing South Railway Station, and Nanjing West Railway Station – connect Nanjing to all of China's major cities, including Shanghai, which is a 90- minute ride via bullet train or three hours by car. For more information on Nanjing, visit <http://www.gotonanjing.com/> or follow the destination on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [YouTube](#) at @GoToNanjing.

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