

VIETNAMESE LUNAR NEW YEAR, OR “TET”

The Vietnamese New Year is called “Tet”, short for “Tết Nguyên Đán” which means “Feast of the First Morning”.

Celebrations continue for at least three days up to an entire week after New Year’s Day. Tet shares many traditions with Chinese New Year: people buy new clothes and clean their homes in anticipation of Tet, as it is considered bad luck to sweep during Tet itself; families gather for a reunion meal and eat traditional foods like *banh chung*; children receive red envelopes with lucky money; and there are decorations and lion dances in the streets. New Year’s Day is reserved for visiting family, with visits to friends on the second day and visits to teachers and business associates on the third day. The first visitor to one’s house on New Year’s Day carries special symbolic significance, and is a major ritual of Tet (*xông đất*). A successful, moral, or good-natured visitor is said to bring good fortune for the year, while someone in mourning or with an incompatible zodiac sign will bring bad luck. To be safe, people avoid entering a home first unless explicitly invited, and sometimes the head of a house will leave and return at midnight to avoid bad luck from an undesirable first visit.



This handout was developed by the West Vancouver Memorial Library, North Vancouver City Library, and North Vancouver District Library in collaboration with the North Shore Immigrant Inclusion Partnership.

HAPPY LUNAR NEW YEAR!

新年快乐

[Xin Nian Kuai Le]

新年快樂

[Sun Lin Fie Lok]

새해 복 많이 받으세요

[SaeHae Bok Manhi Bonaeseyo]

Chúc Mừng Năm Mới

[Chook Moong Numb Moi]



Lunar New Year is a centuries-old celebration marked by the beginning of the lunar calendar.

While Lunar New Year is commonly referred to as “Chinese New Year”, it is observed in many countries across Asia, including China, Korea, and Vietnam. For these countries, Lunar New Year is based on the traditional Chinese lunisolar calendar; the date changes annually but always falls between January 21 and February 20. Their largest annual festival, it is a period of mass movement as people travel home for the holiday period. Though there are distinct customs for each country’s celebration, they share many similarities and all involve family gatherings, traditional foods, and bright decorations.



Lantern Festival - The 15th day after the New Year is the first full moon of the year and is celebrated with the Lantern Festival. Though there are some regional differences, this festival always marks the end of the Chinese Spring Festival. Typically families gather again and eat rice dumplings called *tangyan* or *yuanxiao*. People spend time outdoors looking at the moon, walking the streets appreciating and carrying lighted lanterns, answering riddles written on lanterns, setting off firecrackers, and watching lion dances.

CHINESE LUNAR NEW YEAR, OR "SPRING FESTIVAL"

In China, "Chinese New Year" is referred to as the "Spring Festival" or "Lunar New Year".

It is the biggest festival of the year and is celebrated not only in mainland China but in places with large Chinese populations like Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, and Thailand. Specific customs vary across regions, but typically lasts for 16 days, starting from New Year's Eve up until the Lantern Festival on the 15th day of the first month. Families prepare by house-cleaning and decorating with red symbols like lanterns, couplets, and paper cut-outs representing luck and happiness; in Southern regions they decorate with kumquat trees.

Every year is tied to one of the 12 zodiac animals, and that year's zodiac animal features prominently in the decorations. On New Year's Eve families reunite for a traditional meal, and children receive red envelopes with lucky money from their elders. Families stay up late together, with the majority in Northern China watching the annual televised New Year's Gala together. On New Year's Day people pay respects to their ancestors, visit with close family members, and watch firecrackers and lion dances in the streets.



KOREAN LUNAR NEW YEAR, OR "SEOLLAL"

Korean New Year lasts three days: the day before the New Year, the day of the New Year, and the day after the New Year.

Koreans use this time to gather with family and to embrace traditions. Ancestor worship is a key aspect of Korean New Year, with people paying respects to ancestors in a ritual called *charye*. Elder worship (*sebae*) is an important custom as well, with children showing filial respect with a deep traditional bow; they are rewarded with crisp paper money in beautiful silk bags.

On New Year's Day a big meal is shared, with traditional foods like *tteokguk* (a type of soup) and *jeon* (a savory pancake). Many dress in colorful traditional Korean clothing called *hanbok*. Gifts are exchanged between family members, and time is spent playing popular folk games like *yutnori*.

