What is Songkran Festival? Inside Thailand's April New Year celebrations

On 13 April, Thailand celebrates its New Year with the world’s wettest festival, Songkran. Here's everything you need to know about the annual national holiday...

**What is Songkran?**  
  
Songkran – also known as the Water Splashing Festival – is a celebration to mark the start of the Buddhist New Year. Buddha images are bathed, and younger Thais show respect to monks and elders by sprinkled water over their hands.  
  
Parades, dancing and folk entertainment mark the lunar change too, although getting wet is what Songkran is most famed for.  
  
Over the years the festival has morphed into all-out water war, with unsuspecting victims and eager participants being blasted by high powered super-soakers!

**Why is Songkran so special?**

Songkran is the epitome of fun. In a nutshell: vast quantities of water are stored in whatever vessels take your fancy (squirt guns, buckets and water balloons are all acceptable), before being used to saturate your nearest and dearest.  
  
It’s a welcome reprieve from the intense heat but has a serious side too, the original focus being on enriching religious intentions and building family bonds.

**When and where can I join in?**

Songkran runs 13 to 15 April. Festivities can be found countrywide: in Khon Kaen, in eastern Thailand, there are parades of flower-laden floats; in Bangkok, waterfights are focused on Khao San Road.  
  
But it’s the northern city of Chiang Mai that celebrates with most gusto. It’s practically pandemonium – people literally flood the streets.  
  
There are no rules or requirements for joining in, just be prepared to get wet.