# The Top 10 Holidays and Festivals in Shanghai

Holidays and festivals like dragon boat racing, National Day, and Chinese New Year can be enjoyed all around China, but experiencing them in Shanghai is special. The metropolis backdrop of the Bund and the megacity's [history of Western influences](https://www.tripsavvy.com/best-things-to-do-in-shanghai-1495585) lend even the oldest traditions a new kind of excitement.

Big festivals cause Shanghai to become even busier than usual, but don't worry: With some patience and [a little planning ahead](https://www.tripsavvy.com/before-you-go-to-china-1495430), you can still make great memories at any of these events.

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## Gregorian New Year’s Eve

Although the [Lunar New Year is celebrated with more enthusiasm](https://www.tripsavvy.com/chinese-new-year-celebration-1458286) a few weeks later, Gregorian New Year’s Eve on January 31 is as good a reason as any to party. The Bund is always busy, but due to a tragic stampede in 2015, large fireworks on the river are no longer guaranteed. Instead, many residents prefer the smaller celebrations in shopping and entertainment districts such as Xintiandi. The many Western expats who call Shanghai home gather at parties, ticketed events, and rooftop bars.

Another option for New Year’s Eve is going to [Longhua Temple](https://www.tripsavvy.com/best-temples-in-shanghai-to-visit-1495583), one of the most important temples in the city, to ring a giant bell and bring good luck in the new year. Traditional performances and dance troupes provide entertainment.

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## [Chinese New Year](https://www.tripsavvy.com/wearing-red-underwear-chinese-new-year-1494985)

Hands down, Shanghai is one of the best places in the world for [celebrating Chinese New Year](https://www.tripsavvy.com/wearing-red-underwear-chinese-new-year-1494985). You’ll get to witness ancient traditions observed within the setting of a modern metropolis. Along with seeing decorations and fireworks, you’ll enjoy stumbling across dragon and lion dances throughout the many interesting neighborhoods of the city.

You won’t be the only one enjoying Chinese New Year in Shanghai! The 15-day holiday period kicks off the exceptionally busy [first Golden Week of the year](https://www.tripsavvy.com/golden-week-in-china-explained-1535672); [millions of people will be traveling](https://www.tripsavvy.com/traveling-in-china-during-chinese-new-year-4580535), so you'd do well to book ahead.

In 2021, Chinese New Year will begin on February 12 (Year of the Ox).

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## Peach Blossom Festival

Just as Japan [celebrates *hanami* in early spring](https://www.tripsavvy.com/japan-cherry-blossom-festivals-1550069), Shanghai's city parks have enough brilliantly blooming peach trees to merit an annual Peach Blossom Festival. It begins in late [March](https://www.tripsavvy.com/visitors-guide-for-travel-china-march-1495464) or early [April](https://www.tripsavvy.com/weather-packing-event-guide-april-china-1495458), depending on Mother Nature’s whim.

The epicenter for the festival is Chengbei Folk Peach Orchard. Performances include traditional music, acrobatics, and everyone’s favorite: pig racing.

If you want something more low-key, an enjoyable day can be spent roving among parks appreciating the sights and sweet scents. Gucun Park is one of the best, but the [Shanghai Botanical Garden](https://www.tripsavvy.com/shanghai-4138869) in the southern part of the city is a sure bet for finding peach—plus cherry and plum—blooms.

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## [Shanghai International Film Festival](http://www.siff.com/siff/english/)

Considered one of the largest international film festivals in Asia, the SIFF has been recognizing extraordinary talent in acting and filmmaking since 1993. Instead of Golden Globes, the most prestigious awards handed out during the 10-day event are Golden Goblets.

Film screenings take place in cinemas big and small all over the city. You’ll need to get tickets in advance for the most popular screenings, where directors and cast members may be in the audience.

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## Longhua Temple Fair

Held in the largest of ancient temples in Shanghai, the Longhua Temple Fair is an exciting cultural event that’s been going on since the Ming dynasty! Along with worship activities, the festival consists of traditional dancing, martial arts, vegetarian food, cultural demonstrations, and other “folk” entertainment.

In 2020, the Longhua Temple Fair will be held on March 26.

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## Dragon Boat Festival

Dragon Boat racing is based on traditions that date back 2,500 years, and the three-day Dragon Boat Festival (aka the Duanwu Festival) is a favorite tradition; many Chinese people take time off work to [enjoy summer weather](https://www.tripsavvy.com/best-summer-activities-in-china-1495052) and travel domestically around this time.

Festival-goers gather to watch dragon boat races, [eat sticky rice dumplings](https://www.tripsavvy.com/best-food-to-try-in-shanghai-4772378), and drink *realgar* wine, a special brew used to keep insects at bay. The festival is held on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month (usually in June), a day thought to be very unlucky per old superstition. The 2020 Dragon Boat Festival will start on June 25.

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## [Mid-Autumn Festival](https://www.tripsavvy.com/chinese-moon-festival-1458337)

The [Mid-Autumn Festival](https://www.tripsavvy.com/china-things-to-do-4138873), better known to tourists as the “Mooncake Festival,” honors the full moon of the eighth lunar month. Heavy pastries known as mooncakes are gifted and shared among family and friends, lanterns decorate homes and public spaces, and some of the [ancient “water” towns](https://www.tripsavvy.com/china-4138875) organize events.

The Mid-Autumn Festival is heavily commercialized but mostly quiet. Aside from the colorful lanterns and omnipresent ads for lavish mooncakes, many tourists may not even realize a festival is underway. Pick up a mooncake or two to enjoy (be warned: they’re filling!), then stroll and appreciate what is often one of the brightest full moons of the year.

The Mid-Autumn Festival [takes place in late September or early October](https://www.tripsavvy.com/fall-festivals-in-asia-4175471). The 2020 festival will begin on October 1.

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## Shanghai Tourism Festival

The Shanghai Tourism Festival has been held annually since 1990 and attracts millions of visitors every fall. A large parade, mascots, live music, and even a procession of decorated cruise ships on the river are part of the two-week event. The deal gets even sweeter with half-price admission to major tourist attractions around the city during the festival.

The 2020 Shanghai Tourism Festival will begin on September 11.

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## [National Day and Golden Week](https://www.tripsavvy.com/china-essential-info-4138872)

The [National Day holiday](https://www.tripsavvy.com/china-essential-info-4138872) is celebrated throughout China every October 1 to commemorate the founding of the People’s Republic of China. The date also [kicks off one of China’s “Golden Week” holiday periods](https://www.tripsavvy.com/golden-week-in-china-explained-1535672).

An estimated 700 million people travel in China the week of October 1, making National Day the busiest time to be in Shanghai. Popular places such as the Bund [will be inundated with tourists](https://www.tripsavvy.com/the-most-crowded-places-in-china-4147740) from the mainland who want to see different parts of their own country. The week after National Day isn’t the best time to explore Shanghai—not unless you just want to be awed by the size of the crowds!

Unlike other festivals in Shanghai that change dates based on the Chinese lunisolar calendar, National Day is always on October 1.

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## [Christmas](https://www.tripsavvy.com/christmas-and-new-years-eve-europe-4057574)

although December 25 technically isn’t a public holiday in China, that doesn’t stop Shanghai residents from enjoying it. Business closures are unusual, but many Western expats choose to take time off. Christmas is mainly a secular holiday in Shanghai, so it’s more about evoking a holiday spirit. The big malls and [entertainment districts](https://www.tripsavvy.com/visitors-guide-former-french-concession-shanghai-1495574) display lights and decorations, and hotels often put together special Christmas buffets and banquets.

One of the nicest ways to [observe Christmas in Shanghai](https://www.tripsavvy.com/china-things-to-do-4138873) is by visiting the Christmas markets, which are among the many enjoyable [free things to do in Shanghai](https://www.tripsavvy.com/free-things-to-do-in-shanghai-1495584). The cozy, outdoor spaces are lit up and reminiscent of markets you would see in Germany or the Netherlands that time of year.