

## Dragon Boating

Dragon boating isn't something that a lot of people in the United States are familiar with. That is, unless you are of Asian descent. Then you probably know exactly what dragon boating is.

A dragon boat is a long, narrow, human powered boat used in the paddling sport of dragon boat racing which originated in China. Many people think that dragon boating was the pre-cursor of the Ivy League rowing teams. For racing events, the boats are usually outfitted with decorative Chinese dragon heads and tails. A large drum is required to be carried on board to keep the oarsmen in time with each other.

Dragon boat races are traditional held to commemorate the death of Qu Yuan, a Chinese patriotic poet. Dragon boating is the only sport that is celebrated as a national holiday. The Chinese calendar date is 5/5 which usually corresponds to a date falling sometime in June.

The standard crew of a dragon is 22 - 20 paddlers in pairs facing toward the bow of the boat, 1 drummer or caller at the bow facing toward the paddler, and 1 steersman at the rear of the boat. For races, it is common to have just 18 paddlers. Dragon boats do vary in length and crew size.

The drummer is at the heart of dragon boating. He is responsible for leading the crew throughout the race with a rhythmic beating of a drum to indicate the frequency of the paddling strokes. The drummer, or caller, can pick up the pace by drumming faster or slow down the pace by drumming slower. He generally will match his beat with the pace of the front few oarsmen.

Modern dragon boating is organized at an international level by the International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF). The IDBF recognizes two types of dragon boat racing activities: sport racing and festival racing. The latter type of racing is more in keeping with traditional dragon boating.

There are also some very long endurance events such as the Three Gorges Dam Rally along the Yangtze River in China which covers up to 100 kilometers. The Ord River marathon in Australia covers over 50 kilometers and is another endurance event endorsed by the IDBF.

Today, dragon boating is among the fastest growing of team water sports with tens of thousands of participants in organizations and clubs in 60 countries. The sport is recognized for the camaraderie, strength, and endurance fostered

among participants. It has also become a very popular corporate and charitable sport.

Dragon boating isn't just an Asian sport. It has grown in popularity in North America as well. It has a long, rich history and is a beautiful sport to watch. Dragon boating embraces the Asian traditions and brings them into the modern world in a whole new way!