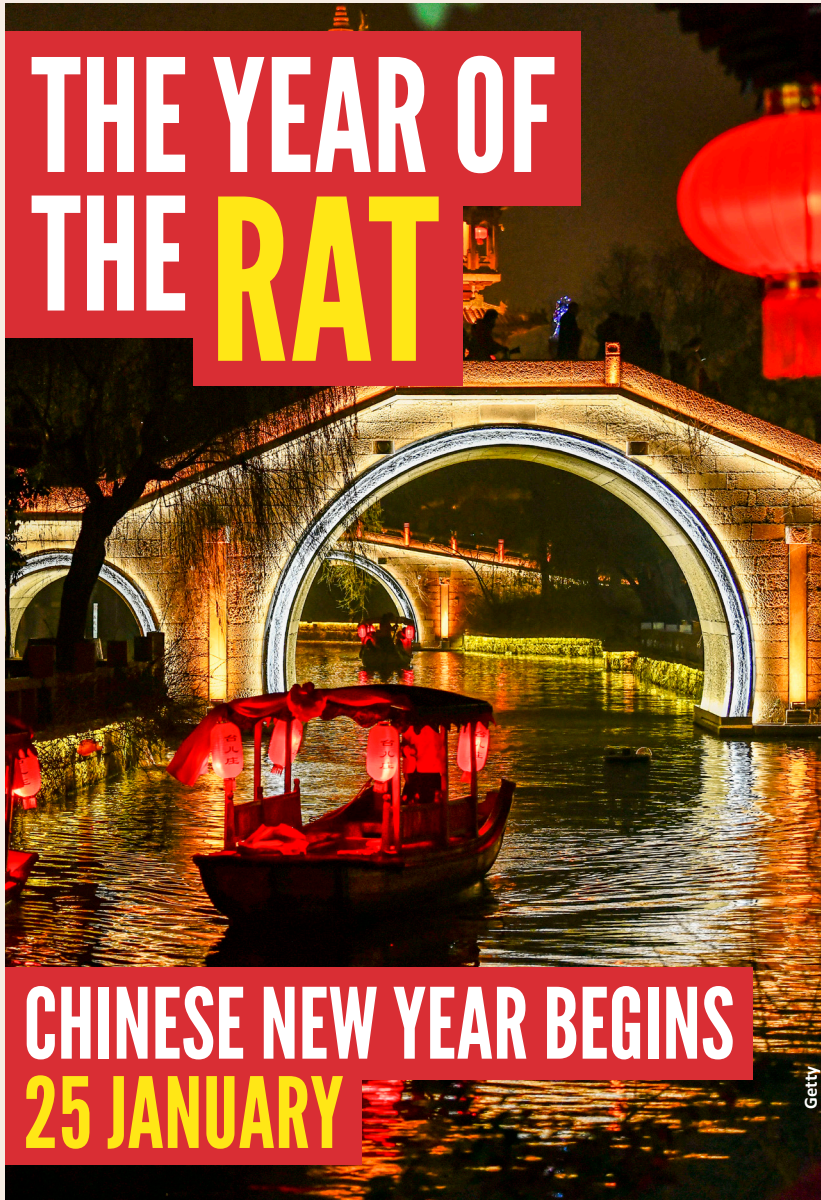


THE WEEK AHEAD



THE YEAR OF THE RAT

CHINESE NEW YEAR BEGINS 25 JANUARY

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WHILE our New Year celebrations may have been and gone, the Chinese are just starting to celebrate.

Chinese New Year is also known as the Lunar New Year or Spring Festival. Each year Chinese New Year begins on the first day of the new moon. Chinese New Year is the most important date in the Chinese calendar. It is believed that a good start to the year will lead to good luck. Traditionally, the day will begin with fireworks, and the colour red is used everywhere.

The story goes that in ancient times, a monster would come up from the bottom of the sea once a year, to eat animals and humans. On this day, the villagers would all escape into the mountains. But one year, an old man decided not to go into the mountains but face the monster. He covered homes in red paper, dressed in red, and prepared firecrackers. The monster was angered by the red paper, scared by the firecrackers and when it saw the old man dressed in red, laughing at it – the monster ran away! The following morning, when villagers returned to their town, they found it had been saved. So, from then on, these colour and firecracker traditions continued.

There are lots of ways to ensure good luck in the year ahead on Chinese New Year, and there are also lots of things that you're supposed to avoid. On the day of New Year you should not have a shower as it is believed you could wash away the good luck.



THE CHINESE ZODIAC

There are 12 animals in the Chinese zodiac that are used to represent years. In order, these are: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig. Last year was the Year of the Pig, and this year, it's the rat's turn.

The zodiac repeats every 12 years, making it easy to figure out whether it's your year. What's your zodiac animal?

If you were born in 2008, it's likely that your zodiac animal is a rat. You might be thinking that your year will be lucky but it's actually said to be bad luck!

Some Chinese people believe that the best way to protect yourself from evil spirits and bad fortune in your zodiac year is to wear red underwear every day!

Questions on: 'The Year of the Rat'

1) Chinese New Year is believed to bring good luck for the year ahead. How is it traditionally started?

2) What is Chinese New Year also known as?

Tick **two**:

- Spring Festival
- Summer Festival
- Lunar New Year

3) What date does Chinese New Year begin this year?

4) In the story, explain how the old man scared away the monster.

5) How many animals are there in the Chinese zodiac?

6) Fill in the missing animal in these sentences.

Last year was the Year of the _____.

This year it is the Year of the _____.

7) If it is your zodiac year, what do some Chinese people believe you should do to protect yourself from evil spirits?

8) What do some people believe you should not do on the day of Chinese New Year?