

Unit 4: Dragon Boat Festival

Narrator: Every year on the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar, people all over the world celebrate "Duanwu Jie" or as it has become known in English, the Dragon Boat Festival. The festival has been celebrated in China for over 2,000 years.

Customs vary from place to place—as do the boats. The longest boats can be 35 meters long and need up to sixty people to paddle them. Each boat has a drummer. Team members must follow the drummer's beat to make sure everyone paddles at the same speed. When the drum beats get faster, the team paddles faster! In some places, the races are intense, athletic contests, such as this tournament in Xi'an, Shaanxi. Crowds are treated to closely fought races, as well as other forms of entertainment.

Another tradition of Dragon Boat Festivals is the eating of Zongzi—sticky rice dumplings with various fillings. Like the festivals, the Zongzi flavors vary by region. Northern regions of China prefer sweet zongzi, while southern areas prefer non-sweet versions.

Since 2008, the dragon boat festival has been celebrated as a public holiday in China. And, in 2009, the festival was added to the UNESCO World Intangible Cultural Heritage List. The festival is likely to continue for many years to come.