

Festivals and Events in Suzhou

In Suzhou, colorful festivals and cultural celebrations abound all year round. There are traditional festivals, tourism official festivals, and new city-level events.



Festival and Events

□ *Welcome the God of Wealth at Panmen Gate*

On the fourth day of the Chinese New Year, Suzhou people used to hold certain ceremony to welcome the God of Wealth. It is said that local deities including the God of Wealth returned to their earthly stations after a lengthy stay in Heaven. Since 2003, Suzhou government has developed this traditional festival into a great folk event for all the public at Panmen Gate. The event includes City Gate Opening Ceremony, God of wealth Cruise and so on. Visitors can learn more about the God of wealth.

□ *The Lantern Festival*

The Lantern Festival falls on the 15th day of the first lunar month. Traditionally, Suzhou people appreciate lanterns, guess lantern riddles, set off firecrackers, admire lantern displays and exercise to stay healthy. Nowadays, Suzhou people also follow the custom of eating sweet dumplings and holding lantern fairs. Most people buy ready-made sweet dumplings rather than making them.

□ *Taihu Lake Plum Blossom Festival*

The Taihu Lake Plum Blossom Festival Celebration is held in the Linwudong Square, West Hill, Taihu Lake. Focused on the plum blossom, this festival sees all kinds of wonderful folk culture activities in a propitious and enthusiastic atmosphere. Visitors from all over take great pleasure in seeing Taihu Lake, the surrounding hills, and the fragrant flowers.

□ *International Tourism Festival In Suzhou*

The International Tourism Festival in Suzhou is a grand tourism event including several programs which last one month, such as a food fair, painting shows, dragon boat contests, international photography exhibitions, tourism trade fairs and so on. Every year the People Ferry Boats Performance acts as the opening of the international tourism festival which has always attracted lots of locals and tourists to come, and is the most important part of this festival.

□ *International Tourism Festival In Zhouzhuang*

This International Tourism Festival is hosted in the ancient town of Zhouzhuang on April each year. It hosts international art creation contest each year, on the subject of river villages and ancient towns, in the forms of photography, calligraphy, painting, literary art, art, craft and literature, etc. Meanwhile, the fair has traditional folk activities with river village characteristics, such as the Village Girls Dance, Lamp Boat, Fish Hawk, Lotus-fruit beating Box, Carrying Flower Basket and Ape Tea, etc. It has been developed into a festival celebration activity with both a congregation of famous artists and art lovers.



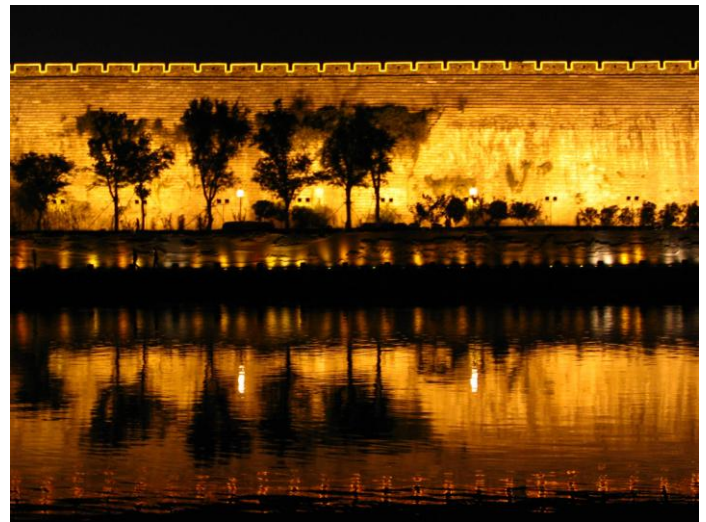
Festival and Events

□ *“Crushing Gods” Temple Fair*

“Crushing Gods” is a traditional public activity. It is related to Lu Dongbing who is one of the Eight Immortals in Chinese legends. It is said that the 14th of April is the birthday of Lu Dongbing in the Chinese Lunar Calendar. On that day, he would pretend to be a beggar walking among the crowds. If someone walked past Lu Dongbing, he or she would have good luck for the following year. As a result, many people went shopping on that day. Nowadays, this traditional event has developed into an annual temple fair. In the Immortal Temple, there are many food stands, fish shops, handicraft shops on that day. Altogether, it is a very unique experience to be had.

□ *Dragon Boat Festival*

Like Chinese people in other parts of the country, Suzhou people eat Zongzi and hold dragon-boat races to celebrate the Dragon Boat Festival. It is generally believed that this festival originated to honor the memory of the patriotic poet Qu Yuan, who lived in the state of Chu during the Warring States period. However the Suzhou people celebrate the festival to commemorate Wu Zixu, a high-ranking official of the state of Wu during the same period. At the festival, local people hang Chinese mugwort leaves, calamus and garlic on the doorframes, mix realgar wine with liquor, and apply the mixture on children’s ears and noses to ward off poisonous insects.



□ *Mid-Autumn Festival*

This is another important festival in Suzhou. Suzhou people taste delicious Suzhou-style moon cakes, burn joss sticks, light candles, set tables in courtyards, and offer red water chestnuts, white lotus roots, pomegranates, Chinese chestnuts and moon cakes to the Moon Goddess, to ask for a happy and healthy life. The Stone Lake and Baodai Bridge are the best places for local people to appreciate the bright moon at the festival. At Chongyuan Temple, a famous temple in Suzhou, there is also a special ceremony for this festival. The monk here will light the lights in this temple to pray for luck.

□ *Hanshan Temple Bell Ringing Festival*

The ancient Hanshan Temple in Suzhou is home to one of China's oldest and largest New Years festivals. In traditional Chinese culture, the stroke of midnight is celebrated by ringing the great bells of Buddhist temples. According to Buddhist legend, each layman has 108 kinds of annoyance per year, and each bell tolling can help people dispel a kind of annoyance. One who listens to 108 bell tolls on the New Year Eve will have good luck and happiness in the coming year. On December 31st every year, thousands of tourists gather inside and outside the temple to listen to 108 bell tolls at the same time, praying for good luck and happiness in the coming year. At Hanshan Temple an array of activities and performances have been arranged around the ringing to make it a fascinating and entertaining way to ring in the New Year!