

# The Chinese Calendar

The traditional lunar calendar (阴历 yīnlì), used throughout history in China, calculates months based on the moon's phases. The lunar calendar is also known as (农历 nónglì), which means "agricultural calendar," because it was used in ancient times to guide planting and harvesting.

Today, along with most of the world, China uses the Gregorian calendar for business, school, and everyday life. The lunar calendar, however, determines most holidays in China, such as Chinese New Year (春节 Chūnjié), the Lantern Festival (元宵节 Yuánxiāo jié), the Mid-Autumn Festival (中秋节 Zhōngqiū jié), and many other traditional celebrations.

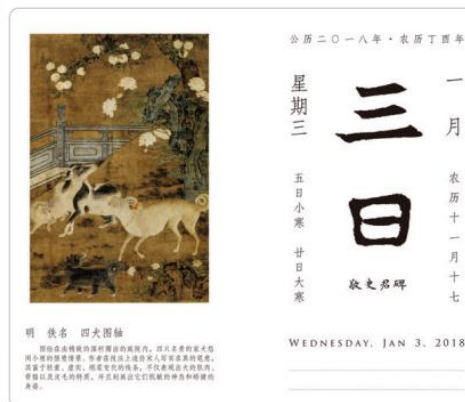
In addition, the lunar calendar is used to select auspicious dates for weddings, funerals, and other important life events. Lunar calendar birthdays are also still celebrated, especially among the older generations. So don't be surprised if a Chinese friend celebrates his or her birthday twice a year.

**CHINESE NEW YEAR (春节 Chūnjié)**, also known as Spring Festival, is the first day of the lunar calendar. It is celebrated in January or February of the Gregorian calendar. The calendar page below shows that Chinese New Year falls on January 29 in 2025.



## Activities

- Choose the best answer, based on the reading.
  - Which date is most likely to be determined by the lunar calendar?
    - a college exam
    - a company meeting
    - a child's birthday party
    - a couple's wedding
  - Which event is most likely to be determined by the Gregorian calendar?
    - Chinese New Year
    - business travel
    - a funeral ceremony
    - Mid-Autumn Festival
- Look at the right-hand page of this Chinese calendar book. What is the Gregorian calendar date? What is the lunar calendar date? Answer in Chinese.



**CULTURE NOTE**  
The Palace Museum of the Forbidden City (故宫 Gùgōng) in Beijing publishes an annual calendar book featuring art from the museum's collection. It is one of the most popular souvenirs for visitors.

- Search online for your lunar calendar birthday and share it with the class in Chinese.
- Discuss the following questions.
  - Are you familiar with other cultures or traditions that use a lunar calendar?
  - Why do you think the Gregorian calendar has replaced the lunar calendar in some areas of life but not others?