

Friendship International



JANUARY 31, 2025

THE FURRIEST WEATHERMAN

If you're new to the U.S., you may be hearing about "Groundhog Day" for the very first time. This quirky tradition is all about predicting the weather—with a little help from a groundhog named Phil, who lives in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania.

According to folklore, on February 2nd every year, if Phil comes out of his burrow and sees his shadow, it means six more weeks of winter. If he does not see his shadow, spring will come early. It is a silly but beloved tradition dating back to 1887, inspired by old European weather predictions involving animals.

The celebration in the small town of Punxsutawney is like a big party! Thousands of people gather before sunrise to see Phil make his prediction. There's music, dancing, and lots of excitement—even in the freezing February weather. Some fans even wear fun costumes, like groundhog hats or Punxsutawney Phil t-shirts. It is certainly a festive way to break up the winter blues.

So, where does Phil live the rest of the year? He has a cozy home in a special zoo-like enclosure at the Punxsutawney Library. And while he is called "Phil" every year, there have been many groundhogs playing the role over the decades. The current "Phil" is lovingly cared for and, like all the groundhogs along the way, is treated like a star.

Groundhog Day is a reminder that even silly traditions can bring a community together. We hope you enjoy this bit of quirky American fun!



UPCOMING DATES

January 31	International Music Day at FI
February 7	"Weddings" Program - bring pictures!
February 14	Valentine's Day Craft
February 21	Honoring Our Heritage (No Classes)
February 28	Extended Classes (No Program)

Lunar New Year

Lunar New Year is celebrated in many parts of the world. It is the first day of the lunar calendar, whose months correspond to lunar cycles. Usually, Lunar New Year falls in January or February of the Gregorian calendar.

This year's Lunar New Year celebration begins on Wednesday January 29th and lasts 16 days through February 12th. It is the Year of the Snake.

In China, Lunar New Year—also called the Spring Festival—is the most important celebration of the year. Just like Christmas in the US, the Spring Festival is about family and gathering. As the Spring Festival approaches, many people in China travel to see their parents and grandparents, often across long distances, to spend the week-long holiday together.

The Spring Festival is an extended celebration involving many traditions. Although there are regional differences, some traditions remain similar throughout China. A week or so before New Year's Eve, people start cleaning their homes to welcome the new year. This is also the busiest shopping season of the year; people buy new clothes, groceries for hosting, gifts, and Spring Festival decorations.

Two of the most iconic decorations are Fu Zi and Chun Lian, both bright red paper items with black or gold Chinese characters.

When Lunar New Year's Eve arrives, people gather around the dinner table for the "family reunion dinner," the most important meal of the year. After dinner, people play mahjong, card games, or watch Spring Festival galas on TV while waiting for midnight. As soon as the year turns, firecrackers go off and fireworks light up the night sky (in areas where such practices are permitted). From the first or second day of the new year to the seventh day or beyond, people visit relatives and friends, during which kids and the elderly receive money in red envelopes, symbolizing wishes for good health and peace.

A very special thanks to former Friendship participant Sophie Vong-Karlage for sharing with us. These snippets came from her longer article on Lunar New Year written for us in January 2023. While Lunar New Year is celebrated in many Asian countries, Sophie wrote from the perspective of China, where she was raised.

LUNAR NEW YEAR KIDS CRAFT

Take & Make kids craft kits are available for pick up at the Central Branch of the Lexington Library on Saturday Feb 1 to Tuesday Feb 4. This craft is a Lunar New Year theme. While supplies last. Limited to one per customer. For kids 5-12 years old. [Click here for the Library's website.](#)



MAKE YOUR OWN LUNAR NEW YEAR LANTERNS



HEALTHY HOMEMADE OATMEAL COOKIES