

Embargoed Until

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YEAR OF THE COO

2021 Chinese New Year Celebrations Moo-ve Online

2021 marks the Chinese Year of the Ox – or in a unique Scottish twist – the Year of the Coo. Chinese New Year in Edinburgh has become the largest celebration of its kind in Scotland and tomorrow (Friday 12 February) marks the start of the Year of the Ox. This year, due to Covid19 guidelines, the programme will be a mix of online events, promotions, outdoor installations and walking trails. Events will continue throughout the Year of the Coo, to enable more activities to take place as and when restrictions ease. Full listings and activities can be found at ChineseNewYear.scot

In addition to the celebrated Official Chinese New Year Concert, Edinburgh Castle will be lighting red to mark the occasion, the Golden Monkey art installation at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh will continue, and will be joined by a Chinese Coo installation on the Royal Mile later in the year. The Scottish Confucius Institute for Business & Communication at Heriot-Watt University will be hosting a series of online tutorials – everything from Tai Chi to Chinese New Year Cookery.

China celebrates the New Year according to the lunar calendar, sharing many similarities with Scotland's own Christmas and Hogmanay traditions. Each year is attributed to an animal from a 12-year cycle of the Chinese Zodiac. According to one myth, the Jade Emperor said the order would be decided by the order in which they arrived at his party. The Ox was about to be the first to arrive, but Rat tricked Ox into giving him a ride. Then, just as they arrived, Rat jumped down and landed ahead of Ox. Thus, Ox became the second animal.

Scotland's Chinese Consul General Ma Qiang said, "Chinese New Year is the most important celebration in the Chinese calendar and it is wonderful to see how the residents of Edinburgh have taken the celebrations to their hearts. The Year of the Ox promises hard work, positivity and honesty. These are all things we will need in the coming twelve months and I wish everyone in Edinburgh the best of New Year luck."

Rob Lang, Chair of ETAG's China Ready Initiative said; "We're delighted to be working with businesses across the city to create a unique and inspiring online celebration of Scottish and Chinese culture, and the ever-growing links between them. The last twelve months have been extraordinarily difficult for residents and businesses across the city and the Chinese New Year programme of events creates an excellent opportunity to enable the people of the city to learn more about Chinese culture whilst also re-affirming Scotland's capital as an inspiring and welcoming destination. While a number of Chinese New Year events are taking place online this year, we hope that once restrictions ease residents and visitors can enjoy the Chinese connections across the city."

The official Chinese New Year Gala Concert, held annually at the Usher Hall, moves online with the Qindao Opera House Symphony Orchestra performing *Soaring Dragon, Leaping Tiger*, as well as performances of Chinese folk music, a Chinese children's orchestra and Scottish piping and country dancing. The Gala Concert will be broadcast in China and Scotland on Saturday 13 February.

The Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh RBGE has extensive historic links with China, undertaking regular joint research and conservation projects. The garden has the largest collection of Chinese plants outside of China and is currently hosting the Golden Monkey art installation by the Australian ecological artist Lisa Roet. The 45ft inflatable sculpture delivers a serious message about global warming and habitat loss affecting the rare golden sneezing snub-nosed monkey native to the forested China-Myanmar border. It has already been exhibited in China, during Beijing Design Week in 2016, where it adorned the façade of the Kengo Kuma-designed The Opposite House, one of the most iconic hotels in the capital. The RBGE is open daily with a pre-booked access.

Artist Ian Kirkpatrick is creating a life-size Chinese Coo sculpture - inspired by the iconic Scottish animal and Chinese art and culture - which will be displayed on the Royal Mile at VisitScotland's iCentre when restrictions ease. A series of China and Coo-themed self-guided walking and cycling trails of the city have been developed in partnership with Cycling Tour Company A Wee Pedal. Starting from Blackford Hill, one route follows in the footsteps of Chiang Yee, one of the finest travel writers of the 20th century, who visited Edinburgh in the 1940s writing about his experience in *The Silent Traveller*. Full details of all the routes can be downloaded from ChineseNewYear.scot.

Heriot Watt University's Scottish Confucius Institute for Business and Communication will host a series of online videos celebrating everything from Chinese New Year customs and cookery to an explanation of the importance of the Chinese Zodiac. In addition, the Institute will be offering online taster classes in Tai Chi and, as part of their Chinese New Year Celebration series, sessions on Drinking: The Chinese Way and Banquets/Dining, the Chinese Way.

Professor Ian Baxter, Director of the Scottish Confucius Institute for Business & Communication at Heriot-Watt University commented; "In difficult times we are pleased to be working with ETAG again to support the third city-wide Chinese New Year Festival. This partnership creatively celebrates China and Scotland to build cultural understanding and a diverse mix of entertainment and education, as well as business opportunities to build the China-ready welcome for visitors to the city and residents."

Full details of Edinburgh's Chinese New Year celebrations can be found at ChineseNewYear.scot.

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