

Tet - The Vietnamese New Year

Normally Vietnamese, Chinese & other oriental people use the same calendar as the rest of the world. But they also follow a lunar calendar that they consult often when scheduling life-events that they want to insure are blessed with good luck. The Vietnamese calendar like the Chinese calendar began in the year 2637 B.C. It is 355 days long and consists of 12 months that are 29 or 30 days long. About every three years a thirteenth month is added to maintain balance. In Vietnam, the calendar was devised based on the regularly changing phases of the moon. Most Vietnamese, even city dwellers and overseas Vietnamese, have a lunar calendar in their homes to consult for festivals and auspicious dates. Because of the use of the lunar calendar, the actual days of the New Year vary from year to year. The equinoxes and solstices that marked the beginning of the European seasons were taken as the midpoint by the Asian calendar with the result that each Vietnamese season begins six weeks earlier than its European counterpart.

Tet, in the Vietnamese language, symbolizes the very first morning of the New Year in Vietnam and is popularly known as the Vietnamese New Year. Also known by the name of Nguyen-Dan, its celebrations lasts for about 7 days. The celebrations of the Vietnamese New Year involves a lot of excitement and enthusiasm and is it is regarded as one of the most popular festivals of the year among the Vietnam people. The happiness associated with Vietnamese New Year can be attributed to the fact that this particular festival brings along one of the most desired break in the agricultural year for the Vietnamese people. As Vietnamese New Year celebrations fall between the period of crop harvesting and the sowing of the new crops, people get much time and opportunity to celebrate this festival of new hopes with much fervor. As far as the preparation for Vietnamese New Year goes, that start days and weeks before the New Year's Day. People start cleaning and decorating their homes with a belief that by doing so they would be getting rid of bad fortune and bad memories, which were associated with the previous year. People all over Vietnam buy new clothes as well as new shoes and try their best to pay off their debts and even try to resolve the differences among the family members and friends. The New Year's Eve is celebrated with a special ceremony by the name of Le Tru Tich, at the midnight hour. The ceremony is initiated with firecrackers and gongs in order to bid goodbye to the previous year and welcome the New Year with loud happy noises. Just like the Chinese, the Vietnamese people are also very much particular about what they do on New Year's Day, as they believe that the events and actions performed on Vietnamese New Year's Day determines a person's luck and fortune for the rest of the year to come. Thus they try to be in touch only with those things, which represent good fortune. People who are in mourning are avoided on this particular day, as they are associated with death. Children are told not fight or even cry on Vietnamese New Year's Day and the homes are adorned with Hoa Mai, which is a yellow blossom that represents the season of spring and happiness.

New Year gifts are exchanged among the family members and friends and homage is paid to the Kitchen God. The custom associated with the kitchen God Tao is also observed in every Vietnamese household for a week before the Vietnamese New Year. Vietnamese people are of the belief that there exist three gods for them, who are duly represented by the three legs of the cooking equipment as used in the kitchen and thus kitchen in the house is the perfect place for these Gods. The middle God is a woman, while the other two are her husbands. In the ancient times, it was once a custom to provide a carp to the Gods on which they can travel. The carp basically symbolizes the second last stage of the process through which the animals were slowly and gradually transformed into dragons. People used to buy these carp from the market. They used to place it in a bucket of water and used to place the bucket at the altar of the house and in due time it was set free. The people also make it a point to visit local temples on this day in order to pray for God's blessings for prosperity and good health. The Vietnamese families are known to plant a New Year's tree in front of their homes by the name of Cay Neu at the time of Vietnamese New Year. A bamboo pole is used for this purpose. People remove all the leaves from the tree so that it can be wrapped or ornamented with good luck red colored paper. According to famous legends in the Vietnamese culture, the red color scares off evil spirits. The Cay Neu is taken down on the seventh and the last day of Tet. This is the last ritual, which brings an end to the New Year celebrations. The Vietnamese New Year cuisine includes a special rice pudding, which needs to be prepared beforehand. The rice pudding is given the name of banh chung or banh tet. The main ingredients of this pudding are mung beans and pork. Some other famous New Year foods are preserved sweets, beef, chicken, fish, oranges, coconuts, grapefruits and other seasonal fruits, especially watermelon. Watermelon holds much importance, as its flesh is red in color and hence the melon is considered to be lucky. The seeds of the watermelon are often dyed red also and served as delicacies along with other food items. The middle of the day observes an offering on the altar of the household for the ancestor's of the family by the family members. The offerings are accompanied with burning of incense at the altar. The Vietnamese people are of the belief that the first person to go through the door on the Vietnamese New Year will replicate the family's future luck and wealth. The first day of the Vietnamese New Year is reserved for visits to all the closest friends, teachers

and parents, while on the second day people visit their in-laws and other acquaintances who are not as close. The third day is observed as the day of visiting the family of the teacher and more distant relatives. The spirits return to heaven on the fourth day of the Vietnamese New Year and business in the Vietnamese household returns to normal. People also make visits to the local temple on this particular day in order to bring back the flowers or greenery as a form of gift from the celestial spirits.

The Calendar Differences

In the Vietnamese zodiac, the "cat" replaces the "rabbit" in the Chinese zodiac. Thus, a child born in the Chinese year of the rabbit was also born in the Vietnamese year of the cat. In addition the Vietnamese replace the Chinese "sheep" with "goat" (however, the word for the two animals is the same in Chinese). The Vietnamese zodiac uses the same animals as the Chinese zodiac for the remaining 10 years, though the "ox" or "cow" of the Chinese zodiac is usually considered to be a water buffalo in the Vietnamese zodiac. The Chinese calendar is based on astronomical observations and therefore dependent on what is considered the local standard time. North Vietnam switched time zones on August 8, 1967, with South Vietnam doing likewise in 1975 at the end of the Vietnam War. As a result of the shift, North and South Vietnam celebrated Tết 1968 on different days. The moving backwards of one hour had a similar effect to the 1929 Beijing time change and the effect of this change was also seen with the Winter Solstice of 1984. On Hanoi time the solstice fell on December 21, though on Beijing time the solstice fell on December 22.

As the 11th month of the Chinese calendar must contain the Winter Solstice, it was not the month from November 23, 1984 to December 21, 1984 as per the Vietnamese calendar, but rather the one from December 22, 1984 to January 20, 1985. The effect of this was that the Vietnamese New Year fell on January 21, 1985, whereas the Chinese New Year fell on February 20, 1985. The two calendars agreed again after a leap month lasting from March 21 to April 19 was inserted into the Vietnamese calendar.

From 1975 to 2100, there are only four occurrences where the Lunar New Year begins at different dates in Vietnam and in China, which are:

Year - Vietnamese New Year	Chinese New Year	~	Year - Vietnamese New Year	Chinese New Year
1985	21 January		2007	17 February
2030	2 February		2053	18 February

What Year Were You Born In?

The Years and Personal Characteristic Traits Of The Vietnamese Zodiac

A Rat (Ty) year prophesies a year of chaos. Rat people are charming and attractive to the opposite sex and have a fear of light and noise. They are active and dynamic but can be fussy about little things. Rats can have a positive side since rats are a sign there is grain in the storage bins; thus, rats, represent a bountiful harvest. Fortright, tenacious, intense, meticulous, charismatic, sensitive, hardworking, industrious, charming, eloquent, sociable, artistic, shrewd. Can be manipulative, vindictive, self-destructive, mendacious, venal, selfish, obstinate, critical, over-ambitious, ruthless, intolerant, scheming.

- Years of the Rat: 31 January 1900 – 18 February 1901 * 10 Feb 1912 – 5 Feb 1913
 * 5 February 1924 – 24 January 1925 * 24 Jan 1936 – 10 Feb 1937 * 10 Feb 1948 – 28 Jan 1949
 * 28 January 1960 – 14 February 1961 * 15 Feb 1972 – 2 Feb 1973 * 2 February 1984 – 19 February 1985
 * 19 February 1996 – 6 February 1997 * 7 February 2008 – 25 January 2009 * 2020 – 2021

The Buffalo (Suu) symbolizes industriousness and patient strength, traits suitable for a scientist. The buffalo is a traditional symbol of spring and agriculture because of its association with the slow and its pleasure wallowing in the mud. People of this year are thought to possess the characteristics of that animal: steadiness, placidity, but stubbornness when crossed. Dependable, calm, methodical, born leader, patient, hardworking, conventional, steady, modest, logical, resolute, tenacious. Can be stubborn, narrow-minded, materialistic, rigid, demanding.

- Years of the Water Buffalo: 19 Feb 1901 - 7 Feb 1902 * 6 February 1913 - 25 January 1914
 * 25 January 1925 - 12 February 1926 * 11 Febr 1937 - 30 Jan 1938 * 29 January 1949 - 16 February 1950
 * 15 February 1961 - 4 February 1962 * 3 Feb 1973 - 22 Jan 1974 * 20 February 1985 - 8 February 1986
 * 7 February 1997 - 28 January 1998 * 26 January 2009 - 14 February 2010

Tigers (Dan) are quick to anger and are indecisive, but they can be flexible and accommodate their personalities to suit circumstances. The tiger is king of the jungle and, nocturnal, evokes images of darkness and stormy weather. The tiger is king of the jungle and, nocturnal, evokes images of darkness and stormy weather. A woman born in a Tiger Year will be unhappy in marriage, but a man will often be talented and suited for a high position. Unpredictable, rebellious, colorful, powerful, passionate, daring,

impulsive, vigorous, stimulating, sincere, affectionate, humanitarian, generous. Can be cold, restless, reckless, impatient, quick-tempered, obstinate, ruthless, selfish, aggressive, unpredictable, moody.

**Years of the Tiger: 8 February 1902 - 28 January 1903 * 26 January 1914 - 13 February 1915
* 13 February 1926 - 1 February 1927 * 31 Jan 1938 - 18 Feb 1939 * 17 February 1950 - 5 February 1951
* 5 February 1962 - 24 January 1963 * 23 Jan 1974 - 10 Feb 1975 * 9 February 1986 - 28 January 1987
* 28 January 1998 - 15 February 1999 * 15 February 2010 - 2 February 2011**

Cats (Mao) are smooth talkers, talented, and ambitious and will succeed in studies. They are in conflict with rats. A cat person has a supple mind and patient personality and is one who knows how to wait for favorable conditions before taking action. Ambitious, gracious, good friend, kind, sensitive, soft-spoken, amiable, elegant, reserved, cautious, artistic, thorough, tender, self-assured, shy, astute, compassionate, flexible. Can be moody, detached, superficial, self-indulgent, opportunistic, stubborn.

**Years of the Cat: 29 January 1903 - 15 February 1904 * 14 February 1915 - 2 February 1916
* 2 February 1927 - 22 January 1928 * 19 Feb 1939 - 7 Feb 1940 * 6 February 1951 - 26 January 1952
* 25 January 1963 - 12 February 1964 * 11 Feb 1975 - 30 Jan 1976 * 29 January 1987 - 16 February 1988
* 16 February 1999 - 4 Feb 2000 * 3 Feb 2011 - 22 Jan 2012 * 2023 - 2024 * 2035 - 2036 * 2047 - 2048**

Unlike the dragon of the West, The Dragon (Thin) in Asia mythology can be protective and is a symbol of the male (yang) principal of the universe and of royal authority. The Dragon lives all the elements: under the water, on the ground, and in the air. The Dragon bears a water sign which is good for agriculture. Dragons are sincere, energetic but short-tempered and stubborn. They are symbols of power, wealth, prosperity, and royalty. There is a saying, "In the Year of the Dragon and of the Snake, everyone keeps food for him or herself." Famine is apt to appear in these years. Magnanimous, stately, vigorous, strong, self-assured, proud, noble, direct, dignified, jealous, eccentric, intellectual, fiery, passionate, decisive, pioneering, artistic, generous, loyal. Can be tactless, arrogant, imperious, tyrannical, demanding, intolerant, dogmatic, violent, impetuous, brash.

**Years of the Dragon: * 16 February 1904 - 3 February 1905 * 3 February 1916 - 22 January 1917
* 23 January 1928 - 9 February 1929 * 8 Feb 1940 - 26 Jan 1941 * 27 January 1952 - 13 February 1953
* 13 February 1964 - 1 February 1965 * 31 Jan 1976 - 17 Feb 1977 * 17 February 1988 - 5 February 1989
* 5 February 2000 - 23 January 2001 * 23 January 2012 - 9 February 2013 * 2024 - 2025**

Snakes (Ty) speak little but have tremendous wisdom. They are associated with the damp earth. Snakes symbolize the eternal revolution, and regeneration of humanity. Snake people are considered calm, gentle, profound, and compassionate but may fly off the handle at times. They are determined and persistent. Deep thinker, wise, mystic, graceful, soft-spoken, sensual, creative, prudent, shrewd, elegant, cautious, responsible, calm, strong, constant, purposeful. Can be loner, bad communicator, possessive, hedonistic, self-doubting, distrustful, mendacious, suffocating, cold.

**Years of the Snake: * 4 February 1905 - 24 January 1906 * 23 January 1917 - 10 February 1918
* 10 February 1929 - 29 January 1930 * 27 Jan 1941 - 14 Feb 1942 * 14 February 1953 - 2 February 1954
* 2 February 1965 - 20 January 1966 * 18 Feb 1977 - 6 Feb 1978 * 6 February 1989 - 26 January 1990
* 24 January 2001 - 11 February 2002 * 10 February 2013 - 30 January 2014 * 2025 - 2026 * 2037 - 2038**

Horse (Ngo) people are smooth talkers and given to compliments and generosity listen to advice. The horse's propensity to kick evokes images of a quick-tempered personality. The horse's speed leads it to be compared with the sun, which traverses the earth daily; in legends, the sun is associated with fiery steeds. The Horse is invested with purity, nobility, and wisdom. It is esteemed for alertness, intelligence, strength, and its friendship, with humans. Cheerful, popular, quick-witted, changeable, earthy, perceptive, talkative, agile - mentally and physically, magnetic, intelligent, astute, flexible, open-minded. Can be fickle, arrogant, childish, anxious, rude, gullible, stubborn.

**Years of the Horse: * 25 January 1906 - 12 February 1907 * 11 February 1918 - 31 January 1919
* 30 January 1930 - 16 February 1931 * 15 Feb 1942 - 4 Feb 1943 * 3 February 1954 - 16 February 1955
* 21 January 1966 - 8 February 1967 * 7 Feb 1978 - 27 Jan 1979 * 27 January 1990 - 14 February 1991
* 12 February 2002 - 31 January 2003 * 31 January 2014 - 18 February 2015 * 2026 - 2027**

Goat (Mui) people are calm and shy, unassertive and self-effacing. They are clumsy in speech so they make poor salespersons, but they are compassionate regarding the less fortunate and tend to help others. They are often taken advantage of because of their natural kindness and timidity. Righteous, sincere, sympathetic, mild-mannered, shy, artistic, creative, gentle, compassionate, understanding, mothering,

determined, peaceful, generous, seeks security. Can be moody, indecisive, over-passive, worrier, pessimistic, over-sensitive, complainer, weak-willed.

**Years of the Goat: * 13 February 1907 - 1 February 1908 * 1 February 1919 - 19 February 1920
* 17 February 1931 - 5 February 1932 * 5 Feb 1943 - 24 Jan 1944 * 24 January 1955 - 11 February 1956
* 9 February 1967 - 29 January 1968 * 28 Jan 1979 - 15 Feb 1980 * 15 February 1991 - 3 February 1992
* 1 February 2003 - 21 January 2004 * 19 February 2015 - 7 February 2016 * 2027 - 2028**

The Monkey (Than) is an erratic genius. Monkeys are clever and skillful, curious, and inventive, but they may drive people away by talking too much and being contemptuous of others. Their weakness lies in their tendency to be erratic and inconsistent. Inventor, motivator, improviser, quick-witted, inquisitive, flexible, innovative, problem solver, self-assured, sociable, artistic, polite, dignified, competitive, objective, factual, intellectual. Can be egotistical, vain, selfish, reckless, snobbish, deceptive, manipulative, cunning, jealous, suspicious.

**Years of the Monkey: * 20 February 1920 - 7 February 1921 * 6 February 1932 - 25 January 1933
* 25 January 1944 - 12 February 1945 * 12 Feb 1956 - 30 Jan 1957 * 30 January 1968 - 16 February 1969
* 16 February 1980 - 4 February 1981 * 4 Feb 1992 - 22 Jan 1993 * 22 January 2004 - 8 February 2005
* 8 February 2016 - 27 January 2017 * 2028 - 2029**

The Rooster (Dau) year represents a period of hard work and activity since the hen and rooster are busy from morning to night. The rooster's comb is a mark of high intelligence and of a literary spirit, but an excess of these traits can lead to mental illness. People born in this year are considered profound thinkers. At the same time, the reason, people often hang pictures of a red rooster in their houses. People born in this year earn their living from small business, which they practice with diligence like a "chicken scratching the soil for worms" Crowing roosters drive ghosts away at sunrise. A white rooster is sometimes placed on the coffin of funeral processions to clear the way of demons. Acute, neat, meticulous, organized, self-assured, decisive, conservative, critical, perfectionist, alert, zealous, practical, scientific, responsible. Can be over zealous and critical, puritanical, egotistical, abrasive, opinionated, given to empty bravado.

**Years of the Rooster: * 22 January 1909 - 9 February 1910 * 8 Feb 1921 - 27 Jan 1922
* 26 January 1933 - 13 February 1934 * 13 Feb 1945 - 1 Feb 1946 * 31 Jan 1957 - 17 Feb 1958
* 17 February 1969 - 5 February 1970 * 5 Feb 1981 - 24 Jan 1982 * 23 Jan 1993 - 9 Feb 1994
* 9 February 2005 - 28 January 2006 * 28 January 2017 - 15 February 2018 * 2029 - 2030**

The year of the Dog indicates future prosperity. Worldwide, the dog is used as a guard against intruders. Pairs of stone or ceramic dogs are placed on each side of the entrance to villages and temples as guards. The dog year will be secure and protected. The hour of the dog is 7pm to 9pm when people of rural Vietnam have gone to bed and leave the dog to keep watch. Honest, intelligent, straightforward, loyal, sense of justice and fair play, attractive, amicable, unpretentious, sociable, open-minded, idealistic, moralistic, practical, affectionate, sensitive, easy going. Can be cynical, lazy, cold, judgmental, pessimistic, worrier, stubborn, quarrelsome.

**Years of the Dog: * 10 February 1910 - 21 January 1911 * 28 Jan 1922 - 14 Feb 1923
* 14 February 1934 - 25 January 1935 * 2 Feb 1946 - 21 Jan 1947 * 17 Feb 1958 - 8 Feb 1959
* 6 February 1970 - 26 January 1971 * 25 Jan 1982 - 12 Feb 1983 * 10 Feb 1994 - 30 Jan 1995
* 29 January 2006 - 17 February 2007 * 16 February 2018 - 4 February 2019 * 2030 - 2031**

The Pig symbolizes the wealth of the forest since the boar maintains its lair in the woods. Boar people are chivalrous and gallant, honest, courageous, studious, and well-informed but also headstrong, short-tempered, and impulsive. Honest, gallant, sturdy, sociable, peace-loving, patient, loyal, hard-working, trusting, sincere, calm, understanding, thoughtful, scrupulous, passionate, intelligent. Can be naïve, over-reliant, self-indulgent, gullible, fatalistic, materialistic.

**Years of the Pig: * 1899 - 31 January 1900 * 30 January 1911 - 17 February 1912
* 16 February 1923 - 4 February 1924 * 4 Feb 1935 - 23 Jan 1936 * 22 January 1947 - 9 February 1948
* 8 February 1959 - 27 January 1960 * 27 Jan 1971 - 14 Feb 1972 * 13 February 1983 - 1 February 1984
* 31 January 1995 - 18 February 1996 * 18 Feb 2007 - 6 Feb 2008 * 5 February 2019 - 24 January 2020
* 2031 - 2032 * 2043 - 2044 * 2055 - 2056**

**Info gathered from around the internet & Wikipedia. Tet: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/T%E1%BA%Bf>
Chinese New Year: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_zodiac .**