

Media Release

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Laneways to light up for Lunar celebrations

The laneways of Chinatown will come to life for a dazzling night of stalls, concerts, street performances and free activities, kicking off 16 days of celebrations to mark the City of Sydney's 2020 Sydney Lunar Festival.

For the first time, Lunar Lanes will weave through the streets of Chinatown to Darling Harbour on Lunar New Year's Day, linking historic Haymarket with the new harbourside precinct.

More than a million visitors are expected to enjoy the sights, sounds and flavours of Asia during the City of Sydney's Sydney Lunar festival from 25 January to 9 February.

As the biggest celebration of the Lunar New Year outside Asia, the festival welcomes tourists from around the world, as well as Sydney's multicultural Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Thai, Indonesian, and Malaysian communities.

Lord Mayor Clover Moore said this year's celebrations will feature close to 100 community events across Sydney.

"Over the years we've seen this festival grow from a small community festival in Chinatown to one of the largest lunar celebrations in the world," the Lord Mayor said.

"Each year this festival just gets bigger and better. In 2019 the festival attracted close to 1.5 million people who spent nearly \$42 million during the event. It's a wonderful boost for our local economy, retailers and restaurants.

"We've put a lot of work into creating an exciting and diverse program, from our laneway party opening night to community dance performances, the dragon boat races in Darling Harbour and of course, the food, there's truly something for everyone.

"I can't wait to again welcome residents and visitors from around the globe to Sydney for this community celebration, starting in Chinatown where it all began more than two decades ago."

2020 is the Year of the Metal Rat, starting on 25 January. The Year of the Rat is the first sign of the lunar zodiac and heralds the start of the 12-year lunar calendar cycle.

Marking this auspicious year, internationally acclaimed designer Claudia Chan Shaw has created an eight-metre tower of nine golden rats. These will stand guard over Sydney Harbour as part of the Sydney Lunar Lanterns display.

Ms Shaw says her love of collecting toys and her own heritage inspired the towering lantern display.

“The busy, curious, gregarious nature of the animal provided the inspiration to present the rats as fun and cute mechanical wind-up robot-like creatures.

“Each rat is gold, to reflect 2020 as the year of the Metal Rat. For the Chinese, gold or yellow is the also the colour of heroism.

“I am also a collector of tin toys and robots from the 1950s and 60s, so to create my own robot rat is so special to me.

“I’m very proud of my Chinese-Australian heritage and I’m absolutely thrilled to have created this lantern for Sydney Lunar Festival. It’s wonderful to see the concept come to life.”

Sydney Lunar Festival curator, Valerie Khoo, said the event had a unique and welcoming appeal.

“The Sydney Lunar Festival has become such a popular and inclusive event for the wider community,” Ms Khoo said.

“Sydneyers are wonderful in embracing the many cultures that make up this city. The festival is a brilliant opportunity for people to immerse themselves and enjoy the traditions of another culture and welcome others to our beautiful city.”

The Fred Hollows Foundation has been announced as the new charity partner for the 2020 lunar festival.

“The Fred Hollows Foundation is excited to be part of one of the most immersive and exciting events in Sydney,” said deputy CEO Nick Martin.

“In the Year of the Rat, we will continue our work across Asia, including Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and some provinces in China.

“We’re also engaging with multicultural communities in Australia to raise awareness of eye health.”

There are more than 95 events planned for the 2020 Sydney Lunar Festival celebrations. Highlights include:

Lunar Lanes

Chinatown – Saturday 25 January, 5pm–10pm

Celebrations kick off on Lunar New Year’s Day when the laneways of Chinatown, Darling Square and Darling Harbour come to life with live entertainment, traditional celebrations, carnival games, art installations, lion dancing and market stalls.

Lunar Spectacular show

Sussex Street stage, Haymarket – Saturday 25 January, 5pm–8pm

The Lunar Spectacular Show will feature over 300 community performers ready to share their culture with traditional and contemporary dance, Korean drumming, Japanese hip hop and fashion shows.



Sydney Lunar New Year Fair

Belmore Park, Hay Street, Haymarket – Saturday 8 February, 10am–4.30pm

Free multicultural carnival for the whole family featuring food and market stalls, amusement and performances. This event is created in partnership with TVB.

LED lion and dragon dances

Haymarket – Saturday 25 January, 8.30pm–10pm

Circular Quay – Friday 31 January, Saturday 1 February and Friday 8 and 9 February from 8.15pm

Meticulously decorated with hundreds of LED lights, catch an electrifying LED lion and dragon dance performance.

Lunar Lanterns

Circular Quay foreshore – Friday 31 January – Sunday 9 February

Discover 12 larger-than-life animal signs of the lunar zodiac. Delight in modern technology blended with classic techniques as these magical lanterns light up Sydney's harbour. New lanterns to be debuted include Claudia Chan Shaw's glowing tower of nine golden rats, Min Woo Bang's pair of robotic Horses, Nancy Liang and Fiona Lu's paper-folded rabbit and a chandelier-inspired rooster designed by festival curator, Valerie Khoo.

Lion dance program

Circular Quay foreshore – 1–7 and 10 February, 7pm and 7.30pm

Haymarket – 31 January-2 February and 7–9 February, 6pm and 6.30pm

With plenty of drumming, flamboyance and acrobatic skill, the City's lion dancing troupes will ring in the Lunar New Year celebrations in Chinatown and around the harbour foreshore.

Dragon boat races

Cockle Bay – Saturday 1 February – Sunday 2 February

More than 3,000 dragon boat paddlers take to the water of Darling Harbour in colourful 12 metre-long dragon boats for this spectacular regatta – the largest of its kind in the southern hemisphere.

For media inquiries or images, contact Belinda Wallis.

Phone 0467 810 160 or email bwallis@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

For interviews with Lord Mayor Clover Moore, contact Anusha Muller

Phone 0408 494 545 or email amuller@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

[For Sydney Lunar Festival event details visit What's On City of Sydney](#)

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