

Songkran Festival

Date: 13-15 April

Venue: Nationwide

“**Songkran**” is the Thai traditional New Year and an occasion for family reunion. At this time, people from the rural areas who are working in the city usually return home to celebrate the festival. Thus, when the time comes, Bangkok temporarily turns into a deserted city.

The festival falls on April 13 and the annual celebration is held throughout the kingdom. In fact, “Songkran” is a Thai word which means “move” or “change place” as it is the day when the sun changes its position in the zodiac. It is also known as the “Water Festival” as people believe that water will wash away bad luck.

This Thai traditional New Year begins with early morning merit-making, offering food to Buddhist monks and releasing caged birds to fly freely into the sky. During this auspicious occasion, any animals kept will be set free. Paying homage to one’s ancestors is an important part of the day. People will pay their respects to the elders by pouring scented water over the palms of their hands. The elders in return wish the youngsters good luck and prosperity.



In the afternoon, after performing a bathing rite by gently pouring water mixed with Thai fragrance, called “**Nam Op Thai**” for Buddha images and the monks, the celebrants both young and old, joyfully splash water on each other. The most-talked about celebration takes place in the northern province of Chiang Mai where Songkran is celebrated from April 13 to 15. During this period, people from all parts of the country flock there to enjoy the water festival, to watch the Miss Songkran Contest and the beautiful parades.

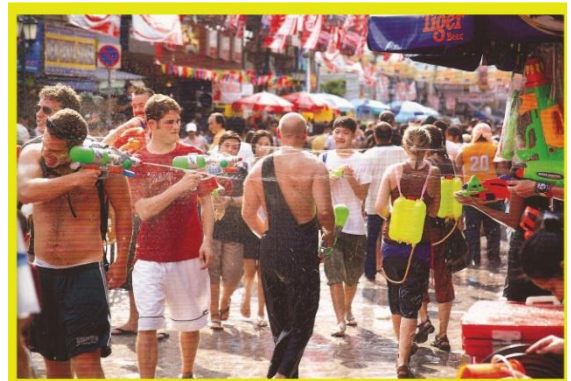


In Bangkok, the Buddha image “**Pra Buddha Sihing**” is brought out from the National Museum for people to sprinkle lustral water at Sanam Luang, opposite the Grand Palace.

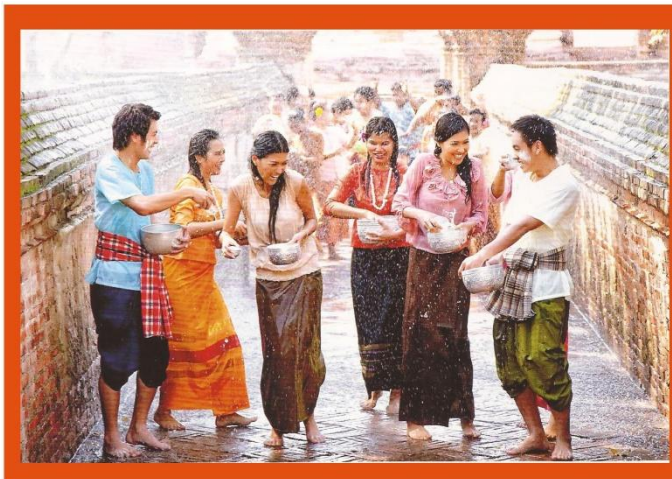


Highlight : Visitors can celebrate Songkran Festival nationwide or experience the uniqueness of the event in major cities as follows:

Bangkok : Thais believe that a visit to nine temples in one day gives the worshippers prosperity and good luck. Visitors can make merit at any nine temples around Bangkok, followed by throwing water at some of the most famous venues; such as Khao San Road and/or Silom Road.



Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya : Apart from the alms-giving and merit-making activities, you can watch the the Miss Songkran beauty pageant, see a cultural performance, and throw water. The highlight of Songkran in Ayutthaya is the chance to play with elephants in the water.



Chiang Mai : Chiang Mai Songkran Festival includes a procession of Pra Buddha Sihing, a highly revered Buddha image, around city. People on both sides of the road sprinkle

fragrant water on the Buddha image. This ceremony is followed by the sprinkling of water to seek the blessing of the elders, creating sand-pagodas, and watching Lanna cultural performances and folk games. The festival is not complete without water-throwing activities.

Nong Khai : Visit Wat Pho Chai and sprinkle water on the sacred Luangpho Phra Sai, the Buddha image highly revered by the local Thai and Lao people. Take part in the water-throwing as well as enjoy the local North-Eastern cuisine and cultural performances by the Mekong River.

Nakhon Phanom : One of the major rituals performed in Nakhon Phanom at the



Songkran Festival is to create a pagoda with sand, and sprinkle fragrant water over sacred sites; such as, the Phrathat Phanom. Enjoy throwing water at Khao Pun Road, and explore the folk plays and entertainment at Hat Sai Tong Si Khotrabun and Amphoe Renu Nakhon.

Khon Kaen : Songkran Festival in Khon Kaen features ox-cart processions decorated with flowers and beauty pageants. A not-to-be-missed place to visit is Khao Niao Road (Sticky Rice Road), similar to Bangkok's Khao San Road, where you can throw water as well as join the local elders who perform folk dances. Moreover, you can participate in the human wave activity recorded in the Guinness Book of World Record as the largest human wave in the world.

Hat Yai : Hat Yai celebrates Thai New Year differently from other provinces of Thailand with the Hat Yai Midnight Songkran Festival. Cultural performances and entertainments start late and the water-throwing starts after nightfall.



Nakhon Si Thammarat : Celebrate the Thai New Year from 13 to 15 April at Si Thamma Sokarat Park and merit, bathing the Pra Buddha Sihing Buddha image with fragrant water, and watching the Hindu-based Nang Kradan procession and cultural performances, as well indulging in the water-throwing.

Phuket : Songkran Festival on the Beach attracts locals and foreigners at Hat Patong (Patong Beach). You can witness the procession of the Pra Buddha Sihing Buddha image along Hat Patong, and participate in several other activities, including the water splashes.

Chon Buri : There are two places in Chon Buri – Bang Saen Beach and Pattaya – where Songkran is celebrated after Songkran Day. This event is called ‘Wan Lai’ Songkran Festival, translated as “Flowing Day” of Songkran Festival. The Wan Lai Bang Saen Songkran Festival and Wan Lai Pattaya Songkran Festival feature making merit at temples, building sand-pagodas, and watching cultural performances and beauty contests, as well as the water-throwing sessions. The highlight is the ‘Kong Khao’ procession which shows appreciation towards the Goddess of Rice.

Samut Prakan : Phra Padaeng Songkran Festival is usually held a few days after Songkran at Amphoe Phra Padaeng. This is a Mon or Raman style event as there



is a large Raman community living in Phra Pradaeng. At this festival, you can learn how to play Saba, a Raman game, as well as watch the **Beauty Queen and King Pageants.**

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