

Thailand Celebrates New Year With Water

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Happy New Year - Thai Style.

Welcome to Songkran aka The Thai New Year, celebrated on April 13, 14 and 15. Songkran is commonly known as the "water festival" as public water fights are enjoyed throughout the country during this period. Water, a symbol of renewal, is believed to cleanse and wash away the sorrows from the previous year. People are encouraged to throw water on each other and it often becomes a nationwide free-for-all.

Sounds fun, get the super-soaker, But, there is much more to it as well. The origins of Thai New Year combine Buddhist belief, ancient astrology, and the solar calendar. Songkran, which means the shift of the sun from one side of the zodiac to the other, is celebrated when the sun moves from Pisces to Aries, beginning a new astrological year.

Songkran consists of four days. On the first day (Wan Sungkharn Long), houses are cleaned and swept. Wan Nao, the second day, involves the preparation of food to be offered to monks the next day. The third day is New Year's Day (Wan Payawan), celebrated by visiting the temple, presenting food and clothing to the monks, bathing the Buddha image with jasmine-scented water, and taking part in one of the many rituals believed to bring good luck. On the last day, Wan Parg-pee, homage is paid to ancestors and elders. Water is gently poured over the hands or shoulders of an elder while they recite blessings and good wishes for the new year. Happy New Year H2O.