



▲The decorations of New Year.
[Photo by Xu Neng]



▲►Hand-made tiger dolls.
[Photo by Xu Neng]



Tigers in Chinese History

Since ancient times, in traditional Chinese culture, the tiger has been regarded as an auspicious beast symbolizing courage, strength, and wealth, as well as a protective spirit capable of suppressing evil.

Many of Ningbo's cultural venues are organizing thematic exhibitions in celebration of the Year of the Tiger.

At Ningbo Museum and Ningbobang Museum, a special exhibition titled *Auspicious Tigers-Spring Festival Exhibition of Zodiac-Inspired Art for the Year of the Tiger* is now open, showcasing over 130 cultural relics on loan from other notable museums around the country.

Many of the artefacts are daily objects decorated with tiger-related visual elements, such as bronze mirrors with tiger-and-dragon motifs that date back as early as the Eastern Han Dynasty and as late as the Ming Dynasty. These historical items demonstrate that Chinese people have always admired tigers throughout history.



Tiger Hide-and-Seek at Tianyige Museum

Do you know there are "tigers" hidden all over Tianyige Museum? From the first day to the sixth day of Chinese New Year, the staff will be placing little gift sachets containing museum merchandise all over the grounds for visitors to discover.

The four adorable stone tigers in the East Garden of Tianyige Museum are also joining the festivities. Coloring pages featuring the stone tigers and art supplies will be provided to anyone interested in designing a "new look" for the tigers. Visitors can upload photos of their work to Tianyige Museum's official Wechat account to join a contest.

Visitors can also take part in arts and crafts activities to make seal stamps and holiday ornaments with the Chinese character 福 *Fu* ("good fortune"). *Fu* calligraphy will be given out free of charge. On the fifth day of Chinese New Year, young opera artists from the Ningbo Xiaobaihua Yue Opera Troupe will put on a performance on the historical stage at the Museum's Qin Ancestral Hall.



Folk Customs Convey Festive Mood

On January 21, to celebrate the upcoming Year of the Tiger, Ningbo's Qiangjiao Town organized a series of traditional activities for citizens. Many families brought along their children to make paper-cutting art, sample traditional snacks, partake in local crafts, and surround themselves with cultural symbols of good fortune and prosperity.

Popular folk customs in the run-up to Chinese New Year include attaching cut-paper "window flowers" to window panes as decoration and making zodiac-themed ornaments. At Qiangjiao, led by volunteer You Tingting, the participants cut out "window flowers" with tiger designs or the Chinese characters for "Happy Spring Festival". Many children were engrossed in making tigers dolls; they sewed together pieces of cloth and beads to craft charming little stuffed tigers. Since the Chinese character for "tiger" (*hu*) rhymes with the character for "fortune" (*fu*), many adults hope that the spirit of the tiger would keep their children healthy and strong in the New Year.



Making Traditional Food

No Chinese New Year celebration is complete without traditional treats. At Qiangjiao, visitors kneaded dough of glutinous rice and japonica rice flour, wrapped them around fillings of various flavors, then shaped them into carps, tigers, ingots, and other cultural symbols associated with auspiciousness.

For Ningbo people, rice cakes are not simply a type of food, but also an embodiment of the New Year atmosphere and part of many time-honored customs.

On January 20, in a rice cake shop in Da'ao Village, Hengxi Town, the aroma of steamed rice permeates the air. The cooked dough is pressed by machine to form strips of steaming rice cake, which are then placed on bamboo racks for drying.

The owner of the shop, Ren Jinliang, grinds rice flour in the mill. His wife handles all the interactions with customers who come to buy rice cakes. His son, Ren Xinbo, puts the grounded flour into the steamer. The best dough-kneaders from the village are all there to lend an extra hand. The scene, though busy, is jovial and festive.

The aroma of rice cakes heralds the arrival of Chinese New Year. At Ren's shop, there is always a steady stream of customers. With their hard-working hands, the Ren family are moulding a happy holiday season and their future prosperity.



Families Make Tiger-Head Shoes

Tiger-head shoes are a type of traditional Chinese handcrafted artwork with symbolic, aesthetic, and practical value. On January 25, over a dozen families learned to make tiger-head shoes under the tutelage of artisan Xia Aidi, an intangible cultural heritage preserver, in Fuming Jiayuan community, Yinzhou District.

"The techniques of making tiger-head shoes are quite complicated; a pair of authentic tiger-head shoes must be entirely handmade," Xia said, as she demonstrated every step of the craft, from design, embroidery, fabric cutting, to sewing.

The parents and their children listened attentively, then began their work with enthusiasm. The adults completed the challenging sewing parts, while the kids helped out by passing them the scissors and adhesive tape.

The event was a lively affair that gave everyone a deeper insight into traditional Chinese culture, folk customs, and the meaning and symbolism of tiger-head shoes, along with a warm dose of holiday cheer.



City Bedecked with Blooming Flowers

To welcome Chinese New Year, 25 new flowerbeds and floral installations are being constructed in the city's main parks and roadside green spaces.

The theme of the floral installations highlights the arrival of the Year of the Tiger. Many cartoonish tigers dolls, red lanterns, and New Year ornaments have been used to decorate the floral installations.

Pansies and violets are used extensively in the installations, along with silver-leaf chrysanthemums, kumquats, tulips, daffodils and other vibrantly-colored plant varieties. In the downtown area, over 800,000 new potted flowers replaced older plants.

To add to the festive cheer and spruce up the roadsides, city landscaping lawns, including over 5,000m² of green space along Zhongshan Road, have been renewed with in-season plants and flowers. Their brilliant colors brighten up Ningbo's winter look and prepares the city for a jolly holiday season.