

Moonwalk: Reading



The West has Christmas and Thanksgiving as a special time for the family. In China this time is during the Moon Festival. Families get together to watch the full moon, eat moon cakes and sing moon poems. The festival is on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month each year. It is also called the Autumn Festival.

The Indian people from North America have beautiful names for the different moons each month. For example January is called the Wolf Moon, June is the Flower Moon and November is the Freezing Moon.

In Thailand 'Songkran' is the start of the Buddhist New Year. Songkran is from 13th to 15th April and it's a three-day public holiday. In the past this spring holiday was during the fifth full moon of the lunar calendar. Then the farmers started their work again.

The Islamic calendar uses the lunar calendar. All the months start with the new moon. The most important month is the holy month of Ramadan which is the 9th month. In the Western Gregorian calendar Ramadan starts about 11 days earlier each year. In 2007 Ramadan starts on 12th or 13th September and finishes 13th October.

Many ancient civilizations used the lunar calendar. Upper Egypt was once called The Land of the Moon. However, the Egyptians were the first people to use the solar calendar, or the Gregorian calendar. They knew that an Earth year was 365.25 days, but with a lunar calendar the year is only 354 days - 11 days too short.

Most Christian festivals have a fixed date on the solar calendar. However, Easter Sunday changes every year because it depends on the moon. Easter is always the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox (March 21st). Therefore Easter can be between 22nd March and 25th April. In 2007 Easter Sunday is 8th April.

Both the moon and the sun cause tides. However, the moon is stronger because it is nearer the Earth. When the moon and sun are together (during full moon and new moon) you get very high or very low tides. LowTide is a British festival which is held every year on the Saturday in May with the lowest tide. In 2007 the festival is Saturday 19th May.

For the Hindus the full moon was the beginning of a new month. Now they use the solar calendar but, like other cultures, they use the lunar calendar to work out the dates of religious holidays.

Surely the most amazing moon event was 21st July 1969 when the first man walked on the moon. Neil Armstrong said "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." This is not a public holiday in the US.