



The Chinese zodiac



2021 is the Year of the Ox and more especially the Year of the Metal Ox. It lasts from the 2021 Chinese Lunar New Year on February 12, until the 2022 New Year's Eve on January 31.

The Ox ranks second on the Chinese zodiac signs. In Chinese culture, the Ox is a valued animal. Because of its role in agriculture, positive characteristics such as being hardworking, honest, persistent, cautious, and patient are attributed to it.

The most widespread Chinese zodiac legend says that the Jade Emperor (The Emperor in Heaven in Chinese folklore) ordered a race in which the first twelve animals to cross the finish line would be honored with their own zodiac year. On the day of the race, the rat got up very early and rushed to the gathering site. On the way, he encountered the ox that ran much faster.

In order not to fall behind, he came up with a clever idea. He made the straightforward ox carry him on the condition that he sang for the ox. The ox and the rat were in the lead towards the end of the race. The ox was happy thinking that he would be the first sign on the zodiac, but upon arrival the rat jumped from the ox's back and crossed the finish line first. He became the first lucky animal of the Chinese zodiac. That's how the rat won the race.

Following the Rat, the 11 animals to arrive were, in order: the Ox, the Tiger, the Rabbit, the Dragon, the Snake, the Horse, the Sheep, the Monkey, the Rooster, the Dog, and the Pig.

At that time, the cat and the rat were good friends and neighbors. When they heard of the news that the Jade Emperor were selecting zodiac animals, the cat said to the rat: 'We should arrive early to sign up, but I usually get up late.' The rat then promised to wake up his friend and go together. However, on the morning when he got up, he was too excited to recall his promise, and went directly to the gathering place. When the cat finally arrived, the selection was over. That's why there is no cat in the Chinese zodiac, and why cats hate rats so much that every time they meet, the cat will chase and kill the rat.

The elements - Metal, Water, Wood, Fire, Earth - are an integral part of the Chinese zodiac. Each animal is associated with one of them. This is known as the fixed element of the sign. For example, the Ox is associated with the "Earth" element.

Additionally, each year is also associated with an element. Years ending in 0 and 1 are associated with "Metal". 2021 is therefore the Year of the Metal Ox.

A person's characteristics are determined both by the ruling element of their signs as well as the element of their birth year. A Metal Ox will be controlled by both Metal (2021) and Earth (the fixed element of the Ox).

Find your Chinese zodiac sign, its fixed element, your birth year element, and the whole - rather complicated - shebang at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_zodiac .

