

10 great places to ring in Chinese New Year

The Chinese Year of the Dragon starts Monday, but you don't need to cross the Pacific for the party. Throughout North America, Chinatowns will be sponsoring parades and festivals. "It's a celebration of culture. There's a lot of tradition and really wonderful activities," says **Bonnie Tsui**, author of *American Chinatown: A People's History of Five Neighborhoods* (Free Press, \$15). She shares some favorite Chinese communities with **Larry Bleiberg** for USA TODAY.

Boston

New England's only major Chinatown began to develop in the 1880s but recently found new life with the completion of the Big Dig, which removed an elevated highway and created such public spaces as Chinatown Park. When Tsui was a student in Boston, she frequented the area's low-cost, high-flavor restaurants, including Chau Chow City, a late-night dim sum house. 888-733-2678; bostonusa.com

Richmond

British Columbia

This Vancouver suburb has boomed with immigrants from Hong Kong over the past 25 years. Now it's an example of a modern Chinatown with glitzy malls and restaurants that can feel like Shanghai. Tsui loves the summer night market. "It's really popular and huge with all these food stalls. It's a very modern glimpse of Chinese-Canadian life." For a more traditional experience, visit the Sun Yat-Sen Chinese Garden in Vancouver's downtown Chinatown. 877-247-0777; tourismrichmond.com or HelloBC.com

Honolulu

Hawaii's location gives it a historic connection to all of Asia, and visitors will find influences from the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia, as well as China. "It's a tropical Chinatown," Tsui says. She suggests roaming the market and looking for longan, a lychee-like fruit, and calamansi, a citrus fruit. "It's fantastic to browse around and see what people are buying and then see it served in the restaurants in the neighborhood." 800-464-2924; gohawaii.com

Oakland

Much different from nearby San Francisco's, Oakland's Chinatown is a compact neighborhood integrated into downtown. "It feels less touristy, a real place," Tsui says. She likes the Friday farmers market. "It's jam-packed with fresh Asian produce." 510-839-9000; visitoakland.org



By John Kennard, Greenway Conservancy

Boston: New England's only major Chinatown has seen a resurgence since the Big Dig highway project was completed, creating public spaces and parks.

New York

New York has the largest Chinese population in the country, and although residents live throughout the metro area, they still hold Manhattan's Chinatown dear. "It's very diverse and vibrant. There are many different dialects spoken," says Tsui, who grew up on Long Island but visited family there regularly. Two favorite dining stops: Dim Sum A Go Go and Peking Duck House. 212-484-1200; nycgo.com

San Francisco

The nation's oldest Chinatown developed around the port where most Chinese immigrants entered the country during the Gold Rush years. "Chinese America has its roots here. It has a very historic feel," says Tsui, who now lives in the city. She recommends a visit to the Chinese Historical Society museum, which tells the story of the community and how it grew. 415-391-2000; sanfrancisco.travel



LA Inc.

Los Angeles: The original Chinatown gave way to Union Station. New Chinatown, a few blocks away, features bakeries, jewelry shops and a Taoist temple.

Los Angeles

L.A.'s first Chinatown was razed to build downtown's Union Station. But the community simply moved a few blocks away to develop what became New Chinatown. The history is expertly covered at the Chinese American Museum of Los Angeles, Tsui says. Although Chinese now live throughout Southern California, the neighborhood still bustles with bakeries, jewelry shops and a Taoist temple. 213-624-7300; discoverlosangeles.com

Las Vegas

Less than 20 years old, this modern Chinatown began as a mini-mall on Spring Mountain Road, about a mile off the Strip. Tsui, who featured the community in her book, says it has since become a thriving Asian neighborhood with a full range of retail services, including banks, bookstores, beauty shops and restaurants. "It has places where you can only hear Chinese spoken and only see Chinese script," she says. 800-332-5333; visitlasvegas.com

Chicago

This South Side neighborhood, which celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, is undergoing a revival. Standout sites include the Chinatown Mural, which depicts the history of the Chinese in America with 100,000 pieces of glass hand-painted and hand-cut in China. Also noteworthy: Pui Tak Center, a landmark 1920s building with pagoda towers, clay roof tiles and terra cotta detailing. 312-744-2400; chicagochina.town.org

Toronto

Canada's largest city has a huge Chinese population and several Chinatowns, but the most historic is downtown, centered on Dundas Street West and Spadina Avenue. Tsui used to visit her grandfather here as a child during the summer. It still has restaurants, herb shops and markets, but it's also home to a mixture of recent Asian immigrants, college students and Latin American residents. 800-499-2514; seetorontonow.com



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