

Billions celebrate Year of the Snake

theday.co.uk/billions-celebrate-year-of-the-snake-4 29 January 2025



Slow down: According to the Chinese zodiac the Year of the Snake promises slow and steady development; those who are patient, strategic and willing to embrace the snake's wisdom will find they can thrive by adapting to a slower pace in all aspects of their life.

Should we embrace our inner serpent? For Chinese people welcoming the lunar New Year today, snakes have positive attributes as well as scary and despicable ones.

What's happening?

A recent survey found that 42% of people in Britain are afraid of snakes, while just 9% are afraid of dogs.

In Chinese mythology, snakes are associated with darkness. But they also represent wisdom, wealth and the pursuit of love and happiness. The fact that snakes shed their skins makes them symbols of rebirth.

Find out more

According to the Chinese **lunar calendar**, this year also represents wood and fire. This combination, says one expert, produces intelligent people who are "resilient, courageous and positive."

Scientists say that snakes are much more complex than people realise. They smell with their tongues, which collect particles from the air, earth and water and analyse them to track their prey. Some snakes, such as the anaconda, can do this under water.

Snakes are extremely sensitive to temperature, and will react to tiny changes in it. They can survive in very harsh conditions and play a very useful role in nature by controlling rats and mice. Their **venom** is also an important ingredient in many drugs.

The black mamba's, for example, contains a powerful painkiller. The Sumatran cobra's may help to kill cancer cells.

Should we embrace our inner serpent?

Some say

Yes! As Chinese mythology recognises, snakes have many more good qualities than bad ones.

Others think

No! There are good reasons for snakes having such a terrible reputation and we should recognise them for the venomous creatures they are.

Six steps to discovery

Some people say

"The greatest deception men suffer is from their own opinions."

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Are you scared of snakes? Have you ever seen or felt one in real life?

2. Wonder

Leonardo da Vinci (1452 – 1519), Italian artist and inventor

What do you think?

What questions do you have? - For example: How fast can snakes move? Do all countries have snakes?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - How frequently do snakes shed their skin – and why?

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - A friend chooses a snake as the mascot of a team you belong to. Think about what you would say.

5. Express

What do others believe? - Which animal would you most like to be like? Take it in turns to say.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Imagine the local zoo asks you to write a poem. Write one about a snake and illustrate it.

Glossary

Lunar Calendar - A calendar that uses the phases of the moon to mark the passage of time.

Venom - A poisonous substance secret by such animals as snakes, spiders and scorpions.