

Have You Ever Seen A Dragon?

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Here is a chance for the entire family to come and watch dragons..... a Dragon Boat Race, that is.

The Atlanta Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival was first held at Stone Mountain Park, Stone Mountain, GA. Now it is an annual event at the Lake Lanier Olympic Venue, Lake Lanier GA, in September. Check website below for current information and dates.



Dragon's Head.

Photo by TAB Photography

Last September (2010), there were some 71 participants representing businesses (*UPS, AT&T, AJC International and The Home Depot*), associations (*National Association of Chinese Americans*), clubs (*Lanier Canoe & Kayak Club*), universities (*Emory, University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, Agnes Scott*) and other organizations (*Breast Cancer Survivors*). Teams of racers came from Georgia, Florida and South Carolina.

It was an event of fun for the whole family to enjoy throughout the day. There were various categories of races and the teams competed in several preliminary rounds to secure a place in the final race. These preliminary races commenced in the early hours of the morning. In the afternoon, there were dances and performances from Asia, including a Lion Dance performed by a group of American enthusiasts. Visitors and participants organized picnics; there were food stalls where one could try ethnic cuisines. It was a truly a day of fun and of learning about the many cultures from around the world that have found a home in cosmopolitan Metro Atlanta.

For up-coming events and information on how to get involved, below are some relevant websites.

In Atlanta, GA: www.dragonboatatlanta.com (September 10, 2011)

In Tampa, FL: <http://tampa2011.idbfworldchamps.com>

In Hong Kong: Sun Life Stanley International Dragon Boat Festival
www.dragonboat.org.hk/en/home/homepage.html

International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF): <http://idbfworldchamps.com>



Dancers. *Photo by TAB Photography*

Lion Dance. *Photo by TAB Photography*

A Short History of the Dragon Boat Race:

The race itself has its origins in the legend of Qu Yuan, a beloved Chinese statesman and poet who lived in the 4th Century in the Kingdom of Chu. As a political statement against the corruption that infested the royal court, he ended his life by drowning in the Mi Lo River.

The Duan Wu Festival was established by the people in his memory. This is also known as the Dumpling Festival when rice dumplings are tossed into a lake or river symbolically to keep the fish away from Qu Yuan's body and to appease his spirit. These dumplings, called Zong Zi, are wrapped in bamboo leaves filled with: meats, beans, peanuts or water chestnuts. They come in a variety of flavors. This festival is traditionally held on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Chinese lunar calendar. The dragon boat race is part of this festival: a re-enactment of the fishermen's failed attempt at trying to save Qu Yuan. A traditional dragon boat requires 30 days and 3 craftsmen to build. A typical boat is 39 feet in length with a dragon's head on the prow and a tail for the stern. Today, dragon boats are made either from teak or fiberglass.

The popularity of the dragon boat race has grown so much that it is no longer a Chinese cultural affair, but an international sport participated by people of all nationalities and held at various times of the year. Each team is usually made up of twenty rowers, one drummer and one steersman. Each event may have races of different categories: men, women, mixed, recreational, etc. The first International Dragon Boat Race was held in Hong Kong in the mid 70s and by 2010 this annual event had 150+ participants from around the world.