

## Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races

Hong Kong is recognised as the birthplace of modern international dragon boat racing. When the Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races (the Race) was organised in Hong Kong for the first time in 1976, it is regarded as an annual global event by dragon boat teams around the world. The HKTB has been assuming the role as the organiser of the Race. From 1978 onwards, the Race was managed by the Hong Kong Amateur Rowing Association (now the Hong Kong, China Rowing Association) who took the duty to provide technical support for race courses and to set up such courses. Starting from 2000, the Hong Kong China Dragon Boat Association took over as the organiser of the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Carnival to work towards a comprehensive promotion and provide support for the Race.

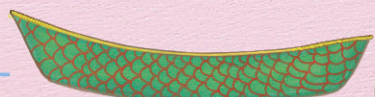
The Race consists of standard boat and small boat races with a racing distance of 500 metres and 200 metres respectively. The fastest team to finish the race is the winner. In traditional dragon boat racing, standard boats are usually used in major races, while small boats are occasionally used for women races.

## More about a dragon boat

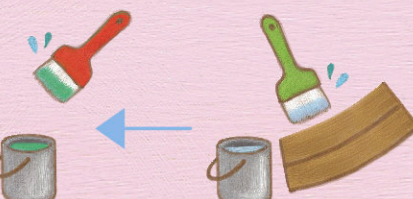
### Process of making a traditional dragon boat and the relevant terminology



Attach a dragon head, a dragon tail and a rudder to the boat



"Paau Gwong (刨光)": To remove dust and apply varnish to provide a smooth finish to the boat



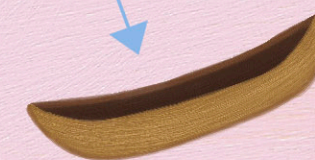
"Soeng Tung Jau Fui (上桐油灰)": (to apply linseed oil putty): To fill the gaps between planks to prevent seepage



"On Lung Coeng (安龍腸)": To fix bamboo strips between the seats and the spine bar for reinforcement. It is also called "Zaau Mit (抓蔑)" or "Lung Zim (龍尖)"



"Zong Paai Gwat (裝排骨)": To insert bulkheads under seats



"Zong Daai Pong (裝大旁)": It means to "join" the outer bottom planks, or nail the planks on both sides of the boat (also called "Deng Faa Pong (釘花旁)")

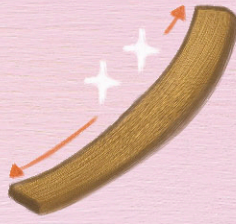
"Lung Gwat (龍骨)" (keel plank): The most essential part of a dragon boat which is mainly made of a large straight China fir log to reinforce the bottom structure of the boat



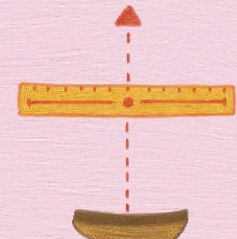
"Hei Dai (起底)": To nail inner bottom planks to both sides of the keel plank



"Hei Seoi (起水)": To curve and streamline the bottom of the boat beautifully and sufficiently to help the boat move faster in the water



"Daa Seoi Ping (打水平)": To set the centre line of the boat to ensure that the inner bottom planks are nailed in a balanced and symmetrical manner



Small dragon boat  
Number of athletes: 12

9 metres

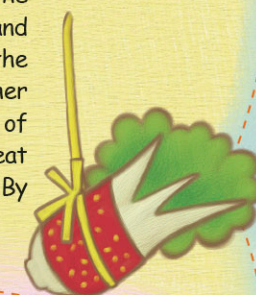


Standard dragon boat  
Number of athletes: 20

12 metres

## Launching Ceremony of a Dragon Boat

When a dragon boat is made, a propitious time and an auspicious date will be chosen and the boat will be paddled to a predetermined location. When the boat master of the boatyard sends out a signal, everyone on board will, all at once, stop paddling and beating the drum and keep quiet. One of them at the bow will then swim to the shore, pick a bundle of grass (so it is called "picking the green") and put it into the dragon's mouth (a gesture to denote a blessing for the business of the boatyard). When the boat master gives another signal, everyone on board will start to take action. Amid the roar of the gong and the drum, the team of paddlers will, following the beat of the drum, row the boat back to the boatyard in high spirits. By then, the launching ceremony of a new boat is completed.



香港國際  
龍舟邀請賽  
Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races

大型體育活動事務委員會  
Major Sports Events Committee



中國香港龍舟總會  
Hong Kong China Dragon Boat Association





# What is the origin of dragon boat racing in Hong Kong?

## History



The sport of dragon boat racing has a history of over 5 000 years in China. Legend has it that QU Yuan, a worthy official in the State of Chu, drowned himself in the Miluo River on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. In memory of him, villagers threw rice in bamboo tubes into the river. The custom of rowing dragon boats, originally for warding off the plague and evil spirits, was also given a new meaning of driving away fish in the river to stop them from eating QU Yuan's body. Today, dragon boat racing is more than just a traditional festive activity and has developed into an international sport.

中文版請瀏覽：  
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In the early days after the opening of Hong Kong's port when local inhabitants were mainly fishermen, dragon boat racing was just an activity in a traditional festival and for leisure and entertainment. It was not until the 1970s that the Hong Kong Tourist Association (HKTA) (currently named as the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB)) intended to promote dragon boat racing as a tourist attraction. Subsequently, the HKTA, in collaboration with the Joint Association of Hong Kong Fishermen, organised the Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races at the Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter, putting the sport on the track towards modernisation, internationalisation and regularisation. Riding on the success of the event, the sport was promoted to different parts of the world.

## The custom of dragon boat racing among fishermen in Hong Kong

Dragon boat races are organised by local fishermen every year during Tuen Ng Festival or on some specific festive occasions. Early in the morning of the event day, team members will transport their dragon boat to the competition venue by a fishing vessel (specifically called the "dragon barge"). The entire process of transporting the dragon boat is commonly known as "lifting the dragon".

First of all, some team members will row the dragon boat close to the "dragon barge". Then, other team members on the "dragon barge" help lift and tie the dragon boat to a side of the barge's body. Later, the "dragon barge" is sailed to a pier nearby to pick up the remaining team members. When all team members have assembled, giant long flags representing the team are hoisted all over the bow of the "dragon barge" to boost morale and symbolise an anticipated triumphant return from the competition.

Upon arrival at the competition venue, all teams bring along their offerings to worship the Goddess of the Sea and pray for favourable weather, luck and blessings for the fishermen. After the religious rituals, the dragon boat is launched in water, with the "dragon head" and "dragon tail" fitted onto the boat and the "dragon head" decorated for auspicious purpose. Then, "dragon boat water" is splashed on the dragon boat to "wake up the dragon" which has the same effect as an eye-dotting ceremony.

When the competition officially starts, spectators assemble on "dragon barges" to watch the race. After the prize presentation ceremony, team members tow the dragon boat together and leave for drinks and a dinner to share the joy of the race.

