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A Festival to Celebrate New Zealand-China Ties

By CHARU SURI FEBRUARY 20, 2015 6:00 PM Comment

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The Auckland Lantern Festival in 2014. ATEED

The Auckland Lantern Festival, now in its 16th year, will raise awareness of Chinese culture in New Zealand from Feb. 26 to March 1 with a series of events designed to welcome the zodiac year of the goat.

More than 800 lanterns handmade in Zigong in China's Sichuan province will be presented to Auckland, honoring a centuries-long tradition dating from the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-221 A.D.) to usher in the new year with light. The festival's opening night is a lanterns-only display.

The event will include more than 100 craft and culinary vendors, as well as theatrical performances, dancing, live music and martial arts and, on its last day, fireworks.

A focus will be on stories of Chinese family culture in New Zealand; two plays that deal with the subject, by the Auckland native Renee Liang, will be staged at the Musgrove Studio.

The initiative was created to strengthen trade relations between New Zealand and Asia (another festival to honor India's Diwali — the festival of lights — is scheduled for October).

The festival runs daily from 5 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., and an estimated 70,000 attendees are expected; admission is free.

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