



By: TA | AP Brief

Record 9.5 billion trips expected during China's Lunar New Year travel rush



Liu Zhiquan was waiting for a 30-plus hour train journey to Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, some 1,242 miles (2,000 kilometers) from Beijing, where he works in construction.

He's one of the hundreds of millions expected to travel to their hometowns as part of the world's largest movement of humanity, or "chunyun" as it's called in China, ahead of the **Lunar New Year** on Feb. 17.

"Things feel worse this year than last. The economy is bad and it's getting harder to make money," he said.

Liu chose a slower train to save money: a high-speed train would take just nine hours but costs more than twice as much.

Nonetheless, he chose to make the 30-hour journey to be home for the festival, the one time of year workers across the country take breaks and spend time with their loved ones.

China's government estimates that 9.5 billion trips will be made during the 40 day-period around the festival, a record high, according to information from the National Development and Reform Commission.

Some 540 million of those trips will be made via train, and 95 million by air. The rest will be on the road.

The festival of the year

In a country where workers are expected to put in long hours — including on weekends — and get few days of annual leave, the **Lunar New Year festival** is a precious time.

At a train station in Beijing, passengers were crowded in the waiting areas with large bags and suitcases as they waited for their trains.

Others snacked on instant noodles, an easy snack as stations provide hot water for free.

It has become more difficult for a big family to get together - Tian Duofu

Tian Duofu, a young woman who recently started working full time in Beijing, said she was looking forward to the nine-day holiday, which begins Feb. 15. "It has become more difficult for a big family to get together. After I started working, I realized such a long holiday is rare and we see each other less and less in person, which makes the Spring Festival significant."

"The new year is the festival of the year, and if we don't go back home, we won't be able to enjoy the festival atmosphere," said Tian Yunxia, a woman from Henan province who runs a breakfast stall in Beijing. "I want to go home to see my children, my grandchildren and my husband."