

STRICT EMARGO until 00:01 Friday 16 February 2018

YORKSHIRE SET FOR ANOTHER FIRE-CRACKING CHINESE NEW YEAR

Yorkshire is celebrating the Chinese New Year with news of a huge increase in the number of Chinese visitors to the county.

Research by Visit Britain shows figures have more than doubled since 2012 when 9,000 Chinese people chose Yorkshire as a holiday destination, compared to almost 20,000 in 2016 – a massive 122 per cent increase.

According to recent global research,** the Chinese have a positive opinion of Britain, ranking it fourth overall compared to 49 other nations.

The same research reported that apart from the UK's favourite big attractions like stately homes, Royal palaces and Big Ben, Chinese tourists are attracted to the 'beauty of the landscape' and the feeling of being 'connected to nature'.

Sir Gary Verity, Chief Executive of Welcome to Yorkshire, said: "China is fast becoming the biggest force in world tourism and we're delighted to see a huge increase in visits to this part of the world.

"All the signs are that those numbers will rise even further as we await the final figures for 2017 which we believe will show a further upward trend. We're very much looking forward to another great year welcoming people from China to experience all the wonderful things Yorkshire has to offer."

Sir Gary was speaking as he got in on the Chinese New Year action on a visit to the kitchens of Leeds restaurant Tattu to help cook-up a storm.

Executive chef Clifton Muil showed Sir Gary the art of high end Chinese cookery.

Clifton said: "Chinese New Year is a really important date in the restaurant's calendar. It gives us a unique opportunity to embrace the cultural celebrations of the holiday and bring customers together to dine in the customary way, with a menu inspired by some of the traditional new year's dishes you would find at any family celebration. We're very much looking forward to showing Leeds how we celebrate

with our food and a spectacular lion dance performance planned for the evening of Saturday 17 February.”

The Chinese New Year starts today (16 February) and while Tattu will be treating guests to a great show in the restaurant, there’s plenty more going on across the county:

In **Sheffield**, the City Hall is the venue for the city’s annual Chinese cultural show which has grown since 2004 to include local and international performances. Jointly organised by the city’s two universities, the council and community groups, the event on Tuesday 20 February attracts thousands of people from across the city region.

At **Hull** City Hall, traditional Chinese lion dancing and a mix of music from East and West are included in the city’s New Year celebrations on Saturday 17 February, and in **Leeds** several events have been taking place since the beginning of the month including workshops, exhibitions and parades culminating in a huge celebration at Leeds Town Hall on Sunday 18 February hosted by the Leeds Chinese Community Association.

Scarborough-based Amelia’s Chocolate is running a series of confectionery-making drop-in workshops today and Saturday at their Victoria Road shop. People can get into the spirit of celebrating the Chinese New Year of the Dog by making dog-shaped chocolate lollies or pictures.

- ENDS -

** the 2017 Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index (<http://nation-brands.gfk.com/>)

Images: Sir Gary Verity joined Executive Chef Clifton Muil in the kitchens at Tattu in Leeds, where they’re gearing up to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

Editors’ Notes:

- **Welcome to Yorkshire** is the official destination management organisation for Yorkshire, working to grow the county’s visitor economy.
- **Welcome to Yorkshire** is a not-for-profit membership organisation, funded in part by grants, sponsorship and Welcome to Yorkshire members. All money raised is reinvested directly back into promoting Yorkshire.
- Key facts include:
 - Tourism in Yorkshire is worth £7 billion annually
 - The county’s tourism and hospitality industry employs almost a quarter of a million people

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