

## Thai Culture Spotlight : Thai Long-boat Racing

Long-boat racing is one of the traditional rites which marks the end of the Buddhist Rain Retreat. The boat races mainly take place in the eleventh or twelfth lunar months (around September or October of each year), when the water level is at its highest. At this time, racing is held nationwide, but the most popular areas are in Phichit, Phitsanuloke, Nan, Angthong, Pathumthani, Suran Thani and Ayutthaya.



Long-boat races are usually held in cities and towns that have major waterways flowing through them, but they are not restricted to a particular region or province. Long-boat racing is considered a national sport in Thailand, and its history can be traced back to the Ayutthaya period over 600 years ago. In the early days, boat racing was a means to keep boatmen in top physical and mental shape so they could defend the country to their utmost ability.

Racing boats are usually made from dugout tree trunks, and can accommodate up to sixty oarsmen sitting in a double row. The oarsmen usually dress in the same color or in a uniform of some type. The festive events draw thousands of local and foreign spectators who watch the races along both sides of the riverbanks. Trophies and prizes are always awarded to the winning teams.

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