



CGTN: More than a journey: How Spring Festival travel rush reflects a changing China

Descrizione

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The 2026 Spring Festival travel rush begins on February 2 and will run for 40 days, ending on March 13. Ahead of this annual migration, CGTN published a feature article exploring how the event has transcended its role as a transport phenomenon, becoming a unique lens through which to view China's social transformation.

BEIJING, Feb. 02, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) ?? Under the glow of floodlights at a maintenance base in Nanchang, east China's Jiangxi Province, rows of silver bullet trains stand in perfect formation. From above, the assembly resembles a fleet of land-based aircraft carriers ready for service.

This is one of the launchpads across China for the world's largest human migration: chunyun. The 40-day annual Spring Festival travel rush officially begins at the stroke of midnight on February 2, ahead of the country's most important holiday.

This year, chunyun is set to shatter all previous records. Official estimates predict a staggering 9.5 billion inter-regional passenger trips over the 40-day period, which runs through March 13.

Driven by a nine-day holiday, the longest in recent memory, the 2026 rush is more than a logistical feat; it is a vivid window into China's social transformation.

Resilience of Chinese logisticsAs with every year, the 2026 chunyun stands as a spectacle of logistics. Officials project that self-driving will remain the dominant mode of transport, accounting for roughly 80 percent of all trips. Meanwhile, rail and civil aviation are expected to reach historic peaks, with passenger volumes hitting 540 million and 95 million, respectively.

Behind these numbers lies a sophisticated, multi-tiered infrastructure. To support the surge in electric vehicles, the Ministry of Transport has expanded the highway charging network to 71,500 charging

points. Travelers can use a special mini-program to monitor real-time charger availability, while mobile emergency charging units have been deployed during peak hours.

Complementing the highways, China's railway system is now bolstered by a high-speed network exceeding 50,000 kilometers and utilizes advanced ticketing and extensive infrastructure to ensure a seamless, high-capacity journey.

Safety remains the ultimate priority. As cold fronts threaten northern and central regions with snow and ice, the China Meteorological Administration and emergency departments have pre-positioned de-icing equipment and specialized rescue teams. High-tech tools, including drones and helicopters, stand ready for rapid response. Officials say chunyun coordination is a massive operation involving more than 20 government departments.

Heartwarming services In a deeper commitment to passenger comfort, this year's travel rush features more heartwarming services—catering to the diverse needs of millions, transforming a massive migration into a personalized experience.

A key highlight is the expansion of quiet carriages. Now available on over 8,000 high-speed trains, these carriages offer a haven for passengers seeking a peaceful journey. Broadcast volumes are capped at 40 percent, and crew members provide silent service, replacing loud announcements with gentle assistance. Staff also offer free disposable earplugs and fun packs, including picture books, to keep young children entertained and calm.

At major airports and rail stations, efforts are underway to close the digital divide. Central to this are Silver Hair services, allowing seniors to travel with dignity and ease. At Shijiazhuang Airport in north China, for instance, travelers aged 80 and above enjoy priority check-in and boarding.

Travel is also becoming more inclusive for families, including their four-legged members. In central China's Henan Province, Pet Rail services have expanded from one station to four, allowing travelers to book specialized transport crates via the 12306 app.

The Chinese New Year The vast movement of people during chunyun is a collective journey home, culminating in the Spring Festival, also known as the Chinese New Year, which falls on February 17 this year. Rooted in Chinese culture with celebrations of various forms, the festival marks the first day of the lunar calendar and symbolizes renewal and family unity. It carries a universal resonance of hope and aspirations for a better life.

Core customs—family reunions, red decorations symbolizing prosperity, wishes for good fortune, festive family feasts, and creating traditional crafts such as lanterns— captivate cultural enthusiasts worldwide with their unique approach to welcoming the new year.

Each year, the Spring Festival Gala, an annual TV program broadcast live by China Media Group and watched by billions worldwide, epitomizes China's cultural appeal. With three rehearsals completed, the 2026 gala will continue to take shape in a festive and uplifting atmosphere, vividly reflecting China's dynamism in a new era.

On Chinese New Year's Eve, CGTN also presented its flagship live special, Super Night. The program offered companion-style commentary on the CMG Spring Festival Gala in five languages.

English, Spanish, French, Arabic and Russian ?? alongside a range of original features. These segments vividly showcased aspects of Chinese culture that captivate overseas audiences, including Spring Festival customs, intangible cultural heritage and traditional opera, helping global viewers better grasp the essence of Chinese culture and connect with it emotionally.

For more information, please click here:<https://news.cgtn.com/news/2026-02-01/More-than-a-journey-How-chunyun-travel-rush-reflects-a-changing-China-1KptvLAeFPi/p.html>

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Categoria

1. Comunicati

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1. ImmediaPress

Data di creazione

Febbraio 3, 2026

Autore

redazione