



Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month 2021

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q: How many countries make up all of Asia and the Pacific Islands?

A: According to the United Nations, there are 48 countries in Asia today, plus 3 dependencies (Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao). <https://www.worldometers.info/geography/how-many-countries-in-asia/> .

Following are the regions of Asia, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau:

- Eastern Asia: China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Macau, Mongolia, and Taiwan.
- South Central Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.
- Southeastern Asia: Brunei, Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam.
- Western Asia: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Bahrain, Cyprus, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

The Pacific Ocean contains approx. 20,000-30,000 islands, with islands south of the tropic of Cancer but excluding Australia grouped into three divisions:

- 1) Melanesia (black islands) includes New Guinea (largest Pacific Island, which is divided into Papua New Guinea, plus the Indonesian provinces of Maluku, Papua and West Papua), New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji, and the Solomon Islands. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Melanesia>
- 2) Micronesia (small islands) includes the Marianas, Guam, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, and the Federated States of Micronesia <https://www.britannica.com/place/Micronesia-cultural-region-Pacific-Ocean>
- 3) Polynesia (many islands) includes New Zealand, the Hawaiian Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Tokelau, Wallis and Futuna, Niue, Pitcairn Island, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, and Easter Island <https://www.britannica.com/place/Polynesia>

Q: What is the population of Asians and Pacific Islanders who live in the U.S.?

A: About 6.5% of the U.S. population is made up of the following (in order of highest population): Chinese (ex-Taiwan), Asian Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Pakistani, Thai, Hmong, Cambodian, Laotian, Taiwanese, Bangladeshi, Burmese, Nepalese, Indonesian, and Sri Lankan. About 0.5% of the U.S. population is made up of the following: Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian or Chamorro, and Tongan. American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands are U.S. territories, while Hawaii is a state. The U.S. census also counts Indigenous Australians as part of this group. The first Asians documented in the Americas arrived in 1587, when Filipinos landed in California. In 1778, the first Chinese arrived in Hawaii (annexed in 1900).

Source: <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/visualizations/2020/demo/aiian-population-us.pdf>

Q: When/how did Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month originate?

A: Like most commemorative months, Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month originated with Congress. The origin of Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month dates back to the 95th Congress (1977-1978). May was the month chosen to recognize the contributions and influence of Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans to America's diversity and success. The month of May was selected due to the significance of May 6 and May 10 in the history of Asian/Pacific Americans. May 7, 1843 was when the first Japanese immigrants arrived in the U.S. and May 10, 1869 was when the first transcontinental railroad was completed with a significant number of Chinese immigrants.

1. In 1977, the House of Representatives introduced 3 joint resolutions (sponsored by Reps Horton, Whalen, Satterfield) to designate the first 10 days of May as Asian-Pacific Heritage Week. A similar bill was introduced in the Senate by Senator Inouye. Rep Horton introduced another joint resolution designating 7 days in May beginning on May 4th as Asian/Pacific American week. Passed by Congress, the President was directed to issue a proclamation designating the week beginning May 4, 1979 as "Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week."
2. On March 28, 1979, President Carter issued a Presidential proclamation for Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week. Over the next ten years, Presidents Carter, Reagan and George H.W. Bush continued to annually issue proclamations designating a week in May as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-4650-asianpacific-american-heritage-week-1979>
3. On May 7, 1990, President H.W. Bush issued a Presidential proclamation designating May 1990 as the first Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=23748>
4. On May 9, 1990, Congress passed Pub.L.101-283 requesting the president to issue a proclamation which expanded the observance of Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week to a month in May 1990. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-104/pdf/STATUTE-104-Pg168.pdf>
5. On May 14, 1991, Congress unanimously passed Pub.L.102-42 and was signed by President George H.W. Bush. This law requested that the President proclaim May 1991 and May 1992 as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Months. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-105/pdf/STATUTE-105-Pg243.pdf>
6. On October 23, 1992, Congress passed Pub.L.102-450, which designates May as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month. Presidents Clinton, George W. Bush, Obama, and Trump have annually issued proclamations designating May as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-106/pdf/STATUTE-106-Pg2251.pdf>

Source: <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/commemorative-observations/asian.php>

FILMS/VIDEOS:

- PBS collection of more than 40 films available on WORLD Channel through your local PBS Station this May. Check your local listings for air times. If you miss them on TV (or they're not available in your area), you can find them online here: <https://www.pbs.org/specials/asian-pacific-american-heritage-month/>
- 5-hour PBS film series: <https://www.pbs.org/weta/asian-americans/>. As America becomes more diverse, and more divided, while facing unimaginable challenges, how do we move forward together? Told through intimate and personal lives, the series will cast a new lens on U.S. history and the ongoing role that Asian Americans have played in shaping the nation's history.

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS:

- https://www.pta.org/home/events/About-Every-Child-in-Focus/Calendar/Asian-Pacific-American-Heritage-Month?gclid=EAIaIQobChMlnMiFpOzg7wIVCvCzCh2SCANnEAMYAiAAEgIcRfD_BwE
- https://ozobot.com/blog/activities-to-celebrate-asian-and-pacific-islander-american-heritage-month?utm_source=pinterest&utm_medium=social
- <https://www2.ed.gov/free/features/asian-pacific-heritage.html>
- <https://volunteers.girlscoutsrv.org/2018/05/03/celebrate-asian-american-and-pacific-islander-heritage-month/>
- https://www.pta.org/home/events/About-Every-Child-in-Focus/Calendar/Asian-Pacific-American-Heritage-Month?gclid=EAIaIQobChMlnMiFpOzg7wIVCvCzCh2SCANnEAMYAiAAEgIcRfD_BwE

HISTORICAL RESOURCES:

- <https://asianpacificheritage.gov/> - The Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum join in paying tribute to the generations of Asian and Pacific Islanders who have enriched America's history and are instrumental in its future success.
- <https://www.loc.gov/collections/ansel-adams-manzanar/about-this-collection/> - Ansel Adams documented the Manzanar War Relocation Center in California and the Japanese-Americans interned there during WWII.
- <https://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-war-asianpacific.html> - Asian Pacific Americans made lasting contributions to America's wartime efforts. Collected stories highlight their service from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq.
- <https://www.archives.gov/news/topics/asian-pacific-american-heritage-month> - The National Archives holds a wealth of material documenting the Asian and Pacific Islander experience, and it highlights these resources online, in programs, and through traditional and social media. Including Chinese Exclusion Act, Japanese American Internment, Chinese Americans as perpetual foreigners, Annexation of Hawaii, etc.
- <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/npscelebrates/asian-american-pacific-islander-heritage-month.htm>. Visit the National Park Service site for fascinating facts about the Asian American and Pacific Islander people and their contributions to U.S. history, as well as historical events in national parks or shared through NPS programs and partners.