



ARTS & CULTURE

Monkey Festival Returns to Town in Thailand

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A Thai town's popular "monkey **festival**" returned Sunday after a two-year break caused by the pandemic.

The fun event takes place in Lopburi in central Thailand. There, thousands of monkeys eat large amounts of fruits and vegetables. The animals can be seen climbing on people and colorful fruit formations made of pineapples, bananas and even costly durians.

"Today's special is durian, which is **expensive**. Lopburi monkeys like expensive things," said Yongyuth Kitwatananusont. She has organized over 30 monkey festivals.

The huge fresh meal costs over \$3,000. It is a yearly tradition for locals in Lopburi to thank the monkeys for doing their part in bringing **tourists** to the area, which is sometimes known as "Monkey Province." The event takes place on the last Sunday in November.

The **theme** for this year's festival was **wheelchair** monkeys. Yongyuth, the event organizer, planned to donate 100 wheelchairs to needy people.

Tourists have been slowly returning to Thailand after the government launched a quarantine-free travel plan for vaccinated visitors in November. The country saw more than 100,000 travelers in November. That is as many as the number of arrivals in the first 10 months of 2021 combined.

The festival proved to be a popular event this year. Tourists were seen playing with monkeys with their cameras.

"I'm really happy to get to see this and now I'm thinking about going to the next festival," said Ayoub Boukhari, a visitor from Morocco. "It's quite unexpected and the monkeys are quite **silly**."

The return of the tradition also pleased locals.

"It's the first time in two years that monkeys get to eat all kinds of fruits and vegetables," said Lopburi local Thanida Phudjeeb. "I'm happy for them."

I'm Ashley Thompson.

The Reuters news agency reported this story. Ashley Thompson adapted it for VOA Learning English. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.

Words in This Story

festival *-n.* a special time or event when people gather to celebrate something

expensive *-adj.* costing a lot of money

tourist *-n.* a person who travels to a place for pleasure

theme *-n.* the subject or idea on which the style of something is based

wheelchair *-n.* a chair with wheels that is used by people who cannot walk because they are disabled, sick, or injured

silly *-adj.* playful and funny