



# Christmas Around the World





# Christmas Around the World

It is interesting to see how different countries celebrate Christmas. The USA is so multi-cultural that you will find many different ways of celebrating Christmas. How is Christmas celebrated around the world?





Germany





# Germany



Germans love to decorate their houses at Christmas. Many houses will have little wooden frames holding electric candles in their windows, and coloured pictures of paper or plastic which look beautiful from the outside at night. Often too, they will have an 'Adventskranz' – a wreath of leaves with four candles. (Advent - meaning 'coming' – is the 4 week period before Christmas). On each Sunday of Advent, Another candle is lit. Most homes will also have little wooden 'cribs' - a small model of the stable where Jesus was born, with Mary, Joseph, Baby Jesus, and animals. Children leave letters on their window sills for Christkind, a winged figure dressed in white robes and a golden crown who distributes gifts. Father Christmas – 'Der Weihnachtsmann' - brings presents in the late afternoon of Christmas Eve (December 24th), after people have been to a church meeting. The presents are then found under the Christmas tree. One person in the family will ring a bell and call everyone to come to the room. **“Froehliche Weihnachten” “Merry Christmas!”**



**Belgium**





# Belgium

In the days of the Soviet Union, Christmas was not celebrated very much. New Year was the important time - when 'Father Frost' brought presents to children. With the fall of Communism, Christmas can be openly celebrated - either on December 25th; or more often on January 7th. This unusual date is because the Russian Orthodox church uses the old 'Julian' calendar for religious celebration days. Special Christmas food includes cakes, pies and 'meat dumplings'.





Australia





# Australia



Christmas over here in Australia seems to be more casual than anywhere else, from all the reports I've heard. We'll have breakfast with our immediate families, first, if we're staying at our own house or a hotel. It's normally bacon, eggs, toast, and black pudding (Yum!). Then, at about 11 am, we go to a relative's house or they come to ours - normally we swap each Christmas. We open some presents, And have our lunch, which would be prawns, and crab, things like that. After lunch, we open more presents, and explore them! Then, the 'over 30s' have a nap, while we younger ones give each other little presents, normally not more than five to ten dollars each. Then, we have a swim if there's a pool anywhere nearby, but if there isn't, we go to a park, or something like that. We have our main meal at dinner time. Turkey, chicken, fish, crab, prawns, potato, pumpkin, peas, pudding -the works and reminisce over the year. Then we sleep. And that's all Christmas is over here.





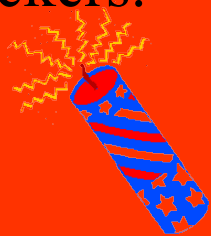
Italy





# Italy

In Italy Christmas begins on 1st of December. We decorate the tree, or, more often, we make the "PRESEPE". The Presepe is a sort of Little miniature of what happened on December 25th of the year 0 B.C. We put a big hut with Mary, Joseph, Jesus, a donkey and a bow. It's said that Jesus was warmth during the first night by the two animals. In the presepe there's not only the holy family, we put also the three kings, shepards, with sheep of course, fishermen, curious people some angels, houses, lights and animals. Presents are usually put under, or in any case as near as possible to the presepe. On Dec. 25th's night presents are taken out of the wardrobe. We believe that Jesus Christ in person comes to bring the presents. Christmas dinner is served on the night of December 24th, while others take it on midday of 25th. We give our presents before the meal begins. Everyone has to have a present. We light up the mantelpiece and teenagers enjoy themselves with little firecrackers. This is our usual Christmas and the presepe is put away only on January 7<sup>th</sup>. **“Buone Feste Natalizie” “Merry Christmas!”**





Mexico





# Mexico

Christmas festivities begin with "Las Posadas," nine consecutive days of candlelight processions and lively parties starting December 16. In villages and urban neighborhoods throughout Mexico youngsters gather each afternoon to reenact the holy family's quest for lodging in Bethlehem. The parade of "Santos Peregrinos" (Holy Pilgrims) stops at a designated house to sing a traditional litany by which the Holy Family requests shelter for the night and those waiting behind the closed door turn them away. They proceed to a second home where the scene is repeated. At the third stop the pilgrims are told that while there is no room in the "posada" (inn), they are welcome to take refuge in the stable. The doors are flung open and

all are invited to enter.

**“¡Feliz Navidad!” “Merry Christmas!”**





England





# England



For English children, Christmas begins in October when most English children write their Christmas Lists to Father Christmas. English houses are decorated two weeks before Christmas day. The tree is decorated with tinsel, twinkling fairy lights, tartan ribbons and baubels.

The home is usually decorated with statues of Father Christmas, holly wreaths, mistletoe, and welcoming lights at the windows. English children go to bed on Christmas Eve night after having 'The Night Before Christmas' read to them by their parents and leaving a mince pie and some milk for Father Christmas (and a carrot for Rudolph).

On Christmas Day morning they rush into their parents bedrooms and drag their parents downstairs to the living room where a stack of Christmas presents lie under the tree, in stockings or in sacks.

The tree and decorations are unwillingly taken down two weeks after Christmas day, as it is considered bad luck if they are up longer.



Norway



# Norway



In big Norwegian country kitchens in farms and villages off the beaten track the hectic preparations still begin weeks before the festival season. The smell of Christmas fills the house, bringing the children's

expectations up to fever pitch. But the children do not usually enjoy the meal very much. Their eyes keep turning to the closed living room door, and they grow more and more impatient with the unbearably slow pace with which their elders finish the meal. The children tumble in as the door is opened, only to stop short, awestruck by the sight of the tree, aglow with the light from real candles, and with the neatly wrapped gifts heaped underneath. Then follows a Norwegian ritual known as "circling the Christmas tree". Everybody joins hands to form a ring around the tree, and the company then walk around it singing carols. Finally, the gifts are distributed, and the children can relax. The rest of the evening is spent on fun and games and there are cakes and other good things to be eaten. On the morning of Christmas Day the family goes to church. **"God Jul" "Merry Christmas!"**







France





# France

In France, Christmas is always called 'Noël. Everyone has a Christmas tree, sometimes decorated in the old way with red ribbons and real white wax candles. Fir trees in the garden are often decorated too, with lights on all night. Father Christmas is called Père Noël. The Christmas meal is an important family gathering with good meat and the best wine. Not everyone sends Christmas cards.

**“Joyeux Noel”**

**“Merry Christmas!”**





**Brazil**





# Brazil

Father Christmas is called Papai Noel. Many Christmas customs are similar to USA or UK. For those who have enough money, a special Christmas meal will be chicken, turkey, ham, rice, salad, pork, fresh and dried fruits. Poorer people will just have chicken and rice.

**“Boas Festas e Feliz Ano Novo”**

**“Merry Christmas!”**





Finland





# Finland



Finnish people believe that Father Christmas (Santa Claus) lives in the north part of Finland called Korvatunturi, north of the Arctic Circle. People from all over the world send letters to Santa Claus in Finland. (It is only fair to say that the people of Greenland say that really, Father Christmas lives in Greenland!) Everyone cleans their houses ready for the three holy days of Christmas - Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day. Christmas Eve is very special, when people eat rice porridge and plum fruit juice in the morning. They will then decorate a spruce tree in the home. At mid-day, the 'peace of Christmas' is broadcast on radio And TV from the Finnish city of Turku by its Mayor. In the evening, a traditional Christmas dinner is eaten. Many families will visit cemeteries and grave-yards to place a candle onto the burial graves of family members. Cemeteries are very beautiful at Christmas-time. Children receive their presents on Christmas Eve, usually with a family member dressing as Father Christmas. **“Hyvaa joulua” “Merry Christmas!”**



Portugal





# Portugal

People pretend that Father Christmas brings presents to children on Christmas Eve. The presents are left under the Christmas tree or in shoes by the fireplace. A special Christmas meal of salted dry cod-fish with boiled potatoes is eaten at midnight on Christmas Eve.

**“Feliz Natal”**

**“Merry Christmas!”**







Russia





# Russia

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**“Pozdrevlyayu s prazdnikom  
Rozhdestva is Novim Godom”  
“Happy Birthday Jesus!”**





China





# China



Christians in China celebrate by lighting their houses with beautiful paper lanterns and decorating their Christmas trees, which they call "Trees of Light," with paper chains, paper flowers, and paper lanterns. Chinese Children hang muslin stockings and await a visit from Santa Claus, whom they call Dun Che Lao Ren (dwyn-chuh-lau-oh-run) which means "Christmas Old Man." Since the vast majority of the Chinese people are not Christian, the main winter festival in China the Chinese New Year which takes place toward the end of January. Now officially called the "Spring Festival," it is a time when children receive new clothing, eat Luxurious meals, receive new toys, and enjoy firecracker displays. An important aspect of the New Year celebration is the worship of ancestors. Portraits and paintings of ancestors are brought out and hung in the main room of the home.



Japan

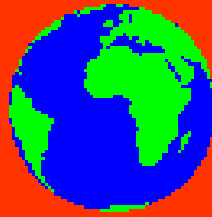




# Japan



Christmas was introduced in Japan by the Christian missionaries, and for many years the only people who celebrated it were those who had turned to the Christian faith. But now the Christmas season in Japan is full of meaning and is almost universally observed. The idea of exchanging gifts seems to appeal strongly to the Japanese people. The tradesmen have commercialized Christmas just as our western shops have done. For several weeks before the day, the stores shout Christmas. There are decorations and wonderful displays of appropriate gifts for men, women, and children -- especially children. In Japan there is a god or priest known as Hoteiosho, who closely resembles our Santa Claus. He is always pictured as a kind old man carrying a huge pack. He is thought to have eyes in the back of his head. It is well for the children to be good when this all-seeing gentleman is abroad.



For more Christmas celebrations  
around the world, visit **Christmas  
Worldview, Christmas  
Celebrations  
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Traditions Around the World.**

