

Christmas Around *The* World

Infuse your holiday traditions with Christmas customs, recipes, and crafts from 19 countries around the world.



Welcome

Christmas is one of the most beloved and widely celebrated holidays worldwide. It is a special time that brings joy and sparkle to our lives with feasting and special rituals, colorful decorations, and the exchanging of gifts. Traditions have developed around this holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus and they have changed as they have crossed borders into other countries and over time. Traditions help us honor things that are important to us.

In this study of Christmas customs and traditions from 19 different countries on six of the seven continents, your family will discover similarities to and differences from what you may celebrate in your home. You may be familiar with some of them because of your own cultural heritage, whereas others may be completely new to you! Our hope is that you will enjoy learning some new things and have fun doing so.

In addition, you will have the option to bake some new holiday treats as well as make some crafts that loosely represent the region.

A WORD OF CAUTION: In this PDF we explain the traditional gift-bearer of each included country. If you have young children who still *believe*, you may want to skip this study, or just share small facts and complete the crafts and recipes.

If you are not familiar with the story of the birth of Jesus, you can read all about it in a book of the Bible called Luke (Luke 2). If you do not own a Bible, there are several [online sources](#). If you would like to add to your collection of Christmas books, consider purchasing [The Story of Christmas](#) which beautifully illustrates the Bible story in picture book format.

In addition, let this study spark conversation in your home. Here are some questions you may want to explore with your children about your own traditions:

- What is your favorite thing about Christmas?
- Why is it important to you?
- What is special about it?
- What is your favorite tradition to celebrate with your family around Christmastime?
- What is your favorite book to read at Christmastime?
- What is your favorite holiday treat or food that we eat only at Christmas?

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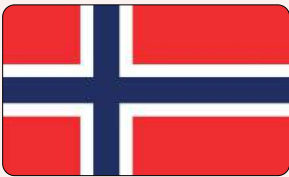
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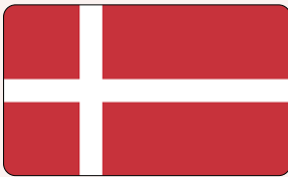
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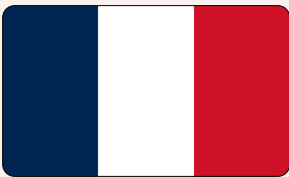
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Readers' Guide

This page serves as a helpful guide, clearly connecting each section to the related content. We've structured the layout to make it easy for you to understand what each section is about, ensuring you can navigate through the PDF with clarity and confidence.

United States

In the United States of America, traditions vary by region and by cultural heritage. In general, it is common to celebrate the season by decorating a Christmas tree - either artificial or live - with ornaments, lights, and a tree topper. A skirt covers the base and is where wrapped gifts are placed in anticipation of Christmas Eve or Christmas Day when the gifts are then opened.

Another tradition is to hang stockings on the fireplace mantle, or if there is no fireplace in the home, some other central location. Santa Claus, the traditional gift-bearer, visits the home and fills the stockings with small gifts and treats.

Many people will decorate the outside of their homes in colored or white lights, some even timed to flash to the beat of accompanying music!

Food plays an important part of the Christmas holiday with the baking of various treats and sharing them with friends and neighbors. Christmas dinner includes special dishes, again reflecting the cultural heritage of the family.

Christmas music appears on radio stations and in stores, setting a festive tone to the holiday.

Many Americans attend church services on either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day in celebration of the birth of Jesus. Some churches put on pageants, concerts, living nativities, or other special ceremonies.

There are many other ways that Christmas can be celebrated in the United States, some religious and some not, some traditional and some not. However, it is a national holiday when most stores and restaurants are closed in observance, regardless of religious beliefs.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

Scan here to download Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more from the United States!

TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

It's customary to decorate a Christmas tree, string lights on the outside of your home, and hang a wreath on the front door. Many families send Christmas cards to loved ones.

CHRISTMAS TREATS

Decorated sugar cookies and Gingerbread man cookies.

TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

In this section, readers will discover the meaning and customs of iconic holiday elements from around the world, highlighting the holiday spirit across various cultures.

A picture showcases a Christmas tradition or symbol.

CHRISTMAS TREATS

This section explores tasty Christmas treats from around the world, offering a flavorful journey through diverse holiday traditions.

CHRISTMAS WEATHER

Discover how Christmas weather varies worldwide, from snowy to sunny, offering a new perspective on holiday traditions.

DECEMBER

24

Christmas Eve

Key dates for each country's Christmas traditions and customs.

WHERE IN THE WORLD...

World Map Indicating the Country's Location

WHERE IN THE WORLD...

CHRISTMAS WEATHER

Traditionally cold and snowy in the north, and warm in the southern part of the country.

GREETINGS

Traditional holiday greeting for each country.

GREETING

Merry Christmas!

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

This section dives into how different countries exchange Christmas gifts. It covers who brings the gifts, where they're placed, and the treats that go along with them.

GIFT BRINGER

Santa Claus

GIFT PLACEMENT

Gifts are placed under the tree and in stockings hung above the fire place.

TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

Cookies and milk are set out for Santa, and carrots are left for his reindeer.

CRAFT

Add a touch of the USA to your Christmas celebrations with a free cranberry and popcorn garland craft.

POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Dive into the festive sounds of Christmas around the world in this section, featuring popular songs and melodies.

POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- Silent Night
- O Holy Night
- Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
- Joy to the World
- O Come, All Ye Faithful

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!

CRAFT/RECIPE

Infuse your Christmas celebrations with free craft instructions and recipes from around the world.

**NOTE: A recipe and craft may not be available for every country.*

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United States

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EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more from the United States!



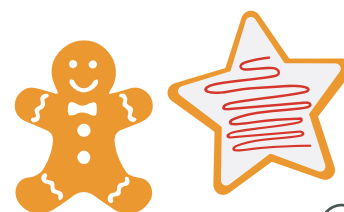
TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

It's customary to decorate a Christmas tree, string lights on the outside of your home, and hang a wreath on the front door. Many families send Christmas cards to loved ones.



CHRISTMAS TREATS

Decorated sugar cookies and Gingerbread men cookies.



WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



Traditionally cold and snowy in the north, and warm in the southern part of the country.

GREETING

Merry Christmas!

DECEMBER

24

Christmas Eve

DECEMBER

25

Christmas Day

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Santa Claus



GIFT PLACEMENT

Gifts are placed under the tree and in stockings hung above the fireplace.



TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

Cookies and milk are set out for Santa, and carrots are left for his reindeer.

CRAFT

Add a touch of the USA to your Christmas celebrations with a cranberry and popcorn garland craft.

POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- Silent Night
- O Holy Night
- Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
- Joy to the World
- O Come, All Ye Faithful

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!



Great Britain

In Great Britain, Christmas traditions are a blend of religious and secular customs.

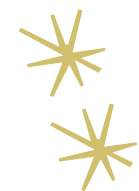
Like the United States, British homes have a decorated tree that is put up in early December. One unique tradition is Christmas crackers. These are paper tubes filled with candy, small trinkets, and other treats. It is fun to pull a cracker and hear the loud pop over the Christmas meal with family and friends. Scan the QR code for instructions to make your own!

Favorite British desserts include pudding, also called plum pudding, which is a dense fruitcake, and mince pies which are small tarts filled with dried fruits and spices.

Boxing Day is the day after Christmas and historically was the day when servants, tradespeople, and the poor received boxes (gifts) from their employers. To-day it is an official bank holiday that is associated with shopping and sporting events such as football (soccer) and cricket.

Another tradition is a televised speech by the ruling monarch that has been a tradition since the first one in 1957.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more from Great Britain!



TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

Families enjoy pulling Christmas crackers, attending Christmas Eve candlelight church services, and watching The King's Speech on TV. Boxing Day is a public holiday the day after Christmas where people enjoy shopping and watching sports.



CHRISTMAS TREATS

Mince pies and Christmas pudding



WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



Weather is often damp, foggy, and cold.

GREETING

Happy Christmas!

DECEMBER

24

Christmas Eve

DECEMBER

25

Christmas Day

DECEMBER

26

Boxing Day

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Father Christmas



GIFT PLACEMENT

Father Christmas fills stockings with treats and small gifts.



TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

Mince pies and a glass of sherry, whiskey, or brandy is left out for Father Christmas, and carrots for the reindeer.

CRAFT

Add a touch of Great Britain to your Christmas celebrations with a Christmas Crackers craft.

POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- The Holly and the Ivy
- God Rest Ye
- Merry Gentlemen
- Good King Wenceslas
- Once in Royal David's City



Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!

Australia

Because Australia is in the southern hemisphere, it is summertime in December. Many traditions that were brought over with English settlers have had to change due to the difference in climate and geography. Since much of the population of Australia lives along the coast, many Aussies celebrate the holiday by going to the beach, having a BBQ or picnic, and playing cricket.

Although some people decorate an artificial fir tree, others decorate a native plant called the Christmas Bush, which produces bright red, star-shaped flowers that bloom during the Christmas season. People also decorate their homes with outdoor lights, nativity scenes, and Santa, and include plants and animals that are native to Australia.

Carols by Candlelight is a very special Aussie tradition. Some communities sing in churches, in parks, on the beach, and even in amphitheaters. To learn more about this tradition check out the InquisiKids podcast by scanning the QR code below.

Santa is called Father Christmas in Australia, and despite the heat, he still appears in his red suit and hat and large white beard. Children leave out pillowcases for him to fill with gifts. Scan the QR code below to get directions to make you own festive pillowcase.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Australian Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more!



TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

Families celebrate with beach BBQs or a seafood fest and by participating in Carols by Candlelight. Santa is pulled by kangaroos instead of reindeer.



CHRISTMAS TREATS

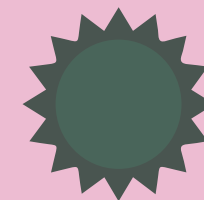
Pavlova, fruit mince pies, and trifle.



WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



Since this country is in the southern hemisphere, it is warm or even hot at this time of year!

GREETING

Merry Christmas!

DECEMBER

24

Christmas Eve

DECEMBER

25

Christmas Day

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Father Christmas/
Santa Claus



GIFT PLACEMENT

Gifts are either left inside festive pillowcases or at the breakfast table.



TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

Cookies (called biscuits) and milk or beer are left out for Santa (since it's warm!), and carrots for the reindeer.

CRAFT

Add a touch of Australia to your Christmas celebrations by making a festive pillowcase.

POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- 12 Days of Christmas (Australian version)

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!



Sweden

Sweden is located on the Scandinavian peninsula, in the far north of Europe. Since it is dark for much of the day during the winters in Scandinavia, light plays a big role in the traditions in this region. Advent candles are a typical way to count the days until Christmas.

Another festival of light is the celebration of St. Lucia Day. Traditionally, the oldest girl in the family wears a white dress with a red sash and a crown of candles and carries food early in the morning to her family in bed. St. Lucia Day (December 13) marks the beginning of the Christmas season in Sweden, and St. Knut's Day (January 13th) marks the end.

In Sweden, decorations made of straw trace their roots back to agricultural traditions. It was an easily available material and used for various purposes. The tradition of placing a large straw goat called *Julbock* or *Gävlebocken* next to the tree helps Swedes connect with their heritage.

Jultomte is similar to Santa Claus. He is dressed in red and has a white beard and leaves gifts for children. Children leave him *julgröt* (rice porridge). In Swedish folklore, *Tomte*, a mythical creature associated with the Christmas season, is believed to protect the home and its inhabitants.

The *Julbord* is a traditional Christmas buffet that includes pickled herring, cured salmon, sausages, meatballs, ham, and different types of bread and condiments.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Swedish Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more!



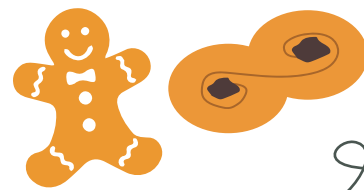
TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

Families celebrate St. Lucia Day, hang ornaments made of straw in their homes, and place a straw goat next to the Christmas tree. Wreaths are hung on doors and a star of Advent often appears in windows. St Knut's Day marks the end of the Christmas season, with singing songs and dancing around the Christmas tree before taking it down.



CHRISTMAS TREATS

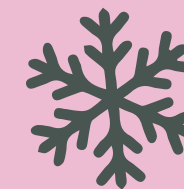
Pepparkakor (thin gingerbread cookies) and *Saffransbullar* (sweet, slightly spiced saffron buns)



WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



Being in the far north, it is often cold, dark, and snowy.

GREETING

God Jul!

DECEMBER

13

St. Lucia Day

DECEMBER

24

Julafton
(Christmas Eve)

JANUARY

13

St. Knut's Day

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Jultomte or *Tomte*
(Christmas gnome)



GIFT PLACEMENT

Gifts are left under the Christmas tree or near the fireplace.

TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

Julgröt (rice porridge) is set out for *Jultomte* or *Tomte*.



POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- Mer Jul (More Christmas)
- Stilla natt
- Hej mitt vinterland
- Sankta Lucia

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!



CRAFT

Add a touch of Sweden to your Christmas celebrations with a gnome/elf craft.

Norway

Norway is another country in Scandinavia and shares similar traditions with its neighbors. The Christmas Goat is called *Julebukk*, and in some parts of the country children dress up as *julebukker* and go door-to-door singing carols.

Norwegians have their own version of Santa Claus, called *Julenissen*. This gnome-like creature with a long white beard and a red cap brings gifts to children on Christmas Eve. Scan the QR code for instructions to make a gnome ornament.

Norwegians also celebrate St. Lucia day (December 13) but rather than straw, they decorate their homes with *Juleneks*, which are sheaves of grain decorated with a red bow. It is tied to a post or hung on a door to feed the birds on Christmas morning.

Christmas dinner *julemiddag* boasts dishes like *ribbe* (pork ribs), *pinnekjøtt* (dried and salted lamb ribs), *lutefisk* (dried fish), *medisterkaker* (sausage patties), an assortment of vegetables and *lefse* (thin potato flatbread), followed by rice pudding with a hidden almond for dessert. The person who finds the almond will have good luck in the coming year. Norwegians also enjoy *Pepparkakor*, a Swedish ginger cookie, like gingersnaps.

Little Christmas Eve or *Lille julaften* is celebrated on December 23rd as a prelude to the Christmas festivities. On this day families decorate their Christmas trees, but it can also be a day of cleaning and tidying so that everything is spotless and ready for the following two days.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Norwegian Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more!



TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

Items from nature are traditionally used as decorations such as pinecones, moss, branches, and straw. *Juleneks* are stalks of oats tied to a tree branch. St Lucia Day and Little Christmas Eve are also celebrated.



CHRISTMAS TREATS

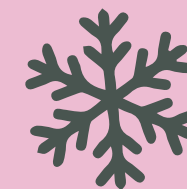
Pepparkakor (gingerbread cookies) and *Kransekake* (a tower-like almond cake made of rings)



WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



Because it is so far north, it is cold, dark, and often snowy.

GREETING

God Jul!

DECEMBER

13

St. Lucia Day

DECEMBER

23

Lille Julaften
(Little Christmas Eve)

DECEMBER

24

Julaften
(Christmas Day)

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Julenissen
(Christmas Elf)



GIFT PLACEMENT

Gifts are placed under the Christmas tree, and small gifts can be tied to the lower branches.

TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

On Christmas Eve, kids leave out a bowl of rice or barley porridge for *Julenissen* to eat.

POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- En stjerne skinner i natt
(A Star Shines in the Night)
- Glade jul



Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!

RECIPE

Bake a popular Norwegian Christmas cookie with our *Pepparkakor* recipe—scan the QR code for the recipe.

Denmark

Denmark is another Scandinavian country, so it too shares similar traditions with its neighbors. Some similarities include observing Advent with calendars and wreaths; decorating homes with Christmas trees, ornaments, and lights; dancing around the tree; and celebrating St. Lucia Day (December 13).

The gift bringer is called *Julemand* (Christmas Man or Father Christmas) and he looks like Santa Claus wearing a red suit and having a long white beard. Before there was *Julemand*, there was a mischievous elf-like creature called *Nisse* who lived on farms and helped with tasks or chores. They can be moody creatures so people would try to appease them with food. Children leave out a bowl of rice porridge, hoping to receive a gift in return.

Families enjoy *Julefrokost*, a traditional Danish Christmas lunch which can last all day. Some dishes include herring, liver pate, meatballs, and rice pudding.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more from Denmark!



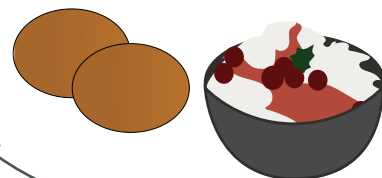
TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

On Christmas Eve, it's customary for Danes to hold hands and dance around the Christmas tree while singing Christmas carols. This tradition is also found in other Scandinavian countries.



CHRISTMAS TREATS

Pebernødder (spiced cookies) and *Risalamande* (rice pudding with cherry sauce, containing a hidden almond).



WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



It is cold and damp, with snowfall possible at this time of year.

GREETING

Glaedelig Jul!

DECEMBER

13

St. Lucia Day

DECEMBER

24

Christmas Eve

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

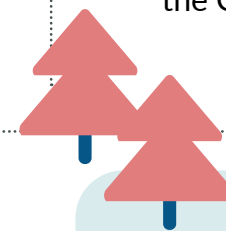
GIFT BRINGER

Julemand
(Father Christmas)



GIFT PLACEMENT

Gifts are placed under the Christmas tree.



TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

Rice pudding is left out for *Julemand*.

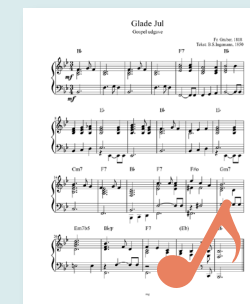
RECIPE

Add a touch of Denmark to your Christmas celebrations with a *Pfeffernüsse* (small spice cookies) recipe.

POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- Et Barn Er Født i Bethlehem (A Child Is Born in Bethlehem)
- Glade Jul
- Dejlige Jul (Merry Christmas, Lovely Christmas)

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!



The Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the main gift-giving holiday is *Sinterklaas* (named for St. Nicholas), celebrated on December 5th. *Sinterklaas* is dressed differently than Santa Claus, sporting a bishop's outfit, and he arrives by steamship from Spain in mid-November. This marks the beginning of the holiday season. *Sinterklaas* has a helper known as *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete, a Spanish Moor), who helps him fill the shoes that the children have placed by the fireplace with gifts and treats. Learn more about the story of St. Nicholas on the InquisiKids podcast by scanning the QR code below!

Christmas trees, Christmas wreaths (called *Kerstkrans*), and festive lights are a common way to decorate for the holiday. Some people exchange gifts on Christmas Day (December 25) but the primary day for gifts is December 5th.

Dutch cities often host Christmas markets (*Kerstmarkten*) throughout the month of December, where people can shop for gifts, enjoy holiday treats, and experience a festive atmosphere. Temporary ice rinks are also set up in various towns so that families can enjoy this popular pastime.

Many Dutch families have a *gourmetten* (a type of indoor grilling) for Christmas dinner, cooking small pieces of meat, fish, or vegetables in small pans over an electric grill. It involves melting cheese on the on top of the ingredients, and is served with a variety of condiments and sauces. *Kerststol*, a fruit-studded sweet dough filled with almond paste, is a traditional Christmas bread.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more from The Netherlands!



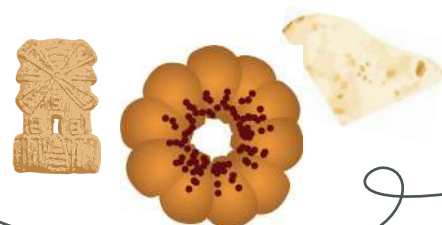
TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

In November, *Sinterklaas* travels from his home in Spain to the Netherlands. The arrival festivities include a boat parade and horse parade through the city. Children line the route to watch as Sint and his Moorish helpers throw candy and cookies to the onlookers.



CHRISTMAS TREATS

Speculaas (spiced, thin, crispy cookies), *Kerstkrans* (wreath-shaped pastry made with almond paste and puff pastry), and *Lefse* (flat sweet bread).



WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



It is chilly, with some rain possible.

GREETING

Fijne Kerst!

DECEMBER

5

Sinterklaas

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Sinterklaas (Saint Nicholas) and *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete)



GIFT PLACEMENT

Sinterklaas fills wooden shoes left by the fireplace.

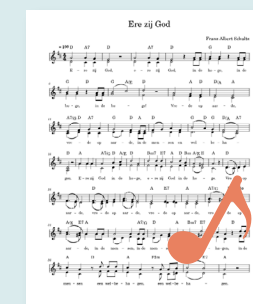


TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

Sinterklaas gets *Speculaas* cookies and his horse gets straw, carrots, and water.

RECIPE

Add a touch of The Netherlands to your Christmas celebrations with a *Speculaas* cookie recipe.



POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- Ere Zij God (Glory to God)
- Stille Nacht
- Heilige Nacht

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!

Germany

Germany has a rich and longstanding tradition of celebrating Christmas, and many of its customs and traditions have been adopted by other countries. Like the Netherlands, Germany is known for their Christmas markets, called *Weihnachtsmärkte*, which open in late November and run through December. People shop for holiday decorations as well as hand-crafted gifts. They also enjoy seasonal treats such as bratwurst, *Lebkuchen*, and *Glühwein*. Learn more about these famous markets on the InquisiKids podcast when you scan the QR code below.

Germans observe the season of Advent with an Advent wreath and count down the days until Christmas with an Advent calendar. You can often find these items at the Christmas markets.

On the night of December 5th, children in Germany clean their boots and place them outside their doors. St. Nicholas (*Sankt Nikolaus*) fills the boots with small gifts, chocolates, oranges, and nuts, but the main Christmas celebration is *Heiligabend* on December 24. Families exchange gifts, attend a church service, and celebrate with roast goose, duck, or carp, served with red cabbage, potato dumplings and gravy. Germans are known for baking cookies at Christmas. Scan the code for *Pfeffernüsse*, *Lebkuchen*, and *Vanillekipferl* recipes.

The tradition of decorating evergreen trees is believed to have originated in Germany. On Christmas Eve families use ornaments, lights, tinsel, and a special tree topper, such as an angel or star, to decorate their Christmas tree.

These are just a few Christmas traditions in Germany. Each region has its own unique variations on these customs.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download German Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more!



TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

Decorating an evergreen tree is thought to have originated in Germany, as is building gingerbread houses. Shopping at Christmas markets is a favorite tradition in small towns and large cities alike.



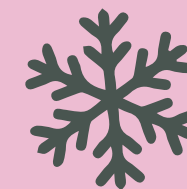
CHRISTMAS TREATS

Lebkuchen (soft gingerbread cookies, often covered in chocolate or icing), *Pfeffernüsse* (ginger cookies), and *Springerle* (anise cookie with an embossed design).

WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



It is cold, and snowfall is common, especially in the southern part of the country.

GREETING

Frohe Weihnachten!

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Christkind (Christ Child) or *Weihnachtsmann* (Christmas Man). St. Nicholas brings gifts on the night of Dec 5th.

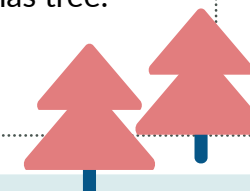


CRAFT

Add a touch of Germany to your Christmas celebrations with a gingerbread ornament craft.

GIFT PLACEMENT

Gifts are placed under the Christmas tree.



TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

Milk and cookies are left out for *Weihnachtsmann*.



Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!

POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- O Tannenbaum
- Stille Nacht
- Heilige Nacht
- Vom Himmel Hoch
- Da Komm Ich Her (From Heaven Above to Earth I Come)
- Es ist ein Ros entsprungen (Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming)



France

France shares many similar traditions with its European neighbors such as using Advent calendars and lighting Advent candles in a wreath to count down the days until Christmas. Christmas markets are called *Marchés de Noël* and are a popular way to shop for holiday treats, gifts, and crafts. A famous one is in Strasbourg.

It is common to exchange gifts and attend Midnight Mass in beautifully decorated old churches on Christmas Eve. Some families exchange gifts on Christmas Eve while others do so on Christmas Day. Well-behaved children receive gifts from *Père Noël* (Father Christmas).

Some traditions that are special to the French people revolve around food. The first is the *Réveillon*, which is a Christmas Eve feast featuring dishes like foie gras, oysters, and roast meats, accompanied by wine and Champagne. The second is the Yule Log (*Bûche de Noël*) which is the traditional Christmas dessert served as the grand finale to the *Réveillon*. It is a sponge cake, layered with creamy fillings, and frosted with a chocolate buttercream made to resemble a log. It has a bark-like texture and sometimes even has (candy) mushrooms “growing” on it.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download French Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more!



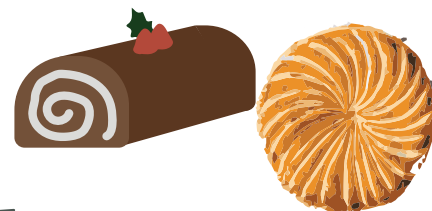
TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

The *Réveillon* is a festive Christmas Eve dinner featuring elaborate dishes such as foie gras, oysters, and roast meats. The nativity scene is called a *crèche*, and it is a common Christmas decoration in French homes and churches.



CHRISTMAS TREATS

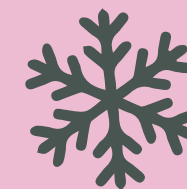
Bûche de Noël (log-shaped sponge cake filled with flavored buttercream) and *Galettes des Rois* (almond-flavored puff pastry cake served on Epiphany).



WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



It is cold in the northern regions, yet milder in the southern part of the country.

GREETING

Joyeux Noël!

DECEMBER

24

Christmas Eve

DECEMBER

25

Christmas Day

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Père Noël
(Father Christmas)

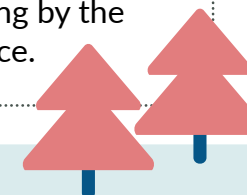


GIFT PLACEMENT

Gifts are placed under the Christmas tree or in stockings hung by the fireplace.

TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

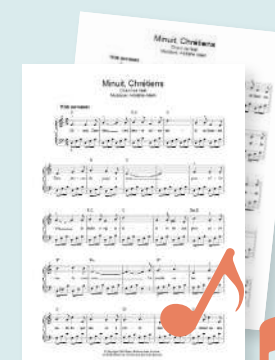
Children leave a glass of wine and some treats for *Père Noël*.



POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- Minuit, chrétiens (O Holy Night)
- Il Est Né, le Divin Enfant (He Is Born, the Divine Child)

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!



RECIPE

Add a touch of France to your Christmas celebrations with a Croquant recipe.

Italy

Italy is a very regional country because historically it was not a united nation but many little city states. Consequently, traditions vary greatly from region to region. What is common in the north of Italy is not the same in the south and vice versa.

One tradition that is common throughout the country is the use of the nativity scene or *presepio*. The nativity scene is a central Christmas decoration in Italy. Families create elaborate *presepi* with figurines depicting the Holy Family, shepherds, angels, and various village characters. These nativity scenes are displayed in homes, churches, and public places, and they can be quite intricate and detailed. There is an entire street in the city of Naples with shops dedicated to these collectibles and there's even a museum devoted to these elaborate scenes. Learn more about these *presepi* on the InquisiKids podcast—scan the QR code below.

In southern Italy and Sicily, people carry statues of the Holy Family through the streets, accompanied by music, and singing.

Panettone and *Pandoro* are two traditional Italian Christmas cakes. *Panettone* is a sweet, fruit-filled bread, while *Pandoro* is a golden, star-shaped cake dusted with powdered sugar. Both are enjoyed during the holiday season and are often given as hostess gifts. Both can be found in specialty stores in the US.

Italy has a unique gift-bringer called *La Befana*. She is an old woman who leaves gifts for children on the eve of the Epiphany (January 5). *Babbo Natale* (Father Christmas) is the most universally recognized gift-bringer in Italy. However, the gift-bringer varies by region. Scan the QR code to learn more about each gift-bringer by region.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Italian Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more!



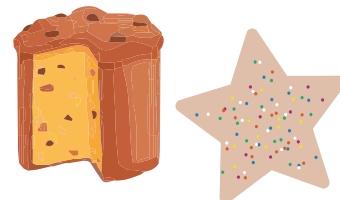
TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

Many families have a *presepio* (manger scene) in their homes. An old custom is the Christmas letter: children write a letter to their parents to tell them how much they love them. Then they tuck the letter underneath their father's plate to be read during the traditional Christmas lunch.



CHRISTMAS TREATS

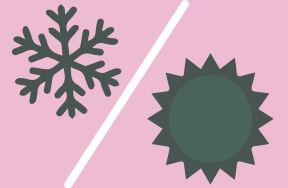
Panettone (dome-shaped fruitcake), *Pandoro* (star-shaped, sweet yeast bread dusted with powdered sugar), and *Befanini* (shortbread cookie for Epiphany).



WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



It is cold and possibly snowy in the far north, chilly and wet in the central region, and warm in the southern region.

DECEMBER

5

San Nicolo'

DECEMBER

13

Santa Lucia

DECEMBER

25

Babbo Natale
(Christmas Day)

JANUARY

5

La Befana Day

JANUARY

6

L'epifania
(Epiphany)

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

There are 5 different gift bearers depending on the region. *San Nicolo'* (St Nicholas), *Santa Lucia* (St. Lucy), *Gesu' Bambino* (baby Jesus), *Babbo Natale* (Father Christmas), and *La Befana*.

GIFT PLACEMENT

San Nicolo leaves candy or coal for children, *St. Lucia* rewards good kids with food, *Gesu' Bambino* gives gifts in the living room, *Babbo Natale* places presents under the tree, and *La Befana* fills stockings with gifts.

TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

Children leave a plate of food for *St Lucia* and hay, milk, or carrots for her donkey. They leave wine and sweets for *Babbo Natale*.



GREETING

Buon Natale!

RECIPE

Make Befanini cookies for Epiphany (January 6) with this recipe.



POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- Tu Scendi dalle Stelle
- Astro del Ciel (silent night)
- Venite Fedeli (Oh Come all ye faithful)

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!

Spain

Although Spain has a diversity of Christmas traditions that vary from one region to another, some well-known customs and celebrations are widely observed across the country. One of the most prominent Christmas traditions in Spain is celebrating *Nochebuena* (Christmas Eve) over an elaborate meal of roast lamb, seafood, and a variety of traditional sweets. Many Spaniards also attend Midnight Mass.

On December 22nd, Spain holds one of the oldest, world-famous Christmas lotteries, known as *El Gordo* (The Fat One). The draw is a major event in Spain with people gathering to watch the live broadcast.

Elaborate Nativity scenes, called *belenes*, often include not only the Holy Family but also extensive representations of local life, featuring figurines of everyday people, animals, and miniature landscapes.

January 6th, known as *Día de los Reyes* (Three Kings' Day, known elsewhere as Epiphany), is a significant day for gift-giving in Spain. According to tradition, the Three Wise Men bring gifts to children. Parades that feature the Three Wise Men are held across the country, and children leave their shoes out on the night of January 5th to receive gifts.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Spanish Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more!



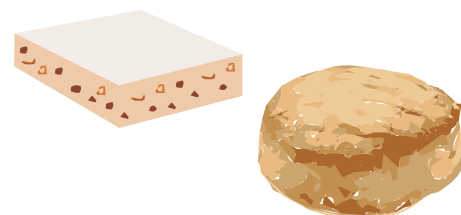
TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

Nativity scenes, known as *Belén* in Spanish, are displayed in homes and public places.



CHRISTMAS TREATS

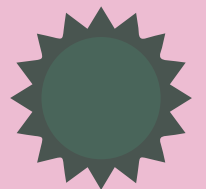
Turrón (nougat made with almonds and honey)
Mantecados (crumbly shortbread cookies).



WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



Generally temperatures are mild. It is warmer in the southern region than the north.

GREETING

Feliz Navidad!

DECEMBER

24

Nochebuena
(Christmas Eve)

DECEMBER

25

Christmas Day

JANUARY

6

Día de los Reyes
(Three Kings' Day)

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Los Tres Reyes Magos (the Three Wise Men) or *Papá Noel* bring gifts for children.



GIFT PLACEMENT

Gifts are left either under the Christmas tree or near children's shoes.



TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

Children leave water, hay, and snacks for the kings' camels, and a glass of sherry and treats for The Three Kings.

POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- Noche de Paz (Silent Night)
- Campana Sobre Campana (Bell on Bell)

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!



Mexico

In Mexico, the main celebration is called *Las Posadas*. This celebration that lasts 9 nights begins on December 16th and culminates on the 24th. *Posada* is the word for “inn,” and it reenacts Mary and Joseph’s search for a place of lodging in Bethlehem. Each night, friends gather for a procession. A man plays the part of Joseph, and a woman plays the part of Mary. The procession stops at someone’s house where they ask if there is room for them. They ask by singing traditional songs known as *villancicos*. The people in the homes play the role of innkeepers, denying them shelter until finally allowing them in. They celebrate the evening with food. At the last house, on Christmas Eve, Joseph is told there is only room in the stable where a nativity is set up. Traditional food such as *tamales*, *buñuelos*, and hot *ponche* (a warm fruit punch) are served.

Piñatas are a popular part of Mexican Christmas traditions, especially during *Las Posadas* as well as at other holiday celebrations. Children take turns trying to break open the colorful *piñatas* filled with candy and small toys.

Like other countries, Mexican families display *nacimientos* (nativity scenes), count down using an Advent Calendar, and celebrate Christmas Eve (*Nochebuena*) with a festive meal. They also attend *la Misa de Gallo* (Midnight Mass). They decorate Christmas trees and go caroling (*Villancicos*).

In the town of Oaxaca, there is a unique tradition called *la Noche de Rábanos* (Night of the Radishes) on December 23rd. Residents carve figures out of radishes and other vegetables, creating elaborate scenes and displays that attract visitors from all over. Learn more about this tradition on the InquisiKids podcast—scan the QR code below.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Mexican Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more!



TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

Poinsettias are Christmas flowers that are named for Joel Poinsett, the first US Ambassador to Mexico. The plant reminds Mexicans of the story of a poor boy who was going to church to visit baby Jesus. He had nothing to bring as a gift, but on the way, he saw some plants on the side of the road. When he picked them something special happened: the top leaves changed to bright red.



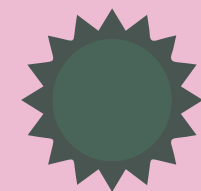
CHRISTMAS TREATS

Buñuelos (deep-fried dough drizzled with syrup or honey), *Polvorones* (shortbread cookies dusted in powdered sugar), and *Tamales* (traditional Christmas dish made with masa and various fillings, both sweet and savory).

WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



It is mild to warm especially along the coast, but the inland areas are cooler at night.

GREETING

Feliz Navidad!

DECEMBER

16

Las Posadas begins

DECEMBER

23

Noche de Rabanos
(Night of the Radishes)

DECEMBER

24

Noche Buena
(Christmas Eve)
Las Posadas ends

JANUARY

6

Día de Reyes
(Three Kings' Day)

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Los Tres Reyes Magos
(the Three Wise Men)
leave gifts for children.



GIFT PLACEMENT

The kings leave gifts either under the Christmas tree or near children's shoes.

TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

Hay or grass and water are left out for the camels, and *tamales* or *pan dulce* (sweet bread) are left for the kings.

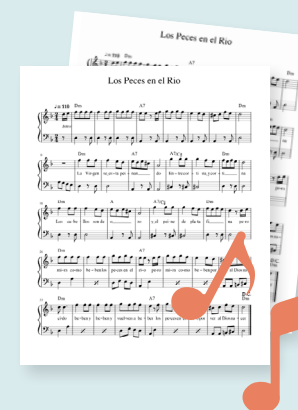
CRAFT / RECIPE

Add a touch of Mexico to your Christmas celebrations with a Poinsettia pin craft and a *Polvorones* (Mexican wedding cookies) recipe.

POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- Los Peces en el Río
(The Fish in the River)
- Noche de Paz (Silent Night)

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!



Argentina

Christmas traditions in Argentina are a blend of customs influenced by European traditions and the country's unique cultural identity. Traditions from European influence include the celebration of *Nochebuena* and *la Misa de Gallo* (Christmas Eve and Midnight Mass), Christmas trees are also decorated even though these trees are not native to Argentina. Nativity scenes (*presebres*), Christmas lights, and singing Christmas carols are also popular traditions.

Some regional traditions, especially in the south, include having a *parrillada* or barbecue on Christmas Eve. (Argentina is in the southern hemisphere so it's their summer!) *Ponche Navideño* is a traditional Argentine Christmas punch made with fruit and spices. It is often served as a warm, comforting drink during the holiday season. Scan the QR code below for a recipe!

Like Boxing Day in the UK, *Día de San Esteban* (St. Stephen's Day) is celebrated on December 26th with gatherings, meals, and family time.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Argentine Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more!



TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

Christmas caroling is a popular tradition in Argentina, with people singing villancicos (carols) in the streets and door-to-door.



CHRISTMAS TREATS

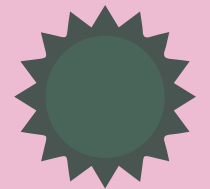
Panettone (Similar to Italy, this sweet yeast bread is also popular in Argentina), *Turrón* (Spanish-style nougat is also enjoyed in Argentina during the holidays), and *Mantecados de Anís* (Spanish anise-flavored shortbread cookies).



WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



A country in the southern hemisphere, so it is warm to hot in the southern regions and very hot in the northern regions.

GREETING

Feliz Navidad!

DECEMBER

24

Nochebuena
(Christmas Eve)

DECEMBER

25

Christmas Day

DECEMBER

26

Día de San Esteban
(St. Stephen's Day)

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Los Tres Reyes Magos
(the Three Wise Men)
or *Papa Noel*



RECIPE

Add a touch of Argentina to your Christmas celebrations with a *Ponche Navideño* recipe.

GIFT PLACEMENT

Children find gifts either under the Christmas tree or near their shoes.

TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

Families leave hay or grass for the camels and water and snacks for the kings.



POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- Noche de Paz (Silent Night)
- Los Peces en el Río (The Fish in the River)

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!



Israel

Because the major religions in Israel are Judaism and Islam, Christmas is celebrated by a small percentage of the population. The Christian community, which is made up of predominantly Arab Christians, is roughly about 2% of the country's population. Although Christmas is not a public holiday in Israel, some Christmas traditions are observed by Christians as well as some secular Israelis.

Many Christians in Israel attend Christmas Eve and Christmas Day church services to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Two of the best-known churches for Christmas celebrations include the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. (Search YouTube for some fascinating virtual tours!)

While Santa Claus (Baba Noël) is known and recognized, the emphasis of Christmas tends to be more on religious observances, including attending church services and participating in nativity scenes. Gift-giving on Christmas is not as widespread as in other countries, but it can still occur in some Christian households.

Since Bethlehem is the birthplace of Jesus, many Christians come from around the world to participate in the festivities and visit the Church of the Nativity. The town is crowded with processions by a variety of different denominations—including Greek Orthodox, Armenian, Catholic, Protestant, and Ethiopian—that pass through Manger Square or the Shephard's Fields. Some of these denominations do not celebrate Christmas on December 24 or 25. Rather, they observe the day on January 6 or 7.

Nazareth also comes alive during this time with processions and parades, a Christmas market, lighting of the Christmas tree, and services in the Basilica of the Annunciation.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more from Israel!



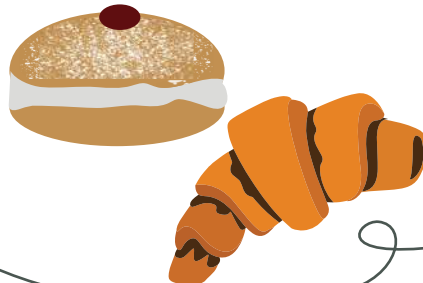
TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS


In predominantly Christian areas, people decorate, display nativity scenes and attend Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.




CHRISTMAS TREATS

Sufganiyot (deep-fried jelly-filled doughnuts) and *Rugelach* (rolled pastry filled with jam, nuts, or chocolate).



WHERE IN THE WORLD... 



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



It is mild and cool, with some rainfall possible.

GREETING

Chag Molad Sameach!

DECEMBER	JANUARY	JANUARY
25	6	7
Christmas Day (Protestant & Catholic)	Christmas Day (Armenian)	Christmas Day (Ethiopian, Greek Orthodox)

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER
Baba Noël (Santa Claus)

GIFT PLACEMENT
Gifts are exchanged among friends and family and are placed under the tree or near the Nativity Scene.

TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER
No specific treats

RECIPE

Add a touch of Israel to your Christmas celebrations with a *Rugelach* recipe.

POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- O Little Town of Bethlehem
- Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!



32 CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD 33

Egypt

Christmas is a religious holiday in Egypt, is celebrated by the Coptic Orthodox Church, and is a time of cultural celebration and family gatherings. The Coptic Orthodox Church, an ancient Christian denomination with its roots in Egypt, traces its origins to the early days of Christianity in Egypt, with traditions dating back to the first century AD. It is believed that St. Mark the Evangelist, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus, brought Christianity to Egypt and is considered the founder of the Coptic Church. (The term "Coptic" is derived from the Greek word "Aigypptos," which means Egypt.)

The Coptic Church follows the Julian calendar and thus celebrates Christmas on January 7th. Churches are beautifully decorated for the occasion, and the liturgy includes prayers, hymns, and scripture readings. Leading up to Christmas, many Coptic Orthodox Christians observe a 43-day period of fasting known as the Advent Fast or the Nativity Fast. It begins on November 25th and ends on January 6th, culminating in the Christmas celebration.

While the exchange of gifts is not as common as in some Western countries, some Egyptian Christian families do exchange gifts. In recent years, Santa Claus and the concept of gift-giving have become more popular, especially in urban areas. *Baba Noël* climbs through the window to leave presents for the children in exchange for *Kahk el Eid* (traditional sweets).

However, Coptic Christians don't follow this tradition. Instead of gift-giving, Coptic Christian families will give money to the younger members of the family on Christmas Eve. This popular tradition is done on most other Egyptian holidays too. On the Coptic Christmas Day, friends and family gather in homes, giving out *Kahk* as gifts. For many Christians in Egypt, Christmas morning usually means a cup of tea with a plate of *Kahk el Eid*.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Egyptian Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more!



TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

Christmas is celebrated on January 7th by Coptic Christians, and it is marked by church services, the exchange of gifts, and feasting on *fatta*, a traditional Egyptian Christmas dish made with bread soaked in a seasoned, slow-cooked meat broth.



CHRISTMAS TREATS

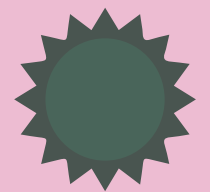
Kahk (butter cookie covered in powdered sugar), *Basma* (shredded phyllo dough, nuts, and syrup dessert), and *Ghryba* (shortbread).



WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



Temperatures are traditionally mild and dry.

GREETING

Eid Milad Majid!

NOVEMBER

25

Advent Fast begins

JANUARY

6

Christmas Eve
Advent Fast ends

JANUARY

7

Christmas Day
(Coptic Christians)

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Baba Noël



GIFT PLACEMENT

Gifts are exchanged among friends and family but are not placed in a specific location.

TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

Kahk el Eid are left for *Baba Noël*



RECIPES

Add a touch of Egypt to your Christmas celebrations with *Ghryba* and *Kahk el Eid* recipes.

POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- Joy to the World
- O Holy Night

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!



Lebanon

Lebanon has a significant Christian population, and Christmas is an important holiday in this country. However, it has a diverse religious population, so people celebrate Christmas with a mix of traditions. While gift-giving is practiced in many Lebanese households, the emphasis on gift-bringers like Santa Claus varies. In some areas with Christian majorities, children may expect gifts from *Santa Claus* or *Baba Noël*, while in others, the focus may be more on family gatherings, Midnight Mass, and traditional festive meals.

Nativity scenes and Christmas markets are popular, and Christmas lights and decorations are used to decorate homes and balconies. Christmas is a time for charitable activities in Lebanon where organizations and individuals engage in acts of kindness and giving to help those in need during the holiday season.

Lebanese families often gather for a special Christmas Eve dinner, which may include traditional dishes like roast lamb, *kibbeh* (a type of meat pie), stuffed grape leaves, and a variety of sweets. Due to its relationship with France, some families enjoy a *bûche de Noël* for dessert.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Lebanese Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more!



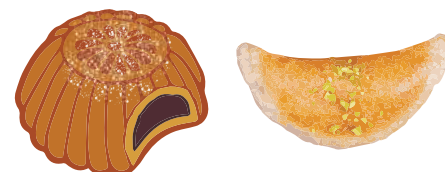
TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

Christmas is celebrated on January 7th in the Lebanese Orthodox Church, with church services and festive gatherings. *Mezze*: A variety of small dishes, including stuffed grape leaves and kebabs, are often served during Christmas feasts.



CHRISTMAS TREATS

Ma'amoul (shortbread-like cookies filled with dates, nuts, or figs, shaped with decorative molds), *Atayef* (small, folded pancakes stuffed with sweet cheese or nuts and then fried or baked).



WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



Traditionally cool, and occasionally rainy.

GREETING

Eid Milad Majid!

JANUARY

7

Christmas Day

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Emphasis on gift-bringers like Santa Claus varies.



GIFT PLACEMENT

Gifts are exchanged among friends and family and are placed under the Christmas tree.

TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

No traditional treats are given.



POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- Jingle Bells
- Noël Blanc

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!



Russia

Because of the anti-religious policies of the Communist party, Christmas was practically eradicated in Russia for most of the 20th century. New Year's Eve and New Year's Day became the most important Russian holiday, although Christmas was reintroduced as a holiday in the 1990s following the dissolution of the USSR.

Adherents to the Russian Orthodox Church follow the Julian calendar rather than the Gregorian, so they celebrate Christmas on January 7th. The centerpiece of Russian Christmas celebrations is the attendance of the Midnight Mass or Vigil on the night of January 6th. The service includes special prayers, hymns, and the symbolic blessing of water. Following the service, families gather in homes to share a special Christmas Eve dinner known as the Holy Supper. This meal typically consists of 12 meatless dishes, symbolizing the 12 apostles. It includes items like mushrooms, pickled vegetables, dried fruits, and a special bread called *kulich*, served with honey.

Because the major winter holiday is related to New Year's Eve, there are two characters associated with Russian winter folklore: *Ded Moroz* (Father Frost) and *Snegurochka* (Snow Maiden). *Ded* brings gifts to children on New Year's Eve rather than Christmas. The arrival of the New Year is marked by fireworks, parties, and festive gatherings. For many Russians, New Year's is a time of family togetherness and gift-giving.

In a country as large as Russia, it's understandable that Christmas celebrations can vary significantly by region and individual preferences. In some rural areas and more traditional households, Christmas may be celebrated with a greater emphasis on religious observance, while in urban centers, it may be more secular and similar to Western-style Christmas celebrations.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Russian Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more!



TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

Christmas is a significant religious holiday for Russian Orthodox Christians, who make up a substantial portion of the population. They participate in Midnight Mass or Vigil on the night of January 6th. However, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day are the primary focus of the winter holiday season, especially for secular Russians. It is marked by fireworks, parties, and gift-giving.



CHRISTMAS TREATS

Kolyadki (pastries filled with cheese and poppy seeds), *Pryaniki* (spiced gingerbread-like cookies, filled with jam or sweetened condensed milk).

WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



It is very cold with significant snowfall probable.

GREETING

S Rozhdestvom!

New Year's Eve is a more prominent holiday than Christmas.

DECEMBER

31

New Year's Eve

JANUARY

7

Christmas Day
(Russian Orthodox Church)

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Ded Moroz (Grandfather Frost) and his granddaughter *Snegurochka* (Snow Maiden)

GIFT PLACEMENT

Snegurochka rides a sleigh pulled by 3 horses to deliver gifts, placing them under the New Year tree.

TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

A feast of cookies, chocolates, and a shot of vodka is left for Grandfather Frost and the Snow Maiden.



POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- В лесу родилась ёлочка (In the Forest, There Was a Little Christmas Tree)
- По всей земле (All Over the Earth)

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!

India

Only 2% of India is Christian but 25% of the State of Goa is. Consequently, this coastal state in southwestern India has a unique blend of Indian and Portuguese influences as a result of its colonial history. This fusion of cultures has resulted in some distinctive Christmas traditions. Midnight Mass, nativity scenes, and Christmas carols are popular practices. Goans take immense pride in creating intricate and beautifully detailed cribs, or nativity scenes. Many families and communities organize crib-making competitions, where they showcase their artistic skills and creativity.

While the figure of Santa Claus is not as prominent in Goa as in some other parts of the world, some children receive gifts from Santa Claus, who is known as *Papa Noel* or *Bom Vavaddo* in Konkani.

Traditional Goan folk dances, such as the *Dekhnni* and the *Corridinho*, are performed at Christmas gatherings. These dances are characterized by colorful costumes and lively music.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Indian Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more!



TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

In coastal areas of Goa, beachside celebrations are common. People gather on the beaches to enjoy music, dance, and fireworks.



CHRISTMAS TREATS

Kulkuls (traditional Goan Christmas sweet that is deep-fried and coated in sugar), *Kuswar* (intricately crafted snacks and treat platter including a variety of items).



WHERE IN THE WORLD...



GREETING

Meri Krismas! (Hindi)

DECEMBER

25

Celebration Day

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Santa Claus is called Christmas Baba, Christmas Taathaa or Natal Bua in different parts of the country.

GIFT PLACEMENT

Santa leaves gifts for children in stockings or shoes by the Christmas tree or near the door.

TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

Milk and cookies are left for Santa but mostly in urban areas with the influence of Western-style traditions.



POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
- Silent Night

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!

Iceland

The Yule Lads (*Jólasveinar*) are 13 mischievous characters thought to be the sons of two mythical trolls. Each figure has his own distinct personality and habits. Beginning on December 12th, children place a shoe in the window and each night a different Yule Lad arrives to leave small gifts or play pranks.

Because it is so dark at this time of year, light plays a big part in the Christmas season. Advent candles are lit. Christmas trees, homes, and streets are decorated with lights. On December 23rd, Icelanders light bonfires (*Jólasbrenna*) across the country, to symbolize the victory of light over the darkness—a tradition that dates back to ancient times.

Another delightful tradition is *Jólabókaflóð* (Christmas Book Flood) where people exchange books as gifts on Christmas Eve and spend the evening reading in a cozy atmosphere complete with hot chocolate and candlelight. Because of this tradition, many authors release their latest works at this time of year and many books are published in the weeks that lead up to Christmas. The Christmas season is a time for reading, storytelling, and sharing stories of folklore and myths, both ancient and modern.

Christmas Eve (*Jóladagur*) is the primary day of celebration in Iceland. Families gather for a festive meal that often includes traditional dishes such as *hangikjöt* (smoked lamb), fermented shark (*hákarl*), and a variety of sweet treats. After dinner, many people attend Midnight Mass or participate in church services.

Dive deeper into these Icelandic Christmas customs when you tune into the InquisiKids podcast by scanning the QR code below.

EXPLORE MORE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS
Scan here to download Christmas crafts, recipes, music, and more from Iceland!



TRADITIONS & SYMBOLS

Neighborhoods and towns decorate their streets, buildings, and trees with colorful lights, especially the capital city, Reykjavik. This practice is called *Jólaljós* (Christmas Lights).



CHRISTMAS TREATS

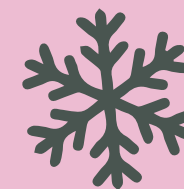
Laufabrauð (thin, decorative, deep-fried flatbread adorned with intricate patterns), *Ástarpungar* "Love balls" (deep-fried doughnuts with a hint of cardamom), and *Jolasmakokur* (traditional Christmas cookie).



WHERE IN THE WORLD...



CHRISTMAS WEATHER



This country is so far north that it is cold, snowy, and dark at this time of year.

GREETING

Gleðileg jól!

DECEMBER

24

Jóladagur
(Christmas Eve)

Beginning December 12, Yule Lad visit each night, leaving small gifts during the 13 nights leading up to Christmas, then gifts are exchanged on December 24.

GIFT TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS

GIFT BRINGER

Jólasveinar
(13 Yule Lads)



GIFT PLACEMENT

The Lads leave gifts in shoes, but gifts that are exchanged on December 24 are placed under the Christmas tree or left by the window.

TREATS FOR THE GIFT BRINGER

The Yule Lads do not require offerings or snacks so the children typically don't leave anything for them.



CRAFT

Add a touch of Iceland to your Christmas celebrations with a snowflake craft.

POPULAR CHRISTMAS MUSIC

- Himna smiður (Builder of the Skies)
- Að koma í jól (Coming for Christmas)

Scan the QR code to download a Christmas Playlist!



Christmas Calendar

Congratulations on completing your journey through the global tapestry of Christmas. From traditional festivities to unique customs, we trust this study adds rich diversity of this joyous holiday to your family celebrations. To recap what you've read in this PDF, here you'll find a comprehensive list of Christmas dates celebrated across the globe.

NOVEMBER						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 St. Martin's Day	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 Coptic Advent Fast begins	26	27	28
29	30					

DECEMBER						
1	2	3	4	5	6 St. Nicholas Day	7
8	9	10	11	12	13 St. Lucia Day	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23 Little Christmas Eve	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26 Boxing Day, St. Stephen's Day	27	28
29	30	31 New Year's Eve				

JANUARY						
1 New Year's Day	2	3	4	5	6 Epiphany, Día de Reyes Coptic Christmas Eve Advent Fast ends	7 Celebration of Christmas by Coptic Christians
8	9	10	11	12	13 St. Knuts Day	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Bibliography

Embrace the diverse wonder of Christmas worldwide with the following books.
Mix-and-match and you'll have additional books to enjoy as Readers or, even better,
Read-Alouds, making your December that much more connected and meaningful.

Visit [sonlight.com/christmas-books](https://www.sonlight.com/christmas-books) for even more delightful Christmas reads.

A World of Cookies for Santa: Follow Santa's Tasty Trip Around the World by M.E. Furman, illustrated by Susan Gal. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 2017. <https://amzn.to/3McME1n>

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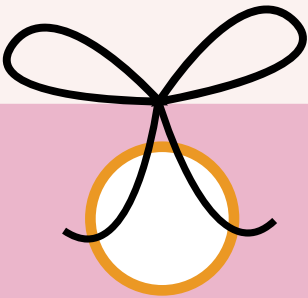
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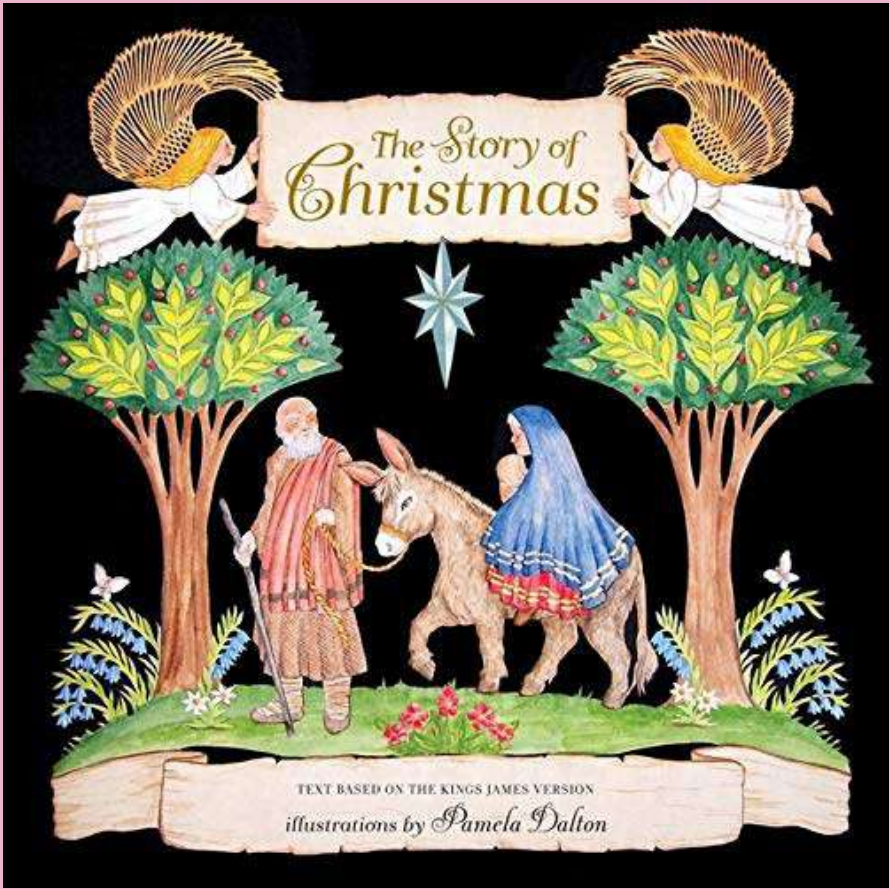
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THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS

by: Pamela Dalton

<https://www.sonlight.com/the-story-of-christmas>



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