

Christmas Around the World





Christmas



Christmas

History
Traditions
Today

Christmas

- Celebrates the birth of Jesus, Savior to Christians
- Gifts are exchanged partly because the Bible tells of the wise men (magi) bringing gifts to the Christ-child as they came to worship Him

Christmas

- Nativity scene comes from the Bible, especially in the books of Matthew and Luke

Christmas

- Catholic Church set December 25th as the celebration date to combine with the Roman holiday of the winter solstice (when sun has no apparent North or South movement) in 336 A.D.

Turkey

- Santa Claus comes from a real person in 325 A.D. – Saint Nicholas in Turkey*
 - Reputation for kindness and generosity
 - Legends of financial miracles on behalf of the poor and unhappy

* Mostly Christian nation at this time

Turkey

- Santa's red and white suit came from the traditional Bishop's robes that Saint Nicholas would have worn

Turkey

- Stockings were originally hung, hoping that Saint Nicholas would bring gold coins (as legend says he did for three poor girls that needed money to get married)
- Most were filled with small gifts, especially fruit and nuts

Germany

- Christmas tree is a German tradition, dating to about 700 A.D.
- “Yule” log was a large foundational log placed in the fireplace
 - Name comes from an associated celebratory cry heard about Christmastime because the nights were becoming shorter

Holland

- Dutch name for Nicholas was Sinterklaas, which became Santa Claus
- Gifts are exchanged on Christmas day partly because of the Dutch Santa Claus legends

Scandinavia

- Legends from folktales told of a magician that punished naughty children and rewarded good children with presents

Scandinavia

- Mistletoe was used as a Christmas decoration for years, but was associated with pagan rituals
 - A goddess of love – probably where kissing under the mistletoe comes from
- Holly replaced it, where the thorns remind of Christ's crown on the cross and the red berries of His shed blood

Italy

- Naughty children in Italy were the first to get a lump of coal in the stocking

England

- Songs or “carols” [songs] were sung by small choirs for the pleasure of those that happened to walk by
- Christmas cards started in London in 1843

France

- Singing “carols” [songs] accompanied by a group dance
- Noel in French is translated Christmas

Greece

- Christmas is abbreviated Xmas because the word for Christ in Greek is Xristos

Israel

- Christmas eve is celebrated because the Jewish tradition is that the new day starts at sundown [therefore Christmas eve is actually the start of Christmas day]
- Some Jews (by heritage) are also Christians (by faith)

Mexico

Nochebuena, the Mexican name of the flower English-speakers call poinsettia, was discovered in Taxco and the valleys surrounding Cuernavaca. Known by the Aztecs in their native Nahuatl language as cuetlaxochitl, it is believed that they brought the plant from the tropical climate of Cuernavaca to their Aztec highlands for cultivation in special nurseries. Prized in the prehispanic era for the curative properties of the milk that dripped from the leaves, stems and flowers when cut, the pigment from the red leaves was also used to dye cotton fibers.

Epcot Center in Florida

- Each country pavilion has a section dedicated to the history and traditions of Christmas (during the Christmas season)

Christmas in America

- Pilgrims did not celebrate Christmas
- Immigrants brought their Christmas traditions, especially in the 1700s and early 1800s
- Christmas as a national celebration gathered momentum during the mid-1800s

Christmas

- U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, J.R. Poinsett, imported (what became) the poinsettia for Christmas in 1828

Christmas in America

- Santa's sleigh, reindeer, etc. came from 2 published works in 1822 and 1863-1886
 - 1822 – “The Night Before Christmas”
 - 1863-1886 – magazine published pictures of Santa's workshop, Santa reading letters, Santa checking his list, etc.

Christmas in America

- Started to become popular in 1860s, and by 1874 Macy's in New York developed Christmas theme window displays
- Tree decorations became common in 1880 when Woolworth's began to sell manufactured ornaments

Christmas

- Outdoor White House tree tradition started in 1923 with President Coolidge

Christmas in America

- Two most popular secular songs at Christmas are:
 - Bing Crosby's "White Christmas" (1942)
 - Gene Autry's "Rudolf the Red-nosed Reindeer" (1949)
 - Based upon the Montgomery Wards booklet of the same name given away free in 1939 – written by a father attempting to cheer up a sad daughter grieving over a dying mother

Christmas

- There's something to celebrate for everybody:
 - Great traditions incorporating aspects from many countries
 - Significant religious events