

English and american traditions

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Christmas

- Every country has its own customs and traditions. English people are proud of their traditions and they keep them up.
- It is difficult to speak about England without speaking about its holidays. Christmas Day is among them.
- All English people celebrate Christmas (or X-mas) on the 25th of December.
- Christmas! What kind of holiday is it? It is the yearly celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. It falls on December 25 by the Catholic Church and on the 7th of January by the Orthodox Church. This holiday means the beginning of the new year and the new life. English people celebrate this holiday with the evergreen tree — Christmas tree. Children put along sock, called a Christmas stocking at the end of their beds and Santa Claus comes down the chimney to bring them presents.
- Christmas Day is the greatest holiday in England. It is interesting to visit the shops before this holiday. There are a lot of nice Christmas cards and presents there. English people like this holiday very much and prepare for it beforehand. They buy presents for each other, try to send Christmas cards for their relatives and friends.
- It is interesting to visit London during this holiday. There is a Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square. We can see many lights, toys and sweets all over this tree. Everywhere you can see slogans "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year".
- The traditional English dinner on Christmas is turkey and pudding.

Christmas



St. Valentine's Day

- St. Valentine's Day has its origins in the Roman festival of Lupercalia, observed on February 15. Lupercalia celebrated the coming of spring in the Roman calendar (February was observed later in the year than it is today). Lupercalia was associated with the Roman gods Lupercus and Faunus. Lupercus watched over shepherds and their flocks and the festival of Lupercalia became a celebration intended to ensure the fertility of flocks, fields and people.
- The celebration of Lupercalia spread as the Roman Empire grew. When the Romans conquered France, the first Valentine-like cards were used, in which women had written their names (possibly accompanied by love notes) that later could be used in a lottery to search someone favours.
- From its association with Lupercalia, St. Valentine's Day associates with love and romance. This led Valentine's enthusiasts to appoint the Roman god Cupid as a patron of Valentine's Day. Cupid is also known as Amour or Eros in Greek mythology. The ancient Greeks believed Eros was the force of «love» that is why Eros seems to have been responsible for impregnating a number of goddesses and mortals.
- There are several legends about St. Valentine's Day. Each legend stems from real-life martyr known as Valentines who lived in the time of Roman Empire. It is unsure who St. Valentine was, but there are several possible candidates. One of these Valentines is believed to have been a Roman priest and physician. He was put into prison by roman authorities for his teachings and was beheaded on February 14 in the third century A. D. According to the legend he performed a miracle -he cured the blindness of his jailer's daughter. Before the execution, he wrote her a letter signed «From Your Valentine» Another legend says that the same Valentine wrote to children and friends who loved him from the jail. After his death this Valentine was buried in the Roman road Via Flaminia. Pope Julius I is said to have later built a basilica above his grave. One more Saint Valentine candidate, believed to be a bishop of Teni (a province in central Italy), was executed in Rome.
- According to another legend, Valentine was an Italian bishop who lived at about the same time. He was thrown into prison because he secretly married couples, contrary to the laws of the Roman Empire. The legend says that he was burnt at the stake.
- February 14 was also a Roman holiday. On this day, young men randomly chose the name of the girl to escort to the festival. The custom of choosing a sweetheart on this day became very popular in the medieval Europe. Later this custom spread to American colonies.
- Now, St. Valentine's Day is the day of all sweethearts. On this day, people send presents or flowers to those whom they love. Most people send «valentines», greeting cards, named after St. Valentine's letters written in the jail. Valentines can be sentimental and romantic, or funny and friendly. Valentines can be anonymous. Valentines can be heart-shaped. People buy valentines or make them themselves.

St.Valentine's Day



Easter

- From Scotland to the Channel, Britain is full of customs and traditions. A lot of them have very long histories. Some are funny, some are strange- But they're all interesting and are all part of the British way of life.
- Easter is the time for holidays, festivals and time for giving chocolate Easter eggs, the day of parties, and above all a celebration that Jesus raised from the dead and lives forever. Eggs play an important part in Easter celebration; they are predominantly given to children. The eggs are either hollow or have a filling, and are usually covered with brightly colored silver paper.
- Easter is much more than ordinary holiday. It is the oldest and the most important Christian Festival, the celebration of the death and coming Jesus Christ to life again. For Christians, the dawn of Easter Sunday with its message of new life is the high point of the year.
- Easter is a feast that is not always held on the same date each year. Easter Day is celebrated on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox.
- This means that Easter can fall as early as March 22 or as late as April 25.
- Like most Christian festivals, Easter has its origins in pre-Christian times. Our ancestors believed that the sun died in winter and was born anew in spring. The arrival of spring was celebrated all over the world long before the religious meaning became associated with Easter. Today, Easter celebrates the rebirth of Christ.
- The word Easter is thought to have derived from the goddess Eostre, an Anglo-Saxon Goddess.
- Even though Easter is associated with spring here in England, it is not so in countries in the Southern Hemisphere. In these countries Easter falls near the end of autumn. However, through out the world Easter is felt to be a time of new life and new beginnings.

Easter



Thanksgiving

- Thanksgiving is a happy holiday on the fourth Thursday of each November. Americans of all religions celebrate this holiday with big dinners and family reunions. It is a time to remember all the good things in life and to be thankful. Turkey is a traditional Thanksgiving Day Food.
- This holiday was founded by the Pilgrims. They were a group of English settlers who came to Massachusetts in 1620. The Pilgrims came to America because they wanted religious freedom.
- Their first winter was difficult, and many of the Pilgrims died. But the following year, the corn harvest was good. And there was celebration for three days. That was the first Thanksgiving.
- Every Thanksgiving Macy's department store organizes a parade in New York City. In the parade there are balloons of popular cartoon characters, famous television stars, and bands from all over the United States.
- Each year, more than 55 million people watch this parade on television. Many other large American cities also have Thanksgiving Day parades.
- Watching college football games on television is also a typical Thanksgiving Day activity.

Thanksgiving

