

## WORLD HOLIDAYS

### What are Holidays?

**Holidays** are special days to help us remember or honor people and events. The earliest holy days were to honor sacred events. As other occasions and people were celebrated, holy days became holidays. Many countries have national holidays set by the government. Schools, banks, and government businesses close.

- **Christmas** - a religious holiday for Christians celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. It includes going to church, as well as Santa Claus, Christmas trees and gifts.



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white dresses with red sashes and a crown of lit candles serve Lucia buns to their families.



- **Easter** - a religious holiday for Christians celebrating their belief that Jesus rose from death. It includes going to church as well as Easter bunnies, Easter baskets, and decorating eggs.



- **Hanukkah** - a religious holiday for the Jewish faith. Families light one candle on a Menorah each night for 8 days to remember the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Children receive one gift each day for 8 days of Hanukkah.



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- **Yom Kippur** - a religious holiday for Jewish people celebrated ten days after Rosh Hashanah with fasting and prayer.
- **Ramadan** - a religious holiday for Muslims who must fast for a month. That means they only eat before sunrise and after the sunset. The month is marked with prayer and charity to the poor. They give gifts and have a feast on Eid-al-Fitr, "Festival of Breaking the Fast."
- **Mardi Gras** - began as a religious holiday for Christians. In French it means Fat Tuesday which is the day before Ash Wednesday. Christians receive ashes on their heads at the beginning of Lent, the season leading up to the death of Jesus. Mardi Gras is a day to celebrate with parades, feasts, and parties before the solemn sacrifices of Lent.

- **Kwanzaa** - started in Africa. It lasted 7 days to celebrate the harvest. Today it is also for African Americans to honor their ancestors and their culture.
- **New Year** - celebrated on January 1 to begin another year. Many people make resolutions to try to improve their lives in the new year. In many countries, the night before is a bigger celebration. They stay up late to see the clocks change to 12:00 and celebrate with cheering and parties.



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- **Diwali**, - Hindu "festival of Lights" lasts for 5 days. In India the people remember the homecoming of Lord Rama after 14 years in exile.
- **Victoria Day** in Canada - Monday before May 25. Also called Dominion Day to remember the day in 1867 when the provinces of Canada were united.

- **Canada Day** - July 1
- **Boxing Day** - December 26 - In Great Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, people give gifts to service workers.
- **Bastille Day** - July 14 - is Independence Day in France. On July 14, 1789 the royal prison, a symbol of cruelty and oppression, was destroyed by the people of Paris. It led to the end of the French Revolution and the beginning of a democratic government.
- **Cinco de Mayo** - Mexicans celebrate the victory over French rulers on May 5, 1862.



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- **St. Patrick's Day** - March 17 - began as a religious holiday in Ireland to remember a priest who brought Christianity to the Emerald Isle. Since 1737 it has been celebrated in America as a day to wear green, eat green food, and have a parade. Legend says if you catch a leprechaun, you can have his pot of gold.





- **Valentine's Day** - February 14 - began as a religious holiday in Europe to remember St. Valentine. Today it is a day to show your love and affection with special cards shaped like red hearts.



- **Mothers Day** is the second Sunday in May. It is a day to honor mothers.



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weather. If he does not, then Spring is right around the corner.

- **Presidents' Day** - celebrated the third Monday in February. Originally it was to honor George Washington on Feb. 22 and Abraham Lincoln on Feb. 12. Today it honors all American presidents. Schools, banks, and government offices close.
- **Memorial Day** - the last Monday in May - a day to honor all men and women who died in wars for the US. Ceremonies are held at the Grave of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington, VA. Originally celebrated on May 30, 1868, it was called Decoration Day when the graves of Union soldiers were decorated. Many communities have parades. Schools, banks, and government offices are closed.

- **Flag Day** - June 14 - a day to honor the American flag. June 14, 1777 is the day the first US flag was flown.



- **Independence Day** - July 4 - we remember the signing of the Declaration of Independence from England on July 4, 1776. It is a day for parades, picnics, and fireworks. Schools, banks, and government buildings are closed.
- **Labor Day** - the first Monday in September- remember and honor workers. Schools, banks, and other government offices close.



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- **Thanksgiving Day** - the fourth Thursday in November - we remember the first Thanksgiving when the Pilgrims thanked the Indians for helping them in the New World.

