

# Christmas around the world

## (Joyeux Noël) FRANCE

**Père Noël** is accompanied by **Père Fouettard**, who brings presents only to good kids. Children put their shoes by the fire place to get gifts. People have dinner at midnight on December 24 (le Réveillon) with a cake called La Bûche de Noël.



## (Vrolijk Kerstfeest) BELGIUM

Belgian children believe that **Saint Nicholas** brings them their presents. They also believe he rides a horse so they leave hay and carrots and water for the horse just outside the house on December 6.



## (Vrolijk kerstfeest) THE NETHERLANDS

**Sinterklaas** rides a horse. Dutch children leave their shoes out, filled with hay and sugar for his horse. In the morning they find their shoes filled with candy, nuts and gifts. When **Sinterklaas** appears to children, he takes the form of their father or a male relative.



## (Frohe Weihnachten) GERMANY

Children count the days until Christmas with an **Advent calendar**. They also write letters to **St. Nicholas** asking for presents (December 6). Christmas Eve is the most important time of the Christmas season for families. Some even say it is a magical night when animals can speak. The wonderful tradition of the Christmas tree, which started in Germany, is the heart of the celebration.



## (Glædelig Jul) DENMARK

Danish people celebrate Christmas Eve with a special rice pudding in which a single almond is hidden. Whoever finds the



almond will have good luck for the coming year.

**Julemanden** arrives in a sleigh drawn by reindeer and the sack over his back. He is assisted with his Yuletide chores by **Elves** called **Jul Nisse**, who live in attics.



## (God Jul) SWEDEN

Most people in Scandinavian countries honour **St. Lucia** on December 13. Traditionally, the eldest daughter in each family gets up early and wakes each of her family members, dressed in a long, white gown with a red ribbon and a crown made of twigs with nine lighted candles. **Jultomten**, visits houses in the afternoon on Christmas Eve.



## (С рождеством!) RUSSIA

Families decorate a New Year's tree and make Salad Olivier (diced meat, veggies and potatoes all slathered in Mayo). **Grandfather Frost** (Дед Мороз) delivers presents to good children, aided by The **Snow Maiden** (Снегурочка).



## (Buon Natale) ITALY

Italian people exchange gifts on January 6, when the **Wise Men** or **Magi** reached baby Jesus. Italy has **La Befana**, who brings gifts for good children and punishment for the bad ones. The nativity scene dates back to Saint Francis of Assisi.



## (Feliz Navidad) SPAIN

Spanish people celebrate **Nochebuena** (Christmas Eve), and families gather together to share a meal. Children leave their shoes filled with straw and barley for the camels of the **Wise Men** who visit them on January 6.



## (Merry Christmas) UK

The tradition of hanging stockings by the chimney began here because **Father Christmas** accidentally dropped some gold coins on his way down the chimney which got caught in a drying stocking. British children wait until the afternoon to open their gifts.



## (Merry Christmas) CANADA / U.S.A.

People decorate Christmas trees and hang their stockings by the fireplace because children believe that **Santa Claus** will fill them with gifts. People also exchange cards and gifts and go carolling.



## (Feliz Navidad) MEXICO

They celebrate Christmas for nine days with **Las Pastorelas**. People dress as Mary and Joseph walking from house to house asking if Mary may stay the night. Then, they are invited in for a party with food, songs, and a **Piñata** filled with all kinds of sweets.



**Boxing Day** is celebrated the day following Christmas, when small gifts were given to servants.

## (圣诞快乐) CHINA

Christian kids decorate their houses with beautiful paper lanterns. Many Chinese children also hang stockings and wait for Santa Claus or **Dun Che Lao Ren**, which means "Christmas Old Man."



## (メリークリスマス) JAPAN

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. Children must be good when this all-seeing gentleman is abroad.



## (Merry Christmas) AUSTRALIA

**Santa's** sleigh is pulled by eight white kangaroos. Christmas dinner is eaten outdoors and is followed by a visit to the beach or a game of cricket.





## CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD QUIZ

- 1) In Belgium, who comes on December 6?
- 2) Christians in China call Santa Claus Dun Che Lao Ren, which means...
- 3) The first nativity scene was displayed in 1223 by St. Francis of Assisi in which country?
- 4) In Sweden, the Christmas season begins on December 13, the feast day of St. Lucia. On this day it is traditional for the eldest daughter in every family to...
- 5) In which country is a Yule log-shaped cake called a "Bûche de Noël" traditionally served?
- 6) In China, what do people traditionally use to light their homes at Christmas?
- 7) Where do Santa's elves live in Denmark?
- 8) Who delivers presents in Russia?
- 9) In The Netherlands, what transport does Saint Nicholas traditionally use?
- 10) Which country originated the tradition of hanging stockings by the fireplace?
- 11) At Christmas Mexican parents allow children to break a .....
- 12) What animals pull Santa's sleigh in Australia?
- 13) Where was developed the modern tradition of the Christmas tree?
- 14) When and where is Boxing Day celebrated?
- 15) Where is Father Christmas known as Père Noël?
- 16) When do Spanish children receive their gifts?
- 17) In what country do children receive gifts from La Befana, a kindly old witch?
- 18) Who accompanies Père Noël with a book in which each child's behavior is recorded?