

## The United States

In the United States Christmas is celebrated in many ways due to the extremely diverse communities.

Many families celebrate the holiday as a non-religious celebration of family. Christmas day is typically spent with family. A few weeks before Christmas, the house is decorated with a tree and decorated with ornaments. Children write a letter to Santa Claus asking for gifts to be received on Christmas day. On Christmas Eve, the children put out a glass of milk and cookies and go to bed waiting for Santa Claus to come in and leave gifts under the Christmas tree.

On Christmas morning, the children open presents and then the family spends the day together.

Families that celebrate the religious origins of the holiday may go to church, decorate their home with a manger scene, and discuss their religious beliefs on this day.



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**1** In **Mexico**, the celebrations of Christmas vary greatly depending on the region. Many people celebrate very similar to how it is celebrated in The United States.

An interesting tradition that is frequently celebrated around Christmas is the Posada. This is an event organized by groups of friends or different organizations such as churches or schools. A house or various houses are designated to represent a Posada, which means inn or shelter in Spanish. The group will walk together to the “Inn” and sing a song asking for shelter, to represent how Mary and Joseph asked for shelter when Mary was pregnant with the Baby Jesus. Depending on the complexity of the planned event, various houses may say no and redirect the group to another house and the group continues singing until a house accepts the group (as planned in advance). Then they may have a dinner, drink typical ponche (a type of hot punch) and there is usually a piñata shaped like a star with candy inside for the kids.

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**2** In **Australia**, Christmas is celebrated similarly to how it is celebrated in the United States, except because they are in the Southern hemisphere, it is summer there during Christmas. Therefore they frequently have outdoor barbeques, go to the beach, or go camping instead of just staying inside. At the beach, they may have sandcastles that are Christmas-themed.

Also, when Santa goes to Australia, he changes to cooler clothes and uses 6 kangaroos instead of reindeer. They are called “white boomers.”

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**3** In **Trinidad and Tobago** in the Caribbean, many people celebrate by spending time with friends and family. They frequently share food and drinks with neighbors.

Most people also paint and make repairs to their houses during this time and buy new electrical appliances or furniture.

On Christmas Day, most people spend the day at home and eat an elaborate meal including apples, grapes, turkey, ham, bread, and ginger beer. They also make and share fruitcake that is made from fruit that was soaked in rum and cherry wine for weeks.

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**4** In some parts of **Germany**, children write to the Christkind (The Christ Child) to ask for presents. They decorate the envelopes to make them look more interesting and then leave the letters on the windowsill during December.

In Nurberg, a city in Germany, a young girl is chosen every year to participate in a parade as the Christkind. She wears a long white and gold dress, has long blond curly hair and wears a gold crown and sometimes wings like an angel.

From the beginning of December until Christmas, she has over 150 official duties including visiting hospitals, resting homes, and children’s nurseries.

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