

# Festive celebrations

## Christmas

**Joyeux Noël! Buon Natale! Feliz Navidad! Веселого Різдва! 圣诞快乐!**

**It's easy to get wrapped up (literally!) in your own country's Christmas traditions but, around the world, people have a 'Merry Christmas' in many different ways.**

### Did you know?

- Christmas is celebrated by over 2 billion people around the world!
- Many of the UK's favourite festive traditions actually started elsewhere - for example, Christmas tree decorating came from Germany, while leaving milk and biscuits for Santa is thought to have come from the Netherlands.
- Not everyone celebrates Christmas on 25th December. In Ethiopia and parts of Russia, Christmas falls in January, while in the Philippines, celebrations start in September and last until the new year!

### Cultures and customs

- In Iceland, children leave their shoes by the window for 13 nights before Christmas, waiting for the *Jólasveinar* (Yule Lads) - mischievous characters who leave gifts for good children... or rotten potatoes for naughty ones!
- In Ukraine, families decorate their Christmas trees with delicate spider webs made from tinsel, inspired by a folk tale about a poor widow.
- In Spain, from December 8th, children feed a decorated log, covered in a blanket, with treats. On Christmas Eve, they hit the log with a stick whilst singing "Caga tió!" (Poop, log!), remove the blanket and eat the treats!

Even the weather we associate with Christmas is different across the world. While people in the UK might imagine snowy days and cosy fires, families in Australia, South Africa and South America often celebrate with barbeques on the beach or picnics in the sunshine!

## Food, glorious food

- In France, families gather on Christmas Eve, *la veille de Noël*, for a long meal called *le Réveillon* which can last late into the night. It's tradition to have 13 different desserts, representing Jesus and his 12 apostles.
- In Italy, Christmas Eve, *la vigilia di Natale*, brings the Feast of the Seven Fishes, a seafood-filled meal.
- Unlike France or Italy, Japan doesn't have centuries-old Christmas recipes, as 25th December isn't a traditional Japanese holiday. Instead, Japanese Christmas food focuses on convenience and togetherness, with many families enjoying a fried chicken dinner, a custom that began after a 1970s advertising campaign by a fast food company.

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**#morethanwords**

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