

# **Guide To Christmas**

## ABOUT XMAS...

- Do you like Christmas? Why/Why Not?
- How do you celebrate Christmas in your country?
- Does your family have any traditions?
- What days are celebrated the most in your country?
- Who brings the presents in your country?



Christmas is the time of year when many families get together. It is a time for eating, drinking and relaxing. Families, who haven't seen each other in months, meet up and spend time together. So what are the typical traditions and foods that we have at Christmas?



# Decorations

Christmas is the time of year when people decorate their houses and local forms of government decorate the streets. So what are the typical Christmas decorations?



# The Nativity Scene



Mostly displayed in Churches and some public places. Not as popular as it used to be but still most Christians still put up a crib in their houses for Christmas.

Do you put up a crib in your house?

# Christmas Tree

The exact origin of the Christmas tree is not known but it is believed to come from Northern Europe and some of the first records of Christmas trees appear in the 15th Century.

Since then they have become common in homes and public places. Some families even have two, one in the garden, one in the house. People put all types of decoration on the trees, including lights, balls, tinsel and popcorn. Yes, popcorn! In the US some families make decoration for trees with popcorn.

What about you? Do you have a tree and do you decorate it?



# Other Decorations



Holly is hung in homes. It is a symbol for truth.



Mistletoe is also hung up in houses and traditionally over doorways. If you meet someone under the doorway, tradition says you must kiss



Christmas lights are hung around houses. Some people spend hundreds of Euros decorating the outside of their houses and in some places they hold an annual competition.

# Food



A huge part of Christmas is Food. It's a time to pile on the pounds! What food do you traditionally eat at Christmas?



# Typical Christmas Food & Desserts



Turkey & Ham but in the US some people prefer goose at Christmas.



Roast Potatoes and Gravy.



Vegetables such as carrots, turnips, broccoli and Brussels sprouts.



Cranberry Sauce is traditionally served with turkey and ham.



There are many different types of dessert but possibly the most famous is Christmas pudding. It can be made 4 months before Christmas. Normally served with custard or whipped cream.

# Christmas Lunch



Christmas Lunch is the most important meal over Christmas. Not only is the food important but so too is the decoration on the table. Most tables have a holiday themed centre-piece in the middle. Apart from cutlery and napkins, diners also have a Christmas cracker which is pulled during lunch. Inside each cracker there is a hat, a few jokes and a gift. The quality of the gift depends on the cracker but some people have paid up to €6m for just six crackers. The prizes in those crackers included yachts, cars and expensive jewellery.



# Music



One important Christmas tradition is Music. Whether it be traditional Christmas carols, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDNRZHymvw>, children's Christmas songs, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0byH9h1CIBY>, or the charts. Each year in the UK there is a lot of competition to be the Christmas No.1 in the charts. There are plenty of Christmas songs but the most famous has to be *White Christmas* by Bing Crosby <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJSUT8In114>

What about you? Are there any traditional carols or songs in your country?

# Television

With lunch over, presents opened, it is now time to put your feet up and watch some TV. Most programmes have a Christmas special but what really gets the ratings on Christmas Day are the Soap Operas!!!



Britain is home to some of the longest running soap operas in the world and at Christmas they usually contain major plotlines to keep people watching. Normally they last an hour and the shows are aired in two parts. Up to 16m can watch them on Christmas Day.

Do you have anything similar in your country?

# Television



Another important event on TV every Christmas is the Queen's speech which is aired at 3pm on Christmas Day. The broadcast normally lasts 5 minutes and in it the Queen reflects on the previous 12 months of the year. Although it is mainly watched by those in the UK, it is also viewed around the world.

An alternative to the Queen's speech is broadcast on Channel 4 at the same time. This has been happening since 1993. It normally is a message with humour but sometimes it can have a serious tone. People who have made the speech include Marge & Lisa Simpson and Edward Snowden.



# Literature



There are hundreds of stories and poems written about Christmas but probably the most famous is a Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens.

It is a story about a miserly old man, Ebenezer Scrooge, who is visited by three ghosts on Christmas Eve and his life is changed forever. There are countless films with the same title. If some wants to say their boss is tight, they call him 'A Scrooge'.



# Other Christmas Traditions



Christmas cards are a very important part of Christmas. It may seem silly but each year over €1bn worth of Christmas cards are bought and sold.



Secret Santa originally started in offices but with the recession more and more families have decided to do it to help keep costs down.

And what about you? What traditions to you have?

# Important Christmas Dates



There are 12 days of Christmas, so the song says, but not all the days are the same. So which are the important ones?

The weekend before Christmas is always the busiest for shops. Christmas Eve is the time for last minute shopping and midnight mass is traditional. Christmas Day is a day for family. In Ireland, bars and restaurants are closed.



# After Christmas Day



The 26th of December is Boxing Day in the UK and St. Stephen's Day in Ireland. It is a day when people go out and meet friends. It is also when the 'sales' officially start.

While the rest of the days are not public holidays, many people take annual leave so they can spend time with loved ones and visit friends.

New Year's Eve is a night normally spent with friends. Before, most people went out but since the millennium more and more people are having house parties.

New Year's Day normally sees people meeting with family for lunch to welcome in the New Year.



# Hogmanay



Possibly the biggest New Year's party in the UK is in Edinburgh on the 31st of December when Scottish people celebrate Hogmanay.

The city of Edinburgh have concerts and fireworks to say goodbye to the old year and hello to the new one. It has become tradition to sing the poem, Auld Lang Syne, by Robert Burns. The poem was originally in Scots but has been translated into many languages.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rId95N2teUc>

# Resolutions



So the New Year has started and so too has the final Christmas tradition: The New Year's resolution. Each year people promise to do different things in order to improve their lives. Very often they give up before February.

Do you have New Year's resolutions? If you were to make one, what would it be?



# Father Christmas

It is often said that Santa Claus wears red after a Coca Cola campaign changed his traditional green suit to red. This is not true! Coca-Cola's 1931 advert was the first major advertisement to appear in many countries and so many people attribute the change in colour to the beverage company. But Santa was wearing red long before that.



In saying that, Coca-Cola did help in changing the appearance of Santa into a much more appealing character. Santa had been depicted as an elf, an old man with a hunch and a priest. In 1931 Coca-Cola launched their famous campaign and since then, the jolly, plump St Nick that we have all come to know and love has been used on everything. So in a way they did change Santa Claus.



Also remember! He sees you when you are sleeping and knows when your awake. He is making a list and checking it twice and is going to find out who is naughty and nice. Boys and Girls. Santa Claus is coming to town.

Nollaig Shona!