

Christmas Celebrations Around the World

Christmas is a Christian holy day, which is celebrated on 25th December each year. It marks the birth of Jesus, who Christians believe is the Son of God. Some people go to church for midnight Mass on Christmas Eve (24th December). Christmas is celebrated in different and unique ways in many countries around the world. Many non-Christian countries also celebrate Christmas too, marking the occasion with gatherings of family and friends and giving gifts.



Did You Know...?

Presents are often exchanged as a reminder of the gifts the Three Wise Men brought to Jesus. They are also given to show love for family and friends and to remember the true 'gift' - Jesus.



Australia

In Australia, Christmas happens during the summer time. Traditionally, Australians enjoy the lead up to Christmas day with carols by candlelight. Houses are decorated with Christmas trees and Christmas decorations are put up around the house. On Christmas Day, children who have been good all year receive their presents from Santa Claus. Some people enjoy Christmas day at the beach.

Mexico

Mexico celebrates Christmas from 12th December to 6th January. Children often perform in processions called 'las Posadas'. They are a celebration of the Christmas story when Mary and Joseph looked for somewhere to stay.

Houses are decorated and children visit the houses of friends and neighbours and sing a song at each home. Then, the children say prayers of thanks and





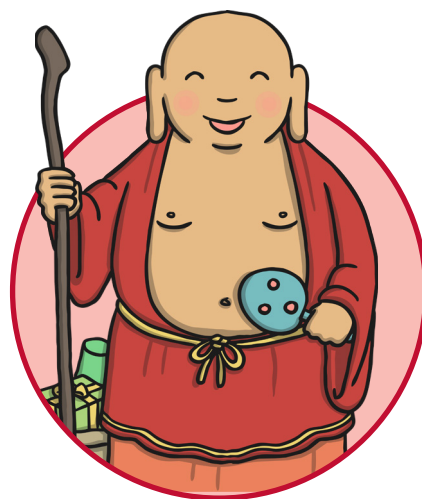
festivities begin with food, games and fireworks. Each night a different house holds the Posada party. One game that is often played at Posada parties is piñata. A piñata is a decorated clay or papier-mâché jar filled with sweets, which is hung from the ceiling or a tree branch.

At the final Posada, families go to church for a midnight service. After church, there are more fireworks to celebrate the start of Christmas and this is the night that Santa Claus will visit children who have behaved through out the year.

Japan

In Japan, Christmas is celebrated as a time to spread happiness and is not seen as a religious holiday. It is only in the past few decades that Japanese people have started celebrating Christmas and it is not a holiday, so schools and businesses are usually open.

Sending Christmas cards and giving presents are popular at this time and parties are held for children with games and dancing. People like to eat fried chicken on Christmas Day and they also eat a Japanese version of Christmas cake, which is a sponge cake with whipped cream and strawberries.



There is a Japanese gift bringer called Hoteiosho, a Buddhist monk, with a large belly and a cloth sack full of toys. He has eyes in the back of his head, which means that he's able to see the children and how they behave without them knowing.

Germany



In Germany, the main Christmas celebrations happen during Advent (a Christian festival that leads up to Christmas). The 'Advent Kranz', a wreath with four candles on it, symbolizes the countdown to Christmas. Traditionally, families will light a candle

on the last four Sundays before Christmas.

Christmas trees are thought to have originated from Germany and have been used since the Middle Ages. Another German Christmas tradition is the Christmas markets where all sorts of Christmas food and decorations are sold. On Christmas Eve, Father Christmas (der Weihnachtsmann) leaves gifts for the well-behaved children.

Christmas Eve is the main day of Christmas celebrations in Germany and businesses close in the afternoon in preparation for the holiday celebration that evening. Families sing Christmas carols together and may read the story of Christ's birth aloud. Family members exchange gifts.



Christmas Around the World Questions

1. Tick the correct answer.

In Germany, traditionally people read the story of Christ's birth on what day?

☐ 24th December

☐ 12th December

☐ 25th December

2. Write the correct answer.

a. Which country enjoys fried chicken on Christmas Day?

b. Which country celebrates with carols by candlelight?

c. Which country celebrates with a piñata?

d. Which country holds Christmas markets to buy goods for Christmas?

3. Tick the correct statements.

☐ The 'Advent Kranz' is a wreath with four candles.

☐ The 'Advent Kranz' is decorated and displayed in the window.

☐ The 'Advent Kranz' has one candle lit on each Sunday leading up to Christmas.

4. What can be bought at a German Christmas market?

5. Why does Hoteiosho have eyes at the back of his head?

6. What does the giving of presents symbolise?

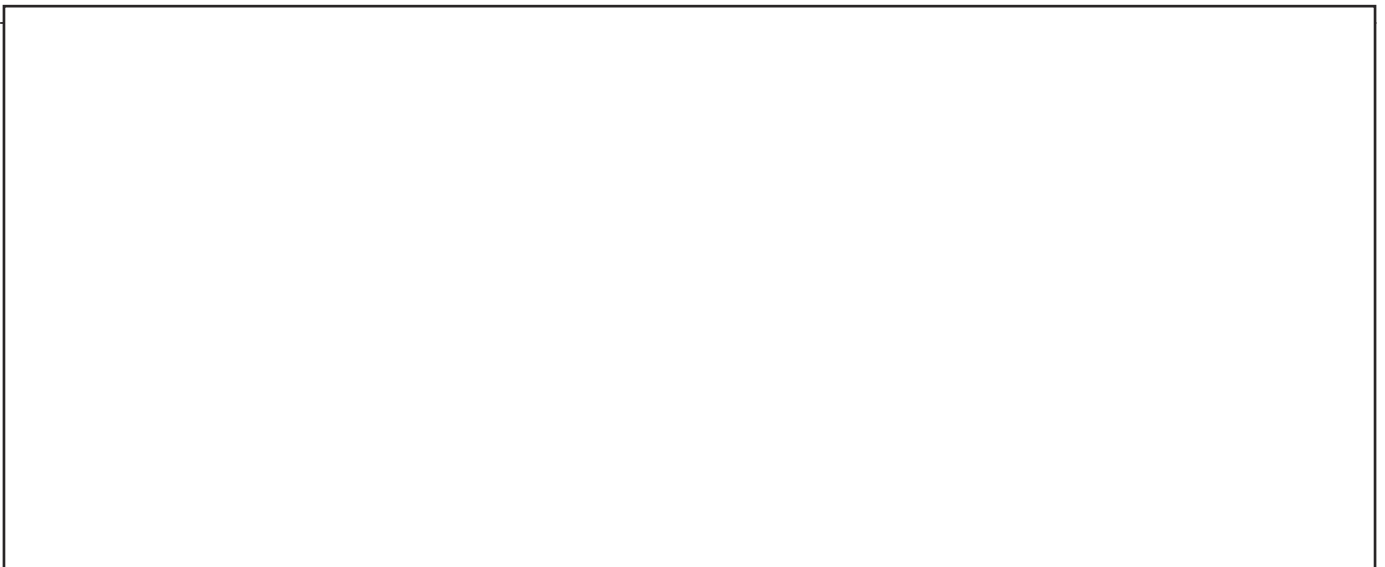
7. What part of the Christmas story is recreated during 'las Posada'?

Christmas Around the World Questions

8. List three interesting things Mexican people traditionally do during Christmas celebrations.

9. List three interesting things Australian people traditionally do during Christmas celebrations.

10. Challenge option: Draw a picture of a Christmas celebration from around the world. Write at least three sentences describing your picture.



Christmas Around the World **Answers**

1. In Germany, traditionally people read the story of Christ's birth on what day?

24th December

2. a. Which country enjoys fried chicken on Christmas Day?

Japan

- b. Which country celebrates with carols by candlelight?

Australia

- c. Which country celebrates with a piñata?

Mexico

- d. Which country holds Christmas markets to buy goods for Christmas?

Germany

3. Choose the correct statements.

The 'Advent Kranz' is a wreath with four candles.

The 'Advent Kranz' has one candle lit on each Sunday leading up to Christmas.

4. What can be bought at a German Christmas market?

Christmas foods and decorations can be bought at a German Christmas market.

5. Why does Hoteiosho have eyes at the back of his head?

Hoteiosho has eyes at the back of his head so that he can see everything including how children are behaving.

6. What does the giving of presents symbolise?

Presents symbolise the gifts given by the Three Wise Men and also to show love for family and friends.

7. What part of the Christmas story is recreated during 'las Posada'?

'Las Posada' recreates the Christmas story as children act out the part when Mary and Joseph look for somewhere to stay in Bethlehem.

8. List three interesting things Mexican people traditionally do during Christmas celebrations.

Answers will vary but could include: In Mexico people start celebrating from 12th December and a procession happens called 'las posada'. Fireworks are let off and families play piñata. Finally, people attend midnight Mass at church.

9. List three interesting things Australian people traditionally do during Christmas celebrations.

Answers will vary but could include: Australian people traditionally enjoy going to carols by candlelight, decorating their house with Christmas decorations and going to the beach.

10. Challenge: Draw a picture of a Christmas celebration from around the world. Write at least three sentences describing your picture.

Answers will vary.