

CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

<http://www.whychristmas.com/cultures/india.shtml>

Traditions in India Thursday December 24, 2015
Source: Revs Sarah and Abraham Peddiny
Presiding Elders African Methodist Episcopal Church in India
www.ameindia.com:

One of the most common Indian Christmas traditions is that Christian families prepare Christmas cookies: Rose Cookies, Diamond cuts, etc and share with other Christian families. Children wear new clothes and take the cookies from house to house.

Then you have a host of people visiting Christian homes during Christmas. People who are poor and do the menial jobs, ..are given homemade snacks and some money.

Families gather together and go to church with their new clothes and jewels on and flaunt them.

Newly married couples visit parents on both sides since this is their first Christmas as a couple.



Carole Copeland Thomas

(508) 947-5755 www.tellcarole.com
www.mssconnect.com

Speaker • Trainer • Facilitator

6 Azel Road Lakeville, Massachusetts 02347
carole@mssconnect.com • Email
(508) 947-3903 • Facsimile

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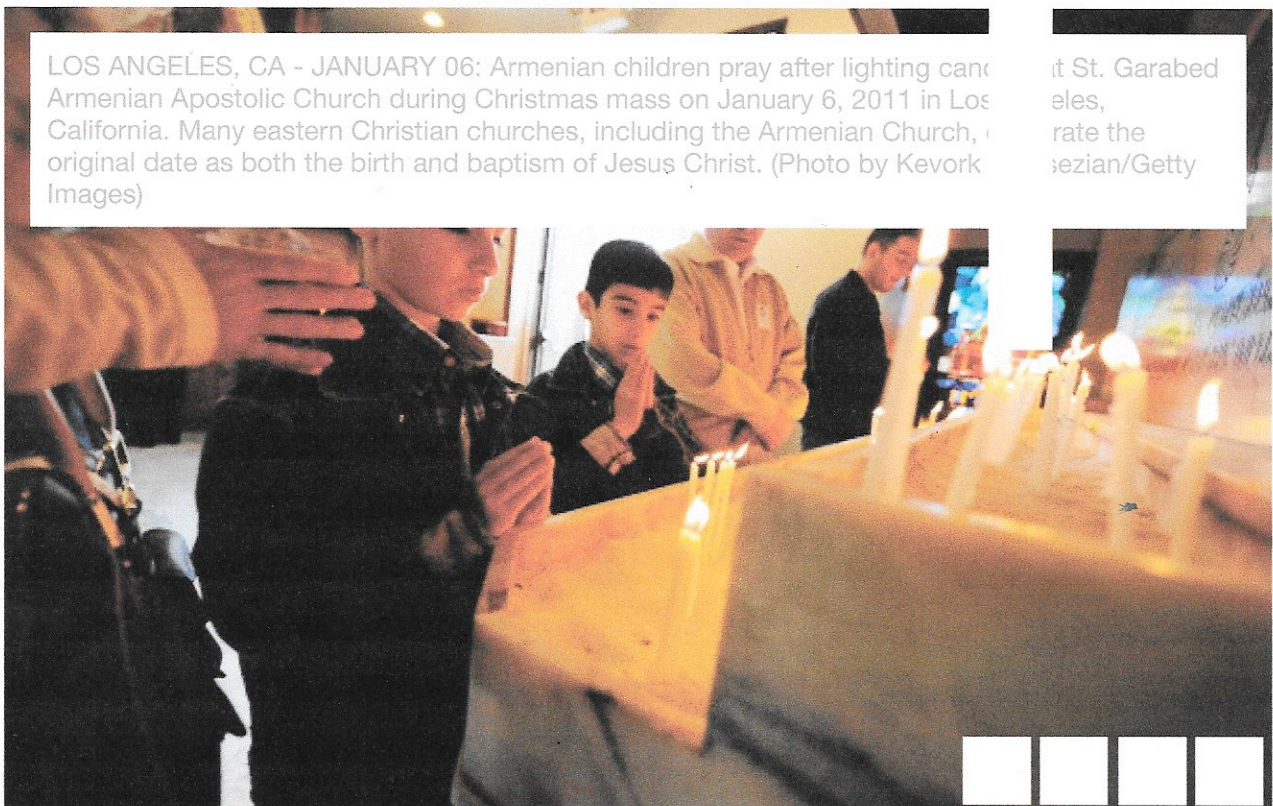
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Thank you!

🌿 Christmas in Armenia 🌿



The Armenian Apostolic Church celebrates Christmas on January 6th. On this day it also celebrates the Epiphany (which means the revelation that Jesus was God's son). Epiphany is now mainly the time Churches remember the Visit of the of Wise Men to Jesus; but some Churches, like the Armenian Apostolic Church, also celebrate the Baptism of Jesus (when he started his adult ministry) on Epiphany.



LOS ANGELES, CA - JANUARY 06: Armenian children pray after lighting candles at St. Garabed Armenian Apostolic Church during Christmas mass on January 6, 2011 in Los Angeles, California. Many eastern Christian churches, including the Armenian Church, celebrate the original date as both the birth and baptism of Jesus Christ. (Photo by Kevork Djansezian/Getty Images)

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Some Armenians fast (don't eat anything) in the week before Christmas. The Christmas Eve meal is called khetum 'խիթում'. It often includes dishes such as rice, fish, nevik 'նեվիկ' (green chard and chick peas) and yogurt/wheat soup called tanabur 'թանապուր'. Desserts includes dried fruits and nuts, including rojik (whole shelled walnuts threaded on a string and encased in grape jelly), bastukh (a paper-like dessert made of grape jelly, cornstarch and flour). This lighter menu

is designed to ease the stomach off the week-long fast and prepare it for the rather more substantial Christmas Day dinner. Children take presents of fruits, nuts, and other candies to older relatives.

Santa Claus Gaghand Baba / Kaghand Papa traditionally comes on New Year's Eve (December 31st) because Christmas Day itself is thought of as more of a religious holiday in Armenia.

In Armenian Happy/Merry Christmas is Shnorhavor Amanor yev Surb Tznund (Շնորհավոր Ամանոր և Սուրբ Ծնունդ) (which means 'Congratulations for the Holy Birth'). Happy/Merry Christmas in lots more languages.

At the beginning of December a big Christmas Tree (Tonatsar) is put up in Republic Square in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia.

Favorite and traditional Holiday foods in Armenia include Anooshaboor (Armenian Christmas Pudding), Khozee bood (glazed ham) and dried fruits. Every house is ready with lots of sweets because anyone might knock on the door and come in for a party!

🌿 Christmas in Brazil 🌿



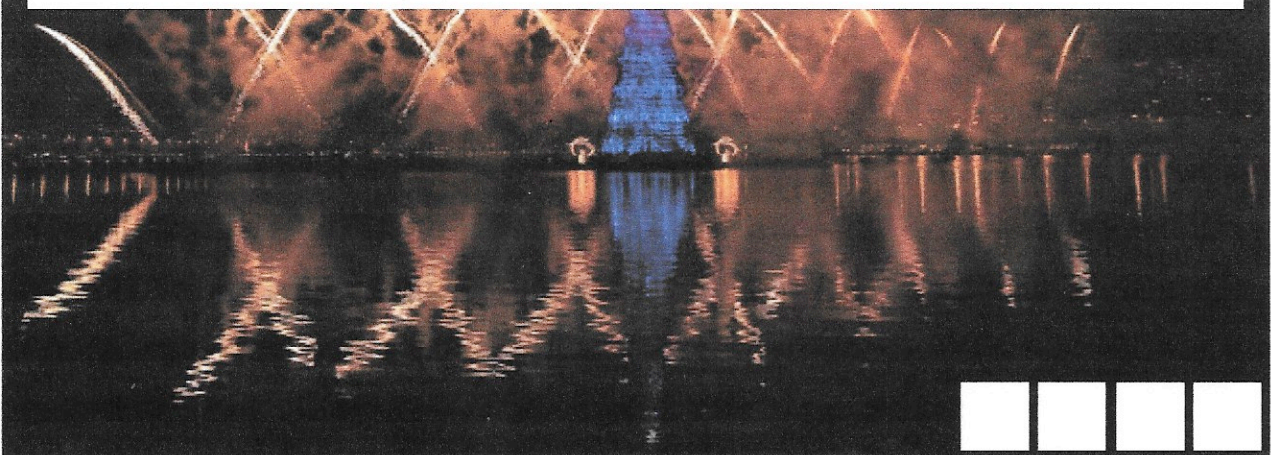
Many Brazilian Christmas traditions come from Portugal as Portugal ruled Brazil for many years. Nativity Scenes, known as Presépio are very popular. They are set-up in churches and homes all through December.

Christmas plays called Los Pastores (The Shepherds), like the plays in Mexico, are also popular. In the Brazilian versions of the play, there's also traditionally a shepherdess and also a woman who tries to steal the baby Jesus!

Most people, especially Catholics, will go to a Midnight Mass service or Missa do Galo (Mass of the Roster). The mass normally finishes about 1.00am. On Christmas day, people might go to church again, but this time the services are often in the afternoon.

After the Missa do Galo there are often big firework displays and in big towns and cities there are big Christmas Tree shaped displays of electric lights.

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL - NOVEMBER 30: Fireworks explode during the lighting ceremony for Rio de Janeiro's famed floating Christmas tree in Lagoa Rodrigo de Freitas on November 30, 2013 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The constructed tree is the largest floating Christmas tree in the world according to the Guinness Book of World Records. The tree is 85 meters tall and is displayed by three million microlights. (Photo by Mario Tama/Getty Images)



Getty Images News | Mario Tama

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In Brazil, Santa Claus is called Papai Noel & Bom Velhinho (Good Old Man).

Many Christmas customs are similar to ones in the USA or UK even though it's summer and very hot at Christmas time in Brazil. Many people like to go to the beach.

Sometimes children leave a sock near a window. If Papai Noel finds your sock, he'll exchange it for a present!

Taking part in a 'Secret Santa', known as 'amigo secreto' (secret friend) is popular in Brazil at Christmas. It is traditional to give small gifts all through December using a pretend name (apelidos). On Christmas Day people reveal who their amigo secreto was!

The most popular Christmas song in Brazil is 'Noite Feliz' (Silent Night).

It's common in Brazil to get a '13th salary' at the end of the year – i.e. in December you get twice the normal amount of pay for that month! The idea is to help boost the economy around Christmas. This has been going on for decades and most people don't even question that other countries might not do it!

Favourite Christmas foods in Brazil include pork, turkey, ham, salads and fresh and dried fruits. Everything is served with rice cooked with raisins and a good spoon of "farofa" (seasoned manioc flour.) Popular Christmas desserts include tropical and ice cream.

Brazil's population is a mix of many different cultures and people that originally came from different countries, so you may have Italian Panettone in São Paulo, Portuguese salted Cod in Rio de Janeiro and some African style food in the states of North-East Brazil.

The meal is normally served around 10pm on Christmas Eve and exactly at Midnight people greet each other, make a toast wishing everyone a Happy Christmas and after that they will exchange presents. The lunch on Christmas day is also special and after that some people go to relatives and friends houses to visit.

Epiphany, when people remember the Wise Men visiting Jesus, is widely celebrated in Brazil.

Christmas in China



In China, only about one percent of people are Christians, so most people only know a few things about Christmas. Because of this, Christmas is only often celebrated in major cities. In these big cities there are Christmas Trees, lights and other decorations on the streets and in department stores. Santa Claus is called 'Shen Dan Lao Ren' and has grottos in shops like in Europe and America.

NANJING, CHINA - DECEMBER 24: (CHINA OUT) People dressed in Santa Claus costumes attend a celebration for the Christmas Eve at Xinjiekou on December 24, 2013 in Nanjing, China. (Photo by ChinaFotoPress/Getty Images)



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In Chinese Happy/Merry Christmas is 'Sheng Dan Kuai Le or
Mandarin and 'Seng Dan Fai Lok or 聖誕快樂' in Cantonese.
Christmas in lots more languages.

延快乐' in
opy/Merry


In China, Santa is known as 'Sheng dan lao ren' (Traditional:
聖誕老人; means Old Christmas Man).

延老人, Simplified:

Only a few people have a Christmas Tree (or celebrate Christmas at all!). If people

do have a tree it is normally a plastic one and might be decorated with paper chains, paper flowers, and paper lanterns (they might also call it a tree of light). The Christmas Trees that most people would see would be in shopping malls!

Christmas isn't that widely celebrated in the rural areas of China, but it's becoming more well known.

The strange thing is that most of the world's plastic Christmas Trees and 
Christmas decorations are made in China, but the people making them might not know what they are for!!!

A tradition that's becoming popular, on Christmas Eve, is giving apples. Many stores have apples wrapped up in colored paper for sale. People give apples on Christmas Eve because in Chinese Christmas Eve is called 'Ping An Ye' (which means quiet or silent night) and the word for apple in Chinese is 'Ping Guo' which sounds similar.

Some people go Carol singing, although not many people understand them or know about the Christmas Story. Jingle Bells is a popular Carol in China!

People who are Christians in China go to special services. Going to Midnight Mass services has become very popular.

Thank you to Lisa, Gu Yuhong and DeAnn for their help in giving me information on Christmas in China!

Christmas in Germany



A big part of the Christmas celebrations in Germany is Advent. Several different types of Advent calendars are used in German homes. As well as the traditional one made of card that are used in many countries, there are also those made out of a wreath of Fir tree branches with 24 decorated boxes or bags hanging from it. Each box or bag has a little present in it. Another type is called 'Advent Kranz' and is a ring of fir branches that has four candles on it. This is like the Advent candles that are sometimes used in Churches. One candle is lit at the beginning of each week in Advent.

Christmas Trees are very important in Germany. They were first used in Germany during the Middle Ages. If there are young children in the house, the trees are usually secretly decorated by the mother of the family. The Christmas tree was traditionally brought into the house on Christmas eve. In some parts of Germany, during the evening the family would read the Bible and sing Christmas songs such as O Tannenbaum, Ihr Kinderlein Kommet and Stille Nacht (Silent Night).

Sometimes wooden frames, covered with coloured plastic sheets and with electric candles inside, are put in windows to make the house look pretty from the outside.

Christmas Eve is the main day when Germans exchange presents with their families.

In German Happy/Merry Christmas is 'Frohe Weihnachten'. Happy/Merry Christmas in lots more languages.

Germany is well known for its Christmas Markets where all sorts of Christmas foods and decorations are sold. Perhaps the most famous German decorations are glass ornaments. The glass ornaments were originally hand blown glass and were imported in the USA in 1880s by the Woolworth stores. The legend of the glass 'Christmas Pickle' is famous in the USA, but it's that, a legend. Most people in Germany have never heard of the Christmas Pickle!





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The Image Bank | Brian Lawrence

In some parts of Germany, mainly the south east of the country, children write to the 'das Christkind/Christkindl' asking for presents. The letters to the Christkind are decorated with sugar glued to the envelope to make them sparkly and attractive to look at. Children leave the letters on the windowsill at the beginning of or during Advent.

'das Christkind' translates as 'The Christ Child' in English but Germans don't think of the Christkind as the baby Jesus! The Christkind is often described as a young girl with 'Christ like' qualities. In Nürnberg 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. This is similar to St Lucia in Sweden. (And it can seem a bit confusing calling the 'Christ Child', Jesus, a girl!)

The Nürnberg Christkind officially opens the Christmas market on the Friday before Advent starts. And before Christmas she has over 150 'official duties' including visiting hospitals, old people's homes and children's nurseries! She also has to give TV interviews and visit other cities.

Santa Claus or Father Christmas (der Weihnachtsmann) brings the main Christmas presents on December 24th. You might also write a letter to Weihnachtsmann in other parts of Germany. Some people say that Santa/Father

Christmas (Weihnachtsmann) brings the presents and some say it is Christkind!

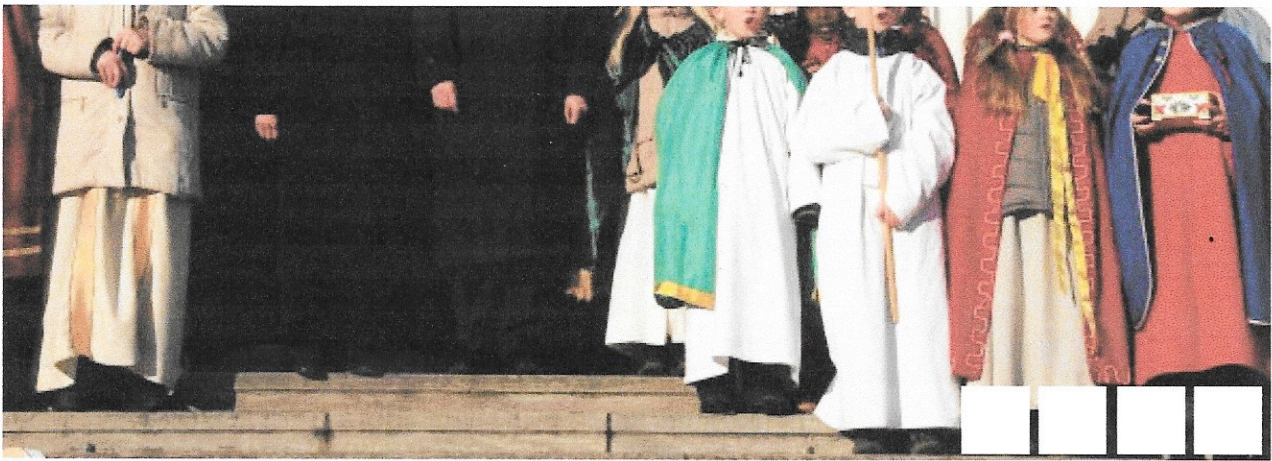
As well as hoping for presents from Christkind or der Weihnachtsmann, children also hope that 'der Nikolaus' will bring you some small gifts, such as sweets and chocolate on the 6th December (St Nicholas's Day). He comes in the night between the 5th and the 6th and puts the presents into the shoes of the children, who usually place them by their doors on the previous evening. In some regions of Germany, there is a character called "Knecht Ruprecht" or "Krampus" who accompanies Nikolaus (St. Nicholas) on the 6th of December. He is big horned monster clothed in rags and carries a birch. He will punish the children who were bad and will give them a birch as a present. He is usually the one who scares the little children. In other parts of Germany, St. Nicholas is followed by a small person called "Schwarzer Peter" (Black Peter) who carries a small whip. Black Peter also accompanies St. Nicholas or Sinterklaas in Holland. In north west Germany Santa is joined by Belsnickel a man dressed all in fur. Although 'der Nikolaus' visits in December, he's not officially part of Christmas!

At small work places and school parties, secret presents are often exchanged. A door is opened just wide enough for small presents to be thrown into the room. The presents are then passed around among the people until each person has the correct present! It is thought to be bad luck to find out who sent each present.

Another tradition is the Sternsinger (or star singers) who go from house to house, sing a song and collect money for charity (this is a predominantly Catholic tradition). They are four children, three who dress up like the Wise men and one carries a star on a stick as a symbol for the Star of Bethlehem. When they're finished singing, they write a signature with chalk over the door of the house. The sign is written in a special way, so Christmas 2015 would be: 20*C*M*B*16. It is considered to be bad luck to wash the sign away - it has to fade by itself. It has usually faded by the 6th of January (Epiphany). The Sternsingers visit houses between December 27th and January 6th.

BERLIN - JANUARY 06: German President Horst Koehler (C) and his wife Eva Luise Koehler receive child carolers dressed as the three kings at Bellevue Palace on January 6, 2009 in Berlin, Germany. The carolers, in German called Sternsinger, traditionally visit households across Germany in order to raise money for needy children throughout the world. (Photo by Sean Gallup/Getty Images)





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Carp or Goose are often served for the main Christmas meal. Stollen is a popular fruited yeast bread that is eaten at Christmas. Here is a recipe for Stollen.



E+ | MKucova

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Over the in Germany and Austria, the famous Ski Jumping 'Four Hills Tournament' ('Vierschanzentournee') is held. It starts in Germany with Oberstdorf (Germany) on the 29th or 30th December and Garmisch-Partenkirchen (Germany) on New Years Day and continues in Austria with Innsbruck (Austria) on 3rd or 4th of January and Bischofshofen (Austria) on the 6th January. I'm a big Ski Jumping fan, so I watch it!

Thank you to Céline Krimmel for her help in giving me information on Christmas in Germany!

🌿 Christmas in Ghana 🌿



People in Ghana celebrate Christmas from the 20th of December to the first week in January with lots of different activities. Many people travel to visit their relatives and friends in other parts of the country. Over 66 languages are spoken in Ghana and all these language groups have their own traditions and customs!

December is also the start of the cocoa harvest (the bean that make chocolate) in Ghana. Ghana is the worlds second biggest cocoa producer. I really like some fair-trade chocolate that's made with cocoa from Ghana!

Christmas Eve night is the time when the celebrations really start with Church services that have drumming and dancing. Children often put on a Nativity Play or other drama. Then choirs come out to sing and people come out in front of the priests to dance. Songs are mostly sang in the languages that the people understand best. This makes them feels that God speaks their language. Sometimes these services and dancing go on all night long!

Other people celebrate Christmas Eve with fireworks and parties.

On Christmas day the Churches are very full. People come dressed in their colorful traditional clothes. After the Church service on Christmas morning, people quickly go back to their houses to start giving and receiving gifts.





Lonely Planet Images | Ariadne Van Zandbergen

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Traditional food includes stew or okra soup, porridge and meats rice and a yam paste called 'fufu'.

During the Christmas period children's parties, employees' end of year parties, etc. are mostly celebrated in the hotels, at the beaches, school parks and community centers with good wishes for all people on earth.

Some Ghanaians also go to Church on the 31st December to thank God for sending Jesus and to pray for a good and safe New Year. People may also use that time to remember those who died during the previous year and pray that the difficulties that they may have encountered over the year don't carry on into the New Year.

Thank you to my friend John Sidsaya for his help in giving me information on Christmas in Ghana!

🌿 Christmas in India 🌿

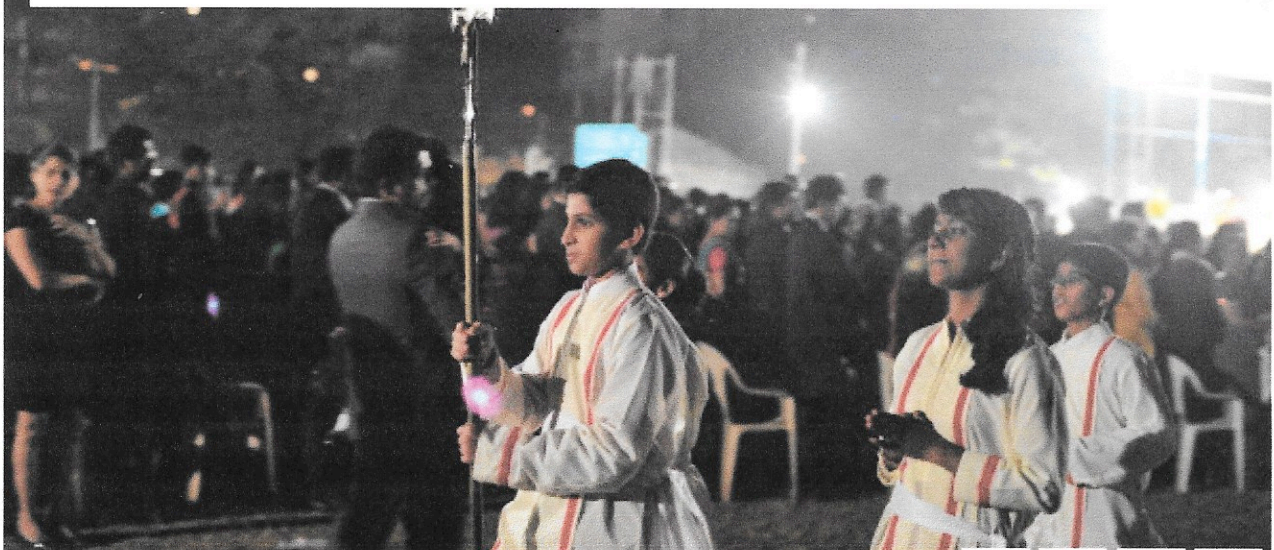


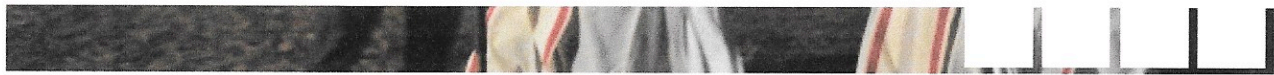
Compared to other religious festivals, Christmas is quite a small festival in India, due to the number of people who are Christians (about 2.3%) compared to people who belong to other religions. Having said this, the population of India is over 1 Billion, so there are over 25 million Christians in India!

One of the largest Indian Christian Communities in a city is in Mumbai. A lot of the Christians in Mumbai (previously known as Bombay) are Roman Catholics. In India's smallest state, Goa which is on the west of India, about 26% of people are Christians. Many of the Christians in Mumbai came from or have roots in Goa. The states of Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram (all on the very east of India) have high populations of Christians as well.

Midnight mass is a very important service for Christians in India, especially Catholics. The whole family will walk to the mass and this will be followed by a massive feast of different delicacies, (mostly curries) and the giving and receiving of presents. Churches in India are decorated with Poinsettia flowers and candles for the Christmas Eve Midnight Mass service.

[UNVERIFIED CONTENT] Young catholic boy holds the alter at midnight mass at Immaculate Conception Church, at mount Poinzur, Mumbai suburb India. Historically this church was established by Portuguese invaders and British few century ago. Catholics are minority community in India.





Many different languages are spoken in India. In Hindi Happy/Merry Christmas is 'Śubh krisamas' (शुभ क्रिसमस); Urdu it's 'krismas mubarak' (کریسمس); in Sanskrit it's 'Krismasasya shubhkaamnaa'; in Gujarati it's 'Anandi Natal' or 'Khushi Natal' (આનંદી નાતાલ); in Bengali 'shubho bôṛodin' (শুভ বড়দিন); in Tamil it's 'kiṛistumas vāḷttukkaḷ' (கிறிஸ்துமஸ் வாழ்த்துக்கள்); in Konkani it's 'Khushal Borit Natala'; in Kannada it's 'kris mas habbada shubhaashayagalu' (ಕ್ರಿಸ್ ಮಸ್ ಹಬ್ಬದ ಶುಭಾಷಯಗಳು); in Mizo it's 'Krismas Chibai'; in Marathi it's 'Śubh Nātāl' (शुभ नाताल); in Punjabi it's 'karisama te nawāṃ sāla khuṣayāṃwālā hewe ' (ਕਰਿਸਮ ਤੇ ਨਵਾਂ ਸਾਲ ਖੁਸ਼ਿਜਾਂਵਾਲਾ ਹੋਵੇ); in Malayalam it's 'Christmas inte mangalaashamsakal' and in Telugu it's 'Christmas Subhakankshalu'. Happy/Merry Christmas in lots more languages.

Instead of having traditional Christmas Trees, a banana or mango tree is decorated (or whatever tree people can find to decorate!). Sometimes people use mango leaves to decorate their homes.

In Southern India, Christians often put small oil burning clay lamps on the flat roofs of their homes to show their neighbors that Jesus is the light of the world.

Christians in Goa love to celebrate Christmas! Goa has lots of 'western' customs as part of their Christmas as Goa has historical connections with Portugal. Most Christians in Goa are Catholics. People like to go carol singing around their neighbors for about a week before Christmas. Christmas Trees are also very popular as is a 'traditional' rich fruit Christmas Cake! Lots of local sweets are also eaten at Christmas in Goa. Favourite sweets include neureos (small pastries which are stuffed with dry fruit and coconut and fried) and dodol (like toffee that has coconut and cashew in it). These are other sweets are often part of 'consuada' when people make sweets before Christmas and give them to their friends and neighbors. Most Christian families also have a nativity scene with clay figures in it. On Christmas Eve Christians in Goa hang out giant paper lanterns, in the shape of stars, between the houses so that the stars float above you as you walk down the road. The main Christmas meal is also eaten on Christmas Eve and is also 'western' with roast turkey or chicken being popular. After the meal, Christians head to Church for a Midnight mass service. After the service the church bells ring to announce that Christmas Day has arrived. Many Christians in

Goa also celebrate Epiphany and remember the Wise Men visiting Jesus.



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Moment Open | photography by Carol Adam

Christians in Mumbai use many Christmas traditions from Goa including the star lanterns and manger scenes (people like to make sure they have the best the nativity scene!).

In north-west India, the tribal Christians of the Bhil folk, go out night after night for a week at Christmas to sing their own carols the whole night through. They go to surrounding villages singing to people and telling the Christmas story.

In South West India, in the state of Kerala Were, 22% of the state's 33 Million population are Christians and Christmas is important festival. Traditional Catholics fast don't eat from 1st to 24th of December - until the midnight service. Every house will be decorated with a Christmas star. During the start of the Christmas season, almost all the stationary shops will be filled with new and variety Christmas stars. People make cribs in their homes and Churches.

In India, Father Christmas or Santa Claus delivers presents to children from a horse and cart. He's known as 'Christmas Baba' in Hindi, 'Baba Christmas' in Urdu (both of those mean Father Christmas); 'Christmas Thaathaa' in Tamil and 'Christmas Thatha' in Telugu (both of those mean Christmas old man); and 'Natal Bua' (Christmas Elder Man) in Marathi. In Kerla Were state, he's known as 'Christmas Papa'.

Christmas in Jamaica



Christmas is a very special time in Jamaica and like a lot of other countries, radio stations play carols all through the Christmas period.

Lots of people paint their houses and hang new curtains and decorations for Christmas. Most families spend Christmas Day at home with friends and family members.

The Christmas day meal is usually prepared on Christmas Eve. The traditional Jamaican Christmas meal include fresh fruits, sorrel and rum punch and meat.

*The Christmas Day breakfast includes ackee and saltfish, breadfruit, fried plantains, boiled bananas, freshly squeezed fruit juice and tea. Dinner is usually served in the late afternoon and this may include chicken, curry goat, stewed oxtail, rice and peas.

Jamaican red wine and rum fruitcake is traditional and is eaten in most homes. The fruits in the cake are soaked in red wine and white rum for months before Christmas. (I have some friends who come from Jamaica and Jamaican Christmas Cake is really nice!)

Thank you to Lola Adegoke for her help in giving me information on Christmas in Jamaica!

Christmas in South Africa



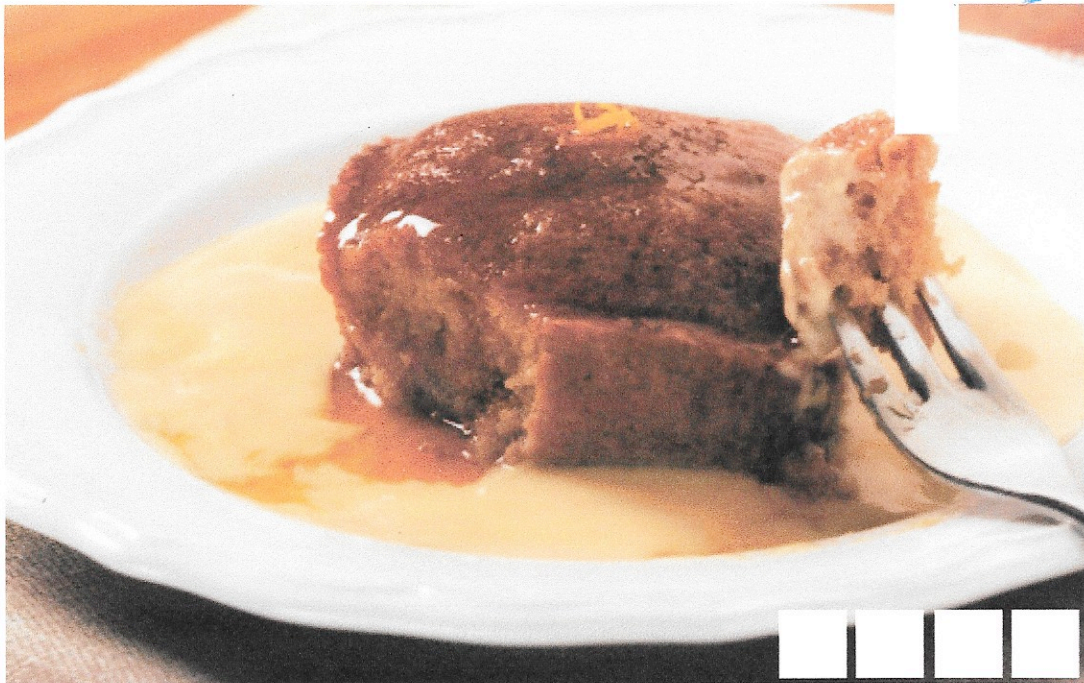
*Look up
Boxing Day*

Because South Africa is in the Southern Hemisphere, Christmas comes in the summer. So there's lots of sun and beautiful flowers in full bloom.

The schools are closed for the Christmas holidays and some people like to go camping. Going carol singing, on Christmas Eve, is very popular in towns and cities. Carols by Candlelight services are also popular on Christmas Eve. And many people go to a Christmas morning Church Service.

Traditional 'fir' Christmas trees are popular and children leave a stocking out for Santa Claus on Christmas Eve.

The Christmas meal is either turkey (or duck), roast beef, mince pies or suckling pig with yellow rice & raisins and vegetables, followed by Christmas Pudding or a traditional South African desert called Malva Pudding (sometimes also called Lekker Pudding) - get the recipe. People also like to pull Christmas Crackers! The meal is often eaten outside in the summer sun! If it's really hot they might even have a barbecue or 'braai'.



E+ | Carla McMahon

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South Africa also has several other UK Christmas traditions, because of its history with the UK.

On Christmas day afternoon, people visit family and friends or might go for a trip into the country side to play games or have a swim.

Boxing Day is also a public holiday in South Africa and again people like to be 'out and about' having a good time!

In Afrikaans (one the languages spoken in South Africa) Happy/Merry Christmas is 'Geseënde Kersfees'. Happy/Merry Christmas in lots more languages.

Santa Claus is also known as Sinterklaas & Kersvader for people who speak Afrikaans (which has a base in Dutch).