

Christmas in England

In England, as in all English speaking countries, children don't get their presents on Christmas Eve (**December 24th**). Father Christmas, or Santa Claus, as they call him in the USA, comes at night when everybody is asleep. He goes from house to house on a sleigh pulled by reindeer that can fly. They land on the roofs of the houses and Santa comes down the chimney, leaving the presents in the stockings hanging around the fireplace or at the foot of the children's beds.

In the morning of Christmas Day (**December 25th**), children usually get up very early to open their presents. Then they have plenty of time to play with their new toys, while their parents prepare the Christmas dinner for the whole family, which is usually served in the early afternoon. They eat stuffed roast turkey with roast potatoes and Brussels sprouts. For dessert, they have Christmas pudding, brought to the table flaming hot.

At three o'clock, many people in England turn their televisions on to listen to the Queen's Christmas message. This is normally the only time in the year when the monarch speaks directly to the people on TV. The day ends with everybody relaxing, playing games, watching television, singing Christmas carols or just falling asleep.

On December 26th, Boxing Day, the English get up later because it's a public holiday. It is another day for eating, drinking, and watching television at home, or going out to watch some sport. As many shops now open on this day, many people also take the day to exchange gifts or buy reduced price Christmas gifts.



Exercises

1. Now **number the sentences from 1 to 7** to show the **correct order** according to the text.

- ___ On December 26th, the English celebrate Boxing Day.
- ___ Families have Christmas dinner in the early afternoon.
- ___ Santa's reindeer take him from house to house.
- ___ On Christmas Day, children wake up early to see their presents
- ___ Many people watch the Queen's Christmas message on TV and then they have fun.
- ___ They play with the new toys.
- ___ English children don't receive Christmas gifts on December 24th.



2. Reread the **3rd and 4th paragraphs** of the text and **complete these sentences.**

1. Many English people turn on the TV at _____ to watch the Queen's Christmas message.

2. After listening to the Queen's message, they _____

3. In England, December 26th is a _____; however, many shops are _____.

3. Discuss.

- Do you celebrate Christmas? If yes, what's a typical Christmas like for you?
- Do you make a big deal out of Christmas or do you think Christmas is just a bunch of humbug? Why?
- Are you expecting any special gifts this holiday season? Please explain.
- Have you bought any special gifts this holiday season? Or do you plan to buy any? Why?
- Would you prefer a white Christmas or a Christmas at a tropical holiday resort? Why?
- What would be the perfect Christmas for you? Please explain.
- Please describe the best Christmas you have ever had. What made it so great?
- Have you ever had a terrible Christmas? If yes, what happened?

Christmas Traditions in England



The reason to explain the custom of **hanging stockings** from the mantelpiece. Father Christmas once dropped some gold coins while coming down the chimney. The coins would have fallen through the ash grate and been lost if they hadn't landed in a stocking that had been hung out to dry. Since that time children have continued to hang out stockings in hopes of finding them filled with gifts.

The celebration of **Boxing Day**, which takes place on December 26 - the feast of St. Stephen, is a part of the holiday season unique to Great Britain. Boxing Day began in the mid-nineteenth century. It was designated as the one day for giving to the less fortunate.



The custom of **singing carols** at Christmas is also of English origin. During the middle ages, groups of serenaders called "waits" would travel around from house to house singing ancient carols and spreading the holiday spirit. The word "carol" means "song of joy." Most of the popular old carols we sing today were written in the nineteenth century.

Christmas Dishes From Around the World - Video Lesson

1. Match the two columns.

1. The British	1. 13 desserts, Turkey/goose with a chestnut stuffing
2. Iceland	2. Roasted goose and red cabbage, stollen cake
3. France	3. Feast of seven fishes, pasta, broth, panettone
4. Australia	4. Roast turkey and veggies, Brussels sprouts, gravy, boiled/mashed/roasted potatoes, Christmas pudding, mince pies
5. Germany	5. Roast beef/ ham, pumpkin or apple pie, eggnog
6. Japan	6. Curry, milky and sweet pudding
7. India	7. Roasted reindeer/puffin/gars, boiled potatoes, fermented skate,
8. Italy	8. Barbecue, pavlova, Christmas pudding
9. Argentina	9. Vitel Tonne sliced veal with tuna and mayonnaise sauce with capers
10. U.S.A.	10. KFC

2. Mark the following sentences as true (T) or false (F).

- a. In Iceland, people fast before Christmas.
- b. It is a tradition to eat fermented skate at a restaurant.
- c. The 13 desserts were created to honor Christ and his Apostles.
- d. The Stollen cake symbolizes the camel.
- e. In Japan people don't celebrate Christmas.
- f. Curry is a popular dish on Boxing day.
- g. In Italy, people enjoy their festive meal on Christmas Eve.
- h. In Australia, people hide a gold coin inside the Christmas pudding.
- i. In Argentina, the traditional Christmas dish has been actually brought over by Italians.
- j. In the U.S.A., people prefer a roast turkey for Christmas.

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

Christmas in Hungary

Most of the Hungarian Christmas traditions are gone, but, fortunately, the custom of Advent remains, which is the waiting period beginning four weeks before Christmas and includes the Advent wreath with the four candles (3 purple, one pink). For believers, this means preparation for the most important Christian festival of the year, while it serves as a warning for less religious people to hurry up with the Christmas shopping. The more candles are lit, the closer Christmas is. It maybe sounds surprising, but the Hungarian Santa Claus, "Mikulás" comes on **6 December**, as it is the name day of "Miklós" (Nicholas) according to the Hungarian calendar. It is the day when Mikulás brings children (and adults) smaller gifts and puts them into their polished shoes. Bad kids, however, receive a birch instead.

It maybe sounds surprising, but the Hungarian Santa Claus, "Mikulás" comes on 6 December, as it is the name day of "Miklós" (Nicholas) according to the Hungarian calendar. It is the day when Mikulás brings children (and adults) smaller gifts and puts them into their polished shoes. Bad kids, however, receive a birch instead. It is a simple story: children have to write a wishlist in the form of a letter to Little Jesus, and they receive their gifts due to their behaviour during the past year. In Hungarian families without any young children, adults give minor presents to each other and mostly focus on the pleasure of being together.

Interesting to note that Hungarians give their presents **on 24 December**, so the custom of unboxing presents **on the morning of 25th** is not a habit in Hungary. 24 December is dedicated wholly to the celebration: this is when families set up and decorate their Christmas trees, then begin the line of holiday dishes on Christmas Eve, which requires preparation.

This period focuses on traditional Hungarian meals, such as roast pork, stuffed cabbage, delicious freshwater fish and many desserts await for consumption, accompanied by some pálinka and wine. Hungarian Christmas is not a fitness-friendly holiday, but Hungarians don't mind it. At least there will be something to lose in the gym after the celebration.

But when 24 December comes, the country becomes quiet, shops close, and tranquillity is set upon the people until **the morning of 27th**. There is no Boxing Day in Hungary, but people do not mind as they get tired of shopping and the mass. The best remedy for this rat race is to spend a pleasant day in one of Hungary's world-famous baths.



Eight Hungarian Christmas Traditions

1. Advent Wreaths

In Hungary, the countdown to Christmas is marked by traditional advent wreaths. These beautiful holiday centerpieces feature four candles, representing faith, hope, joy and love, nestled in a bed of pine branches and ribbon. A candle is lit each Sunday leading up to Christmas, with the final candle lit on *szent-este*, or Christmas Eve.



3. Christmas Tree

In Hungary, holiday trees are decorated on Christmas Eve. Traditionally, children are not allowed to see the tree until they have been given permission by their parents, marked by the ringing of a bell. It is common practice for grandparents to take the children for a walk while the rest of the family decorates the tree. Upon their return, the family unveils the "surprise," claiming that it was brought there by angels.



Hungarian Christmas trees are decorated with unique and beautiful ornaments. Since the 19th century, it has been Hungarian custom to decorate the holiday tree with *szaloncukor*, a sweet fondant often covered in chocolate and wrapped in shiny colored foil. Other decorations include shiny glass ornaments and handmade decorations embroidered with traditional Hungarian designs.



2. Mikulás

Hungarian children receive gifts twice during the holiday season. On the eve of St. Nicholas Feast Day, which is celebrated on December 6, they are visited by Saint Nicholas, or *Mikulás*. That night, children place newly polished boots on their windowsills to be filled with small presents by Mikulás and his helpers. If you've been good, you will wake to find a boot filled with oranges and mandarins. If you've been naughty, Mikulás' sidekick *Krampusz* (a mischievous devil), will have left a bundle of birch sticks (*virgács*) instead.



4. Holiday Feast

Decorating the tree is typically followed by a big family dinner. Traditional Hungarian holiday meals contain a spicy fish soup called *halászlé*, which translates to 'Fishermen' soup.' This bright red soup was originally prepared over an open fire by fishermen along the Danube and Tisza, and is made with hot paprika and carp. Stuffed cabbage, or *töltött káposzta* is another holiday delicacy. The cabbage leaves are filled with savory rice, minced pork meat, herbs and – of course – paprika. These delicious rolls are served with a generous helping of sour cream.

5. Poppy Seed Desserts

In Hungary, poppy seeds (*mákos*) are believed to bring good luck and fortune in the new year. This is why poppy seed desserts are a common feature of the holiday season. One of the most famous poppy seed desserts is *mákos retes*, a rich poppy seed strudel. These poppy seed rolls have two traditional filling varieties: poppy seeds, symbolizing richness and good health and walnuts, which were believed to protect against bad luck. Another delicious poppy seed dessert is *mákos guba*. This bread pudding sprinkled with poppy seeds and drizzled with sweet honey is a traditional treat used to reward children for good behavior.



6. Holiday Markets

Christmas markets are a highlight of the holiday season in Budapest – and the most celebrated is at Vörösmarty Square. Named one of the best Christmas markets in Europe by Conde Nast Traveler, this world-renowned holiday market features over 100 wooden stalls selling traditional Hungarian handicrafts. Folk music and the scent of mulled wine fill the air, while open kitchens serve holiday comfort food like *nokedli* dumplings, *lángos* and chimney cakes. It's no surprise that the Vörösmarty Square Christmas Fair attracts thousands of visitors every holiday season.



7. Mezeskalacs

Mezeskalacs (pronounced may-zesh-koh-lotch) are beautifully-made Hungarian gingerbread cookies. Unlike traditional gingerbread, these sweet treats are infused with honey, giving them a mild flavor and light texture. Once out of the oven, each cookie is meticulously decorated with royal icing "piped into floral patterns (*mezossegi*) as well as cross-hatched lace, animal designs and Hungarian aphorisms."



8. Regölés

Much like North American caroling, *regölés* or "singing good wishes" is a Hungarian holiday tradition. From December 26 until New Year's Day, singers called 'regősök' travel from house to house singing songs of good wishes to their neighbors. Historically, this was "a custom of singing about the magic of nature, greetings, wishing for abundance, drawing couples together and collecting donations." These Hungarian carols can still be heard throughout the holiday season.