

Chinese New Year

Chinese New Year is the most important of the traditional Chinese holidays. It falls on different dates each year, between January 21 and February 20. Visits to friends and family take place during this celebration. The color gold is said to bring wealth, and the color red is considered especially lucky. The New Year's Eve dinner is very large and includes fish, noodles, and dumplings. Chinese New Year begins on February 19, 2015.

Diwali: This past year, this five-day Hindu festival began on November 13th and is an official holiday in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar, among others. The festival is also referred to as the “festival of lights” and celebrates both the attainment of nirvana by Mahavira (an Indian Sage), as well as a Death Anniversary of Swami Dayanand (Hindu religious leader).

The word “Diwali” is a contraction of a word translating to “row of lamps,” as the holiday involves the lighting of small clay lamps to symbolize the victory of good over evil. Firecrackers are burst and, during the festival, all those celebrating wear new clothes and share sweets with family and friends.

Ramadan; Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Every day during this month, Muslims around the world spend the daylight hours in a complete fast.

Answer: During the blessed month of Ramadan, Muslims all over the world abstain from food, drink, and other physical needs during the daylight hours. As a time to purify the soul, refocus attention on God, and practice

Christmas: Christmas is celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Christmas in the United States brings together many customs from other countries and cultures. Around the world, family members help to decorate the tree and home with bright lights, wreaths, candles, holly, mistletoe, and ornaments. On Christmas Eve, many people go to church. Also on Christmas Eve, Santa comes from the North Pole in a sleigh to deliver gifts; in Hawaii, it is said he arrives by boat; in Australia, the jolly man arrives on water skis; and In Ghana, he comes out of the jungle.

Hanukkah: Jewish people celebrate Hanukkah, a holiday honoring the Maccabees victory over King Antiochus, who forbid Jews to practice their religion. For eight nights, Hanukkah is celebrated with prayer, the lighting of the menorah, and food. A Hanukkah menorah has nine candles, a candle for every night, plus a helper candle. Children play games, sing songs, and exchange gifts. Potato pancakes, known as latkes in Yiddish, are traditionally associated with

Hanukkah and are served with applesauce and sour cream. This year Hanukkah starts the evening of Tuesday, December 16 and the last night is Wednesday, December 24.

Kwanzaa

On December 26, Kwanzaa is celebrated. It is a holiday to commemorate African heritage. Kwanzaa lasts a week during which participants gather with family and friends to exchange gifts and to light a series of black, red, and green candles, which symbolize the seven basic values of African American family life that are unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith

New Year's Day

New Year's Day is the first day of the year in the Gregorian calendar on January 1. There are often fireworks at midnight to celebrate the new year. Commonly served in the southern part of the United States, black-eyed peas are thought to bring luck and prosperity for the new year, greens (usually collards) bring wealth, and pork because pigs root forward.

Three Kings Day

At the end of the Twelve Days of Christmas comes a day called the Epiphany, or Three Kings Day. This holiday is celebrated as the day the three wise men first saw baby Jesus and brought him gifts. On this day in Spain, many children get their Christmas presents. In Puerto Rico, before children go to sleep on January 5, they leave a box with hay under their beds so the kings will leave good presents. In France, a delicious "kings' cake" known as *La galette des rois* is baked. Bakers hide a coin, jewel or little toy inside it.

Winter Solstice

The Winter Solstice occurs Sunday, December 21 this year. It is the shortest day of the year.

People all over the world participate with festivals and celebrations. Long ago, people celebrated by lighting bonfires and candles to coax back the sun.