



Celebrations Around the World: A Sample of Holidays by Month

January and February

Chinese New Year—Millions of people in China, and around the world, celebrate Chinese New Year with fireworks and lanterns. There are parades that feature the dragon, the Chinese symbol of strength.

Hogmanay—This New Year’s celebration is said to be the most important festival in Scotland. It has been celebrated since the 1600s.

March and April

Holi—During this Hindu spring festival people mix powdered paint with water and splash each other with the bright colors!

Songkran—This celebration in Thailand includes parades with huge statues of Buddha that spray water on the spectators.

Passover--This is a major Jewish holiday that honors ancestors. The highlight of the holiday is the Passover seder, special family dinners.

Easter—Christians worldwide celebrate Easter. People attend church and celebrate with different customs. Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia follow the orthodox calendar so celebrate Easter on a later date than those in the West. In Germany, children make “egg trees”. In Hungary, girls are sprinkled with perfumed water.

May and June

May Day—This holiday marks the return of spring on May 1st. Children in England mark the day by dancing around a large pole, called a maypole, striped with ribbons.

Kodomo-no-hi—The main purpose of this festival, Children’s Day, in Japan is to show young children the importance of strength and determination.

July and August

O-Bon—Japanese families keep the memories of their loved ones alive by putting lit candles in lanterns and floating them on rivers during this festival.

Esala Perahera—This grand Buddhist festival is held in Sri Lanka every year in August. Over 100 decorated elephants, dancers, acrobats and drummers parade through the streets.

Ramadan—During this holy time Muslims do not eat or drink from sunrise to sundown. Going without food or water is called fasting, and it is meant to teach Muslims the importance of things like patience and self-control.

Iriji—This harvest celebration from Nigeria and Ghana celebrates the yam, a food similar to the sweet potato. Held in August or September, the people celebrate the yam because it is an important food and a plentiful harvest means that the community will eat well.

September and October

Thanksgiving—Celebrated in the United States, this holiday marks the early settlers' first harvest. Families gather together for a large meal.

Trung Thu—This fall festival in Vietnam and China celebrates the moon. The traditional food of this mid-autumn festival is the moon cake.

November and December

Day of the Dead—During this holiday families in Mexico pray to the souls of their dead relatives so that they will return to the living for one night. In the weeks leading up to the holiday, stores sell candy shaped like skulls, coffins and skeletons.

Hanukkah—People of the Jewish faith celebrate Hanukkah by lighting the candles of the menorah for eight days to remember an ancient miracle in which one day's worth of oil burned for eight days.

St. Lucia Day—On December 13th the festival of St. Lucia takes place and is celebrated by lighting candles, eating lussekatt buns and singing carols. This starts the Christmas holiday season for many people in Sweden.

Christmas—People around the world celebrate this Christian holiday that marks the birth of Jesus Christ. Many go to church, share meals with family and give gifts.

Kwanzaa—This holiday is celebrated from December 26th through January 1st by million of African Americans. The word kwanzaa means "first fruits" in Swahili. It is a time for families to get together and celebrate ancestors, family, culture and community.