



Winter Celebrations Around the World: About the Holiday



As the days grow short in the Northern Hemisphere, people around the world gather to celebrate light, family, and the turning of the year. From candlelit processions in Sweden to all-night poetry readings in Iran, every culture has its own warm traditions. This pack takes a tour of winter celebrations across the globe.

Winter celebrations take place from December through early January around the world. Dates shown are typical; some follow local, solar, or lunar calendars.

- Saint Lucia Day, December 13, is a festival of light celebrated in Sweden, Norway, and Finland.
- In Sweden, a girl chosen as Lucia wears a white gown and a crown of candles and leads a procession.
- Saffron buns called lussekatter are a favorite treat on Saint Lucia Day.
- Las Posadas, December 16 to 24, recalls Mary and Joseph's journey and search for shelter.
- Las Posadas is a beloved tradition in Mexico, and celebrations often include a star-shaped pinata.
- Yalda Night is celebrated on the winter solstice, the longest night of the year, in Iran and nearby lands.
- On Yalda Night, families stay up late with pomegranates and watermelon and read poems by Hafez.
- Dongzhi, the Chinese winter solstice festival, usually falls around December 21 to 23.
- For Dongzhi, families share tangyuan, sweet rice balls that symbolize family reunion.
- Hogmanay is Scotland's New Year festival, and singing Auld Lang Syne at New Year began there.
- On Hogmanay, the first visitor after midnight, the first-footer, may bring gifts such as coal or salt.
- Many Christians celebrate Epiphany, also called Three Kings Day, on January 6, honoring the Magi.