Discovering Winter Celebrations Around the World

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	

- Hanukkah
- Feast of the Immaculate Conception
- St. Lucia's Day
- Winter solstice festivities
- New Year's festivities

December 2026

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					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

- Epiphany
- Armenian Christmas
- Orthodox Christmas
- Yennayer
- Orthodox New Year
- Laba Festival

January 2027

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December

*December 4 to 12*z*



Hanukkah

his Jewish celebration, also known as the Festival of Lights, commemorates a miracle that is said to have taken place several thousand years ago in Jerusalem. According to tradition, a lamp that had only enough oil for a single day miraculously burned for eight days. This led to the use of the menorah, a candelabrum holding nine symbolic candles that are lit each day, one after another, until all of them are lit. A ninth candle, called the shamash, is used to light the others.

December 8



Feast of the Immaculate Conception

This Christian feast celebrates the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. Festivities vary from region to region and country to country, but they are known for the many lanterns and candles that light up windowsills, streets and public spaces in cities. The celebration is especially famous in Lyon, France, where it is called the Festival of Lights (Fête des Lumières), as well as in Colombia and Venezuela, where it is known as Día de las Velitas, or Little Candles Day.

December 13



St. Lucia's Day

In Scandinavian countries, a Nordic tradition involved lighting fires to drive away evil spirits during the longest nights of the year. Today, this celebration is known as St. Lucia's Day, in honour of a Christian martyr. This festival of light includes a candlelight procession of girls and boys dressed in white robes, singing together. To represent Lucia's illuminated hair, Swedish children wear a crown of lights made of candles or an electric garland, while holding a lit candle in their hands.

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December 21



Winter Solstice

Every year on December 21, festivals and celebrations take place in different parts of the world to mark the official start of winter in the Northern Hemisphere. Here are a few examples.

Shab-e Yalda

Celebrated in Iran and Afghanistan, among other places, Shab-e Yalda is one of the major holidays on the Persian calendar. During the celebration, it is very popular to eat red-fleshed fruits, such as pomegranates or watermelons. The colour red evokes fire, in tribute to the sun. This holiday is an opportunity to make wishes for the new year and to mark the end of fall.

Dongzhi

This important Chinese celebration takes place between December 21 and 23,* according to the Chinese solar calendar. It was originally a festival marking the end of the harvest, when workers returned from the fields to share the fruits of their hard work with their families. Today, families gather to celebrate the year gone by.

Yule

For Wiccans and neopagans, Yule celebrates the return of the sun and the beginning of longer days. This Nordic festival was originally celebrated in Scandinavia. A well-known Yule tradition is burning a Yule log to celebrate the sun's return. This custom was later adopted into Christmas traditions, and it inspired the Yule log cake (bûche de Noël) that many families enjoy today.

December 26 to January 1



Kwanzaa

This celebration of African culture honours the harvest, African heritage and seven community values, one for each day. The seven symbols highlighted during Kwanzaa are a straw mat, which symbolizes the foundation of the community; fruits and vegetables, which symbolize abundance; corn, which symbolizes growth and prosperity; a cup, which represents sharing; a kinara, or seven-branched candle holder, and homemade gifts, which represent creativity and intention. The seventh symbol, the unity of African peoples, is represented by the candles: three red, three green and one black, matching the colours of the Pan-African flag.

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December 31



New Year's Festivities

New Year's is a widely celebrated holiday around the world. However, traditions vary from country to country and culture to culture.

In Italy, Germany, Ireland and the United States, it is common to eat vegetables, sometimes leafy greens, as symbols of wealth and good fortune.

In some countries, it is common to eat pork as a symbol of prosperity for the year ahead.

In many parts of Colombia, people make large dolls (called Año Viejo, meaning "old year") out of old clothes and paper and burn them at midnight. The dolls symbolize the failures of the year that is ending.

Hundreds of millions of people around the world watch on television as the ball drops in New York's Times Square at midnight.

In the Netherlands, people welcome the new year by sounding the horns of all the ships in port.

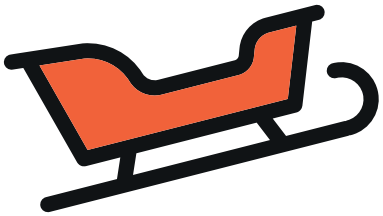
In Scotland, people celebrate Hogmanay. According to the tradition of "first-footing," the first person to cross the threshold of a home after midnight brings good luck for the year, especially if they bring a small symbolic gift, such as coal, shortbread or whisky.



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January

January 6

Epiphany

This holiday commemorates the visit of the Three Wise Men, who came to worship at the manger where Jesus had just been born. According to tradition (observed by some families in France, Quebec, Acadia, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Belgium and Lebanon), a cake called the galette des Rois (the kings' cake) is shared on the Feast of the Three Kings. A bean or a small porcelain figurine is hidden inside, and the person who finds it in their slice becomes king or queen for the day. In Mexico, families share a sweet, crown-shaped bread called rosca de reyes, which hides a small plastic figure of baby Jesus. In Spain, January 6 is a public holiday and one of the most important celebrations of the year, as it is the day the Three Kings bring gifts to children.

January 6

Armenian Christmas

Most Armenian churches celebrate Christmas on January 6, a date that goes back to the early centuries of Christianity. On this day, Armenians celebrate Christ's birth and his baptism in the Jordan River. For the occasion, families prepare dishes such as anoushabour, a dessert made with wheat and dried fruit.

January 7

Orthodox Christmas

Orthodox Christmas, observed in countries such as Russia, Serbia and Georgia, differs from Western Christmas in its date: it is celebrated on January 7, or 13 days later. This difference is due to the Orthodox Church's use of the Julian calendar, as opposed to the Gregorian calendar used in most of the world today. In Orthodox Christmas traditions, there is no Santa Claus. Believers observe a 40-day fast and refrain from exchanging gifts, focusing instead on the religious meaning of the occasion. Celebrations similar to those in Western countries take place at New Year's, when people give and receive gifts.

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January 14



Orthodox New Year

It is also known as the Old New Year. This tradition is still observed in countries such as Russia and Georgia, and informally in Ukraine. The holiday exists because of the Orthodox Church, which follows the Julian calendar. Although generally more low-key than New Year's on January 1 , this celebration remains an important occasion for family gatherings. Filled with nostalgia, it is marked by meals, toasts and songs wrapping up the holiday season in style.

January 12 to 14



Yennayer

(Berber New Year). Yennayer is the first day of the year in the agricultural calendar used since ancient times by the Berbers across North Africa (especially in Algeria and Morocco). Celebrated each year in different regions between January 12 and 14, this holiday coincides with January 1 in the Julian calendar, which runs 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar we commonly use. On this holiday, families traditionally share a hearty meal of legumes and couscous with poultry to symbolize abundance in the year ahead.

*January 15**



Laba Festival

The Laba Festival is a traditional Chinese holiday held on the eighth day of the twelfth month of the lunar calendar. On this day, it is customary to eat a special Laba congee, or rice porridge, usually made with at least eight ingredients that represent people's prayers for a good harvest. Many temples offer Laba congee to the public free of charge. This celebration kicks off the festivities leading up to the Lunar New Year, falling in the middle of winter.

**Dates in the Gregorian calendar, the one we use, change from year to year.*



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