

BRITISH FESTIVALS AND TRADITIONS
CHRISTMAS FACTS

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Christmas Day is celebrated by millions of Christians around the world, usually on December 25th. It is also a popular holiday celebrated by non-Christians. Christmas Day is an annual celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Although the exact date of Jesus' birth is unknown it is estimated to have been between 7 and 2 B.C. The date of December 25th was chosen in the 4th century. The popular customs of celebrating Christmas include gift-giving, sending holiday cards, Christmas trees and lights, carolling, a feast and church celebrations.

Interesting Christmas Facts:

The word Christmas originates from the words Christ's Mass. In old English (first recorded in 1038) it was referred to as Cristesmæsse, which literally means 'Christian Mass'.

A common figure known throughout the world and associated with Christmas is Santa Claus. Other popular Christmas figures include Christkind, Saint Nicholas, and Father Christmas.

Anglo-Saxons referred to the holiday as 'midwinter' or 'nativity'.

The word Noel entered the English language in the late 1300s. It originated from the Latin word 'natalis' which means 'day of birth'.

Christmas lights were invented in 1882 by Edward Johnson.

The first evidence of a Christmas tree is from a pamphlet that dates back to 1570.

In order for Santa to visit all the homes on Christmas Eve he would have to visit 822 homes each second.

The tradition of hanging stockings comes from a Dutch custom. They would leave shoes full of food for St. Nicolas' donkeys and St. Nicholas would then leave small gifts in return.

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12th century nuns left socks full of nuts, fruit and tangerines at the doors of the poor. This is where the tradition of putting tangerines in stockings came from.

The three wise men who visited Mary and Joseph when Jesus was born brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh as gifts. Some believe that Jesus was born in a cave and not a stable.

The tradition of Christmas carolling began as an old English custom. It was originally called wassailing and was a toast to long life.

St. Francis of Assisi began the custom of singing Christmas carols in church in the 13th century.

There are approximately 60 million trees grown in Europe each year.

The letter X in Xmas is a Greek abbreviation for Christ.

In 1950 the world's largest Christmas tree was placed in a Washington Mall. It was 221 feet high.

Jingle Bells was originally written by James Pierpont in 1857, for Thanksgiving not Christmas. It was originally called One Horse Open Sleigh.

The traditional Christmas meal in England before turkey was mustard and a pig's head.

The world's biggest snowman was 113 feet tall and was built in Maine.

The Christmas wreath is symbolic of Jesus. The red berries symbolize his blood and the holly represents the crown of thorns.

In Germany, they call Santa Kriss Kringle; in Italy they call him La Befana; in France they call him Pere Noel.

The best-selling Christmas song ever is White Christmas by Bing Crosby. It has sold more than 50 million copies around the world.