



LUNAR NEW YEAR

In China and other East Asian countries, Lunar New Year is the most important holiday of the year. For fifteen days, people celebrate with traditions like special dances, parades, fireworks, and family gatherings. The traditional Chinese calendar follows the cycles of the moon, so the new year falls sometime between late January and mid-February.

Red is the most important color during this holiday—it symbolizes luck, happiness, and prosperity. Children often receive *hóng bao*, red envelopes with money inside, from their elders. People eat foods with special meaning, too, like long noodles to symbolize a long life. Families enjoy time together and get excited for the coming year.



EID AL-FITR

Eid al-Fitr is a three-day Muslim holiday that means “festival of breaking fast” in Arabic. It’s a joyous time to celebrate everyone’s hard work during *Ramadan*, a month of special prayers, reflection, and going without food and drink from sunrise to sunset.

During the festival, girls wear their best outfits, and many cover their hair with a headscarf called a *hijab*. Families and friends wish each other “Eid Mubarak!” or “Happy Eid!” and enjoy delicious feasts. It’s also a time to shower others with presents! Children usually receive money in special envelopes, and families give gifts to people in need so that everyone can share in the Eid celebration.



CULTURAL Celebrations

Girls in the United States and around the world celebrate all kinds of different holidays. Each celebration has special clothes, decorations, and traditions to go along with it. Which of these holidays have you celebrated? Which would you love to learn more about?

Christmas

Christmas Day falls on December 25, and the entire month of December is a time to decorate Christmas trees with lights and ornaments, exchange gifts, and visit loved ones. Ham, sweet potatoes, fruit cake, and cookies are popular foods to eat. Many families have special recipes that they prepare year after year.

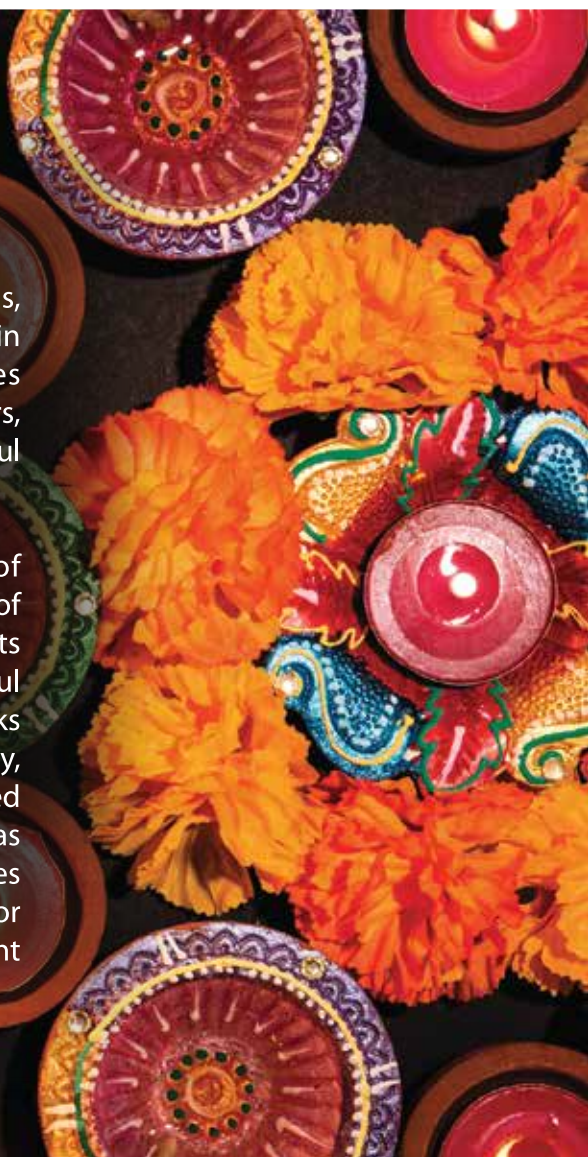
For Christians, Christmas Day honors the birth of Jesus. But the holiday is a special time for many non-Christians, too. For anyone who celebrates, the season is about more than gifts. It’s a time to spread cheer by sending cards, donating time or money to charities, and reconnecting with friends and family.



Diwali

Diwali is a five-day festival that Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists celebrate in India and all over the world. Families decorate their homes with flowers, clay lamps called *diyas*, and colorful sand designs called *rangoli*.

Diwali is known as the Festival of Lights and celebrates the victory of light over darkness. Colorful lights shine brightly, people wear beautiful new clothes, and spectacular fireworks light up the sky. But most importantly, Diwali is about celebrating with loved ones. Families share sweets such as *laddoos* and *burfi* and visit temples together to pray. Diwali is a time for unity when people from all different backgrounds celebrate together.



Hanukkah

Hanukkah, which means “dedication,” is an eight-day Jewish holiday that falls between late November and late December. It celebrates an ancient story about an oil lamp in a temple that miraculously burned for eight nights. Each night, families remember the miracle by lighting a candle on the Hanukkah *menorah*.

Hanukkah celebrations are full of family, games, and food. Children spin wooden *dreidels*, four-sided tops with Hebrew letters that mean “A great miracle happened here.” People enjoy foods fried in oil such as *suffkinyot* (jelly doughnuts) and *latkes* (potato pancakes). Many families also exchange gifts, especially chocolate coins called *gelt*. It’s a special time to celebrate the Hanukkah victory of light over darkness.



KWANZAA

Kwanzaa is a celebration of African and African American culture that lasts seven days, from December 26 to January 1. Every night, families around the world light one of the seven colored candles on the *kinara* (candle-holder) and talk about a special idea. For example, the first candle represents *umoja*, which means unity in Swahili.

During Kwanzaa, families display symbolic items, such as the *mkeka* (mat) and *kikombe cha umoja* (unity cup). Many girls wear colorful African-style dresses made with traditional *Ankara* fabric. Depending on the night, they might eat a feast, sing, read stories, dance, exchange small gifts, or even have a big celebration with other families.

