

christmas traditions around the world for kids

Christmas traditions around the world for kids are a delightful way to explore the diverse ways people celebrate this festive season. Every country has its unique customs, stories, and traditions that make Christmas special. From decorating trees to singing carols, the joy of Christmas is shared globally. In this article, we will take a journey around the world to discover how children and families celebrate Christmas in different cultures.

1. North America

United States

In the United States, Christmas is celebrated with a mix of cultural traditions. Here are some popular customs:

- Decorating the Christmas Tree: Families gather to decorate a pine tree with colorful lights, ornaments, and a star or angel on top.
- Santa Claus: Children eagerly await Santa Claus, who is said to deliver gifts on Christmas Eve. Many kids hang stockings by the fireplace for Santa to fill with treats.
- Christmas Cookies: Making and decorating cookies, especially gingerbread men, is a fun activity for kids. Families often leave cookies out for Santa along with a glass of milk.

Canada

In Canada, Christmas traditions are similar to those in the United States, but with some unique twists:

- The Christmas Market: Many Canadian cities host Christmas markets where families can shop for handmade gifts and enjoy festive foods.
- Celebrating with Family: Canadians emphasize family gatherings during Christmas. Families often come together for a holiday feast, which may include turkey, stuffing, and butter tarts.
- Boxing Day: The day after Christmas, known as Boxing Day, is a public holiday. Families often spend this day relaxing or shopping for post-Christmas sales.

2. Latin America

Mexico

In Mexico, Christmas celebrations are vibrant and full of traditions:

- Las Posadas: This nine-day celebration from December 16 to 24 represents Mary and Joseph's journey to find shelter. Children participate in reenactments, singing songs, and breaking piñatas.
- Nochebuena: On Christmas Eve, families gather for a big dinner that often includes tamales, bacalao (salted cod), and ponche (a warm fruit punch).
- La Misa de Gallo: Many families attend a midnight Mass called La Misa de Gallo (Rooster's Mass) on Christmas Eve.

Brazil

Christmas in Brazil is celebrated during the summer, and traditions reflect this warm season:

- Ceia de Natal: The Christmas dinner, known as Ceia de Natal, features dishes like roasted turkey, rice with raisins, and a variety of fruits.
- Papai Noel: Brazilian children await Papai Noel, or Father Christmas, who delivers gifts on Christmas Eve.
- Fireworks: In many cities, fireworks light up the sky at midnight on Christmas Eve, creating a festive atmosphere.

3. Europe

United Kingdom

In the UK, Christmas has a rich history of customs:

- Advent Calendars: Children enjoy counting down to Christmas with advent calendars, which often have chocolate or small gifts behind each door.
- Christmas Crackers: At Christmas dinner, families pull Christmas crackers, which pop open to reveal small gifts, jokes, and party hats.
- Boxing Day: Similar to Canada, Boxing Day is celebrated on December 26, with many people enjoying sports and visiting family.

Germany

Germany is known for its enchanting Christmas markets and traditions:

- Advent Wreath: Families create an Advent wreath with four candles, lighting one candle each Sunday leading up to Christmas.
- Christkind: In many regions, the Christkind (Christ Child) is believed to bring gifts on Christmas Eve, while in other areas, it is Santa Claus.
- Stollen: A traditional fruitcake called Stollen is enjoyed during the holiday season, often shaped like a baby Jesus in swaddling clothes.

4. Asia

Philippines

The Philippines is known for having one of the longest Christmas seasons, starting in September:

- Simbang Gabi: This tradition involves attending early morning Mass from December 16 to 24. Many families enjoy traditional foods like puto bumbong (purple rice cake) after Mass.
- Parol Lanterns: Children and families create colorful parol lanterns, which symbolize the Star of Bethlehem and are hung outside homes.
- Christmas Eve Feast: On Christmas Eve, families gather for a big feast called Noche Buena, sharing dishes like lechon (roast pig) and various desserts.

Japan

In Japan, Christmas is more of a festive occasion than a religious holiday:

- KFC for Christmas Dinner: A unique custom is to eat fried chicken from KFC on Christmas Day, which has become a popular tradition.
- Christmas Lights: Cities are adorned with beautiful Christmas lights and decorations, creating a magical atmosphere.
- Gift Giving: While not a widespread tradition, some families exchange gifts, often focusing on the joy of giving rather than the religious aspect.

5. Africa

South Africa

In South Africa, Christmas occurs during the summer, leading to outdoor celebrations:

- Braai (Barbecue): Many families celebrate with a braai, enjoying grilled meats and salads on Christmas Day.
- Caroling: Children often go caroling in their neighborhoods, spreading holiday cheer and receiving treats in return.
- Gift Giving: Similar to other countries, South African children look forward to receiving gifts from Santa Claus.

Ethiopia

Ethiopian Christmas, known as Genna, is celebrated on January 7:

- Church Services: Many families attend church services that can last for hours, celebrating the birth of Christ.

- Traditional Foods: A traditional feast often includes injera (a type of flatbread) and doro wat (spicy chicken stew).
- Cultural Games: Children may participate in traditional games and sports during the festive season.

Conclusion

Christmas traditions around the world for kids are a wonderful way to learn about different cultures and the spirit of giving and joy. Whether it's decorating trees, sharing meals, or participating in unique customs, children can appreciate the diversity of celebrations that mark this special time of year. Exploring these traditions can foster understanding, appreciation, and a sense of global community among kids, making the holiday season even more enriching and enjoyable. So, as Christmas approaches, consider how different cultures celebrate, and perhaps try incorporating some of these wonderful traditions into your own family celebrations!

Frequently Asked Questions

What do children in Sweden do to celebrate Christmas?

Children in Sweden celebrate by dressing up as 'St. Lucia' on December 13th, wearing white robes and a crown of candles, and they often sing songs to welcome the light.

How do kids in Mexico celebrate Las Posadas?

Kids in Mexico celebrate Las Posadas by reenacting Mary and Joseph's search for shelter, going door to door, singing carols, and eventually enjoying a festive party with food and piñatas.

What unique Christmas tradition do kids in Japan enjoy?

In Japan, a popular Christmas tradition for kids is to eat KFC chicken, as many families order it for their Christmas dinner, making it a special treat.

What do children in Italy do on Christmas Eve?

On Christmas Eve, children in Italy often participate in a feast called 'La Vigilia,' which includes a variety of fish dishes, and they might also set up a Nativity scene.

What is a fun Christmas tradition in the Philippines?

In the Philippines, children enjoy the 'Parol' festival, where they make and display colorful star-shaped lanterns to symbolize the Star of Bethlehem.

How do kids in Germany celebrate Advent?

In Germany, children celebrate Advent by opening a door on an Advent calendar each day of December, leading up to Christmas, often finding small treats or chocolates inside.

What is the tradition of 'Three Kings Day' for kids in Spain?

In Spain, children celebrate 'Three Kings Day' on January 6th by receiving gifts, as they believe the Three Wise Men bring presents, and they often enjoy a special cake called 'Rosca de Reyes.'

What do kids in Australia do to celebrate Christmas during summer?

In Australia, kids celebrate Christmas during the summer by having barbecues on the beach, playing outdoor games, and sometimes enjoying a festive lunch with traditional foods like seafood.

What Christmas tradition do children in Norway have involving trolls?

In Norway, children believe that trolls and other mythical creatures come out during Christmas, so they leave out porridge for them on Christmas Eve to keep them happy.

What do Russian children look forward to on New Year's Eve instead of Christmas?

In Russia, children look forward to New Year's Eve instead of Christmas, when they receive gifts from Ded Moroz (Father Frost) and his granddaughter Snegurochka, celebrating with fireworks and festive meals.

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