

Curious Christmas



ICELAND: a nation of books lovers

People celebrate Christmas in a different way around the world and Iceland is not an exception.

They eat the typical Christmas food: lamb, pork and leaf bread (a traditional kind of bread cut with geometric patterns). This is not so strange, but keep reading.

Can you imagine unwrapping your presents and going into bed instead of playing or using your gifts? This is how Icelanders celebrate Christmas Eve and it's called *Jólabókaflóð*. Jolabokafloð means "Christmas book flood" in English, because, on that day, there are books in every Icelandic house.

During World War II there wasn't much food or clothes, but there was no problem with paper, so books were a great present. On the 24th of December, Icelanders open their presents, many of them are books and start reading them immediately. Also, it's cold and icy in the winter, so the best option is to get into bed with a mug of a hot drink while reading the first pages of new books.

There is another interesting tradition, 13 days before Christmas Eve, children leave their shoes next to the windows and the 13 Yule Lads, the sons of two trolls, leave small presents. The trolls leave candy if the child has good behaviour, but they leave rotten food if the child has bad behaviour.

This tradition is nice: going into bed with a new book and a cup of hot cocoa sounds yummy!

A HOT Christmas!

When you think of Christmas time, you normally think of winter. However, in Australia this holiday is totally different from other countries, it is like the upside down world.

Australians celebrate Christmas in summer and summer in Australia starts from mid December to March. Do you imagine Christmas in summer? Everything is different. Many people decorate their front doors, houses and gardens with flowers and lights. At night, neighbours visit each other to look at the decorations.

Curiously, children change the lyrics for Christmas Carols and songs about snow, winter and cold. That is why they have their own and original Australian Carols.

On the 25th of December, Santa brings presents to children surfing instead of flying with his reindeers. He normally changes his clothes to swimsuits and flip-flops due to the high temperatures.

Families exchange their presents and visit their friends. At lunchtime, they often have barbecues at the beach with seafood such as prawns and lobsters. At night, most people have a light and cold dinner along with some traditional desserts like pavlova (a cake made of meringue, whipped cream and fruit), trifle (a cake with fruit covered with cream, custard and jelly) and Christmas puddings (made with flour and dried fruit). Six days later, on 31st December, Australians are one of the first ones to say hello to the new year due to the time zone difference.

SWEETS fill the streets

On December 24th, people celebrate Christmas' Eve. At home, each Spanish family gets together at dinnertime. The most typical food is turkey, but this changes depending where you are in Spain. However, after dinner many people eat a variety of traditional sweets for example: mantecados, polvorones and turrones.

The most important day, the 31st of December, begins. On New Year's Eve families and friends have dinner and they eat seafood, lamb or turkey. Also, some friends celebrate this day together and they buy food and fizzy drinks, choose the music and the party starts. What's interesting is that at 12 o'clock everybody eats twelve grapes, if you eat all of them, you will have a lucky year ahead.

There are two important days in January. The 5th of January is amazing. This is a party for kids where people eat the traditional Three Wise Men's cake (a ring-shaped cake stuffed with cream and fruits). After that, the parade of the Three Kings goes down the avenues and they throw sweets and even some small presents to the crowd, filling the streets with candies. At night, The Three Wise Men bring presents for kids and the next day in the morning, January 6th, every children open their presents. Then, they play with their new toys all day.

santa's dancing with dragons

Few people in China are Christian. However, only big cities and some people celebrate Christmas. They decorate streets and department stores with Christmas trees, lights and other decorations.

How can you feel the Christmas spirit on this special day in this country? The postmen and women dress up as Santa when working, young people get together to go out with their friends and young couples exchange presents. Interestingly, on Christmas Eve (24th December), people in stores give apples as a symbol of a peaceful and quiet evening, they call this day the "Silent Night."

On Christmas Day, Santa gives presents to people at shopping centres. Chinese call Santa the "Old Christmas Man" and people sing Christmas Carols while opening their presents. They celebrate this day by having a feast. They eat pork, jiaozi (Chinese raviolis), spring rolls, huoshao (a sweet baked roll) and rice.

However, Chinese people celebrate the most famous festival sometime in January or in February. Chinese New Year starts with the new moon until the next full moon, they call this holiday "Spring Festival." Celebrations include fireworks, red clothes and bright decorations.

Before welcoming the new year, people clean their homes in order to say goodbye to bad luck. The last event during these holidays is the "Lantern Festival" where people carry lanterns during a parade at night, and there is also a long, colourful dragon dancing on the streets as a symbol of good fortune.



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