

# WINTER HOLIDAYS IN ENGLAND



IN ENGLAND, AS IN EVERY COUNTRY, THE MOST  
POPULAR AND AWAITING HOLIDAYS ARE  
CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR.



# CHRISTMAS

Christmas Day is celebrated in the United Kingdom on December 25. The tradition of Christmas observance is believed to have begun in England in 596 AD, when St Augustine landed on her shores with the message of Christianity on his lips.

In most of the countries of the UK, the festive season begins at Advent. During this time, holly wreaths are made with three pink, one white and one purple candle.



Shops however, start selling Christmas decorations from mid-November to enthusiastic Christmas shoppers who prefer to have a one-upmanship over their friends and neighbours. In England as well as in most other nations of the U.K., the beautiful Christmas Trees are an essential part of traditional Christmas decorations. In England, the decorating of Christmas trees has been widely popular since around the 1850s when Prince Albert had a Christmas tree set up in Windsor Castle for his wife Queen Victoria and their children. In modern times, the Christmas decorative items last until 6 January (Epiphany). It is considered bad luck to have these at home even after this date. The present day Christmas festivities here sees the celebrators adorning their homes with Christmas trees, lights, tinsel and other decorative items in the days counting to the festival.



# TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS DINNER

The traditional Christmas dinner in England is a mouthwatering affair with the main dish being roasted turkey with vegetables and sauces. The dessert is usually a rich, fruity Christmas pudding with brandy sauce. For English kids, Christmas is the time to have fun with family and friends and receive gifts from Father Christmas, a Santa Claus-like figure, who is pictured as wearing a long red or green robe. This lover of children is said to leave presents for them in their stockings (or pillowcases that they hang at the end of their bed) on Christmas Eve. The gifts are usually opened on Christmas Day, though not until afternoon.



# The festive spirit

THE FESTIVE SPIRIT CAN BE DISCERNED ALL OVER BRITAIN WITH MOST PUBLIC PLACES SUCH AS DEPARTMENTAL STORES, GIFT SHOPS, TOWN HALLS AND RESTAURANTS DECORATED BEAUTIFULLY WITH ELECTRIC LIGHTS AND FESTOONS FOR THE OCCASION. CHURCHES AND CATHEDRALS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY HOLD MASSES, WITH MANY PEOPLE ATTENDING THE MIDNIGHT MASS ON CHRISTMAS EVE, OR A SERVICE ON CHRISTMAS MORNING. FOR CATHOLICS, IT IS ONE OF THE MAIN HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION.

In London and the provinces, a number of theatres traditionally organize for kids a special Christmas pantomime based not on Biblical tales but on such popular children's stories such as Little Red Riding Hood and Aladdin, with a subtle connection to the festival being made deliberately.



# The Boxing Day

IN ENGLAND THE DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS IS CALLED BOXING DAY, NAMED SO BECAUSE YOUNG BOYS USED TO GO AROUND ON THIS DAY COLLECTING MONEY IN CLAY BOXES. THE BOXES WERE SMASHED OPEN, WHEN THEY WERE FULL. THE BOXING DAY IS STILL CELEBRATED IN THE UK. IT IS A BANK HOLIDAY IN ENGLAND. IF IT HAPPENS TO FALL ON A WEEKEND, THEN A SPECIAL BANK HOLIDAY IS DECLARED ON MONDAY.



# NEW YEAR

On New Year's Eve (December 31), just before midnight, many people turn on a television to show pictures of one of the four clocks on the Clock Tower on the Palace of Westminster, or Houses of Parliament, in London counting down the last minutes of the old year. At midnight, as the New Year begins, the chimes of Big Ben, the bell inside the Clock Tower, are broadcast to mark the start of the New Year. Champagne or other sparkling wines are often served at this point.

Many people hold parties at home or go out to pubs or night clubs. These parties often continue into the early hours of the morning. Hence, for many people, New Year's Day is time for recovering from the excesses of the night before. For others, it is the last day of the Christmas holiday before they return to work. Some take the opportunity to carry out home improvements or to go for a walk in the country. In many places around the United Kingdom's coast, groups of people dress up in fancy costumes and run into the cold sea. Many people make New Year's resolutions. These are promises to themselves that they will lead a better life in some way in the coming year. Common New Year's resolutions include stopping smoking, losing weight, eating more healthily, getting more exercise or spending less money. Some types of resolution that would lead to a healthier lifestyle are supported by government advertising campaigns.





# Public life

NEW YEAR'S DAY IS A BANK HOLIDAY. IF JANUARY 1 IS A SATURDAY OR SUNDAY, THE BANK HOLIDAY FALLS ON MONDAY, JANUARY 2 OR 3. NEARLY ALL SCHOOLS, LARGE BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS ARE CLOSED. IN SOME AREAS STORES MAY BE OPEN, ALTHOUGH THIS VARIES A LOT. PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEMS DO NOT USUALLY RUN ON THEIR NORMAL TIMETABLES. IN GENERAL, PUBLIC LIFE SHUTS DOWN COMPLETELY ON NEW YEAR'S DAY.

