

## Fall/Winter Observances

There are myriad observances worldwide in the months leading up to the northern hemisphere's winter solstice, and the month afterward. It's valuable to recognize the origins of these observances, and to acknowledge that others recognize different events and celebrate differently than you may.

VIDEO: [Christmas before Christ - Yule & Other Northern European Traditions](#)

Event	Date [ <i>calendar</i> ]	Country: culture/religion	Observance of:	Notes	Sources
<b>Thanksgiving</b>	Second Monday of October [ <i>Gregorian calendar, solar</i> ]	Canada	Harvest	Time to gather with family for a hearty meal	VIDEO: <a href="#">Canadian Thanksgiving Explained</a>
<b>Diwali</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> day of 8 <sup>th</sup> month of Kartika [ <i>Hindu calendar, lunar</i> ]  Falls during late October to early November on the Gregorian calendar	India: Hinduism	Victory of Lord Rama over Ravana and Rama's rescue of his kidnapped wife Sita; victory of good over evil, light over darkness	Joyful and loud celebrations, lots of fireworks, firecrackers, and oil lamps (diyas) lit, cleaning the house s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Children's book</b> <a href="#">Binny's Diwali</a></li> <li>• Global News video clip <a href="#">What is Diwali</a></li> </ul>
		India: Jainism	Spiritual awakening of lord <a href="#">Mahavira</a>		
		India: Sikhism	Guru Hargobind's return to Amritsar after being imprisoned		
		India/Nepal: Buddhism	Varies, incl. prayers to Lakshmi, or to celebrate emperor Ashoka's commitment to peaceful living		
<b>Samhain</b> pronounced "SAH-win"	31 October [ <i>Gregorian calendar, solar</i> ]	Ireland/Scotland, Celtic neopagans, Wiccans, non-religious people of Irish/Scottish ancestry	End of harvest season, beginning of winter	Per Irish mythology this was the time of year when the otherworld was nearest, the dead closest to the living. There would be ritual bonfires, dressing up in costumes going from house to house and singing songs or reciting verses in exchange for food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARTICLE: <a href="#">Samhain</a> (Wikipedia)</li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">How to celebrate Samhain</a></li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Misunderstood Moments - The Celtic Origins of Halloween</a></li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">What is Samhain? Finland's Kekri   Irish Folklore</a></li> </ul>
<b>Day of the Dead</b>	1-2 Nov [ <i>Gregorian calendar, solar</i> ]	Mexico	Remembrance of loved ones who have passed	Families clean up gravesites and spend the night alongside flower and candle adorned graves of their loved ones. Orange <i>cempacuchil</i> flowers and skulls are common decorations, sugar skulls, <i>pan de muerto</i> (bread of the dead) are common sweets. Families set up ofrendas (altars) where photos of deceased loved ones are set up along with their favorite foods and beverages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See <a href="#">YouTube playlist</a> of informational videos</li> <li>• <b>Children's film</b> <a href="#">Coco</a> (Disney/Pixar)</li> </ul>
<b>Labor Thanksgiving Day</b>	23 November [ <i>Gregorian calendar, solar</i> ]	Japan: non-religious	Respecting labor, celebrating production, thanking fellow citizens	First observed in 1948. Origins of the holiday are from <i>Niiname-sai</i> or <i>Niiname-no-Matsuri</i> , a harvest ritual/celebration of the Shinto religion, traditionally held on the last <i>Day of the Rabbit</i> of the eleventh month of the old lunar calendar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">What Japan's "Kinrokansya no Hi" is Like / Labor Thanksgiving Day in Japan / November 23rd</a></li> </ul>
<b>National Day of Mourning</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday in November [ <i>Gregorian calendar, solar</i> ]	United States: Indigenous peoples	Honoring ancestors, acknowledging current struggles of Native people, remembrance, spiritual connection, protest of racism and oppression, dispelling of Thanksgiving mythology	First observance in 1970.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WEBSITE: <a href="#">United American Indians of New England</a></li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Why these native American observe a national day of mourning each Thanksgiving</a> (Huffington Post)</li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">The Harsh truth about Thanksgiving</a> (NowThis News)</li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Smoke Signals – Why the Story of Thanksgiving is a Lie</a> (TNX TV)</li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Everything you know about Thanksgiving is WRONG</a> (MTV Impact)</li> </ul>

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<b>Hanukkah</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> day of 3 <sup>rd</sup> month of Kislev [ <i>Hebrew calendar, lunisolar</i> ] Falls during late Nov to late December on the Gregorian calendar	Worldwide: Judaism	Miracle of the oil - following the overthrow of dictator Antiochus the Jews under the Maccabee family observed that one day's worth of sacred oil burned in the temple for eight days	Celebration lasts 8 days, foods traditionally fried in oil, such as latkes (potato pancakes); one candle is lit per night for eight nights, gifts given each night, a game is played with a dreidel (top) with labeled sides and children can win gelt (candy money)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Children's film</b> <a href="#">Lamb Chop's Special Chanukah</a> (YouTube)</li> </ul>
<b>Saturnalia</b>	17-23 December [ <i>Julian Calendar, solar</i> ]	Ancient Rome	Honor of the god Saturn	SEE ALSO: Mithra, Persian deity in Zoroastrian religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Saturnalia - Rome's Awesome Pagan Christmas DOCUMENTARY</a></li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">The mystery cult of Mithras Sol Invictus</a></li> </ul>
<b>Dongzhi</b>	~21 December [ <i>Gregorian calendar, solar</i> ]	China: cultural	Winter solstice	People worship ancestors, make and eat tongyuan (sweet glutinous rice balls, served hot)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARTICLE: <a href="#">Dongzhi Festival</a> (Wikipedia)</li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Celebrating Dongzhi with Tang Yuan</a></li> <li>• <b>Children's show</b> <a href="#">Stillwater, S1E13 "The Way Home"</a> (Apple TV)</li> </ul>
<b>Winter (Solstice) various</b>	Winter ~21 December in present day Gregorian calendar	(a) Finland: Lapland, Sámi shamanism (b) Nordic countries/Norse mythology	Winter solstice	(a) Beavi, a sun goddess of the Sámi, the indigenous people of the Nordic countries, was also said to fly through the heavens in a sled surrounded by reindeer antlers on the Winter Solstice with her daughter, Beavi-nieida (sun maiden). Sámi Shaman would visit people in winter for healing rituals using <i>amanita muscaria</i> (red cap) mushrooms, would sometimes drop down the chimney when doors were snowed over, and would receive food before they left in reindeer drawn sleighs. The <i>World Tree</i> and the <i>Pole Star</i> parallel Christmas tree and star topper traditions, and reindeer who have eaten the <i>amanita muscaria</i> may appear playful (see: "reindeer games"). (b) The Norse goddess Freyja or Frigga is a spinning goddess who sits at her wheel during the Winter Solstice, weaving the future fates of the year to come. The solstice celebration of Frigga was called Yule, from the Norse word for wheel. Even today, the Christmas wreath was based on Frigga's "Wheel of Fate."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VIDEO/ARTICLE: <a href="#">Santa is a Psychedelic Mushroom</a> (NYT)</li> <li>• Article/audio: <a href="#">Did 'Shrooms Send Santa And His Reindeer Flying?</a> (NPR)</li> <li>• Video: <a href="#">The Astonishing Connections Between Santa and Amanita Muscaria</a> (FreshCap Mushrooms)</li> <li>• Article: <a href="#">The psychedelic secrets of Santa</a>, by Dana Larsen (<a href="#">Catalyst Magazine, Dec 2009 issue</a>)</li> <li>• ARTICLE: <a href="#">Women of the Deer Mother's Solstice</a></li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Storytelling: Deer Mother – an ancient folktale retold</a></li> <li>• ARTICLE: <a href="#">Remembering the Deer Mother of Winter Solstice</a></li> </ul>
<b>Welcoming the return of the light on turtle island</b>	~21 December in present-day <i>Gregorian calendar, solar</i>	Present day United States: Indigenous/First Nation peoples	Winter solstice, winter festival(s)	"Turtle Island" is the term used to describe the earth, which is said to sit on the back of a giant turtle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARTICLE: <a href="#">Winter solstice amongst indigenous in the US</a> (Ark Republic)</li> </ul>
<b>Panquetzalitzli</b>	All 20 days of the 15 <sup>th</sup> month of the Aztec calendar (~21 December in present-day <i>Gregorian calendar, solar</i> )	Present day Mexico: Aztec (Mexico) empire	Winter solstice, Aztec sun deity Huitzilopochtli defeats his older sister, the moon goddess Coyolxauqui		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARTICLE: <a href="#">5 Indigenous Winter Solstice Celebrations That Honor the Shortest Day of the Year</a> (ReMezcla)</li> </ul>
<b>Alban Arthan</b>	~21 December in present-day <i>Gregorian calendar, solar</i>	Celtic/druid	Winter solstice	Some Druid Orders believe this means the Light of the hero King Arthur Pendragon symbolically reborn as the Sun Child (The Mabon) at Solstice. Others see the Light belonging to the star constellation the Great Bear (or the Plough) – Art(hur) being Gaelic for Bear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARTICLE: <a href="#">Winter Solstice – Alban Arthan</a> (Druidry.org)</li> </ul>
<b>Yule</b>	21 December – 01 January [ <i>early Germanic regional calendars, lunisolar, predating the Julian calendar</i> ]	Germanic paganism	Winter solstice	Origin of such traditions as: the Yule log, the Yule goat, the Yule boar, Yule singing. Connected to the Wild Hunt, the god Odin, and pagan Anglo-Saxon Mōdraniht ("Mothers' Night").	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARTICLE: <a href="#">Yule</a> (Wikipedia)</li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Yule preparations   Pagan Yule stories &amp; history</a></li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Origin of the Yule Goat</a></li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Mothers Night   Reconstructing The Pagan Celebration of Modranecht</a></li> </ul>

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<b>Sol Invictus</b> <i>(unconquered sun)</i> <b>Solis Invicti</b>	25 December [ <i>Gregorian calendar, solar</i> ]	(a) Ancient Rome (b) United States: The Satanic Temple (TST)	(a) Celebration of the Roman sun god (b) Celebration of being unconquered by superstition and consistent in the pursuit and sharing of knowledge		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">TST Boston: Sol Invictus</a></li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Christmas, Christianity and Mithras</a></li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Did Christmas copy the sun god's birthday?</a></li> </ul>
<b>Christmas and related</b>	25 December, with associated observances ranging from early December to early January [ <i>Gregorian calendar, solar</i> ]	Iceland: cultural	Christian birth of Jesus and Winter Solstice traditions	Giant/ogress/troll Gryla kidnaps and eats naughty children. She and her third husband Leppalúi have 13 sons, the Yule Lads, who play pranks on people and steal items in the 13 days before and after Christmas. Their cat, the Yule Cat Jolakotturrinn, roams the countryside during Christmas time and eats people who haven't received and worn any new clothes by Christmas Eve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARTICLE: <a href="#">Icelandic Christmas Folklore</a> (Wikipedia)</li> <li>• <b>Children's show Hilda, S2E10 "The Yule Lads"</b> (Netflix)</li> </ul>
		Wales	varies	A horse skull is mounted on a pole and the person carrying it is covered by a cloth. The horse and accompanying group go from house to house singing or reciting verses asking to be let in. Each house is expected to have witty replies denying entry but eventually lets the crowd in for food and drink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARTICLE: <a href="#">The tradition of the Welsh Christmas Horse Skull</a></li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Mari Lwyd (The Ghastly Christmas Horse of Wales)</a></li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Mari Lwyd - The Welsh Sources and Meaning</a></li> <li>• SONG: <a href="#">Mari Lwyd</a> (Carreg Lafar)</li> </ul>
		Dutch, Germanic, Russian	Varies	Father Frost (Russian) rewards good children with gifts Dark and hairy Krampus (Germanic) punishes naughty children Black Pete (Dutch) accompanies Saint Nicholas on 5-6 December and either entertains the children or punishes those who are naughty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARTICLE: <a href="#">Father Frost</a> (Wikipedia)</li> <li>• ARTICLE: <a href="#">Krampus</a> (Wikipedia)</li> <li>• ARTICLE: <a href="#">Zwarte Piet</a> (Wikipedia)</li> </ul>
		Spanish-speaking countries	Novenas/ Posadas nine nights prior to Christmas	Prayers or community processions through neighborhoods representing Mary and Joseph seeking a place to rest where Mary could give birth. See "sources" for info on traditional foods FOOD/DRINK: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Turrón</a> (Spain)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Hallacas</a> (Venezuela)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Buñuelos</a> (various)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Champurrado</a> (Mexico)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Ponche Navideño</a> (various)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Las Posadas for Kids</a></li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Celebrating Las Posadas</a></li> <li>• SEE ALSO: <a href="#">Spain's Christmas lottery</a></li> <li>ORIGIN OF "POINSETTIA":</li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Cuetlaxochitl</a> (Apromeci, Defense Association for Indigenous Culture and Medicine)</li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Cuetlaxochitl</a></li> </ul>
		Spain: Catalonia (Autonomous community in Northeastern Spain)	Local folklore incorporated into Christmas	<u>Caga Tió</u> : Families will set out a log with a painted face and blanket; this is called " <u>Caga Tió</u> " ('crapping log' in Catalan language). Families set out food for him on nights leading to Christmas. On Christmas Eve they sing a song (and beat the log with a wet stick), then remove gifts or sweets from under the blanket, which the log 'pooped' out. <u>Caganer</u> : A figurine of a man with pants pulled down, pooping outdoors to fertilize the land; he is placed in nativity scenes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Caganer - the defecating Catalan Christmas figurine</a></li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">The crowning jewel of Catalonia's nativity: the crapper</a></li> <li>• SONG: <a href="#">Caga Tio (Crapping Log)</a></li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Christmas Caga Tio</a></li> </ul>
		Spanish-speaking countries	Three Kings day (06 Jan)	Celebration of the Three Wise Men visiting baby Jesus, according to the Julian calendar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">What is El Dia de los Reyes Magos</a></li> </ul>
<b>Kwanzaa</b>	26 December – 01 January [ <i>Gregorian calendar, solar</i> ]	United States: Black/African American culture	African heritage of Black people in the United States, community and resilience	Celebration of Black history for African Americans. This holiday was first celebrated in 1966 and focuses on seven principles: (1) Unity (2) self-determination (3) collective work and responsibility (4) cooperative economics (5) purpose (6) creativity (7) faith Families will set up a Kinara (candle holder) with seven candles, three red, three green, one black, set out produce, corn, a unity cup, and exchange homemade gifts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Learn about Kwanzaa for kids</a> (Mr. Pete's Playhouse)</li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">Unpacking the Future of Kwanzaa in the Black Community</a> (The Root)</li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">A Brief History of the Kwanzaa Holiday and Six Amazing Facts</a> (Matter of Factx)</li> <li>• VIDEO: <a href="#">What Is Kwanzaa and How Is It Celebrated?</a> (Inside Edition)</li> </ul>