

Best Practice Network Advent Calendar



Syria

1

Those who celebrate Christmas, receive gifts from the smallest camel of the Three Wise Men. The legend has it that, baby Jesus gave the smallest camel eternal life to reward its commitment after it tirelessly travelled to Bethlehem to meet him.



Christmas Wreath

3

Wreaths became popular in the UK by Queen Victoria's German husband, Prince Albert. They were first exchanged by friends and family to represent the sun and its hopeful return.



Scotland

5

New Year's Eve, known as Hogmanay, is the main celebration in Scotland with "The Bells" ringing at midnight. People sing "Auld Lang Syne" and welcome in a "First Footer", the first visitor, who must bring a gift.



6

On Christmas Eve in Iceland, people exchange books. They call this the "Book Flood" (Jolabokaflod). Families spend their evening together reading, drinking hot cocoa and eating Icelandic chocolates.

Norway

2

In Norway they start Christmas celebrations on Christmas Eve. On the 24th of December, they hide all the household brooms as they believe mischievous spirits would steal them and fly over the towns.



Philippines

4

In the Philippines they decorate their streets and houses with colourful giant lanterns called Parol. The star represents the Star of Bethlehem for hope and goodwill.



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Italy

On the 5th of January, excited children prepare for a late-night visit from La Befana by hanging up socks to be filled with small delights. La Befana, “the good witch of Christmas”, is a kind, old witch who delivers presents on the 6th of January.



9

Australia

Christmas is celebrated a little differently in Australia, with most people visiting the beach. It is not uncommon to see surfing Santa’s hitting the waves. Christmas dinner is usually shrimp and lobster cooked on the BBQ.



11

Mince pies

Mince pies became famous at Christmas in the UK by the Tudors. They started by containing real mince meat with fruits! By the Victorian era, the meat had been replaced by fruits but the name stayed the same.

8

In Poland, Christmas Eve is the most important part of Christmas celebrations and festivities begin when the first star appears in the sky. It is also customary to set an extra place at the table for a lone stranger or someone out of luck.

Poland



10

Celebrated worldwide by people of the Jewish faith, Hanukkah falls between November and December. It lasts eight days with an extra candle on the menorah to be lit every evening.

Hanukkah



12

In Japan instead of Christmas dinner, they eat Kentucky Fried Chicken! This began in the 70s when the fried chicken was the closest meat to turkey the visitors could get.

Japan



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India

As it is difficult to get European traditional Christmas trees in India, those who celebrate Christmas decorate banana and mango trees instead! They also use mango leaves to decorate inside their homes.



15

Germany

The Christmas pickle is an old German tradition. A glass ornament of a pickle is the last to be placed on the tree. On Christmas morning, the first child to find the pickle is given the first gift, or a special gift to open.



17

Venezuela

It is common to strap on your roller skates and glide to Christmas "cockerel's" mass beginning at dawn. Skating to the mass became so popular that streets are officially closed to traffic until 8am so families can skate together in safety.



18

It is a tradition in Ukraine to have a spider web decoration on the Christmas tree. It comes from a story of a poor family who couldn't afford to decorate their tree. A spider, who was thankful for the household warmth, spun beautiful decorations on their tree, saving Christmas and bringing good luck to the family.

Spain

14

Children write letters to one or all of the Three Kings (known in the UK as the Three Wise Men), who will bring them gifts on the 6th of January. Cities host colourful street parades where the Three Kings are played by local celebrities.



Sweden

16

Traditionally, the Yule goat was a spirit that would appear before Christmas to make sure that the festive preparations were going well. With time, the goat became a gift giver and is sometimes seen in place of or alongside Santa.



Ukraine



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Christmas Crackers

Invented in the UK by a sweet maker called Tom Smith. Firstly Christmas Crackers were bon-bon sweets with a riddle included. Mr Smith worked with a firework shop to create the bang we have today!



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Greece

Instead of Christmas trees, the Greeks decorate their boats with Christmas lights. This tradition, called "Karavaki", is a symbol of hope for the fishermen to return home from their fishing trips.



23

China

In Mandarin, the word for *apple* and *Christmas* is very similar, so Chinese people started a tradition of gifting apples. The apples are decorated in colourful wrapping paper or placed in sparkling boxes strewn with festive greetings.

22

New Zealand is known for having its own, very special Christmas tree. It's called a Pohutukawa tree. They grow amazing bright red flowers that are in full bloom by Christmas.



24

Christmas Stockings

The story has it that Saint Nick threw a bag of gold down a chimney for those in need. It landed in a sock drying by the fire, giving a beginning to this popular tradition. In today's stockings children find their Christmas presents.

