

Christmas in the United Kingdom

Most families have a Christmas Tree (or maybe even two!) in their house for Christmas. The decorating of the tree is usually a family occasion, with everyone helping. Christmas Trees were first popularised in the UK by Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria. Prince Albert was German, and thought that it would be good to use one of his ways of celebrating Christmas in to England. Holly, Ivy and Mistletoe are also sometimes used to decorate homes or other buildings. Most villages, towns and cities are decorated with Christmas lights over Christmas. Often a famous person switches them on. The most famous Christmas lights in the UK are in Oxford Street in London. Every year they get bigger and better. Thousands of people go to watch the big 'switch on' around the beginning of November.



Children believe that Father Christmas or Santa Claus leaves presents in stockings or pillow-cases. These are normally hung up by the fire or by the children's beds on Christmas Eve. Children sometimes leave out mince pies and brandy for Father Christmas to eat and drink when he visits them. Now, some people say that a non-alcoholic drink should be left for Santa as he has to drive!



Children write letters to Father Christmas/Santa listing their requests, but sometimes instead of putting them in the post, the letters are tossed into the fireplace. The draught carries the letters up the chimney and Father Christmas/Santa reads the smoke.

There are some customs that only take place, or were started, in the UK. Was-sailing is an old Anglo-Saxon custom that doesn't take place much today. Boxing Day is a very old custom that started in the UK and is now taken as

a holiday in many countries around the world.



In the UK, the main Christmas Meal is usually eaten at lunchtime or early afternoon on Christmas Day. It's normally roast turkey, roast vegetables and 'all the trimmings' which means vegetables like carrots & peas, stuffing and sometimes bacon and sausages. It's often served with cranberry sauce and bread sauce. Traditionally, and before turkey was available, roast beef or goose was the main Christmas meal. One vegetable that is often at Christmas in the UK are brussel sprouts. I love them but lots of people don't! Dessert is often Christmas Pudding. Mince pies and lots of chocolates are often eaten as well!

The dinner table is decorated with a Christmas Cracker for each person and sometimes flowers and candles. The UK is also famous for Christmas Cake - some people love it and some people really don't like it! It's traditionally a rich fruit cake covered with marzipan and icing - and often top with Christmas themed cake decorations like a spring of holly



In the UK, it doesn't snow very often, but people always want to know if it will be a 'White Christmas'. The British definition, used by the UK Meteorological Office (who say if it has been a White Christmas in the UK or not!), is that a single snowflake has been seen falling in the 24 hours of Christmas Day! This doesn't happen a lot in the UK!



One sure way of getting some snow into Christmas in the UK is by watching the popular cartoon 'The Snowman' which is about a boy's adventure when his snowman comes to life. The animation was first shown on UK TV on Boxing Day in 1982. It's based on a story book

of the same name by the children's author and illustrator Raymond Briggs. For many families, it's now a 'must watch' over Christmas. The Snowman also featured the song "Walking in the Air". In the animation, it was sung by Peter Auty, a choirboy at St Paul's Cathedral in London. However, the song became very famous in 1985 when it was used in a Christmas TV advert for the 'Toys "R" Us' chain in the UK. This time, it was sung by a choirboy called Aled Jones. Aled Jones is now an adult and is a TV and Radio presenter! The song has been recorded by lots of different people and groups (including an adult Aled singing a duet with his younger self) and is now a real UK 'Christmas classic'! In 2012 a sequel to The Snowman called "The Snowman and the Snowdog" was shown on Christmas Eve.

All across the UK, in cities and towns, there are fireworks to celebrate the New Year. Two of the most famous fireworks displays are in London, along the River Thames, and in Edinburgh at the Hogmanay celebrations.

Some people celebrate New Year's Eve (which is called Hogmanay) more than Christmas! The word Hogmanay comes from a kind of oat cake that was traditionally given to children on New Year's Eve



Glossary:

- Christmas Tree - choinka;
- Holly - ostrokrzew;
- Ivy - bluszcz;
- Icing - lukier;
- Mistletoe - jemiola;
- Christmas lights - świąteczne światła;
- Santa Claus/Father Christmas - Święty Mikołaj;
- Chimney - komin;
- Candle - świeczka;
- Boxing Day - drugi dzień Świąt;
- Snowflake - płatek śniegu
- Fireworks - sztuczne ognie
- Snowman - bałwan

