



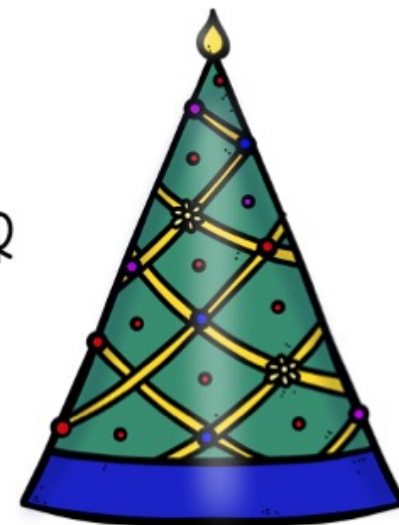
RUSSIA

Your first stop is Russia. Russia celebrates Christmas on January 7. In Russia, Father Frost and his granddaughter, the Snow Maiden, deliver presents to children under decorated New Year trees. On Christmas Eve, many people have 12-dish dinners, which are usually made up of a beetroot soup called *borscht*, vegetables, sauerkraut, and porridge dishes. You most likely won't find any meat at this meal. The Christmas Day meal, however, is considered a feast and includes a roast pork or goose, meat dumplings, and desserts like gingerbread cookies. Another holiday tradition in Russia is where children go around to the homes of friends and family while singing Christmas carols and wishing people a happy new year.



BORSCHT

NEW YEAR
TREE



FATHER CHRISTMAS
AND THE
SNOW MAIDEN



GERMANY

Germany is known for their Christmas traditions. In fact, many countries have adopted Christmas traditions from Germany. One of these traditions is the Christmas tree. In Germany, many parents decorate their Christmas trees on Christmas Eve and surprise their children when they are finished. Another tradition is the advent calendar and wreath to count down the days until Christmas. In the days leading up to Christmas, children open the windows on the advent calendars. Each day, there is a candy, poem, story, or even a small present. On Christmas Eve, Father Christmas visits homes and delivers presents to the children. On December 6, Germany celebrates St. Nicholas Day. On the eve of St. Nicholas Day, children leave out their shoes and St. Nicholas puts candy and small gifts in their shoes that night.



SHOES FILLED
WITH GIFTS

ST. NICHOLAS



ADVENT
WREATH



MEXICO

The Mexican celebration of Christmas is called Las Posadas. Las Posadas begins December 16 and ends December 24. Each night of Las Posadas, children go door to door to the houses of neighbors, friends, and family members as they reenact part of the Christmas story. The children are told that there is no room until they reach the last home. At the last home, they are welcomed in, and this is where the party is held. Each night of Las Posadas, a new home welcomes them in and has a party. Piñatas are often part of the celebration. Children take turns hitting the paper mâché object with sticks until candy falls out. On January 6, Mexico celebrates Día de los Reyes, which means "Day of the Kings". On the night before Día de los Reyes, the children leave their shoes outside. In the morning, the shoes are filled with toys and sweets from the Three Kings. On this day, people eat a sweet bread called Rosca de Reyes (Ring of the Kings).



PIÑATA

ROSCA DE REYES



THE THREE KINGS



FRANCE

In France, most homes are decorated with Christmas trees and nativity scenes. It is also common to find mistletoe hanging from doorframes. The mistletoe is a promise of good luck to those who walk under it. On Christmas Eve, there is a special meal. This meal is a large feast that lasts for hours. Dinner usually includes turkey, oysters, and *escargot*, which is cooked snails. It is also a tradition to have 13 desserts at this meal. One of those desserts is a Yule log cake. This cake comes from an old tradition where families would chop down trees and use the special logs to light their fireplaces every night through the 12 days of Christmas. Nowadays, not all homes have fireplaces, so the Yule log has been made into a delicious holiday dessert to help carry on the tradition. The dessert is a chocolate cake with cream filling that has been rolled into a log shape. It is then covered with chocolate icing to make it look like the bark of a tree.



ESCARGOT

MISTLETOE



NATIVITY
SCENE



ENGLAND

In England, most towns and cities decorate the streets with Christmas lights. The most famous display of lights is in England's capital city, London. Many people also decorate their homes with lights, Christmas trees, and mistletoe. On Christmas Eve, children hang up stockings over their fireplaces or above their beds in hopes that Father Christmas (Santa Claus) will fill them up that night with presents and treats. They also leave out mince pies, drinks for Father Christmas, and carrots for his reindeer. Children also write letters to Father Christmas to tell him what they wish to receive for Christmas. On Christmas Day, families exchange gifts with each other and share Christmas meals. At the Christmas meal, people eat turkey, vegetables, and stuffing. Christmas pudding and Christmas cake are usually on the menu. At Christmas dinner, people wear paper crowns on their heads.



MINCE PIES

STOCKING



CHRISTMAS
PUDDING



ISRAEL

Even though the Christmas story took place in Israel, most people in Israel do not celebrate Christmas. Instead, people celebrate the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, which is celebrated around the same time as Christmas. Hanukkah is an eight-day celebration. Many families exchange gifts each night for those eight days. On the first night, many families have big dinners. Potato *latkes* (fried potato pancakes), beef brisket, and jelly donuts are often served. After dinner, families light the menorah candles. Each night, a new candle is lit. During the lighting of the candles, a blessing is given, and a special Jewish hymn is sung. On each night, children are given small gifts, Jewish money coins, or even chocolate coins.



LATKES



MENORAH



JELLY DONUT