

Many English-speaking countries have the same Christmas traditions, but of course each country, region and family has its own traditions too. In their blogs and comments, Carol from Manchester, Jack from Sydney and Laurie from New York tell us about some of their countries' traditions and what they are especially looking forward to this year.

Carol's Blog

How we celebrate Christmas

Posted by Carol on 10th November



I love Christmas: the delicious food, the decorations, and the atmosphere. It'll be so nice to go Christmas shopping, meet friends and go to lots of parties. In the United Kingdom, we send or give Christmas cards to everyone we know and decorate our houses with the cards that our friends send us. We put up a tree and lights – often at the beginning of December. There are carol-singers in the streets, there are nativity plays at the schools and many people go to see traditional family shows known as pantomimes. I already have our tickets!

When Christmas Eve arrives, children get really excited: Santa Claus is coming! In the evening, they hang up their stockings, put out some Christmas cake and a drink for Santa (and maybe a carrot for his reindeer Rudolph) then go to bed and try to sleep.

On Christmas morning (25th), they find presents in their stockings and under the Christmas tree. After opening them, some families go to church – I think we'll do that this year again. Later, everyone sits down to pull crackers and then eat a big Christmas dinner – traditionally it's a big roast turkey followed by Christmas pudding.



I've heard that more than half of British people eat turkey on Christmas Day! For the rest of the day, my family, like many others, plays board games and watches Christmas programmes or movies. It's wonderful that my grandparents can celebrate the day with us again this year. We'll make sure we all watch the Queen's Christmas speech with them at 3 p.m., my grandma especially loves that!



The day after Christmas is called Boxing Day. No, it doesn't mean families are fighting! In the past, servants had the day off and got presents – 'Christmas boxes' – from their employers. Today, the public holiday is a day for special sports events – or shopping, because the winter sales start! But in my house, we'll just have a lazy day!

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@Carol / Jack: For me, Christmas will start when I have time to take part in one of the many popular Australian ‘Carols by Candlelight’ singalong events!



Here in Sydney we put up a Christmas tree and decorations in December like everyone else – but if you see snow, it’s fake! When poor Santa Claus flies across Australia on his sleigh to put the children’s presents in their stockings, he must be really hot, because of course it’s summer here! On Christmas Day some people may eat turkey and Christmas pudding like in the UK, but most of us enjoy eating outside – we have all kinds of great holiday food, but especially seafood. In fact, many people go to the beach to barbecue, go swimming or surfing (with a Santa hat on, of course!), play games like cricket or relax with family and friends. That’s where you’ll find me!

On Boxing Day, another public holiday, I’ll enjoy watching cricket on TV. Or maybe I’ll go down to Sydney Harbour to watch the famous Boxing Day yacht race. We’re sports-crazy here in Australia!

take part: teilnehmen fake: Attrappe sleigh: Schlitten cricket: Cricket, beliebte Sportart in Australien und vielen anderen englischsprachigen Ländern

1 Look at the texts and decide if the statements are true (T) or false (F).

In the UK ...	true	false
a pantomimes are held in every school.		
b children open their presents on Christmas Eve.		
c the shops are open on Boxing Day.		

In Australia ...	true	false
d because it’s summer, turkey is not very popular on Christmas Day.		
e people do not go to the beach on Christmas Day.		
f almost everyone takes part in sports events on Boxing Day.		

2 Look at the words and phrases. According to the texts, are these Christmas traditions associated with the UK, Australia or both?

barbecue • carols by candlelight • Christmas pudding • ~~Christmas tree~~ • crackers • decorations • games • nativity play • pantomime • Santa Claus • sports events • stockings

UK	Australia	Both countries
		Christmas tree

3 After reading about Carol's and Jack's traditions, Laurie from New York then wrote about what she enjoys doing at Christmastime. Read the text. Can you spot five things that are different from what Carol and Jack said? Mark them in the text, then take notes.

- 1 driving around to see the lights on the houses
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

@Carol / Laurie: A lot of our traditions are clearly similar to Australia and the UK. We all put up Christmas lights and decorations too – but I must say, in the US, house-owners often go crazy! I'm sure you've seen in movies how we love to decorate the outsides of our houses with lights and figures of Santa, reindeer or snowmen. People love driving around town to see all the amazing houses!

As a New Yorker, what is very special for me during the Christmas season is to go ice-skating with my friends in front of the big Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center. After that we walk around and see all the lights and Christmas displays in the shop windows. You hear Christmas songs and carols everywhere you go – it's a magical atmosphere. 😊 At the end of the day we usually drink delicious homemade eggnog back at my apartment – perfect!

I see Carol and Jack have another day off on the 26th. Sadly, I'll be back in the office. It's not a holiday here like in the UK and Australia. They're so lucky to have a day to recover from Christmas!



house-owner: Hausbesitzer, -in display: Auslage eggnog: Eierlikör holiday: Feiertag (AE) to recover: sich erholen

4a Find the words which are associated with Christmas traditions in Australia, the UK and/or the US. Be careful! There are two things that do not belong.

URWGAMESGLBOXESXRCEGGNOGGBRTCAROLSNSSBOOTSLITSEAFOODBRYBARBECUEDIWICESKATING
CKUNATIVITYPLAYNMSPEECHCYGTURKEYIJBSPORTSELPPRESENTSLAKDUCKSTHRPANTOMIMEENCI
DECORATIONSRFSREINDEERWAT

games, _____

4b Circle the two words in 4a which are in all three texts.

5 Do you have any of the traditions that Carol, Jack and Laurie mentioned in your country or in your family too? What is different? What is the same? What other traditions do you have and which do you especially like? Do you celebrate a different holiday?

bake cookies • make decorations • go to see friends/relatives • go out for a meal •
celebrate Christmas on a different day • celebrate ...

We also pull (smaller) crackers in Germany, but at New Year, not at Christmas!



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- 1 a false, b false, c true, d true, e false, f false
- 2 *UK*: crackers, nativity play, pantomime; *Australia*: barbecue, carols by candlelight;
both countries: Christmas pudding, decorations, games, Santa Claus, sports events, stockings
- 3 2 go ice-skating, 3 Christmas displays in the shop windows, 4 drinking eggnog, 5 Boxing Day is not a holiday
- 4a games, boxes, eggnog, carols, seafood, barbecue, ice-skating, nativity play, speech, turkey, sports, presents, pantomime, decorations, reindeer
Words that do not belong: boots, ducks
- 4b carols, decorations
- 5 *individual answers*