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WINTER CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

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Poland



<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/17/61/43/176143b5e9353121cda8a66268312da.jpg>

In **Poland**, Christmas Eve (Wigilia) is a day first of fasting, then of feasting. In Polish tradition, people combine religion and family closeness at Christmas. The Wigilia feast begins at the appearance of the first star. On the night of Christmas Eve, so important is the appearance of the first star in remembrance of the Star of Bethlehem, that it has been given an affectionate name of "the little star" or Gwiazdka (the female counterpart of St. Nicholas).

On that evening, children watch the sky anxiously hoping to be the first to cry out, "The star has come!" Only after it appears, the family members sit down to



In the **Czech Republic**, preparations for Christmas begins right from around mid-November.

The Advent period begins here four Sundays before Christmas Eve. During this time, a wreath is made of several evergreen branches fastened together, decorated with ribbons, pinecones and other trinkets and four candles placed around it, each representing one of the four weeks of the Advent period.

A well known custom observed here is "Barborky" that is practiced on the feast day of St. Barbara. On every 4th of December, young girls of marriageable age cut off a twig from a cherry tree and put it in water. If it blooms by Christmas Eve, the girl is believed to get married sometime during the coming year.

In the final days to December 25th, gifts and greetings are sent out to friends and family members. Every individual home is decorated as beautifully as possible.

The Christmas tree is indispensable to

a dinner table.

Some practice the superstition that an even number of people must be seated around the table. In many homes an empty place setting is symbolically left at the table for the Baby Jesus or, for a lonely wanderer who may be in need of food, or if a deceased relative should come and would like to share in the meal. The supper, which includes many traditional dishes and desserts, can sometimes last for over two hours. It is followed by the exchange of gifts.

Although gift-giving plays a major role in the rituals, emphasis is placed more on the making of special foods and decorations. According to tradition, bits of hay are spread beneath the tablecloth as a reminder that Christ was born in a manger. Others partake in the practice of placing money under the table cloth for each guest, in order to wish for prosperity in the coming year.

(photo by wrota-swietokrzyskie.pl)



The supper begins with the breaking of the opłatek. Everyone at the table breaks off a piece and eats it as a symbol of their unity with Christ. They then

share a piece with each family member.

A traditional Wigilia supper in Poland includes fried carp and barszcz (beetroot soup) with uszka (ravioli). Universal Polish Christmas foods are pierogi as well as some herring dishes, and for desert, makowiec or noodles with poppy seed. Often, there is a compote of dry fruits for a drink.

The remainder of the evening is given to stories and songs around the Christmas tree.

As presents are unwrapped, carollers may walk from house to house receiving treats along the way. Christmas Eve ends with Pasterka, the Midnight Mass at the local church.

The custom of Christmas night liturgy was introduced in the Christian churches after the second half of the 5th century. In Poland that custom arrived together with the coming of Christianity.

The next day (December 25) begins with the early morning mass followed by daytime masses. According to scripture, the Christmas Day masses are interchangeable allowing for greater flexibility in choosing the religious services by individual parishioners.

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The Czech Republic

mas Eve dinner. It is considered unlucky to get up from the table before everyone is finished. Also, the table is always set for an even number of guests in the belief that it would bring bad luck if done otherwise. Presents are exchanged after dinner and often, fortunes are told. At midnight, people attend Holy Mass, known as "Pasterka".

On December 25th (Christmas Day), the churches in Czech Republic are adorned with evergreens and Christmas Trees. The festivities last for three days. Czechs traditionally have a cod roe soup on this day and tempt each other with tales of a mythical golden pig. Everyone wishes each other 'Prejeme Vam Vesele Vanoce' (Merry Christmas) on this day.



(<http://www.praguecityline.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/V%3%A1no%C4%8Dn%C3%AD-trhy.jpg>)



Romania

Romania is a rich country when it comes to traditions and superstitions, many of the old traditions can be discovered in the countryside, in remote areas of the country.

The Lenten is a period of religious preparations for the great feast of Christmas. Religious people don't eat meat, nor other animal products during this period before Christmas. In Romania children go caroling on Christmas Eve. Carolers usually expect small food and beverage goodies- fruits, nuts, cookies, glasses of wine for adult carolers- in exchange for their performances.

Traditionally, carolers have bells, whips and drums and make noise to dispel the malevolent spirits.

Some of them also wear costumes and masks symbolizing diverse animals such as: bears, goats and horses, which representing the evil forces.

From Christmas until Epiphany, they also visit the houses in the neighborhood singing the Carol of The Star and other religious carols, holding a stick with a Star made of cardboard or other materials on top of it.



In Romanian folklore, Christmas comes from an ancient tradition called "Saturnalia" or the "Winter Sun" connected to the winter solstice.

Because days are shorter at the end of December, the sun must be helped with all kinds of magical elements and rituals to remain alive and not to disappear forever.

A great festivity is made during these three days of Christmas, with drinks, traditional food, pork, fish, bread, corns, sweets, fruits and nuts.

In the first day of the New Year they walk again from house to house chanting a song about luck, throwing rice in the doorways of their receivers.

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<http://www.christmaswow.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Romanian-Christmas-Traditions-5.jpg>

A traditional Romanian sweet is served on the occasion is called "nappy Jesus" (in Romanian called Turte or Scutecele lui Hristos) made of thin layers baked on a hotplate and filled with honey and nuts.

Usually, everyone cooks Christmas dishes during this day. In the evening, the tradition goes that the garbage must not be thrown out, to avoid grievances and damages, the chimneys are cleaned and the ash is thrown on the vineyard, to ensure a bountiful harvest in the year to come.

If you're visiting Romanian friends for Christmas, expect to eat a traditional cake called Cozonac, lots of Sarmale - Stuffed cabbage, Caltabosi- similar to hog's pudding, Toba and many others.



http://s.iw.ro/gateway/g/ZmIsZVNvdXJjZT1odHRwJTJhbnNjb2Rlci5yY3MtcmRzLnVlJTJGc3RvcnFnZSUyRjltwMTQl/MkYxMiUvRjMxJTJGMzY3MTY0XzM2NzE2/NF90cmFkaXRpaV9wb3B1bGEyZV9tZW9t/YWZheC5qcGcmdz04MDAmaGFzaD0wNGQw/OWNjZDBhN2U0NzFmYTQ3OThiYTQ4YV9wV9wM2YzNg==_thu mb.jpg

<http://www.viatransylvania.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/basesteanu-8-Copy.jpg>



Italy

They light candles around their presepio and pass the figure of the Baby Jesus from person to person, finally placing it tenderly in the manger.

Then they enjoy a lavish meatless supper featuring fish or another type of seafood, vegetables, salads, antipasto, bread, pasta, and sweets. Later that night, everyone goes through the torch-lit streets on their way to Christmas Eve mass.

Christmas Day is reserved for church, family, and feasting. Some Italian children receive gifts from Baby Jesus or from Babbo Natale, as Father Christmas is called. Then everyone sits down to a big Christmas dinner. This often includes capon or another roasted meat. Pannetone, a yeast cake filled with fruit, and panforte, a dense honey cake spiced with cloves and cinnamon, are popular sweets, along with cassata, which includes ice cream and fruit.

New Year's Day is when friends get together and visit. It is also the day when Italians exchange gifts with each other. The children have to wait until January 6 to get their gifts from La Befana, whose name comes from the Italian word for Epiphany.

The Christmas season begins in Italy on the first Sunday of Advent, which is four Sundays before Christmas.

In the cold winter weather of the northern mountains and in the mild weather of the south, Christmas fairs feature fireworks and bonfires along with holiday music. Families go to the Christmas markets to shop for gifts and new figures for the manger scene. Some families set up a Christmas tree and decorate it.

During novena, the nine days before and including Christmas Day, children go from house to house reciting Christmas verses for coins. The family sets up its presepio, or manger scene, on the first day of the novena.

They gather before the presepio each morning or evening of novena to light candles and pray. Some families put life-size figures of Mary and Joseph in their front yard. Both manger scenes and Christmas carols originated in Italy.

During this time, children write letters to their parents wishing them a merry Christmas, promising good behavior, and making a list of the gifts they hope to receive. The parents read these letters aloud at dinner. Then they toss them in the fireplace. The children chant to La Befana, the mythical Christmas witch, as their wishes go up the chimney.

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<https://i.ytimg.com/vi/QsGgmobIC8M/maxresdefault.jpg>

January 6 is also called Three Kings Day, because it is the day the Three Kings visited the Christ Child in Bethlehem long ago. The legend says that old Befana was too busy cleaning house to help the Wise Men. Now the aged wanderer flies through the air on her broomstick looking for the Christ Child on the eve of Epiphany. Children set out their shoes by the fireplace on that night, hoping for the gifts they asked for during novena. La Befana leaves candy and gifts for children that are good.

During the Christmas season, Italian families sing a special song called Shepherds' Carol in honor of the zampognari, or real shepherds who came to town at Advent and went from house-to-house playing bagpipes and singing songs about the birth of Jesus. In some towns, bagpipers dressed as shepherds still play and sing in front of the neighborhoods' presepios.



https://bolognauncovered.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/prima_w.jpg

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**"În școala noastră,
fiecare elev este
important".**

**"In our school every
student is important".**



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Turkey

On Dec. 31, the **Turkish** celebrate the Great Day, a holiday that encompasses the gift giving of the beginning of the new year. In large cities, people gather in the town squares where they dance and watch fireworks. Other people celebrate on rooftop gardens by feasting on chestnut-stuffed turkey. Children receive gifts and women receive lucky red underwear



<https://c.tadst.com/gfx/750w/turkeynewyearseve.jpg?1>

New Year's Day in Turkey starts with fireworks after the traditional countdown at the end of the New Year's Eve. Celebrations usually last until dawn and many people use the day off on January 1 to relax and visit friends and relatives.

Many people in Turkey start celebrating New Year's Eve with a large family dinner. The main course is traditionally a roasted turkey. Variety shows on television begin in late afternoon and continue until early morning of the next day. Many people play games while waiting for the clock to strike midnight.

People living in big cities in Turkey traditionally celebrate the New Year in city squares, from where they can watch fireworks at midnight between New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. S

mall-town residents often try to come to bigger cities for the celebrations. Many people also congratulate each other, toast

to a New Year and exchange small gifts at midnight between New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.



<http://www.eceerken.net/resimler/yilbasi-hindisi-tarifi-resimli-0.jpg>

New Year's Eve generally ends with a countdown, but parties and street performances last until dawn. Late celebrations are also common for house parties with friends and relatives and festivities at hotels and restaurants. The morning of January 1 is usually quiet. People who celebrated the New Year's Eve in out-of-town locations, such as ski resorts, generally start returning home in the late afternoon. It is also common for people to visit relatives and friends who were not around them on December 31 and for people to exchange small gifts to each other.

Turkey replaced the solar-based Islamic calendar (*Rumi takvim*), used in the Ottoman Empire, with the Gregorian calendar in 1926. Between 1926 and 1934 the New Year's celebrations were held on the first weekend after January

The New Year's tree, which is identical to Christmas tree in Christian countries, as well as images of *Noel Baba* (the Turkish name for Santa Claus) are the most common symbols of New Year's Day in Turkey.