Christmas Around the World

Christmas in France

Christmas celebrations start on December 6, Saint Nicholas Day. It is common for people to decorate their homes with a Christmas tree and a nativity scene. As well as Jesus, the shepherds and other figures normally found in a nativity scene, characters such as a hunter, a policeman and a baker are included in the nativity scene. Mistletoe is often hung above doors. People say that that kissing at midnight will bring good luck.

Children are often given an advent calendar which helps them count down to Christmas. Another traditional Christmas decoration in France is the advent wreath, which is made of pine tree branches and is decorated with four candles.

Advent wreath

On the eve of Saint Nicholas Day, children place their shoes near the fireplace. Families tell Christmas stories and sing Christmas songs. Children then go to bed hoping that their shoes will be filled with gifts by morning. It is said that children who have been naughty will receive a bundle of twigs or coal!

Santa Claus is called Père Noël in France. He is a large figure who has a white beard and wears red robes with a black belt. The main feast, Réveillon, is held the night before on Christmas Eve. The Christmas feast includes 13 desserts! One popular dessert is bûche de Noël, which is a sponge cake shaped as a yule log. Popular Christmas foods in France include turkey, duck, snails and cheese.
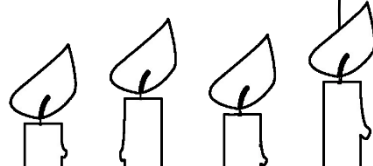
Christmas Day is a time for families. Some families exchange gifts on Christmas Eve while others do so on Christmas Day. Many people will attend church on Christmas Day.

How is Christmas in France similar to Christmas in your country?

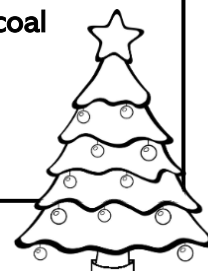How is Christmas in France different to Christmas in your country?

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church	dessert	wreath
snails	reveillon	coal
nativity	mistletoe	
presents	feast	

Mistletoe

Advent wreath

Bûche de Noël

"Merry Christmas" in French is "Joyeux Noël"