



# Christmas Around the World



## Christmas in the Netherlands

“Merry Christmas” in Dutch is “Zalig Kerstfeest”

Many people in the Netherlands decorate their homes to celebrate Christmas. Perhaps the most spectacular decoration is the Christmas tree, which is often decorated with ribbons, pinecones and baubles. Some Christmas trees have cookies shaped as wreaths (kerstkransjes) hung from them. In the weeks before Christmas, many towns in the Netherlands are decorated and special Christmas markets are held.



Saint Nicholas is called Sinterklaas in the Netherlands. Sinterklaas arrives from Spain by boat filled with presents. Riding a white horse and dressed in red robes, he parades through towns. Children leave their shoes by the fireplace or by a windowsill. They sing Sinterklaas songs in the hope he will knock on the door and bring presents. Children who are naughty are told that Sinterklaas will carry them

Sinterklaas away in a sack!

December 5 is Sinterklaas Eve, and many families have parties to celebrate. This is the most exciting day for many children because Sinterklaas brings presents. A popular tradition on this day is a treasure hunt. Adults hide presents and give clues to help children find them. Celebrations continue December 6 which is Saint Nicholas Day.

While Sinterklaas visits earlier in December, Kerstman (Santa Claus) visits on December 25. Children may still receive gifts on this day; however, most are given out on Saint Nicolas Day. Families spend Christmas Day together. Many families enjoy watching movies, playing games and of course, eating! It is also common for people to attend church services.

Meats such as goose, venison, turkey and pork are popular for Christmas dinner. The Dutch also enjoy eating lots of sweet foods during the Christmas period. One of these treats are spiced biscuits called 'speculaas'. Another popular dessert food is 'kerststol' which is a bread with dried fruit, and a sweet flavour.



kerststol