

Christmas Around the World

Christmas in Russia

The main Russian Christmas holiday is held on January 7. Some Catholic families may also celebrate Christmas on December 25. During much of the 1900s, religious celebrations were not allowed in Russia. Families wishing to celebrate Christmas had to do so in the privacy of their homes. Over time, Christmas traditions were moved to New Year's Day. As a result, New Year's Day has become a bigger celebration than Christmas for most Russians. Today, many Russians are beginning to turn to religion and Christmas as a religious holiday is growing in popularity.

Some Russians will fast in the lead up to Christmas. This means that they will not eat certain foods. They break their fast when the first star in the sky appears on Christmas Eve (January 6). Some families will also attend church services on this day. After the service, Christmas Eve supper is served. As is tradition in many Eastern European countries, twelve dishes are served. The twelve dishes represent the twelve apostles. Traditionally, these dishes have no meat. Common foods include mushroom and sauerkraut soup, dumplings, fish and stuffed mushrooms. Vzvar is a sweet drink which is traditionally served at the end of the meal. It symbolises the birth of a child and on Christmas Eve, the birth of Jesus. Often, an extra place is set at the table for the spirits of family members who have passed away.

The Christmas meal on January 7 is a feast! Popular meats include pork and goose. Meat dumplings, stuffed pies and aspic (a savoury jelly) often accompany the main dishes. Dried fruit, gingerbread and biscuits are popular foods commonly served for dessert.



Aspic

People often decorate their homes with nativity scenes, stars and other Christmas decorations. Christmas is a day many Russians spend at home with loved ones. Families will often exchange gifts with one another. A common Christmas tradition that can involve the whole family is fortune telling. Fortunes are told through tarot readings, tea leaves and even rice!

Do you think you would enjoy Christmas in Russia?

Use the Venn diagram to compare Christmas in Russia to Christmas in your country.

