

Christmas in Britain



What Do People Do?

Prior to Christmas Day, people decorate their homes and gardens prior to Christmas Day.

These decorations may include:

- **Christmas trees.**
- **Small colored fairy lights.**
- Various other **decorations** with rich colors that spark the Christmas mood.

In many towns and cities, the **shopping streets** are also decorated with lights and large pine trees..

In some places a **Nativity scene** is arranged. This illustrates the story of Jesus' birth using statues or actors and live animals. Many churches hold special services in the night before Christmas Day.

Many people spend Christmas Day with family members, with whom they **exchange gifts and cards**.

Many **children wake up to find a sock or stocking filled with gifts** on their bed or somewhere else in the house.

These have supposedly been brought by a mythical figure called '**Father Christmas**' or '**Santa Claus**', who lives for most of the year at the North Pole.

He travels in a sleigh pulled by reindeer and enters houses by climbing down the chimney. He supposedly travels so fast that he can deliver presents to all children in one night, although some in some stories **elves help him** with his work.

Later in the day, people may attend special **church services**, even if they do not usually go to church. Nearly everyone prepares and eats a **special meal**. This often includes roast turkey, potatoes and parsnips, and other vegetables. After the main course, **Christmas pudding** is often eaten. Mince pies are also popular on Christmas Day. They are sweet pastry cases filled with a mixture of dried fruit, fat and alcohol.

Background and symbols

Christmas Day is often seen as the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago.

However, many aspects of the celebration have their origins in the **Pagan traditions of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland.**

These include bringing pieces of evergreen trees into homes, lighting fires, holding parties and eating special foods. When missionaries converted the inhabitants of these countries to Christianity, many of these customs were included in the Christian celebrations.