

January

Epiphany (6 January)

Epiphany, or the 12th Day of Christmas, commemorates how a star led the Magi, or the three kings or wise men, to the baby Jesus. Countries celebrate on the evening before and on the actual day with parades of decorative floats and people in costume as the kings bearing gifts.

Chinese New Year (22 January)

The Chinese New Year is the most important and longest celebration (15 days!) in China. The day before the New Year starts, fireworks are often set off all night to ward off evil spirits and people have dinner with their family. On the first day of the Chinese New Year, people go to their temples to pray and visit family. The Chinese New Year is traditionally celebrated with dragon- and lion dances. This year is the year of the rabbit.! The rabbit is known to be the luckiest of all animals and symbolises mercy, elegance and beauty. Happy New Year! Gong Xi Fa Cai!

March

Holi (8 March)

On Holi Phagwa the new year is celebrated. Hindus celebrate the triumph of good over evil. The night before Holi, pyres are lit, symbolising bad thoughts and feelings that disappear in the flames. During Holi people throw colored powder on each other, which symbolizes the good things. Subh Holi!

International Women's Day (8 March)

International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality.

Navratri (22-30 March & 15-24 October)

Navratri spans over nine nights and ten days. During Navratri Hindus celebrate the goddess Durga for killing the demon, Mahishasura. The Goddess Durga is the embodiment of Shakti, which is the primal source of all power. Navratri aims to contemplate and purify ourselves physically, mentally and spiritually. The nine nights are typically dedicated to different aspects of the divine feminine principle. Each aspects recognises a story which illustrates certain values. For many people it is a time of religious reflection and fasting, so that they can translate the values into their own lives and use them to develop into a harmonious human being. Among fasting customs are observing a strict vegetarian diet and abstaining from alcohol and certain spices. It's mostly celebrated in the month of Chaitra, which is in March/April and again in the month of Sharada, which is in September/October.

Ramadan (22 March*)

The holy month of Ramadan commemorates the time when the Quran, the Holy book, was first revealed to the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) by the angel Gabriel. The night of revelation, also called the 'Night of Power' — or Laylat Al-Qadar — is also believed to have occurred during Ramadan. Muslims all over the world are required to fast from dawn till dusk during Ramadan — a practice that is meant to instil patience and faith. The date the Islamic month falls on is slightly different each year since it depends on the sighting of the moon.

* The exact date is never certain far in advance, as religious authorities in various countries rely on the sighting of the Eid crescent moon to announce when it will officially begin

April

Pesach (6-13 April)

Jews celebrate the Feast of Passover (Pesach in Hebrew) to commemorate the liberation who were led out of Egypt by Moses.

Good Friday (7 April)

Good Friday is a day of mourning and sorrow over the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ and a reminder that the sins of all people made it necessary for him to die in the first place. It's also a day of gratitude for the supreme sacrifice that he made.

Holy Saturday (8 April)

Holy Saturday commemorates the day that Jesus Christ lay in the tomb after his death, according to the Christian Bible. It is the day after Good Friday and the day before Easter Sunday.

Easter (9 April)

Easter is an annual Christian festival in commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, observed on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox, as calculated according to tables based in Western churches on the Gregorian calendar and in Orthodox churches on the Julian calendar.

Jom Hasjoa (18 April)

Holocaust Remembrance Day, or Holocaust Day, is observed as a day of commemoration for the approximately six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust by Nazi Germany and its collaborators, and for the Jewish resistance in that period. It is considered a national memorial day.

Eid al-Fitr (21 April*)

The word 'Eid' means feast or festival. Eid Al Fitr is a religious holiday that marks the end of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting. Fasting is considered an act of worship during this month and a chance for Muslims to be more compassionate to the needy, practise patience and get closer to God.

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May

Vesak - Buddha day (6 May)

Some Buddhists commemorate the birth, enlightenment and death of Buddha on separate days, but its also possible to celebrate this all on one day: Wesak. On this day the birth, enlightenment and death of Buddha is commemorated. To reach enlightenment is one of the most important goals of Buddhists. You free yourself from pain and sorrow and to reach this you have to have enough life wisdom. This usually doesn't work in one lifetime: Buddhists believe that you are born again after your death in order to continue 'learning'. Wesak is a day for good deeds.

Ascension of Jesus (18 May)

To Christians, the ascension signifies that Christ completed his work on Earth and allowed him to prepare a place for his followers in heaven.

Sjavoicot (26 & 27 May)

Sjavoicot commonly known in English as the Feast of Weeks, is a Jewish holiday that occurs on the sixth day of the Hebrew month of Sivan. In the Bible, Shavuot marked the wheat harvest.

Pentecost (28 May)

The festival of Pentecost is still important to Christians today because it represents the beginning of the Christian Church. It reminds them how Jesus' promise that God would send the Holy Spirit was fulfilled.

June

Eid al-Adha (28 June – 2 July)

Eid al-Adha is a religious holiday celebrated in Islam that lasts three days. It honours the willingness of Ibrahim (Abraham) to sacrifice his son Ismail (Ishmael) as an act of obedience to Allah's (God's) command. Before Ibrahim could sacrifice his son, however, Allah provided him with a lamb which he was supposed to kill in his son's place because of his willingness to sacrifice his own son in the name of God. In commemoration of this intervention, animals are ritually sacrificed. Part of their meat is consumed by the family which offers the animal, while the rest of the meat is distributed to the poor and the needy.

July

Keti Koti (1 July)

Dag der Vrijheden, which translates directly to 'Day of Freedoms' is more generally known as Keti Koti, which means 'broken chains' in Sranan Tongo - the language spoken in Suriname. Keti Koti is a festival in the Netherlands to commemorate the abolition of slavery in Suriname and the Dutch Antilles. It is celebrated annually on 1 July to mark Suriname's Emancipation Day.

August

Raksha bandhan (30 August)

Raksha Bandhan is a festival that celebrates the love and duty between brothers and sisters. Sisters tie a rakhi, a decorated bracelet, around their brother's wrists as an expression of her love and his well-being. The brothers thank their sisters with a small gift and promises to protect her against injustice, violence or suffering.

September

Rosj Hasjana (16 & 17 September)

Rosj Hasjana is the Jewish New Year. The biblical name for this holiday is Yom Teruah. Rosh Hashanah is a two-day observance and celebration.

Jom Kipoer (25 September)

Jom Kipoer is the holiest day in Judaism and Samaritanism. It occurs annually on the 10th of Tishrei, the first month of the Hebrew calendar. Primarily centred on atonement and repentance, the day's observances consist of full fasting and ascetic behavior accompanied by intensive prayer as well as sin confessions (traditionally inside of a synagogue).

Mid-autumn festival (29 September)

During this festival Chinese people celebrate the harvest. People are happy that the hard work is over, they thank heaven and go out together at night to watch the full moon and be together. People

celebrate with feelings of gratitude towards Heaven and Earth. The main part of the mid-autumn festival is eating mooncakes which symbolise family reunion due to their round shape.

Soekot (30 September – 6 October)

Soekot In addition to its harvest roots, the holiday also holds spiritual importance with regard to its abandonment of materialism to focus on nationhood, spirituality, and hospitality, this principle underlying the construction of a temporary, almost nomadic, structure of a sukkah.

October

Navratri (22-30 March & 15-24 October)

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November

Dia de los Muertos - day of the dead (2 November)

The day of the dead is one of the most important festivities in Mexico because Mexicans honor their deceased relatives with a joyful and positive celebration.

Divali (12 November)

During Divali, hindus celebrate the victory of good over evil, victory of light over darkness and victory of bliss over ignorance. Divali is also known as the festival of lights, diya's are lit in and around the house. Subh Divali!

Thanksgiving Day (23 November)

Thanksgiving Day is celebrated annually as a national holiday in the North American continent on the fourth Thursday of November. The day is meant to celebrate the harvest season and other blessings of the year gone by.

Srefidensi Dey (25 November)

Srefidensi Dey is celebrated annually on 25 November to mark the Surinamese independence since 25 November 1975. It is a national holiday in Suriname.

