

NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

**IN UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA**

A. Americans share three national holidays with many other countries:

- Easter Day

Falls on a spring Sunday that varies from year to year

- Christmas Day

December 25

- New Year's Day

January 1

Easter Day

Celebrates the Christian belief in resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Many American follow old traditions of coloring hard boiled eggs and giving children baskets of candy.

On the day, Easter Monday, the president of the US holds annual Easter egg hunt on the White House lawn for young children.

Christmas Day

A Christian holiday marks the birth of the Christ Child.

Decorating houses and yards with the lights, putting up Christmas trees, giving gifts, and sending greetings cards have become tradition even for many non-Christian Americans.

New Year's Day

- The celebration of this holiday begins the night before, when Americans gather to wish each other a happy and prosperous coming year.

B. Uniquely American Holidays:

1. Thanksgiving Day - Fourth Thursday in November

2. Independence Day - July 4

3. Martin Luther King Day - January 15

In 1986 that day was replaced by the third Monday of January

4. Presidents' Day - The Third Monday in February

5. Memorial Day - The Fourth Monday of May
6. Labor Day - The First Monday of September
7. Columbus Day - The Second Monday of October
8. Veterans Day - November 11

Thanksgiving Day

=Many Americans take a day of vacation on the following Friday to make a four day weekend

=They may travel long distances to visit family and friends.

=The holiday dates back to 1621, the year after the Puritans arrived in Massachusetts, determined to practice their religion without interference.

=After a rough winter, in which about half of them died, they turned for help to neighboring Indians, who taught them how to plant corn and other crops. The next fall's bountiful harvest inspired the Pilgrims to give thanks by holding a feast.

=The Thanksgiving feast became a national tradition – not only because so many other Americans have found prosperity but also because the Pilgrims' sacrifices for their freedom still captivate the imagination.

Independence Day

=Honors the nation's birthday – the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

=It is a day of picnics and patriotic parades, a night of concerts and fireworks. The flying of the American flag is widespread.

Martin Luther King Day

=The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. an African American clergyman, is considered a great American because of his tireless efforts to win civil rights for all people through nonviolent means.

Presidents' Day

=Birthday of George Washington, hero of Revolutionary War and the first President of the U.S. was a national holiday - February 22

=Birthday of Abraham Lincoln, the president during the Civil War was a holiday in most states. - February 12

=The two days have been joined, and the holiday has been expanded to embrace all past presidents. - The Third Monday in February

Memorial Day

- =This holiday honors the dead. Although it originated in the aftermath of the Civil War, it has become a day on which the dead of all wars.
- =The dead generally are remembered in special programs held in cemeteries, churches, and other public meeting places

Labor Day

=This holiday honors the nation's working people, typically with parades.

=For most Americans it marks the end of the summer vacation season, and for many students the opening of the school year.

Columbus Day

=On October 12, 1492, Italian navigator Christopher Columbus landed in the New World.

=Although most other nations of the Americas observe this holiday on October 12, in the US. it takes on the second Monday in October.

Veterans Day

Originally it is called Armistice Day.

This holiday honors Americans who had served in World War I. It falls on November 11, the day when the war ended in 1918.

But now it honors veterans of all wars in which the US. has fought.

Veterans' organizations hold parades, and the president customarily places a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery, across the Potomac River from Washington D.C.

C. OTHER CELEBRATIONS

* Valentine's Day - February 14

Americans give presents, usually candy or flowers, to the ones they love.

* Halloween - October 31

- American children dress up in funny or scary costumes and go “trick or treating”: knocking on doors in their neighborhood.
- The neighbors are expected to respond by giving them small gifts of candy or money.
- Adults may also dress in costume for Halloween parties.

Various ethnic groups in America celebrate days with special meaning to them even though these are not national holidays.

Jew's High Holy Days

- In September
- Most employers show consideration by allowing them to take these days off.

Irish Americans' St. Patrick

- March 17
- Irish Americans celebrate the old country's patron saint, St. Patrick.
- =This is a high spirited day on which many Americans wear green clothing in honor the "Emerald Isle".

Mardi Gras

- The day before the Christian season of Lent begins in late winter
- a big occasion in New Orleans, Louisiana, where huge parades and wild revels take place.
- =As its French name implies (Mardi Gras means “Fat Tuesday,” the last day of hearty eating before the penitential season of Lent), the tradition goes back to the city’s settlement by French immigrants