



What are Christmas traditions?



There is not one single answer: it depends very much on where you live. There are big differences around the world and many of them date back to prehistory. The 25th of December is thought to be Christ's birthday, but our festival has its roots in pagan midwinter festivities, which are much older.

We are all familiar with local Christmas traditions and perhaps with a few others if we have friends or relatives in other countries. However, there are many traditions which are not very well known; some are bizarre, others hilarious.

The power of advertising has an effect on modern Christmases, so for many Japanese families a visit to KFC – the American fast food restaurant chain that specializes in fried chicken – is due on Christmas Day, thanks to Colonel Sanders advertising campaign.

If Kentucky Fried Chicken on Christmas Day is not to your taste, you could try Greenland's speciality, a plate of raw whale skin with a side dish of blubber.... Or you

might visit Slovakia, where they throw a spoonful of *lokša* pudding at the ceiling, which sounds like a lot of fun. The more that sticks, the more luck it will bring you.

Evil spirits play a big part in many Christmas traditions. In Guatemala, houses are swept clean and the dirt is piled up outside the house. Then a figure of the devil is placed on top and burned. On the other hand, in Norway, all the brooms are hidden away in case the devil steals them, so no cleaning is done.

Ethiopia has very unusual traditions. For a start, Christmas Day is celebrated on 7th January.

Everybody wears white clothes, some of which resemble a Roman toga, and men and boys play a game called *ganna*, which is similar to hockey.

These are just a few of the many Christmas traditions in the world, but whatever traditions you follow, let us all wish each other a merry Christmas and a happy, and above all peaceful, new year!