Christmas in France
By: Boubacar Diallo

Christmas in France, or Paris, is memorable and magical. Instead of hanging stockings on Christmas Eve, French children leave their shoes sitting by the fireplace in the hopes that Pere Noel will fill them with presents and will also leave nuts, sweets and other goodies. Pere Noel is Father Christmas. They have this celebration they do and it’s called Reveillon.

Reveillon is a huge traditional feast. It is eating late at night following Christmas Eve. France has rich culinary traditions and much of this can be found in many of the wonderful foods prepared at Christmas time. Like many countries in Western Europe, the Christmas season in France begins with Saint Nicholas Day, December 6th.

Jesse Chopak stated, “When I’m in Paris for Christmas with my parents, I wake up in the morning on Christmas day, go eat croissants, and then go to church and sing songs. After that, we go back home and eat Buche de Noel and other pastries. My family comes home, they kiss me on the cheek, and we go help my mom make dinner and fixing up stuff. After we are done with helping, we eat, have fun and talk, and play with other kids.”

Many years ago, French nuns began leaving gifts secretly at the houses of poor families with children. Many families couldn’t afford any special things for their children on St. Nicholas Eve. Packages of wonderful luxuries from Spain mysteriously appeared at their homes; and, they never knew who brought it.

Christmas Eve, after the children are sleeping, parents hang little toys and candies, on the branches of the Christmas tree for their children to find on Christmas morning. On New Year’s Day, friends and family members exchange gifts. Famous French carols include “The First Noel” which was originally a shepherd’s tune “Angels from the Realms of Glory” and “O Come, O Come Immanuel”

Many French people fast during the day December 24 but after a midnight church service, eat reveillon and ham, fowl, salads, cakes and other food. They eat fresh Gosse. It’s a tradition because legend says the Three Wise men were met by geese when they arrived.

Christmas Day is another day for feasting with other family members and friends. They always eat it with the crusty French bread. Buche de Noel is a cake which looks like a Yule log but it’s traditional. Two other days of feasting during the holiday occur on Epiphany and New years. On Epiphany, the French bake a Twelfth Night cake call Galette des Rois.

Joyeux Noël
Christmas in England
By: Scott LaRoe

Christmas in England has been around for a long time. Christmas was first introduced in England in AD 596 when St Augustine landed on its shores and wanted to bring Christianity to the Anglo Saxons. Traditions include mummering, Christmas trees, Father Christmas, and Boxing Day.

One of England’s earliest traditions is mummering. In the middle ages mummers put on masks to act out Christmas plays. This tradition is still performed in towns and villages today.

On Christmas Eve, the children leave stockings at the edge of the bed and hope to get presents. Father Christmas leaves presents on Christmas Eve or early Christmas morning. He leaves the good kids presents and the bad kids bags of dirt. The kids usually leave him a snack like milk and cookies and the reindeer carrots.

James Christoph stated, “when he celebrated Christmas in England on Christmas day, they woke up and had breakfast and then in the afternoon opened the presents. For Christmas dinner, they had roasted turkey, potatoes and stuffing. For desert they had a type of pudding.”

The day after Christmas is called Boxing Day because boys used to fill up clay boxes with money; and when they were filled, they broke them open. In England, they also elect boy bishops in commemoration of St. Nicholas’s compassion for children. These mock bishops were allowed to do the duties of the ecclesiastic except for the delivery of mass.

In England, Christmas dinner is eaten at midday. The only thing that is eaten on the day before Christmas dinner is Frumenty, a type of porridge made from corn. Over the years, the recipe has changed to include eggs, fruit, spice, lumps of meat and dried plums. This is how plum pudding was invented. One of the deserts served during Christmas dinner is trifle; it is a type of cake with gelatin and a little rum covered with whipped cream.

Merry Christmas

Christmas in Nigeria
By: Breck Morton

Christmas is celebrated by a large number of families in Nigeria. Many people light up their houses with colorful lights and prepare extravagant meals for the occasion. It is celebrated in the same way it is in America. Gifts are exchanged among family; and, drinks and food are shared, such as turkey, chicken and beef. In Nigeria, the Christmas cake is one of the most important parts of the celebration. They are baked and adored by everyone there.

Because of the landscape in Nigeria, which is dry and hot and rising to sometimes over 80F, many homes are decorated with an artificial Christmas tree and ornaments. On Christmas day, nearly everyone goes to church and gives thanks, just like an American Thanksgiving. However, unlike American church services, there is not usually much more than a few carols and reception afterwards.

Also, unlike an American Christmas, the stories of Santa Claus and the mistletoe aren’t really part of the celebration, and a British custom known as ‘Boxing Day’, an extension of the Christmas holiday is celebrated. There are dancers and festivals in the streets on this day.

Many people throw parties on Christmas Eve that go all night and to Christmas day. The children are usually let to play with firecrackers and toys while the adults mingle. Members of the church choir may visit different neighborhoods and sing carols to families to liven the night even further.

Some families, because of the weather in the winter months, take short vacations to many different places, but most stay home and celebrate with their families.

Een Plesierige Kerfees

Merry Christmas
Christmas in Greece
By: Rebel Hafner

Until about 40 years ago, Christmas wasn’t considered as a big holiday in Greece. However, recently people have noticed that the western European customs have spread to Greece. With those customs came the excitement of Christmas.

If you were to go to Greece during the holiday season, you would find decorations everywhere and Christmas lights would be strung up over most major cities and towns. Greece is also home to the largest Christmas tree in Europe almost every year. In the houses, you would find decorative food in most of the rooms. Almost a week before the 25\textsuperscript{th}, wives and mothers would be in the kitchen cooking such things as Kourambies and Melomakarona (types of cookies). These, along with nuts, oranges, and mandarins, are placed on a tray and put in the living room as a traditional Greek decoration.

St. Nicholas is considered to be the patron saint of sailors in Greece. He is depicted as a huge man with brine (salt water) dripping from his clothes and face. Greek sailors think it to be bad luck if you leave port without some kind of St. Nicholas icon on board.

A fasting period starts about 40 days before Christmas. This is meant primarily to be a religious sacrifice of sorts, but many Grecians find it to be a healthful practice as well. Eating meat or anything that comes from an animal (such as milk, eggs, etc.) is considered an unfaithful action during this time.

On Christmas Eve, Grecians have many practices that sound a bit like ours. Young children go to different houses and sing kalanda or traditional Greek carols. This music is usually accompanied by clay drums and/or small metal triangles. If the children sing well, the families in the house reward them with sweets and occasionally a small present. Another similarity is that Christmas is one of the more major holidays with time off from school, Christmas trees, and a lot of anticipation.

The Christmas feast is one of the biggest parts of Christmas in Greece. Traditionally, roast pork was the main dish but recently stuffed turkey has become more popular. Christopsomo, or Christ’s bread, is made every Christmas Eve. A cross is carved into the dough before it’s baked. Before it is served, the head of the household makes the sign of the cross above the loaf of bread, and then begins serving it. Another traditional food is a cake called Vasilopita. A coin is covered in tin foil and hidden in the cake. The person who finds the coin in their serving is awarded the families luck for the New Year.

I hope you learned a little bit about the Christmas traditions in Greece. Thanks for reading, and

Kala Christouyenna!!!
Christmas in Vietnam
By: Huy Linh Ho

Vietnam is a country that is located in Asia. It was influenced by many traditions from China especially religions. Lots of Vietnamese are Buddhism; but, more and more are turning into Christian. Christmas is a holiday that people that believe in Jesus and God celebrate. It is known worldwide and has been celebrated for centuries. Each year, more and more people celebrate it even if they are not Christians, etcetera.

During Christmas holiday in Vietnam, streets are full with colorful light bulbs and Merry Christmas banners that have Santa Claus pictures. Lots of people would go shopping on this holiday to buy gifts for their beloved ones. Traffic is unavoidable during this holiday; it usually lasts for hours. Sometimes people go out for fancy dinners or just buy a cake and go home to celebrate.

Everyone decorates their house with tons of colorful decorations. They decorate their Christmas trees with plastic candy canes, bows, snowflakes and of course every single Christmas trees that you can find there would also be made from plastic. People do not cut real ones from the woods. Instead, they just buy plastic ones from the stores. In Vietnam, trees are very important and it is even illegal to walk on grass.

There is no snow in any part of Vietnam except for the high land part which is way up on the mountain. Because of that, cotton during this time is also a product that lots of people buy for decoration. At Christmas time, churches are very crowded with people who are not even Christian. Vietnamese love Christmas time; they enjoy singing Christmas carols and dressing up as Santa Claus or Mrs. Claus. Some people would volunteer and dress up as Santa Claus to give out presents for unfortunate kids. There are even centers where they are trained to be Santa Claus. Thanks to those Santa Claus, lots of kids were able to enjoy their Christmas with awesome toys.

Christmas is a time that malls and stores compete with each other and have their special sales. Everywhere you go, you would see banners and advertisements of Christmas special sales. Vietnamese love shopping, so during this holiday, even more people would go out shopping. It is one of the busiest holidays in Vietnam. Televisions and radios would show and broadcast Christmas movies, stories, songs or Christmas products.

Chuc Mung Giang Sinh