



Islam. Judaism. Christianity. Buddhism. Hinduism.

# Faith-based *Most widely celebrated holidays in the faith*

## Christianity

### **Christmas-** December 25

Is a holiday to commemorate the birth of Jesus, the central figure of Christianity. Popular modern customs of the holiday include gift-giving, music, an exchange of greeting cards, church celebrations, a special meal, and the display of various decorations; including Christmas trees, lights, garlands, mistletoe, nativity scenes, and holly. In addition, Father Christmas (known as Santa Claus) is a popular folklore figure in many countries, associated with the bringing of gifts for children. (Watch a video on [Christmas Video](#) here)  
(To read about how Christmas is celebrated around the world click here: <http://www.history.com/content/christmas/christmas-around-the-world>)

### **Easter-** *date changes with each calendar year*

Easter is the annual festival commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the principal feast of the Christian year. Connected with the observance of Easter are the 40-day penitential season of Lent: beginning on Ash Wednesday and concluding at midnight on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday; Holy Week, commencing on Palm Sunday, including Good Friday, the day of the crucifixion, and terminating with Holy Saturday; and the Octave of Easter, extending from Easter Sunday through the following Sunday. (Information provided by: <http://www.history.com/content/easter/what-is-easter>) (Watch a video on [Easter Video](#) here)

### **Ash Wednesday-** *date changes with each calendar year*

Is the first day of Lent and occurs forty-six days (forty days not counting Sundays) before Easter. Ash Wednesday gets its name from the practice of placing ashes on the foreheads of the faithful as a sign of repentance. At Masses and services of worship on this day, ashes are imposed on the foreheads of the faithful. The priest, minister, or in some cases officiating layperson, marks the forehead of each participant with black ashes in the shape of a cross, which the worshipper traditionally retains until it wears off.  
(To learn more: <http://www.history.com/content/easter/easter-related-festivals>)

### **Good Friday-** *date changes with each calendar year*

Is a holiday observed primarily by adherents to Christianity commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus and his death at Calvary. The holiday is observed during Holy Week as part of the Paschal Triduum on the Friday preceding Easter Sunday  
(To learn more: <http://www.history.com/content/easter/easter-related-festivals>)

### **Palm Sunday-** *date changes with each calendar year*

The feast commemorates an event mentioned by all four Canonical Gospels the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem in the days before his Passion. It is also called Passion Sunday or Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion. In many Christian churches, Palm Sunday is marked by the distribution of palm leaves (often tied into crosses) to the assembled worshippers.  
(To learn more: <http://www.history.com/content/easter/easter-related-festivals>)

## Buddhism

### **Nirvana Day – February 15**

This commemorates the day Shakyamuni Buddha passed away. The Sanskrit word “nirvana” is understood to mean the blowing out or extinction of the flame of personal desire. When the Buddha died at the age of 80, he entered into complete Nirvana.  
(Information provided by: BCA Center for Buddhist Education, <http://www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org>)  
( For more information click here: <http://buddhism.about.com/od/buddhistholidays/a/nirvanaday.htm>)

### **Birthday of the Buddha – April 8**

This day commemorates the birth of the historical Buddha (Prince Siddhartha, later called Shakyamuni Buddha). He was born approximately 2,500 years ago in what is now the country of Nepal. A ceremony called Bathing the Body of the Buddha is part of the holiday celebration. A statue of the baby Buddha is placed in a bowl and sweet tea is poured over the statue in honor of the Buddha's birth. (Information provided by: BCA Center for Buddhist Education, <http://www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org>)  
Click here see images of this holiday being celebrated: <http://buddhism.about.com/od/buddhistholidays/ig/Images-of-Vesak/>

### **Vesak – date changes with each calendar year**

Vesak is the celebration of three major events in the life of the Buddha: his birth, awakening, and death. Some Buddhists observe Vesak, which is on the first full moon of the fifth month. Other Buddhists observe these three events in Buddha's life on three separate days: Buddha Day (April 8), Bodhi Day (December 8) and Nirvana Day (February 15).

(Information provided by: BCA Center for Buddhist Education, <http://www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org>)

Click here see images of this holiday being celebrated: <http://buddhism.about.com/od/buddhistholidays/ig/Images-of-Vesak/>

### **Bodhi Day – December 8**

This is the day Prince Siddhartha sat in deep meditation under a bodhi tree and became the Buddha, the Awakened One. By his example, he showed that it was possible for people to become fully enlightened. This day signifies the dawn of humanity's universal emancipation from suffering and unawareness.

(Information provided by: BCA Center for Buddhist Education, <http://www.BuddhistChurchesofAmerica.org>)

## **Islam**

### **Start of Ramadan (Month of Fasting) - date changes with each calendar year**

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. It is the Islamic month of fasting, in which participating Muslims refrain from eating and drinking from dawn until sunset. Ramadan is a time for spiritual purification achieved through fasting, self-sacrifice and prayers. Fasting during Ramadan is one of the five Pillars of Islam. Families and friends feast together every evening at sunset to break their fast and pray for everyone around the world. (Information provided by: Islamic Relief USA, [www.islamicreliefusa.org](http://www.islamicreliefusa.org))

[\(Watch a video on Ramadan here\)](#)

### **Eid ul-Fitr (Festival of Breaking the Fast)- date changes with each calendar year**

Ramadan concludes with a 3-day festival known as "Eid ul-Fitr," which literally means "to break the fast." The holiday marks the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting and is a culmination of the month-long struggle towards a higher spiritual state. It is the time for celebrations for the Muslims, when they buy new clothes and lots of gifts. This day Muslims visit mosque early in the morning and a get together is there at their home of all their near and dear ones. The entire family has delicious feasts together. Children enjoy Eid the most as they get a lot of sweets and gifts from their family members.

(Information provided by: Islamic Relief USA, <http://www.islamicreliefusa.org>) ( To read more: [http://islam.about.com/od/ramadan/ff/eid\\_fitr.htm](http://islam.about.com/od/ramadan/ff/eid_fitr.htm))

### **Days of Hajj (Days of Pilgrimage to Kaba)- date changes with each calendar year**

The Hajj is the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It is currently the largest annual pilgrimage in the world, and is the fifth pillar of Islam, a religious duty that must be carried out at least once in their lifetime by every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to do so. The ritual of pilgrimage to Mecca is considered by Muslims to stretch back thousands of years to the time of Abraham. Pilgrims join processions of hundreds of thousands of people, who simultaneously converge on Mecca for the week of the Hajj, and perform a series of rituals and celebrate the four day global festival of Eid al-Adha.

(Information provided by: Islamic Relief USA, <http://www.islamicreliefusa.org>) (To read more: <http://islam.about.com/od/hajj/tp/hajjinfo.htm>)

### **Eid al-Adha (Festival of the Sacrifice)- date changes with each calendar year**

Eid al Adha is a four day festivity that is celebrated at the end of Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. The Festival of Sacrifice which occurs 70 days after Eid-al-Fitr. Eid ul-Adha is the second most important festival in the Muslim calendar. It is to remember the time when Abraham was going to sacrifice his own son to prove obedience to God and marks the end of the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca). It takes place on the 10th day of Dhul-Hijjah, the last month of the Islamic calendar. (To read more: <http://islam.about.com/od/hajj/a/adha.htm>)

(Information provided by: Islamic Relief USA, <http://www.islamicreliefusa.org>)

26 November 2011
15 November 2012
4 November 2013
25 October 2014
14 October 2015

### **Muharram (The Islamic New Year)- date changes with each calendar year**

The month of Muharram marks the start of the Islamic new year. The Islamic new year is celebrated relatively quietly, with prayers and readings.

(Information provided by: Islamic Relief USA, <http://www.islamicreliefusa.org>)

(To learn more: [http://islam.about.com/cs/calendar/a/hijrah\\_calendar.htm](http://islam.about.com/cs/calendar/a/hijrah_calendar.htm))

## Hinduism

### **Diwali (or Deepavali)**- *date changes with each calendar year*

Perhaps the most well-known Hindu festival, Diwali, or the Festival of Lights, is celebrated by Hindus worldwide. Diwali marks the return of Lord Ram to his kingdom of Ayodhya after a 14 year exile. The residents lit all Ayodhya with rows of clay lamps. The lighting of lamps symbolizes the victory of knowledge over ignorance and good over evil. This is the largest Hindu festival of the year. It is a national holiday in India. "...*may include dietary fast or vegetarian diet*"

(Information provided by: Hindu American Foundation, [www.HAFsite.org](http://www.HAFsite.org) & JKP, Barsana Dham Austin, TX)

(To learn more: <http://hinduism.about.com/od/diwalifestivaloflights/a/diwali.htm>)

### **Krishna Janmashtami**- *date changes with each calendar year*

Krishna Janmashtami celebrates the birthday of Krishna, one of the most beloved avatar's of Lord Vishnu, born at midnight in a prison cell and carried to safety. Celebrations usually include an enactment of Krishan's birth and childhood. The life of Krishna is told in the *Mahabharat*, the world's longest epic, and it includes his deliverance of the *Bhagavad Gita*, one of the most sacred Hindu scriptures. "...*may include dietary fast or vegetarian diet*"

(Information provided by: Hindu American Foundation, [www.HAFsite.org](http://www.HAFsite.org) & JKP, Barsana Dham Austin, TX)

(To learn more: <http://hinduism.about.com/od/festivalsholidays/a/janmashthami.htm>)

### **Holi**- *date changes with each calendar year*

The Festival of Colors, celebrated with much fanfare by Hindus throughout the world, brings communities together in expectation of a bountiful harvest. There are many Hindu mythological associations for Holi, but one of the most popular is in remembrance of Lord Krishna, who enjoyed squirting colored water and applying special colored paste on the young maidens in his village. This is a festival of spring where people get together and throw colored powder on each other in a joyous mood. They forgive and forget any past animosity with family and friends while remembering and worshipping God. "...*may include dietary fast or vegetarian diet*"

(Information provided by: Hindu American Foundation, [www.HAFsite.org](http://www.HAFsite.org) & JKP, Barsana Dham Austin, TX)

(To learn more: <http://hinduism.about.com/od/holifestivalofcolors/a/holybasics.htm>)

### **Maha Sivaratri** – *date changes with each calendar year*

Translated as the Great Night of Lord Siva, this festival is usually marked with a day long fast followed by a celebration and vigil at night. It tests the devotees will power to abstain from food and remain awake throughout the night. On this night in particular, married women offer prayers to Goddess Parvati, the consort of Lord Siva, to bless their marriages while unmarried women pray for future marital bliss. "...*may include dietary fast or vegetarian diet*"

(Information provided by: Hindu American Foundation, [www.HAFsite.org](http://www.HAFsite.org) & JKP, Barsana Dham Austin, TX)

(To learn more: <http://hinduism.about.com/od/festivalsholidays/p/mahashivratri.htm>)

### **Navratri** – *date changes with each calendar year*

Navratri is a nine day and night celebration of the Goddess Durga, who embodies the power of the universe. The first three days celebrate Goddess Durga specifically, the following three celebrate Goddess Laxmi (Goddess of Wealth), and the last three celebrate Goddess Saraswati (Goddess of Knowledge). This joyous festival is just one way that Hinduism pays homage to the feminine Divine. "...*may include dietary fast or vegetarian diet*"

(Information provided by: Hindu American Foundation, [www.HAFsite.org](http://www.HAFsite.org) & JKP, Barsana Dham Austin, TX)

(To learn more: <http://hinduism.about.com/od/festivalsholidays/a/vasantnavratri.htm>)

## Judaism

### **Passover (Festival of Freedom)-** *date changes with each calendar year*

“The eight-day festival of Passover is celebrated in the early spring, from the 15th through the 22nd of the Hebrew month of Nissan. It commemorates the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt. And, by following the rituals of Passover, Jews have the ability to relive and experience the true freedom of their Jewish ancestors.”

(Information provided by: [http://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach\\_cdo/aid/871715/jewish/What-Is-Passover.htm](http://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/871715/jewish/What-Is-Passover.htm))

“Almost all American Jews observe Passover to some extent, even if to go to their parents' house for a ritual dinner (called a seder, pronounced SAY-der) on the first and/or second night of the holiday. Most (though not all) American Jews avoid bread and grain products to one extent or another throughout this holiday, in memory of the fact that our ancestors left Egypt in a hurry and didn't have time to wait for their bread to rise. You should avoid scheduling events involving food during this holiday, and should avoid scheduling travel for Jews because it may be hard for them to find suitable food away from home.” ([Watch a video on Passover here](#))

(This information is for educational use only. It is provided and copy written by: Tracey R. Rich, <http://www.jewfaq.org>)

(Click here for listings and information on all Jewish holidays: [http://www.chabad.org/calendar/holidays\\_cdo/aid/672022/jewish/2010-Holidays.htm](http://www.chabad.org/calendar/holidays_cdo/aid/672022/jewish/2010-Holidays.htm))

### **Rosh Hashanah-** *date changes with each calendar year*

“Rosh Hashanah is a happy, festive holiday, but somewhat more solemn than American New Year. Like American New Year, it is a time to look back at the past year and make resolutions for the following year. It is also a wake-up call, a time to begin mental preparations for the upcoming day of atonement, Yom Kippur.” ([Watch a video on Rosh Hashanah here](#))

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(Click here for listing and information on all Jewish holidays: [http://www.chabad.org/calendar/holidays\\_cdo/aid/672022/jewish/2010-Holidays.htm](http://www.chabad.org/calendar/holidays_cdo/aid/672022/jewish/2010-Holidays.htm))

### **Yom Kippur-** *date changes with each calendar year*

“Yom Kippur is the Jewish day of atonement, a day of fasting and repentance to reconcile ourselves with the Creator for the mistakes we have made in the last year. It occurs on the ninth day after the first day of Rosh Hashanah”

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(Click here for listings and information on all Jewish holidays: [http://www.chabad.org/calendar/holidays\\_cdo/aid/672022/jewish/2010-Holidays.htm](http://www.chabad.org/calendar/holidays_cdo/aid/672022/jewish/2010-Holidays.htm))

### **Hanukkah-** *date changes with each calendar year*

“Chanukkah is the festival of lights, commemorating the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after a successful revolt against the Selucid Greeks. As part of the rededication, the victorious Jews needed to light the Temple's menorah (candelabrum), but they had only enough oil to last one day and it would take eight days to prepare more oil. Miraculously, the one-day supply of oil lasted for eight days. The miracle of the oil is commemorated with this eight-day candlelighting holiday.” ([Watch a video on Hanukkah here](#))

(This information is for educational use only. It is provided and copy written by: Tracey R. Rich, <http://www.jewfaq.org>)

(Watch a video on Hanukkah here: <http://www.history.com/video.do?name=culture&bcpid=1681694254&bclid=1675979339&bctid=1586359394>)

### **Sukkot-** *date changes with each calendar year*

“This festival of booths commemorates the Biblical period of wandering in the desert, and is commemorated by building a temporary shelter (called a sukkah, usually rhymes with "book a") in the yard and eating meals in it. Some spend considerable time in the sukkah, even sleeping there. Sukkot begins on the fifth day after Yom Kippur, in late September or October, and lasts for 7 days.”

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(Click here for listings and information on all Jewish holidays: [http://www.chabad.org/calendar/holidays\\_cdo/aid/672022/jewish/2010-Holidays.htm](http://www.chabad.org/calendar/holidays_cdo/aid/672022/jewish/2010-Holidays.htm))

# Cultural *racial and ethnic population* | <http://www.census.gov/pubinfo/www/hotlinks.html>

## African American

### **National Black History Month** - February

Is a remembrance of important people and events in the history of the African Diaspora. It is celebrated annually in the United States (US) and Canada in February and the United Kingdom in the month of October. ([Watch a video on Black History here](#))  
(Information provided by: <http://www.africanamericanhistorymonth.gov/>)

### **Kwanzaa**- December 26 – January 1

Kwanzaa is a non-religious African American holiday which celebrates family, community, and culture. It is celebrated for seven days: December 26 - January 1. ([Watch a video on Kwanzaa here](#)) (Information provided by: <http://www.history.com/content/kwanzaa>)

### **Juneteenth**- June 19

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. (learn more here: <http://www.juneteenth.com/history.htm>)

## Latino or Hispanic

### **Hispanic Heritage Month**- September 15 - October 15

“Each year, Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15, by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America.” (Information provided by: <http://hispanicheritagemoth.gov/about/>)

(To Learn more about Hispanic History in America: <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/hispanic/americas.htm>)

(To read about Latinos in history: <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/hispanic/history.htm>)

### **Cinco de Mayo**- May 5

“During the French-Mexican War, a poorly supplied and outnumbered Mexican army under General Ignacio Zaragoza defeats a French army attempting to capture Puebla de Los Angeles, a small town in east-central Mexico. Victory at the Battle of Puebla represented a great moral victory for the Mexican government, symbolizing the country's ability to defend its sovereignty against threat by a powerful foreign nation. Today, Mexicans celebrate the anniversary of the Battle of Puebla as Cinco de Mayo, a national holiday in Mexico.” (Watch a video [Cinco de Mayo Video](#) here) (Information provided by: <http://bit.ly/b0QgXp>)

## Asian/ Pacific Islander

### **Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month**- May

“May is Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month – a celebration of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States. The month of May was chosen to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese to the United States on May 7, 1843, and to mark the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869. The majority of the workers who laid the tracks were Chinese immigrants. (Information provided by: <http://asianpacificheritage.gov/>) (For ideas on how to celebrate this month: [http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_lesson/lesson235.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson235.shtml))

### **Chinese New Year**- *date changes with each calendar year*

Today, the 15-day Chinese New Year festivities are celebrated with a week of vacation in metropolitan areas of China. Much like the Western New Year (January 1st), the biggest celebration is on the eve of the holiday. At the turn of the new year, fireworks cover the city. Aside from New Year's Eve, there are other important days of the 15-day New Year Festival.

(Watch a video on [Chinese New Year Video](#) here) (Information provided by: <http://www.history.com/content/chinesenewyear>)

### **Raksha Bandhan** – *date changes with each calendar year*

Raksha (translated as "to protect") Bandhan (translated as "tied together") is the Hindu celebration of the bond between brothers and sisters. The celebration centers around the rakhi, a decorated thread that the sister ties around her brother's wrist as a symbol of their bond. The brother vows to protect his sister and usually gives her a gift. Rakhi's are given, not only to blood brothers, but also cousin brothers and good friends.

(Information provided by: Hindu American Foundation, [www.HAFsite.org](http://www.HAFsite.org) & JKP, Barsana Dham Austin, TX)

(To learn more about Raksha Bandhan to here : <http://www.raksha-bandhan.com/>)

## American Indian

### **American Indian & Alaska Native Heritage Month- November**

“National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month is celebrated to recognize the intertribal cultures and to educate the public about the heritage, history, art, and traditions of the American Indian and Alaska Native people.”

(Information provided by: [http://www.ihs.gov/PublicAffairs/Heritage/Heritage\\_History.cfm](http://www.ihs.gov/PublicAffairs/Heritage/Heritage_History.cfm))

(For ideas on how to celebrate this month: [http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_lesson/lesson209.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson209.shtml))

(To learn more about the history of American Indians: <http://www.lib.washington.edu/subject/History/tm/native.html>)

(To learn more about the history of Alaska Natives: <http://www.akhistorycourse.org/>)

Videos for other major holidays:

Martin Luther King Jr: [Dr.King Video](#)

Memorial Day: [Memorial Day Video](#)

New Years: [New Years Video](#)

Valentine's Day: [Valentine's Day Video](#)

Mardi Gras: To learn more about Mardi Gras, go here: <http://www.history.com/topics/mardi-gras>

St. Patrick's Day: [St. Patrick's Day Video](#)

Labor Day: [Labor Day Video](#)

Mardi Gras: [Mardi Gras Video](#)

Forth of July: [July 4th](#)