



CHRISTMAS TIME IN ENGLAND



Read about how young British boys and girls spend the Christmas season.



Christmas Eve - December 24th

For many English people Christmas Eve is a very busy time. A popular tradition in England is to go out Christmas **carolling**. A *carol* is a short song or hymn about Christmas or the winter season. Some of the most famous carols are “*Silent Night, Jingle Bells, Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer* and *O Christmas Tree*. Some people go door to door and sing these songs to bring the Christmas spirit to their neighbours. Other Christmas activities include going to the pub for a drink with close friends and family, or going to a midnight church service. For children, Christmas is the time when Father Christmas or **Santa Claus** comes. Before children go to bed, they usually hang up their stockings and put out some mince pies and milk for Santa Claus. Nowadays, some children even leave carrots out for Santa’s **reindeer** to eat. Parents tell their children the Santa Claus lives in Greenland and makes all the presents with his elves. Then, he puts all of these toys on his **sleigh** and goes around the world leaving the presents to children who have behaved well that year.



Christmas Day

On Christmas morning, children are usually the first to get up and then they go to immediately wake up their parents. Once the entire family is awake, they start opening their presents. After all the presents have been opened, the family sits down and has a large breakfast or brunch together. They usually eat eggs, bacon, toast, **hash browns** and other such breakfast foods.

The Queen's Message

An important ritual among British people is to watch the King or Queen’s speech. This tradition began in 1932, when Rudyard Kipling (a famous English writer) wrote a speech for King George V. The speech was so beautiful that King George V decided to read it to all the people in his Kingdom and it was an enormous success. The speech began like this, “I speak now from my home and from my heart, to you all...”. Now that Queen Elizabeth II is the reigning monarch, it is her responsibility to continue this rich tradition and read a speech to the British public every year on Christmas. However, this message is not only for British people: it is broadcast all over the world and is watched by millions of people.





Christmas Dinner

British people are not known for their culinary **expertise**; however, Christmas Dinner is a very delicious and **wholesome** meal. They usually start with prawns or some sort of smoked fish. Then, the main course is served. It is a heavy meal made up of turkey, potatoes (roasted, boiled or mashed), vegetables (Brussels sprouts), roasted parsnips, and stuffing with gravy and bread sauce. After such a meal, it is hard to believe that you will have room for dessert, but if you do, they serve a rich Christmas pudding (chocolate, vanilla or fruit flavoured) accompanied with brandy sauce or brandy butter.



Boxing Day - December 26th

On Boxing Day, people go out to visit each other. It is a time to re-connect with people whom you do not see much during the rest of the year. In England, Boxing Day, celebrated on December 26th, is traditionally a time to give gifts to tradesmen, servants, and friends. Even though in the UK Boxing Day is still a public holiday, most shops and supermarkets are open, but banks and most offices remain closed. Therefore, Boxing Day is also a very busy day for shoppers. Most unwanted or unusable gifts are returned and exchanged for new products. Children do not have to return to school until after the new year, but for most people, the 27th is a normal day and they have to return to work.



COMPREHENSION

Answer the following questions.

- 1) What are some famous Christmas carols?
- 2) What do the children leave out for Santa's reindeer?
- 3) What do families do after opening presents?
- 4) Who wrote the original speech for the British monarchs?
- 5) Who was the first monarch to read the Christmas speech?
- 6) How many people listen to the Queen's speech?
- 7) How is British Christmas dinner different than yours?
- 8) What do most shoppers do on Boxing Day?

GLOSSARY

carolling: cantare canzoni di Natale.

reindeer: renna.

sleigh: slitta.

hash browns: frittelle di patate.

expertise: abilità.

wholesome: salutare, sano.

WRITING

How does your family spend Christmas Holidays? Write about what you normally do on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. You can write about:

- What type of meal you have on Christmas Eve and Christmas Dinner
- What time you go to bed at on Christmas Eve/What time you wake up at on Christmas Morning
- What time you open presents at
- Who you visit during the holidays