



Hohoho!

(Part I)

Do you have plans for Christmas? This is one of the busiest periods of the year for hotels as people want to spend some time with their family and friends and often need to travel to do so. Below is Part I of my Blog on Christmas. Enjoy 😊!

Holiday traditions around the world ^{1,2,3,4}

The end-of-the-year holiday season sparks nostalgia for people around the world. Below are some of the unusual traditions taking place in various countries 😊.

- In Austria, the notorious Krampus beast is a scary counterpart to Santa Claus who punishes naughty children. December 5 is known as Krampusnacht (Krampus Night), a time when the horned devil goes around towns to find those that were disobedient. But it's not all doom and gloom—the next day is called Nikolaustag (St. Nicholas Day) and Santa Claus comes to spread some much needed joy after Krampus' fright night.
- In Ireland, festivities last from Christmas Eve until January 6 (Epiphany). On December 26, known as St. Stephen's Day, an Irish tradition known as the *Wren Boys Procession* takes place. Children go from door to door singing, holding a stick that is topped by a holly bush and a wren. They ask for money for the "starving wren," which goes into their pockets.
- In Ukraine, Christmas Eve festivities are known as Sviata Vechera, ("Holy Supper"). The celebration begins when the first star is sighted in the evening sky. In farming communities, the household head brings in a sheaf of wheat, which symbolizes the wheat crops of Ukraine. It is called "didukh," which translates to "grandfather spirit." In homes within the city, a few stalks of wheat may be used to decorate the table.
- In Poland, carp featured during Christmas dinner are often kept in the family bathtub for days before being eaten 😊. Afterwards, it's common for the fish scales to be kept for good luck!

Christmas Markets ^{5,6}

¹ <https://www.viator.com/en-CA/blog/Holiday-Traditions-from-Around-the-World/I93572>

² <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/celebrations/article/christmas>

³ <https://blog.remitly.com/lifestyle-culture/winter-holidays/>

⁴ <https://learningliftoff.com/k-12-education/school-calendar-and-seasons/9-winter-holidays-around-the-world/>

⁵ <https://blog.remitly.com/lifestyle-culture/christmas-market/>

⁶ <https://www.timeout.com/usa/things-to-do/best-christmas-markets-in-the-usa>

Christmas markets draw millions of visitors annually during the advent season, especially across Northern Europe. Locals and world travelers highly anticipate them. Though these events are now part of many people's Christmas traditions, those markets have secular roots.

In 1296, Ostrich Emperor Albrecht issued a decree allowing Viennese shopkeepers to open their stores for a day or two in early winter. This way, residents of Vienna could stock up on the supplies they needed to endure the cold season ahead.

During the years that followed, many European villages and cities held their own winter markets. As these events grew, stalls began selling toys, baskets, woodcarvings, roasted nuts, and other goodies. This gave attendees the opportunity to buy Christmas gifts along with their winter necessities. During the 15th century, festive gifts had become the chief attraction at winter markets, and the European Christmas market was born.

Today, there are hundreds of Christmas markets around the world. For instance, in the U.S., *The Great Dickens Christmas Fair* is one of the most unique markets. Organizers transform the Cow Palace arena outside San Francisco into Dickensian London with hundreds of performers and vendors dressed in Victorian costumes. Visitors wander through music halls and festive shops filled with handmade goods. They can have a pint at Mad Sal's Dockside Inn, and sample festive foods like roasted chestnuts, fish and chips and Christmas pudding, or interact with beloved Dickens' characters like Tiny Tim, Bob Cratchit, and Father Christmas.

What are some Christmas traditions in the U.S.?^{7,8,9}

- Watching a movie – according to a study, America's favorite holiday movies are *Home Alone*, *The Grinch* (2018), *Elf*, *Edward Scissorhands*, and *Happiest Season*. Although this list is a blend of old and new preferences, nearly all are distinctive takes on the traditional holiday story¹⁰.

⁷ <https://www.minted.com/lp/christmas-traditions>

⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christmas>

⁹ <https://preply.com/en/blog/most-popular-holiday-movies-in-america/>

¹⁰ For this study, the authors analyzed search trends for keywords related to 115 of the highest-rated and highest-grossing holiday movies of all time, according to Rotten Tomatoes and Box Office Mojo.

- Setting up a Christmas tree – this is one of the oldest Christmas traditions, dating back to the 15th century. In the U.S. alone, a staggering 30-35 million real Christmas trees find new homes each year. Embellishing the tree marks the start of the holiday season.
- Hanging the Mistletoe – this charming tradition dates way back to the 2nd or 3rd century. Not only did it supposedly ward off mischievous spirits, bringing good vibes to homes, but it also symbolized affection and camaraderie.

Hotels sumptuously decorated for Christmas^{11,12}

Below are examples of luxury hotels that go all-out for Christmas 😊.

- *The Greenbrier* (West Virginia): natural mineral springs have drawn guests, including US presidents, to *The Greenbrier* for more than two centuries. The historic hotel opened in 1913. Letters to Santa, a fun run and cookie decorating workshops are all part of The Greenbrier's lineup in the days surrounding December 25. On Christmas Eve, there's a Season's Greetings Dinner and a service in the resort's chapel. On Christmas Day, puzzles and board games, indoor planetarium presentations and a Christmas musical will keep families entertained.
- *Mohonk Mountain House* (New York) – the hotel celebrates Hanukkah and a Victorian-style Christmas each year, decking its halls with classic decorations and the spirit of the holiday season. Special events include the Hudson Valley Gingerbread Competition, a Winter Lights Display, open-air ice skating, food demonstrations, daily crafts, etc.
- *Big Cedar Lodge* (Missouri) - in early November, Big Cedar Lodge transforms itself into holiday headquarters. Not only is the property lit up with over 2 million lights, but it also hosts a multitude of holiday festivities including baking with Mrs. Claus, a Gingerbread Build Off, a holiday tram tour, an ice rink, a tree lighting ceremony, and much more.

¹¹ <https://10best.usatoday.com/awards/travel/best-hotel-for-the-holidays-2023/>

¹² <https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/hotels-lavish-christmas-decorations-feat/index.html>

On their way to join their loved ones for Christmas, or simply indulging themselves, many will spend a few nights at a hotel, where they expect to get clean and comfortable rooms. Unfortunately, the number one issue in the hotel industry is staff shortage. This is why adopting an electronic tipping solution like **TIP&GO®**, which can increase employees' earnings by up to 30%, is a must for hoteliers who want to satisfy their guests 😊.

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Francis Léonard, CEO

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