



# INTERNATIONAL HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

## DECEMBER 2011

**12.1 Restoration Day** - marks the restoration of independence of Portugal in 1640 after three decades of Spanish domination Portugal & Macao

**National Day** - marks the unification of Romania and Transylvania in 1918 and the 1989 overthrow of the communist regime Romania

**Youth Day** Portugal

**National Day** - commemorates the day in 1958 when the colony of Ubangi-Shari became an autonomous territory within the French Community and took the name Central African Republic Central African Republic

**Festival of Freedom and Democracy** - commemorates the overthrow of Hissene Habre by Idriss Deby in 1990 Chad

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**12.2 National Day** - marks the date in 1971 when four emirates met at Dubai Guesthouse Palace and agreed to enter into a union called the United Arab Emirates United Arab Emirates

**Gospel Days** – a celebration of the first missionaries coming to the islands and sharing their Christian faith Marshall Islands

12.2	<p><b>National Farmers' Day</b> – a day to honor the nation’s hard working farmers who excelled in their contribution to improve the agricultural sector with certificates and prizes; observed the first Friday of December</p>	Ghana*
	<p><b>Republic Day</b> - anniversary of the establishment of the People’s Republic in 1975</p>	Laos
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12.3	<p><b>International Day of Persons with Disabilities</b> - promotes the continuing integration of persons who are disabled into general society</p>	UN
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12.4	<p><b>Tassoua</b></p> <p><b>Kamolol Day</b> (Thanksgiving Day)</p> <p><b>Good Neighborliness Day</b> – celebrated the first Sunday of December</p>	<p>Iran</p> <p>Marshall Islands</p> <p>Turkmenistan*</p>
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12.5	<p><b>Ashura/Tamkharit</b> – for Sunni Muslims, a commemoration of Noah’s leaving the ark on Mount Ararat; for Shi Muslims, a somber day dedicated to the martyrdom of Hussein, the grandson of the prophet Muhammad, at the Battle of Karbala in AD 680; the schism between Sunni and Shia Muslims dates from this event; begins at sundown the previous day</p> <p><b>King's Birthday</b> - celebrates the life of King Bhumibol Adulyadej; the holiday is celebrated with festivities, prayers, and a nationwide effort to wear yellow, the color that symbolizes devotion</p> <p><b>Discovery Day</b> – commemorates the discovery of Haiti by Christopher Columbus in 1492</p>	<p>International*</p> <p>Thailand</p> <p>Haiti</p>

- 12.5**     **Sinterklaas** – the eve of Saint Nicholas Day which celebrates the name day of Saint Nicholas, patron saint of children; this is the chief give-giving occasion     Netherlands
- Discovery Day** – commemorates the date in 1492 that Christopher Columbus landed on the Dominican Republic     Dominican Republic
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- 12.6**     **St. Nicholas' Day/Santa Claus Day** - celebrates the life of St. Nicholas, a Christian bishop from what is now Turkey, known for his good deeds; in many European countries, families exchange gifts on this day rather than on Christmas     Germany & Slovakia
- Independence Day** - commemorates independence from Russia in 1917     Finland
- Constitution Day** - commemorates the day in 1978 on which the constitution was enacted     Spain
- Gita Jayanti** – a festival dedicated to the birth of Srimad Bhagvad Gita, the holy book of Hindus     Hindu
- Foundation of Quito** – commemorates the founding of Quito by the Spanish in 1534; the week-long festivities include a bullfight fair, chivas (open colorful buses with live bands), canelazos (warm alcoholic drinks with cinnamon), and flamenco shows     Ecuador
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- 12.7**     **Felix Houphouet-Boigny Remembrance Day** - celebrated the day of Felix Houphouet-Boigny's death; he was the first President of Cote d'Ivoire and played a leading role in the decolonization of Africa     Ivory Coast
- Earthquake Victim's Memorial Day** - commemorates the 1988 earthquake, which killed 60,000 people and left thousands homeless     Armenia

12.7	<b>Independence Day</b> - the Ivory Coast became fully independent on August 7, 1960; it is celebrated on December 7	Ivory Coast
	<b>St. Ambrose Day</b> – celebrates the life of Saint Ambrose, a bishop of Milan who became one of the most influential ecclesiastical figures of the 4 <sup>th</sup> century and is counted as one of the four original doctors of the church	Italy
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12.8	<b>Bodhi Day</b> – commemorates the day that the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni or Siddhartha Gotama, experienced enlightenment and found the roots of suffering after sitting and meditating under a pipul tree	Buddism
	<b>Galungan Day</b> – a 10-day celebration during which deified ancestors of the family descend to their former homes; they must be suitably entertained and welcomed, and prayers and offerings must be made for them; those families who have ancestors who have not yet been cremated, must make offerings at their graves	Bali
	<b>Feast of the Immaculate Conception Day</b> - honors the conception of the Virgin Mary without any stain of original sin	Christian
	<b>Saint Clement of Ohrid Day</b> - honors the life of Saint Clement, patron saint of Ohrid [present-day Macedonia], a medieval Bulgarian scholar and writer and the first Bulgarian archbishop	Macedonia
	<b>Mother's Day</b>	Panama
	<b>Constitution Day</b> - commemorates the day the constitution was adopted	Uzbekistan
	<b>Gunpowder Day</b> – fireworks help to honor the Lady of the Immaculate Conception	Costa Rica
	<b>Battle of the Falklands Day</b> – commemorates the victory of the British Navy over the Imperial German Navy in 1914	Falkland Islands

12.8	<b>Our Lady of Camarin Day</b> – honors the patron saint of Guam	Guam
	<b>Blessing of the Waters</b> (Beach Day) - clerics cast a cross into the icy water; whoever fetches it will attain good fortune for a whole year	Uruguay
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12.9	<b>Independence Day</b> - commemorates independence from the United Kingdom in 1961	Tanzania
	<b>Constitution Day</b> – adopted in 1986	Northern Marianas
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12.10	<b>Human Rights Day</b> - established in 1948 by the U.N. to commemorate the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights	UN
	<b>Constitution Day</b> - marks the advent of the regime of the Constitutional Monarchy	Thailand
	<b>Ganga-Bois</b> - a Vodoun (Voodoo) holiday honoring the Loa (deity) of nature	Haiti
	<b>Foundation Day</b> - the controlling MPLA-Labor party was formed on this date in 1977	Angola
	<b>Unduvap Full Moon Poya Day</b> – a celebration of the arrival of the Bo-tree sapling, brought to Sri Lanka by Buddhist Theri Sanghamitta; this, the oldest documented tree in the world, is venerated by Buddhists in Anuradhapura	Sri Lanka
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12.11	<b>Birthday of the Sultan of Selangor</b>	Malaysia
	<b>Proclamation of the Republic</b> - marks the date Upper Volta became an autonomous republic in the French Community, a political entity made up of former French colonies	Burkina Faso

<b>12.12</b>	<b>Neutrality Day</b> - commemorates the day in 1995 when all 185 members of the United Nations unanimously adopted a special resolution “On the permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan”	Turkmenistan
	<b>Fiesta of Our Lady of Guadalupe</b> - commemorates the day the Virgin Mary appeared to Juan Diego, circa 1531, and instructed him to take roses to the local bishop; the church had refused Diego’s request to build a shrine in the Virgin’s honor because it did not believe the Virgin would appear to a simple native; upon seeing the roses in the dead of winter, the bishop conceded	Mexico & Costa Rica
	<b>Agoueh r oyo</b> (Feeding the Sea) – a Vodoun (Voodoo) holiday known as the feeding of the sea; this holiday honors the loa of the ocean, ships and boats and is the patron of seafarers	Haiti
	<b>Jamhuri</b> (Independence) – a celebration of independence from Britain in 1963	Kenya
	<b>Constitution Day</b> – marks the adoption of the first Constitution of the Russian Federation in 1993	Russia
	<b>National Tree Planting Day</b> – celebrated the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday of December	Malawi*
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<b>12.13</b>	<b>Republic Day</b> - marks the day in 1974 that Malta became a republic within the Commonwealth, with the President as head of state instead of Queen Elizabeth II acting as Queen of Malta	Malta
	<b>National Day</b> - a day of national pride that is celebrated with sporting, cultural, religious and social events	St. Lucia
	<b>Luciadagen</b> (Aaint Lucia Day) - honors the third- or fourth- century saint, known as the Queen of Light; in Sweden, the start of the Christmas season; the eldest daughter of the household dresses in white, adorns her head with a wreath of burning candles, and offers coffee and sweets to the family	Sweden

12.14	<b>Chingshan Wang's Birthday</b> - honors Chingshan Wang, a god believed able to cure illnesses	Taiwan
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12.15	<b>Kingdom Day</b> (Statue Day) <b>Kingdom Day</b> – the Kingdom Charter was signed on this day in 1954 <b>Koninkrijksdag</b> (Kingdom Day) – commemorates the signing of the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands by Queen Juliana in 1954	Bonaire St. Martin Netherlands
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12.16	<b>Day of Reconciliation</b> - commemorates a famous Boer victory over the Zulu, The Battle of Blood River, in 1838 <b>Independence Day</b> - commemorates the declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 <b>Bijoy Dibash</b> (Victory Day) – signifies independence after a nine-month Liberation war against Pakistan in 1971 <b>National Day</b> – on this day in 1971 Bahrain gained its independence from Great Britain <b>Las Posadas</b> – a traditional Mexican festival lasting 9 days which re-enacts Mary and Joseph's search for room at the inn <b>Constitution Day</b> – anniversary of the 1962 constitution	South Africa Kazakhstan Bangladesh Bahrain Mexico Nepal
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12.17	<b>National Day</b> – commemorates the accession of Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuk, the first king of Bhutan to the throne	Bhutan

12.18	<b>Republic Day</b> - marks the founding of the Republic and creation of the Presidency of the Republic of Niger	Niger
12.19	<b>Separation Day</b> – celebrates the political separation of Anguilla from the islands of St. Kitts-Nevis	Anguilla
	<b>St. Nicholas Day</b> – honors the life of St. Nicholas and is the usual gift-giving day	Ukraine
	<b>Sveti Nikola</b> – honors St. Nicholas, the patron saint for many Serbian families	Serbia
12.20	<b>Day of Mourning</b> – marks the anniversary of the 1989 U.S. invasion of Panama	Panama
12.21	<b>Chanukah</b> (Festival of Lights) – commemorates the miracle of the one-day supply of oil miraculously lasting eight days; also marks the defeat of Seleucid Empire forces that had tried to prevent the people of Israel from practicing Judaism; Judah Maccabee and his brothers destroyed overwhelming forces, and rededicated the Temple in Jerusalem; it is customary to give children money and play with the dreidel to commemorate the learning of the Torah that was done under the guise of gambling	Jewish
	<b>São Tomé Day</b> (Catholic) – commemorates the day on which São Tomé and Príncipe were discovered by Portuguese navigators in 1470	São Tomé & Príncipe
	<b>Solstice</b> – in the Northern Hemisphere, winter begins today; in the Southern Hemisphere, today is the beginning of summer; between the equator and the Arctic Circle, the sun rises and sets farthest south on the horizon for the year and the period of daylight is at its shortest	International



**12.22 Unity Day** – commemorates the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987, done to end the nationwide conflict between the AZANU and ZAPU parties that had Zimbabwe divided since 1963 Zimbabwe

**Yule** (Winter Solstice) – the time of death and rebirth of Sun God; the full moon after Yule is considered the most powerful of the whole year; celebrated with a light festival, with as many candles as possible on or near the altar to welcome of the Sun Child Pagan

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**12.23 Tenno Tanjobi** (Emperor's Birthday) – a national holiday to honor Emperor Akihito, born in 1933 Japan

**Feast of Radishes** – an unusual festival celebrated in Oaxaca; in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, farmers would carve radishes into imaginative shapes as a means to entice people to buy produce at the market; this tradition was later formalized and is celebrated each year Mexico

**Queen's Birthday** – commemorates the birth of Queen Silvia Sweden

**Suez Victory Day** – commemorates the 1973 Yom Kippur War between Israel and coalition of Arab nations which included Egypt Egypt

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**12.24 Christmas Eve** – the night before Christmas Christian

**Yap State Constitution Day** Micronesia

**Santuranticuy Fair** (Saints for Sale) – a market where many artists come to sell their products, like statues, to make the holidays more vibrant Peru

**Independence Day** – anniversary of independence in 1951 Libya

<b>12.25</b>	<b>Christmas</b> - an annual holiday that commemorates the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christian religion's savior	International
	<b>Bath of Christmas</b> – rituals involving leaf-rubbing for medical treatments and talismans for magic protection, ritual sacrifices of pigs and goats, boucans for amusement, to which the loa come to bathe themselves and their protégés; sacrifice of turkeys for Caplau	Voodoo
	<b>Quaid-e-Azam's Birthday</b> (Jinnah's Birthday) - celebrates the life of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a Pakistani politician, and leader of the All India Muslim League, who founded Pakistan and served as its first Governor-General	Pakistan
	<b>Constitution Day</b> - commemorates the day the Constitution of the Republic of China was passed	Taiwan
	<b>Children's Day</b>	Congo

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<b>12.26</b>	<b>Independence Day</b> - commemorates the date of the release of the official results of the independence plebiscite in 1990, confirming secession from Yugoslavia	Slovenia
	<b>Second Day of Christmas</b>	Germany, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Poland
	<b>National Thanksgiving Day</b>	Solomon Islands
	<b>Boxing Day</b> - this holiday takes its name from the little boxes that servants, trades people, and others who rendered service to the public carried around on the day after Christmas to collect tips and year-end bonuses; usually observed as a public or bank holiday	International
	<b>Family Day</b>	Vanuatu & Namibia

- 12.26 Saint Stephen's Day/Santo Stefano** - honors the life of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr Greece, Italy, Switzerland, Croatia
- Day of Goodwill** - similar to Boxing Day, this day is set aside as a day to give to those who are less fortunate South Africa, & Namibia
- Junkanoo** - a festival similar to Mardi Gras and celebrated by some African and Caribbean countries; traditions include elaborate costumes, dance performances, and rhythmic music; celebrations continue on until January 1<sup>st</sup> Bahamas
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- 12.27 Proclamation Day** - celebrates the proclamation of South Australia as a British province; the proclamation was made by Captain John Hindmarsh, beside The Old Gum Tree at Glenelg; held the first working day after Christmas Day Australia\*
- Constitution Day** - a new constitution was adopted on this day in 1972 North Korea
- San Jose Carnival** Costa Rica
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- 12.28 Holy Innocents' Day** – a religious commemoration of King Herod's ordering the slaughter of all male infants in his kingdom, intended to include the Christ Child; akin to April Fool's Day, it is an occasion for jokes and pranks Mexico
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- 12.30 Danza de los Diablitos** – a three-day festival held by the Boruca Indian tribe in Costa Rica; a ritual dance re-enacts the Spanish conquest; participants wear elaborate costumes and masks, which empower the dancer to fight and dispel the evil of the Spanish intruders who are represented by a mock bull Costa Rica

- 12.30 Rizal Day** – commemorates the life and works of José Rizal, one of the Philippines’ national heroes; he was a patriot and most prominent advocate for reform in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial era; he was executed on this day in 1896 making him a martyr of the Philippine Revolution Philippines
- Republic Day** - anniversary of the Democratic Republic of Madagascar since 1975 Madagascar
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- 12.31 Day of Azeri Solidarity** - commemorates the date in 1989 when, as a protest against the former Soviet authorities preventing Azeris from communicating with relatives living across the border, a group of young Azerbaijanis broke into neighboring Iran Azerbaijan
- Revolution Day** Ghana
- Commemoration of the Restoration** (St. Sylvester) – marks the anniversary of St. Sylvester’s death; St. Sylvester was pope during one of the most important times of Rome’s history and was pope during Constantine’s rule Switzerland
- Omisoka** - celebrates the final day of the old year; on this day the Japanese gather to get ready to welcome the new year; in addition to cleaning the home and getting things in order, the Japanese place a kadomatsu (a decoration of pine, bamboo, and straw) on each side of the front door for good fortune; a shimekazari is hung above the door to bring happiness and to ward off bad spirits Japan
- Hogmanay** - celebrations include the custom of “first-footing”, which starts immediately after midnight, and involves being the first person to cross the threshold of a friend or neighbor and often involves the giving of a symbolic gift intended to bring luck to the household Scotland