



INTERNATIONAL HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

DECEMBER 2008

12.1—**National Day**; Romania

Marks the unification of Romania and Transylvania in 1918 and the 1989 overthrow of the communist regime

12.1—**Festival of Freedom and Democracy**; Chad

Commemorates the overthrow of Hissene Habre by Idriss Deby in 1990

12.1—**National Day**; Central African Republic

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

12.1—**National Day**; Romania

Commemorates the assembly of the delegates of ethnic Romanians held in Alba Lulia in 1918, which declared the Union of Transylvania with Romania

12.1—**Restoration Day**; Macao & Portugal

Marks the restoration of independence of Portugal in 1640 after three decades of Spanish domination

12.2—**National Day**; United Arab Emirates

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

12.2—**Republic Day**—Laos

Anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic in 1975

12.3—**International Day of Persons with Disabilities**; U.N.

Promotes the continuing integration of persons who are disabled into general society

12.4—**Kamolol Day** (Thanksgiving); Marshall Islands

12.5—**Discovery Day**; Haiti

Commemorates the discovery of Haiti by Christopher Columbus in 1492

12.5—Discovery of Hispaniola; Dominican Republic

Commemorates the date in 1492 that Christopher Columbus landed on the Dominican Republic

12.5—King’s Birthday; Thailand

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

12.5—Sinterklaas; Netherlands

Celebrates the name day of Saint Nicholas, patron saint of children

12.6—St. Nicholas Day; International

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 of Christmas

12.6—Arafa; Afghanistan

Celebrated the ninth day of the month of Zul-Hajja. A day for Muslims to come together in unity

12.6—Constitution Day; Spain

Commemorates the day in 1978 on which the constitution was enacted

12.6—Farmer’s Day; Ghana

Celebrated as a day of rest for workers across Ghana

12.6—Foundation of Quito; Ecuador

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.

12.6—Independence Day; Finland

Commemorates independence from Russia in 1917

12.7—Earthquake Victims’ Memorial Day; Armenia

Commemorates the 1988 earthquake, which killed 60,000 people and left thousands homeless

12.7—Felix Houphouet-Boigny Remembrance Day; Ivory Coast

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

12.7—Good Neighborliness Day; Turkmenistan

Celebrated the first Sunday of December

12.7—National Day; Ivory Coast

12.7—St. Ambrose Day; Italy

Celebrates the life of Saint Ambrose, a bishop of Milan who became one of the most influential ecclesiastical figures of the 4th century and is counted as one of the four original doctors of the church

12.8—Battle of the Falklands Day; Falkland Islands

Commemorates the victory of the British Navy over the Imperial German Navy in 1914

12.8—Blessing of the Waters (Beach Day); Uruguay

12.8—Constitution Day; Uzbekistan

Commemorates the day the constitution was adopted

12.8—Hari Raya Haji (Feast of the Sacrifice); Singapore

Celebrated by Muslims on the tenth day of the last month of the Muslim calendar. Marks the conclusion of the annual Haj—the pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca

12.8—Mother’s Day; Palau & Panama

12.8—National Tree Planting Day; Malawi

12.8—Our Lady of Camarin Day; Guam

Honors the patron saint of Guam

12.8—Saint Clement of Ohrid; Macedonia

Honors the life of Saint Clement, patron saint of Ohrid (present-day Macedonia), a medieval Bulgarian scholar and writer and the first Bulgarian archbishop

12.9—Constitution Day; Northern Marianas

12.9—Independence Day; Tanzania

Commemorates independence from the United Kingdom in 1961

12.10—Rights Day; U.N.

Established in 1948 by the U.N. to commemorate the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

12.10—Constitution Day; Thailand

Marks the advent of the regime of the Constitutional Monarchy

12.10—Foundation Day; Angola

The controlling MPLA-Labor party was formed on this date in 1977

12.10—Ganga-Bois; Haiti

A Vodoun (Voodoo) holiday honoring the Loa (deity) of nature

12.11—Proclamation of the Republic; Burkina Faso

Marks the date Upper Volta became an autonomous republic in the French Community, a political entity made up of former French colonies

12.10—Settlers’ Day; Namibia

12.12—Jamhuri (Independence) Day; Kenya

A celebration of independence from Britain in 1963

12.12—Agou-Arroyo (Manga la mer); Haiti

A Vodoun (Voodoo) holiday

12.12—Constitution Day; Russia

Marks the adoption of the first Constitution of the Russian Federation in 1993

12.12—Neutrality Day; Turkmenistan

Commemorates the day in 1995 when all 185 members of the United Nations unanimously adopted a special resolution "On the permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan"

12.12—Unduvap Full Moon Poya Day; Sri Lanka

A religious holiday honoring the arrival of the Bo-tree sapling

12.12—Fiesta of Our Lady of Guadalupe; Mexico

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

12.13—Luciadagen (Saint Lucia Day); Sweden, U.S.

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

12.13—National Day; St. Lucia

12.13—Republic Day; Malta

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

12.14—Chingshan Wang's Birthday; Taiwan

Honors Chingshan Wang, a god believed able to cure illnesses

12.15—Navidades; Puerto Rico

Marks the beginning of the traditional Christmas season, ending with Three Kings Day on January 6

12.15—Fast of Tebet; Israel

The fourth month of the civil year; the tenth month of the ecclesiastical year

12.15—Kingdom Day; St. Martin

12.15—Kingdom Day (Statue Day); Bonaire

12.15—Kindgom Day (Koninkrijksdag); Netherlands

Commemorates the signing of the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands by Queen Juliana in 1954

12.16—Bijoy Dibash (Victory Day); Bangladesh

Signifies independence after a nine-month Liberation War against Pakistan in 1971

12.16—Independence Day; Kazakhstan

Commemorates the declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991

12.16—National Day; Bahrain

12.16—Day of the Vow & Reconciliation Day; South Africa

Commemorates a famous Boer victory over the Zulu, The Battle of Blood River, in 1838

12.16—Las Posadas; Mexico

A traditional Mexican festival lasting 9 days which re-enacts Mary and Joseph's search for room at the inn

12.16—Constitution Day; Nepal
Anniversary of the 1962 constitution

12.17—National Day; Bhutan
Commemorates the accession of Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuk, the first king of Bhutan to the throne

12.18—Republic Day; Niger

12.19—Separation Day; Anguilla
Celebrates the political separation of Anguilla from the islands of St. Kitts-Nevis

12.19—St. Nicholas Day; Ukraine
Honors the life of St. Nicholas and is the usual gift-giving day

12.19—Sveti Nikola; Serbia
Honors St. Nicholas, the patron saint for many Serbian families

12.20—Day of Mourning; Panama
Marks the anniversary of the 1989 U.S. invasion of Panama

12.21—Solstice; International
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 – 12 hours, 8 minutes at the equator and decreasing to zero at the Arctic Circle

12.21—Chanukah (Festival of Lights); Israel

12.22—Army Day; Vietnam

12.23—Tenno Tanjobi (Emperor's Birthday); Japan
A national holiday to honor Emperor Akihito, born in 1933

12.23—Feast of the Radishes; Mexico
An unusual festival celebrated in Oaxaca. In the 16th 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

12.23—Queen's Birthday; Sweden

12.23—Suez Victory Day; Egypt
Commemorates the 1973 Yom Kippur War between Israel and a coalition of Arab nations which included Egypt

12.24—Constitution Day; Micronesia

12.24—Santuranticuy (Saints for Sale); Peru
One of the largest arts and crafts fairs in Peru, Santuranticuy dates back to the Vice-regency. Artisans lay out blankets on the sidewalks and sale a wide variety of figurines

12.25—Children’s Day; Congo

12.25—Constitution Day; Taiwan

Commemorates the day the Constitution of the Republic of China was passed

12.25—Quaid-e-Azam (Jinnah’s Birthday); Pakistan

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

12.25—Death of Tsongkapa; Tibet

Marks the anniversary of the death of Tsongkapa, the great reformer of Tibetan Buddhism & founder of the Gelukpa sect. In honor of his death houses, streets, and temples are lit by numerous lamps

12.26—Boxing Day; International

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. Today, it is usually observed as a public or bank holiday

12.26—Junkanoo; Bahamas

A festival similar to Mardi Gras and celebrated by some African and Caribbean countries. Traditions include elaborate costumes, dance performances, and rhythmic music. The celebrations continue on January 1

12.26—Day of Goodwill; South Africa

Similar to Boxing Day, this day is set aside as a day to give to those who are less fortunate

12.26—Independence Day; Slovenia

Commemorates the date of the release of the official results of the independence plebiscite in 1990, confirming secession from Yugoslavia

12.26—National Thanksgiving Day; Solomon Islands

12.26—Proclamation Day; Australia

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

12.26—St. Stephen’s Day; International

Honors the life of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr

12.27—Anniversary of the Constitution; North Korea

A new constitution was adopted on this day in 1972

12.27—Family Day; Vanuatu

12.28—Holy Innocents’ Day; Mexico

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

12.29—Hijra (New Year); Islamic (Muslim)

The first day of the first month (Muharram) of the Islamic year. Begins at sundown the previous day

12.30—Republic Day; Madagascar

Anniversary of the Democratic Republic of Madagascar since 1975

12.30—Rizal Day; Philippines

Commemorates the death of Dr. Jose P. Rizal, a Filipino polymath, nationalist and the most prominent advocate for reforms in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial era. Rizal was executed on this day in 1896 making him a martyr of the Philippine Revolution

12.31—Commemoration of the Restoration (St. Sylvester); Switzerland

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

12.31—Day of Azeri Solidarity; Azerbaijan

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

12.31—Festival Day; Montserrat**12.31—Republic Day**; Congo**12.31—Omisoka**; Japan

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

12.31—Hogmanay; Scotland

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