

# AMERICAN HOLIDAYS

*by Sergey Andronaki*



Although the United States is young compared to other countries, its culture and traditions are rich because of the contributions made by the many groups of people who have come to its shores over the past two centuries. Hundreds of regional holidays have originated from the geography, climate and history of the different parts of the country. Each state holds its own annual fair with local themes and music; and some celebrate the day on which they joined the Union and became a state.

# Christmas Day



Many people in the United States celebrate Christmas Day on December 25. The day celebrates Jesus Christ's birth. It is often combined with customs from pre-Christian winter celebrations.

It is interesting to visit USA during this holiday. People celebrate Christmas Day in many ways. In the days or even weeks before Christmas Day, many people decorate their homes and gardens with lights, Christmas trees and much more. It is common to organize a special meal, often consisting of turkey and a lot of other festive foods, for family or friends and exchange gifts with them. Children, in particular, often receive a lot of gifts from their parents and other relatives and the mythical figure Santa Claus. This has led to Christmas Day becoming an increasingly commercialized holiday, with a lot of families spending a large part of their income on gifts and food.

# Groundhog Day



*"If Candlemas Day is bright and clear,  
There'll be twa (two) winters in the year."*

The day is associated with folklore which has grown up in rural America. It is believed, by some, if the groundhog, or woodchuck comes out of its hole in the ground and sees its shadow on that day it will become frightened and jump back in. This means there will be at least six more weeks of winter. If it doesn't see its shadow, it will not be afraid and spring will begin shortly.



# Valentine's Day

The first recorded association of Valentine's Day with romantic love is in *Parlement of Foules* (1382) by Geoffrey Chaucer.

Chaucer wrote:

*For this was on seynt Volantynys day  
Whan euery bryd comyth there to chese his  
make.*

*["For this was Saint Valentine's Day, when  
every bird cometh there to choose his mate."]*

One other day that most Americans observe, even though it is not an official holiday, is February 14, Valentine's Day, named for an early Christian martyr whose feast day was once observed on that day. On this day, Americans give special symbolic gifts to people they love. They also send special greeting cards called Valentines to such people. Most commonly, the gifts are candy or flowers.

Modern Valentine's Day symbols include the heart-shaped outline, doves, and the figure of the winged Cupid. Since the 19th century, handwritten valentines have given way to mass-produced greeting cards.



# Flag Day

The American Flag was adopted through the Second Continental Congress within the First Flag Quality of June fourteen, 1777. The quality read:

“Resolved, that the flag of America be thirteen lines, alternate red as well as white; that the actual union be 13 stars, white inside a blue field representing a brand new constellation Flag Day 2011.”

# Independence Day



Independence Day, commonly known as the Fourth of July, is a **federal holiday** in the United States commemorating the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, declaring independence from the Kingdom of Great Britain. Independence Day is commonly associated with fireworks, parades, barbecues, carnivals, fairs, picnics, concerts, baseball games, family reunions, and political speeches and ceremonies, in addition to various other public and private events celebrating the history, government, and traditions of the United States. Independence Day is the national day of the United States.



# Labor Day



Labor Day is a United States federal holiday observed on the first Monday in September (September 3 in 2012) that celebrates the economic and social contributions of workers. Recent research indicates that, in 1882, Matthew Maguire, a machinist, first proposed the holiday while serving as secretary of the CLU (Central Labor Union) of New York.



# Columbus Day



Columbus Day first became an official state holiday in Colorado in 1906, and became a federal holiday in 1937, though people have celebrated Columbus' voyage since the colonial period. In 1792, New York City and other U.S. cities celebrated the 300th anniversary of his landing in the New World. President Benjamin Harrison called upon the people of the United States to celebrate Columbus Day on the 400th anniversary of the event.

During the four hundredth anniversary, in 1892, teachers, preachers, poets and politicians used Columbus Day rituals to teach ideals of patriotism. These patriotic rituals were framed around themes such as support for war, citizenship boundaries, the importance of loyalty to the nation, and celebrating social progress.

# National Arbor Day

Arbor Day (from the Latin arbor, meaning tree) is a holiday in which individuals and groups are encouraged to plant and care for trees. It originated in Nebraska City, Nebraska, United States during 1872 by J. Sterling Morton. The first Arbor Day was held on April 10, 1872, and an estimated 1 million trees were planted that day.



# HALLOWEEN



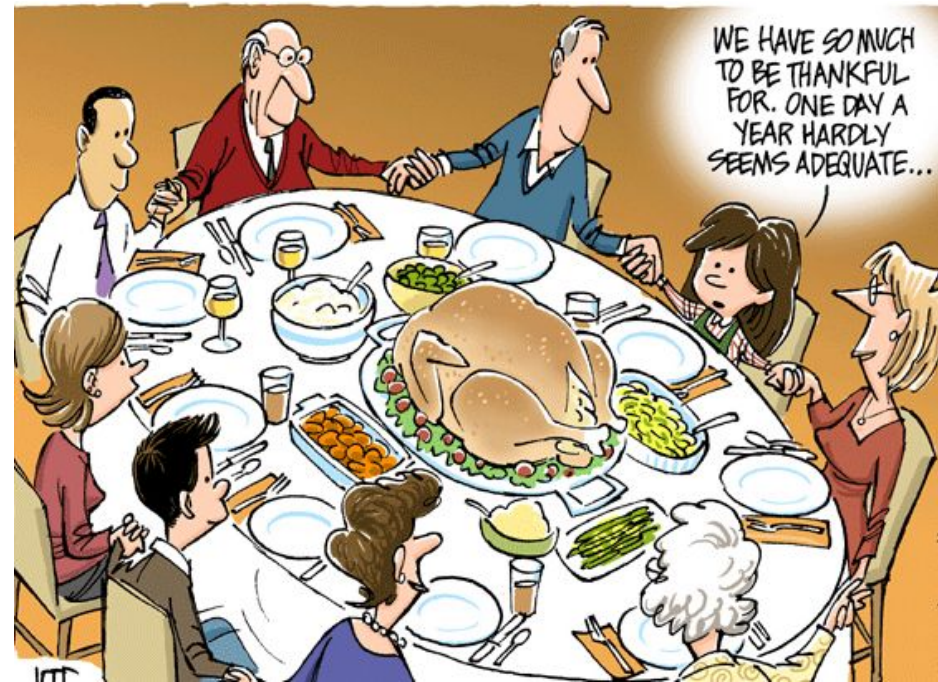
Halloween is celebrated on October 31. On Halloween, American children dress up in funny or scary costumes and go "trick or treating" by knocking on doors in their neighborhood. The neighbors are expected to respond by giving them small gifts of candy or money. Halloween imagery includes themes of death, evil, the occult or mythical monsters. Black and orange are the holiday's traditional colors.

# Veteran`s day



Veterans Day, formerly Armistice Day, is an annual United States holiday honoring armed service veterans. It is a federal holiday that is observed on November 11. It coincides with other holidays such as Armistice Day or Remembrance Day, which are celebrated in other parts of the world and also mark the anniversary of the signing of the Armistice that ended World War I. (Major hostilities of World War I were formally ended at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918 with the German signing of the Armistice.)

# THANKSGIVING DAY



The American Thanksgiving holiday began as a feast of thanksgiving in the early days of the American colonies almost four hundred years ago. Thanksgiving Day is a federal holiday celebrated on the fourth Thursday in November. In the fall of 1621, the Pilgrims held a three-day feast to celebrate a bountiful harvest. Many regard this event as the nation's first Thanksgiving.

The Thanksgiving feast became a national tradition and almost always includes some of the foods served at the first feast: roast turkey, cranberry sauce, potatoes, and pumpkin pie.



# National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

On Sunday morning, December 7, 1941 America's naval base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii was attacked by the forces of the Empire of Japan. More than 2,400 Americans were killed and more than 1,100 were wounded. The attack sank four U.S. Navy battleships and damaged four more. It also damaged or sank three cruisers, three destroyers, one minelayer and damaged 188 aircraft.

National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, which is observed annually on December 7, is to remember and honor all those who died in the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.



# Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is a United States federal holiday marking the birthday of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It is observed on the third Monday of January each year, which is around the time of King's birthday, January 15. The floating holiday is similar to holidays set under the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, though the act predated the establishment of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day by 15 years.

King was the chief spokesman for nonviolent activism in the civil rights movement, which successfully protested racial discrimination in federal and state law.

The campaign for a federal holiday in King's honor began soon after his assassination in 1968.

Ronald Reagan signed the holiday into law in 1983, and it was first observed on January 20, 1986.





The population of the United States is made up of people of very many nationalities. Their predecessors came to America from different countries, and they brought their native celebrations with them.

They all became Americans, but they kept many traditions of those countries they had come from. That is why the number of holidays in different states of America is different. But the most important holidays are marked throughout the United States.





**for your attention!**