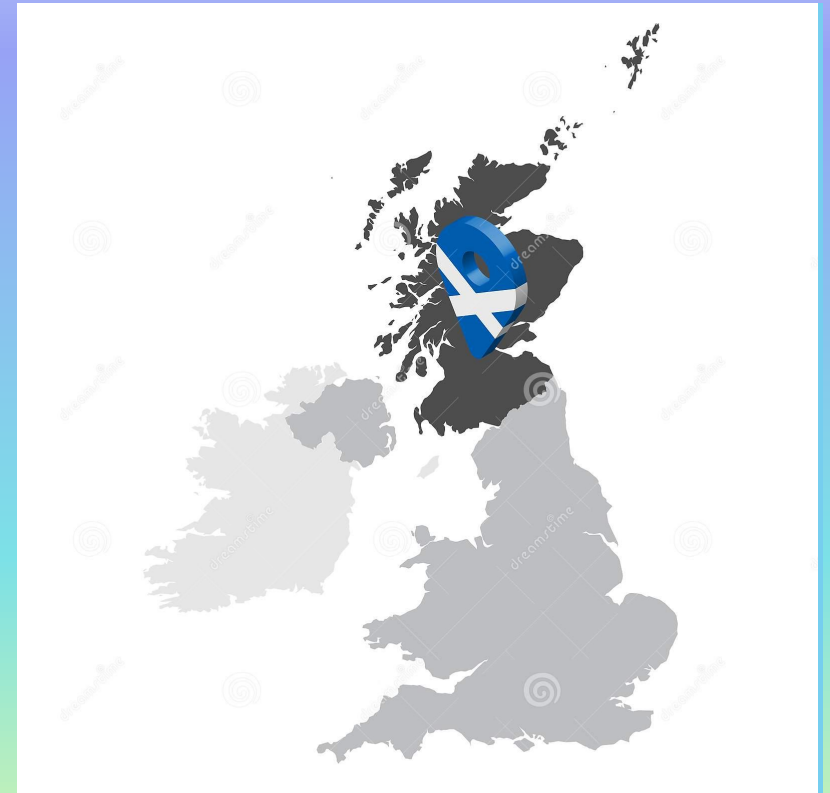


Scottish Holidays

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NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

Celebration of Celtic Music and Culture (12 January) Robert Burns Birthday (25 January) Aphelio (Up-Helly-Aa) Walpurgis Night (30 April) Independence Day of Scotland (24 June) St. Andrew's Day (30 November)



CELEBRATION OF CELTIC MUSIC AND CULTURE

On January 12, Celtic culture festivals are held in many countries, including Scotland for St. Patrick's Day. And from January 12 to 30, Celtic Connections takes place in Glasgow. For 19 days and nights, viewers can attend over 200 events dedicated to Celtic culture and music. The festival features artists from the UK, Canada, USA, France and Spain. In addition to stunning concerts, Celtic Connections presents Talk Shows and Debates, in which Ian Andersen, famed BBC Scotland presenter, talks to renowned musicians. In France, in Lorient (province of Brittany), at the beginning of August, the largest festival of Celtic culture has been taking place for 35 years, a grandiose get-together, which the British themselves call emvod ar geited (Celtic assembly). For ten days the city turns into a huge stage, where the descendants of the Gauls, Britons, Scots, Gallats, Picts, Gaels, Erins perform.





Concerts, master classes on playing traditional musical instruments, demonstrations of national costumes, competitions in traditional sports are accompanied by exhibitions, scientific and pseudo-scientific conferences. The festival opens with the grandiose Parade of the Celtic Nations - the streets of Lorient turn into a podium for the demonstration of folklore outfits, the sounds of bagpipes penetrating into the very depths of the soul emphasize the historical flavor of the action. To get to know Celtic music properly, you should definitely attend the "Magic Night" concert. It is held four times during the festival at the city's main sports arena. The best musicians from Asturias, Brittany, Galicia, Ireland, Wales and Scotland present their regions to the audience. All this is accompanied by a breathtaking laser show.

ROBERT BURNS BIRTHDAY (JANUARY 25)

The birthday of the famous poet Robert Burns (1759 - 1796) is a national holiday in Scotland, the poet's homeland. The Scots are very proud of their famous compatriot and honor his memory.

It is customary to celebrate Robert Burns's birthday in the form of a dinner (the so-called Burns Supper), held according to a specific scenario. First - a small stage performance, with poems, songs and folk dances. In Scotland, Burns is revered as a symbol of the nation, and therefore the poet's birthday - one of the most beloved holidays in the country of the hills - is celebrated widely and noisily.

On this day, the Scottish national costume is taken from the wardrobe. The kilt and the design of the fabric - tartan - is transmitted only through the family line and determines belonging to a particular clan. Clans have their origins in ancient times, when only the Highlanders (Scots who live in the mountains, not on the plains) were divided into clan families. Clan affiliation is still an important characteristic of the Scottish family.



The Burns Day feast consists exclusively of Scottish cuisine. Haggis is traditionally made from finely chopped lamb liver with the addition of oatmeal and spices. Together with haggis, boiled potatoes and turnips are served on the festive table. For dessert, the knowledgeable hostess will prepare cranichen - whipped cream with raspberries and toasted oatmeal, slightly reminiscent of Yakut kerch in taste. And, of course, the famous Scotch whiskey is on the table that day.

Burns was born to a farmer's family. While still at school, Robert began writing down his first poems in a notebook. He wrote only about what he experienced and felt himself - joys and sorrows, love for women, devotion to the homeland. Burns's youth passed in need and toil and, as it usually happens, awakened love in him. He had a stormy personal life full of romances. Its themes are love, freedom, Scottish nature and history. For him, the Scottish language was not a dying dialect, but an exquisite poetic instrument. Poetry captivates with its simplicity, playfulness and amazing musicality.

Old Scottish folk poetry influenced Burns's work. He collected texts and melodies, supplemented them with stanzas of his own composition, lost or obscure - replaced with his own. It is often impossible to establish where the folk texts are and where the Burns texts are. There are many monuments to the beloved national poet in Scotland. There are even monuments with the mountain daisy, praised by Burns, crushed by a plow, and a field mouse, whose nest was ravaged by a poet-plowman.

Burns is hailed as a romantic poet, but his poems and ballads reflect the practical sanity of the peasants among whom he grew up. Burns' work marked the heyday of Scottish poetry - lyrical, earthly, satirical, sometimes mischievous.

And now there is not a single Scottish house where Burns's books and about Burns would not stand on the shelves, where his portrait would not hang. Especially among the Scots, Burns's poem My Heart's in the Highlands is popular, which is full of love for Scotland, the poet's homeland.



APHELIO (UP-HELLY-AA)



In the 9th century, the Vikings landed on the Shetland Islands, off the coast of Scotland, opening a new page in the history of the islands. This event is dedicated to the famous traditional Scottish holiday Up-Helly-aa in the main city of the Shetland Islands, Lerwick.

The people of Lerwick make a 30-foot model of a Viking ship (with a dragon on the bow), dress up as Vikings, light torches, walk the streets blowing traditional war horns, and carry the ship across town to the sea. More than 900 picturesquely dressed participants follow a squad of 40 Vikings and their giant ship to the place where the fire will be lit.

In the evening, a torchlight procession burns a wooden Viking boat according to the ancient rite of burying dead warriors. On the coast, the ship is burned - 900 burning torches are thrown onto the "ancient" ship. The spectacle is impressive! This is the custom of the Vikings, adopted for the funeral of warriors and leaders.



The Scottish land has been raided by the Vikings for a long time, so many of the traditional festivals for this area bear the imprint of Scandinavian culture. Today the Scots are proud of a similar history and connection with famous Scandinavian pirates.

The official date of the holiday of torches was recorded only at the beginning of the 19th century - on this day, noble men returned from the Napoleonic wars.

WALPURGIS NIGHT (APRIL 30)

Walpurgis Night is the main sabbath of witches, as well as one of the most important pagan holidays dedicated to fertility. This is a holiday that every self-respecting witch is obliged to honor with attention. Where did this godless tradition come from?

The Celts had eight holidays, dividing the year into eight approximately equal parts:

winter (Yule) and summer solstice. These holidays were celebrated by almost all peoples.

Imbaelk, or Groundhog Day, is the day when winter meets spring. The only holiday that managed to get rid of notoriety. In Russia, this day is celebrated as Presentation.

Beltane - April 30 (Walpurgis Night) and Samhain - November 31 - Halloween.

The date of the Beltane holiday was not so accurate before - it was celebrated when the hawthorn faded. The Celts counted the days from evening to evening, not from morning to morning. The tradition has been preserved in two celebrations - Halloween night and Walpurgis night. These holidays were the opposite of each other - both on the calendar and in meaning. For the Celts, the night before May 1 marked the onset of summer time - the "big sun", the night before November 1 - respectively, the onset of winter. It was believed that on both holidays the gates to another world, the land of elves, were wide open.



Like most peoples, the holiday in honor of the beginning of summer was dedicated to the sun and fertility, and therefore to male power. The phallic symbol that has come down to our times reminds of this - the May pole. The tradition of dancing on May 1 around a pole decorated with flowers and ribbons was preserved by the inhabitants of Britain and Ireland. On this day, they also choose the May Queen - the only girl who on this day is allowed to wear green clothes, beloved, according to legend, by the elves. The Queen becomes, as it were, a mediator in communication between people and the People of the Hills.

Bonfires were another symbol of Beltane. The ancient Celts released cattle on this day to pastures after wintering in barns. It was considered obligatory to drive the animals between two rows of fires - according to legend, this saved them from winter ailments.

As elsewhere, where she reigned, the Christian church blacklisted not only the Celtic gods, but also the holidays. However, since the day of the year cannot be abolished, I tried to impose a different meaning on them. So, November 1 became All Saints Day, other old holidays, including New Year, also acquired a Christian flavor. But in the church calendar there were already enough various dates requiring marking, and good Catholics tried to forget about the celebration of May 1.

The present name was given to the ancient celebration by the Germans - in honor of Saint Walpurgis.

The first official mention of Walpurgis Night appeared in the protocols of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages. Saint Walburga (aka Waltpurde, Walpurgis, Vabur, Falbur, Bugga, Godurj) is a real historical figure. This noble British woman was born in Devonshire around 710. She was the daughter of Richard, one of the kings of Western Saxony, and Wynn, sister of St. Boniface, the apostle of Germany. Both of her brothers, Willibald and Winibald, were also canonized.



Going on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with his sons, Richard entrusted his 11-year-old daughter to the care of the abbess of Winbourne Convent, known for its strict order. She spent 26 years there. Walburga learned languages so well that she described her brother's journey to Palestine in Latin, not to mention the story of her other brother's life in her native English. Therefore, St. Walburga is called the first writer in England and Germany.

In 748, Walburga's uncle, Boniface, decided to create a system of monasteries in Germany. At his request, Abbess Winbourne sends missionaries, including Walburga. The ship sailed from Britain in clear weather. But soon a terrible storm began. The nun threw herself on her knees right on the deck - and the sea immediately calmed down. The sailors told about this miracle ashore, and in Germany Walburga was greeted with awe. Since then, the saint is considered the patroness of sailors (she also helps with fear of hydration and in storms).

Subsequently, Walburga became abbess of the monastery in Heidenheim, a town in Bavaria not far from Aistadt, and after the death of her brother she even led a monastery. Her virtues and numerous miracles brought her fame. Walburga died on February 25, 777.

More than 100 years have passed, the miracles of the nun have been forgotten. But now the new bishop of Aystadt decides to restore the monastery and the church. The workers desecrated the abbess's grave, and one night her formidable shadow appeared to the bishop ... Soon - namely, on May 1 - the remains of the nun were transported to Aistadt, placing one of the rocks in the void. And from the rock began to flow healing oil, which helped from many diseases. Walburga was canonized, canonized. Later, her remains were taken to different cities in Germany, and the days when this happened were dedicated to her (February 25, October 12, September 24). But the main day of St. Walburgi - May 1st.

So, once again, pagan and Christian patterns were woven into one canvas, and the feast of evil spirits received the name of the righteous woman.

Turn the embroidery over: from the inside out there is a fire and dancing of a laughing witch.

So why is the 30th of April named among the most popular Sabbath dates? Most likely, some of the testimonies of good Christians who have become eyewitnesses of the "godless action" have real ground. Witnesses claimed that on dark nights they found, most often - on the tops of hills, people doing, from their point of view, various indecencies: performing rituals, putting on masks and, finally, indulging in carnal love. All this can be fragments of ancient traditions. Indeed, not only the Celts, but also many other followers of pre-Christian cults, during the sacraments associated with land, fertility and successful hunting, made sacrifices, smeared themselves with blood, changed into animal skins and masks.



SCOTLAND INDEPENDENCE DAY (24 JUNE)

On June 24, 1314, at the Battle of Bannockburn, the Scottish king Robert the Bruce defeated the army of the English king Edward II, restoring the independence of his country.

During the reign of King Alexander III, Scotland prospered economically and was in relatively peaceful relations with its southern neighbor, England. The tragic death of the Scottish king and the absence of heirs revived all the old problems and gave rise to new ones, which eventually led to the events known as the "First War of Independence of Scotland."

After the death of Alexander III in 1286 and his young daughter Margaret in 1289, John Balliol and Robert the Bruce the Elder were among the many contenders for the Scottish crown. Both were descendants of the Norman knights of William the Conqueror (1165-1214).

At the request of the Scottish Bishop Fraser (Norman by blood), a message was sent to Edward, King of England, asking him to become an arbiter in this situation. Hoping to seize the opportunity to unite all of Britain under his rule, Edward readily agreed. Confirming his feudal and military supremacy, the regents of Scotland allowed Edward to decide who would rule in Scotland.

King Edward I of England conferred the crown on Balliol, although Bruce was one degree closer to the broken dynasty than Balliol.

Edward wanted to dominate Scotland. If he could not become her king, then he could choose the most acceptable challenger obedient to his will. Balliol was more than forty years old, he was not very educated and did not have a strong will. Edward treated him with cruel contempt, using him to carry out his plans in Scotland. Tired of his humiliating position, Balliol renounced his oath of allegiance to Edward and turned against him.

In 1296, King Edward I of England overthrew and imprisoned the Scottish king John Balliol and declared himself the direct ruler of Scotland.

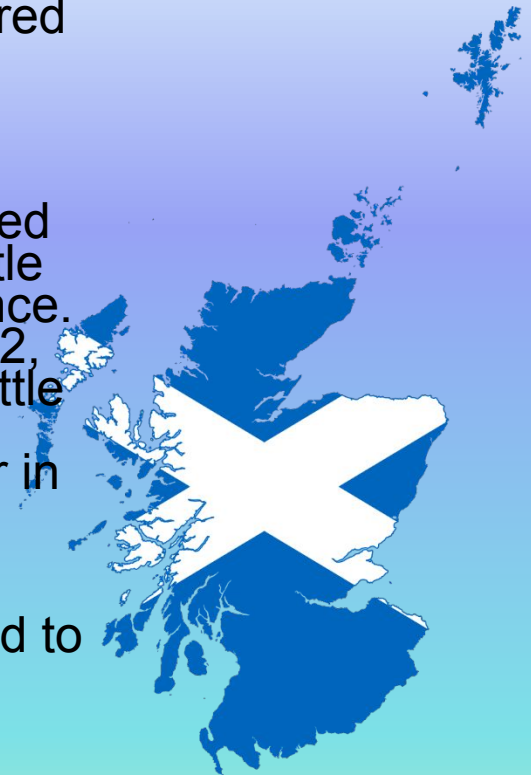
A resistance movement began in Scotland. William Wallace was a born leader. Of the few facts known about him, one is absolutely clear - he inspired and led his people effectively, sometimes barbarously, in a guerrilla war against the British, fueled by a thirst for revenge and love for Scotland. He quickly became the leader of an army capable of traversing large expanses of barren territory to attack unsuspecting British bases.

Wallace organized an army of commoners and small landowners, and attacked the English garrisons between the Forth and Tay rivers. On September 11, 1297, the English army of John de Warren, Earl of Surrey, met Wallace's army at Fort near Stirling. Wallace's forces were significantly outnumbered, but Surrey had to cross a narrow bridge over the Forth before he could reach the Scottish positions. Wallace won a crushing victory. He captured Stirling Castle, and for a short time Scotland was almost liberated from the occupying forces. In October Wallace invaded northern England and ravaged the counties of Northumberland and Cumberland.

Upon his return to Scotland in early December 1297, Wallace was knighted and declared guardian of the kingdom, ruling in Balliol's name. However, the nobles gave Wallace little support, while Wallace had to confront Edward I himself, who was campaigning in France. Edward returned to England in March 1298, and invaded Scotland on 3 July. On July 22, Wallace's spearmen were defeated by Edward's archers and knightly cavalry at the Battle of Falkirk, Stirling. Although Edward was unable to pacify Scotland before returning to England, Wallace's military reputation was undermined. He resigned his post of curator in December and was succeeded by Robert de Bruce (later King Robert I) and Sir John Comyn (Cumming) "the Red".

Although most of the Scottish nobles submitted to Edward in 1304, the British continued to pursue Wallace relentlessly. On August 5, 1305, Wallace was arrested near Glasgow. Driven to London, Wallace was denounced as a traitor to the king.

Robert Bruce, the grandson of the first contender for the crown, a smart and courageous man, asserted his rights to the throne and defended Scottish independence. At a meeting of Scottish noble families held at Doomfries in February 1306, Robert the Bruce was unanimously proclaimed king.



After expelling English officials from the country, he was crowned in Skane on March 25, 1306. Edward I sent Eimer Walenz to Scotland, who defeated Bruce's troops at Methven. Many Scottish nobles died in this battle or were executed; Bruce's daughter and wife fell into the hands of the British, and he himself was forced to seek refuge in one of the Hebrides.

After some time, Bruce dared to resume the struggle with a small number of adherents, caused the British a lot of harm, but had to flee with his friends to the Carrick Mountains more than once. Edward entered Scotland with a strong army, but only reached Carlyle, where in 1307 he was overtaken by death.

Edward's son, Edward II, was weak, not distinguished by a warlike spirit, could not successfully fight against the brave Bruce and suffered a decisive defeat at Bannockburn on June 24, 1314.

Thereafter, Bruce's crown and Scottish independence were secured. Bruce devastated England as far as York with fire and sword and sent his brother to Ireland, which, with his help, also liberated itself for a short time from English rule. At the request of Edward II, Pope John XXII sent his legate to England in 1318, charged with restoring peace between the warring parties. Bruce did not want to hear about reconciliation, and was excommunicated, and an interdict was imposed on Scotland.

In 1322, Edward II again invaded Scotland with a strong army, but, suffering in everything shortage, was forced to start a retreat with heavy losses.

In May 1323 Bruce agreed to finally conclude a truce for 13 years. When the young Edward III came to the throne under the tutelage of Mortimer, then on March 1, 1328, the final peace was concluded, which recognized the independence of Scotland.

However, Scotland's Independence Day is celebrated on the day of Bruce's Scottish Army victory at Bannockburn on June 24, 1314.



SAINT ANDREW'S DAY (NOVEMBER 30)



This is the Day of the patron saint of Scotland. The severity and stubbornness of the Scottish character is best and most clearly expressed in the emblem of the national flag of Scotland - the thistle. There is a legend dating back to the days of the Viking raids in Scotland.

In the IX century, the Vikings landed on the east coast of Scotland with the intention of conquering and plundering the country. The Scots gathered all their fighting forces and took up a position across the River Tay. They arrived in the evening and set up camp, settled down to rest, believing that the enemy would not attack until the next day. However, the Vikings were close by.

Finding no guards or sentries around the Scottish camp, the Vikings crossed the Tay with the intention of suddenly capturing the Scots and slaughtering them in their sleep. To this end, they took off their shoes in order to make as little noise as possible when moving to the camp. But suddenly one of the Vikings stepped on a thistle. From the sudden and sharp pain, he cried out. Hearing the cry, the Scots raised the alarm in the camp. The Vikings were forced to retreat, and the Scots chose the thistle as their national emblem in gratitude for the timely and unexpected help.



END

