



SUNNY VISTA

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Celebrating December

Bingo Month

Spiritual Literacy Month

Safe Toys and Gifts Month

Antarctica Day
December 1

Special Kids Day
December 2

Hanukkah
December 6–14

Lost and Found Day
December 11

World Choral Day
December 13

Christmas
December 25

Boxing Day
December 26

Kwanzaa
December 26–January 1

New Year's Eve
December 31

Winter Traditions

The sweet smell of gingerbread and a glimpse of evergreen are two sure signs that the holiday season is upon us. While gingerbread can be delicious to eat, many will be using it as a construction material on Gingerbread House Day, December 12.



Author DeeAnn Mandryk traces the origins of the gingerbread house to the early 1800s in Germany, after the Brothers Grimm published their collection of fairy tales. One tale in particular—that of Hansel and Gretel lured into a house made of bread and sugar—inspired bakers of a traditional German gingerbread, known as *lebkuchen*, to become architects on a miniature scale. Why build houses out of gingerbread? They'll last a long time.

Mandryk credits the first gingerbread people, however, to Queen Elizabeth I. The queen would honor important visitors with gingerbread people fashioned in their likeness. It's unknown whether the queen actually liked to eat these hard, spicy cookies.

Many winter evergreens—such as holly, mistletoe, and even such conifers as fir, spruce, and pine—were revered in ancient times by Druids, Celts, and the Vikings. Botanist Larry Stritch explains how these cultures believed evergreens were sacred due to their ability to withstand snow and freezing cold. Decking the halls with boughs of holly provided both winter decoration and protection and good luck for the home. On December 19, which is Look for an Evergreen Day, bundle up and venture outside to find winter greenery. Or perhaps a better idea is to bring in a tree or some garland for decorating your living space. Set up a chair nearby and enjoy the beauty of the season with a warm cup of mulled cider or hot cocoa.

Christmas Day

Christmas is both a sacred religious holiday and a worldwide cultural and commercial phenomenon. Christians celebrate Christmas Day as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Popular customs include exchanging gifts, decorating Christmas trees, attending church, sharing meals with family and friends and, of course, waiting for Santa Claus to arrive. December 25 has been a federal holiday in the U.S. since 1870.

The middle of winter has long been a time of celebration around the world. Centuries before the arrival of the man called Jesus, early Europeans celebrated light and birth in the darkest days of winter. Many peoples rejoiced during the winter solstice, when the worst of the winter was behind them and they could look forward to longer days and extended hours of sunlight.

In Scandinavia, the Norse celebrated Yule from December 21, the winter solstice, through January. In recognition of the return of the sun, fathers and sons would bring home large logs, which they would set on fire. The people would feast until the log burned out, which could take as many as 12 days. The Norse believed that each spark from the fire represented a new pig or calf that would be born during the coming year.

In Germany, people honored the pagan god Oden during the mid-winter holiday. Germans were terrified of Oden, as they believed he made nocturnal flights through the sky to observe his people, and then decide who would prosper or perish. Because of his presence, many people chose to stay inside.

Happy Holidays!



Resident Birthdays

Shirley I- Dec 4th
Sally C - Dec 9th
Robert S – Dec 11th
Claudia E – Dec 13th
Chadron C- Dec 24th
Dorothy S- Dec 26th

Team Member Birthdays

Dawn N- Dec 2nd
Alisa H- Dec 5th
Casey F- Dec 5th
Nicole R- Dec 7th
TyQuitta G- Dec 9th
Pamela Cooper- Dec 9th
Christopher M- Dec 11th
Sandra L- Dec 14th
Micheal S- Dec 15th
Mariah M – Dec 16th
Nicole M- Dec 18th
Kimona S- Dec 18th
Chelsea J- Dec 19th
David S- Dec 20th
Shelby M – Dec 20th
Derrell B- Dec 23rd
Norberto R- Dec 26th
Lindy M - Dec 29th
Melissa L- Dec 29th
Deborah S- Dec 30th
Lola F Dec 30th

SAGITTARIUS: In astrology, those born between December 1st and 21st are Archers of Sagittarius. Archers are exciting and independent. Their positive attitude, great sense of humor, and kind heart make them excellent friends. But get ready for an earful. Archers often also speak their mind.

CAPRICORN: Those born between December 22nd and 31st are Goats of Capricorn. Goats are the most stable and sure-footed of astrological signs. Reliable, economical, practical, and organized, they make good multi-taskers and politicians.

Naughty or Nice?

December 4th is Santa's List Day, but throughout December, children worldwide will be wondering whether old St. Nick has counted them as *naughty* or *nice*. Of course, most fall somewhere in the middle. But tell that to the Krampus.



In the alpine villages of Europe, December 5th is celebrated as *Krampusnacht*, or Krampus Night. It's the eve before Saint Nicholas Day, and—says cultural historian Stefanie A. Babb—it's the night when a Krampus creature (half Big Foot, half Devil) searches for all the children who've been "naughty." This long-haired beast is thought to be Santa's twin brother and helper. Children hear his arrival by the clanking chains and bells around his waist. The punishment for the naughty depends upon the child's degree of naughtiness. Some children are given coal or bundles of birch. But the naughtiest are said to be thrown into a sack and carried away to the Krampus' lair—where they're eaten for dinner.

Modern day *Krampusnacht* activities involve men donning elaborate goat-skin costumes and exquisitely carved wooden masks. Photographer Alan Taylor has traveled throughout the Alps—from Italy to Austria and Germany—capturing groups of men parading the streets in their terrifying costumes while dragging chains and carrying flaming torches. It's a common sight for homes to be decorated year-round with bundles of the Krampus' birch, painted gold, to remind children to remain well-behaved. And there's even a new horror movie, scheduled to be released on *Krampusnacht* eve 2015, that tells the tale of this devil beast.

It's the "nice" children who enjoy the big payoff on December 6, Saint Nicholas Day. It's named for the fourth-century Bishop of Myra famed for his secret gift-giving. Children awake to find gifts and sweets, and can breathe easy since there's a whole year before the Krampus returns.



Jingle All the Way

Everyone singing *Jingle Bells* this holiday season may be surprised to learn it's a Thanksgiving song.



Kyna Hamill, vice president of the Medford Historical Society in Massachusetts, explains that the song's 19th-century composer, Medford resident James Pierpont, based it on a local tradition of one-horse open sleigh races through the streets of his hometown. When Pierpont moved to Savannah, Georgia, and became a pastor, he led his congregation in singing the song on Thanksgiving. They loved it so much they sang it again a month later on Christmas. Today, residents of Savannah share their ancestors' passion for the tune. They dispute that Pierpont wrote the song in Medford, and instead they claim it as their own.

Christmas Fun

Match the words to the correct pictures to complete the crossword. Then find a secret message.

- 1 bells
- 2 candle
- 3 candy cane
- 4 card
- 5 chimney
- 6 Christmas tree
- 7 elf
- 8 gingerbread
- 9 holly
- 10 letter
- 11 lights
- 12 ornaments
- 13 presents
- 14 reindeer
- 15 Santa Claus
- 16 sleigh
- 17 snowman
- 18 stocking
- 19 wreath

The secret message is _____ ISLCoLead home.