

2014 has flown by! We've had a great year here at Reach Cambridge, welcoming more teenagers than ever to our Cambridge summer school, and running tailor-made international study programs for school groups from around the world.

Now 'tis the season to be jolly, and we are looking forward to all the festive fun that this period holds. Last year, we told you about [Cambridge at Christmas](#), and in particular, the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols held at Kings College Chapel. This year, we wanted to explore holiday celebrations across the world!

In **Belgium**, St Nicholas' Day is on December 6<sup>th</sup>. Children leave their shoes in front of the fireplace for Sinterklaas to leave presents in.

In **Spain**, families celebrate the Three Kings – 'Los Tres Reyes' - on 6<sup>th</sup> January instead of Christmas Day.

In **Puerto Rico**, Three Kings Day is also celebrated on 6<sup>th</sup> January. On the evening before, children collect grass, put it in a shoebox, and place it under the bed to feed the Three Kings' Camels.

In **Italy**, naughty children get a visit from a witch called Befana who leaves them a bag of coal. On 6<sup>th</sup> January towns all over Italy burn fake witches on bonfires to remember the tradition.

In **Norway**, presents are given on Christmas Eve, 24<sup>th</sup> December, either by Father Christmas who is called Julenissen, or little gnomes called Nisse.

In **Australia**, Christmas is in the middle of summer, so Father Christmas changes into cooler clothes, and gives the reindeer a rest, using 'Six White Boomers' (kangaroos) to guide his sleigh. Australians decorate their homes with the native Australian tree 'Christmas Bush', which produces cream coloured flowers that turn a deep shiny red over the festive period! On Boxing Day, people have barbecues and play or watch sports.

In the **UK**, the celebration of the festive season varies from household to household, but Father Christmas (also known as Santa Claus) usually features heavily – this rounded, jolly man in a red suit visits houses at night and delivers stockings full of presents to good children. Some households leave out a mince pie (a traditional Christmas treat) for Santa and a carrot for Rudolph near the

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chimney in case they get hungry. Presents are exchanged on Christmas Day 25<sup>th</sup> December and a big roast dinner, usually with a turkey, is eaten – with leftovers saved for Boxing Day 26<sup>th</sup> December. The term 'Boxing Day' is thought to have derived from a custom where wealthy Victorian families would give the servants a day off on the 26<sup>th</sup> December. Nowadays, it's just a wonderful extra day off work to play with our new presents!

You can find out more about all the festive celebrations around the world [here](#).

Vrolijk Kerstfeest! Joyeux Noel! Frohe Weihnachten! Sheng Dan Kuai Le! Happy holidays to everyone, and [we hope to see you in 2015!](#)

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