
U.S. Holidays and Festivals

Federal Holidays

Federal law establishes the following public holidays for federal employees. If the holiday falls during the weekend, it may be observed on a different day. Many government offices are closed on federal holidays and some private businesses may close too.

New Year's Day

New Year's Day is on January 1st. The celebration of this holiday begins the night before, when Americans wish each other a happy and prosperous new year. Many people make "New Year's resolutions".

Birthday of Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day is celebrated on the third Monday of January. The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. was an African-American clergyman who is recognized for his efforts to win civil rights for all people through non-violent means.

Washington's Birthday

Washington's Birthday is celebrated on the third Monday of February in honor of George Washington, the first President of the United States. This date is also called "Presidents' Day" in honor of all past presidents.

Easter

Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the ecclesiastical equinox, which is on March 21st. Consequently, the date varies every year. On this date, Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Memorial Day

Memorial Day is celebrated on the last Monday of May. It originally honored the people killed in the American Civil War, but today all wars are remembered.

Independence Day

Independence Day is celebrated on July 4th. This holiday honors the nation's birthday - the Declaration of Independence on July 4th, 1776. It is a day of picnics and parades and a night of shows and fireworks.

Labor Day

Labor Day is celebrated on the first Monday of September. It honors the nation's workers, typically with parades. For many Americans it represents the end of the summer vacation and the start of the school year.

Columbus Day

Columbus Day is celebrated on the second Monday of October. The day commemorates October 12th, 1492, when Italian navigator Christopher Columbus landed in the New World. The holiday was first proclaimed in 1937 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Veterans' Day

Veterans' Day is celebrated on November 11th. This holiday originally honored Americans who fought in World War I. Today, it honors veterans of all wars in which the U.S. has fought.

Thanksgiving Day

Thanksgiving Day is celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November. It started in 1621, when the pilgrims had a three-day feast to celebrate a bountiful harvest. The Thanksgiving feast always includes some traditional foods: roast turkey, cranberry sauce, potatoes and pumpkin pie.

Christmas Day

Christmas Day is celebrated on December 25th. Christmas is a Christian holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. On this day, people decorate their houses with lights, decorate Christmas trees, give presents and send cards.

Other Celebrations

There are many other celebrations in the United States which are not federal holidays.

Groundhog Day

Groundhog Day is on February 2nd and has been celebrated since 1887. On Groundhog Day, crowds gather in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, to see if groundhog Punxsutawney Phil can see his shadow, thus predicting six more weeks of winter weather (or not).

Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is celebrated on February 14th. The day was named after an early Christian martyr, and on Valentine's Day, people give presents to the ones they love.

Earth Day

Earth Day is celebrated on April 22nd. It was first celebrated in 1970 and it inspired national legislation such as the "Clean Air Act" and the "Clean Water Act". Earth Day is to promote ecology, respect for life, and highlight problems of pollution.

Mother's Day

Mother's Day is the second Sunday of May. In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson asked Americans to give a public expression of reverence to their mothers on this day.

Flag Day

Flag Day, celebrated on June 14th, has been a celebration since 1916. Americans are encouraged to display the USA flag outside their homes and businesses on this day to honor the history and heritage of the country.

Father's Day

Father's Day is celebrated on the third Sunday of June. Father's Day began in 1909 in Spokane, Washington, when a daughter requested a special day to honor her father, a Civil War veteran who raised his children after his wife died.

Patriot Day

September 11th, 2001, was a defining moment in American history. On that day, terrorists hijacked four commercial airliners to strike targets in the United States. Nearly 3,000 people died as a consequence of the attacks. Patriot Day is celebrated on September 11th in honor of the victims of these attacks.

Halloween

Halloween is celebrated on October 31st. American children dress up in scary costumes and "trick or treat" in their neighborhood. The neighbors are expected to give them candy.

Pearl Harbor Day

Pearl Harbor Day is on December 7th. It is to honor the 2,400 military personnel who were killed on this date in 1941 by Japanese forces. The attack on Pearl Harbor caused the United States to enter World War II.