

A pixelated, black and white globe of the Earth is centered on the image. The continents are outlined in black against a white background, with a light blue color filling the oceans. The globe is set against a solid blue background. Overlaid on the globe is the text "Christmas Around the World" in a bold, red, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in two lines, with "Christmas Around" on the top line and "the World" on the bottom line. The text is slightly curved to follow the shape of the globe.

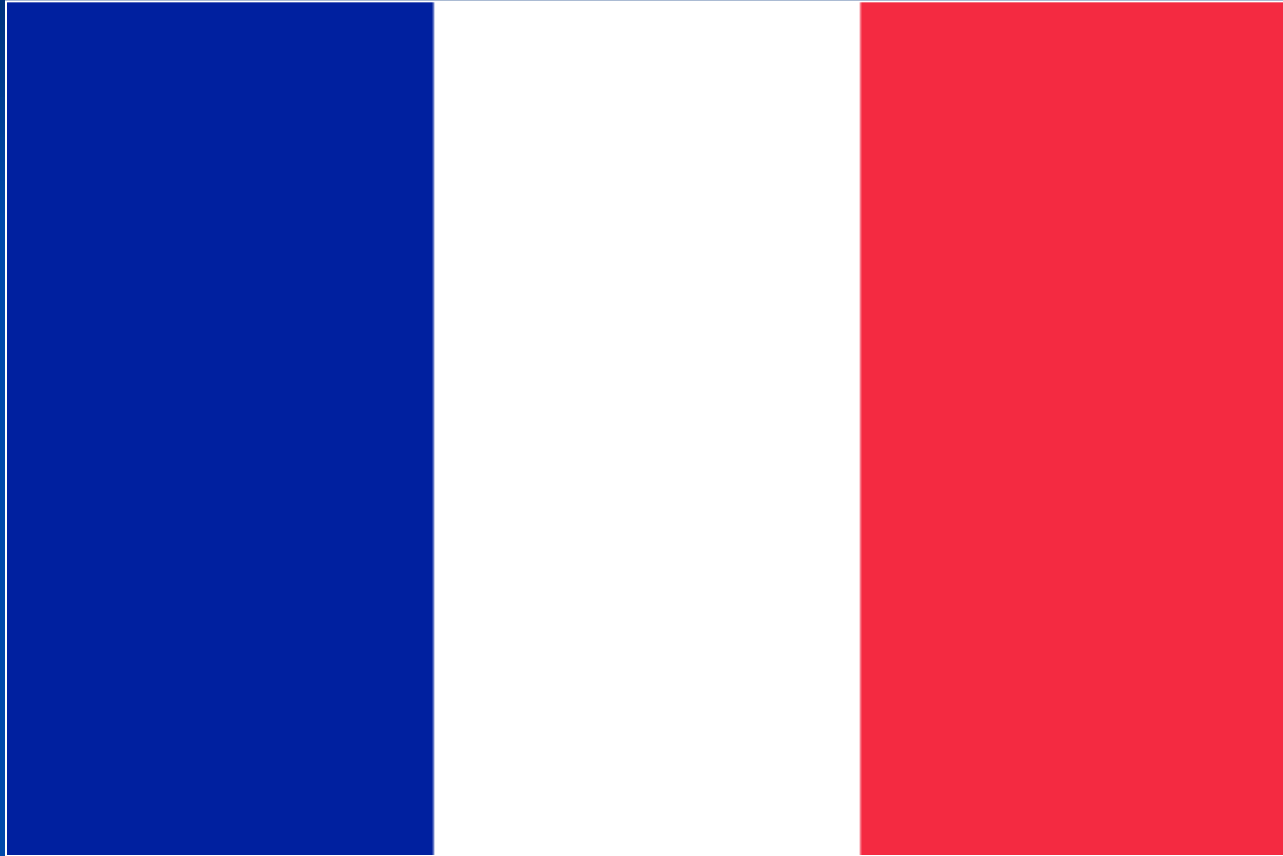
**Christmas Around
the World**

France



- Capital City: Paris
- Main Language: French
- Currency: French Franc
- Area: 211,207 square miles
- Population: 58,979,000
- Main Religion: Roman Catholic

Flag of France



Interesting Facts

- The Eiffel Tower in Paris was built for the World's Fair of 1889. It stands 984 feet tall. At the time it was built, it was the tallest man made structure on Earth.



Holidays

- In France, children put their shoes in front of the fireplace so *Pere Noel* (Father Christmas) can fill them with gifts. Many families attend midnight Mass and then have a festive supper called *Le reveillon*. Large numbers of French families also decorate their homes with small Nativity scenes. In these scenes, clay figures called *santons* (little saints) portray the story of Jesus' birth. Some people put additional santons in their Nativity scenes every year. They buy these figures at special holiday fairs that are held before Christmas.

The Netherlands



- Capital City: Amsterdam
- Main Language: Dutch
- Currency: Guilder
- Area: 16,162 square miles
- Population: 15,808,000
- Main Religion: Roman Catholic and Protestant

Flag of The Netherlands



Interesting Facts

- The name “Netherlands” means “The Low lands.”
- The legend of the Dutch boy using his finger to plug a dike was a fictional story, however, there is a statue honoring the youngster in Spaarnedam, Holland.





- There are more bicycles per capita in The Netherlands than anywhere else in Europe.

Holidays

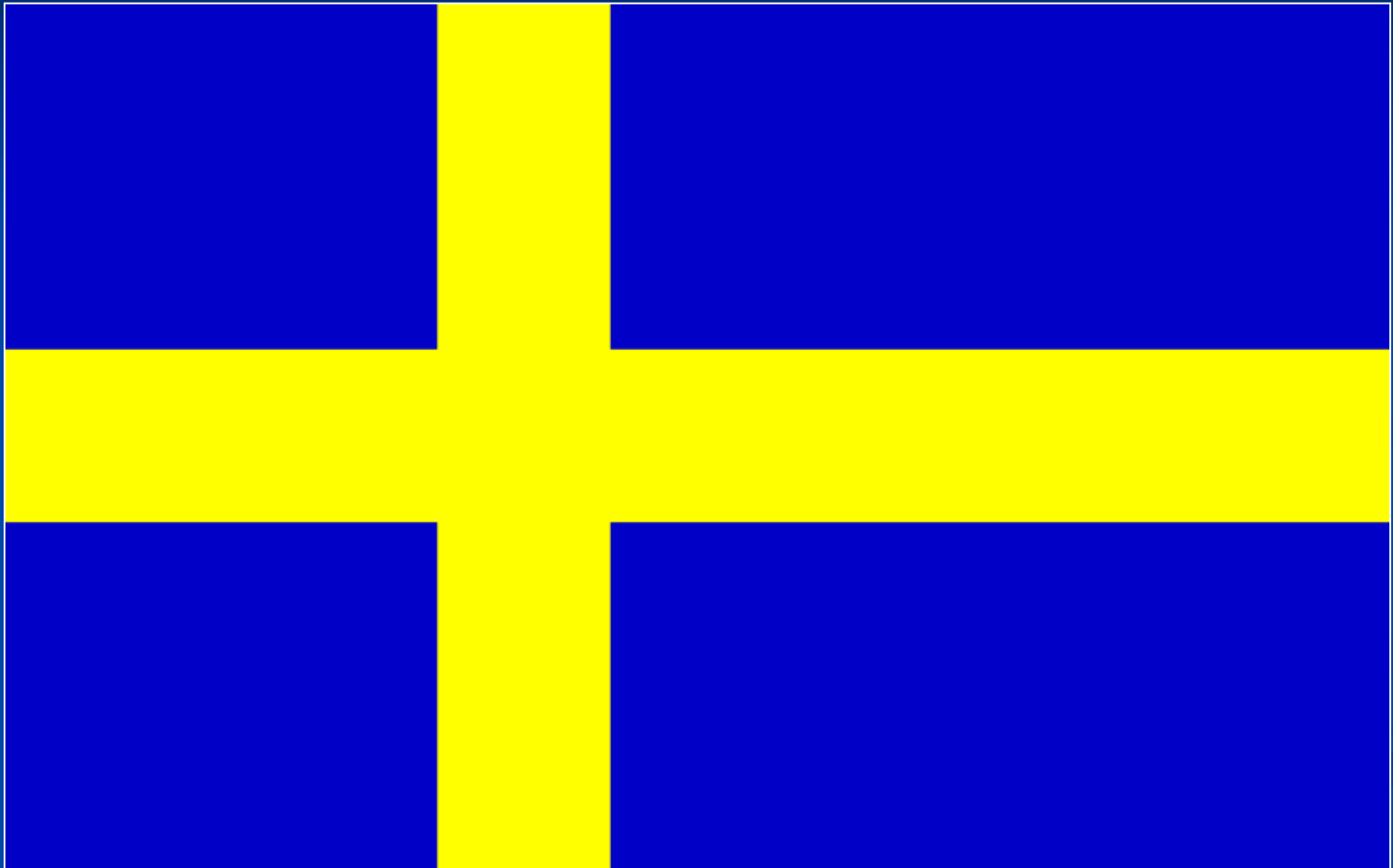
- In mid-November, “Sinterklaas” arrives by steamboat dressed in a bishop’s robe with his helpers, “Zwarte Piets” (Black Peters). “St. Nicholas Day” is celebrated on December 5th. That evening, families exchange gifts and children leave carrots and hay in their shoes for the Saint’s horse. The next morning, the children receive candies if they have been good.

Sweden



- Capital City: Stockholm
- Main Language: Swedish, Danish, & Norwegian
- Currency: Swedish Krona
- Area: 173,732 sq. miles
- Population: 9,234,209
- Main Religion: Lutheran (Christianity) & Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic

Flag of Sweden



Interesting Facts

- Swedish men are very tall, and the average age people live to is 80 years old.
- In November in Southern Sweden, it gets light at 8.30 am and dark at 3.30 pm.
- In Sweden when a person says "no" they smile and nod their head up and down.
- Swedes have been known for a number of inventions, including astronomical lens, zipper, marine propeller, refrigerator, computer mouse and pace-maker.
- Sweden is the homeland of the ancient Vikings.

Holidays

- On Dec. 13, the feast of Santa Lucia is celebrated. Dressed in white and wearing a wreath of lighted candles on her head, the oldest daughter, prepares sweet cakes and coffee for each family member while they are still in bed. She wakes them by singing. On Christmas Eve, houses are prepared for “Jultomten” (Father Christmas) who arrives in a sleigh with elves. Trees are lit with real candles. At midnight, Swedes listen to the Christmas story and open gifts. Christmas day is spent at church and home.

Italy



- Capital City: Rome
- Main Language: Italian
- Currency: Italian Lire
- Area: 116,305 square miles
- Population: 57,187,000
- Main Religion: Roman Catholic

Flag of Italy



Interesting Facts

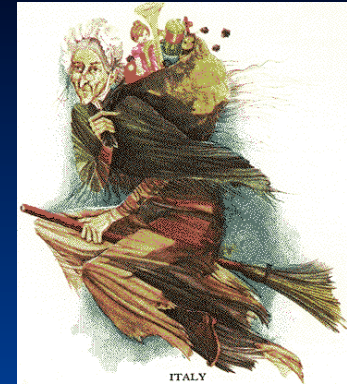
- Venice is probably the most unique city in Europe. There are no streets in Venice, only canals. People travel by taxi boats called “gondolas.”





- The Tower of Pisa is perhaps the most unusual tower in the world. During construction, the ground beneath began to sink causing it to lean. Today it leans almost ten feet to one side and will eventually fall over.

Holidays



- On January 5th, the Eve of Epiphany, a fair of toys, candies and gifts takes place in Rome. During the “Epiphany Festival,” January 6th, “Befana,” a friendly witch, brings toys and sweets to Italian children who have been good. Children who have been bad receive lumps of coal.

Israel



- Capital City: Jerusalem
- Main Language: Hebrew, Arabic, English, Russian
- Currency: Shekel
- Area: 7,850 square miles
- Population: 6.43 million
- Main Religion: Judaism, Islam, Christianity

Flag of Israel



Interesting Facts

Basic Information

Church of the Nativity



Holidays

- *"Mo'adim Lesimkha"*
- This is Hebrew for "Merry Christmas" but in Israel there are many Christians who celebrate Christmas by going to the church built on the exact spot where Jesus was born. Thousands of people visit the Church of the Nativity which is usually ablaze with flags and decorations at Christmas. The manger, down deep winding stairs, can be found in a grotto with a silver star and fifteen silver lamps shining above it. Around the star is the inscription "Here of the Virgin Mary Jesus Christ was born."

- People watch the dramatic annual parade led by galloping horsemen and police mounted on Arabian horses. Christian homes are marked with a red cross on the door. They have a silver star on a pole in the middle of the village square.
- Pilgrims often visit Bethlehem at Christmas time. They fill Manger Square and enjoy the Christmas atmosphere. Afterwards they might go into the fields where the shepherds heard the good news of Jesus' birth.

Hanukkah

- Hanukkah is a mid-winter festival celebrated by Jewish people. It is celebrated for eight days beginning on the twenty-fifth day of the Hebrew month of Kislev which falls within the month of November and December. Hanukkah commemorates the victory of the Maccabbes over the Syrians in 165 B.C.
- The Jews of Palestine, under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus successfully fought a war against King Antiochus. The king had forced all of his subjects to practice the religion of Greece. After the war when the Maccabbes returned to their temple they found only enough sacred oil to light the holy menorah for one day. By divine miracle, however, the lamp continued for eight days in celebration the event was called “The Festival of Lights” or “Hanukkah.”

China



- Capital City: Beijing
- Main Language: Mandarin Chinese
- Currency: Yuan
- Area: 3,696,032 square miles
- Population: 1,276,953,000
- Main Religion: Confucianism, Taosim and Buddhism

Flag of China



Interesting Facts

- The Great Wall of China is 3,900 miles long. It took at least one million people working twenty-five years to complete. It is the only man-made object large enough to be seen from space.





- The Chinese were the first to use paper money, in the 8th century A.D.

Holidays

- **Do the Chinese celebrate Christmas in China?** Well, the answer to this question is both YES and NO. If you walked around a major Chinese city 20 years ago, you probably wouldn't have seen many signs of Christmas. This is because Christmas is a Christian holiday and not many Chinese people are Christian. However, if you were to visit those same Chinese cities today, you'd see signs of Christmas everywhere you looked! On the Avenue of Eternal Peace in Beijing, China, there are Christmas displays everywhere. Many Chinese people celebrate by decorating their houses with Christmas trees, cooking and eating special foods, and spending time with family and friends. So yes, the Chinese celebrate Christmas. But no, most do not celebrate it for the same reasons that Christians do.

Christmas in Hong Kong

- In Hong Kong, the figure who visits children is known as Lan Khoong or Dun Che Lao Ren. There are church services given in Chinese as well as English. Children send Christmas cards depicting the Holy Family in a Chinese setting. Public areas are decorated with Nativities, poinsettias, streamers, and paper chains.

Mexico



- Capital: Mexico City
- Main Language: Spanish
- Currency: Peso
- Area: 761,606 sq mi
- Population: 106,682,500
- Main Religion: Christian & Roman Catholic

Flag of Mexico



Interesting Facts

- Mexico City has hosted the nineteenth Olympic Games in 1968. It is the only Latin America country to do so.
- The national sport of Mexico is the masculine Bull fighting. All the large cities in Mexico have bullrings. The largest bullring in the world is La Monumental in Mexico City.
- Mexican food is world famous. Fajitas, quesadillas, enchiladas and tacos originated there.

- Mexico is home to many volcanoes, including two that can be seen from the capitol city. North America had volcanoes throughout the West at one point, but the area of North America with the most active volcanoes is in Mexico. The two famous volcanoes that can be seen from Mexico City are called Popocatepetl and Ixtacihuatl. While neither is active, Popocatepetl will still shoot out streams of steam and smoke into the air, which can also be seen from Mexico City.



Holidays

- In Mexico, the most cherished custom of Christmas is the Posadas. Posadas, meaning lodging, is the name given to the 9 days of celebration before “La Navidad” (Christmas Day). It honors the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and their search for lodging each night.
- In the countryside, children gather at private homes. Each is given a candle, which is lit as the kids form a line and parade down the street. Two kids lead the parade, carrying figurines of the Holy Family.

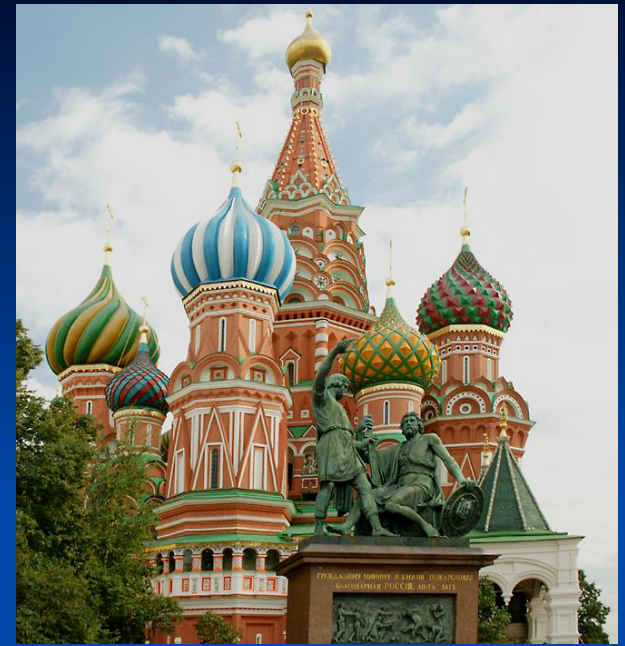
Holidays

- As they approach each house, they're turned away until they arrive at a stable replica. There, they arrange the figurines, placing Jesus in the manger exactly at midnight.
- After prayer, there is fun and partying. Kids break the pinata and fireworks are set off.
- Children receive their gifts on January 6 instead of Christmas day. This day is known as the "Day of the Wise Men." Instead of hanging up stockings, kids put their shoes out for the Wise Men to fill with toys.

Russia



- Capital: Moscow
- Main Language: Russian
- Currency: Russian Ruble
- Area: 6,592,735 square miles
- Population: 141,800,000
- Main Religion: Russian Orthodox



Flag of Russia



Interesting Facts

- Russia is the largest country in the world. It covers 1/7 of all of the land of our planet.
- Russia used to be ruled by tsars. These were like kings or emperors. Now, Russia has a President.
- It is a criminal offense to drive around in a dirty car in Russia!
- The Russian tundra is melting for the first time since the ice age.
- Moscow has the world's most used subway system.
- Microwave ovens were banned in Russia in 1976.
- Russia celebrate Christmas twice a year, December 25 and January 7th!

- Russia boasts an enormous variety of landscapes, ranging from tundra to steppes, from deserts to mountains, from glaciers to volcanoes. **The Urals** (below) are the oldest mountains in the world and lake Baikal is the world's deepest lake and a largest reservoir of fresh water on earth.



Holidays



- In Russia, the religious festival of Christmas is being replaced by the **Festival of Winter** but there are some traditions that are still kept up in some parts of the country.
- In the traditional Russian Christmas, special prayers are said and people fast, sometimes for 39 days, until January 6th Christmas Eve, when the first evening star appears in the sky. Then begins a twelve course supper in honor of each of the twelve apostles - fish, beet soup or **Borsch**, cabbage stuffed with millet, cooked dried fruit and much more.

Holidays

- Hay is spread on the floors and tables to encourage horse feed to grow in the coming year and people make clucking noises to encourage their hens to lay eggs. On Christmas Day, hymns and carols are sung. People gather in churches which have been decorated with the usual Christmas trees or **Yelka**, flowers and colored lights.
- **Babushka** is a traditional Christmas figure who distributes presents to children. Her name means grandmother and the legend is told that she declined to go with the wise men to see Jesus because of the cold weather. However, she regretted not going and set off to try and catch up, filling her basket with presents. She never found Jesus, and that is why she visits each house, leaving toys for good children.

- Italy - Buon Natale e Felice Anno Nuovo
- France - Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année!
- The Netherlands - Vrolijk Kerstfeest en een Gelukkig Nieuwjaar!
- China - Kung His Hsin Nien bing Chu Shen Tan
- Israel - I'D Miilad Said ous Sana Saida
- Mexico- Feliz Navidad
- Russia- S Rozhdestvom!

MERRY
CHRISTMAS!!!!