

# CHRISTMAS in France

## NATIVITY

A Nativity scene, or le creche, is often used to decorate French homes at Christmas. They contain clay figures of the story of Jesus' birth. French scenes have the typical Nativity figures, as well as a butcher, baker, policeman, and priest. Traditionally, the Nativity scene is displayed until February 2, forty days after Christmas Day.



## YULE LOG

French homes often burn yule logs made from cherry wood. The log is brought into the home on Christmas Eve and sprinkled with red wine to make it smell nice when burning. The log and candles are burned all night with food and drinks left out in case Mary and baby Jesus pass by in the night.

## PERE NOEL

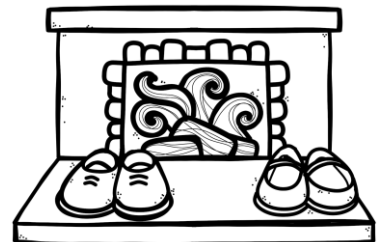
In France, Father Christmas or Santa Claus is known as Pere Noel. He is accompanied by Le Pere Fouettard, a man dressed in dark clothes, in eastern France. He represents the butcher who kidnapped children later saved by Saint Nicholas. He does not bring gifts.



## SAINT NICHOLAS DAY

In northern and eastern France celebrations begin on December 6, Saint Nicholas Day. They celebrate him because he was the protector of children. Children place their shoes in front of the fireplace on December 5 before going to bed. They believe St. Nicholas will arrive on his donkey carrying treats and gifts for them. Children awake to find their shoes

filled with treats. However, naughty children get a bundle of twigs tied together with a ribbon. There are many parades to honor Saint Nicholas on December 6.



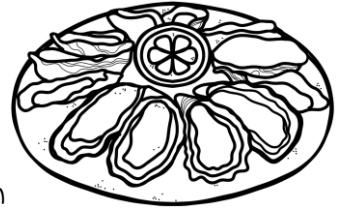
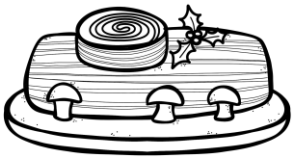


## FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

A four-day festival from December 5 to December 8 in Lyon is known as la Fete Des Lumieres, or the Festival of Lights. Everyone places candles on their windowsills and the buildings are lit up with colored lights. Streets are decorated with illuminations.

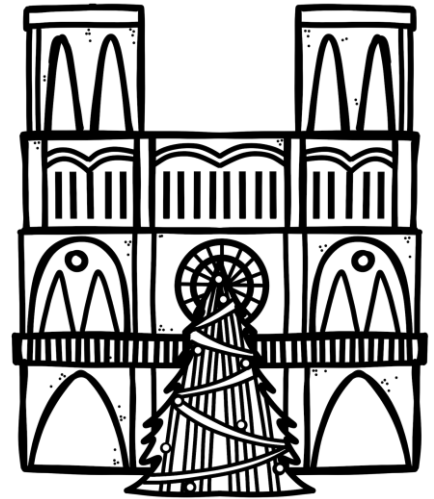
## FOOD

Reveillon, the main Christmas meal is typically eaten on Christmas Eve or early Christmas morning after people have returned from the midnight church service. Roast turkey with chestnuts or roast goose, oysters, foie gras, lobster, venison, and cheeses are common foods at a French table. A chocolate sponge cake log called buche de Noel is normally consumed as dessert. Other desserts made from fruit, nuts, and pastries are also popular.



## NOTRE DAME

Many people attend church services at the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris France during the Christmas season.

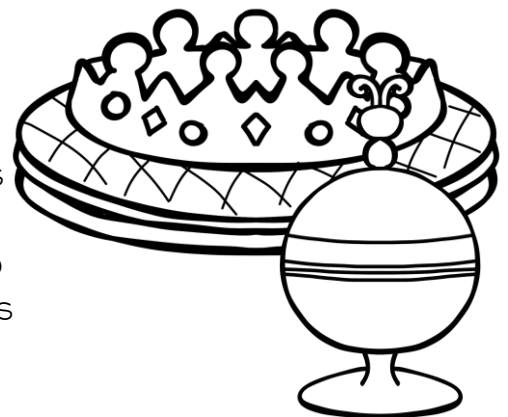


## NEW YEAR

To say Happy New Year in French, you say, "Bonne Annee," which means "Good Year." It is tradition on midnight of New Year to kiss under the mistletoe. Many people make a New Year's Resolution.

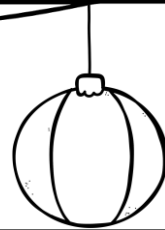
## EPIPHANY

Known as Fete des Rois, Epiphany, is celebrated in France on January 6<sup>th</sup>. A flat almond cake, Galette des Rois, is eaten. It has a bean or toy inside and is decorated with a gold paper crown on the top. The day celebrates the journey of the Three Kings who followed the star of Bethlehem to find baby Jesus and give him presents of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

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**IDENTIFY:** Use the word bank to identify each term described.

Yule log	shoe	St. Nicholas
twigs	Nativity scene	Pere Noel
Notre Dame	Reveillon	Epiphany
	1. Father Christmas in French	
	2. Honored on December 6	
	3. Main Christmas meal	
	4. These are left up until February 2 <sup>nd</sup> in France	
	5. Children put this out for Pere Noel on December 5	
	6. Naughty children get these for Christmas	
	7. Brought in and burned on Christmas Eve	
	8. Celebrated on January 6 <sup>th</sup> in France	
	9. Major cathedral in France	

**TRUE OR FALSE?:** Place a check in the correct column.

STATEMENT	T	F
11. Le Pere Fouettard brings gifts to French children.		
12. Galette des Rois is typically eaten on New Year's Eve.		
13. A buche de Noel is a common French dessert at Christmas.		
14. The Festival of Lights in Lyon lasts four days.		
15. Oyster and lobsters are common French foods at Christmas.		
16. The French traditionally kiss under the mistletoe on Christmas Eve.		
17. Fete des Rois honors the three kings who visited baby Jesus.		
18. Saint Nicholas is honored on December 6 <sup>th</sup> in France.		
19. Children put out stockings in France for Pere Noel to fill.		
20. Saint Nicholas is thought to bring gifts on a sleigh.		

## **MULTIPLE CHOICE:** Choose the best answer.



21. Which of the following is NOT an accurate statement about Nativity scenes in France?

- A. They are called le creche in French.
- B. The figures are made of clay.
- C. The figures are strictly Biblical.
- D. They remain displayed until February 2.

22. Why are yule logs left burning and food is set out on Christmas Eve?

- A. It allows Pere Noel to easily find homes.
- B. It provides warmth and a snack for Pere Noel.
- C. In case Mary and baby Jesus stop by.
- D. It is considered good luck for the New Year.

23. Which of the following best completes the analogy?

December 6 : St. Nicholas Day :: January 6 : \_\_\_\_\_

- A. Epiphany
- B. Festival of the Lights
- C. New Year's Eve
- D. Christmas Eve

24. Which of the following best describes the text structure of the selection?

- A. Cause and Effect
- B. Problem and Solution
- C. Compare and Contrast
- D. Description

25. Which sentence would be LEAST necessary to include in a summary of the selection?

- A. The French have several interesting traditions during the Christmas season.
- B. The French have many Christmas traditions that are similar to other nations around the world.
- C. Many people attend a church service at Notre Dame cathedral during the Christmas season.
- D. Many French Christmas traditions revolve around the story of Jesus' birth.