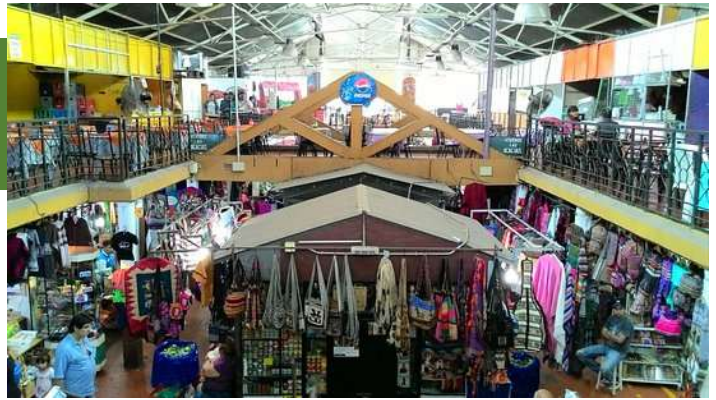


Christmas Traditions in Mexico

The weather is warm and mild in Mexico during the Christmas season. Families shop for gift, ornaments, and good things to eat in the market stalls, called **puestos**.



They decorate their houses with lilies and evergreens. Family members cut intricate designs in brown paper bags to make lanterns called **farolitos** or **luminarias**. They place a candle inside and then set the farolitos along sidewalks, on windowsills, and on rooftops and outdoor walls to illuminate the community with the spirit of Christmas.



The Mexican celebration of Christmas is called **las posadas** and begins on December 16. Families begin the nine-day observance of las posadas by reenacting the Holy Family's nine-day journey to Bethlehem and their search for shelter in a **posada**, or inn. In some parts of Mexico, for the first eight evenings of las posadas two costumed children carry small statues of **María y José** as they lead a candlelight procession of friends and neighbors from house to house. They sing **villancicos**, a song asking for shelter for the weary travelers. When at last they find a family that will give shelter, the children say a prayer of thanks and place the figures of **María y José** in the family's nativity scene, or **nacimiento**. Then everyone enjoys a feast in the house of one of the participants. Watch this video about las posadas. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QKnCAiN4k-w>



For the children, a **piñata** party is the best part of **las posadas**. The piñata is a large clay or papier-mache figure shaped like a star, an animal, or some other object and covered with colorful paper streamers. The

piñata is filled with candy or small gifts and hung from the ceiling. The blindfolded children are spun around and given a big stick. They take turns trying to break open the piñata with the stick while the piñata is raised and lowered. Everybody scrambles for the gifts and treats when the piñata shatters and spills its treasure.



The ninth evening of las posadas is **Buena Noche**, Christmas Eve. Noche Buena is when the family gathers, eats Christmas dinner together and celebrates. Noche Buena is an all-night affair, which includes la *Misa del Gallo*, Mass of the Rooster, a midnight mass marking the beginning of Christmas Day. The mass gets its name from the rooster, who crows the beginning of a new day.

After mass, the church bells ring out and fireworks light up the skies. Many Mexican children receive gifts from Santa Claus on this night. The children help to set up the family's **nacimiento** in the best room in the house. The scene includes a little hillside, the stable, and painted clay figures of the Holy Family, shepherds, the Three Kings, and the animals. The children bring moss, rocks, and flowers to complete the scene.

Many children receive gifts on the eve of Twelfth Night, January 5, from **los Reyes Magos**, the Three Kings who pass through on their way to Bethlehem. Children leave their shoes on the windowsill and find them filled with gifts the next morning. At a special Twelfth Night supper on January 6, families and friends enjoy hot chocolate flavored with vanilla and cinnamon, and a ring-shaped cake. Whoever gets the slice of cake containing a tiny figure of baby Jesus will give a tamale party on February 2, Candlemas Day.



All of the families help prepare the tamales, which are a meat or chicken filling wrapped in corn dough. The tamale is then wrapped in corn husks and steamed. A religious service held on Candlemas marks the end of the Christmas season in Mexico.

Spanish Christmas Vocabulary to Know

1. ***Feliz Navidad*** — Merry/Happy Christmas
2. ***Próspero Año Nuevo*** — It's used to mean "Happy New Year," but it literally means "prosperous New Year."
3. ***Noche Buena*** — This term for "Christmas Eve" literally means "Good Night." It usually consists of a large meal.
4. ***Misa del Gallo*** — This means "Midnight Mass" or literally "Rooster's Mass." Many Catholic families attend this mass at midnight on Christmas Eve as part of their annual celebrations.
5. ***Navidad*** — Christmas
6. ***Noche vieja*** — This term for "New Year's Eve" literally means "old night."
7. ***Año Nuevo*** — New Year
8. ***Día de Año Nuevo*** — New Year's Day
9. ***Día de Reyes*** — This "Day of Kings," is also known as "Epiphany" or "Three Kings' Day." It's on January 6th. This is the proverbial "12th day of Christmas" and is celebrated with food and gifts. Though in the US this day is largely ignored, many people around the world (including in Spanish-speaking countries) consider this the pinnacle of the Christmas season.
10. ***Vacaciones de Navidad*** — "Christmas holidays" or "Christmas break."
11. ***Niño Jesús*** — Baby Jesus
12. ***Virgen María y José*** — Virgin Mary and Joseph.
13. ***Reyes Magos*** — This literally means "Magi Kings." It refers to the "Three Magi," "Three Kings" or, as they're most commonly known in English, the "Three Wise Men."
14. ***Papá Noel*** — Rather than Santa Claus, most Spanish-speaking countries have "Father Christmas." He isn't as popular as Santa, though, and he often leaves only a small gift on Christmas. The *Reyes Magos* usually bring more gifts on the *Día de Reyes*.
15. ***Árbol de Navidad*** — Christmas tree
16. ***Calcetín*** — Stocking
17. ***Luces navideñas*** — Christmas lights
18. ***Hombre de nieve*** — Snowman
19. ***Corona de Navidad*** — Christmas wreath
20. ***Flor de Navidad/Flor de Nochebuena*** — These terms for "poinsettia" literally mean "Christmas flower" or "Christmas Eve flower" respectively.

21. ***Adornos*** — Decorations/ornaments

22. ***Comida del día de Navidad*** — This refers to “Christmas dinner,” though it literally means “food of Christmas Day.”

23. ***Pastel de Navidad*** — This term means “Christmas cake.” Traditionally, these feature various dried fruits. Unlike American-style fruitcakes, though, they often feature almond paste and icing.

24. ***Mazapán*** — This means “marzipan,” which is a sweetened almond paste. It’s a particularly common holiday treat in Spain.

25. ***Rosca/Roscón de Reyes*** — This term means “Ring of Kings.” It’s an oval pastry traditionally consumed on the *Día de Reyes*. It’s often decorated with dried fruits. But bite carefully: A baby Jesus figurine, toy, coin or dried bean is usually hidden in one of the pastries in any given box. Whoever finds the hidden object is traditionally expected to pay for a party.

26. ***Tarjeta de Navidad*** — Christmas card

27. ***Regalo*** — Present

28. ***Nacimiento*** — Nativity scene

29. ***Villancico*** — Christmas carol

30. ***Espíritu navideño*** — Christmas spirit

31. ***Cascabeles*** — This word means “bells,” though it’s often used to refer to “sleigh bells” in songs like “Jingle Bells.”

32. ***Renos*** — Reindeer

33. ***Calendario de adviento*** — Advent calendar

<p>I want to wish you a happy Christmas.</p> <p>Some people say Happy Holidays instead of happy Christmas.</p> <p>On January first, people say prosperous new year.</p> <p>The night before christmas is christmas eve.</p> <p>Misa del Gallo is at twelve o'clock at the church.</p> <p>The thirty first of december is Nochevieja.</p> <p>2020 is the new year.</p> <p>The night that the three kings visited Christ was La Noche de Reyes. People give presents on this day.</p> <p>The Day of Kings is on January 6.</p> <p>I like Christmas vacation.</p> <p>Baby Jesus was God's gift to us.</p> <p>The virgin Mary and Joseph were the parents of Jesus.</p> <p>The three kings saw the star in the sky.</p> <p>Papa Noel is like "Santa Claus". He brings presents to children.</p> <p>We put lights on our Christmas tree.</p> <p>Calcetines are put by the fireplace.</p> <p>I like to see the Christmas lights.</p> <p>If it snows, you can make a man of snow.</p> <p>There is a Christmas wreath on the door. It is green and has a red bow.</p> <p>You put ornaments on the tree.</p> <p>My favorite Christmas food is tamales.</p> <p>We like to drink hot chocolate.</p> <p>I send Christmas cards to friends.</p> <p>We give presents to friends. Santa gives us presents.</p> <p>There is a nacimiento next to the church.</p> <p>Santa has eight reindeer</p> <p>An advent calendar has small doors with little prizes.</p>	<p>Quiero desearles una feliz Navidad.</p> <p>Algunas personas dicen felices fiestas en lugar de feliz navidad.</p> <p>El primero de enero, la gente dice próspero año nuevo.</p> <p>La noche antes de Navidad es Nochebuena.</p> <p>Misa del Gallo está a las doce en punto en la iglesia.</p> <p>El treinta y uno de diciembre es Nochevieja.</p> <p>2026 es el año nuevo.</p> <p>La noche en que los tres reyes visitaron a Cristo fue La Noche de Reyes. La gente da regalos en este día.</p> <p>El día de los reyes es el 6 de enero.</p> <p>Me gustan las vacaciones de navidad.</p> <p>El niño Jesús fue un regalo de Dios para nosotros.</p> <p>La virgen María y José fueron los padres de Jesús.</p> <p>Los tres reyes vieron la estrella en el cielo.</p> <p>Papá Noel es como "Santa Claus". Él trae regalos a los niños.</p> <p>Ponemos luces en nuestro árbol de navidad.</p> <p>Calcetines se ponen junto a la chimenea.</p> <p>Me gusta ver las luces navideñas.</p> <p>Si nieva, puedes hacer un hombre de nieve.</p> <p>Hay una corona de Navidad en la puerta. Es verde y tiene un lazo rojo.</p> <p>Pones adornos en el árbol.</p> <p>Mi comida navideña favorita son los tamales.</p> <p>Nos gusta tomar chocolate caliente.</p> <p>Envío tarjetas de Navidad a amigos.</p> <p>Damos regalos a amigos. Santa nos da regalos.</p> <p>Hay un nacimiento al lado de la iglesia.</p> <p>Santa tiene ocho renos</p> <p>Un calendario de adviento tiene puertas pequeñas con pequeños premios.</p>
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