

Topic Page: [Holidays](#)

Summary Article: **holiday**

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[altered from holy day], day set aside for the commemoration of an important event. Holidays are often accompanied by public ceremonies, such as parades and carnivals, and by religious observances; they may also be simply a time for relaxation. Days of commemoration are observed throughout the world, e.g., Bastille Day in France, May Day in Russia, and the New Year in China. National holidays are observed throughout a country and are considered legal if proclaimed by the central government. In the United States the state governments have jurisdiction over the celebration of holidays, except with regard to federal employees and agencies. On legal holidays banks and schools are closed and business transactions are restricted. New Year's Day, Presidents Day (a combined observance of George Washington's and Abraham Lincoln's birthdays that occurs near the date of Washington's birthday), the Fourth of July (Independence Day), Labor Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day are legal holidays observed by all the states. Abraham Lincoln's birthday, Memorial Day, Election Day, Columbus Day, and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday are legal holidays in most states. Many special occasions are observed by single states or by a group of states, such as Patriots' Day (in Massachusetts and Maine) and the Confederate Memorial Day. In 1971 the U.S. Congress created several three-day weekends for federal employees by proclaiming that certain holidays be observed on Monday regardless of their actual dates. Holidays now celebrated on Monday in most states include Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Columbus Day and Veterans Day. For religious holidays, see feast. See also bank holidays.

See Deems, E. M. , ed., *Holy-days and Holidays* (1902, repr. 1968);

Myers, R. J. , *Celebrations: The Complete Book of American Holidays* (1972).

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