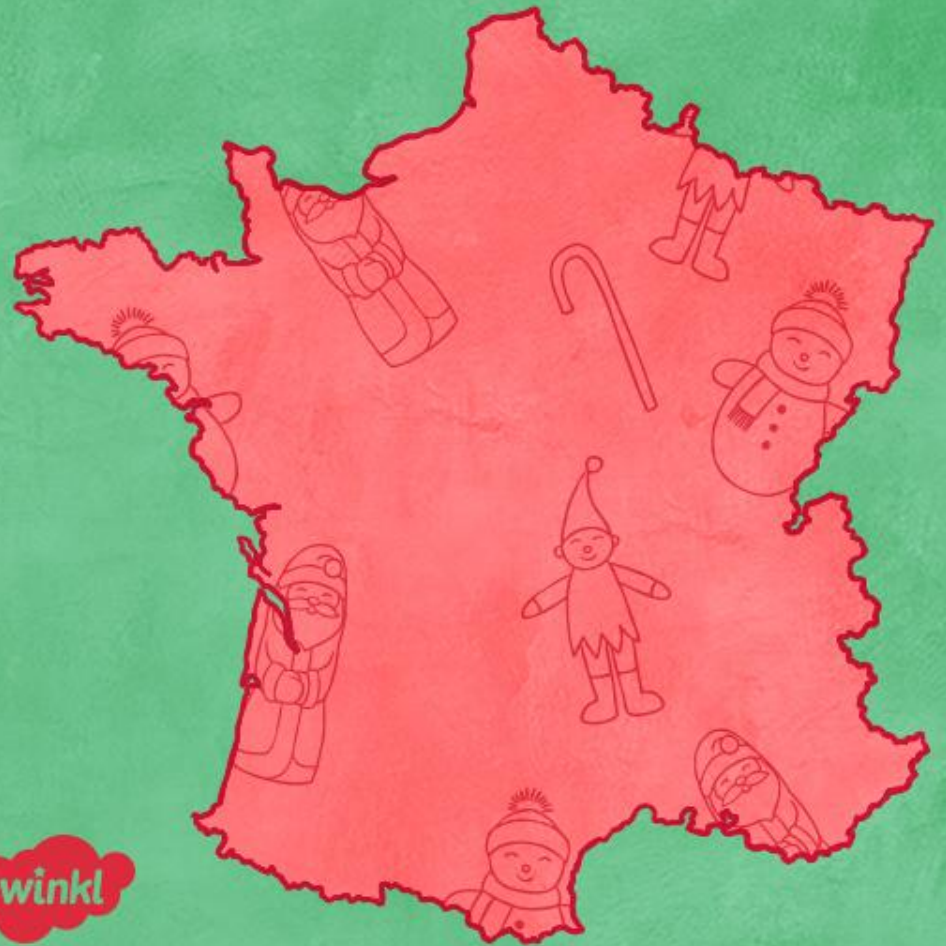


Celebrating Christmas in France



The Nativity

Christmas is an important festival in France.
Nativity scenes or cribs are very common in France.



Apart from the usual figures, local craftsmen will include models of a butcher, baker, policeman and other well-known local characters, in the Nativity scene!

The idea of the crib dates back to the 14th century in Avignon, introduced by St Francis of Assisi.

Decorations

French homes are decorated with Advent wreaths, often with real candles. Christmas trees also feature in houses in France, and are decorated with lights and glass ornaments.



Traditionally, homes would not be decorated until Christmas Eve.

Merry Christmas!

To say 'Merry Christmas' in French you would need to say:



**'Joyeux
Noël'**

Père Noël



Father Christmas is called *Père Noël*. The French tradition is that children leave their shoes by the fireplace or under the Christmas tree, and Père Noël will fill the shoes with sweets, nuts and small toys.



Yule Logs

On Christmas Eve, it is traditional to bring in a log made from cherry wood, and sprinkle it with red wine! The log makes a pleasant smell while it is burning.



The log would then be left to burn all evening and through the night, in case Mary and the Baby Jesus pass and need a warm place to stay.

Réveillon

On Christmas Eve, many people in France attend Midnight Mass. When they return home, they share their main Christmas dinner. In French, this meal is called *réveillon*.

It means “The Awakening” because Christians believe the true importance of Christmas has been revealed: God’s son has been born. Traditional food at *réveillon* is smoked salmon, oysters, lobster, goose and cheeses.



Did you know?

In some parts of France, this meal includes eating 13 different desserts made from fruit, nuts and pastries!

Desserts

Dessert might be a chocolate sponge called *la bûche de Noël*, or Christmas log.



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The Wise Men

The celebrations continue until the first Sunday in January, when the arrival of the Three Wise Men is commemorated.

This is called *La Fête des Rois*.



Children might sing songs at people's doors and collect coins as they go.

