

ALOE

A LESSON ON ENGLISH

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New Year Celebrations around the World

December 31 as New Year's Eve

At midnight on December 31, almost everywhere in the world church bells ring, horns toot, whistles blow, sirens shriek. London's Trafalgar Square and New York City's Times Square swarm with crowds of happy, noisy people. Even people with no tradition of beginning the new year on that date join in this public celebration.

Greece, Rome, & Medieval Europe

The ancient Greeks began their new year with the new moon following June 21. Before the time of Julius Caesar, the Roman new year started on March 1. In most European countries during the Middle Ages, the new year began on March 25, the day of the Feast of the Annunciation.

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur

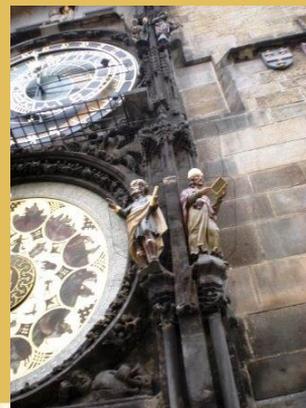
In September or October, Jews believe that God opens the Book of Life for 10 days, starting with Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and ending with Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). During these days, the holiest in the Jewish year, Jews try to atone for any wrongdoing and to forgive others.

Korea and Asia

While many Koreans celebrate the New Year on January 1st of the solar calendar, the lunar new year, which is late winter/early spring, is popular. The holiday is celebrated in similar fashion by many Asian communities that follow the lunar calendar, from the Vietnamese who observe Tet to the Chinese, who sometimes refer to it as Spring Festival, to the Koreans and their Seollal.



In Thailand, a special three-day water festival on April 13–15 marks Songkran, the Buddhists' celebration of the new year. Parades feature huge statues of Buddha that spray water on passersby. People also release fish into rivers as an act of kindness.



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New Year around the World, continued from p.1

Each of the religious groups in **India** has its own date for the beginning of the year. One Hindu New Year, Baisakhi, comes sometime in April or May.

Chinese New Year: People (often wearing new clothes) carry lanterns and join in a huge parade led by a silk dragon, the Chinese symbol of strength. According to legend, the dragon hibernates most of the year, so people throw firecrackers to keep the dragon awake.

Indonesia has two New Year celebrations — the official one on January 1 and another on the Islamic New Year, the tenth day of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic year, whose date varies from year to year.

Iran celebrates New Year's Day on March 21. A major part of New Year rituals is setting the "Haft Seen" with seven specific items. In ancient times each of the items corresponded to one of the seven creations and the seven holy immortals protecting them. All the seven items start with the letter "S" (this was not the order in ancient times): Seeb (apple), Sabze (green grass), Serke (vinager), Samanoo (a meal made out of wheat), Senjed (a special kind of berry), Sekke (coin), and Seer (garlic).

In **Russia**, the Russian Orthodox Church observes the New Year according to the Julian calendar, which places the day on January 14.

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