**Federal Holidays in the USA**

Federal law establishes the following public holidays for federal employees. If the holiday falls during the weekend, it may be observed on a different day.

Many government offices are closed on federal holidays and some private businesses may close as well. If you plan to visit a government office on or around a federal holiday, you should contact them to determine when they will be open.

**New Year's Day**

New Year's Day is January 1. The celebration of this holiday begins the night before, when Americans gather to wish each other a happy and prosperous coming year. Many Americans make New Year's resolutions.

**Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.**

[**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**](http://www.mlkday.gov/) is celebrated on the third Monday in January. The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. was an African-American clergyman who is recognized for his tireless efforts to win civil rights for all people through nonviolent means.

**Washington's Birthday**

[**Washington's Birthday**](http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/georgewashington/) is celebrated on the third Monday of February in honor of George Washington, the first President of the United States. This date is commonly called Presidents' Day and many groups honor the legacy of [past presidents](http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/) on this date.

**Memorial Day**

[**Memorial Day**](http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Memorial-Day.shtml) is observed the last Monday of May. It originally honored the people killed in the American Civil War, but has become a day on which the American dead of all wars are remembered.

**Independence Day**

[**Independence Day**](http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Independence-Day.shtml) is July 4. This holiday honors the nation's birthday - the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. It is a day of picnics and patriotic parades, a night of concerts, and fireworks.

**Labor Day**

[**Labor Day**](http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Labor-Day.shtml) is the first Monday of September. This holiday honors the nation's working people, typically with parades. For most Americans it marks the end of the summer vacation season and the start of the school year.

**Columbus Day**

[**Columbus Day**](http://www.memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/oct12.html) is a celebrated on the second Monday in October. The day commemorates October 12, 1492, when Italian navigator Christopher Columbus landed in the New World. The holiday was first proclaimed in 1937 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

**Veterans Day**

[**Veterans Day**](http://www1.va.gov/opa/vetsday/) is celebrated on November 11. This holiday was originally called Armistice Day and established to honor Americans who had served in World War I. It now honors veterans of all wars in which the U.S. has fought. Veterans' organizations hold parades, and the president places a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

**Thanksgiving Day**

[**Thanksgiving Day**](http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Thanksgiving.shtml) is celebrated on the fourth Thursday in November. In the fall of 1621, the Pilgrims held a three-day feast to celebrate a bountiful harvest. Many regard this event as the nation's first Thanksgiving. The Thanksgiving feast became a national tradition and almost always includes some of the foods served at the first feast: roast turkey, cranberry sauce, potatoes, and pumpkin pie.

**Christmas Day**

Christmas Day is a celebrated on December 25. Christmas is a Christian holiday marking the birth of the Christ Child. Decorating houses and yards with lights, putting up Christmas trees, giving gifts, and sending greeting cards have become holiday traditions even for many non-Christian Americans.

**Other Celebrations**

There are many commonly observed celebrations in the United States that are not federal holidays. Some of these observances honor groups of people, such as National African American History Month and Women's History Month, or causes, such as National Oceans Month and National Substance Abuse Prevention Month. Many of these holidays and observances are proclaimed by the President ever year.

These are some of the most popular American celebrations and observances that occur every year.

**Groundhog Day**

[**Groundhog Day**](http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/extremes/2004/groundhog/groundhog.html#ground) is February 2 and has been celebrated since 1887. On Groundhog Day, crowds gather in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, to see if groundhog Punxsutawney Phil sees his shadow after emerging from his burrow, thus predicting six more weeks of winter weather.

**Valentine's Day**

[**Valentine's Day**](http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb13-ff06.html) is celebrated on February 14. The day was named after an early Christian martyr, and on Valentine's Day, Americans give presents like candy or flowers to the ones they love. The first mass-produced valentine cards were sold in the 1840s.

**Earth Day**

[**Earth Day**](http://www.epa.gov/earthday/) is observed on April 22. First celebrated in 1970 in the United States, it inspired national legislation such as the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts. Earth Day is designed to promote ecology, encourage respect for life on earth, and highlight concern over pollution of the soil, air, and water.

**Arbor Day**

[**National Arbor Day**](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/apr10.html) was proclaimed as the last Friday in April by President Richard Nixon in 1970. A number of state Arbor Days are observed at other times of the year to coincide with the best tree planting weather. The observance began in 1872, when Nebraska settlers and homesteaders were urged to plant trees on the largely treeless plains.

**Mother's Day**

[**Mother's Day**](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/may09.html) is the second Sunday of May. President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation in 1914 that started the holiday. He asked Americans to give a public expression of reverence to mothers on this day. Carnations have come to represent Mother's Day, following President William McKinley's habit of always wearing a white carnation, his mother's favorite flower.

**Flag Day**

[**Flag Day**](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/jun14.html)**,** celebrated June 14, has been a presidentially proclaimed observance since 1916. Although Flag Day is not a federal holiday, Americans are encouraged to display the flag outside their homes and businesses on this day to honor the history and heritage the American flag represents.

**Father's Day**

[**Father's Day**](http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Fathers-Day.shtml) celebrates fathers every third Sunday of June. Father's Day began in 1909 in Spokane, Washington, when a daughter requested a special day to honor her father, a Civil War veteran who raised his children after his wife died. The first presidential proclamation honoring fathers was issued in 1966 by President Lyndon Johnson.

**Patriot Day**

[**September 11, 2001**](http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/History-American/September11.shtml), was a defining moment in American history. On that day, terrorists hijacked four commercial airliners to strike targets in the United States. Nearly 3,000 people died as a consequence of the attacks. Patriot Day and National Day of Service and Remembrance is observed on September 11 in honor of the victims of these attacks.

**Halloween**

[**Halloween**](http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Halloween.shtml) is celebrated on October 31. On Halloween, American children dress up in funny or scary costumes and go "trick or treating" by knocking on doors in their neighborhood. The neighbors are expected to respond by giving them small gifts of candy or money.

**Pearl Harbor Day**

[**Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day**](http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/events/wwii-pac/pearlhbr/pearlhbr.htm) is December 7. In 1994, Congress designated this national observance to honor the more than 2,400 military service personnel who died on this date in 1941, during the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, by Japanese forces. The attack on Pearl Harbor caused the United States to enter World War II.