

Webinar: New Years Around the World presented by the Culture & Ethnic Diversity Network



On Wednesday 29th January 2025 the Culture & Ethnic Diversity Network hosted a webinar to celebrate the different New Years around the world and shine a spotlight on the unique traditions associated with each.

Why are there different New Years around the world?

Many of us will be familiar with the Gregorian calendar — a **solar calendar** based on Earth's orbit around the sun — which is more commonly used worldwide and means that New Years Day falls on the 1st January. However, despite sharing the same day for New Years, these countries have quite different traditions and ways of celebrating which we will explore further in this summary document.

However, a lot of other cultures & countries, use a lunar or lunisolar calendar rather than a solar calendar. **Lunar calendars** focus instead on months that follow the moon's phases and **lunisolar calendars** try to combine these two methods by following both the solar year and the moon's phases.

Some examples include:

- ❖ Kali Yuga hinduism - currently dwapara - 5126 - lunisolar calendar - 21st of October
- ❖ Hijri calendar - 1445 - shorter year - 354/355 days - June 27th New Year
- ❖ Chinese Calendar – lunisolar - 4723 - 29th of January
- ❖ Buddhist calendar - lunisolar - 2568 - 17th of April
- ❖ Rosh Hashanah - Jewish New Year - 5785 - 22nd-24th of September

DS Smith colleagues share their experiences of New Years Day Celebrations:

Chinese New Year



Jennifer Berezna

Also known as **Spring Festival** in Chinese and **Lunar New Year** in English, Chinese New Year celebrates the beginning of a new year on the lunisolar Chinese Calendar, marking the end of winter and the beginning of spring. The festival takes place from Chinese New Years Eve to the Lantern Festival held on the 15th day of the year. Each new year is named after an animal from the Chinese Zodiac.



Where is CNY celebrated?

- **China, Hong Kong, Taiwan (ROC)**
- Southeast Asia including **Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines & Thailand**
- Also prominent beyond Asia, especially in **Australia, Canada, France, Mauritius, New Zealand, Peru, South Africa, United Kingdom, & United States**, as well as in many **European** countries
- Influenced celebrations in other cultures, such as **Losar of Tibet, Tết of Vietnam, Seollal of Korea, Shōgatsu of Japan and Ryukyu New Year**

Islamic New Year

- ❖ Also known as **Muharram** or **Hijri New Year**, it marks the beginning of the new Islamic calendar year. It is celebrated on the first day of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic **lunar calendar** and this year it falls on June 27th, 2025.
- ❖ Commemorates the migration of **Prophet Muhammad** from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE, which laid the foundations of the Islamic faith.
- ❖ While not as widely celebrated as other Islamic festivals like **Eid al-Fitr** and **Eid al-Adha**, the Islamic New Year holds significant spiritual importance for Muslims worldwide.



Mo Sher



Celebrations include:

- > Special prayers, recitation of the Quran, and gatherings with family and friends.
 - > Exchanging gifts, wearing new clothes, and decorating their homes.
 - > Charitable acts and remembering those in need.
- ❖ The Islamic New Year is a time for reflection, renewal, and strengthening one's faith. It serves as a reminder for Muslims to follow the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and strive for **spiritual growth** in the coming year.

Scotland – Hogmanay



Mary Phillips

- ❖ Hogmanay is a Scottish word for the last day of the year or 'New Year's Eve', its origins are uncertain, but the first written record of it was 1604.
- ❖ It is celebrated across Scotland, most notably in Edinburgh, at the Hogmanay Festival, which began in 1993. As seen in the photo on the right, Hogmanay Festival is a massive outdoor street party with a concert and fireworks.



- ❖ When it strikes midnight fireworks go off and it is tradition to all join hands, with friends, family or whoever you are celebrating with to sing 'Auld Lang Syne', written by Robert Burns, the most prominent poet to have written in Scots dialect.
- ❖ 'First-Footing' is still common, to ensure good luck the first foot in the house must be a dark-haired male. Celebrations continue into New Years day with people seeing friends and family, and its tradition to go for a big walk with a tipple at the end to warm you up.

Spain – The Twelve Grapes of Luck

This tradition is known as "Las Doce Uvas de la Suerte" which translates to "The Twelve Grapes of Luck." It originated in Spain and began in 1909 when grape growers in Alicante had an excellent harvest that year, leading to a surplus of grapes.

To address this, grape growers began promoting the idea of eating a grape with each strike of the clock at midnight on New Year's Eve. This was seen as a way to prosperously begin the new year by consuming the incredible grape harvest.



Victoria Gabarda



The tradition quickly spread across Spain. Each grape represents a month of the new year, so consuming all 12 is believed to lead to 12 months of prosperity and good luck. The grapes are typically eaten one by one in sync with the bell strikes at midnight to ring in January 1st.

Today, it has become an entrenched Spanish tradition celebrated annually. Many families gather, have the 12 grapes ready, and make wishes for good fortune as they eat each grape with the midnight chimes. It's a fun way to welcome the new year with hope and optimism.

Hindu Diwali Celebration



Radhika Joshi

- ❖ Known as the "Festival of Lights," Diwali symbolizes the victory of light over darkness and good over evil.
- ❖ Celebrated based on the lunisolar calendar, it falls on Amavasya (new moon) night in the Hindu month of Kartika (October/November).
- ❖ The five-day festival begins two days before the new moon and ends two days after, with variations by region.

Day 1: Dhanteras – Worship of Dhanvantari (god of health). Homes are cleaned, and gold or utensils are purchased for good fortune.

Day 2: Chhoti Diwali – Marks Krishna’s victory over Narakasura. Diyas are lit, and homes are decorated with rangoli.

Day 3: Diwali – The main day includes Lakshmi Puja, lighting diyas, fireworks, family gatherings, and feasts.

Day 4: Govardhan Puja – Celebrates Krishna lifting Govardhan Hill. Special food offerings are made to Lord Krishna.

Day 5: Bhai Dooj – Honors siblings. Sisters pray for their brothers’ well-being, and gifts are exchanged.



Jain Diwali Celebration



Jeel Desai

Jains celebrate Diwali (festival of lights) as an observance of **Lord Mahavira’s** (an important idol within Jainism) **liberation** (moksha), which occurred on the day of New Moon in 527 BCE.

The festival holds spiritual significance as it marks Lord Mahavira’s attaining **Moksha** (enlightenment and release from the cycle of birth and death).

Jains use a **Lunar-based calendar** that begins with the liberation of Mahavira. It aligns with the Hindu lunisolar calendar.

Key Aspects of Jain Diwali Celebrations:

- ❖ Fasting and prayers: Jains observe fasting and engage in meditation, self-discipline and prayers to honour Lord Mahavira.
- ❖ Lighting lamps (diyas) to symbolize the light of knowledge and cleansing ignorance.
- ❖ Temples and houses are beautifully decorated, and rituals like offering sweets and prayers are conducted.

