

Around the World with Kate & Mack:

12

Days of Christmas



Parents' Guide for "Around the World with Kate & Mack: 12 Days of Christmas"

Hi parents!

Mack and I thought we'd give you some helpful tips for our 12 Days of Christmas lessons. It's like a behind-the-scenes look at our trip just for parents! That way you'll know what's happening each day so you can help your kids learn about all this exciting stuff. After all, one of the best parts of Christmas is spending time with the ones you love, and we think your family will have an awesome time traveling the world together and learning about so many countries.

First off, we think it's a great idea if you sign up for the daily downloads. It makes it really easy to do with your kids if you get one day at a time. If you haven't done that yet, you can sign up at wycliffe.org/12-days-of-christmas.

Here's how the lessons work:

1. To start each lesson, you and your kids can read about some of the interesting ways that each country celebrates Christmas. It's like a mini story, just from Mack and me!
2. Next, you'll be able to read some fun facts. These are really cool, and they give you a deeper look into the country you're learning about that day.
3. Then there's an activity. Mack and I tried to mix it up, so sometimes it's a recipe that you can do as a family, and then

sometimes it's a craft that your kids can do (they might need a little help on a few of them).

We think it would be great if you spent time reading about each country together as a family and talking about what you learn. Then your kids can do the activities, if they want. Maybe you want to do one country a day, or maybe you want to read about all the countries and do the crafts on a weekend. You can choose whatever works best for your family!

- ✓ If you have **5 minutes**, you can read the fun facts.
- ✓ If you have **10-20 minutes**, you can also read about our adventure in each country.
- ✓ If you have **20+ minutes**, you can do an activity.
- ✓ If you have **30+ minutes**, you can read everything and get started on the activity*.

*Some activities are short, but some might take more time for your kids to finish. That's why it's a good idea to think about your kids — can they pay attention for a long time? Do they like to take breaks? That way you can decide if you should do one day all at once, or split it up into little sections.

We also thought it might be helpful to give you a quick look at what each country talks about. There's sooooo much we can share with you, but we wanted to try to keep it simple. That way if there's something that was extra interesting to you or your kids, you can do some investigating on your own!

Day 1 – Mexico

- ✓ "Merry Christmas" in Spanish is *Feliz Navidad*.

- ✓ Learn about the nine posadas, a procession that kids do every night from December 16-24 as they look for a room in the inn for Mary and Joseph.
- ✓ Make delicious Mexican hot chocolate. Yum!
 - **Supplies:** hot cocoa mix, cinnamon, nutmeg, cayenne pepper.
- ✓ Make a balloon-shaped piñata.
 - **Supplies:** flour, water, salt, newspaper, balloon, decorations (paint, ribbons, etc.), candy.

Day 2 – Finland

- ✓ “Merry Christmas” in Finnish is *Hyvää Joulua*.
- ✓ Learn about a special Christmas ceremony that’s broadcast on the radio and TV.
- ✓ Make a Finnish paper star for your tree.
 - **Supplies:** paper, pencil, ruler, scissors, glue, string.

Day 3 – Japan

- ✓ Learn how Christmas is celebrated very differently in Japan than much the world — they celebrate New Year’s much more!
- ✓ Play *Fukuwarai*, a fun game that’s a lot like “Pin the Tail on the Donkey.”
 - **Supplies:** scissors.

Day 4 – Serbia

- ✓ “Merry Christmas” in Serbian is *Hristos se rodi*.
- ✓ Learn how Serbians celebrate Christmas on January 7, not on December 25.
- ✓ Make hay for Jesus to sleep on — he needs a comfy bed once he’s born!

- **Supplies:** construction paper, scissors.

Day 5 – Ghana

- ✓ Learn how Christmas Eve services can sometimes last the whole night.
- ✓ Color your own Ghanaian shirt, made out of beautifully bright *kente* cloth.
 - **Supplies:** markers, colored pencils or crayons.

Day 6 – Greece

- ✓ “Merry Christmas” in Greek is *Kala Christouyenna*.
- ✓ Learn how Christmas trees aren’t really popular in Greece, so they do something different instead.
- ✓ Color your own traditional Greek ship, called “The Christmas Boat” (or *karavaki* in Greek).
 - **Supplies:** markers, colored pencils or crayons.

Day 7 – Australia

- ✓ Learn how Christmas happens during Australian summer, so they don’t have a “white Christmas” like the songs talk about.
- ✓ Make delicious *pavlova*, a meringue and fruit dessert that’s popular in Australia.
 - **Supplies:** egg whites, white sugar, vanilla extract, lemon juice, cornstarch, whipped cream, mixed fruit.
- ✓ Make a Christmas crown, and wear it at a special holiday meal.
 - **Supplies:** colored paper, pencil, scissors, tape.

Day 8 – Argentina

- ✓ “Merry Christmas” in Spanish is *Feliz Navidad* (the same as Mexico!).
- ✓ Learn how Argentinians like to ring in Christmas Day with a big bang.

- ✓ Make Christmas cider.

- **Supplies:** apple juice, cinnamon sticks, cloves, orange.

Day 9 – Russia

- ✓ Learn about some of the delicious foods that Russians like to eat around the holidays.
- ✓ Make your own *pryaniki*, a spice cookie that's served with tea around Christmas time.
 - **Supplies:** flour, baking soda, cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg, allspice, salt, egg yolks, vanilla, sugar, honey, confectioners' sugar.

Day 10 – Philippines

- ✓ "Merry Christmas" in Tagalog is *Maligayang Pasko*.
- ✓ Learn how people in the Philippines celebrate Christmas longer than any other country in the world (and you probably won't believe how long it is!).
- ✓ Make your own parol, a traditional Christmas star used in Filipino decorations.
 - **Supplies:** popsicle sticks or cardboard, colored tissue paper, scissors, glue.

Day 11 – Democratic Republic of Congo

- ✓ "Merry Christmas" in Lingala (that's the main language spoken there) is *Mbotama Malamu*.
- ✓ Learn how people do a play that starts at the Garden of Eden and goes all the way until King Herod sends out the order to kill all the babies in Bethlehem.
 - Read the story of Jesus' birth from Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 2:1-23.

Day 12 – Greenland

- ✓ "Merry Christmas" in Greenlandic is *Juullimi Ukiortaassamilu Pilluarit*.
- ✓ Learn about some of the interesting foods eaten at Christmas time — things you probably wouldn't think of being Christmas foods!
- ✓ Play a game that's popular in Greenland ("what's that your passing, Mack?").

And at the very end, Mack and I get to share about the true meaning of Christmas — the birth of Jesus Christ!

We hope that you've found these tips helpful as you travel around the world with Mack and me, right from your own home. Enjoy learning some of the cool things we experienced on our trip to these 12 countries.

So to you and your family, Merry Christmas!

Hi, kids!

It's me, Kate, and my best friend, Mack. Christmas is one of my favorite holidays, and there are so many fun traditions that we like to do every year. My family loves to go caroling, or to drink mugs filled with delicious Mexican hot chocolate!

But did you know that not everybody celebrates Christmas? It's true! Christmas first started as a religious holiday that honored Jesus' birth. But over the last 2,000 years, Christmas has changed a lot. Nowadays, people all over the world celebrate it for different reasons, and it isn't always about remembering Jesus' birth.

The reason I love Christmas is because I get to remember the story of how God gave us the greatest gift in the whole world – Jesus Christ! How cool is it to think that Jesus was once a baby, just like we all were? God loved us so much that he wanted Jesus to live a human life, just like us. Reading the story of how Jesus came into the world is always exciting, but reading it during the Christmas season makes it feel that much more special! You can read this in Luke 2:1-21.

As I thought about how Christmas is different all

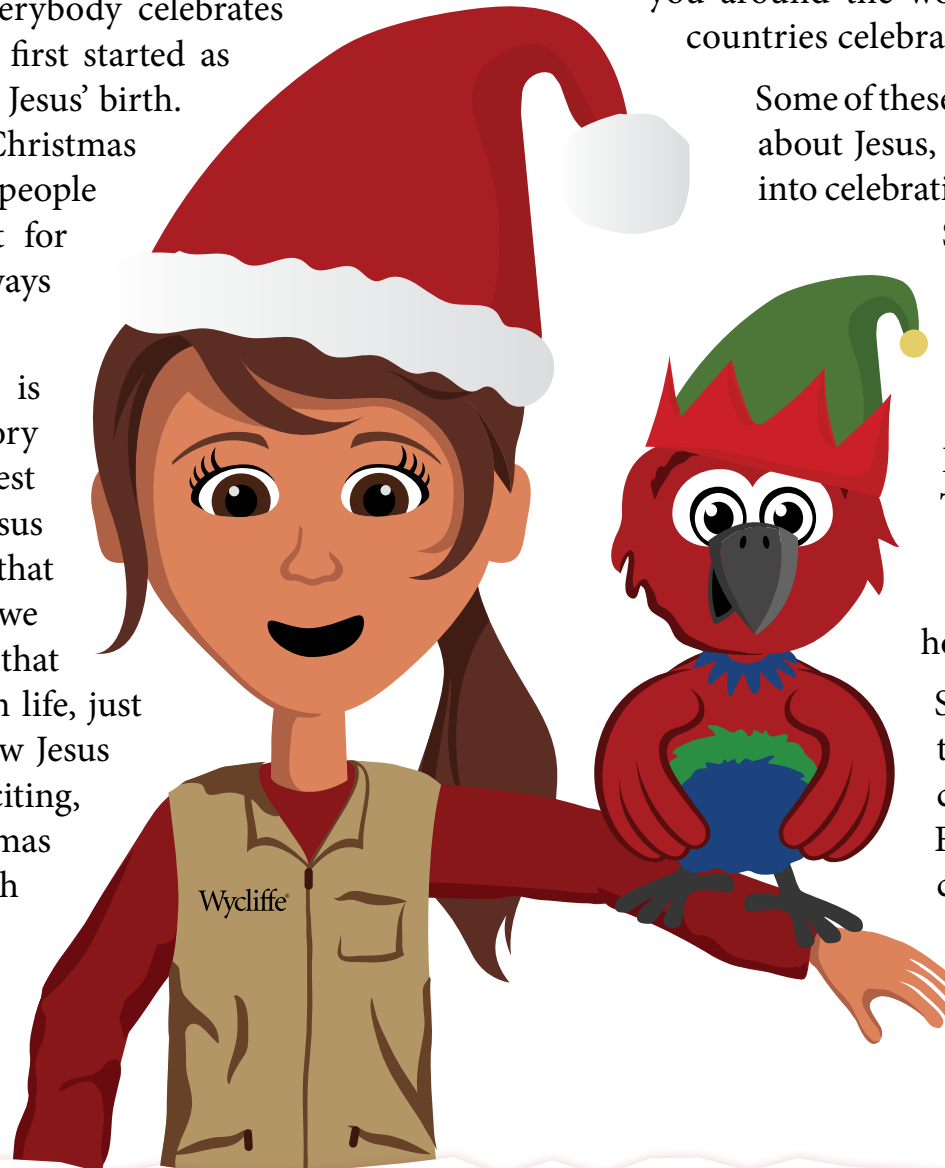
around the world, Mack and I decided that we wanted to learn about Christmas traditions from other countries. It'll be interesting to learn all the different ways that this season is celebrated, don't you think? So we're going to take you around the world and learn how 12 different countries celebrate Christmas.

Some of these countries have traditions that are about Jesus, and some of them have changed into celebrating different things, like including Santa Claus into their traditions.

Did you know that many of the things we do at Christmas — like even having a Christmas tree! — aren't about Jesus' birth? But where did the tradition start? That's why we want to learn about how different countries celebrate Christmas so we can find out how these traditions first started!

So get ready, because we're about to go on an adventure to learn how countries like Ghana, Mexico, Finland, Australia, and others celebrate Christmas.

Let's go!



Day 1 – Mexico



Hi guys! Our first stop is going to be Mexico, because that's where Mack and I grew up!

First off, I'm going to teach you how to say "Merry Christmas" in Spanish (that's the language spoken in Mexico). It's *Feliz Navidad*. So from Mack and me, we want to wish you "Feliz Navidad!"

But back to learning about Christmas traditions in Mexico. Christmas is celebrated from December 12 all the way to January 6. That's almost four weeks long! Starting on December 16 until Christmas Eve, kids often perform *Posada* processions. (*Posada* is Spanish for "inn" or "lodging.") There are nine *Posadas*, one for every night from December 16 to 24, and these celebrate the part of the Christmas story where Joseph and Mary are looking for a room in an inn.

The outside of houses are decorated with evergreens, moss and paper lanterns, and kids are given candles and a board with painted clay figures of Mary riding on a donkey and Joseph. They walk with the candles and the board all around the streets, calling out to friends and neighbors as they walk. They also stop at different houses, singing about how Joseph and Mary went around Bethlehem asking for a room.

After the song is finished, the people in each house tell the kids that they don't have any room for Mary and Joseph! This happens at every house until the very last night when

the kids are finally told that there is a room for Mary and Joseph, and they're invited inside.

The kids say prayers of thanks for finally finding a place to stay, and the party begins! Food, games and fireworks help to finish out the *Posada* for that night.

Each night of the nine *Posadas*, a different house hosts a party. And on the last *Posada* — on Christmas Eve — a manger and figures of shepherds are also put on the board with Mary and Joseph. When the final *Posada* house is found and the kids are invited in, a baby Jesus is put into the manger. Then families go to a midnight church service, and after the service is over, more fireworks are lit to celebrate the official start of Christmas!



Fun Facts:

- 🌐 Kids often get their presents on January 6, which is the day of Epiphany, or *El Día de los Reyes* (the day of the three kings) in Spanish. The presents are left by the three kings, and it's tradition to eat a special cake called *Rosca de Reyes*, or "three kings cake." Hidden inside the cake is a figure of baby Jesus, and whoever finds it in their piece of cake becomes the "godparent" of Jesus for that year.
- 🌐 Another important day is *Candelaria* (also known as Candelmas). That's celebrated on February 2 and remembers the day that Jesus was taken to the temple as a baby and officially presented before God (Luke 2:22-40). Lots of Mexicans have parties on this day to mark the end of Mexican Christmas celebrations.
- 🌐 The biggest angel ornament ever made was from Mexico. Sergio Rodriguez made an angel in January 2001 that was 18 feet and 3 inches high and with wings that spanned 11 feet and 9 inches. But the most amazing thing about the angel was that it was made out of old beer bottles — 2,946 of them!

Let's make Mexican hot chocolate

Mexican hot chocolate is a delicious drink, but it's different than the traditional American hot chocolate. Instead of marshmallows, they use spices!

Here's how you make it:

Ingredients

- ✓ 3 cups instant hot cocoa mix (any brand)
- ✓ 3 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ✓ 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ✓ A pinch of cayenne pepper



1. Combine all the ingredients and mix together.
2. Blend $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the mix with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup milk and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup boiling water.
3. Store the leftover mix in a container, unless you're making six cups (that's how many you can make with this recipe).

Stir and enjoy! If you want to be really fancy, you can have your mom dust a light layer of cocoa powder on top of your drink — it makes the hot chocolate extra yummy!

It's *muy delicioso!* That means it's very delicious in Spanish.



How to make your own balloon-shaped piñata in 8 easy steps

Piñatas are often part of *Posada* parties. (A *piñata* is made of decorated clay or jar covered with paper mache and filled with candy.) The *piñata* is often decorated like a ball with seven peaks that represent the “seven deadly sins,” or it can be an animal (like a donkey) or a bird. The *piñata* is hung from the ceiling or a tree, and kids are then blind-folded as they take turns hitting the *piñata* until it splits open and the candy falls out! Then all the kids hurry and pick up as much candy as they can.

Here's how you make it:

Supplies:

- ✓ 2 cups flour
 - ✓ 2 cups water
 - ✓ 1 tablespoon salt
 - ✓ Newspaper
 - ✓ Balloon
 - ✓ Decorations (like paint, glitter, ribbons, tissue paper, etc.)
 - ✓ Candy
1. Make a paper mache paste by mixing 2 cups flour, 2 cups water and a tablespoon of salt. Stir the mixture until it starts to thicken, like cake batter.
 2. Prepare your paper mache strips by ripping up newspaper into strips that are about 1-2 inches wide and 6-8 inches long. You'll need to make a lot of these strips so that you have enough to cover your balloon in several layers of paper.

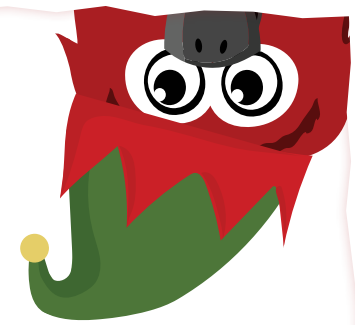
Mack painted
balloon piñata



3. Blow up your balloon, nice and big. Apply the paper mache paste to your paper strips. Then dip the strips into the paste and remove any extra paste by running the strips between your fingers or dragging them along the edge of the bowl.
4. Apply the paper mache to the balloon by laying the strips down all over the balloon in crisscross patterns until the whole balloon is covered. Leave the knot of the balloon uncovered so you can remove the balloon easier. Do this 3-4 times, letting each layer dry before adding another. Let the piñata completely dry until it is hardened.
5. Decorate your *piñata*! Paint it, add stickers, ribbons, streamers, glitter, or whatever you want to make it pretty and bright.
6. Pop the balloon and remove it. A small hole will be left where the balloon was knotted.
7. Fill the hole with candy. You can also add small toys, streamers or any surprises you'd like to put inside!
8. Cover the hole with masking tape, anchoring a ribbon on either side of the hole so you can tie the piñata to a tree or wherever you want to hang it.

Once you've done all these steps and hung the *piñata* up, you're ready to play. And don't forget your blindfold!

Day 2 – Finland



Next stop, Finland! Before we learn about Christmas traditions in Finland, let's learn how to say "Merry Christmas" in Finnish. It's *Hyvää Joulua*. Now we know how to say Merry Christmas in English, Spanish and Finnish!

Some people believe that Santa Claus (also known as Father Christmas) comes from Finland and lives in the northern part of the country, north of the Arctic Circle. People from all over the world send letters to Finland, hoping they'll arrive at Father Christmas' house. There's even a big theme park called "Christmas Land" near where it's said that Father Christmas lives.

Everyone tries to be at home for Christmas — even the fishermen try to dock their boats by December 21st. People clean their houses for the three special days of Christmas — Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day — and make special treats to eat. They also make a sheaf (that's a bundle) of grain, nuts and seed that are tied on a pole so that the birds can enjoy food too.

On Christmas Eve morning, people traditionally eat rice porridge and drink plum fruit juice. They'll then spend the day decorating a spruce tree with candles, apples, fruit, candies, paper flags, stars, cotton and tinsel. A star is put on the top of the tree to remind them of the Star of Bethlehem.

In the afternoon, a ceremony is broadcast on the radio and TV. It starts with the hymn "A Might Fortress Is Our

God" (sung in Finnish) and then the "Declaration of Christmas Peace" is read. It talks about the birth of Jesus and how everyone should be peaceful and joyous on this special day.

The ceremony ends with trumpets playing the Finnish national anthem. That night, they dress up for Christmas dinner, which usually starts between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m., or traditionally when the first star of the night is seen in the sky. They eat a traditional Christmas dinner: including casseroles made of macaroni, rutabaga, carrot and potato, cooked ham or turkey, and lots of other delicious food.

Gifts are exchanged on Christmas Eve after dinner, and then Christmas Day starts very early — at 6.am. with a special church service!



Fun Facts:

- 🌍 Finnish people believe that Father Christmas doesn't have to travel very far on Christmas Eve to deliver presents since he lives so close to them. Tradition says that Father Christmas will deliver the presents himself, maybe even with a handful of elves! Because of this belief, kids don't hang Christmas stockings.
- 🌍 Christmas Eve is the biggest day of the Christmas season, because it's the day that Father Christmas comes.

Make a Finnish paper star for your tree!

The Finnish paper star can be made in many different sizes, and you can use it to decorate your tree as an ornament, or even as the tree topper! You might need help from an older sibling or your mom or dad, but these stars are beautiful and lots of fun to make.

Here's what you need:

Supplies:

- ✓ Paper (you can use whatever paper you want, but the prettier the better! A 12 x 12 sheet of scrapbook paper is perfect.) You can also use felt if you want your star to last for years.
- ✓ Pencil & eraser
- ✓ Ruler
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Glue
- ✓ String
- ✓ Optional: clothes pins or paper clips to hold the ends in place while the glue dries
- ✓ Optional: glitter

1. Measure out 12 strips that are 12 inches long and $\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide. (This will make a big star. If you want to make a smaller tree ornament, cut 12 strips that are 6 inches long and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide.)



2. Cut out the strips. If you want to add glitter to your paper, now is a good time! Get out the glue and make your strips pretty.



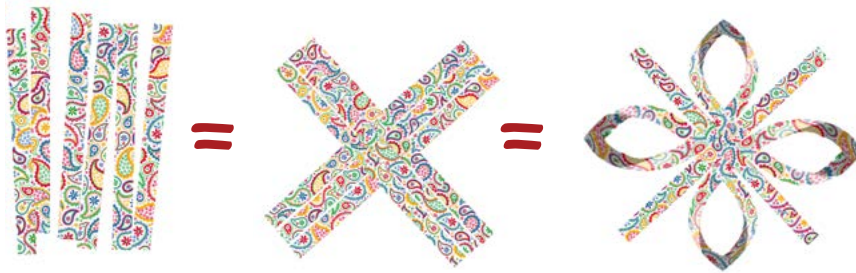
3. Weave six strips together into an X, like the picture shows. Make sure that they weave together at the very center of the strips.



4. Glue the two strips together that form an “L” (or backwards “L”) in the X shape. Do this on all four sides (like the picture shows). Now almost all of your strips should be glued together, except for four strips that make a cross.



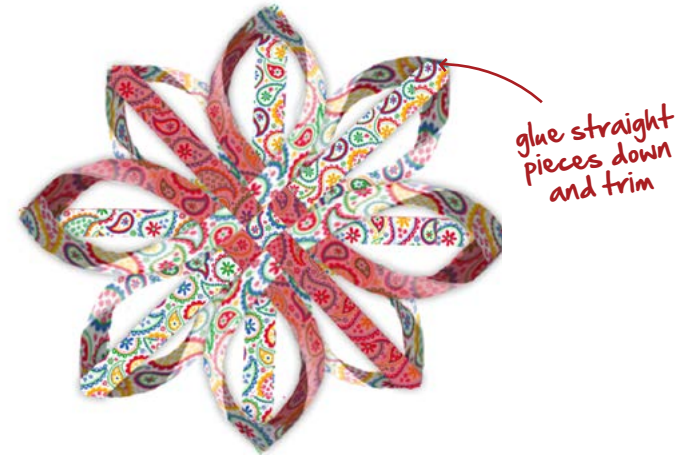
5. Now take your other six strips and repeat steps 3 and 4. You'll have two pieces that look exactly the same. These are your star halves.



6. Lay one of the star halves on top of the other star, making the curved loop match up with a straight piece of paper.



7. Weave the two straight edges closest to each other through the loops and glue them together. Do this for all of the straight pieces of paper. Then glue the centers together.



Now just add a string and hang your star — on your tree, by your window or wherever you wish!



Day 3 – Japan

From Finland we're traveling to Japan, our first stop in Asia. Did you know that Christmas hasn't always been celebrated in Japan? That's because there aren't very many Christians there, so it's not celebrated by everyone.

But over the years, a few Christmas traditions from the United States have come to Japan, like giving presents or Christmas cards. And because many people aren't Christians, Christmas has become a time of spreading happiness rather than celebrating Jesus' birth (and we know that's the true meaning of Christmas!).

Fried chicken is often eaten on Christmas Day, and people will place orders at KFC months before December! This tradition first started in the 1970s, and now it's done every year. They also eat Japanese Christmas cake, a sponge cake that is decorated with strawberries and whipped cream.

The Japanese New Year (called *Shōgatsu* or *Oshogatsu* in Japanese) is a bigger holiday in Japan than Christmas, and it's celebrated more than Christmas Day. Families get together, have a special meal, pray and send each other cards. It's celebrated over five days — from December 31st to January 4th — and it's a very busy time for people in Japan. So in Japan, the New Year is a bigger holiday than Christmas!

Fun Facts:

- 🌐 Christmas Eve is celebrated more than Christmas Day because people celebrate it as a romantic day, and couples spend time together and give presents. It's a lot like Valentine's Day! In fact, so many people are having romantic dinners at restaurants that it can be really hard to find a table if you haven't made a reservation.
- 🌐 Christmas day isn't a national holiday in Japan, and kids still have to go to school. But on December 23, people celebrate the birthday of the current emperor, Akihito, and that's a national holiday instead!



Put the nose on the face!

Since Christmas isn't as big as the Japanese New Year, we're going to play a traditional New Year's game called *Fukuwarai*, or "Lucky Laugh" in English.

This game is a lot like "Pin the Tail on the Donkey." The goal is to put the different parts of the face (like eyes, eyebrows, nose and mouth) onto a blank face while wearing a blindfold. So cut out all these pieces, and when you've finished putting them on the face, take off the blindfold and have a good laugh at the funny face you've created!



Day 4 – Serbia



Onwards to Serbia! Did you know that Serbians celebrate Christmas on January 7? It's true! The reason January 7 is Christmas Day is because they still follow the Julian calendar, which is different than the Gregorian calendar that most people use. (There are two calendars that are used in most places of the world — the Julian calendar was used first, but now most people use the Gregorian calendar, or the “Christian calendar.” If you're ever looking for something interesting to learn about, you should look up the difference between these calendars!)

There are a lot of different Christmas traditions in Serbia, and sometimes the ones you celebrate depend on where you live in the country. So Mack and I have decided to share a few that we found interesting!

Many people spend the six weeks counting up to Christmas celebrating Advent, which starts four Sundays before Christmas. Advent means “coming” in Latin, so it's literally celebrating the coming of Jesus into the world! During Advent, some people fast (that means they don't eat any food at all) or they don't eat food that comes from animals, like meat, milk, eggs, etc. Christmas Eve is the last day of the fast, and that night people get together to have dinner but they still don't eat food that comes from animals.

After Christmas Eve dinner, groups of kids go from house to house knocking on the door, and when it's answered they ask if they can sing. If the neighbor says yes, they sing a song.

As a reward, the neighbor gives the kids candies or sometimes money, and more traditional gifts would include walnuts, prunes, apples and cakes.

One special food that Serbians eat at Christmas is bread that's called *cesnica*. Everyone in the family gets a piece, and there's a coin hidden inside the loaf of bread. Whoever finds the coin in their piece is believed to have extra good luck that year!

In Serbian, “Merry Christmas” is *Hristos se rodi*. That's if you spell it out using the English alphabet. But Serbians use what's called the Cyrillic alphabet, so it would look like this: Христос се роди. Serbians also have special greetings they use during the three days of their Christmas celebration. When you see someone, you say “Christ is born” (except in Serbian!) and they would say “Truly he is born” back to you. Isn't that cool? I think it's a good reminder of the true meaning of Christmas.



Fun Facts:

- 🌍 Traditionally on the morning of Christmas Eve, the father of the family would go into the woods to cut a young oak tree down, but now people just buy one. They burn this log in the fire, and after the father pours wine or throws wheat grains over the logs, he proposes a toast: "Grant, O God, that there be health and joy in this home, that our grain and grapevines yield well, that children be born healthy to us, that our property increase in the field, pen and barn!"
- 🌍 People also put some straw under the table so they remember that Jesus was born in a stable. The day after Christmas, the straw is taken out of the house and little bundles are made with it. Serbians hang these bundles on fruit trees in hopes that they'll make more fruit next harvest season!
- 🌍 Giving gifts on Christmas isn't a tradition in Serbia. Instead, gifts are given the three Sundays before Christmas Day. Tradition says that on the first Sunday kids give gifts; on the second married women give gifts; and on the third married men give gifts. Today people don't always follow this tradition, but this is how Christmas was celebrated for many years in Serbia.

Remember Jesus' birth!

Serbians have some wonderful traditions to help remember that Christmas is about Jesus' birth, and we should try them out! On the days leading up to Christmas, whenever you see someone, try saying the Serbian greeting: "Christ is born." Then you can teach them to say "Truly he is born" back to you!

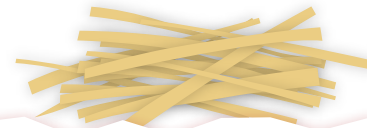
Can you imagine baby Jesus, the Son of God himself, sleeping in a manger where animals usually eat? Like they

do in Serbia, you can also lay out straw in your house to remember where Jesus was born. But not real straw, because mom might not like her house smelling like a stable, right, Mack? So instead let's make some "straw" and fill Jesus' bed with it so he can have a comfy bed to sleep in.

Instructions:

1. Use yellow or tan construction paper and cut strips that look like thick pieces of straw.
2. Then put the pile of straw in a place where you'll see it (maybe by your Christmas tree or somewhere in the living room where you like to sit a lot) so that you can remember what Jesus had to sleep in when he was first born.

Thank you, Jesus, for being born as a baby and coming to save us from our sins!



Day 5 – Ghana

From the land of Serbia we're heading to Ghana, where Christmas is celebrated for almost two whole weeks! The celebration starts on December 20 and goes until the first week of January, and lots of different activities happen during those weeks. Many people travel to visit their friends and family in other parts of the country.

There are over 80 different languages spoken in Ghana, and many of these language groups have their own Christmas traditions. But the night of Christmas Eve is when the celebration really starts! Church services are held, and there is lots of drumming and dancing. Kids often put together a skit about the nativity story, and choirs sing special songs. These songs are usually sung in languages that people understand best (and we know how important it is for us to understand what God is saying in our own language, right, kids?). Sometimes these services go on for the whole night!



On Christmas Day people come back to church, dressed in their bright traditional clothes that are often made from *kente* cloth. After the service is over, they go back to their houses and exchange gifts. They also have traditional foods they eat, like stew or okra soup, porridge, meat, rice, and a yam paste called *fufu*.

Sometimes people also go to church on December 31st to thank God for sending Jesus and to pray for a good New Year. They might also remember their loved ones who died

that year, praying that the troubles and difficulties they had this year won't happen in the New Year.

Like many people in Ghana, let's remember to keep Jesus at the center of our celebrations. After all, the reason we celebrate Christmas is because he was born!

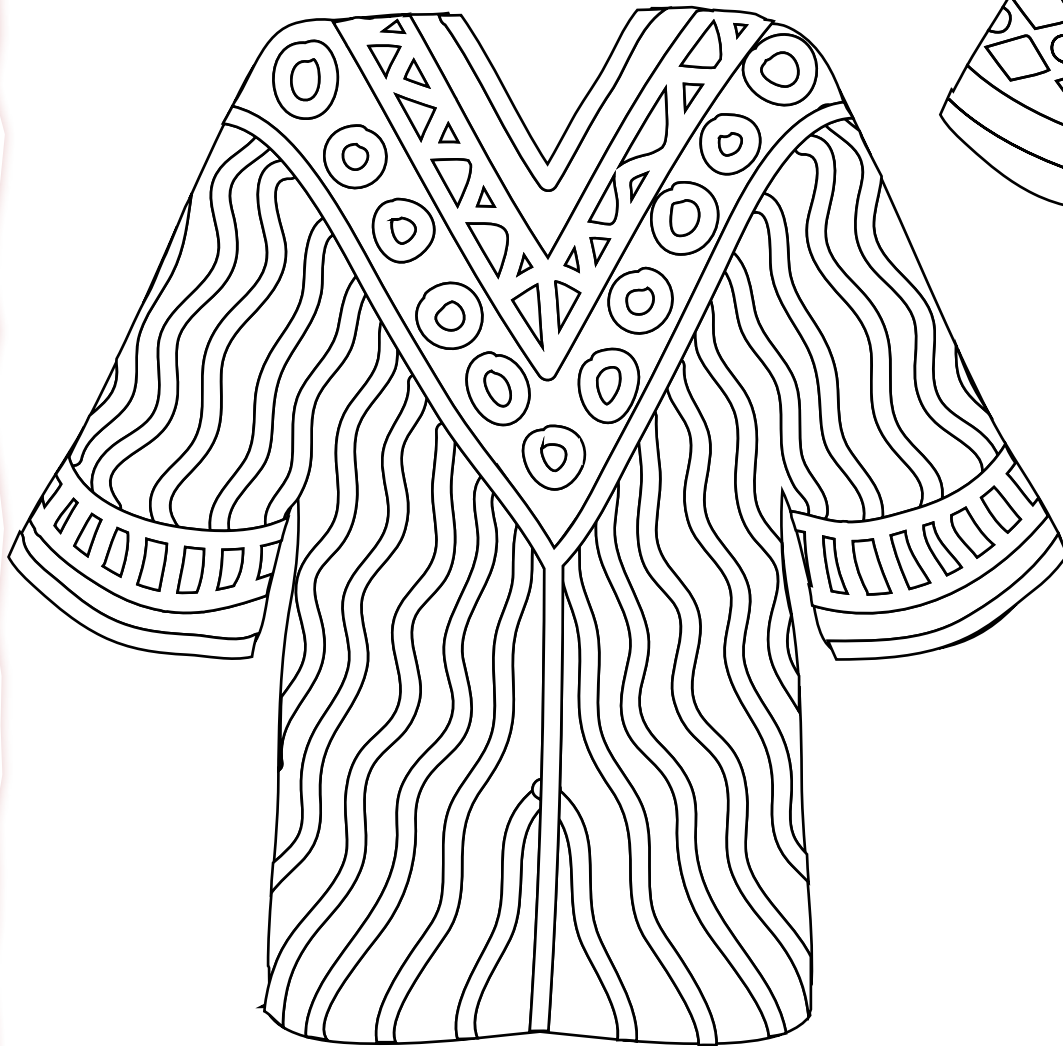
Fun Facts:

-  December is an important month in Ghana because it's the start of the cocoa harvest (that's the bean used to make chocolate — yum!). Did you know that Ghana is the second biggest cocoa producer in the world? Thank you, Ghana, for helping make the cocoa beans for delicious chocolate!
-  Sometimes people celebrate Christmas Eve by setting off fireworks. Now that sounds like a fun way for Christmas Day to start.



Design your own traditional Ghanaian shirt!

Kente cloth is a traditional fabric worn in many parts of Ghana. It's beautiful and bright, and it's become an icon of African cultural heritage around the world. *Kente* cloth is often known by its multicolored patterns, geometric shapes and bold designs. Let's design our own *Kente* shirt by coloring it with our favorite colors!



Day 6 – Greece

We're almost halfway through our travels, and today we're visiting Greece! In Greece, Merry Christmas is *Kala Christouyenna*. And in Greek it looks like this: Καλά Χριστούγεννα. Wow, that's pretty writing!

Christmas trees aren't traditional in Greece, but they're becoming more popular. Instead, most houses have a shallow wooden bowl with a piece of wire hanging across the rim. They hang a wooden cross on the wire with a little bunch of basil on it, and some water is kept in the bowl to keep the basil fresh. Once a day, someone in the family (usually the mother) dips the cross and basil into holy water and sprinkles it around each room in the house.

This is done to keep the *Killantzaroi* (or bad spirits) away. It's believed that the *Killantzaroi* only come during the 12-day period from Christmas to Epiphany (celebrated on January 6), and they supposedly come from the middle of the earth and get into people's houses through the chimney. They like to do mischievous things (that means troublesome or sneaky) like put out fires or make milk go bad, so Greeks keep a fire burning throughout those 12 days because they believe it will keep the *Killantzaroi* away.

Going to a midnight mass service is very important to most Greeks, and afterwards they go home and end their Advent fast. The next day they often eat lamb or pork that's roasted in an oven or over a spit. The meat is served with a spinach and cheese dish, and yummy salads and vegetables. For

dessert you might have *baklava* (a delicious sweet pastry filled with chopped nuts and sweetened with honey or syrup) or other sweet pastries. It makes my mouth water just thinking about it!



Fun Facts:

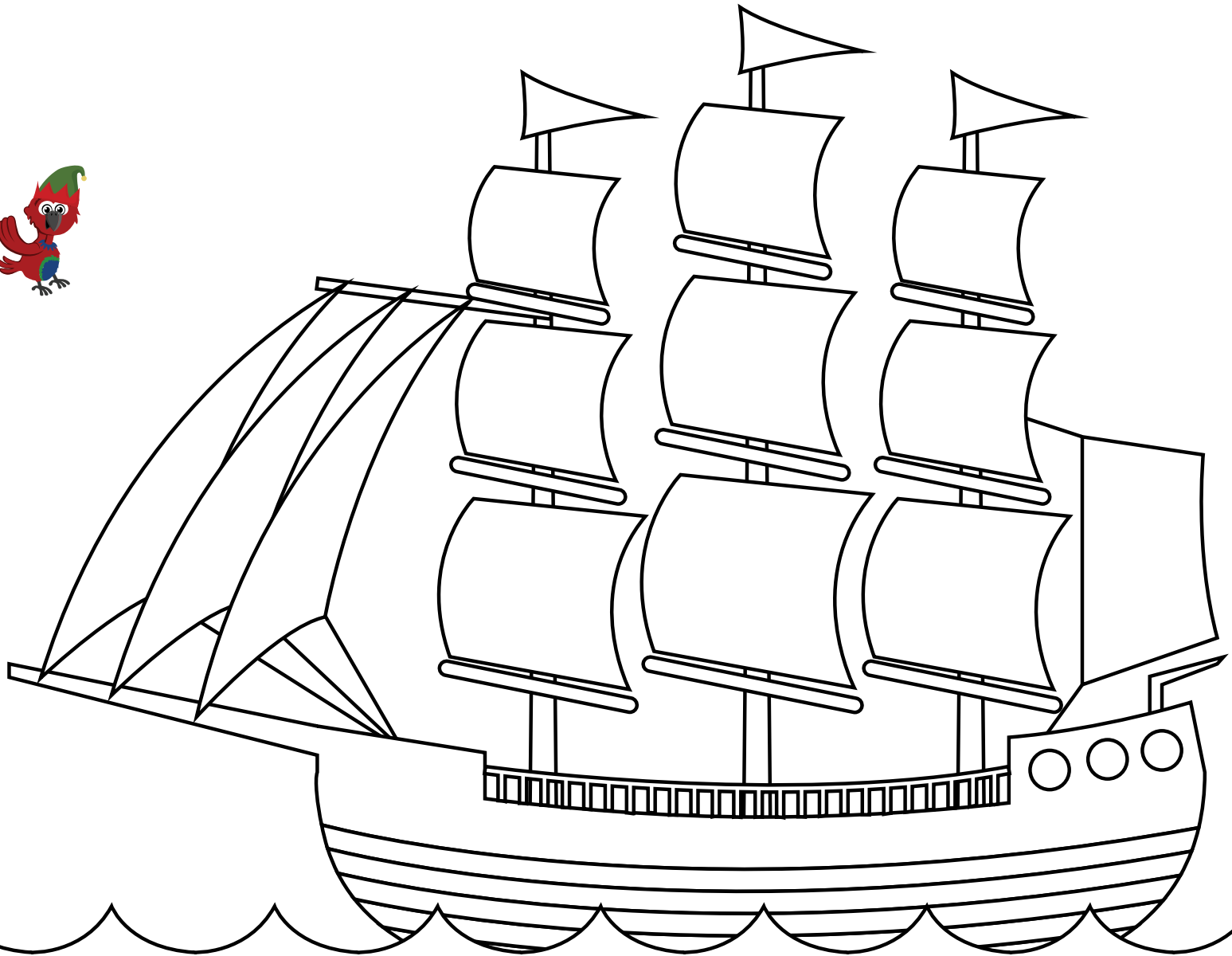
- 🌍 Every December a huge Christmas tree and a three-mast sailing ship are put up in Aristotelous Square in the city of Thessaloniki (the second biggest city in Greece, and one that the Apostle Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians to in the Bible!). Lots of tourists come to see the giant tree and ship.
- 🌍 *Christopsomo* (or Christ bread) is used as table decoration on Christmas Day. It's a round, sweet loaf and the crust is often decorated with what the family does for a living (like if you're a fisherman, you'd have fish on the crust).
- 🌍 Epiphany (also known as "The Blessings of the Waters") is celebrated on January 6 by those in the Greek Orthodox Church, and it celebrates Jesus' baptism. There are lots of events across Greece where young men dive into really cold lakes, rivers or the sea to try to be the first to get a cross that was blessed by a priest and thrown into the water. People think that if you find the cross, you'll have good luck for the coming year.

Color your own traditional Greek ship — "The Christmas Boat"

"The Christmas Boat" (or *karavaki* in Greek) has been around for many years. The tradition goes back to when kids — especially boys — go singing *kalanda* (carols) in the streets on Christmas Eve. They play drums and triangles as they sing, and sometimes they'll even carry model boats that they've decorated with gold-painted nuts. (Carrying a boat is a very old tradition in the Greek islands.) If the kids sing well, people might give them money, nuts, sweets, or even dried figs to eat. The kids sometimes are able to fit the small treats into the model boats they carry with them.

Today people like to decorate small model wood or paper boats with lights and ornaments during the Christmas season. Traditionally the boats are placed near the door or fire with the bow (that's the front of the ship) pointing inwards. This is supposed to look like the boats are making their journey towards the mainland. And sometimes, coins or gold objects (like the painted nuts) are put in the boats to look like riches.





Day 7 – Australia

Christmas celebrated Down Under (that's a nickname for Australia) is different than what so many movies make Christmas look like. It's not snowing, and there's no "white Christmas" for Australia — instead, Christmas comes right in the middle of their summer holidays! Seasons are different in the southern hemisphere, which means that their winter break is during summer break in the United States. A little confusing, huh? But for them, their warm months are over Christmas, and their cold months are during our summer. So when Mack and I learned that Aussies (that's a nickname for people who live in Australia) might spend their Christmas camping or on the beach, it makes sense! You wouldn't want to have a fire and blankets if it's hot outside, would you?

Even though it's hot during Christmas season, many Aussies still hang wreaths on their front doors and go caroling on Christmas Eve. They also decorate their houses with Christmas trees and lights, and sometimes neighbors have competitions to see who has the best light display! Neighbors go and visit each other's houses at night to look at the different light displays — sometimes starting even as early as December 1st.

People think that when Santa Claus gets to Australia, he lets his reindeer have a rest and instead uses kangaroos. He also changes his clothes for less hot ones and enjoys time on the beach!

The main meal on Christmas Day is eaten at lunch time. Sometimes people have Christmas barbecues with seafood, like prawns and lobsters. These barbecues are very popular because it's Australian summer, after all. But traditional Christmas meals are also prepared and include ham, roast turkey or chicken, salads, vegetables and other delicious foods. I think it would be fun to have barbecue on Christmas Day, don't you, Mack?



Fun Facts:

- 🌐 One street in Sydney works together to make beautiful light displays on their houses, and they raise over \$35,000 (Australian dollars) every year for a charity!
- 🌐 Carol services — called “Carols by Candlelight” — are held in state capital cities (Australia has a lot of different states, but not quite like the United States. You should look it up sometime!), and they’re broadcast on TV for other people to see. And since Christmas isn’t cold and snowy, sometimes carols that sing about snow or cold weather have their words changed to go with special Australian words.

Delicious pavlova — yum, yum, yum!

Pavlova is a dessert that’s often part of the Christmas Day meal in Australia. It’s a crisp white meringue (it’s made from beaten eggs) that’s topped with fresh fruit and whipped cream. You’ll need your mom or dad to help you with this because eggs are tricky to work with, but it’ll be worth the time it takes to make this wonderful dessert!

Ingredients:

- ✓ 4 egg whites
- ✓ 1 ¼ cups white sugar
- ✓ 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ✓ 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- ✓ 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- ✓ Whipped cream
- ✓ Mixed fruit (whatever you like — strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, kiwi, mangoes — anything is good if you like it!)



Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F.
2. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and draw a 9-inch circle on the parchment paper.
3. In a large bowl, beat the egg whites until they’re stiff but not dry (this is where you’ll need your mom or dad’s help!).
4. Gradually add sugar (about 1 tablespoon at a time), beating well until thick and glossy.
5. Gently fold in vanilla extract, lemon juice and cornstarch.
6. Now you can spoon the mixture inside the circle drawn on the parchment paper. Spread the mixture toward the outside edge, working from the middle so that the edge gets slightly higher. This will act as a rim, and it will almost look like a shallow bowl (that way your fruit and whipped cream have somewhere to sit later!).
7. Bake for 1 hour. When it’s done, cool it on a wire rack.
8. Once it’s all cool, you can fill the center of the meringue with the whipped cream and fruit.

Now go ahead and dig in to this delicious dessert. Yum!



Make your own Christmas crown!

Christmas crackers are part of Christmas celebrations in Australia, and they're packaged in a cardboard tube wrapped in brightly decorated twisted paper. The cracker is opened by two people, pulled on either end with their arms crossed (like a wishbone). There's a little snapping sound when it opens, and inside are hidden a colored paper hat, a small toy or a joke, riddle or piece of trivia.

Paper hats are a fun part of these Christmas crackers, and they look like crowns! People wear them during Christmas dinner. This is also a tradition in countries other than Australia, like the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, New Zealand, and a few others. Wouldn't it be fun to wear a paper crown during Christmas dinner? Let's make our own!

Supplies:

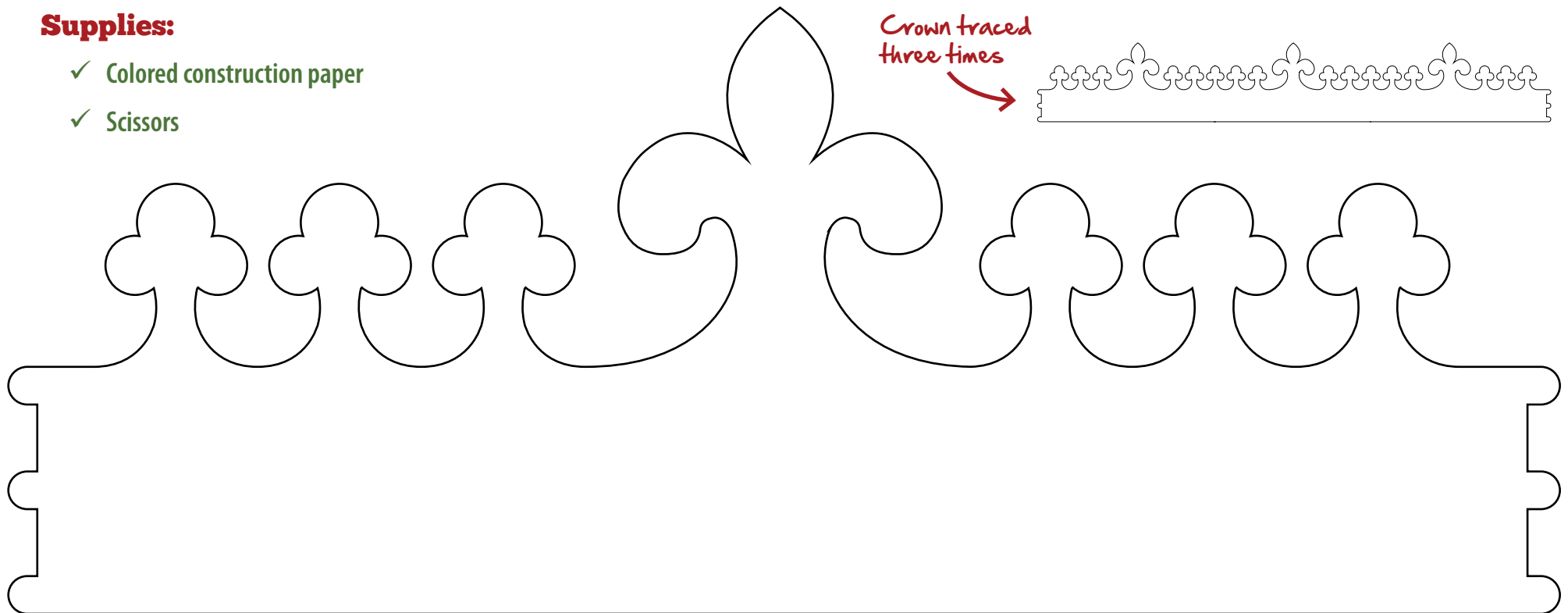
- ✓ Colored construction paper
- ✓ Scissors

- ✓ Pencil
- ✓ Tape or glue

Directions:

1. Cut out the crown from this paper. You'll use it to trace on your colored paper.
2. Trace the crown on your sheet of paper two or three times so the crown is long enough to wrap around your head.
3. Cut it out.
4. Tape or glue the ends together, until it forms a circle.
5. If you want, you can add pretty designs to your crown with markers, glitter, etc.

Now wear your "Christmas cracker crown" to dinner!



Day 8 – Argentina

Well here we are, back in the Americas! But this time, we're visiting Argentina. Spanish is spoken in Argentina just like it is in Mexico, so we already know how to say "Merry Christmas." Can you remember what it is?

If you said *Feliz Navidad*, you're right! Great memory, kids! Now let's learn more about how Christmas is celebrated in Argentina. The Christmas season starts early — sometimes even in November — and that gives Argentinians around a month or more to celebrate Jesus' birth. Many people in Argentina are Catholic, so they also celebrate Advent (we've learned about other countries that celebrate Advent too, remember, kids?)

People decorate their houses with lights and wreaths of green, gold, red and white flowers. They also hang red and white garlands on the doors of their houses. It looks beautiful! Christmas trees are popular, and people often decorate them by December 8, the day they celebrate the feast of Annunciation (the day that they remember when Mary was told that she was going to have the baby Jesus).

The Nativity scene, or *pesebre* in Spanish, is another important decoration to have, and it's usually put near the Christmas tree.

The big meal at Christmas is actually eaten on the night of Christmas Eve, and it might even be a barbecue (just

like Australia). People like to have their big Christmas meal out in the open, so they often eat it out in their garden. And since it's warm, they can do that, even in December. They often eat roasted turkey or pork, stuffed tomatoes and yummy Christmas bread and puddings like *pan dulce*. They also drink delicious cider!

At midnight there are lots of fireworks that people light off to celebrate the beginning of Christmas Day. Some people go to a midnight church service, but others like to stay home, set off fireworks and open their presents. *Globos*, or paper decorations with a light inside that float into the sky, are popular in Argentina. The sky is filled with them on Christmas Eve after midnight — so pretty! I think that *globos* sound like a fun Christmas tradition to start practicing, don't you, Mack?



Fun Facts:

- 🌍 Christmas trees don't have to just be like the traditional tree in Argentina. Any kind of tree works — even a palm tree!
- 🌍 It's warm during Christmas time in Argentina, so there isn't any snow, but people like to put cotton balls on their Christmas trees to look like snow instead! (If you live somewhere that's still warm over Christmas, you could try this too — how fun!)
- 🌍 Kids get their presents on January 6, the day that is known as "Three Kings Day." The night before kids place their shoes outside the front door so that the wise men can fill them. They also leave hay and water for the horses as the wise men continue journeying towards Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. Sometimes they also place their shoes underneath the Christmas tree or under their bed.

How to make your own Christmas cider

Hot apple cider is a common holiday drink in many places of the world, and Argentinians enjoy it at the end of their Christmas dinner! They also like to mix it with fruit, cut into little pieces. You can either make this drink from scratch, or buy the packets at the grocery store. When you're done, put in little pieces of apple, or even a small slice of orange. It's delicious!

Ingredients:

- ✓ 1 quart apple juice
- ✓ 2 cups water
- ✓ 5 cinnamon sticks
- ✓ 1 tablespoon whole cloves
- ✓ 1 orange (sliced, with the skin on)

Directions:

1. In a large pot combine all the ingredients and bring to a boil.
2. Once it's boiling, turn it to low and let it simmer for 15 minutes or so.

Ladle the cider into mugs (it makes six cups), and if you want to add chunks of apples or oranges, you can do that. Now drink up! (But be sure to not burn your tongue — ouch!)



Day 9 – Russia



Well here we are, back in cold weather, Mack! Going from Argentina to Russia is a big difference, and we're all bundled up in warm clothes now. We've already visited this part of the world before when we came to Serbia, but now it's time to learn how Russia celebrates Christmas.

Like Serbia, Christmas is celebrated on January 7. And like we learned in Serbia, it's because they follow the Julian calendar and not the Gregorian calendar. Russians also celebrate Advent. (Remember it starts on November 28 and ends on January 6, the day before Christmas?)

Some people fast (that means they don't eat anything) on Christmas Eve until they see the first star appear in the sky. But when they do eat, it's foods like *sochivo* or *kutia*, a porridge that's made from wheat or rice and served with honey, poppy seeds, fruit (like berries and raisins), chopped walnuts, and even sometimes fruit jellies. *Kutia* is sometimes eaten from one bowl that everyone shares — this represents unity among them. In the past, some families would throw a spoonful of *sochivo* up on the ceiling, and if it stuck, they thought they'd have good luck and a good harvest! (But don't try throwing a spoonful of your oatmeal at the ceiling, Mack. I don't think Mom would like that.)

Sauerkraut is a main dish on Christmas Eve, and it's served with cranberries, cumin (that's a spice), shredded carrot and onion rings. After that, people might eat vegetable pies or porridge dishes. For dessert there's fruit pies, gingerbread

and *pryaniki* (or Russian spice cookies), fresh and dried fruit, and more nuts. Yum!

To finish the meal, people drink *vzvar* (that means “boil-up” in English) and it's a sweet drink made from dried fruit and honey boiled in water. *Vzvar* is traditionally drunk at the birth of a child, so at Christmas time it symbolizes the birth of Jesus. After drinking the *vzvar*, families say prayers and often go to a midnight church service.

Christmas is important in Russia, but sometimes the New Year celebrations are even more important! New Year's is when “Father Frost” (or Santa Claus or Father Christmas) brings presents. In Russia he's called *Ded Moroz*, and his granddaughter, the “Snow Maiden” (or *snegurochka* in Russian), always comes with him. On New Year's Eve kids hold hands, make a circle around the Christmas tree, and call for *Ded Moroz* and *Snegurochka*. When they come, the star and other lights on the Christmas tree light up!



Fun Facts:

- 🌍 Tradition calls the Christmas Eve meal “Holy Supper,” and 12 dishes are served (one to honor each of the 12 apostles of Jesus).
- 🌍 In 1992, Christmas became a national holiday in Russia. People get 10 days off — from December 31 to January 10 — to celebrate both Christmas and the New Year.

Make your own pryaniki!

Pryaniki are Russian spice cookies served with tea at Christmas time. They’re often simple round cookies covered with a flat icing, but you can use fun Christmas cookie cutters if you want. These cookies have been made since the 9th century, so they’ve been around for hundreds and hundreds of years. And if they’ve lasted that long, they must be delicious, right, Mack? Let’s try making them!

Ingredients:

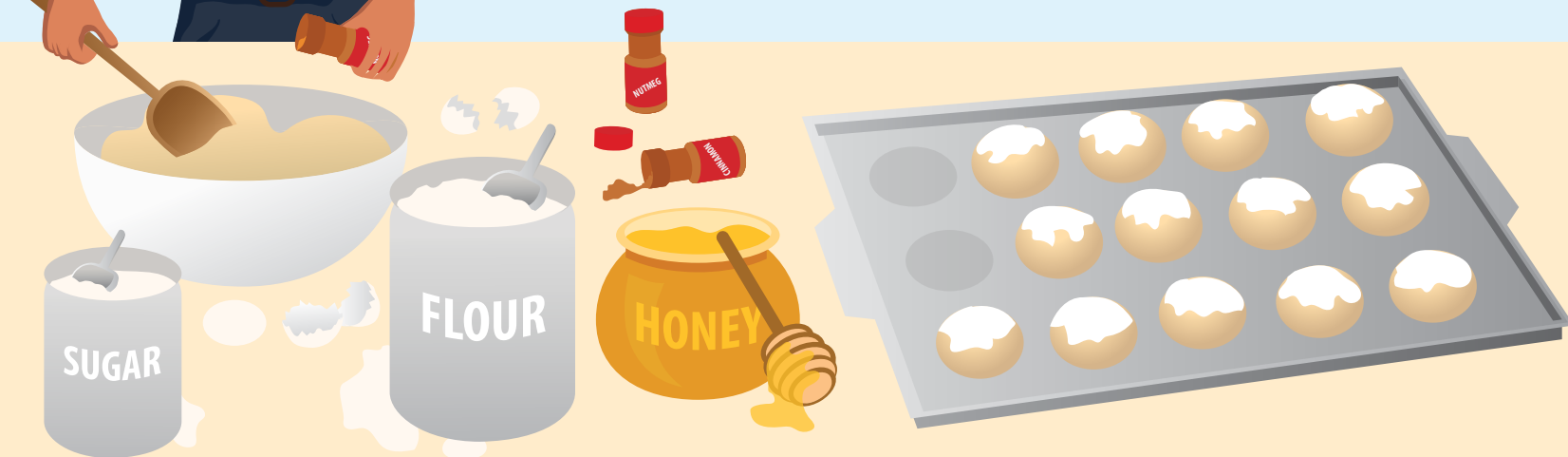
- ✓ 3 cups all-purpose flour
- ✓ 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ✓ ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ✓ ½ teaspoon cardamom
- ✓ ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- ✓ ½ teaspoon allspice
- ✓ Dash of salt
- ✓ 2 large egg yolks
- ✓ 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ✓ 1 cup granulated sugar
- ✓ 1 cup honey
- ✓ ½ cup confectioners’ sugar



Directions:

1. In a medium bowl, sift together the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg, allspice and salt.
2. In a separate big bowl, beat the egg yolks and sugar with an electric mixer (your mom might have to help you here) until they are pale yellow and thick looking.
3. In a small saucepan, heat the honey over low heat until it liquefies. Let it cool slightly so the heat doesn’t scramble the eggs, and then stir the melted honey and vanilla into the beaten egg mixture.
4. Now mix in the dry ingredients to form a stiff dough. Cover with plastic wrap and let it refrigerate for one hour.
5. Heat the oven to 350 degrees.
6. Place parchment paper (ask your mom or dad what that is) on your cookie sheet so that you have a clean surface.
7. Scoop out cookies, (or roll and cut them out with your fun cookie cutters) and place them on the sheet. Make sure you leave some room between cookies so they don’t cook together!
8. Lightly brush the tops of the cookie with honey.
9. Bake for 10-20 minutes, or until they’re lightly golden brown.
10. In a bowl, add the confectioners’ sugar and enough water (like 1 to 2 tablespoons probably) and whisk it together to form a thin icing. When the cookies are cool, you can spread this on top of the cookies.

Now you have a delicious treat to eat. But don’t eat all 24 cookies in one sitting! These really are good, aren’t they, Mack?



Day 10 – Philippines

From the cold of Russia to the warm tropics, we're visiting the Philippines to learn how they celebrate Christmas! Did you know that the Philippines celebrate Christmas over four months?!? They do! They start celebrating as soon as the “-ber” months start, and that starts in September. They keep celebrating until the middle of January, so the Philippines celebrates Christmas the longest in the world. That's a lot of Christmas cheer, right, Mack?

I think it's so cool that Filipinos (that's what people who live in the Philippines are called) are excited to celebrate Christmas. After all, we shouldn't just be excited about Jesus' birth in December — it's something that we should be celebrating every day, no matter what month it is. In Tagalog (that's the language spoken most often in the Philippines, though they have a lot of others) “Merry Christmas” is *Maligayang Pasko*.

Christmas is a big holiday in the Philippines because the country is mostly Christian — in fact, it's the only Asian country with so many Christians (around 80% or more are Catholic). The ways people celebrate are a mixture between American traditions and native Filipino traditions, so many people have a Christmas tree, sing Christmas carols, write Christmas cards and have Santa Claus deliver presents. They also often attend nine masses called *simbang gabi* (or “night worship” in English) starting December 16 until Christmas Eve.

These masses are often early in the morning (like at 4 a.m.!) and then people have breakfast together afterwards.

But they also have their own traditions like the *parol*, or a lighted star lantern. It's often made from bamboo strips and colored paper or cellophane (that's colored plastic stuff). The *parol* represents the star that guided the wise men to Jesus, and it's one of the most popular Christmas decorations.

Christmas Eve is really important, and lots of people stay awake all night long. Christians go to church to hear the last *simbang gabi* (or the Christmas Eve mass). After the service they eat a midnight feast called *Noche Buena*. That sounds like Spanish, doesn't it, Mack? Did you know that there are a lot of Spanish words used in Tagalog? That's because for many years Spain ruled the Philippines, so parts of the Spanish language are still used, even now that the Philippines is an independent country.

The *Noche Buena* is a big, open house celebration with family, friends and neighbors dropping in to wish everyone *Maligayang Pasko* (remember, that's “Merry Christmas” in Tagalog). They eat foods like *lechon* (that's roasted pig), ham, fruit salad, steamed rice and some sweets. They also drink *salabat*, a ginger tea, and eat *bibingka*, a traditional treat that's a thick yellow rice cake. Talking about all this food is making me hungry!





Fun Facts:

- 🌐 In the Philippines, people replace the words “Happy birthday” with *Maligayang Pasko* and sing it to the tune of the traditional happy birthday song.
- 🌐 On Christmas Eve, people act out Joseph and Mary’s search for a place to stay. It’s called *panunuluyan*, and it’s like the Mexican *posadas* that we learned about on day one of our trip!

Make your own parol!

Parols are beautiful star decorations that light up, and they’re seen in many Filipino houses or stores as part of their Christmas decorations. They’re usually big and bright, but we’re going to make a smaller, simpler one! Here’s what you’ll need:

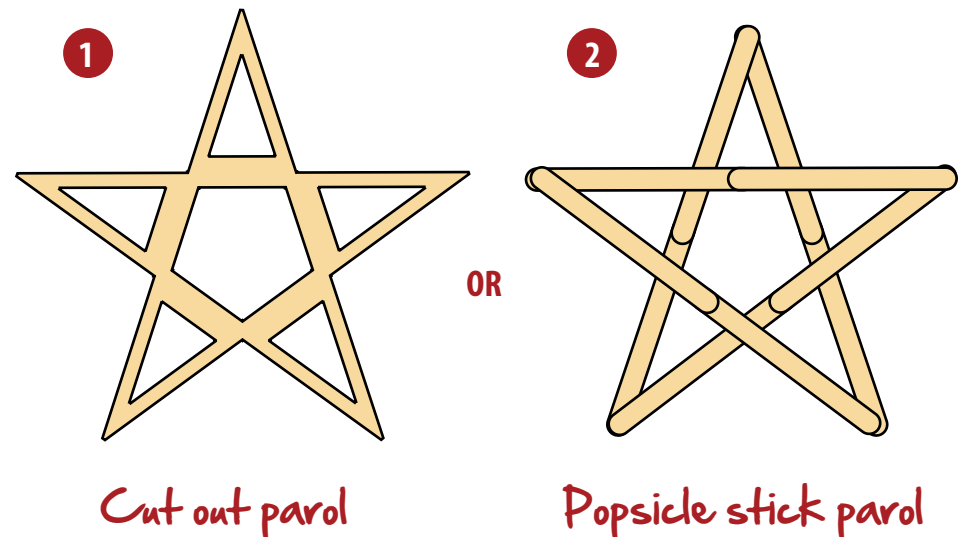
Supplies:

- ✓ Popsicle sticks or cardboard

- ✓ Colored tissue paper
- ✓ Glue
- ✓ Scissors

Instructions:

1. Following this template, glue your popsicle sticks together. Or, if you have cardboard, have your mom or dad cut out this shape. It should look like this when you’re done!

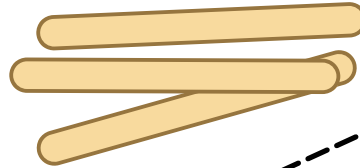


2. Now add your tissue paper. You can either make it all the same color, or you can make every part of the star a different color. Glue the tissue in place however you want it to look.

Now you can hang it on your tree, or above your fire place, or even by a window!

Cut out and trace this parol onto cardboard and then cut it out...

... or use 10 popsicle sticks!



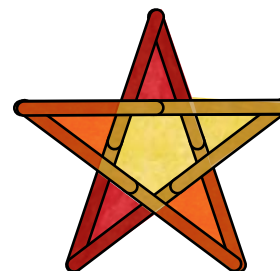
Cut out these two shapes to help you cut out the right size tissue paper for decorating the parol!

1 Cut out tissue paper

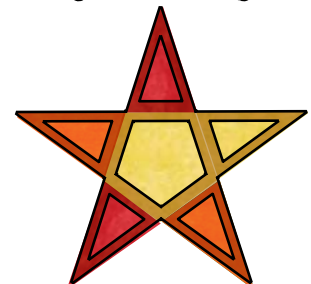


Glue the tissue paper onto the sticks

2



Finished parol using popsicle sticks



Finished parol using cut out template



Day 11 – Democratic Republic of the Congo

Our tour around the world is almost over, kids! We're on our second to last stop — the Democratic Republic of the Congo (or DRC for short). Here "Merry Christmas" is *Mbotama Malamu* (that's in Lingala, the language spoken in the DRC and some other African countries too).

Christmas is a big religious festival in DRC. On Christmas Eve, churches have big musical events (some with even five or six choirs that sing) and they perform a play of the nativity. These plays last a loooooong time — they start at the beginning of the last night of creation and the Garden of Eden, and go all the way until King Herod has sent out the order that all baby boys should be killed (remember how King Herod was afraid that Jesus would replace him as king? But we'll learn more about that later).

People really like acting in this play, and they often try to make it very fun and exciting. It's a chance to show off your best acting skills to all your friends and family, too! Then, around midnight, Jesus is finally born. After that the shepherds visit, the wise men visit and Herod's order is sent out. The play usually ends around 1 a.m., but after that they often keep singing until dawn. That's a long night!

Another service for Christmas Day starts at 9 a.m. with even more singing, but then the rest of the day is spent quietly, and lots of people like to sleep after such a fun and long Christmas Eve night!

Fun Facts:

- 🌍 Since Christmas is a religious festival, most people don't give each other presents. The day is meant to remember the story of Jesus' birth and all that happened before then.
- 🌍 There aren't any fancy foods eaten on Christmas Day, but people usually try to have a better meal than they usually do if they can afford it. That means they might add some chicken or pork to dinner, something that's a special treat.



A look at how Jesus' life started here on earth

After Jesus was born, different people came to visit him like the shepherds and the wise men. They were really excited that the Messiah was finally born! But not everyone was excited. King Herod was scared that Jesus would become the new king, so he sent out an order across the land.

Let's read more about this story. It's a good reminder of how Jesus was born and how God kept him safe by sending his family to Egypt. Jesus' birth was an exciting event, and it fulfilled a lot of different Scriptures throughout the Old Testament where God's people were waiting to be saved by the Messiah. And I think it's awesome that people in DRC celebrate the whole story — all the way from creation until Jesus was born — as the biggest part of Christmas. It's important we keep Jesus at the center of this special season!

You can also
read it in
Luke 2:1-23



MATTHEW 1:18-23 (NLT)

THE BIRTH OF JESUS THE MESSIAH

18 THIS IS HOW JESUS THE MESSIAH WAS BORN. HIS MOTHER, MARY, WAS ENGAGED TO BE MARRIED TO JOSEPH. BUT BEFORE THE MARRIAGE TOOK PLACE, WHILE SHE WAS STILL A VIRGIN, SHE BECAME PREGNANT THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. **19** JOSEPH, HER FIANCÉ, WAS A GOOD MAN AND DID NOT WANT TO DISGRACE HER PUBLICLY, SO HE DECIDED TO BREAK THE ENGAGEMENT QUIETLY.

20 AS HE CONSIDERED THIS, AN ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED TO HIM IN A DREAM. "JOSEPH, SON OF DAVID," THE ANGEL SAID, "DO NOT BE AFRAID TO TAKE MARY AS YOUR WIFE. FOR THE CHILD WITHIN HER WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. **21** AND SHE WILL HAVE A SON, AND YOU ARE TO NAME HIM JESUS, FOR HE WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS."

22 ALL OF THIS OCCURRED TO FULFILL THE LORD'S MESSAGE THROUGH HIS PROPHET:

23 "LOOK! THE VIRGIN WILL CONCEIVE A CHILD! SHE WILL GIVE BIRTH TO A SON, AND THEY WILL CALL HIM IMMANUEL, WHICH MEANS 'GOD IS WITH US.'"

Day 12 – Greenland

Last stop on our 12-day adventure is Greenland! And even though you might think that the country is warm (after all, the name has “green” in it), it’s actually really cold. So get out your *anorak* (that’s a traditional white coat lined with fur that people wear here) and get ready to go on this coooooold journey.

There are two main languages spoken here — Inuit/Greenlandic and Danish. So there are two ways for us to learn how to say “Merry Christmas”. In Greenlandic, it’s *Juullimi Ukiortaassamilu Pilluarit* (wow, that’s hard to say!) and in Danish it’s *Glædelig Jul*.

Did you know that Christmas trees have to be imported (that means shipped from somewhere else) because trees don’t grow as far north as Greenland? It’s true! The trees are often brought from Denmark, and then they’re decorated with candles, bright ornaments and sometimes even small versions of sealskin breeches known as *kamiks* on the night of December 23rd. If people don’t buy an imported tree, they might use a traditional driftwood tree that’s decorated with heather. Villages also put up a really big Christmas tree on a nearby hill so that everyone can see it. How pretty!

There are some interesting foods eaten during Christmas time. *Mattak* is whale skin with a strip of blubber inside. It’s supposed to taste like fresh coconut, but it’s often too hard to chew and so people just swallow it. Another food is *kiviak*, the raw flesh of little *aucks* (a kind of arctic bird) that

have been buried whole in sealskin for several months until they are really decomposed. It might sound strange to you, but it’s a delicacy in Greenland.

People also eat *suaasat* (a soup/stew type of dish), barbecued caribou, fish (either raw like sushi or cooked), and a popular dessert made of berries and apples with a crisp topping. They also eat lots of Danish pastries — yum! It’s tradition that on Christmas night men take care of the women, serving the food and coffee.

Also, did you know that some people say that Greenland is where Santa Claus lives (remember that some people believe he lives in Finland, too)? Either that or where he goes there for his summer holidays at least. People say that he has a home in the north of the country in Spraglebugten, near the town of *Uummannaq*. And because so many people believe Santa Claus lives here, kids actually send letters to him! The letters are addressed to the “North Pole” but they end up in the post office in Greenland’s capital, Nuuk. Around 50,000 letters are sent to Santa Claus every year. Another cool thing is that people think Santa’s sleigh isn’t pulled by reindeers but by dogs.





Fun Facts:

- 🌍 People often put lit-up stars in their windows to help bring some light. They need the light because during the winter months, the sun never rises in Greenland! That's because Greenland is so far north — it's in the Arctic Circle after all — and so you might only get a quick look at the sun before it goes back down behind the southern mountains. Wow!
- 🌍 Traditional gifts in Greenland are model sledges, a pair of polished walrus tusks or sealskin mittens. Everyone in the village gets a gift, and kids go from house to house singing songs for their neighbors.

Play "What's that you're passing?"

A popular Christmas game is passing an object from one hand to another under a long table, hidden beneath the table cloth. Traditionally the object is something that's supposed to be gross feeling (like a frozen egg, wrapped in strips of wet fox fur!) and that's round, clammy and rough.

Next time you're at dinner, try playing this game yourself. Find something that might feel funny in your hand (maybe a rubber ball, or even some silly putty) and pass it around from one person to the next. After everyone's touched it, try guessing what it is!

SQUAAAW??

(frozen egg covered in fox fur?)



Well kids, we've now been to 12 different countries and learned about a lot of different ways that Christmas is celebrated around the world. Mack and I have loved traveling with you, and we're so excited that you decided to come with us.

But before we go, we want to remind you of the most important thing about Christmas — that we're celebrating the birth of Jesus! It's easy to get caught up in the Christmas season and to forget what the true meaning of Christmas is. After all, who doesn't like the carols, decorations, pretty lights, special foods, and the gifts that we give or receive? It's an exciting time of the year, and people often look forward to Christmas all year long!

It's important that we remember why Christmas exists. If it weren't for the birth of Jesus, Christmas wouldn't be a holiday. After all, the main word of "Christmas" is Christ! He's the reason for the season, and we need to keep him at the focus of all that we do.

So how about you get out your Bible and look up Luke 2. Read the whole chapter with your family, and if you want, you could also read the story of Jesus' birth from Matthew 1:18-25 and 2:1-23. It's one of my favorite stories in the whole Bible, and it's one that you should definitely read at least a few times during the Christmas season.

After you're done, pray with your family and thank God for loving us so much that he wanted us to have his Son, Jesus. That's definitely a reason worth celebrating, isn't it, Mack?

We hope that you've had fun traveling with us! There are so many different countries around the world that we still have to explore, so many different people to meet and so many different traditions to learn. But for now, we hope that you have a very merry Christmas!

**Merry
Christmas!**

