

August 2011

August 1-29 (beginning at sundown, August 1)

Holiday: Ramadan

Religion: Muslim

The (lunar) month of fasting begins. Adult Muslims abstain from food, drink, sexual activity and certain other activities from dawn until sunset.

August 26 (beginning at sundown, August 26)

Holiday: Lailat al-Qadr

Religion: Muslim

The Night of Power commemorates the night the first portion of the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (it was revealed over a period of 23 years).

August 31 (beginning at sundown, August 31)

Holiday: Eid al-Fitr

Religion: Muslim

The Festival of the Breaking of the Fast, celebrates the end of Ramadan. The date of this festival is determined by the rising of the New Moon (thus the festival could fall between September 8 - September 10).

September 2011

September 1

Holiday: Ganesh Chaturthi

Religion: Hindu

The festival celebrates the birthday of elephant-headed god Ganesh, worshiped as the god of wisdom, prosperity and good fortune.

September 28-30 (beginning at sundown, September 28)

Holiday: Rosh Hashanah

Religion: Jewish

This marks the beginning of the Jewish year and the beginning of the High Holy Days or the Days of Awe. Celebrants typically observe a day of rest.

September 15-21 (sundown to sundown)

Holiday: Sukkot

Religion: Jewish

The Feast of the Tabernacles commemorates the dwelling of the Israelites in the wilderness. Jews will build sukkot (booths) and spend time in them over the week.

September 23

Holiday: Fall Equinox

Religion: Neo-Pagan/Wiccan

This is a celebration of the transition from life to earth, the harvest and bounty of the earth.

September 27– October 6

Holiday: Durga Puja/Navaratri

Religion: Hindu

The Festival of the Divine Mother celebrates the goddess Durga's victory over the demon Mahisasura.

October 2011

October 6 (date may vary)

Holiday: Dussehra

Religion: Hindu

This festival celebrates Rama's victory over Ravana.

October 7-8 (sundown to sundown)

Holiday: Yom Kippur

Religion: Jewish

The Day of Atonement, the end of the 10 Days of Awe, is devoted to prayer, repentance and fasting. The Sabbath of Sabbaths in the Jewish calendar, it is the most widely observed Jewish holiday of the year.

October 19-20 (beginning at sundown Oct. 19)

Holiday: Simchat Torah

Religion: Jewish

Simchat Torah, the Rejoicing of the Torah (Law), is the ending of the Torah reading Cycle and the beginning of a new one.

October 19 - October 20 (starts at sundown on Oct. 19)

Holiday: Birth of the Bab

Religion: Baha'i

One of the nine holy days in the Baha'i calendar where work must be suspended, the holiday celebrates one of the three central figures of the Baha'i faith.

October 26

Holiday: Diwali

Religion: Hindu/Sikh/Jain

The festival of lights celebrates many different sacred stories, depending on the region of the country.

October 31

Holiday: Reformation Day

Religion: Protestant Christian

Protestant Christian anniversary of their tradition and its emphasis on the place of the Bible and religious freedom.

October 31

Holiday: Samhain

Religion: Neo-Pagan/Wiccan

Pagans believe that on this night the boundary between the physical and the spiritual world is thinnest, and access to the knowledge of the dead is possible.

November 2011

November 1

Holiday: All Saints' Day

Religion: Roman Catholic

A holy day of obligation (which means Catholics are obligated to go to church) that celebrates the Christian saints.

November 1 - 2

Holiday: Dia de los Muertos

Religion: Mesoamerican native and Christian

A festive Mexican holiday when families remember their dead and the continuity of life.

November 4 - 9

Holiday: Hajj

Religion: Muslim

Hajj, which is pilgrimage to Mecca, is obligatory once in a lifetime for all Muslims who have the financial means to go.

November 6-9 (beginning at sundown, Nov. 9)

Holiday: Eid al-Adha

Religion: Muslim

The Festival of the Sacrifice remembers Abraham's devotion in offering his son as a sacrifice.

November 10

Holiday: Guru Nanak's Birthday

Religion: Sikh

One of the most sacred festivals in Sikhism, commemorates the birth of the religion's founder.

November 11 - 12 (beginning at sundown, Nov. 11)

Holiday: Birth of Baha'u'llah

Religion: Baha'i

One of the nine holy days in the Baha'i faith where work must be suspended, the holiday commemorates the birth of the founder of the Baha'i faith.

November 15

Holiday: Nativity Fast

Religion: Orthodox Christian

The Nativity Fast or Advent begins forty days before the Nativity Feast (Jesus' birth) and is a time to prepare through fasting and prayer for the upcoming feast.

November 27

Holiday: Advent

Religion: Christian

The season in which Christians prepare and expectantly wait for the birth of Jesus; Advent in the Western Church begins four Sundays before Christmas Day.

December 2011

December 6 (beginning sundown on Dec. 6)

Holiday: Ashura

Religion: Shi'a Muslim

The anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, Prophet Muhammad's grandson; it is a day of great mourning.

December 8

Holiday: Bodhi Day

Religion: Buddhist

In the Northern tradition, this day celebrates the Buddha's attainment of Enlightenment.

December 8

Holiday: Immaculate Conception

Religion: Roman Catholic

Feast in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary (holy day of obligation).

December 20-28 (sundown to sundown)

Holiday: Hanukkah

Religion: Jewish

The Festival of Lights marks the victory of the Maccabees and rededication of the Temple. It is a celebration of religious freedom and an affirmation of God's saving power.

December 21

Holiday: Winter Solstice

Religion: Neo-Pagan/Wiccan

The shortest day of the year symbolizes the natural cycle of life and death, and the coming of light into the world again.

December 25

Holiday: Christmas/Holy Nativity

Religion: Christian/Orthodox Christian

The celebration of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

December 26 - January 1

Holiday: Kwanzaa

Religion: African-American

An African-American celebration honoring African community values and beliefs.

January 2012

January 1

Holiday: Feast of Mary, Mother of God

Religion: Roman Catholic

A holy day of obligation during which Mary, the mother of Jesus, is celebrated.

January 6

Holiday: Holy Epiphany/Dia de los Reyes/Feast of Theophany

Religion: Christian/Orthodox Christian

A celebration of the epiphany (or manifestation) of Jesus' divine nature. Eastern or Orthodox Christian churches commemorate the baptism of Jesus; Western churches commemorate the coming of the Magi or "Wise Men".

January 23

Holiday: Chinese/Vietnamese/Korean New Year

Religion: Chinese Religions

The most important holiday of the year in China and many other countries.

February 2012

February 15

Holiday: Nirvana Day

Religion: Buddhist

The most important holiday of the year in China and many other countries.

February 27

Holiday: Clean Monday

Religion: Orthodox Christian

Eastern Orthodox churches begin the season of Lent, marked by fasting, prayer, and charity.

February 22

Holiday: Ash Wednesday

Religion: Christian

The beginning of Lent, the 40 - day period (excluding Sundays) of prayer and repentance that precedes Easter.

March 2012

March 8 (beginning at sundown)

Holiday: Purim

Religion: Jewish

This joyous celebration commemorates the victory of the Jews over their tyrannical enemy. The Jews changed the day marked for their destruction into a day of victory.

March 8

Holiday: Holi

Religion: Hindu/Indian

A very popular festival where people throw colored water or powder at one another to celebrate episodes of the life of Krishna.

March 20

Holiday: Spring Equinox

Religion: Neo-Pagan/Wiccan

This day represents the rebirth of the year and celebrates the change of the seasons and the rebirth of the spirit after death.

April 2012

April 1

Holiday: Ramnavami

Religion: Hindu

Begins a nine-day festival in honor of Ram; the Ramayana, an Indian Epic, is performed.

April 1-7

Holiday: Holy Week/Easter

Religion: Christian

The most important Christian holidays, marking the Last Supper, Passion, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday, with a day of holy observance on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday.

April 8-15

Holiday: Orthodox Holy Week/Easter

Religion: Orthodox Christian

Eastern Orthodox churches observe Holy Week, including Holy and Great Friday and Easter or Pascha. On Holy Friday adults abstain from food and drink as their health allows.

April 13 - 15 (dates are available)

Holiday: Songkran/Thingyan/Pi Mai Lao

Religion: Buddhist

These days mark the New Year for many countries in Southeast Asia. Cleansing rituals, which represent a cleansing of the soul and a washing away of the old year, are performed.

April 13-14 (sundown to sundown; dietary restrictions apply throughout this period)

Holiday: Passover

Religion: Jewish

Passover commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. On the first and second nights Seders (a ritual meal) are conducted, retelling the Exodus story, so that Jews never forget they were once slaves and it was God who helped set them free.

April 19

Holiday: Yom Ha-Shoah

Religion: Jewish

Holocaust Memorial Day

April 28

Holiday: Vesak (Buddha Day)

Religion: Buddhist

Holiest of days in the Buddhist year; celebrates the birth of the Buddha. In the Theravada or Southern tradition the Buddha's enlightenment and death are also celebrated.