

International Conversation Cafe

Lifestyle Topic: Festivals Around the World

Introduction

Festivals are the events in which the entire family get together and celebrate things they believe in. These events also involve the preparation of foods as well as gifts being given to family members, relatives, and friends. People enjoy festivals with various activities like singing, dancing, eating, playing games and many more interactive activities. There are different kinds of festivals which are based on religion, arts, and seasons. Religious festivals are based on different religious beliefs/traditions, some of which are given below.

- 1) Christianity – Christmas, Easter, Good Friday, Pentecost, All Saints’ Day
- 2) Muslim – Eid ul Fitr, Hajj, Muharram
- 3) Hinduism – Holi, Diwali, Maha Shivaratri, Ganesh Chaturthi
- 4) Sikhism – Vaisakhi, Gurpurab, Basant Panchami
- 5) Buddhism – Vesak (Buddha Day), Magha Puja day (Sangha Day), Songkran
- 6) Jainism – Mahavir Jyanti (Birth of Lord Mahavir), Diwali (Enlightenment of Lord Mahavir)

Please invite someone at your table to choose a question and answer it or invite someone else to answer it.

- Is there a festival listed above which you wonder about its meaning?
- What festival do you celebrate that is not listed here?

Arts festivals are based on cultural highlights in many countries where people celebrate different occasions based on diversity and richness of their culture and creativity. There are many examples which includes the Coachella valley music and arts festival in U.S., Helsinki Festival in Finland, Edinburgh International Festival in Scotland, Athens digital arts festival in Greece and many more.

Additionally, people also celebrate festivals based on the different seasons such as festivals based on harvesting season and the change of seasons. Some examples include Makar Sankranti in India which is celebrated generally in January; Thanksgiving in the U.S. which is celebrated for a good harvest and the blessings of the past year; The Cherry Blossom festival of Japan and many more.

Please read the questions out loud and invite each other to choose one of the questions and answer. Then invite someone else to choose a question to answer.

- What are the biggest festivals that are celebrated in your country?
- Which festival do you like the most and why?
- o If you have been to a festival that does not originate in your country, what was your experience like? Did anything surprise you?

Importance of festivals

Festivals are important part of culture, society, and religions around the world. Many festivals have importance in religious and spiritual context. For example, Gurupurabs in Sikhism which is the anniversary of the Sikh Gurus, where Sikhs celebrate this festival by doing prayers and visiting Sikh temples. Some festivals reveal traditional customs, dance, art, music, allowing the younger generations to connect with their culture. For example, Holi festival is celebrated in India which marks the celebration of the triumph of good over evil. Some festivals also attract the tourist and promotes the host locations further contributing to the local economy. For example, Loy Krathong festival in Thailand is celebrated to pay respect to the Goddess of Water and the Buddha. Also, festivals like 'We Love Green' is an annual Paris musical festival that promotes ideas and awareness regarding environmental and ecological issues.

Read the questions. Then each person will invite another to choose only one of the questions to answer.

- How do festivals play a role in the spiritual and religious life of communities? Share about one such festival which is celebrated in your culture and what you enjoy or don't enjoy about it.
- What are the economic and cultural benefits of hosting a festival?
 - o Consider a festival in your culture/religion. How has it changed or evolved recently? Are these changes good or bad? Explain.
- What is the role of international festivals in promoting global culture exchange?

Impact of technology

The internet has allowed festivals to reach the global audience through live streaming and social media enables people to experience festivals/celebrations without physically attending it. Also, technologies like holographic performances have led to innovations in festival entertainment. Technology has made improvements in booking tickets through online apps which further helps in event management and crowd control. One of the biggest advantages of technology is that it makes it easier for artists to collaborate on festivals and thus further promote culture diversity.

Read the three questions out loud. Invite each person to pick one of the questions to answer and then invite someone who has not contributed to read and answer.

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of virtual festivals over the festivals which are celebrated traditionally?
 - o Have you participated in a festival virtually? If yes, how was this experience for you?
- Is technology overall improving or degrading the cultural aspects of the festivals? Explain.

