



LET THERE BE LIGHT

Festivals Around the World

As the days get darker and shorter, it's time to add a little light. Autumn and winter have a long history of festivals and celebrations connected with fire and light. And while the older, traditional ones are as bright and full of life as ever, many new festivals have been added – festivals that turn whole cities into amazing displays of light and colour.

CENTURIES OF CELEBRATION



Light Wins Against Darkness

The Hindu festival of Diwali is celebrated in October or November every year (the date changes because it is based on the lunar calendar). This year, it falls on October 19th. Diwali is a happy festival, celebrating the victory of light over darkness and good over evil. It's a public holiday in several countries, including India and Malaysia, but celebrations are held all over the world in places where Hindus live, including Australia and the UK. The **festivities**¹ usually last for five days. People clean and decorate their houses, light candles and oil lamps, give each other little presents and set off fireworks.

Celebrating a Saint

On December 13th, Scandinavians celebrate St Lucy's Day. They remember Saint Lucy, who according to legend brought food to many Christians hiding from **persecution**² in the catacombs of Rome. She **supposedly**³ wore a **wreath**⁴ of candles on her head in order to light her way through the catacombs, so keeping her hands free to carry lots of food. These days, celebrations involve young girls dressed in white robes with wreaths of electric candles on their heads leading a **procession**⁵, while others hold candles and sing songs.



Eight Days of Light

The Jewish festival of Hanukkah can fall anywhere on the calendar between late November and late December (this year it starts on December 12th). It **commemorates a miracle**⁶ that occurred in the second century BC. The legend goes there was just enough oil for one day in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, and yet the lamp somehow continued to burn for eight days. The celebration of Hanukkah also lasts for eight days, and every day people light one candle on a candlestick called a menorah. It is also **customary**⁷ to eat foods made with oil, such as potato pancakes called *latkes*.

Vocabulary

- 1 **festivities** [fe'stɪvətɪz] – oslavy
- 2 **persecution** [ˌpɜːsɪ'kjuːʃn] – pronásledování
- 3 **supposedly** [sə'pəʊzɪdli] – údajně

- 4 **wreath** [ri:θ] – věnec
- 5 **procession** [prə'seɪʃn] – průvod, procesí
- 6 **commemorates a miracle** [kə'meməreɪts 'mɪrəkl] – připomíná zázrak

- 7 **customary** ['kʌstəməri] – obvyklý
- 8 **solemn** ['sɒləm] – vážný
- 9 **to align** [ə'laɪn] – srovnat, zarovnat



BRIGHT NEWCOMERS

Winter in Summer

While Europeans are expecting the arrival of winter, Australians are actually looking forward to summer. That's why Vivid Sydney happens in the Australian winter months of May and June. It's a festival of "light, music and ideas"; so not only are famous landmarks like the Sydney Opera House and the Harbour Bridge lit up, but there is also a rich music program and public talks about topics such as technology, design, architecture and film.



An Old Tradition

The Fête des Lumières (Festival of Light) in the French city of Lyon has roots deep in the past. On December 8th, 1852, the city was ready to celebrate the placement of a Virgin Mary statue in the chapel on Fourvière Hill, but the celebration had to be paused because of bad weather. When the weather improved that night, people lit their homes with candles and went into the streets to celebrate. That tradition has been repeated every year since. Even today, people still put candles on their windowsills and balconies, and there are professional art installations.



Hope After Disaster

In January 1995, a devastating earthquake hit the Japanese city of Kobe. More than 6,000 people were killed, many buildings were destroyed, and the electricity stopped working, leaving most of the city in darkness. In December of that same year, Kobe was decorated with thousands of lights in memory of the victims, and as a symbol of hope and recovery. It was meant to be a one-time event, but its popularity gave birth to the annual Kobe Luminarie festival. Thousands of tiny light bulbs are put up every year, and classical music is played in the background. The atmosphere is a bit more **solemn** than at other light festivals.

Water Everywhere

The Amsterdam Light Festival lasts for almost two months, from December until January. And since the Dutch capital is a city full of canals, it takes place on both land and water. There are two paths to see the exhibits, one on foot and one by boat, and each route has a different theme.



A LOCAL EXAMPLE

Prague Illuminated

The Prague Signal Festival began in 2013, and just one year later *The Guardian*, a British newspaper, listed it among the ten top light festivals in Europe. Some of the most memorable installations of the past four years have included huge eyeballs looking over Charles Bridge, a cloud made of lightbulbs and giant, glowing, human-like figures. Some of the installations are interactive, which means visitors can play with the light and change it. There are always several examples of video mapping, too. This year's Prague Signal Festival will take place from October 12th to 15th.



CULTURE POINT

Stories on Buildings

Video mapping is a technique by which images are projected onto real-life objects such as buildings. These images can tell stories, and artists can play with the architecture of the building, highlighting certain parts or simulating the building's collapse. How is it done?

Basically, video mappers need a light projector and a very detailed picture of the building they are going to work with. They have to check the location, decide from where they will project the light, and sometimes they even make a 3D laser scan of the building. The rest of the work is done with the help of computer software. The main thing is to make sure that the light **aligns** perfectly with the shape and features of the building.

But of course, it's not only about technology. It's an art form, so a video mapper needs a good, original idea before bringing their vision to life in light.



Scan the QR code or go to vimeo.com/130697642 to watch a video mapping on St Barbara's Church in Kutná Hora, inspired by the town's history of silver-mining.