



*Merry Christmas*

In Italy, **Christmas holidays** last two weeks, from 23/12 to 6/1. When Christmas approaches, we Italians prepare to celebrate this day because we remember the birth of Christ. For those who decide to spend Christmas at home [a very high percentage of those who spend their holidays abroad, choose in most cases the hot countries as destinations] there are many traditions followed throughout the centuries. Of central importance is the Christmas tree that traditionally must be decorated on December 8 [our lady's day] along with the nativity scene, a kind of little play of the night when christ was born; in it are visible the newborn Christ, the father [Joseph, the mother [Mary], the ox and the donkey that eat the barn and finally, to complete the work, there are the tree wise men bringing gifts to the infant baby.



Christmas tree



Nativity scene



Because  
Christmas is  
strongly felt by  
us, the  
Christmas tree  
and the nativity  
scene are present  
in

every home, school, office and, of course, church.





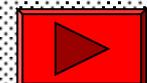
In large as in small towns are wonderful Christmas markets which give liveliness and approach every single person with the magic of the holiday. During the night before Christmas called “Christmas Eve”, there are two major customs : the first concern children who are accustomed to receive their christmas gift; the second one is the midnight mass, a time for everyone of spiritual reccollection, but also an opportunity to meet friends and relatives and exchange greetings.



# The day of 25 December:

The day of December 25 is spent happily within the family: everyone, young and old is around the dining room table and starts the games, the most popular is the raffle, followed by games with cards.

Characteristic dessert are Panettone and Pandoro.



# The day of 31 December:

On December 31 we begin to prepare a big dinner where you can not miss the sausage, a typical dish of this long evening that ends with the sparkling wine at midnight.



# Happy Epiphany

Christmas holidays end up with epiphany, when the witch, who looks like as an ugly witch, brings candies and chocolates to good children and coal to bad children, at the feast of epiphany religious traditions and ancient pagan traditions meet up.

