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Holidays in Russia and in America.

American holidays are strikingly different in origin and show surprising similarities in the manner of their celebration. No matter what the holiday's origin is, they all seem to be the same thing. A holiday has simply become, for most Americans, a day off from work, though some retain some individuality.

There are many national holidays in Russia, when people all over the country do not work and have special celebrations. The major holidays are: New Year's Day, Women's Day, May Day, Victory Day, and Independence Day.

New year. New year in America. People stay awake until after midnight on December 31st to "watch the Old Year out and the New Year in." Many parties are given on this night. Theatres, night clubs, restaurants are crowded. When midnight comes, they greet the New Year: people gather in the streets of big cities, they ring bells, blow whistles and automobile horns, some shoot off guns and firecrackers. In the territory of modern America New year began to be celebrated in the 17th century when to these lands there have arrived colonists from Holland. They have entered the traditions and ceremonies. The cult of Indian pagan gods for centuries was forced out from society. Only in the 20th century during carnivals and parades people have begun to use their fancy images in the festive suits.

The first holiday of the year in Russia is New Year's Day. People see the new year in at midnight on the 31st of December. They greet the new year with champagne and listen to the Kremlin chimes beating 12 o'clock. There are lots of New Year traditions in Russia. In every home there is a New Year tree glittering with coloured lights and decorations. Children always wait for Father Frost to come and give them a present. Many people consider New Year's Day to be a family holiday. But the young prefer to have New Year parties of their own. History of modern New year in Russia has begun with Peter I's arrival. It isn't surprising that the European customs have exerted impact on celebration of New year. People celebrated, started fireworks and put decorated on western fir-tree manners. By the way, it is interesting that a Christmas tree was decorated not in toys, and in sweets, nuts, apples.

Christmas. Christmas in America. It is usually a one-day official holiday, but it is preceded and followed by festive parties, and marked by special church services, gift-giving and feasting. Christmas is a family holiday. Everybody tries to come home for Christmas. People send cards or Christmas greetings to family and friends away from home. Every family tries to have a Christmas tree, which is beautifully decorated. Santa Claus comes from the North Pole in his sleigh, dressed in red cap and jacket, entering the house from chimney. He has gifts of whatever kind you may wish for — nothing is too fabulous nor too trivial for him to provide. In a mass order the holiday began to be celebrated only since the end of the 19th century. And till the XVIII century his celebration was in the New World under a ban at all. For the first time in front of the White House the Christmas tree in 1891 has been established, and in 4 years after that the holiday became nationwide and most important in the United States. During some period the celebration of Christmas lasted exactly 12 days - about day of the Epiphany of Jesus. Later this custom has been forgotten.

No wonder that Christmas is one of the most cherished and long-awaited holidays in Russia. It's celebrated on the 7th of January. Initially this day was linked with many folk customs. Some areas still keep up with the tradition of carols' singing and masking on the night of January 6th. Traditional meal for Christmas in Russia is kutya. It's sweet and delicious rice with raisins and dried fruits. From old times till now people are used to treating their relatives and neighbors with this dish. It is natural to sing carols in honor of Jesus Christ on this night. Christmas holiday in Russia takes the sources far back in the past. In Russia Christmas was for the first time celebrated in 988. Throughout many centuries of tradition of celebration of Christmas in Russia remain invariable. For many orthodox believers this holiday is more

important and solemn, than New Year. Christmas traditions and customs of Russia and America have similarities: to festively decorate fir-trees, to give gifts for Christmas, to visit the temple in honor of a holiday, to receive guests. But there are also some distinctions: decorate windows of rural houses with candles, exchange greeting cards only in America.

Memorial Day. Memorial Day in America is a national holiday, which is celebrated annually last Monday of May. Schools, banks and offices close for the day. On that day, Americans honour the servicemen who gave their lives in past wars. Schools, clubs and churches decorate the cemeteries. They put up the flags on the graves of the army, navy and airmen. They hold memorial services in churches, halls, parks and cemeteries. In addition to solemn services Memorial Day is often marked by other, more joyful ceremonies: colourful parades, sports competitions. The holiday has arisen after the Civil war in the USA and has been originally devoted to the soldiers northerners who have died in this war.

9th of May. This holiday can be compared to a holiday 9th of May. The greatest national holiday in our country is Victory Day. On the 9th of May, 1945, the Soviet Army and its allies completely defeated the German fascists and the Second World War and the Great Patriotic War ended. A magnificent memorial on Poklonnaya Gora has been built to commemorate the Victory. Many veterans take part in the military parade and lay wreaths on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Radio and television broadcast popular war songs. A lot of guests from different countries of the world come to Moscow to participate in the celebrations.

Labor Day. The identical name Labor Day has one more holiday, but it is celebrated differently. In America it is a holiday of recreation. It marks the end of summer and the beginning of autumn. Vacation time is over. Resorts, camps and beaches close. Parents go to summer camps and take their children back home. In the United States Labor Day is celebrated in September. History of this holiday dates back to the late 19th century when various labor movements appeared worldwide. For the first time this holiday in the USA was celebrated in 1882. He was devoted to all workers and those who make a contribution to well-being of nation.

The 1st of May is the Day of Labour in Russia. During Soviet time there were huge demonstrations on this day, as everybody was obliged to show his loyalty to the state; now only communists organize meetings on this date. Holiday history in Russia is connected on May 1st with revolutionary events. In our country this holiday has appeared when Engels and Marx's doctrine, and Lenin's works have received great popularity. Being a revolutionary they took part in demonstrations.

Easter. Easter is in memory of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon between March, 22, and April, 25. The 40 days before Easter are called Lent. Just before Easter, schools and colleges usually close. Students have a week or ten days of spring vacation. Easter is a church holiday, and many churches have an outdoor sunrise service. In Russia this day everyone greets each other with the words «Christ is risen» and answer, «Truly He is Risen». Easter Sunday is a day when people enjoy the blessed food, sing, visit their relatives and friends to exchange Easter eggs.

In America people give each other presents of eggs. There is a popular belief that wearing three new things on Easter will bring good luck throughout the year. Holiday symbols are rabbit, color eggs, flowers, greens and spring pastel tone. The holiday of Easter has no constant calendar date and is celebrated as in Russia, and America at different times. In general, traditions of celebration of Easter in two countries are very similar in spite of the fact that in each country there are the differences connected with some cultural, climatic features of Russia and America

In general holidays is cool! And let everyone will have them in soul even on weekdays.

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