



2024 Religious Holidays



We invite you to share this resource in your workplace, school, place of worship or community centre. Recognizing the religious holidays of others can be a powerful way to connect.

- For those in the minority, a holiday greeting from a colleague, neighbour or classmate can help people feel seen and acknowledged.
- A heartfelt acknowledgement of religious observances can also open a conversation, create a safe space for others to share more about their lives, and help build a sense of belonging and community for all. Even just sharing resources like this one can communicate that everyone is welcomed.
- Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, knowing more about one another can provide an opportunity to authentically share in the joy of different communities' many celebrations.



Encounter World Religions

January 2024

January 7 – **Orthodox Christian: Christmas**

The date that Orthodox Christians celebrate Jesus's birth in the Julian calendar.

January 13 – **Sikh: Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh**

A celebration of the tenth Sikh Guru and spiritual master. He is the last human guru in Sikhism.



January 15 – **Hindu: Makar Sankranti**

Makar Sankranti celebrates the sun. The festival includes flying kites to symbolize spiritual uplift, lighting bonfires in the evening, and taking ritual baths in rivers and ponds.

January 14 – **Eastern Orthodox: New Year**

The "Old New Year" celebrates the start of the Julian calendar.



January 18 – **Buddhist: Bodhi Day**

Bodhi Day celebrates the day Siddhartha Gautama, Sakyamuni Buddha, achieved enlightenment. Dates vary but in Japan and the West, Bodhi Day is often celebrated on Dec 8.

January 21 – **Bahá'í: World Religion Day**

A day in the Bahá'í faith that celebrates common themes for faiths across the world.



January 24 – **Jewish: Tu Bishvat**

This Jewish holiday is celebrated as an ancient Earth Day, where trees are planted annually.

January 25 – **Mahāyāna Buddhist: New Year**

A time for meditation, self-reflection and rituals of cleansing and purification.



Encounter World Religions

February 2024

February 1 – **Wiccan: Imbolc**

Pagans and Wiccans celebrate this festival as the halfway point between the winter solstice and the spring equinox, which honours light, fire, and the return of life after a long winter.

February 8 – **Muslim: Lailat al Miraj**

Muslims remember Prophet Muhammad's journey from Mecca to Jerusalem on this holy day. After his arrival, he ascended to Heaven.



February 14 – **Christian: Ash Wednesday**

This day marks the start of Lent, 40 days of fasting and prayer for Christians before Easter.

February 15 – **Buddhism: Parinirvana**

Known as Nirvana Day in Mahāyāna Buddhism, this day honours Buddha's death and his attainment of final nirvana.

February 26-29 – **Bahá'í: Intercalary / Ayyam-i-ha**

This celebration and period of fasting celebrates giving back to the community and giving gifts to loved ones to honour the Divine Essence of God. This celebration marks the start of the fasting month, where Bahá'ís 15 years and older abstain from food and drink between sunrise and sunset.



*The Parinirvana of the Buddha,
Cleveland Museum of Art*



March 2024



March 8 – **Hindu: Maha Shivaratri**

Hindu celebration of the birth of Lord Shiva, one of the most worshipped Hindu deities.

March 10 – **Muslim: Ramadan begins**

This marks the start of the holy month of fasting for Muslims. Muslims spend this month fasting, engaging in extra prayer, donating to charities and trying to be better versions of themselves.

March 21 – **Bahá'í and Persian: Nowruz**

Occurring on the vernal equinox, this day celebrates the Persian and the Bahá'í New Year. Bahá'ís also end their 19-day fast, which is a period of reflection and profound spiritual reinvigoration. It is the first day of the Bahá'í calendar year.



March 23-24 – **Jewish: Purim**

Purim commemorates the saving of the Jewish people from annihilation at the hands of an official of the Achaemenid Empire named Haman. It is celebrated with food, charity and gatherings that feature making noise and having fun.



March 2024



March 25 – **Hindu: Holi**

One of the most famous Hindu holy days, Holi celebrates the arrival of spring and new life. This lasts for a night and a day, starting on the evening of the Full Moon Day. Celebrations include throwing coloured powder and water on the people around you.

March 29 – **Christian: Good Friday**

This Christian holiday honours Jesus' crucifixion and death. Most Christian denominations observe this holy day.

Note that Orthodox traditions celebrate Good Friday and Easter later in the year.



March 31 – **Christian: Easter**

One of the most important Christian holidays, it memorializes the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is believed that this occurred on the third day after his burial. The week before Easter is known as Holy Week, which starts on Palm Sunday and includes special days like Maundy Thursday (when the Last Supper occurs) and Good Friday, before ending on Easter Sunday. Also known as Resurrection Sunday or Pascha.



April 2024

April is Sikh Heritage Month in Canada designed to recognize the contributions of Sikhs to our communities.

April 6 – Muslim: **Laylat al-Qadr**

Laylat al-Qadr is the holiest night of the year for Muslims as it's believed on this night that the first revelation of the Quran was sent down from Heaven. The exact date is uncertain and so the last ten nights of Ramadan are especially dedicated to praying and scripture reading as the night of decree is believed to have taken place on one of those nights.



April 9-12 – Muslim: **Eid al-Fitr**

One of the most important Islamic holy days which includes feasting to mark the end of Ramadan. Celebrations last from 1-3 days depending on the country.



April 13 – Sikh: **Vaisakhi**

This New Year and spring harvest festival is one of the most important Sikh festivals. It marks the creation of the "Khalsa." Khalsa Sikhs undertake extra devotion, and always wear 5 items, one of which is uncut hair (hair is never cut again once they are initiated).



April 2024



Lord Rama

April 17 – **Hindu: Rama Navami**

A festival celebrating the birth of Lord Rama, a major Hindu deity.

April 21 – **Bahá'í: Ridvan**

The holiest period for Bahá'ís, this 12-day festival commemorates Bahá'u'lláh's declaration that he was a manifestation of God. The name means Paradise and is named after a garden found outside of Baghdad, where he was exiled before traveling to Constantinople.

April 22-30 – **Jewish: Passover**

This 7-day holiday week honours the freeing of Israeli slaves from Egypt. It is one of three pilgrimage festivals and is a major Jewish holiday that begins with a ritual meal called Seder.



April 23 – **Buddhist: Vesak**

For Southeast Asian Buddhists, this is the most important festival, marking the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha. In East Asia, the day marks only the Buddha's birth. Devotees often pour water over an image of baby Buddha in a bathing ritual.



May 2024

May is Canadian Jewish Heritage Month, an opportunity to recognize, celebrate, and learn more about the many contributions Jewish Canadians have made.



May 1 – Wiccan and Pagan: **Beltane**

This Pagan and Wiccan festival honours and represents the peak time of Spring and the beginning of Summer.

May 2 – Bahá'í: **Ridván ends**

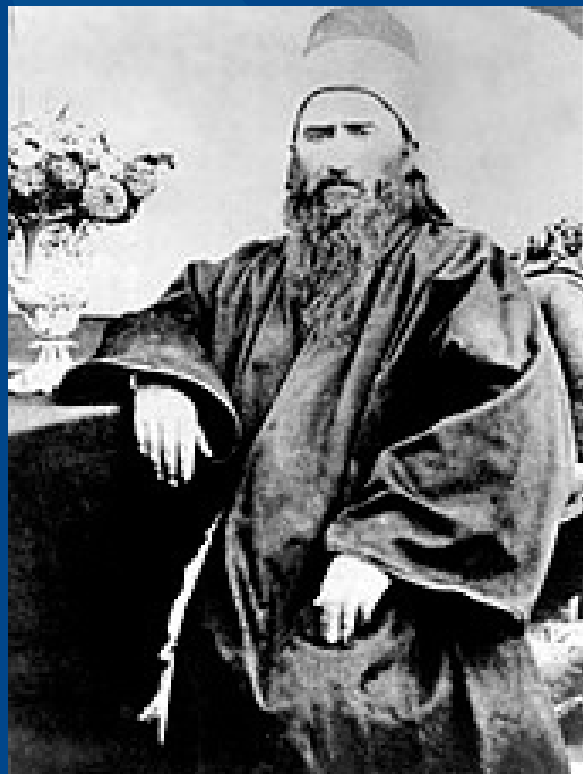
Commemorates the declaration of the founder, Bahá'u'lláh, to his followers in 1863. The first, ninth and twelfth days of Ridvan are major Bahá'í holy days.

May 3 – Eastern Orthodox: **Good Friday**

Also known as Holy Friday or Great Friday, on this day, Orthodox Christians commemorate Christ's death on the cross.

May 5 – Eastern Orthodox: **Easter**

Also called Pascha and Resurrection Sunday, this day is the oldest and most important holy day in the Eastern Christian tradition, celebrating Jesus Christ's resurrection following his crucifixion and death.



May 22 – Bahá'í: **Declaration of the Bab**

This marks the inception of the Bahá'í Faith in 1844. The Bab declared that he was a messenger of God and was sent to prepare the way for the one foretold in all religions who would come to establish universal peace.

Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, was foretold by the Bab



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June 2024

June is National **Indigenous History Month** in Canada, a time to recognize the rich history, heritage, resilience and diversity of First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

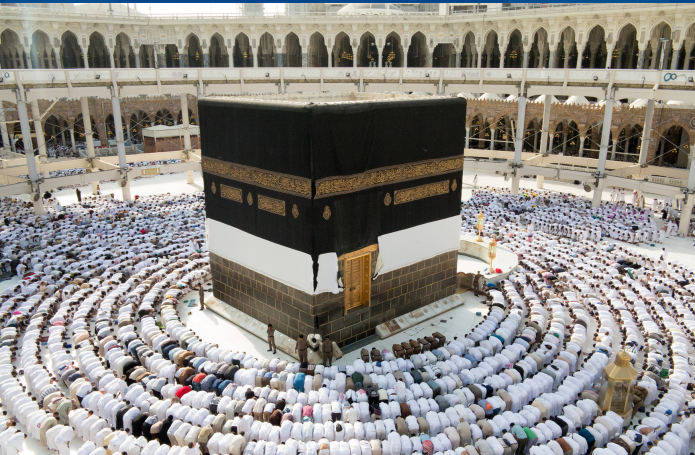
June 11-13 – Jewish: **Shavuot**

This major festival marks the harvest of wheat in Israel and also the giving of the Torah (Jews' major scripture including the Ten Commandments) to Moses and the Israelites. Also known as the Feast of Weeks.



June 14-19 – Muslim: **The Hajj**

All Muslims are required, at least once in their lives, to partake in this annual pilgrimage to Mecca as long as they are physically and financially able to do so.



June 17 – Muslim: **Eid-al-Adha**

This Islamic holiday ends the Hajj pilgrimage. It celebrates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Ishmael, his son, to obey God. In the story, a lamb is given to him to sacrifice in place of his son. On this day, animals, typically a sheep or a goat, are sacrificed and enjoyed by both the family and those in need. Also known as the Feast of the Sacrifice.



June 21 – Indigenous: **National Indigenous Peoples Day or First Nations Day**

A day to recognize and celebrate the history, heritage, resilience and diversity of First Nations, Inuit and Métis across Canada.



June 21 – Litha: **Pagan, Wiccan**

This Pagan and Wiccan festival is held on the summer solstice and celebrates the beginning of summer.



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July and August 2024



July 7 – **Muslim: Hijri New Year**

The Islamic New Year marks the beginning of the lunar year.

July 17 – **Muslim: Ashura**

For Sunni Muslims, Ashura marks when God saved the Israelites from Egypt's pharaoh by allowing Prophet Musa (Moses) to part the Red Sea. Shi'is, however, on this day mourn the martyrdom of Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad.

August 2024

August 1 – **Pagan or Wiccan: Lughnasadh**

This Gaelic festival and Irish holiday honours the first day of the harvest season. It occurs on the halfway point between the summer solstice and the fall equinox. Also known as Lughnasa.



August 26 – **Hindu: Krishna Janmashtami**

Hindu celebration of the birth of Krishna. This annual festival celebrates Krishna, a supreme God in the faith, and includes the reading of religious texts, reenactments of his life, and dance. Also known as Gokulashtami, Janmashtami, or Krishnashtami.

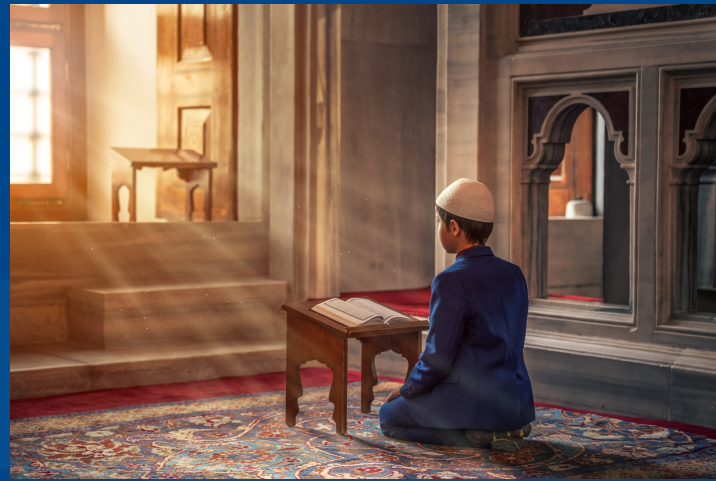


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September 2024

September 15-16 – **Islam: Mawlid-al-Nabi**

Celebrates the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. In some Muslim countries, this is a national holiday but some Muslims do not celebrate it as they feel it risks violating the rule that worship only belongs to God.



September 21 – **Jain: Paryushan**

Holiest day for Jains. An eight day festival signifying human emergence into a new world of spiritual and moral refinement. Marked by fasting and study.



September 21-29 – **Pagan Wiccan: Mabon**

Both Wiccans and Pagans use this day to celebrate the autumnal equinox, a day when the amount of sunlight and darkness is the same. This represents both balance and harmony.



September 30 – **Indigenous: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation**

In Canada, this day honours the children who never returned home from, and survivors of, residential schools, as well as their families and communities. Also known as Orange Shirt Day.



Every Child Matters



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October 2024

October is Canadian **Islamic History Month**, an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of Muslim Canadians and to stand together to combat Islamophobia.

October 2-4 – Jewish: **Rosh Hashanah**

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, recalls the creation of the world and starts the High Holy Days or 10 Days of Awe which focus on repentance and are the most important holy days for Jews.



October 3-12 – Hindu: **Navratri**

Navratri is a 9 day festival dedicated to the Hindu deity Durga. It begins on the first day of the Lunar month of Ashwin. In Sanskrit Navratri means nine nights.

October 11-12 – Jewish: **Yom Kippur**

The most important Jewish holiday, Yom Kippur ends the 10 Days of Awe by focusing on seeking forgiveness for your sins. Many Jews will fast for 25 hours. Also known as the Day of Atonement.

October 12 – Hindu: **Dussehra**

Marks the end of Navaratri, a nine-day festival honouring the goddess Durga and her victory over evil.

October 16-23 – Jewish: **Sukkot**

This 7-day holiday commemorates when Jews journeyed through the desert to the promised land.

October 20 – Bahá'í: **Birth of the Bab**

Commemorates the birth of a founding figure in the Bahá'í Faith.

October 24 – Bahá'í: **Birth of Bahá'ú'llah**

Commemorates the birth of the founder of the Bahá'í Faith.



October 24-25 – Jewish: **Simchat Torah**

Joyous festival in which the reading cycle of the Torah is completed and its first book begun again.

October 29 – November 2 – Hindu Sikh Jain: **Diwali**

A five-day festival of lights celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains. For Hindus, the third day is the holiest day of the year. Celebrations vary, honouring different deities, but decorations with rangoli (coloured powders) and candles are common. Diwali celebrates enlightenment and liberations both spiritual and physical.



November 2024

November is **Hindu Heritage Month** in Canada, an important opportunity to recognize the outstanding contributions that Hindu Canadians have made to Canada's social, economic, political and cultural fabric.



November 1 – **Pagan and Wiccan: Samhain**

A festival marking the new year and the end of the harvest season.

November 1 – **Christian: All Saints Day**

It commemorates saints who have attained heaven. Mexicans celebrate Dia de los Muertos when they remember lost loved ones, including making beautiful altars and visiting graves.

November 2 – **Rastafarian: Coronation Day**

Anniversary of the Crowning of Haile Selassie. On this day, Ras (Prince) Tafari Makonnen became Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia.



Haile Selassie



November 8 – **Sikh: Guru Nanak Ji's Birthday**

Commemorates the birth of the founder of Sikhism in 1469.



December 2024



December 8 – **Roman Catholic: Feast of the Immaculate Conception** This Roman Catholic feast celebrates how Jesus' mother, Mary, was conceived without original sin. Mary is understood to have lived a life free of moral error.

December 8 – **Mahāyāna Buddhist: Bodhi Day** Commemorates the day that the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama (Shakyamuni), experienced enlightenment, known as 'bodhi' in Sanskrit and Pali. Celebrated by East Asian Buddhists primarily.

December 12 – **Roman Catholic: Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe** A religious holiday in Mexico commemorating the appearance of the Virgin Mary near Mexico City in 1531.

December 21 – **Pagan and Wiccan: Yule** This holiday begins at sundown on the winter solstice as the great horned hunter god is reborn. This celebration on the shortest day of the year focuses on rebirth, renewal and new beginnings as the sun makes its way back to the Earth.



December 25 to January 1 2025 – **Jewish: Hanukkah** This eight-day celebration commemorates the victory of the Jews over foreign rule, ending a period of political oppression and religious persecution.



December 2024



December 25 – **Christian: Christmas**
The birthday of Jesus for Protestants and Roman Catholics, celebrated by countries across the world.

December 26 – **Secular: Boxing Day**
A secular holiday celebrated in the U.K., Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and South Africa.

December 26 to January 1 – **Cultural: Kwanzaa** An African-American and pan-African holiday started by Maulana Karenga in 1966 to celebrate African heritage.



December 26 – **Zoroastrian: Zartosht No-Diso (Death of Prophet Zarathushtra)**

A day of remembrance for Zoroastrians, commemorating the death of the prophet Zoroaster or Zarathushtra.

The fravashi, a guardian spirit which each person has, is a symbol of the Zoroastrian religion.

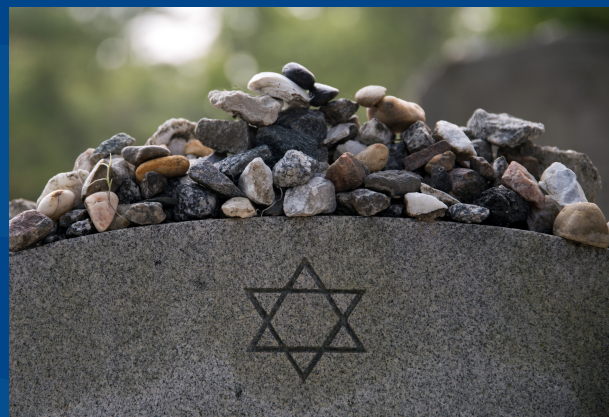


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Special days and months of recognition

While not religious holidays, these commemoration dates hold special significance for religious communities.

January 27 International Holocaust Remembrance Day



January 29 National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action Against Islamophobia

February 1-7 World Interfaith Harmony Week,

March 15 International Day to Combat Islamophobia

May 5 - 6 Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day)

August 22 International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief



For over 20 years, Encounter has helped people, organizations and communities explore what it means to become religiously literate and enhance their understanding of each other and their world.

Learn more about our engaging programs and resources at worldreligions.ca



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