

St. Patrick's Day Around The World

Saint Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland. This means he is the protector and guardian of Ireland. St. Patrick's Day is celebrated on 17th March, which is the day that Saint Patrick died. It is traditionally an Irish holiday and festival, but it is now celebrated around the world.



The shamrock is the symbol of Ireland and Saint Patrick's Day. Its name comes from the Irish Gaelic word 'seamrog', which refers to the three leaves on the plant. Saint Patrick used the three leaves of the shamrock to explain the Christian Trinity (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit).

Who Was Saint Patrick?

Saint Patrick was born in Wales in AD365. His grandfather was a priest and his father was a deacon in the Christian church. When he was only 16, he was kidnapped by pirates. He was sold as a slave in Ireland and spent six years working as a shepherd. His Christian faith became very important to him. When he escaped to Western Europe, he became a deacon for the church. Several years later, he was ordained as a priest and later, a bishop. Eventually, he went back to Ireland to teach people about Christianity. He helped to change Ireland from a pagan to a Christian country.

St. Patrick's Day in Ireland

St. Patrick's Day is a national holiday in Ireland and is celebrated across the country. It is a Christian festival, similar to Christmas and Easter. Most Irish people begin the day by going to church. After this, they usually go to their local town or village for the St. Patrick's Day parade. These parades involve lots of dancers, local organisations, tractors and floats. Many people wear a shamrock or green clothes. You often see lots of leprechaun hats and beards and there is a great party atmosphere.

St. Patrick's Day in the UK

St. Patrick's Day in the UK is celebrated in several cities. Birmingham has the largest parade (the third largest in the world). There is lots of singing, dancing and partying. In Manchester, there is a two-week Irish festival before

St. Patrick's Day because the city has a large Irish community. There is an Irish Market outside the town hall and a large parade through the city centre on St. Patrick's Day.

St. Patrick's Day in Europe

Several countries in Europe celebrate St. Patrick's Day.

- Brussels, Belgium: A parade takes place in an area of the city that is known as the Irish Village. The Mannequin Pis, Brussels' most famous statue, is often dressed up in tweed (a traditional fabric of Irish costumes).
- Oslo, Norway: The Irish community celebrate with a lively parade through the city. There is a pipe band and lots of traditional Irish music and dancing.
- Copenhagen, Denmark: In 2001, the St. Patrick's Day three-legged charity race began. All the money raised is for a different charity every year.

The Southern Hemisphere

Buenos Aires has the largest St. Patrick's Day celebration in South America. There isn't a parade, but there is a giant street party with singing, dancing, food and drink. This is so large, it takes up ten blocks of an area called the Retiro district.

In Sydney, Australia, St. Patrick's Day is also called Family Day. There is a large parade and entertainment in Hyde Park. Lots of local and international acts perform to the large crowds.

In Auckland, New Zealand, there is a parade and carnival, with lots of traditional Irish music and dancing. There are lots of food stalls, a Gaelic football match and lots of parties.

Interesting Facts

- New York City's annual St. Patrick's Day parade is the largest in the world. It has over one million spectators.
- In Chicago, USA, the Chicago River is dyed green in celebration.
- Over 100 million people celebrate St. Patrick's Day every year.
- In Ireland, there are about 60 churches and cathedrals named after Saint Patrick.

Questions

1. Why is St. Patrick's Day celebrated on 17th March?
2. How do you think Saint Patrick might have felt when he was kidnapped and sold as a slave?
3. Where does the word shamrock come from?
4. Why does Manchester have a two-week Irish festival before St. Patrick's Day?
5. How might Saint Patrick's early life have influenced his decision to become a deacon and a priest?

