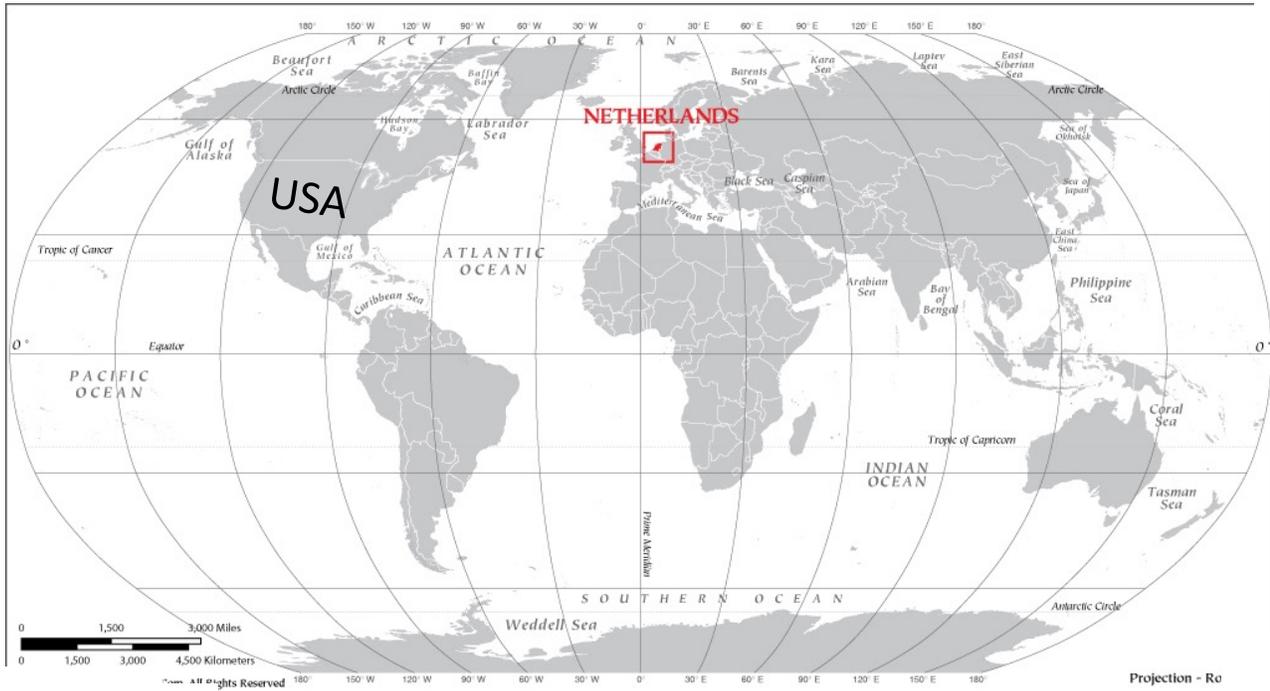


Christmas in The Netherlands

Look at where The Netherlands is!



Look at the flag of The Netherlands. What colors do you see?



The most common language in The Netherlands is Dutch. “Merry Christmas” in Dutch is “vrolijk kerstfeest” (VROH-layk KEHRST-fayst).

How do they celebrate Christmas in The Netherlands?

In the Netherlands, Santa Claus is known as *Sinterklaas*. He differs in appearance from Santa Claus in that he is tall and slender, wears a dark red robe and a hat similar to a bishop's attire, and is often portrayed as elderly with a long, white beard. Tradition goes that Sinterklaas sails from Spain to the Netherlands on December 5 where he trades his ship for a horse. On this day, just as children in the United States often leave treats for Santa Claus's reindeer, children in the Netherlands often fill their clogs or shoes with hay and carrots and place them by the fireplace for Sinterklaas's horse in hopes that the treats will be exchanged for some sweets.



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On the evening of December 5, called *sinterklass avond* (Sinterklass evening), Sinterklass parties are often held. Gifts are hidden and children are provided poems and riddles with clues as to where to find the presents. Special biscuits and sweets are served at the party. One type of biscuit served is called a *banketletter* (meaning letter cake), which is made of marzipan or pastry. It is called a letter cake because the biscuits are made in the shapes of the first letter of the people who at the party.

Presents are also given on December 6, which is called St. Nicholas' Day. One custom in schools on this day is each person's name is put in a hat. Then, everyone picks a name from the hat. Each person gives a surprise present to the person whose name they chose. The presents are usually something useful that the person can use and are often accompanied with a poem with a clue as to who gave the present.

Christmas Day is a quiet day in which people go to church and religious concerts. This day is time for family gatherings and delicious meals consisting of roast goose, roast pork, vegetables, and homemade breads, including currant buns and *stollen* (rich breads made with fruits and nuts).

The Netherlands Wooden Shoe Craft

Color, print, and cut out the shoe template below. Fold in half and tape or staple the sides. Fill with carrots from the next page.

