

# Customs and Traditions in Romania Turkey Slovakia Macedonia Latvia and Poland



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# Romania

## Mărțișor

*Mărțișor*, *marț* and *mărțiguș* are all names for the red and white string with hanging tassel customarily given on the 1st day of March. In the olden times, the string could've also been black and white or blue and white. Giving this talisman to people is an old custom, and it is believed that the wearer will be strong and healthy for the year to come. It is also a symbol of the coming spring. Usually, both women and men wear it pinned to their clothes, close to the heart, until the last day of March, when they tie it to a fruit-tree twig. In some regions, a gold or silver coin hangs on the string and is worn around the neck. After wearing it for a certain length of time, they buy red wine and sweet cheese with the coin, according to a belief that their faces would remain beautiful and white as cheese and rubicund as the wine, all year.





# Easter in Romania

- **Easter** is, together with Christmas, **one of the most important public holidays in Romania**. The Orthodox Easter celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus, and that makes it one of the most important and beautiful Christian customs. In 2018, the Easter Day in Romania is **celebrated on April 8th**. This national holiday helps families throughout the country get together for at least a couple of days, and it is filled with customs and traditions.





# Sanzienele

- *Sânziană* is the Romanian name for gentle fairies who play an important part in local folklore, also used to designate the *Galium verum* or *Cruciata laevipes* flowers. Under the plural form *Sânziene*, the word designates an annual festival in the fairies' honor. Etymologically, the name comes from the Latin *Sancta Diana*, the Roman goddess of the hunt and moon, also celebrated in Roman Dacia (ancient Romania). Diana was known to be the virgin goddess and looked after virgins and women. She was one of the three maiden goddesses, Diana, Minerva and Vesta, who swore never to marry.







# Capra (goat dance)

- **Capra** is the name of a traditional Romanian dance, performed around New Year. It's executed by a young man with a goat mask and a sheep skin on his back. The 'goat' and his companions go from house to house, dancing at each door on New Year's Eve.





# Sorcova

- Sorcova is a Romanian popular custom, practiced on January 1. This custom is very old and is spread throughout the country, being practiced mainly by children. Sorcova is also used to describe the object that characterizes this custom. It consists of a stick or twig decorated with artificial flowers of different colors, wherewith children slightly hit on back their parents or acquaintances in the morning of New Year, wishing them, in special verses, health and luck. When they begin to say the verses, *sorcova* is inclined in the direction of the person to whom they address all wishes, *sorcova* playing the role of a magic wand, endowed with the ability to transmit health, youth and fertility.





# Turkey

## Turkish Tea

- The national drink is tea, served black in tulip-shaped glasses and sweetened with sugar according to the drinker's preference. A common feature in most villages, towns, and cities are the men only teahouses where they gather to drink tea and play games such as OK. Otherwise, tea gardens are popular for families and females, especially on the weekends.







# Turkish carpets

- In every Turkish home, carpets and rugs sit proudly on the floors. With elaborate decoration, the handmade carpets have also become popular holiday souvenirs. Stemming from the days of the nomadic tribes, unfortunately, some rogue salespersons sell fake Turkish carpets. In recent years, as décor design has become more modern, some Turks also opt for the factory-made carpets that are often cheaper.







# Breakfast

- Food is an integral part of Turkish society. Each meal is a gift from Allah to enjoy, and not waste, so Turkish women often spend hours in the kitchen, with painstaking and intense recipes. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day and typically includes eggs, cucumbers, tomatoes, and olives but never forget the bread, at either breakfast or other mealtimes. It is a staple part of Turk's diets.





## EVIL EYE: THE NAZAR BONCUGU

- In direct disbelief of Islamic traditions, the Nazar Boncugu, also known as the evil eye is in offices, homes, in transport and businesses. Turks believe this talisman wards off evil and these days, as well as featuring heavily in Turkish culture, it is one of the top recommended souvenirs to buy.





# Slovakia

## Midsummer Night's Bonfires

- The Midsummer Day is the longest day of the year. Fire, especially bonfire, belonged among the basic elements of the solstice customs and the adults as well as the young went singing and dancing around it.

On this day, people picked medicinal herbs and they looked for treasures with the help of the so called **fern flower** which was to blossom during the Midsummer Night.

Most attention was paid to **fire**. One of the traditions was making huge bonfires on a place clearly seen from the village, launching fire wheels, tossing burning torches, singing, dancing and jumping over the bonfire.







# Easter whipping or bathing

- This custom, spread all over the territory of Slovakia, is known in villages as well as in towns and is performed on the last day of Easter - **Easter Monday**.

Easter Monday is associated with the custom of bathing or sprinkling with water and whipping girls and women. The **traditional reward** for whipping or bathing is a decorated egg called **kraslica** - a symbol of new life.

The oldest way of decorating eggs was dyeing in various herbal dips, later various other techniques developed, like batik, which is putting wax on the egg with a needle and then dyeing it while the waxed places stay uncoloured.

In some regions of Slovakia **the Tuesday** after Easter Monday was the day when girls and women could pay back the whipping and bathing, which appeared very amusing.







# Putting up of the maypoles

- In general, the month of May is considered to be the time of love and new life. The May verdure used to be the symbol of energy and good growth. The most important place among plants belonged to the tree which in these circumstances was called **the maypole**.

The maypole was usually put up by a young man for the girl he loved. The custom is spread all over Slovakia.

Mostly tall straight trees served as maypoles, especially firs and pines with their bark peeled off. Their tops were decorated with colourful ribbons.





# Carnival

- **The Carnival** is the merriest time of the year. Its origins go back to the pre-Christian era and it belongs among the customs connected with the break of the winter and the spring.
- The Carnival, starting at Epiphany and ending on Ash Wednesday, **comes before the Lent**. In the past as well as nowadays, it is the time of merriness and feasts. It culminates in the **carnival mask ball** symbolising the world “upside down” during which the social barriers were neglected.
- The most ancient masks are those representing various animals, the most frequent being the mask of the bull (bull-human), the goat, the bear and the horse.





# Macedonia

## New Year

As with the rest of Europe, New Year's Day and Eve is celebrated from late December 31 through January 1, with memories of the outgoing year and hopes for the upcoming twelve months shared. Traditional fireworks at midnight see residents pouring onto the streets with parties in bars, clubs, hotels, and restaurants lively until early morning.







# Strumica Carnival

The Strumica Carnival is first mentioned in 1670. This Carnival is held every year at the beginning of the Great Lent, an Eastern Orthodox Lenten period similar to the Roman church's calendar about one month earlier. The three days which are called the "trimer days" always begin on the Sunday night at Procka (Forgiveness Sunday) and last until the following Wednesday. On Tuesday night, the Carnival takes place- masked groups of people stroll throughout the city, with men visiting homes of their fiancées and staying there until the early morning hours. The celebration continues with love songs and lyrics complemented with traditional musical instruments.







# Labour Day

- Labour Day in Macedonia is a national holiday, celebrated on May 1 to honor the social and economic achievements of the workers known worldwide as International Workers' Day. Macedonians enjoy their day off with trips to the countryside, the lakes or city parks for picnics, relaxation and general merriment with family and friends.





# Skopje Summer Festival

- Skopje's annual cornucopia of concerts, folk music, traditional events, and museum openings run from June 21 for four or five weeks in venues across the city, which is a feast of indoor and outdoor theatre and musical delights. The entertainment is mostly free and attracts artists and performers from around the world.

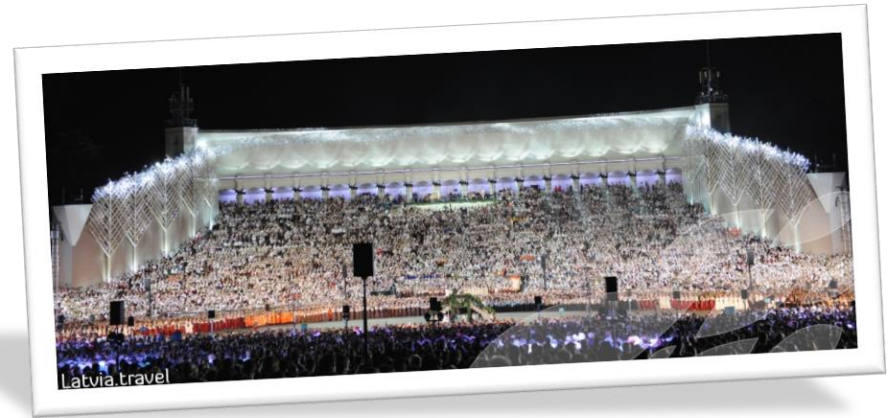
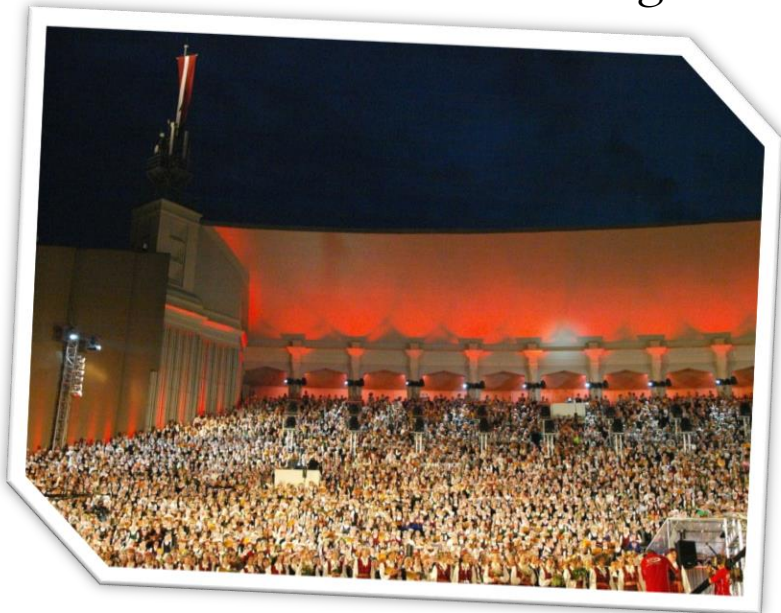




# Latvia

## Song and Dance Celebration

Every five years, for one week. This is the time frame for THE main event in Latvian cultural life - the Nationwide Latvian Song and Dance Festival. It involves hundreds of choirs and folk dance groups, entrancing thousands in the audience. The Festival has earned high honour internationally, being included on the UNESCO Oral History and Non-material Cultural Heritage List.





# Latvian Name Days

- Every Latvian is happy to celebrate the day of their name, as marked in the calendar. It rivals the scale of birthdays and is at least as popular. Each day in the Latvian calendar includes up to four names, and there is a date – May 22 – to celebrate the names not included in it. The tradition is somewhat related to the church calendar of the Saints, however is practically secular today. The State Language Agency updates the calendar every two years.







# Jāņi (summer solstice)

- Jāņi is the most popular Latvian festivity. It is a day when cities vacate and every civil servant and bank clerk shows their pagan side. It originated as an ancient fertility festival celebrated after sowing the crops and before gathering harvest.





# Cemetery festivals

- Families dress up and visit the graves of their loved ones. They tend the graves and adorn them with fresh flowers and candles. A priest gives a sermon and local musicians perform afterwards.







# Poland

## Marzanna

*Marzanna* is the Polish name for a Slavic goddess associated with death, winter and nature. Even though pagan religion was theoretically eradicated from Poland in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, *Marzanna* is still alive thanks to a popular ritual. Every year, on the first day of spring, people would make an effigy, set it on fire, and then drown it in a river. The aim of the ritual is to chase off winter and encourage nature to revive.

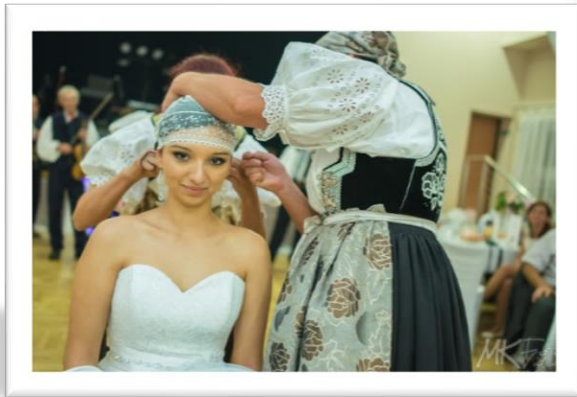






# Oczepiny

- *Oczepiny* is a common Slavic rite which symbolises the transition of the bride from being a maiden to being a married women. Traditionally the bride had her hair cut or shortened and a cap put on. This is also where the name comes from, as *czepiec* is Polish for a cap.





# Pouring buckets of water on strangers

- Among the Easter code of rituals Śmigus Dyngus may be the most unexpected. What it is nowadays is a free-for-all, all-day water battle played out with water pistols, bottles, water balloons thrown from windows, plastic bags or whatever means are on hand – in some rare instances even fire trucks have been known to join in.





# Christmas

- Celebrating both Christmas and Easter is very important to Poles, and there are a plethora of little habits and traditions to obey. For example, at Christmas you have to put a little bit of straw under the tablecloth and set one extra plate for an unexpected guest





# THANK YOU

FOR YOUR TIME

**THE**

**END**



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