



NDA GLOBAL

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Halloween Celebrations Around the World

NDA Global Explores
Different Halloween
Celebrations Around
the World

NDA NEWS

Halloween Celebrations Around the World

It is Halloween season, and these days, people around the world are very familiar with the American version of the holiday: costumes and trick-or-treating, jack-o'-lanterns and fun-sized candy bars. Of course, that's not the only way to celebrate. This month, NDA Global explores some of the ways people celebrate Halloween around the world.

Ireland and Scotland: Samhain

The ancient Celtic festival of Samhain is actually the original Halloween, and the origins of most of the famous Western Halloween traditions are found here. On Samhain, people began preparing for winter, bringing their herds back from their summer pastures and slaughtering livestock. As



summer dissolved into winter, it was believed that the border between the world of the living and the world of the dead dissolved as well.

So, for one night, the souls of the dead, spirits, and fairy folk could easily cross into the physical world. To disguise themselves from evil spirits, people would dress in costumes. Then, they'd go from house to house reciting poetry in exchange for food. The souls of dead ancestors were honored with feasts, and bonfires were lit to

keep the darkness at bay. Jack-o'-lanterns were carved out of turnips to frighten evil spirits away. Now, Dublin hosts a Samhain parade every year, and The Beltane Fire Society hosts a Samhuinn Fire Festival every year in Edinburgh.

Japan: Kawasaki Halloween Parade



Around the world, Halloween is generally for kids. This is not true in Japan, where Halloween celebrations have a decidedly adult overtone. There's no trick-or-treating, but there's plenty of cosplay and plenty of parties. The most prestigious Halloween event in Japan is the Kawasaki Halloween Parade, featuring around 4,000 costumed revelers. You can't just throw on any old thing and attend, however. They have standards, and participants must apply at least two months in advance to join the festivities.

Italy: Ognissanti

In Italy, people celebrate the modern, imported celebration of "Halloween" alongside the older, traditional "Ognissanti" festivities. "Ognissanti" translates to "All Saints Day,"

and it falls on November 1-2. However, people often begin the celebrations a day or two in advance.



During Ognissanti, tradition holds that the souls of the deceased come back to visit their living relatives. People decorate cemeteries with fall chrysanthemums. They leave food out for visiting spirits. In some parts of Italy, parents leave gifts out for their children on behalf of their dead relatives, almost like a miniature Christmas.

Mexico: Día de los Muertos

In Mexico, Halloween doesn't hold a candle to El Día de Los Muertos, the Day of the Dead. A colorful fusion of traditional indigenous customs and European traditions, Día de Los Muertos is a two-day celebration of ancestors and deceased



family members. According to legend, on November 1st and 2nd, the spirits of the dead come back to visit their families. The living celebrates them with flowers, festivals, sweets, and images of intricately decorated skulls and skeletons. They have picnics and light candles in cemeteries. While images of death are everywhere, it's important to understand that this isn't a scary or a sad holiday- it's a celebration of life, both past, and present.

Romania: Day of Dracula

People from all around the world flock to celebrate Halloween at Vlad "The Impaler" Tepes's purported home at Bran Castle in Transylvania, Romania (although it was never actually his castle, and there's been a long-running debate over whether he ever even visited the site). The monument in Transylvania also became home to the world's most notorious vampire, Count Dracula, made famous by Bram Stoker's 1987 novel about the curse of the undead.



The Philippines: Pangangaluluwa



Pangangaluluwa is a tradition in the Philippines in which children go door to door, often in costumes, where they sing and ask for prayers for those stuck in purgatory. While the rituals have increasingly been supplanted by trick-or-treating over the years, some towns are working to revive Pangangaluluwa as a way of keeping the tradition alive, and as a local fundraiser.

Hong Kong: The Hungry Ghost Festival

On the 15th day of the seventh lunar month, which is around mid-August to mid-September, the people of Hong Kong celebrate the Hungry Ghost Festival. In several parts of East Asia, people believe that spirits get restless around



this time of year and begin to roam the world. The festival is a way to “feed” these spirits both the food and money they need for the afterlife. It’s part of a larger month-long celebration that also features burning paper and food offerings.

Bulgaria: Kukeri

Kukeri is probably the best costume party in the world. It’s a centuries-old Thracian tradition that takes place across Bulgaria over the last weekend of January. People from villages and towns across the country come together for the largest celebration, which is held in a Pernik town square, just outside the capital city Sofia, to parade their monster costumes.



Each village has a distinct monster costume style, but all are intended to chase evil spirits away. The costumes include masks, hair, bells, and wooden structures that truly are impressive. The parades go last for two whole days to ensure every group of monsters has their chance to scare away the bad spirits.

India: Pitru Paksha

For 16 days during the second Paksha of the Hindu lunar month of Bhadrapada, many people in India celebrate Pitru Paksha. In the Hindu religion,



it is believed that when a person dies, Yama—the Hindu god of death—takes his or her soul to purgatory, where they'll find their last three generations of a family. During Pitru Paksha, the souls are briefly allowed to return to Earth and be with their families.

These are just a few of the many ways different cultures celebrate Halloween around the world. Halloween takes on a different meaning from country to country and can be rooted deep in history. It is often not only a way to mourn the dead, but to cherish and celebrate their lives.

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