



## Christmas in the Netherlands



*Sinterklaas arrives in the Netherlands by boat.*

In the Netherlands, the Christmas season is long. It begins in late November, when Sinterklaas arrives. Sinterklaas is the Dutch name for Santa Claus. He comes into town in late November. He arrives on a boat from Spain with his helper named Zwarte Piet. There is a special parade when they come into town. They leave the boat and begin a parade through the streets. Sinterklaas rides on his gray horse, Amerigo. Zwarte Piet throws candy and cookies to those who are watching the parade.



Every night after Sinterklaas arrives, children place a shoe by a fireplace or the back door. The children often leave a carrot or hay in the shoe and a bowl of water for Sinterklaas' horse. They sometimes draw a picture as a present for Sinterklaas. The children sing a song and then go to bed. In the morning, there is a special toy or candy in their shoe.



December 5th is St. Nicholas' Eve in the Netherlands. It is known as Pakjesavond. This is the biggest night for children's gifts. Zwarte Piet often hides the presents in the house and leaves a clue to where they are hidden. Sometimes, the presents are left in a big bag by the front door. On December 6, St. Nicholas' Day, Sinterklaas leaves the town until the next year.



*Cookies and candies that Zwarte Piet tosses to the parade crowd.*



For Christmas, families often go to church and then prepare a special Christmas meal. Gourmetten is a traditional Christmas dinner. It is made by grilling eggs, meat or fish in a large pan. Adults give presents for Christmas.



*Dutch children dress as the Three Wise Men on Driekoningen, or Epiphany.*



The Dutch Christmas season ends on Epiphany, which comes on January 6. Epiphany is the celebration of the arrival of the Three Wise Men. In the Netherlands, children dress up as the kings. The children carry lanterns and go from house to house, singing songs. Their listeners give them candy or cake as a treat.





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## Vocabulary Match

Match the definition of the word to the word on the right by writing the letter in the blank.

A. done for many years \_\_\_\_\_ Epiphany

B. party or special event \_\_\_\_\_ grilling

C. cooking on a hot, dry surface \_\_\_\_\_ traditional

D. arrival of the Three Wise Men \_\_\_\_\_ lantern

E. a lamp that can be hung or carried \_\_\_\_\_ celebration

## Character Match

Match the Dutch Christmas name to its description by writing the letter in the blank.

A. Zwarte Piet \_\_\_\_\_ helper

B. Sinterklaas \_\_\_\_\_ horse

C. Amerigo \_\_\_\_\_ Santa Claus

In the space below, draw a picture of something that you would want to leave for Sinterklaas.

