

# CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD: Brazil

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Brazil's Christmas traditions come from a mix of several different cultures. Since many people traveled to live in Brazil from a variety of countries, including Germany, Italy, and Spain and because it was ruled for many years by Portugal, Brazilians practice many holiday traditions from these countries as well as their own.

At the beginning of December, many people in Brazil like to play a holiday game called Amigo Secreto, which means secret friend. Friends at work or school put their names on slips of paper and whoever is playing draws a name without telling everyone else who it is. During the month, notes with clues to the person's identity are given to the secret friend using a pretend name. On Christmas, friends meet to give small gifts, eat, chat, and to reveal who their secret friend was.

December is a time to decorate homes with Christmas trees. These trees have fake snow and are filled with lights and glass ornaments. Fresh flowers are cut from the garden and brought inside as well. Nativity scenes are popular too and these are set up in homes, churches, and in public areas. In big cities, lots of electric lights are used to form the shape of huge Christmas trees, and these look beautiful against the night sky. Big cities also have fireworks on Christmas Day!

Caroling is another favorite tradition, and the most popular Christmas song in Brazil is Silent Night. Families also enjoy going to Christmas plays which are based on the shepherds from the Christmas story. One traditional play is called Os Pastores and features a gypsy who tries to steal the Christ child.

Christmas is a religious holiday for many people in Brazil and on Christmas Eve, or Christmas Day, many families attend Mass (church service). Guests sometimes eat a late meal on Christmas Eve together, so they can welcome in Christmas in the early morning. The Christmas dinner is perhaps the biggest of the year and is served on Christmas day. Items may include turkey, ham, fish, rice, potato salad, kale and garlic, fresh vegetables, and fruit dishes. For dessert, they may have a German "stollen" or Italian "panettone", which are both cakes with dried fruit, or they may have a walnut/chestnut pie.

Gifts are brought on two different days. Most children believe that Papai Noel (Santa) lives in the North Pole and delivers a few presents on Christmas Day, with the help of his tiny reindeer. They also look forward to the Epiphany on January 6th, where they receive more presents from the Three Kings (wise men).