

St. Patrick's Day History and Traditions

This holiday is celebrated every year on March 17th, honouring the Irish patron saint, St. Patrick. The celebrations are largely Irish culture themed and typically consist of wearing green, parades, and drinking.

People all over the world celebrate St. Patrick's Day, especially places with large Irish-American communities. Feasting on the day features traditional Irish food, including corned beef, corned cabbage, coffee, soda bread, potatoes, and shepherd's pie. Many celebrations also hold an Irish breakfast of sausage, black and white pudding, fried eggs, and fried tomatoes.

Common traditions include:

- Parades - This event is most often associated with the holiday. Cities that hold large parades include Boston, New York, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Savannah, and other cities worldwide.
- Drinking - Since many Catholics are Irish-American, some may be required to fast from drinking during Lent. However, they are allowed to break this fast during the St. Patrick's Day celebrations.
- Dying water or beer green - Chicago dyes its river green for the festivities, and many bars serve green-dyed beer. The White House fountain is also dyed green.
- Pea planting - In the Northeast, many celebrate by planting peas. This is largely due to the color and time of year (prime pea-planting conditions).

Saint Patrick - The Missionary and Bishop of Ireland: St. Patrick, or the "Apostle of Ireland," actually started out in the pagan religion. While not much is known about his early life, as many of his life's details were lost to folklore, letters from St. Patrick reveal that he was captured in Wales, Scotland, or another close area outside of Ireland and taken to Ireland as a slave. The legend says that he spent six years there working as a shepherd and that during this time he "found God". The *Declaration* (written by the Saint) says that God told Patrick to escape to the coast, where a ship would be waiting to take him home. After making his way home, Patrick went on to become a priest.

He was born around 460, and by the 600s, he was already known as the Patron Saint of Ireland.

It is believed that he was born in [Roman-Britain](#) in the fourth century, into a wealthy [Romano-British](#) family. His father was a [deacon](#) and his grandfather was a priest in the Christian church. According to tradition, Patrick returned to Ireland to convert the [pagan](#) Irish to Christianity. The *Declaration* says that he spent many years evangelising in the northern half of Ireland and converted "thousands". Tradition holds that he died on 17 March and was buried at [Downpatrick](#). Over the following centuries, many legends grew up around Patrick and he became Ireland's foremost saint.

There are many legends associated with St. Patrick. The symbol of the **shamrock** used for St. Patrick's Day comes from the story of St. Patrick using the shamrock to illustrate the Holy Trinity.

Another popular belief is that St. Patrick banished the snakes from Ireland. The story says that while St. Patrick was fasting, snakes attacked him, so he chased all snakes into the ocean. However, there have never been snakes in Ireland during the post-glacial

period. The absence of snakes and symbolism involved with snakes is believed to explain the story, although it could have been referring to type of worm rather than snakes. One legend has St. Patrick sticking a walking stick into the ground while evangelizing, which turned into a tree.

Saint Patrick's Day, or the **Feast of Saint Patrick** (Irish: *Lá Fhéile Pádraig*, "the Day of the Festival of Patrick"), is a cultural and religious celebration occurring annually on 17 March, the death date of the most commonly-recognised **patron saint** of Ireland, **Saint Patrick** (c. AD 385–461).

Saint Patrick's Day was made an official Christian **feast day** in the early seventeenth century.

The day commemorates Saint Patrick and the arrival of **Christianity in Ireland**,^[3] as well as celebrating the **heritage and culture of the Irish** in general.^[5] Celebrations generally involve public parades and festivals, and the wearing of green attire or **shamrocks**.

Saint Patrick's Day is a public holiday in the **Republic of Ireland**,^[10] **Northern Ireland**,^[11] the Canadian province of **Newfoundland and Labrador** and in the British Overseas Territory of **Montserrat**.

Celebrations and traditions

On St. Patrick's Day it is customary to wear **shamrocks** and/or green clothing or accessories (the "wearing of the green"). **Saint Patrick's feast day**, as a kind of national day, was already being celebrated by the Irish in Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries.. In 1903, Saint Patrick's Day became an official public holiday in Ireland. The first Saint Patrick's Day **parade** held in the **Irish Free State** was held in **Dublin** in 1931.

Legend and Folklore

Shamrocks, leprechauns and the blarney stone are associated with St. Patrick's Day. Shamrocks are three-leaved clovers found growing in patches on grass. You are thought to be lucky if you find a four-leaved clover, so do keep it if you ever come across one!

Leprechauns are little Irish fairies, and they are thought to work as shoe-makers for other fairies. The Irish say that if a leprechaun is caught by a human, he will reveal where he hides his pot of gold. On this day, pictures of shamrocks and leprechauns are hung everywhere. Some people even dress up as leprechauns complete with their big green hats!

The village of Blarney is situated northwest of the Irish city of Cork. Blarney comes from the Irish word 'An blarna', meaning the plain. Blarney Castle is a very famous castle in this village and is 90 feet tall. The world famous Blarney Stone is on the top story. It is said that if one kisses this stone, one will be given the gift of eloquence, meaning to have beautiful speaking abilities. Nowadays, the word blarney means the ability to influence and coax with fair words and soft speech without offending.

