

HOW CHRISTMAS LOOKS IN POLAND?

At least 2 weeks before the date, Poles start baking gingerbread cookies. They are so delicious that one baking session usually is not enough.

We also start decorating our homes but decorating the X-mas tree is traditionally done on 24th of December in the morning. Later, we wait for the first star in the sky. It's a sign to start the most important dinner of the year. But first you need to lay the table. Under the white tablecloth we put some hay – it symbolises the manger where Mary put Baby Jesus. There is an extra seat and a plate for an unexpected guest/a wanderer.

Then the head of the family does the Bible reading, we pray and share the Wafer with each other, wishing everyone all the best. It's a magical and very moving moment.

Finally, we can start the X-mas Eve dinner. There are 12 dishes representing either 12 Apostoles or 12 months of a year. The ingredients also have their meaning, for example: fish-the symbol of Christianity; poppy seeds or gingerbread- the symbol of wealth and well-being; mushrooms- strength and health; many of them originate from pagan or early slavic Times. The dishes differ a bit from one region to another but they are not supposed to contain meat. Good news for vegetarians! One must try all of them, otherwise there will be no luck for U next year.

Polish children don't have to wait for their presents until the X-mas Day. They get them after the dinner.

Everybody keeps awake until midnight. At the time we arrive at a church, just like shepards, to welcome the newborn Jesus. It's a joyful mass with a lot of carol singing.

The 25th and the 26th December is time for paying visits to relatives and friends. Poles traditionally prepare loads of tasty food for Xmas so we eat a lot, drink and sing carols. And we visit other relatives or they visit us. And the procedure repeats. It's definitely not a good time to count your calories.

Merry Christmas! Wesółych Świąt!