Holidays and Celebrations in Brazil

- Many holidays and celebrations around the world come from religion.
- There is no official religion in Brazil but it is primarily a Christian nation with 75 percent of the people reporting that they are Catholic.
- Since the primary religion in both Brazil and the United States is Christian, we share some similar holidays.
- However, the way in which Brazilians celebrate these holidays can be different than the ways that we celebrate them in the U.S.

New Years Day

- Brazil follows the same calendar as we do so New Years Day is on January 1.
- Rio de Janeiro has the most celebrated New Years Eve in the whole world.
- More than 2 million people gather on the beaches of Rio to party and ring in the new year. Copacabana is the most popular beach in Rio for this party.
- It is tradition for people to wear white on New Years Eve in hopes of a peaceful new year.
- Other colors are worn for different wishes. For example, one may wear green to hope for good health. Red is meant to attract passion and romance. Yellow is for money.
- Food is often an important part of a celebration.
- In Brazil, it is tradition to eat lentils for a New Years Celebration. Lentils are believed to increase luck during the upcoming year.
- The ritual of eating pomegranates is said to bring money in the upcoming year. Traditionally Brazilians will eat 7 seedlets without eating the seed. The seeds will then be dried and placed in a wallet to ensure that the wallet will always be full.
- Figs are also eaten at this time to bring prosperity.
- Since pigs use their snouts to root forward in the dirt, pork is considered lucky by Brazilians and is supposed to ensure that your pantry is full all year long.
- Eating turkey is to be avoided at this time of year. These foods are considered unlucky if eaten at New Years. It is believed that since birds scratch the earth backwards, eating them will mean moving backwards in life, instead of forward.
- Lemanja is an African-Brazilian goddess. She is from a religion called Candomble which was brought to Brazil from the African slaves.
- Lemanja is thought to be the goddess of the sea.
- Followers of this religion, along with others, take part in some additional New Years rituals.
- Right after the clock strikes midnight, and after the fireworks show, some Brazilians will rush to the water to jump over 7 waves. After jumping each wave, you say a wish. After jumping the waves, it is believed that you will make Lemanja angry if you turn your back on the ocean so most people will back out of the water.
- Another tradition is to send out candles, flowers, and other gifts out onto the water as an offering to Lemanja.
- If your offering comes back, your wish will not be granted as Lemanja is not happy with your offering.
- Just like here, it is tradition to kiss a person of the opposite sex right after midnight. This is thought to bring good luck in relationships.
- If the past year was not a good one for you, some people will jump up and down 3 times with champagne in a glass and then throw the champagne over their shoulder as a way to make sure that the bad year is erased and the new one will be better.

Carnival

- Carnival is the biggest festival in Brazil.
- The word carnival comes from the Italian language “carne levare” translates to removal of meat.
- Carnival began in Brazil in the 1830’s as a way of celebrating and indulging before Lent begins.
- Lent is the 40 day period leading up to Easter. In the Roman Catholic tradition, Lent is a time of fasting and prayer.
- Carnival is one big party before the more serious 40 days of Lent.
- It takes place beginning on the Friday before Ash Wednesday and lasts until Tuesday.
Many cities have their own Carnival celebrations but the one held in Rio de Janeiro is the largest. Samba music began in Brazil. Samba music and dancing play a huge role in celebrating Carnival. The local Samba schools work all year long on their performance during the Carnival parade. They compete to see which samba school will have the honor of winning the championship title. These performances are practiced in complete secrecy. Each samba school presents a theme which is portrayed by dancers, musicians, and floats. The performances are 80 minutes long. Each samba school has its own flag, colors, and costume styles. These elaborate costumes are made by hand. Each samba school has the following components of their performance. There will always be a flag bearer and her escort. This is the first couple to come dancing down the parade. The Whirling Ladies—Bahianas—This is a group of older women that represent the soul of the samba schools. These women are highly respected in the samba world. They are women who have worked for many years preparing their samba schools for Carnival. Next comes the Queen of the Drums which is a highly sought after job. These drum queens are celebrities during and after Carnival. Following the drum queens are the bateria or drummers. The rhythm of the drums is what keeps the whole performance going. Following the drummers are more samba dancers. These dancers are chosen through a competition each year to represent their school. While the schools are busy parading and the spectators are busy enjoying a night of entertainment, the Carnival judges are watching to see which school will be champion. Some communities celebrate Carnival with smaller festivities. Many neighborhoods have block parties featuring samba music and delicious food.

**Good Friday/ Easter**

- Good Friday and Easter are celebrated similarly to our traditions in the United States.
- Christians in Brazil will go to church and then celebrate with friends and family by having a meal.
- Purple is the traditional color for Easter in Brazil.
- It is tradition for a child’s godparents to give small gifts on Easter.
- Easter egg hunts are not a common occurrence but children do get chocolate and eggs with treats inside.
- Some villages will put on a passion play with thousands of people taking part.
- People will decorate the streets with bright colors. A small parade will be held with people carrying statues of Mary and Jesus. The macela flower is the traditional Easter flower in Brazil.

**Tiradentes Day**

- This is a national holiday in Brazil where businesses and schools are closed. It is celebrated on April 21 each year.
- Tiradentes means “tooth puller” in Portuguese and was the nickname of a famous revolutionary in Brazil.
- During Portuguese rule in Brazil, workers in the mines were being forced to pay heavy taxes even though the gold that they were mining was running out.
- They decided to rebel and gathered in the streets on the day that taxes were due.
- Portugal caught the organizers of this revolution. Joaquim Jose da Silva Xavier was one of the primary organizers. He took the fall for everyone and was hung to death on April 21, 1792.
- He is considered a national hero.
- There is a national monument in his honor.
- Most families simply use this as a day off work and enjoy family activities.

**Independence Day**

- Brazil celebrates their independence on September 7.
- If you remember, Brazil won it’s independence from Portugal without a fight. The prince Pedro declared it’s independence in 1822.
• Celebrations in Brazil include parades, parties, picnics and fireworks in the evening.
• The people of Brazil are very proud of their flag. Banners and flags can be seen being carried and displayed by many.
• Sound familiar?

**Nossa Senhora Aparecida**
• This is celebrated on October 12.
• It is the celebration of Brazil’s patron saint… the protector of Brazil.
• In the town of Aparecida is the world’s 2nd largest basilica (special church designated by the Pope).
• For this celebration, thousands of people travel to the basilica and pray and pay honor to Nossa Senhora Aparecida.
• The story dates back to 1717. Three fishermen were not catching any fish and prayed to the Virgin Mary. Soon after, the statue drifted into their nets and they began to catch a large amount of fish. In fact, they caught so many that their boat almost tipped.
• Since that date, she has been associated with miracles.
• October 12 is also Children’s Day in Brazil.
• Children look forward to this day all year.
• It is a time for adults to make sure that their children feel valued and loved.
• Most children eat a lot of sweets and get to open small gifts.

**All Soul’s Day**
• This is celebrated on November 2 and is a national holiday.
• It is a day where Brazilians visit the graves of those who have died.
• They bring flowers and pray for the souls of their loved ones who have died.
• Roman Catholics believe that when a person dies, they go to 1 of 3 places. The first is heaven, the second is hell, and the third is purgatory.
• Roman Catholics believe that most souls go to purgatory first where their souls can be cleansed.
• Catholics believe that the prayers of people on earth can cleanse the sins/souls of their loved ones so they may enter heaven.

**National Day of Black Conscience**
• This is celebrated on November 20.
• It was chosen to coincide with the death of a famous African-Brazilian leader named Zumbi dos Palmares who fought for the rights of slaves in Brazil.
• Educational events and celebrations of African culture are found throughout the cities of Brazil.
• It is an important holiday for the Africans living in Brazil and works to reduce the discrimination that Africans face.
• It was declared a holiday in 2011.

**Christmas**
• Christmas in Brazil is celebrated on December 25.
• In many ways, the Brazilians traditions are similar to ours; however, Brazil is in summer at Christmas time.
• Christmas plays are popular but there is also traditionally a shepherdess and a woman who tries to steal the baby Jesus.
• Nativity scenes or “presepio” are commonly found.
• Santa Claus is called Papa Noel.
• Sometimes children leave a sock by their window and Papa Noel exchanges it for a present.
• Christmas trees are found in homes.
• Many cities will put up giant electric Christmas trees.
• Rio de Janeiro has the world’s largest floating Christmas tree. It is about 278 feet high… as tall as a 31 story building.

**Birthday Celebrations**
• In many ways, birthday celebrations are similar to the United States.
• Cake is important.
• Children's birthdays often encompass a theme...like a movie or special hobby.
• The song that is sung is called Parabenes a Voce which means congratulations to you.
• It is considered rude to leave before this song has been sung.
• In elaborate/fancy parties, children may change clothes just for the singing of this song.

Weddings
• When a couple gets engaged in Brazil, an engagement ring is not usually given.
• Instead, the couple purchases their wedding rings and wear them on their right hand until the time of the wedding ceremony.
• Brazilian weddings are known to be pretty expensive. The old tradition was for the wedding to be paid for by the brides parents. Now, this practice has changed and the bride and groom (mainly the groom) is responsible for wedding expenses.
• Brides traditionally wear white in Brazil. The traditional color of shoes is gold.
• Many brides write the name of their single friends in the hem of their wedding dress in order to bring luck to them in finding a husband.
• In the U.S. the bride usually chooses the bridesmaids dresses which are traditionally the same color and style.
• In Brazil, bridesmaids can choose their own dress color and style.
• This makes for a colorful event!
• During the reception, the grooms tie is cut into pieces and sold to the wedding guests. This increases funds for the couple’s honeymoon.
• Brides receive extra cash by taking their shoes off during the reception. The shoe is placed in the center of the dance floor and guests generously drop money into the shoe. This is done to wish the newlyweds financial future to be great.

Traditions related to babies
• Pregnancy cravings are taken very seriously in Brazil. It is thought that if you don’t eat what you want right away, your baby will resemble that food.
• It is tradition to give a gift to people/family who come to visit when your baby is born. This can be a small treat along with a picture of the new baby.
• Another fun custom....When a Brazilian baby hiccups, it is tradition to take a thread from his/her clothing or blanket, lick it, and put it on his/her forehead until he/she stops the hiccups.