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It's 2021, Happy New Year! What Year Is It?

Humans have been keeping time since at least the [Neolithic Era](#) (around 10,000 B.C.) The first calendars date to the [Bronze Age](#). These ancient calendars were generally based on the phases of the moon and the solar year. Since then, various cultures have developed their own calendars. The following are some calendars used around the world:

[The Gregorian calendar](#), a solar dating system used by most of the world, is also known as the [New Style Calendar](#). It is named for Pope Gregory XIII, who issued the papal bull "*Inter gravissimas*" in 1582, announcing calendar reforms for all of [Catholic](#) Christendom. The Gregorian calendar modified the existing [Julian calendar](#) (Old Style Calendar) which [Julius Caesar](#) had introduced in the ancient Roman Republic in 46 BCE. The Gregorian calendar is today's internationally accepted civil calendar and is also known as the [Western or Christian calendar](#). It is a solar calendar based on a 365-day common year divided into 12 months of irregular lengths. Eleven (11) of the months have either 30 or 31 days, while the second month, February, has only 28 days during the common year, and every four years February has 29 days called a [leap year](#).

[The traditional Chinese calendar](#), officially known as the Agricultural Calendar or Farming Calendar is a [lunisolar calendar](#) which reckons years, months, and days according to astronomical phenomena. Although modern-day China uses the [Gregorian calendar](#), the traditional Chinese calendar governs holidays - such as the [Chinese New Year](#) and [Lantern Festival](#)—in both China and in [overseas Chinese](#) communities. It also gives the traditional Chinese nomenclature of dates within a year, which people use for selecting auspicious days for [weddings](#), funerals, moving, or starting a business.

[Ethiopia](#) has its own ancient calendar. [The Ethiopian Calendar](#) has more in common with the Coptic Egyptian Calendar. The Ethiopic and Coptic calendars have 13 months, 12 of 30 days each and an intercalary month at the end of the year of 5 or 6 days depending whether the year is a leap year or not. The year starts on the 11th of September in the Gregorian Calendar or on the 12th in Leap Years.

[The Hebrew calendar](#), also called Jewish calendar, is a [lunisolar calendar](#) used today predominantly for Jewish religious observances. It determines the dates for [Jewish holidays](#) and the appropriate [public reading](#) of [Torah portions](#), [yahrzeits](#) (dates to commemorate the death of a relative), and daily [Psalm](#) readings, among many ceremonial uses.

The modern [Iranian or Persian Calendar](#) is the official calendar in Iran and Afghanistan. To find the corresponding year of the Gregorian calendar, add 621 or 622 to a Solar Hejri year. It begins on the vernal equinox as determined by astronomical calculations for the Iran Standard Time meridian (GMT+3.5h). Its years are designated AP, short for Anno Persico. The Iranian year usually begins within a day on the 21st of March.

[Japanese calendar](#) types have included a range of official and unofficial systems. At present, Japan uses the [Gregorian calendar](#) together with year designations stating the [year of the reign of the current Emperor](#). In 1873, as part of Japan's [Meiji period](#) modernization, a calendar based on the solar Gregorian calendar was introduced.

The [Muslim calendar](#), is also called Hijrī calendar or Islamic calendar. It is a dating system used in the [Muslim world](#) for religious purposes. It is based on a year of 12 months, each month beginning approximately at the time of the new moon. The months are alternately 30 and 29 days long except for the 12th, [Dhū al-Hijjah](#), the length of which is varied in a 30-year cycle intended to keep the calendar in step with the true phases of the moon. In 11 years of this cycle, Dhū al-Hijjah has 30 days, and in the other 19 years it has 29. Thus, the year has either 354 or 355 days.

There are also [the Buddhist calendar](#) used throughout Southeast Asia and the [Hindu calendars](#) - Vikram Samvat, Shaka Samvat, and Kali Yuga - collective names for most of the luni-sidereal calendars and sidereal calendars traditionally used in [Hinduism](#). The Vikram Samvat is used in Nepal and some Indian states.

Throughout human history, the arrival of a new year has symbolized rebirth and renewal, and New Year's Eve is one of our most celebrated holidays. It is now an entrenched tradition to say goodbye to the old year as we usher in a new year and the promise it holds.

Although today, most celebrate the New Year on January 1st, others celebrate their New Year during other months based on cultural calendars, religious beliefs, agricultural, astronomical events, etc. We examine the different calendars in this edition and the origin of Fireworks.

We take this opportunity to welcome the The Honorable Jacobo E. Fernández M., Consul General of the Dominican Republic in Miami to South Florida.

We are happy that 2020 has finally come to an end. We are equally happy about the arrival of the COVI-19 vaccine. From all of us at the Protocol and International Affairs Division, we wish you a very happy and prosperous New Year.

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List of Airports and Airlines Offering COVID-19 Testing

Despite COVID-19 cases surging in the U.S. 46 million people are projected to fly for the holidays and more than 85 million Americans will travel just for Christmas, according to a recent survey at [The Vacationer](#). [Click here](#) for the current list of airports and airlines offering COVID-19 testing. The Vacationer also includes airports that will be adding testing in the very near future.

ISO 8601 - Date and Time Format

The new [ISO 8601](#) date and time format seeks an unambiguous calendar-and-clock format that is internationally understood. This ISO standard helps remove doubts that can result from the various day-date conventions, cultures and time zones that impact a global operation. It provides a way of presenting dates and times that is clearly defined and understandable to both people and machines. When dates are represented with numbers they can be interpreted in different ways.

For example, **01/05/12** could mean **January 5, 2012**, or **May 1, 2012** depending on the language or customs of the country. On an individual level this uncertainty can be very frustrating, in a business context it can be very expensive. Organizing meetings and deliveries, writing contracts, and buying airplane tickets can be very difficult when the date is unclear. ISO 8601 tackles this uncertainty by setting out an internationally agreed format for dates: **YYYY-MM-DD**. Hence, **September 27, 2012** is represented as **2012-09-27**. ISO 8601 can be used by anyone who wants to use a standardized way of presenting: Date, time of day, coordinated Universal Time (UTC), local time with offset to UTC, date and time, time intervals, recurring time intervals, etc.

Origin of Military Time

The history of military time dates to the early 11th Dynasty in ancient Egypt (est. 2100 BC). Civilians use the 12-hour system where the same notation of time appears twice a day and differentiated with the notations - AM and PM. This makes it easy to confuse time frames. Also, it is very easy to confuse 12 midnight and 12 noon and it is very difficult in the military to do swift calculations in time difference. For example, in the 12-hour system, it is harder to visualize that something lasts for six hours when told that it starts at 10:45 and ends at 4:45. On the contrary, it is easier to determine duration if we are told that it will last from 10:45 to 16:45. To avoid the above challenges, the U.S. Navy adopted the 24-hour system in 1920 which was later adopted by the U.S. army in 1942. Various other armies from developed nations like Russia, also implemented the system in the period of World War II.

New Year's Celebrations and the History of Fireworks

The first recorded celebration of the arrival of a new year took place 4000 years ago, the festival of [Akitu](#) in Babylon. It occurred during the vernal equinox in March and lasted 11 days. Over the millennia, the Babylonian tradition of making promises to gain favor from the gods, evolved into our tradition of making new year's resolutions. In ancient Egypt, the new year was heralded by flooding of the Nile, while the Chinese New Year was celebrated during the second new moon after the winter solstice.

In many countries, New Year's celebrations start on December 31 and last into the early hours of January 1. The first to greet the new year are Samoa and Kiribati/Christmas Island, while the last are Baker and Howland Islands, part of the U.S. Minor Outlying Islands. There are many common traditions associated with New Year's celebrations such as attending parties, drinking champagne, making resolutions, and kissing your loved ones when the clock strikes midnight. One of the most popular and spectacular is watching fireworks displays.

Even though the exact date and place are lost to history, historians believe that fireworks were developed in the 2nd century BCE in China. The [first natural fireworks](#) were bamboo stalks thrown into a fire. Once the hollow air pockets in the bamboo overheated, the stalk exploded with a bang. These loud noises were believed to ward off evil spirits. According to legend, around 800 CE, a Chinese alchemist mixed sulfur, charcoal, and potassium nitrate (saltpeter). Instead of unlocking the secret to eternal life, he invented a rudimentary form of gunpowder which allowed the Chinese to make exploding weapons and fireworks. As the Chinese honed their skills, they developed rockets that could be fired at enemies without using arrows.

Historians believe that while Europeans were introduced to [gunpowder weapons during the Crusades](#), Franciscan missionaries, explorers, and diplomats brought gunpowder and the recipes to make it to Europe and the Middle East during the 13th century. When Marco Polo returned to Italy in 1295, he brought fireworks from Asia. Europeans developed the new technology into powerful weapons such as cannons and muskets, but also liked fireworks and used them during celebrations and for entertainment. The [first royal fireworks display](#) took place on King Henry VII's wedding day in 1486 and not to be outdone by the English, [Czar Peter the Great](#) of Russia put on a 5-hour fireworks show when his son was born.

During the Renaissance, fireworks were very popular, and pyrotechnic schools existed all over Europe to teach eager students the art of creating elaborate explosions. Until the 1830's, when the Italians started to incorporate trace amounts of metal to increase brightness and chemicals to create color, all fireworks, including America's first Fourth of July display on July 4, 1777, [were orange](#). In [1999, Disney, the world's largest consumer of fireworks](#), started launching shells with compressed air instead of gunpowder at EPCOT's "Illuminations: Reflections of Earth". The largest shell ever launched was a 2,200-pound behemoth launched from a 15,000-pound mortar cannon during the 2018 United Arab Emirates New Year's Eve fireworks celebration.

Times Square Ball Drop

The U.S. most iconic New Year's tradition is the Times Square Ball Drop. In 1903, The New York Times newspaper moved into its new headquarters in Longacre Square. After four years of fireworks shows, the owner of the paper, Adolph Ochs, wanted a bigger spectacle to draw attention to the newly renamed Times Square. He approached Walter Palmer, the Times chief electrician, and asked him to create something interesting and captivating to draw in crowds of spectators. Palmer, who was familiar with the maritime tradition of dropping a time ball so sailors could adjust their chronometers while at sea, devised the idea of dropping a lit-up ball on New Year's Eve. The first ball drop took place on December 31, 1907. It was an iron ball, 5 feet in diameter. Since then, there have been 6 balls. The latest made its debut in 2009. It was made by Waterford Crystal, has a diameter of 12 feet and weighs 11,875 pounds. Because of the large size of the ball, the flagpole was also enlarged and now rises 475 feet above the street. The ball remains atop One Times Square year-round.

Many cities now drop their own ball on New Year's day. Miami has the "Big Orange", a 35 ft. neon icon, that slowly ascends 400 ft. up the side of the InterContinental Hotel. New Orleans drops a "Gumbo Pot." Bethlehem, PA, has a "Giant Peep". Plymouth, WI, has the "Big Cheese", and Mount Olive, NC, lowers a "Pickle," etc.

DIPLOMATIC & CONSULAR RELATIONS

Welcome • Bienvenue • Bienvenidos • Akeyi



The Honorable Jacobo E. Fernández M. is the Consul General of the Consulate General of the Dominican Republic in Miami. He received his engineering degree from the Pedro Henríquez Ureña University (UNPHU) and his master's degree in "Energy Planning" from the Technological Institute of Santo Domingo (INTEC). Consul General Fernández also obtained a second master's degree in "Diplomacy and International Relations" from the Santo Domingo Catholic University (UCSD). In addition, he holds a specialty certification in "Planning Models and Resource Optimization", which he completed at the Comprehensive Water and Land Center (CIDIAT), in Mérida, Venezuela under the auspices of the IDB and the OAS.

The Consul General is a specialist in "Preparation, Formulation and Evaluation of Investment Projects" at the Pontifical Catholic University Madre y Maestra (PUCMM) which is under the auspices of the IDB and the World Bank, as well as a specialist in Hydraulics and in the "Integrated Management of Hydrographic Basins". He has extensive experience as Head of the Projects Unit, that serves as a link between the International Development Agency (AID) of the United States and the Technical Secretariat of the Presidency of the Dominican Republic in charge of PL 480 projects. He also serves as an advisor to the Senate of the Dominican Republic for their energy and hydraulic work projects.

He served as Director of Urban Public Works and as Head of Works and Storm Drainage for the City of Santo Domingo. In recent years, he worked with an interdisciplinary team whose goal it is to stimulate the broadest investment and facilitate the development of roads, dams, clinical, educational, and sports facilities, aqueducts, drinking water, as well as waste water treatment plants, storm drains, Institutional Works, and docks and ports among other essential projects to achieve greater economic and social development in the Dominican Republic. Consul General Fernández was a University Professor for more than twelve (12) years.

Countries Celebrating Independence or National Days in December

Bahrain: Dec. 16, 1971; gained independence from Britain.

Burkina Faso: Dec. 11, 1958; gained independence from France.

Central African Republic: Dec. 1, 1958, National Day; French colony of Ubangi-Shari renamed the Central African Republic when it gained independence from France on August 13, 1960.

Finland: Dec. 6, 1917; gained independence from Russia on Dec. 4, '17.

Kazakhstan: Dec. 16, 1991; gained independence from the Soviet Union.

Kenya: Dec. 12, 1963; "Jamhuri Day" celebrates independence from Britain and the creation of the Rep. of Kenya.

Libya: Dec. 24, 1951; gained independence from Italy.

Macau: Dec. 20, 1999; Portugal formally returned Macau to China.

Mongolia: Dec 29, 1911; Mongolia declared its independence from the Manchu-led Qing Empire in 1911; it declared independence again in 1921, and a referendum was held in 1945. Dec 29th has been celebrated annually since 2011. Independence Day is also the term used for Constitution Day on Nov 26.

Portugal: Dec. 1, 1640; commemorates the restoration of Portuguese independence from the Spanish Empire after 60 years of Spanish rule (1580 – 1640).

Qatar: Dec 18, 1878; Founder's Day (National Day) celebrates Qatar's unification in 1878; it gained independence from Britain on Sep. 3, 1971.

Romania: Dec. 1, 1918: Great Union Day. Unification of Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina with the Romanian Kingdom.

Slovenia: Dec 26, 1990; Independence and Unity day to commemorate the official proclamation of the Slovenian independence referendum.

South Africa: Dec. 11, 1931; became independent from Great Britain, but the British monarch remained head of state. On May 31, 1961, the country became a republic.

St. Lucia: Dec 13: Feast Day of St. Lucy, patron saint of St. Lucia is celebrated as the National Day.

Tanzania: Dec. 9, 1961; Tanganyika gained independence from Britain in 1961. In 1964, it merged with Zanzibar to become Tanzania.

Thailand: Dec. 5: The birthdate of late King Bhumibol Adulyadej is celebrated as the National Day.

United Arab Emirates: Dec. 12, 1971: Union Day: On this day, six of the seven emirates formed a federation, founding the UAE. The 7th joined on December 10, 1972.

ABOUT US

The core mission of MDAD's Protocol and International Affairs Division is -

To facilitate the movement of official guests, delegations, dignitaries and VIPs through MIA and support the airport's international programs and initiatives.

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