



## **AN IMPORTANT DAY IN THE UNITED STATES**

The United States celebrates its Independence Day on July 4 each year. This day commemorates the United States' independence from Britain with the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. At that time, there were 13 states which had been British colonies: New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. These 13 colonies became states represented on the first flag of the U.S. with 13 stars. Now, of course, the flag has 50 stars, as there are 50 states.

Do you know how Americans celebrate Independence Day? Here are some traditions common in small towns and big cities in the United States.

Many people decorate their houses and windows and front porches with red, white, and blue bunting or balloons. Some people even dress in red, white, and blue! Of course, the American flag is displayed prominently.

Some towns and cities organize parades during the day. People come and stand on the side of the street and cheer as they watch the parade go by. In a parade in a small town you might see marching bands, community groups such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, Veterans' groups, the town mayor and other dignitaries, politicians, antique cars, and, of course, fire trucks. After the parade, there might be baseball games or activities for the children such as competitions like tug-of-war, sack races and three-legged races. Often, there are barbecues and concerts in the evening for all to enjoy.

Fireworks are very common in Fourth of July celebrations. In cities such as Philadelphia, where the declaration of Independence was signed, they are held on the waterfront, and they are very beautiful as the red, white, and blue fireworks are reflected on the waters of the Delaware River.

Some people also like to light little sparklers at home, in their front yards, so, in many neighborhoods, you can see the lights and hear the pop-pop-pop of sparklers long into the night on the Fourth of July.

As Independence Day is a federal holiday, most people don't work on that day and often take their vacation then. It's summertime, so many people head to the beach for a cool dip into the ocean or to the mountains to enjoy some fresh air and some rest and relaxation.

Of course, the food on the Fourth of July is very important, and usually it involves a grill. The iconic American foods for this day are grilled hamburgers and hot dogs. Popular side dishes may be potato salad, corn on the cob, coleslaw, and fruit, such as watermelon. Of course, dessert is important, too, and it's often decorated in red, white, and blue colors. Cakes, for example, might have white icing and strawberries and blueberries as decoration to represent the colors of the American flag. Or, for the ever-popular summer treat--ice cream--you might try to get your favorite flavors in red, white, and blue. How about vanilla ice cream with raspberries and blueberries? Mmmm, sounds yummy!

However it is celebrated, Americans really enjoy the Fourth of July. Perhaps you will adopt some of these traditions, or enjoy a parade or a hamburger with all of the trimmings.

*When is Independence Day celebrated in your country? What are some of the traditions that go along with it? Tell us in the forum: click on the red box in the website where it says Forum, log in, and write your answer.*