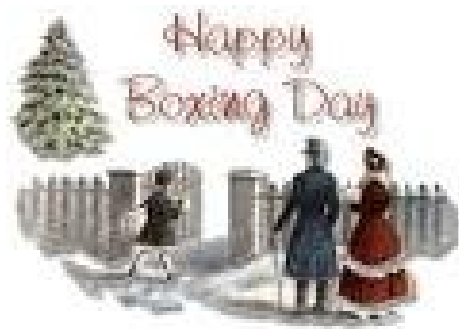


# Boxing Day

Boxing Day is traditionally the day following Christmas Day, when servants and tradesmen would receive gifts from their superiors or employers, known as a "Christmas box". Today, Boxing Day is better known as a bank or public holiday that occurs on 26 December. It is observed in the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and some other Commonwealth nations.



In many European countries, including notably Germany, Poland, Scandinavia and the Netherlands, 26 December is celebrated as the Second Christmas Day.

## Origins

The exact etymology of the term "boxing" is unclear. The European tradition, which has long included giving money and other gifts to those who were needy

and in service positions, has been dated to the Middle Ages, but the exact origin is unknown. In ancient, pre-Christian Rome, Saturnalia was a Roman celebration during which slave owners would switch roles with their slaves. Gift giving was a part of Saturnalia and benevolence to slaves was a practice which may have influenced the later December tradition of boxing and presenting of gifts to people of lesser status. Also, it may come from a custom in the late Roman/early Christian era, wherein metal boxes placed outside churches were used to collect special offerings tied to the Feast of Saint Stephen, which in the Western Church falls on the same day as Boxing Day.

In Britain, it was a custom for tradesmen to collect "Christmas boxes" of money or presents on the first weekday after Christmas as thanks for good service throughout the year. This custom is linked to an older English tradition: Since they would have to wait on their masters on Christmas Day, the servants of the wealthy were allowed the next day to visit their families. The employers would give each servant a box to take home containing gifts and bonuses, and sometimes leftover food.

## Shopping



In Britain, Canada, and some states of Australia, Boxing Day is primarily known as a shopping holiday. It is a time where shops have sales, often with dramatic price reductions. For many merchants, Boxing Day has become the day of the year with the greatest amount of returns.

Many retailers open very early (typically 5 am or even earlier) and offer doorbuster deals and loss leaders to draw people to their stores. It is not uncommon for long queues to form early in the morning of 26 December, hours before the opening of shops holding the big sales, especially at big-box consumer electronics retailers. Many stores have a limited quantity of big draw or deeply discounted items. Because of the shoulder-to-shoulder crowds, many choose to stay home and avoid the hectic shopping experience. The local media often cover the event, mentioning how early the shoppers began queueing up, providing video of shoppers queueing and later leaving with their purchased items.

### Sport

In England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland it is traditional for the Premier League, Scottish Premier League and Irish Premier League respectively, as well as the lower divisions and rugby leagues, to hold a full programme of football and Rugby League matches on Boxing Day. Traditionally, matches on Boxing Day are played against local rivals. This was originally to avoid teams and their fans having to travel a long distance to an away game on the day after Christmas Day. It also makes the day an important one in the sporting calendar.

In horse racing, there is the King George VI Chase at Kempton Park Racecourse in Surrey. It is the second most prestigious chase in England, after the Cheltenham Gold Cup.



Boxing Day is a popular day in the UK and U.S. for mounted fox hunters. Despite fox hunting being banned by the Hunting Act in 2004, Boxing Day remains the biggest hunt of the year for most hunts in the UK by use of scent drag trails instead of live quarry. Australia holds the first day of the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and the start to the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race.

