

I'm not headed home to see family this year for the holidays. How do I keep the traditions alive?

Regardless of what you celebrate, there's probably a group of like minded internationals who are searching for some fellow compatriots to celebrate. Ask your local expat group or at your embassy if they know of any gatherings. Invite your friends and neighbors (regardless of nationality) over to celebrate. Explaining your traditions to others, who have never had the experience, can be a great way to stay connected. Then, Skype. Call your family and friends back home to say hello and see how they are celebrating. And finally, embrace the traditions of the Netherlands. Kruidnoten and chocolate letters are delicious after all.

My partner and I are off different religious faiths and we just had our first child. We're having a lot of arguments about how to celebrate our faiths with our son. What can we do?

You're probably not having a lot of arguments about religion because of religion. You're probably having them because you're sleep deprived new parents who have had their lives thrown into chaos by being utterly responsible for another human being.

Your son is too young to remember if you celebrate Christmas or Kwanza or Yule or Hanukkah this year, so first, stop arguing. You'll have plenty of time to expose your son to both of your faiths. Secondly, while your child is incredibly dependant now, he won't be forever and will eventually grow up and choose his own course. Have ongoing, honest conversations about what your religious identities mean to you, expose him to both of your faiths' and ultimately, let him make his own choice.

Are Christmas markets worth the journey to Germany? What else is there to do in the Netherlands this holiday season?

I have never been especially impressed by the Christmas markets in Germany, but some people do love them. If you want to stay a bit closer to home, Amsterdam, the Hague, and many other cities in the Netherlands host their own.

If you don't want to buy crafts, try lichtjesavond. In many Dutch cities, the tree lightening ceremony comes complete with gluhwein, profertjes and a show. And, of course, ice skating. Several places in the Hague and Amsterdam set up outdoor rinks.