



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

## 2023 RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS AND OBSERVANCES

As an organization dedicated to diversity, inclusion and global strategies, it is important for Y staff to consider religious holidays and observances when planning meetings and special events. Below is a non-comprehensive chart of observances<sup>i</sup> from the largest U.S. religious groups (by population<sup>ii</sup>) to keep in mind as you plan for 2023.

Contact:

For more information or support, please email Y-USA's DIG team at

[DIG@ymca.net](mailto:DIG@ymca.net) or connect with us in the [DIG Link community](#).

| BA'HA'I   |   |                                   |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Naw-Ruz   | Tuesday, March 21 through Wednesday, March 22, 2023   | Work-Restricted                   |
| Ridván  | Thursday, April 20 through Tuesday, May 2, 2023       | Work-Restricted*                  |
| Declaration of the Báb                          | Tuesday, May 23 through Wednesday, May 24, 2023       | Work-Restricted                   |
| Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh                        | Sunday, May 28 through Monday, May 29, 2023           | Work-Restricted                   |
| Martyrdom of the Báb                            | Sunday, July 9 through Monday, July 10, 2023          | Work-Restricted                   |
| Birth of the Báb                                | Sunday, October 15 through Monday, October 16, 2023   | Work-Restricted                   |
| Birth of Bahá'u'lláh                            | Monday, October 16 through Tuesday, October 17, 2023  | Work-Restricted                   |
| BUDDHISM  |   |                                   |
| Lunar New Year                                  | Sunday, January 22, 2023                              | Special Worship**                 |
| Sangkran Thai New Year                          | Thursday, April 13 through Saturday, April 15, 2023   | Special Worship                   |
| Pi Mai  | Friday, April 14 through Sunday, April 16, 2023       | Special Worship                   |
| Maha Sangkran Khmer New Year                    | Friday, April 14 through Sunday, April 16, 2023       | Special Worship                   |
| Vesak   | Friday, May 5, 2023                                   | Work-Restricted                   |
| Pchum Ben/Ancestors Day                         | Friday September 29 through Monday October 16, 2023   | Special Worship                   |
| Cambodian Water Festival Ceremony (Bon Om Touk) | Sunday, November 26 through Tuesday November 28, 2023 | Special Worship                   |
| Loy Krathong                                    | Tuesday, November 28, 2023                            | Special Worship                   |
| Bodhi Day                                       | Friday, December 8, 2023                              | Special Worship                   |
| CHRISTIANITY                                    |   |                                   |
| Epiphany/ Three Kings Day                       | Friday, January 6, 2023                               | Special Worship                   |
| Ash Wednesday                                   | Wednesday, February 22, 2023                          | Special Worship                   |
| Good Friday                                     | Friday, April 7, 2023                                 | Special Worship                   |
| Easter  | Sunday, April 9, 2023                                 | Special Worship (Federal Holiday) |
| Orthodox Easter                                 | Sunday, April 16, 2023                                | Special Worship                   |
| Christmas                                       | Monday, December 25, 2023                             | Special Worship (Federal Holiday) |

| HINDUISM  |   |                 |
|---|---|-----------------|
| Maha Shivarati  | Saturday, February 28, 2023                                 | Work-Restricted |
| Rama Navami   | Thursday, March 30, 2023                                    | Work-Restricted |
| Holi  | Tuesday, March 7 through Wednesday, March 8, 2023           | Special Worship |
| Krishna Janmashtami   | Wednesday, September 6 through Thursday, September 7, 2023  | Work-Restricted |
| Diwali  | Sunday, November 12, 2023                                   | Work-Restricted |
| ISLAM (Islamic holidays begin at sundown the previous day.) |   |                 |
| Ramadan   | Wednesday, March 22 through Friday, April 21, 2023          | Work-Restricted |
| Eid al-Fitr   | Friday, April 21 through Saturday, April 22, 2023           | Work-Restricted |
| Eid al-Adha   | Wednesday, June 28 through Thursday, June 29, 2023          | Work-Restricted |
| Ashura  | Thursday, July 27 through Friday, July 28, 2023             | Special Worship |
| Mawlid-al-Nabi  | Tuesday, September 26 through Wednesday, September 27, 2023 | Work-Restricted |
| JUDAISM (Jewish holidays begin at sundown.)                 |   |                 |
| Purim   | Monday, March 6 through Tuesday, March 7, 2023              | Special Worship |
| Passover  | Wednesday, April 5 through Thursday, April 13, 2023         | Work-Restricted |
| Shavuot   | Thursday, May 25 through Saturday, May 27, 2023             | Work-Restricted |
| Rosh Hashanah   | Friday, September 15 through Sunday, September 17, 2023     | Work-Restricted |
| Yom Kippur  | Sunday, September 24 through Monday, September 25, 2023     | Work-Restricted |
| Sukkot  | Friday, September 29 through Friday, October 6, 2023        | Work-Restricted |
| Simchat Torah   | Saturday, October 7 through Sunday, October 8, 2023         | Work-Restricted |
| Hanukkah  | Thursday, December 7 through Friday, December 15, 2023      | Special Worship |
| SIKHISM   |   |                 |
| Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib                         | Friday, January 20, 2023                                    | Special Worship |
| Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Sahib                           | Friday, June 16, 2023                                       | Work-Restricted |
| Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib                        | Friday, November 24, 2023                                   | Work-Restricted |
| Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Sahib                            | Monday, November 27, 2023                                   | Work-Restricted |

Please note some of these religion's dates are based on different calendars than the US calendar – these are the best estimation of when they will be celebrated in the US but best to consult with local community members to confirm.

**Work-Restricted:** A religious observance that restricts or limits work and/or physical or mental activity directed toward the production or accomplishment of something; toil; labor.

**Special Worship:** Such religious observances listed above are NOT strictly work-restricted but may involve a special worship or observance.

## BA'HAI

**Naw-Ruz:** New Year's Day

**Ridván:** 12-day festival, work is prohibited on 1<sup>st</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> days. Celebrates time that Bahá'u'lláh spent in the Garden of Ridván and proclamation of mission.

**Declaration of the Báb:** celebrates the beginning of the Bahá'í faith.

**Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh:** commemorates the death of Bahá'u'lláh.

**Martyrdom of the Báb:** commemorates the death of the Báb.

**Birth of the Báb:** celebrates the birth of the Báb.

**Birth of Bahá'u'lláh:** celebrates the birth of Bahá'u'lláh.

## BUDDHISM

**Bodhi Day:** Also called Rohatsu or Bodhi Day. The day many Buddhist traditions celebrate the enlightenment of the Buddha.

**Vesak:** Traditionally known as Visakha Puja, is an extremely important day in the Buddhist tradition. This commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha.<sup>iii</sup>

**Buddha's Birthday:** The birthday of the Buddha.

**Songkran Thai New Year:** The traditional Thai New Year of Songkran, the biggest and most important of Thailand's annual festivals, has been celebrated for centuries and is full of tradition and culture. The word Songkran is derived from ancient Sanskrit, a language dating back thousands of years, and means to 'step into', 'enter' or 'pass into'. It describes the monthly movement or 'astrological passage' within the zodiac from one sphere to the next; in April the sun leaves the sphere of Aries and enters that of Taurus, a period known as Maha Songkran or the Great Songkran. This signifies the start of the Thai New Year.<sup>iv</sup>

**Pchum Ben/Ancestors Day:** combining the Khmer word "Pchum", which means "to gather together", and "Ben", a "ball of food", is a Cambodian 15-day religious festival, culminating in celebrations on the 15th day of the tenth month in the Khmer calendar, paying respects to deceased relatives of up to 7 generations.

**Maha Songkran Khmer New Year:** Traditional and ritual celebration of the solar new year in Cambodia, ending of the harvesting season, and receiving the mythical blessing of the king of the gods, Kabil Maha Prum, through his seven daughters from Mount Sumeru, following the 12-animal zodiac.

**Cambodian Water Festival (Bon Om Touk):** Three day festival on the full harvest moon, ending the monsoon season, marking a reversal of the flow between the Mekong and Tonle Sap rivers, and commemorating and honoring a naval victory by Khmer King Jayavarman VII in the 12th century.

**Loy Krathong:** Loy Krathong is a festival celebrated by the Thai people on the full moon night of the twelfth month of the Thai Lunar calendar. In the modern calendrical system, this event usually occurs in the month of November, though the date varies from year to year. Regardless of the exact timing, Loy Kathrong is always considered as an occasion for joy, gratitude, and new beginnings.<sup>v</sup>

## CHRISTIANITY

**Ash Wednesday:** This day marks the beginning of Lent, a six-week period of prayer and fasting in anticipation of Easter.

**Good Friday:** The day Jesus was crucified.

**Easter Sunday:** The celebration of Jesus being raised from the dead.

**Christmas:** The day Jesus was born.

**Epiphany/ Three Kings Day:** Orthodox Christians - the day Jesus was born.

## HINDUISM

**Maha Shivaratri:** Hindu celebration of the birth of Lord Shiva.

**Ramanavani:** A festival celebrating the birth of the most supreme God in Hinduism, Lord Rama.

**Holi:** Festival of Spring or Festival of Colors. This day is typically celebrated by families in India, Nepal, and other parts of Asia by partaking in various regional traditions.

**Krishna Janmashtami:** A two-day festival celebrating the birth of Lord Krishna.

**Diwali:** Festival of Lights. This holiday is typically celebrated by families sharing various traditional rituals in their homes. Although a 5 day festival, the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the festival is the actual day of Diwali, commonly known as the Hindu New Year.

## ISLAM

**Eid al-Fitr:** Marks the end of Ramadan, the month of fasting, and the holiest month in Islamic tradition. It literally means "breaking the fast."

**Eid al-Adha:** Festival of Sacrifice. Commemorates the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son Ishmael. God provided a sheep to sacrifice in Ishmael's place.

**Ashura:** Shi'a Muslims commemorate the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali, Muhammad's grandson. According to Sunni Muslims, Muhammad fasted and asked others to do so on this day as well.

**Ramadan:** The ninth month of the Islamic lunar year and is the time in which Muslims observe fast from sunrise to sunset.

## JUDAISM

**Rosh Hashanah:** Jewish New Year. It is the beginning of a ten-day period of introspection and reflection.

**Yom Kippur:** Day of Atonement. It is the holiest day of the Jewish calendar marked with fasting, worship, and repentance.

**Sukkot:** Festival of Tabernacles. Commemorates the 40 years the Israelites wandered in the desert as well as the fall harvest. While the festival of Sukkot lasts for 7 days, the first day is considered a day of rest.

**Passover:** Festival of Passover. It commemorates the Exodus of Jews from slavery in Egypt. While Passover lasts for 8 days, the first two nights are the most significant and the first day is considered a day of rest.

**Purim:** Purim is a joyous holiday that celebrates the saving of the Jews from a threatened massacre in ancient Persia.

**Shavuot:** Shavuot marks the spring harvest and giving of the Torah. It is celebrated by eating dairy products and learning.

**Simchat Torah:** Simchat Torah is a joyous holiday that celebrates completing the yearly cycle of Torah readings.

**Hanukkah:** Also known as the festival of lights, it is an eight-day festival commemorating the recovery of Jerusalem and the Second Temple during the Maccabean Revolt in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE.

## SIKHISM

**Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib:** The tenth and last living prophet of the Sikhs, he passed the guruship onto the Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, and the Sikh community, Guru Panth.

**Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Sahib:** The 5th Guru and first martyr of the Sikhs. He compiled the the religious text of Sikhism, the Guru Granth Sahib.

**Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib:** The 9th Guru of the Sikhs, who was killed by Mughal rulers in 1675 for defending Hindus facing forcible conversion to Islam.

**Birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Sahib:** Commemorates the birth of the founder of the Sikh faith.

**Mawlid-al-Nabi:** The observance of the birthday of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. It is celebrated with carnivals, large street processions, and the decorating of homes and mosques.

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<sup>i</sup> Calendar of Religious Holy Days and Observances. (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/calendar-religious-holidays-and-observances/index.php>

<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Membership Report. (2010). Retrieved from: [http://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/r/u/rcms2010\\_99\\_us\\_adh\\_2010.asp](http://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/r/u/rcms2010_99_us_adh_2010.asp)

<sup>iii</sup> Dhammatharo, A. L. & Bhikkhu, T. (1998). Visakha Puja. Retrieved from: <https://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/thai/lee/visakha.html>

<sup>iv</sup> TAT Newsroom (2021) Retrieved from: <https://www.tatnews.org/2021/03/thailands-songkran-festival-its-origins-history-and-modern-day-observance/>

<sup>v</sup> Mongkolrat, Tayud (2014) Retrieved from: [https://www.thailandfoundation.or.th/culture\\_heritage/loy-krathong-festival-all-you-need-to-know/](https://www.thailandfoundation.or.th/culture_heritage/loy-krathong-festival-all-you-need-to-know/)