

# Celebration and status worldwide

---

Valentine's Day customs<sup>[*which?*]</sup> developed in early modern England and spread throughout the [English-speaking world](#) in the 19th century. In the later 20th and early 21st centuries, these customs spread to other countries, but their effect has been more limited than those of [Hallowe'en](#), or than aspects of [Christmas](#), (such as [Santa Claus](#)).<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

Due to a concentrated marketing effort, Valentine's Day is celebrated in some [East Asian](#) countries with [Chinese](#) and [South Koreans](#) spending the most money on Valentine's gifts.<sup>[81]</sup>

## Americas

### Latin America

In most [Latin American](#) countries, for example, [Costa Rica](#),<sup>[82]</sup> [Mexico](#),<sup>[83]</sup> and [Puerto Rico](#), Saint Valentine's Day is known as *Día de los Enamorados* (day of lovers)<sup>[84]</sup> or as *Día del Amor y la Amistad* (Day of Love and Friendship). It is also common to see people perform "acts of appreciation" for their friends.<sup>[85]</sup> In [Guatemala](#) it is known as the "Día del Cariño" (Affection Day).<sup>[86]</sup> Some countries, in particular the [Dominican Republic](#) and [El Salvador](#),<sup>[87]</sup> have a tradition called *Amigo secreto* ("Secret friend"), which is a game similar to the [Christmastradition](#) of [Secret Santa](#).<sup>[85]</sup>

In [Brazil](#), the *Dia dos Namorados* (lit. "Lovers' Day", or "Boyfriends'/Girlfriends' Day") is celebrated on June 12, probably because that is the day before [Saint Anthony's](#) day, known there as the *marriage saint*,<sup>[88]</sup> when traditionally many single women perform popular rituals, called *simpatias*, in order to find a good husband or boyfriend. Couples exchange gifts, chocolates, cards and flower bouquets. The

February 14 Valentine's Day is not celebrated at all because it usually falls too little before or too little after the [Brazilian Carnival](#)<sup>[89]</sup> — that can fall anywhere from early February to early March and lasts almost a week. Because of the absence of Valentine's Day and due to the celebrations of the Carnivals, Brazil was recommended by *U.S. News & World Report* as a tourist destination during February for Western singles who want to get away from the holiday.<sup>[90]</sup>

[Colombia](#) celebrates *Día del amor y la amistad* on the third Saturday in September instead.<sup>[91]</sup> *Amigo Secreto* is also popular there.<sup>[92]</sup>

## United States

In the United States, about 190 million Valentine's Day cards are sent each year, not including the hundreds of millions of cards school children exchange.<sup>[93]</sup>

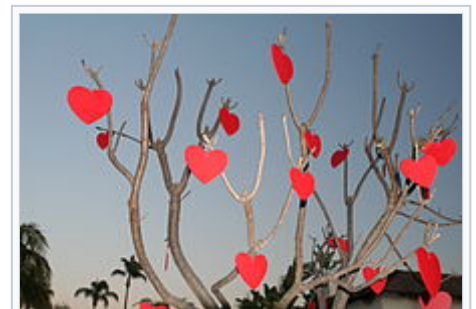
Valentine's Day is a major source of economic activity, with total expenditures in 2017 topping \$18.2 billion in 2017, or over \$136 per person.<sup>[94]</sup> popular gift-giving event, with This is an increase from \$108 per person in 2010.<sup>[77]</sup>

## Asia

### China

See also: *The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl*

In Chinese, Valentine's Day is called lovers' festival ([simplified Chinese](#): 情人节; [traditional Chinese](#): 情人節; [Mandarin](#): *Qīng Rén Jié*; [Hokkien](#): *Chêng Lîn Chiat*; [Cantonese](#): *Chihng Yàhn Jit*; [Shanghainese](#) *Xin Yin Jiq*). The "Chinese Valentine's Day" is the [Qixi Festival](#), celebrated on the seventh day of the seventh



Tree in [San Diego](#) decorated with hearts on Valentine's Day

month of the lunar calendar. It commemorates a day on which a legendary cowherder and weaving maid are allowed to be together. In [Chinese culture](#), there is an older observance related to lovers, called "[The Night of Sevens](#)" ([Chinese](#): 七夕; [pinyin](#): *Qi Xi*). According to the legend, the [Cowherd star](#) and the [Weaver Maid star](#) are normally separated by the [Milky Way](#) (silvery river) but are allowed to meet by crossing it on the 7th day of the 7th month of the [Chinese calendar](#).<sup>[95]</sup>

In recent years, celebrating [White Day](#) has also become fashionable among some young people.<sup>[96]</sup>

## India

In [India](#), in antiquity, there was a tradition of adoring [Kamadeva](#), the lord of love; exemplified by the erotic carvings in the [Khajuraho Group of Monuments](#) and by the writing of the [Kamasutra](#).<sup>[97]</sup> This tradition was lost around the [Middle Ages](#), when Kamadeva was no longer celebrated, and public displays of sexual affection became frowned upon.<sup>[97]</sup> This repression of public affections began to loosen in the 1990s.<sup>[98]</sup>

Valentine's Day celebrations did not catch on in India until around 1992. It was spread due to the programs in commercial TV channels, such as [MTV](#), dedicated radio programs and love letter competitions, in addition to an economical liberalization that allowed the explosion of the valentine card industry.<sup>[97][99]</sup> Economic liberalization also helped the Valentine card industry.<sup>[99]</sup> The celebration has caused a sharp change on how people have been displaying their affection in public since the Middle Ages.<sup>[97]</sup>

In modern times, Hindu and Islamic<sup>[100]</sup> traditionalists have considered the holiday to be cultural contamination from the West, a result of the globalization in India.<sup>[97][99]</sup> [Shiv Sena](#) and the [Sangh Parivar](#) have asked their followers to shun the holiday and the "public admission of love" because of them being "alien to Indian culture".<sup>[101]</sup> Although these protests are organized by political elites, the

protesters themselves are middle-class Hindu men who fear that the globalization will destroy the traditions in their society: [arranged marriages](#), [Hindu joint families](#), [full-time mothers](#), etc.<sup>[99][100]</sup>

Despite these obstacles, Valentine's Day is becoming increasingly popular in India.<sup>[102]</sup>

Valentine's Day has been strongly criticized from a [postcolonial](#) perspective by intellectuals from the Indian left. The holiday is regarded as a front for "Western imperialism", "[neocolonialism](#)", and "the exploitation of working classes through [commercialism](#) by [multinational corporations](#)".<sup>[103]</sup> It is claimed that as a result of Valentine's Day, the [working classes](#) and [rural poor](#) become more disconnected socially, politically, and geographically from the hegemonic [capitalist](#) power structure. They also criticize mainstream media attacks on Indians opposed to Valentine's Day as a form of [demonization](#) that is designed and derived to further the Valentine's Day agenda.<sup>[104][105]</sup> Right wing [Hindu nationalists](#) are also hostile. In February 2012, [Subash Chouhan](#) of the [Bajrang Dal](#) warned couples that "They cannot kiss or hug in public places. Our activists will beat them up".<sup>[106]</sup> He said "We are not against love, but we criticize vulgar exhibition of love at public places".<sup>[107]</sup>

## Iran

In the first part of the 21st century, the celebration of Valentine's Day in [Iran](#) has been harshly criticized by Islamic teachers who see the celebrations as opposed to [Islamic culture](#). In 2011, the Iranian printing works owners' union issued a directive banning the printing and distribution of any goods promoting the holiday, including [cards](#), gifts and [teddy bears](#). "Printing and producing any goods related to this day including posters, boxes and cards emblazoned with hearts or half-hearts, red [roses](#) and any activities promoting this day are banned ... Outlets that violate this will be legally dealt with", the union warned.<sup>[108][109]</sup>

In Iran, the [Sepandarmazgan](#), or Esfandegan, is a festival where people express love towards their mothers and wives, and it is also a celebration of earth in ancient Persian culture. It has been

progressively forgotten in favor of the Western celebration of Valentine's Day. The Association of Iran's Cultural and Natural Phenomena has been trying since 2006 to make Sepandarmazgan a national holiday on February 17, in order to replace the Western holiday.<sup>[110]</sup>

## Israel

In [Israel](#), the Jewish tradition of [Tu B'Av](#) has been revived and transformed into the Jewish equivalent of Valentine's Day. It is celebrated on the 15th day of the month of [Av](#)(usually in late August). In ancient times girls would wear white dresses and dance in the vineyards, where the boys would be waiting for them ([Mishna](#) Taanith end of Chapter 4). Today, Tu B'Av is celebrated as a second holiday of love by secular people (along with Valentine's Day), and it shares many of the customs associated with Saint Valentine's Day in western societies. In modern Israeli culture Tu B'Av is a popular day to pronounce love, propose marriage and give gifts like cards or flowers.<sup>[111]</sup>

## Japan

In [Japan](#), [Morozoff Ltd.](#) introduced the holiday for the first time in 1936, when it ran an advertisement aimed at foreigners. Later in 1953, it began promoting the giving of heart-shaped chocolates; other Japanese confectionery companies followed suit thereafter. In 1958, the [Isetan department store](#) ran a "Valentine sale". Further campaigns during the 1960s popularized the custom.<sup>[112][113]</sup>

The custom that only women give chocolates to men may have originated from the translation error of a chocolate-company executive during the initial campaigns.<sup>[114]</sup> In particular, [office ladies](#) give chocolate to their co-workers. Unlike western countries, gifts such as greeting cards,<sup>[114]</sup> candies, [flowers](#), or [dinner dates](#)<sup>[115]</sup> are uncommon, and most of the activity about the gifts is about giving the right amount of chocolate to each person.<sup>[114]</sup> Japanese chocolate companies make half their annual sales during this time of the year.<sup>[114]</sup>

Many women feel obliged to give chocolates to all male co-workers, except when the day falls on a Sunday, a holiday. This is known as *giri-choko* (義理チョコ), from *giri* ("obligation") and *choko*, ("chocolate"), with unpopular co-workers receiving only "ultra-obligatory" *chō-giri choko* cheap chocolate. This contrasts with *honmei-choko* (本命チョコ, lit. "true feeling chocolate"), chocolate given to a loved one. Friends, especially girls, may exchange chocolate referred to as *tomo-choko* (友チョコ); from *tomo* meaning "friend".<sup>[116]</sup>

In the 1980s, the Japanese National Confectionery Industry Association launched a successful campaign to make March 14 a "reply day", where men are expected to return the favour to those who gave them chocolates on Valentine's Day, calling it *White Day* for the color of the chocolates being offered. A previous failed attempt to popularize this celebration had been done by a *marshmallow* manufacturer who wanted men to return marshmallows to women.<sup>[112][113]</sup>

Men are expected to return gifts that are at least two or three times more valuable than the gifts received in Valentine's Day. Not returning the gift is perceived as the man placing himself in a position of superiority, even if excuses are given. Returning a present of equal value is considered as a way to say that the relationship is being cut. Originally only chocolate was given, but now the gifts of jewelry, accessories, clothing and lingerie are usual. According to the official website of White Day, the color white was chosen because it's the color of purity, evoking "pure, sweet teen love", and because it's also the color of sugar. The initial name was "Ai ni Kotaeru White Day" (Answer Love on White Day).<sup>[112][113]</sup>

In Japan, the romantic "date night" associated to Valentine's Day is celebrated on *Christmas Eve*.<sup>[117]</sup>

In a 2006 survey of people between 10 and 49 years of age in Japan, *Oricon Style* found the 1986 *Sayuri Kokushō* single "Valentine Kiss" to be the most popular Valentine's Day song, even though it sold only 317,000 copies.<sup>[118]</sup> The singles it beat in the ranking were number one selling "Love Love

Love" from [Dreams Come True](#) (2,488,630 copies) and "Valentine's Radio" from [Yumi Matsutoya](#)(1,606,780 copies). The final song in the top five was "[My Funny Valentine](#)" by [Miles Davis](#).<sup>[118]</sup>

In Japan, a slightly different version of a holiday based on a lovers' story called [Tanabata](#) (七夕) has been celebrated for centuries, on July 7 ([Gregorian calendar](#)).<sup>[119]</sup><sup>[*better source needed*]</sup> It has been considered by Westerners as similar to St. Valentine's Day.<sup>[120]</sup>

## Lebanon

[Saint Valentine](#) is the [patron saint](#) for a large part of the Lebanese population. Couples take the opportunity of Valentine's feast day to exchange sweet words and gifts as proof of love. Such gifts typically include boxes of chocolates, cupcakes, and red roses, which are considered the emblem of sacrifice and passion.

## Malaysia

Islamic officials in [West Malaysia](#) warned Muslims against celebrating Valentine's Day, linking it with vice activities. Deputy Prime Minister [Muhyiddin Yassin](#) said the celebration of romantic love was "not suitable" for Muslims. Wan Mohamad Sheikh Abdul Aziz, head of the Malaysian Islamic Development Department ([Jakim](#)), which oversees the country's Islamic policies said that a [fatwa](#) (ruling) issued by the country's top clerics in 2005 noted that the day 'is associated with elements of Christianity,' and 'we just cannot get involved with other religions' worshipping rituals.' Jakim officials planned to carry out a nationwide campaign called "Awat Jerat Valentine's Day" ("Mind the Valentine's Day Trap"), aimed at preventing Muslims from celebrating the day on February 14, 2011. Activities include conducting raids in hotels to



Valentine's Day themed bouquet of [cupcakes](#)

stop young couples from having unlawful sex and distributing leaflets to Muslim university students warning them against the day.<sup>[121][122]</sup>

On Valentine's Day 2011, West Malaysian religious authorities arrested more than 100 Muslim couples concerning the celebration ban. Some of them would be charged in the Shariah Court for defying the department's ban against the celebration of Valentine's Day.<sup>[123]</sup>

In **East Malaysia**, the celebration are much more tolerated among young Muslim couples although some Islamic officials and Muslim activists from the West side have told younger generations to refrain from such celebration by organising da'wah and tried to spread their ban into the East.<sup>[124][125]</sup> In both the states of **Sabah** and **Sarawak**, the celebration is usually common with flowers.<sup>[126][127][128]</sup>

## **Pakistan**

The concept of Valentine's Day was introduced into Pakistan during the late 1990s with special TV and radio programs. The **Jamaat-e-Islami** political party has called for the banning of Valentine's Day celebration.<sup>[102]</sup> Despite this, the celebration is becoming popular among urban youth and the florists expect to sell a great amount of flowers, especially red roses. The case is the same with card publishers.<sup>[129]</sup>

In 2016, local governing body of Peshwar officially banned the celebration of Valentine's Day in the city of Peshwar. The ban was also implemented in other city such as Kohat by the local government.<sup>[130]</sup>

In 2017, the **Islamabad High Court** banned Valentine's Day celebrations in public places in Pakistan.<sup>[131]</sup>

## **Philippines**



In the [Philippines](#), Valentine's Day is called *Araw ng mga Pusong* in much the same manner as in the West. It is usually marked by a steep increase in the price of flowers, particularly red roses.<sup>[132]</sup> It is the most popular day for weddings,<sup>[133]</sup> with some localities offering mass ceremonies for no charge.<sup>[134]</sup>

## **Saudi Arabia**

In [Saudi Arabia](#), in 2002 and 2008, [religious police](#) banned the sale of all Valentine's Day items, telling shop workers to remove any red items, because the day is considered a Christian holiday.<sup>[135][136]</sup> This ban has created a [black market](#) for [roses](#) and [wrapping paper](#).<sup>[136][137]</sup> In 2012, the religious police arrested more than 140 Muslims for celebrating the holiday, and confiscated all red roses from flower shops.<sup>[138]</sup> Muslims are not allowed to celebrate the holiday, and non-Muslims can celebrate only behind closed doors.<sup>[139]</sup>

"Saudi cleric Sheikh Muhammad Al-'Arifi said on Valentine's Day Eve that celebrating this holiday constitutes [bid'a](#) – a forbidden innovation and deviation from religious law and custom – and mimicry of the West."<sup>[140][141]</sup>

## **Singapore**

According to findings, [Singaporeans](#) are among the biggest spenders on Valentine's Day, with 60% of Singaporeans indicating that they would spend between \$100 and \$500 during the season leading up to the holiday.<sup>[81]</sup>

## **South Korea**

In [South Korea](#), women give chocolate to men on February 14, and men give non-chocolate candy to women on March 14 ([White Day](#)). On April 14 (Black Day), those who did not receive anything on

February 14 or March go to a Chinese-Korean restaurant to eat black noodles (자장면 *jajangmyeon*) and lament their 'single life'.<sup>[115]</sup> Koreans also celebrate **Pepero Day** on November 11, when young couples give each other Pepero cookies. The date '11/11' is intended to resemble the long shape of the cookie. The 14th of every month marks a love-related day in Korea, although most of them are obscure. From January to December: Candle Day, Valentine's Day, White Day, **Black Day**, Rose Day, Kiss Day, Silver Day, Green Day, Music Day, Wine Day, Movie Day, and Hug Day.<sup>[142]</sup> Korean women give a much higher amount of chocolate than Japanese women.<sup>[115]</sup>

## Taiwan

In **Taiwan**, traditional **Qixi Festival**, Valentine's Day and White Day are all celebrated. However, the situation is the reverse of Japan's. Men give gifts to women on Valentine's Day, and women return them on **White Day**.<sup>[115]</sup>

## Lebanon

They celebrate Valentine's Day in a different way in every city. In the main city, Bayreuth, the men take women out to dine and may buy them a gift. Many women are asked to marry on that day. In Saida they celebrate it with the whole family – it is more about family love than a couple love.

## Europe

### United Kingdom

In the UK, just under half of the population spend money on their Valentines and around £1.3 billion is spent yearly on cards, flowers, chocolates and other gifts, with an estimated 25 million cards being sent.



Taipei 101 in  
Valentine's Day 2006

In Wales, some people celebrate [Dydd Santes Dwynwen](#) (*St Dwynwen's Day*) on January 25 instead of (or as well as) Valentine's Day. The day commemorates [St Dwynwen](#), the Welsh patron saint of love.<sup>[143]</sup>

## Ireland

On Saint Valentine's Day in Ireland, many individuals who seek true love make a [Christian pilgrimage](#) to the Shrine of St. Valentine in [Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church](#) in Dublin, which is said to house relics of Saint Valentine of Rome; they [pray](#) at the shrine in hope of finding romance.<sup>[144]</sup> There lies a book in which foreigners and locals have written their prayer requests for love.<sup>[145]</sup>

## Finland and Estonia

In [Finland](#) Valentine's Day is called *ystävänäpäivä* which translates into "Friend's Day". As the name indicates, this day is more about remembering friends, not significant others. In [Estonia](#) Valentine's Day is called *sõbrapäev*, which has the same meaning.<sup>[146]</sup>

## France

In France, a traditionally [Catholic](#) country, Valentine's Day is known simply as "[Saint Valentin](#)", and is celebrated in much the same way as other western countries.<sup>[147]</sup>

## Greece



Many Christians make a [pilgrimage](#) to [Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church](#) on Saint Valentine's Day to implore the [intercession](#) of

St. Valentine's Day, or Ημέρα του Αγίου Βαλεντίνου in Greek tradition was not associated with romantic love. In the Eastern Orthodox church there is another Saint who protects people who are in love, [Hyacinth of Caesarea](#) (feast day July 3), but this was not widely known until the late 1990s<sup>[148]</sup> In contemporary Greece, Valentine's Day is generally celebrated as in the common Western tradition.<sup>[149]</sup>

Saint Valentine in their [prayers](#), with the hope of finding true love<sup>[144]</sup>

## Portugal

In [Portugal](#), the holiday is known as "Dia dos Namorados" (Lover's Day / Day of the Enamoured). As elsewhere, couples exchange gifts, but in some regions, women give a *lenço de namorados* ("lovers' handkerchief"), which is usually embroidered with love motifs.<sup>[150]</sup>

## Romania

In recent years, Romania has also started celebrating Valentine's Day. This has drawn backlash from several groups, institutions<sup>[151]</sup> and nationalist organizations like [Noua Dreaptă](#), who condemn Valentine's Day for being superficial, commercialist and imported Western [kitsch](#). In order to counter the perceived denaturation of national culture, [Dragobete](#), a spring festival celebrated in parts of Southern Romania, has been rekindled after having been ignored during the Communist years as the traditional Romanian holiday for lovers. The holiday is named after a character from Romanian folklore who was supposed to be the son of [Baba Dochia](#).<sup>[152]</sup> Its date used to vary depending on the geographical area, however nowadays it is commonly observed on February 24.<sup>[153]</sup>

## Scandinavia

In [Denmark](#) and [Norway](#), February 14 is known as *Valentinsdag*, and it is celebrated in much the same manner as in the United Kingdom.<sup>[154]</sup> In [Sweden](#) it is called *Alla hjärtans dag* ("All Hearts' Day") and is not widely celebrated. A 2016 survey revealed that less than 50% of men and women were planning to buy presents for their partners.<sup>[155]</sup> The holiday has only been observed since the 1960s.<sup>[154]</sup>

## **Spain**

In Spain, Valentine's Day is known as "[San Valentín](#)" and is celebrated the same way as in the UK.