

What is Boxing Day?

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Hollywood, MD- Most Americans head back to work Tuesday, Dec. 26, but the British across the pond will observe the day as Boxing Day.

For many former and current British colonies, the day after Christmas marks Boxing Day, an official holiday.

Why is it called Boxing Day? The tradition originated when masters gave Christmas boxes to tradespeople and servants on the day after Christmas. The custom started because servants would have to wait on their masters Christmas Day. They were allowed to visit their families the next day and their employers would give them boxes to take home with them. Those boxes often contained gifts, bonuses and maybe leftover food.

What do people do on Boxing Day? It's very similar to Black Friday in the U.S. Boxing day is for shopping. The day attracts a record number of shoppers who are lured in with after holiday sales. It used to be the biggest shopping day of the year in the United Kingdom, until Black Friday took over. Another tradition; many go fox-hunting and then grab a drink at the pub.

When did Boxing Day become an official holiday? In the U.K. and many of its former colonies, Boxing Day is a government-mandated holiday. It's been a national holiday in England and Wales since 1871. Scotland followed suit but not until 1974. In Ireland, Dec. 26 was recognized as a national holiday in the early 1920's, but it's known as St. Stephen's Day.

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