

# Christmas is same, snow or no

**PETER VASEY is a senior broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter.**

*Dashing through the snow,  
In a one-horse open sleigh,  
O'er the fields we go,  
Laughing all the way.*

As a child I never questioned these lyrics, nor the lyrics of other Christmas songs. I did not question their logic that Christmas meant snow.

Problem was, I was in Australia. While the northern hemisphere freezes through the Christmas holidays, down under we celebrate the 'silly season' in temperatures sometimes reaching 90 degrees.

But the strange part for northern

hemisphere visitors who spend holiday time in Australia is the juxtaposition of decorations symbolizing a wintry season in the heat of our summer.

Snowmen, candy canes, snow and pine trees -- we have it all.

Australia's Christmas season begins in earnest in mid-November. We don't celebrate Thanksgiving, so retailers get an early start on their bombardment of junk mail and decorations to show Christmas is closing in on the unsuspecting hordes.

The shopping centers are decorated with tinsel garlands, artificial pines standing at center stage, under which Santas of various shapes and sizes sit.

Large mats of soft, white foam lie around them to simulate snow. Over the speakers mounted in the shopping center streams lyrics such as: "I'm

dreaming of a white Christmas/Just like the ones I used to know."

At home stands a 6-foot artificial Canadian pine in our lounge. The tree is decorated with tinsel, glass balls, lights, angel's hair and other ornaments -- just your common Christmas tree.

Around the house, garlands of tinsel are hung and, yes, even stockings are hung though not by a fireplace since it is not a common feature of homes in Sydney.

The weeks before Christmas see many carols-by-candlelight concerts. They vary from the local community gatherings to spectacular events broadcast across the country.

In the evening, the windows around the house may be opened to let the cool, evening breeze from the south float through. That is, it has cooled

down from the stifling day's heat.

Around the suburbs the colored lights flicker and dance on houses, bushes and around letter boxes, though this phenomenon is not as big here as in the United States.

And what of Christmas Day?

Beaches such as Sydney's famous Bondi Beach are filled with families indulging in the joys Christmas brings in the best weather summer can offer.

At the beach, children get to try out their new boogie boards and play beach cricket using their new cricket sets.

Christmas means family time, so the gatherings stretch the holiday.

My family visits one side of our extended family the weekend before Christmas. Christmas Day is spent with my parents and siblings, and the other side of the family visits on


Boxing Day, the day after Christmas. Among Australia's created traditions, are our own Christmas carols.

Typically they talk of summer: "The north wind is tossing the leaves, the red dust is over the ground." But these do not replace the older carols from other, colder parts of the world.


But of course the big question regarding Christmas is what Santa does with his reindeer when he reaches the heat of the Australian summer.

Such goes one Australian song: "Six white boomers, snow white boomers / Racing Santa Claus / through the blazing sun / Six white boomers, snow white boomers / On his Australian run."

A boomer is a kangaroo. Hey, you use what you've got. Have a happy holiday.




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you can see forever.*



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## Students join U.S. traditions

By **KIM SWEET**  
Staff Reporter

Some students aren't able to spend the holidays like most students -- with family and friends, celebrating traditions that are special and unique to their families.

Those less-fortunate students sacrifice seeing their loved ones in order to celebrate the holidays American-style. For many, this also means sacrificing their traditions for American ones as they spend the holidays with American families and friends they meet at school.

While traditions in some countries are only slightly different, in others such as China, the Christmas holiday doesn't even exist, Na Xu, a sophomore pre-dentistry major from China, said.

While some Chinese Roman Catholics do celebrate, they celebrate privately. The holiday is seen as a time to celebrate quietly with family, he said.

The majority of the country, however, postpones celebrating until the country's new year, which comes at the end of January.

During that time, many families celebrate in the same manner as Americans celebrate Christmas. Women clean the house from top to bottom, cook large meals as many as 15 days in advance, and hang cutouts of snowflakes and animals in the window. Parents spoil their children with gifts that include new clothing.

"In the young generation, everything is new for the new year," Xu said.

For other students, the American Christmas traditions aren't much different from the ones in their own countries.

Senom Gol, a graduate student from Turkey studying international business, thought the commercialization of Christmas and its traditions has spread to countries around the world, including her own.

"We still have Santa Claus

"*We still have Santa Claus because it is so universal. ... We don't have sales, though.*"

**SEKOM GOL**  
graduate student from Turkey

because it is so universal and commercial," Gol said. "We don't have sales though."

Many students aren't used to celebrating religious holidays in their home countries.

"We don't celebrate religious holidays, we celebrate national holidays," Gol said.

Students often celebrate these holidays alone or with a few friends who are from their country. Sometimes, being caught up in American culture causes students to forget holidays of their own.

In Natasha Sekitoleko's country of Uganda, Independence Day is one of the major holidays. "Last year, we forgot it was Independence Day," Sekitoleko, a junior environmental studies major said.

Some students give up traditional celebrations with an American family and travel over the long break. "Last year, I went to Florida. I want to go to warm places," Gol said.

Others make the long trek home. Sekitoleko will go home to Uganda for Christmas.

Despite the differences in traditions and holidays, international students appreciate the holidays no less than other University of Nebraska-Lincoln students.

"I think holidays are great. It is a nice opportunity to be with others and not worry about classes," Sekitoleko said.