

Festivals in the USA

54

MP3 Independence Day

Congress signed¹ the Declaration of Independence from Great Britain in Independence Hall in Philadelphia on 4th July 1776. Although America declared independence, Britain still wanted to rule. France joined America against the British and sent money and soldiers. After five years of fighting, the British asked for peace talks. In 1783 they signed the peace treaty and America became independent from Britain. In 1788 the states approved the Constitution and on 30th April 1789 George Washington was elected the first President of the new Republic.

The 4th July is a big holiday in the USA. People celebrate outdoors with family and friends. They have picnics and barbecues. There are parades² in the morning and firework displays³ in the evening. Families put up red, white and blue decorations. People sing patriotic songs like *God Bless America*, and a gun⁴ fires a one-gun salute for each state at noon⁵.



Thanksgiving

At the beginning of September 1620 the Pilgrim Fathers set sail⁶ from Britain on a ship called the *Mayflower*. They wanted a new start in the New World.

The journey was long and difficult and there were violent autumn storms. In November, 102 men, women and children landed⁷ at Cape Cod in Massachusetts. It was winter, and so it was difficult for them to find food and build houses. Fifty of the pilgrims died during the hard winter.

In spring the Wampanoag Indians returned. They taught the pilgrims how to hunt for food and plant corn, squash and beans.

The pilgrims built houses, a meeting place and a storehouse⁸ for the food from their first harvest. In 1621 they had a great feast and they invited the Indian people to eat with them.

Today Thanksgiving in America is an important holiday. Americans celebrate it on the fourth Thursday in November. People travel to be with their families. In most American houses there is turkey for lunch and pumpkin pie⁹ for dessert. There are parades and the most popular one is the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York.



Columbus Day

Christopher Columbus landed in the New World on 12th October 1492. Columbus Day is on the second Monday in October, but not all states celebrate it. In New York there is a huge parade each year.



Mardi Gras in New Orleans

The origin of Mardi Gras comes from Medieval Europe. In 1699 a French-Canadian explorer landed 60 miles south of New Orleans and called this place 'Pointe du Mardi Gras'. In 1718 he established¹⁰ New Orleans. By the 1730s there were elegant Mardi Gras balls in New Orleans and by the late 1830s people wore masks. There were horses and carriages and street processions. From 1872 the traditional colours of the carnival were purple, green and gold and there was a Carnival King called Rex. Today the people of New Orleans celebrate Mardi Gras in February. Everyone dresses up in costumes and to see the parade they have to get a place along the parade route hours before it starts. There are a lot of floats¹¹. In the Bacchus Parade the King's float throws coins¹² with the image of the celebrity King on one side. People who catch the coins can keep them. The Mardi Gras Indian is a type of beautiful feathered¹³ costume. In New Orleans, which is called the 'Big Easy', they say that Mardi Gras is the time to forget your problems and have fun.

54-55 MP3

1 Ascolta e leggi i testi, poi sottolinea l'alternativa corretta.

- 1 George Washington became President on 30th / 13th April 1789.
- 2 In the USA the 14th / 4th July is a holiday.
- 3 Americans celebrate Thanksgiving on the fourth / fifth Thursday in November.
- 4 At Thanksgiving there is chicken / turkey for lunch.
- 5 Columbus Day is on the first / second Monday in October.
- 6 Today the people of New Orleans celebrate Mardi Gras in February / November.

2 Rileggi i testi, poi rispondi alle domande.

- 1 What do Americans do on 4th July every year?
- 2 Who left Britain in September 1620? Why did they leave?
- 3 Who did the Pilgrim Fathers invite to their great feast?
- 4 Where does Mardi Gras come from?

3 Scrivi un breve paragrafo (45-60 parole) su una festa di compleanno a casa tua. Segui le seguenti tracce.

- Do you put up decorations?
- What food do you have?
- Do you play special music? What kind of music?
- Do you have a cake? What kind of cake?

WORDS YOU NEED

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|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. sign | firmare |
| 2. parade | parata, sfilata |
| 3. firework display | spettacolo di fuochi d'artificio |
| 4. gun | (qui) cannone |
| 5. noon | mezzogiorno |
| 6. set sail | salpare |
| 7. land | (qui) sbarcare |
| 8. storehouse | magazzino, deposito |
| 9. pumpkin pie | torta di zucca |
| 10. establish | fondare |
| 11. float | carro da parata |
| 12. coin | moneta |
| 13. feathered | piumato |



4 And in your country?

- Do you celebrate carnival in your country?
- When is it? What do you do? Is there any special carnival food? What?