Your notes

GCSE French: revision notes

Customs, festivals and celebrations

Contents

1. Festivals in France
2. Festivals around the world
3. Useful phrases
4. Grammar to use
5. Key terms
6. Quick questions
7. What to do next

Festivals in France

- **Noël** (Christmas, 25 December): **le réveillon** is the big dinner on Christmas Eve (and on New Year's Eve), often with la bûche de **Noël** (a chocolate log cake).
- le jour de l'An (New Year's Day), la Chandeleur (2 February, when people eat crêpes), **Pâques** (Easter, with chocolate eggs), le poisson d'avril (April Fool's Day).
- le 14 juillet (Bastille Day, **la fête** nationale): un défilé (a parade) and des feux d'artifice (fireworks).
- **la fête** des Rois (6 January): families share la galette des rois, and whoever finds la fève (a small charm) wears the crown.
- **la Fête** de la musique (21 June): free concerts in the streets all over France.

Festivals around the world

- l'Aïd (Eid) comes at the end of le Ramadan, a month when many Muslims fast in daylight hours (**jeûner** means to fast).
- Diwali (the festival of light), Hanoukka (Hanukkah), le Nouvel An chinois (Chinese New Year).
- le Carnaval, for example in Nice or Quebec, when people dress up (**se déguiser**), and Mardi gras (Shrove Tuesday).
- Personal celebrations: un anniversaire (a birthday), un mariage (a wedding), **la fête** des mères (Mother's Day).

Useful phrases

- **fêter** / célébrer (to celebrate), **offrir** des cadeaux (to give presents), recevoir des cadeaux (to get presents), envoyer des cartes (to send cards), décorer le sapin (to decorate the tree).

- se réunir en famille (to get together as a family), manger un repas traditionnel (to eat a traditional meal), aller à l'église / à la mosquée / à la synagogue / au temple.
- Joyeux **Noël**! (Happy Christmas!) Bonne année! (Happy New Year!) Bon anniversaire! (Happy birthday!)
- Ma fête préférée est... parce que... (my favourite festival is... because...).

Grammar to use

- The imperfect for what used to happen: quand j'étais petit(e), j'ouvrais mes cadeaux le matin (I used to open my presents in the morning).
- The perfect for one event: l'année dernière, nous avons fêté **Noël** chez mes grands-parents.
- On (we / people) takes the same verb form as il and elle: on mange de la dinde (we eat turkey), on danse.
- Dates: le premier janvier, le quatorze juillet, le vingt-cinq décembre. Only the first of the month uses premier.

Key terms

la fête	festival (also party)
fêter	to celebrate
Noël	Christmas
Pâques	Easter
le réveillon	Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve dinner
les feux d'artifice	fireworks
le défilé	parade
offrir	to give (a present)
le cadeau	present
se déguiser	to dress up (in costume)
jeûner	to fast (go without food)
l'anniversaire	birthday
le jour férié	public holiday

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What happens in France on 14 July?
2. What is "le réveillon"?
3. What do people eat at la Chandeleur?
4. What does "les feux d'artifice" mean?

Your notes

5. What does "se déguiser" mean?
6. What does "Joyeux Noël" mean?
7. How do you say "Happy New Year" in French?
8. What does "offrir des cadeaux" mean?

Answers

1. The national holiday, Bastille Day
2. A big dinner on Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve
3. crêpes
4. fireworks
5. to dress up in a costume
6. Happy Christmas
7. Bonne année
8. to give presents

What to do next

Practise 14 questions on this topic

Try 4 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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