

# THE AMCHAM POST

A joint initiative of the American Chamber of Commerce in Madagascar and L'Express

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4 pages every Saturday

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## CULTURE

# THANKSGIVING : Why and how to celebrate it ?

On the fourth Thursday of each year, the United States celebrates Thanksgiving. Charity, prayers, thankfulness, Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, kids craft, shopping and especially food: all of these are among Thanksgiving traditions in the U.S.

And every year there is one constant around the White House. The U.S. President stands in front of a live turkey and "pardon" it, ensuring that the bird will not be eaten as part of the traditional Thanksgiving feast.

Thanksgiving is all about being grateful for what we have done and got throughout the year.

**Thanksgiving is not only an American concept.** Canada, Germany, or Japan observes it, but in other ways.

**Canada:** Canadians believe they invented the holiday, then was copied by the Americans.

**Germany:** "Harvest thanks festival" – the literal meaning of "Erntedankfest"



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## EDITORIAL

By Timothy Fallon



Thanksgiving is a tradition unlike many others. The beauty of this holiday are the small traditions within the grand ones. Thanksgiving marks the end of the fall and the onslaught of winter. Many northern states begin to experience the years first snowfall and states further south feel the crisp and cool air that is expected during the Thanksgiving Holiday. Proudly referred to as 'Turkey Day,' Thanksgiving is a holiday whose main event is a massive feast. What's not to love? Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, girlfriends, boyfriends and others all gather around the Thanksgiving table to partake in a meal so large that it only comes once a year. Dishes are prepared hours and days in advance with everyone often contributing to the feast. Can't-miss dishes include stuffing, mac and cheese, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, and of course: a huge roasted turkey.

The tradition is borne out of a day of thanks between the Pilgrims (America's earliest settlers), and the Native American's (commonly mislabeled as "Indians"). The great feast can be traced back to 1621, when the colonists of Plymouth -- now a part of the state of Massachusetts - and the Wampanoag Native American's participated in the First Thanksgiving. Legend has it that a Native American by the name of 'Squanto' took some of the pilgrims under his wing to show them the trades of living off the land. He taught them how to cultivate corn -- a plant crucial to survival -- and how to fish. He showed them which nuts and berries are rich in nutrients and which ones are poisonous and could make them sick or kill them. The Pilgrims had just endured a long journey over the Atlantic Ocean after leaving England for a chance at a better life.

They arrived in Plymouth depleted of supplies and incredibly malnourished. Without the help of Squanto, it is likely they would have died off completely. What happened instead was a beautiful cultural exchange and one of the sole positive relationships between a Native American tribe and European settlers. More often than not, these relationships ended in bloodshed and death for both parties involved. It is said that the First Thanksgiving was a feast as a way of the Pilgrims to give thanks to the Wampanoag for helping them obtain their footing in America. This tradition continued for more than two centuries and into the Civil War. In 1863, during the height of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln declared the fourth Thursday of every November "Thanksgiving," a national holiday.

Now, in 2019, Thanksgiving means family. It is the day of thanks; a time for us to reflect on all the good we have in our lives and enjoy a meal to honor those we love. In my family, the tradition breathes healthily. With Thanksgiving falling on a Thursday, the surrounding Wednesday to Sunday are all a part of the celebration. My extended family has all grown and dispersed throughout the country. On the days leading up to Thursday, everyone makes their pilgrimage to my parents house; where Thanksgiving has lived for as long as I can remember. We eat and drink and laugh until our bellies hurt while we honor traditions that have lasted us a life time. For example: my family competes in a week long table tennis (or ping pong) tournament at the house. Tensions get high and inter family rivalries develop. By the end of the week a new champion is crowned and awarded a trophy that is handmade by my cousin, Emma. In addition to the ping pong tournament, epic card games and board games are played around a table set for a large crowd. As a wise man (or possibly one of my cousins) once said: "the wine flows like wine."

The stresses of a long work year disappear during Thanksgiving week. It is a time to unwind and forget about the pressures that life brings. On the big day, the food is presented on the table in a display of gourmet cooking and hard work. My parents have spent days preparing the feast, and my cousins and aunts and uncles have traveled a long way to enjoy it. In a family that has largely grown up, we all feel like children again for Thanksgiving. For me, this editorial is a small way for me to pay homage to the family that brings me so much joy and to say "Thanks" for all of the good fortune I have. I will be celebrating this year from Madagascar and I plan to share as many of these rich traditions as I can. In the spirit of Thanksgiving, I can happily say I am thankful for my family.

SOURCES: History.com

## CULTURE

## Sumptuous Thanksgiving meal in the US

In 1621, Pilgrims arrived in America and didn't know how to grow food and hunt animals so that many of them died. The Wampanoag (Native Americans) helped them and taught them how to do so and the next year, the Pilgrims had a big harvest. They were so thankful and grateful that they had huge feast of three days to celebrate the new harvest and to give thanks to God and the Indians.

So Thanksgiving Day is a harvest celebration and during this American holiday, which is a day of gratitude and appreciation, people express appreciation to family and friends who gather together around a big feast.

Now, it is celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November so Thanksgiving 2019 occurs on Thursday, November 28.

Big turkeys and cranberries and pumpkin pie are eaten and everybody talks about what they are thankful for (family, friends, good food and the good things in their lives).

Among the common thanksgiving traditions in the US, there are: charity, prayer, thankfulness, Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, kids craft (turkeys made by tracing hands, Pilgrim hats, feathered Indian head-dresses,...), football, making a wish (with the turkey's wishbone), the Presidential turkey pardon, and the holiday shopping (the day after Thanksgiving called Black Friday), which all have their stories and significations.

#### How Other Countries Celebrate Thanksgiving.

All that was only about the American version of Thanksgiving, but actually it's not just an American concept. Some other countries also gather together to express their gratitude for the fall harvest but might not call it Thanksgiving. They celebrate their version with their own food and traditions. Here are some of those countries:



Sumptuous Thanksgiving meal in the US

**In Canada,** it is celebrated on the second Monday of October (same day as Columbus Day in the United States). Canadians believe they invented the holiday, and it was copied by the Americans as they trace the holiday back to 1578. It was when a feast on a frigid fall day in Newfoundland was organized by Martin Frobisher, an English explorer, to celebrate his crew's passage through the Northwest one. Their tradition is to thank God for a good harvest, meaning it's purely a harvest festival. It is almost similar to Americans' traditions anyway.

**For Germany,** it is on the first Sunday of October, but local communities may choose to celebrate it at any time during the harvest season. It is most widely celebrated in rural areas and is called Erntedankfest (literally, harvest thanks festival). In Europe, harvest festivals date back to pagan times whereas in modern Germany, it was into religious culture that the notion has found its way. During this holiday, there are special church services and a lot of singing. On the other hand, a harvest queen and harvest king are crowned by the community and paraded through town in a grand procession.

**In Japan** however, it's on November 23rd. In Asia, Thanksgiving celebrations have little to do with the United States. Japanese observe Kinro Kansha no Hi – Labor Thanksgiving Day – which traces its roots back to ancient harvest rituals. Indeed in 1948, country's post-World War II government formalized the holiday as celebration of labor rights more broadly, not just of those who produce food. That means Japanese people celebrate food but also the hard labor that goes into producing it.

Thanksgiving is not only about sports and the turkey, pumpkin pie and the rest of the yummy food. It has a deeper meaning which is about giving thanks, sharing, having gratitude, loving and having an enjoyable time with family. It's a time when you are thankful for what you have throughout the year. So appreciate the moment as much as you can because this holiday occurs only once a year.

Source :

<https://www.britannica.com/>  
<https://www.plimoth.org/>  
<https://www.history.com/>  
<https://www.thanksgiving.com/>  
<https://modernfarmer.com/>

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About the American Chamber of Commerce in Madagascar :  
AMCHAM in Madagascar is a non-profit association of American, International, Local businesses and business people, and is affiliated with the US Chamber of Commerce, the largest business organization representing the interests of more than 3 million businesses of all sizes, sectors and regions.  
For further information about the benefits of membership, please don't hesitate to contact us either via email or phone.  
Email: [es@amcham-madagascar.org](mailto:es@amcham-madagascar.org)  
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Our Charter and Sponsoring Member:  Our Sponsoring Member: 

**AmCham**  
American Chamber of Commerce in Madagascar

## CULTURE

# Black Friday : America's Treacherous Sale

The day after Thanksgiving -- which always falls on a Thursday -- is informally referred to as "Black Friday." Only one day after the entire country gives thanks and appreciates the important things in life, masses of people flock to shopping malls and department stores to indulge in materialistic tendencies. Retail stores have flash sales with items up to 75-90% discounted. The sales act as a kick-starter for the holiday season. To some it can feel as if these stores are practically giving things away; making it hard to resist. While some genuinely enjoy waking up at the crack of dawn in search for the best deals and hidden gems, this day has also developed side-effects that exploit the poor.

The name for this day was coined from large amounts of people lining up outside stores hoping to be the first to enter as deals only exist while supplies last. Between stampedes, traffic jams, and fights between customers, a few deaths actually occurred - hence the "black" in Black Friday. This day has been the busiest shopping day in America



Black Friday will be on November 29

for years -- and continues to be -- as literally billions of dollars are spent in just one day. This year's prediction from finder.com has American's spending 87 billion dollars. This is a 3 billion dollar drop from last year, but still an astronomical number. On average, adults who participate are expected to spend close to 400 dollars per person. The number of Black Friday shoppers has been increasing exponentially for close to two decades. 2017 was

the first year Black Friday reached over 100 million shoppers and that mark was again eclipsed in 2018.

For a long time, Black Friday existed solely on the Friday after Thanksgiving. The doors of establishments would open around 5 o'clock in the morning and families would rise even earlier to beat the crowds. This morning had a reputation of fun for most and grew to be a tradition in families across the country. There was joy in waking up early in the mor-

ning and joining in on a treasure hunt for items they would otherwise be unable to afford. This was (and continues to be) when many people buy Christmas presents for their loved ones at a discounted price. Things would then be stored away for the month leading up to the big reveal. Although the name has a dark connotation, Black Friday was often seen as a harmless and fun activity that went hand and hand with Thanksgiving.

In more recent years,

stores have become so obsessed with maximizing profit that they have forced employees to come into work on Thanksgiving day. "Black Friday" now means sales starting as early as 6 pm on Thursday. Working in retail is often a minimum wage job; this means new employees are earning the lowest allotted salary that is legal in each state. Minimum wage is what many Americans earn and it is difficult to support a family off of. Because the deals keep starting earlier and earlier, employees are being dragged into stores on the morning of Thanksgiving to stock the shelves and prepare for the chaos that will ensue. This is forcing working class American's to leave their families and clock in for another day of work. Not only does it exploit the employees, but also other working class members of society who might have the day off. Due to the rarity of a deal as good as Black Friday, it is understandable that people are willing to ditch the festivities and seize the opportunity to go shopping.

We are all humans with wants and needs. These days, the line has become more

and more blurred between what is necessary to survive and what we want to make us feel happier. While it might not qualify as a "need" to buy a child the number one item on their wish list, it is hard to put a price on the joy that child will receive. Companies have done their due diligence and research; they know the numbers. In 2016, 101.7 million people went shopping on Black Friday itself. The crowds continued into Saturday when 64 million people visited stores. With margins so high and the volume of shoppers always increasing, why wouldn't stores prioritize Black Friday? If there were to ever be a change, it would have to start with the consumers. If consumers decided to say "no more!" to shopping on Thanksgiving day, the demand for stores to be open would dissipate and employees and consumers alike could return to the dinner table. Until then, expect lines to be around the block.

**SOURCES :**  
thebalance.com, finder.com, independent.co.uk

Written by Timothy Fallon and Fiona Fitzgerald

## PRESS RELEASE

## 40 New Peace Corps Volunteers Sworn-in



**ANTANANARIVO** – 40 new Peace Corps Volunteers were sworn-in to service by the American Ambassador, His Excellency Michael Pelletier, in a ceremony held at his residence in Ambaranjana today. These new Volunteers will work in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). They recently finished eleven weeks of intensive cultural, language, and technical training and have now been assigned to local communities throughout Madagascar where they will live and work for the next two years.

TEFL Educators serve in small and mid-sized towns where students and teachers have little access to English centers and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) resources. They will work in local middle schools, high schools, and some Universities to build English literacy and comprehension skills and to promote interest in the English language among students. As TEFL Educators, they will also work with local English teachers to improve their English language skills, to share different teaching techniques,



and to jointly develop new pedagogical materials for use in the classroom. In addition, they will help to build teachers' capacity through communities of practice. They may also involve the broader school community in their work by organizing English classes for adults, broadcasting English shows on local radio stations, or creating extracurricular clubs for stu-

involved in their community to develop more hands-on activities like organizing field trips and teacher training, or secondary projects such as school gardening, malaria awareness campaigns, and/or gender-related activities such as leadership camps for girls.

The Ministry of Education actively supports the program, valuing English language education as a means to develop an international workforce in the areas of education, medicine, technology, and tourism.

The 40 new volunteers

who were sworn-in to service on November 19, 2019 will join a team of 115 volunteers already serving in the education, agriculture, and health sectors across Madagascar. They will serve the mission of peace and friendship by fostering mutual learning and cultural exchange while working alongside dedicated Malagasy counterparts to improve education, agriculture, and health.

Source: U.S. Embassy Madagascar



Congratulations to the newest PCV in Madagascar  
(Photo credit: U.S. Embassy)

dents. In addition, they get

## FOCUS ON U.S. CITIES

## Top 3 U.S. states international tourists visit



Tourists pose for photographs in front of the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, New York. (© John Minchillo/AP Images)

The United States welcomed nearly 80 million international visitors in 2018, with New York state the top destination. While New York City is the most popular destination in the state, other favorite places to visit include Niagara Falls and scenic byways in the Adirondack and Catskill mountain ranges.

### Who is visiting the U.S., and where else are they headed?

**Florida**, also known as the Sunshine State, ranks as the second most popular state for international travelers. Miami Beach, the Everglades National Park and Disney World are just a few of the many attractions drawing international visitors to the state. Florida's beaches, water sports, cycling and hiking are popular tourists activities year-round.

While Hollywood, **California**, remains an exciting destination, tourists to Los Angeles and San Francisco can easily reach nearby mountains, beaches and deserts. California is home to more national parks than any other state in the U.S.

The United States is, by far, the largest receiver of travel dollars, with international visitors spending \$215 billion in 2018. That's 15 percent of the world's total travel expenditures that year. Half of the international visitors who came to the U.S. in 2018 came from neighboring Mexico and Canada, according to a U.S. Travel Association report. Of the remaining half, travelers from the United Kingdom led the way, followed by visitors from Japan, China, South Korea, Brazil and Germany.

Source: ShareAmerica

## ANNOUNCEMENT

## AmCham Business Trainings I Call for Trainers

Backed by a strong expertise and solid experience generally focused on business market access, business advocacy and promotion of English speaking, the American Chamber of Commerce in Madagascar now more than ever understands the role of the private sector in the Malagasy economy; thus is willing to reinforce its strength.

In 2020, the Chamber will open trainings to a larger public of individuals and/or businesses, members and/or non-members, to inhouse businesses or to exporters.

With this in mind, the Chamber calls for Trainers applications in the following fields:

- Finance and Investments
- Business Management
- Project Management
- Leadership and Entrepreneurship
- Personal Development

Applicants should submit their resume, motivation letter, and module proposals at [elodie@amcham-madagascar.org](mailto:elodie@amcham-madagascar.org)

**For further information, contact AmCham at 020 26 410 34.**

## ANNOUNCEMENT

## AMCHAM YOUTH

As a reminder, the American Chamber of Commerce is non-profit organization based in Madagascar and dedicated to both US and Madagascan businesses. AmCham started working in November 2008 and was officially recognized by the Government of Madagascar in February 2010.

AmCham's missions are to:

- Strengthen trade relations between United States and Madagascar
- Support the establishment of high-quality standards of commercial practice
- Support the expansion of an English-speaking, Anglophone business community in Madagascar

The American Chamber of Commerce in Madagascar is pleased to welcome in 2019 YOUTH INITIATIVES among its members.

As an AmCham Youth member, your organization will have the opportunity to:

- Develop a high level network
- Reinforce your credibility as an organization
- Upgrade your international visibility
- Receive technical support from the AmCham team

Ready to apply? Please verify that your organization:

- Supports at least one SDG goal
- Is led by (a) young person/people aged between 18 and 35 years old
- For startups, is less than 5 years of fiscal activities.

The membership fee is **100 000 Ariary per year**

**No individual application allowed**

**For further information, contact AmCham at [info@amcham-madagascar.org](mailto:info@amcham-madagascar.org) or at 020 26 410 34.**

## MANAGEMENT CORNER

*Manage Your Emotions Before, During, and After a Negotiation*

*Negotiations can get emotional, to say the least. Whether you're asking for a raise, more resources for your team, or to restructure your position, you might feel anxious, reluctant, or worried. But you won't be successful if you're worked up, so take steps to handle your emotions. Before the negotiation, ask yourself how your counterpart might respond — and why. Doing so will help you identify potential setbacks and gather additional information to respond to their challenges. The more you prepare, the less anxious you will feel. During the negotiation, if you find yourself getting upset or nervous, pause and reflect on the underlying reasons and formulate a strategy to address them. After the negotiation, try to avoid carrying negative emotions. Reflect instead on the moments you were most proud of during your interaction, and focus on how you will use your experience to get the result you want in the future.*

*This tip is adapted from "3 of the Most Common Challenges Women Face in Negotiations," by Mara Olekalns et al.*

*Source: Harvard Business Review*

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