

## If horns blow at dusk, it must be Holland

EACH YEAR, it seems that more and more of our old favorite Christmas customs and traditions take a back seat to modern, commercial holiday practices. But there is one custom, practiced in the rural Netherlands, which has survived the years.

Midwinter Horn Blowing begins the first Sunday of Advent and is repeated daily until Christmas Eve. The large horns produce a soft, low, melodic sound which hangs on the air, floating on the night winds from one farm to the next.

EACH DAY at dusk rural roads become Lights glow from behind lace-curtained windows, spilling patches of light out onto neatly mowed lawns and

gardens. The farmers take out their long, curved horns and Christmas tradition begins once again.

Each farmer stands near his well, and he blows the holiday horn, announcing the coming of Christ. The deep wells magnify the sounds of the elder tree horns, carrying the haunting sounds long distances. One Dutchman blows his horn, sending the sound into the holiday night. As his final notes fade, the tune is picked up by another farmer and sent farther across the miles of farmland in eastern Holland.

MIDWINTER HORN blowing is one of the many charming Dutch customs which have been preserved, delighting holiday visitors who seek a se-

rene, traditional Christmas with a unique European flavor.

Holland is noted for its flowers, and Christmastime is no exception. Winter wreaths and bouquets are adorned with red and green ribbons. Real candles shimmer on the limbs of the trees which are set up on Christmas Eve.

Carolers sing traditional yuletide songs as deep, heavy chimes echo their voices, ringing the carols for all to hear.

In snowy part of Holland, sleigh rides provide a delightful, invigorating way to celebrate the holiday season. Harness bells jingle as the clomp of heavy horse hooves is softened by snowy roads.



Horn blowing is a Christmas tradition in the Netherlands.

Christmas in Holland is a time of traditions and customs that make the holidays a special, serene and joyful celebration.

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