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## Christmas

If you have the urge to travel at the end of the year, don't worry about missing Christmas. The birth of Christ is celebrated in many ways across the Pacific Ocean. Only one nation, the Philippines, is Christian, but most countries observe Christmas as a holiday, according to Gene Sawyer, author of "Celebrations: Asia and the Pacific." Sawyer wrote the book after interviewing students and professionals from 30 nations who were at the East-West Center in Honolulu to participate in research, study and training.

Here are some ways that Christmas is celebrated in Asia:

### HONG KONG

Santa Claus (Father Christmas) is the same jolly old fellow with a white beard and costume. At department stores he bounces children on his knee and whispers promises of toys on Christmas morning.

### INDONESIA

In this Muslim nation, artists create beautiful Christmas cards. They are wood-blocked or hand-painted with signs of batik, puppets or classical dancers. Greetings may be in English or Indonesian, translated as "Happy Birthday" or "Season's Greetings."

### JAPAN

In Tokyo, shops along the famous Ginza are rushed with customers as radio and television broadcasts count the shopping days until Christmas. The mammoth department stores have their busiest days of the year catering to the holiday.

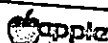
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