



**INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER**  
**The U.S. Embassy in Ukraine**

# Thanksgiving

**November 2006**

Thanksgiving in the United States is possibly the premier U.S. family celebration, typically celebrated at home and marked with a substantial feast. As the anchor of what is for many a four-day holiday weekend, Thanksgiving provides an occasion for family reunions, marks the beginning of the “holiday season” that continues through Christmas and New Year’s Day and, as its name suggests, affords Americans a shared opportunity to express their gratitude for plentiful food and general abundance.



Many cultures traditionally have marked a plentiful harvest with a celebration of thanks. Long before the first English settlers reached North America, Western Europeans observed “Harvest Home” festivals and the British an August 1 Lammas (“Loaf Mass”) Day, celebrating the wheat harvest. The American Thanksgiving holiday began in 1621 with the first successful Pilgrim harvest.

Thanksgiving is a time for tradition and sharing. Even if they live far away, family members often gather for family reunions. As a result, Thanksgiving marks the busiest domestic air travel period of the year. Many Americans enjoy a local Thanksgiving parade, or the annual Macy’s department store parade, televised live from New York City. Others watch televised American football, while all give thanks together for their food, shelter and other good things. Many volunteer their time to help civic groups, churches, and charitable organizations offer traditional meals to those in need.

On a more secular note, the day after Thanksgiving came in the 20th century to mark the beginning of the Christmas shopping season. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Thanksgiving was moved to the fourth Thursday in November, which in some years lengthened that shopping period. Although the fourth Thursday of November falls on a different date every year, the president is expected to proclaim that date as the official celebration.

[http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life\\_and\\_culture/holidays/thanksgiving\\_day.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture/holidays/thanksgiving_day.html)

*This collection of resources aims to provide relevant sources of information on Thanksgiving. The web resources in this collection are represented by U.S. government websites, those of non-governmental international organizations and various reference websites.*

**U.S. Government resources:**

Thanksgiving at the White House - 2006

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/holiday/thanksgiving/2006/index.html>

US Department of State: Thanksgiving Day

[http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life\\_and\\_culture/holidays/thanksgiving\\_day.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture/holidays/thanksgiving_day.html)

FirstGov.gov: Thanksgiving Resources

<http://www.firstgov.gov/Citizen/Topics/Thanksgiving.shtml>

Library of Congress; American Memory: Thanksgiving in American Memory

<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/thanks/thanks.html>

Library of Congress; The LOC.GOV Wise Guide: Thanksgiving

<http://www.loc.gov/wiseguide/nov02/thanks-early.html>

U.S. Census Bureau: Thanksgiving Day Facts

[http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts\\_for\\_features\\_special\\_editions/007643.html](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/007643.html)

Thanksgiving Day – from the U.S. Embassy in Stockholm

<http://stockholm.usembassy.gov/Holidays/celebrate/thanksqi.html>

**Other resources:**

Encyclopedia Smithsonian: From Local Harvests to National Holiday

<http://www.si.edu/resource/faq/nmah/thanks.htm>

History Channel: The History of Thanksgiving

<http://www.history.com/minisites/thanksgiving/>

Scholastic: The First Thanksgiving

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/thanksgiving/>

Thanksgiving at Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thanksgiving>

*Some commercial websites may offer items or information for fee. Though we recommend those sites as potential resources, the Embassy does not endorse their products over other commercial products on the market.*

*If you wish to obtain hard copies of any materials found at the above websites or in case you need web access to visit the websites please contact the IRC at 490-4117*

