A Day for Kings and Queens

Every year on July 20, chess enthusiasts around the world come together to celebrate International Chess Day. This special day commemorates the founding of the International Chess Federation (FIDE) in 1924, which marked a significant milestone in the organization and standardization of chess as a competitive sport.

Chess itself has a rich history, originating in ancient India over a millennium ago. It evolved from a game called *chaturanga* and spread across the globe, influencing cultures and fostering intellectual development. Today, chess is played by millions worldwide, transcending language and cultural barriers.

International Chess Day was first celebrated in 1966, inspired by UNESCO, to highlight chess's role in promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding. The day is now recognized by the United Nations, which officially acknowledged it in 2019. On this day, chess clubs, schools, and communities organize tournaments, workshops, and events to celebrate the game's enduring appeal and educational benefits.

What makes chess so special? It's not just about moving pieces on a board; it's about strategy, patience, and sportsmanship. Chess teaches valuable life skills and values, making it a beloved pastime and educational tool. Whether you're a seasoned grand master or a beginner, International Chess Day is a chance to connect with fellow chess lovers and enjoy the game's unique blend of challenge and camaraderie.

So, on July 20, grab a chessboard, gather some friends, and join the global chess party. Whether you're playing online or in person, it's a day to celebrate the game that unites us all. To borrow FIDE's motto, "*Gens Una Sumus*": "We are one people, united by our love for chess."

July Birthdays

In astrology, those born July 1–22 are the Crabs of Cancer. Crabs are emotional nurturers, dedicated to their home and family. Gentle and kind, they love storytelling around the dinner table and enjoy upholding traditions. Those born July 23–31 are the Lion star sign, Leo. Leos are dignified, strong, and powerful, making good leaders and honorable friends. They are also ambitious, reaching for the stars, working hard, and accomplishing their goals.

P. T. Barnum (circus showman) – July 5, 1810
Nancy Reagan (first lady) – July 6, 1921
Michelle Kwan (figure skater) – July 7, 1980
Milton Berle (comedian) – July 12, 1908
Harrison Ford (actor) – July 13, 1942
Phyllis Diller (comedienne) – July 17, 1917
Don Knotts (actor) – July 21,1924
Gracie Allen (comedienne) – July 26, 1895
Paul Anka (singer) – July 30, 1941

The Birth of a King

On July 18, 1953, a young man named Elvis Presley walked into the Sun Records studio in Memphis, Tennessee, to make his first record. The resulting acetate disc, with just two songs—"My Happiness" and "That's When Your Heartaches Begin"—was supposed to be a gift from Elvis to his mother. Rumor has it, though, that the Presleys did not even own a record player. And besides, his mother's birthday had long passed. Many speculate that the recording was an attempt by Elvis to get the attention of Sun Records owner Sam Phillips. Apparently, Elvis made an impression, because he was invited back to the studio a year later, on July 5, 1954. At first, the session was uninspiring. The band was about to give up when Elvis began fooling around, goofing off, and singing. That sound was exactly what Phillips was looking for, and the King of Rock 'n' Roll was born.

July 2025

Commons Happenings

MEMORY CARE

Celebrating July

Grilling Month

Family Reunion Month

Share a Sunset with Someone You Love Month

Canada Day
July 1

Tom Sawyer Days
July 1–5

Independence Day
July 4

Collector Car Appreciation Day and Cheer Up the Lonely Day
July 11

Everybody Deserves a Massage Week
July 13–19

Moon Day
July 20

Hammock Day
July 22

Paperback Book Day
July 30

Kiwi Christmas Magic

New Zealand's Festival of Christmas brings a unique twist to holiday celebrations, transforming the small town of Greytown into a winter wonderland each July. This monthlong extravaganza, aptly nicknamed the "happiest festival in New Zealand," offers a delightful blend of festive cheer and ingenuity.

Although it began only five years ago as a pandemic initiative, the Festival of Christmas has quickly become a beloved tradition, drawing visitors from across the country. The event's timing in July, which is winter in the southern hemisphere, allows New Zealanders to experience a more traditional chilly Christmas atmosphere, complete with the (unlikely) promise of snow.

The festival boasts an impressive array of activities and attractions. Visitors can marvel at spectacular light displays, participate in workshops, and celebrate the Māori New Year. The program also includes vibrant night markets, lively parties, and an abundance of festive food and drinks, including the warming winter favorites of mulled wine and gin.

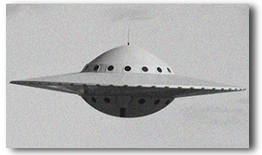
One of the festival's unique features is how it embraces a "Fire and Ice" theme, creating a captivating contrast that adds to the event's charm. Attendees are encouraged to don Christmas sweaters and gather around braziers (portable outdoor firepits), fostering a cozy community atmosphere despite the winter chill.

But the Festival of Christmas isn't just about entertainment; it's a community effort that brings together families, school children, and local groups. This collaborative spirit is evident in the diverse range of events, from art classes and author talks to "Books at the Bar" reading parties.

While the festival primarily takes place in Greytown, it has put the region of Wairarapa on the map as a winter destination. The event has grown to attract people from all around New Zealand, boosting local tourism and showcasing the region's hospitality. With its unique blend of traditional Christmas elements and distinctly Kiwi touches, this midwinter celebration offers a fresh perspective on holiday festivities, proving that the Christmas spirit thrives in New Zealand, summer or winter.

July 2025

Flying Saucer Frenzy



In early July 1947, something strange happened on a ranch near Roswell, New Mexico. It all began after a night of intense thunderstorms. The next morning, rancher Mack Brazel rode his horse to check on the sheep. What he found has inspired curiosity, conspiracy, and hysteria ever since. Metal debris was scattered all over the ground. A shallow trench ran for hundreds of feet. When Brazel showed some of the metal to his neighbors, the Proctors, they offered one explanation: it was a UFO.

Excited citizens making UFO sightings had become something of a fad during early 1947. This incident only stoked the fever. Many insist that not only did a flying saucer crash near Roswell but aliens had been recovered by the military. Conspiracy theorists contend that the military then scrambled to cover the entire incident, chalking it up as the recovery of a fallen top-secret surveillance balloon, complete with life-sized test dummies.

Fifty years later, in 1997, the Air Force was still trying to put rumors to rest. It released a 231-page report: “Case Closed: The Final Report on the Roswell Crash.” Each July, however, believers and skeptics alike gather in Roswell to celebrate the UFO Festival. Attendees are encouraged to parade while dressed as their favorite ET and listen to evidence presented by panels of scientists and authors.

UFO sightings aren’t limited to Roswell. Records from the Roman Republic around 200 BC describe ships descending from the sky. Japanese fishermen swore to an at-sea encounter with an alien in the year 1803. And in 1946, Swedish military personnel reported strange “ghost rockets” in the sky. Since a worldwide phenomenon deserves a worldwide holiday, July 2 is now celebrated by many as World UFO Day.

Planet Over Plastic

For many, plastic bags from a grocery or convenience store are a common part of day-to-day living. But there is a movement dedicated to reducing, with the goal of altogether eliminating, the use of plastic bags. These believers will proclaim their intentions on July 3, International Plastic Bag Free Day.

The average plastic bag is used for only 25 minutes but takes approximately 20 years to decompose. Even then, they don’t complertely disappear; they just break down into microplastics. Even more shocking, according to Zero Waste Europe, every minute one million plastic bags are in use worldwide. Bags in use this minute will most likely end up in landfills, trees, the ocean, or recycled into other things like bottles, carpets, and clothes.

Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

July 14 is International Town Criers Day. In olden times, when much of the populace could not read and newspapers weren’t widely available, it was the job of the town crier to stand in the middle of town, ring his bell, and shout out the important news of the day. Town criers also shouted “Oyez! Oyez!”—the Anglo-Norman form of “Hear ye! Hear ye!”

Today, the sight of someone wearing a tricorn hat, a powdered wig, and a ruffled collar while ringing a brass bell and shouting the day’s news might be strange. But some towns still carry on the tradition of town crying. The American Guild of Town Criers was founded on July 5, 1997, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The North American Town Crier Championships, first held in Canada in 1983 and in the United States in 1991, have been held each year to promote “the ancient art of town crying.” Though the position is ceremonial, town crying is a source of both pride and joy for many communities.

Talking Heads

A special announcement for all those ventriloquists out there! Cincinnati’s annual ventriloquists conference, known as the Vent Haven ConVENTion, is set to take place July 16–19 at the Holiday Inn Cincinnati Airport in Erlanger, Kentucky.

The convention is named after the Vent Haven Museum in Fort Mitchell, Kentucky—just across the river from Cincinnati. Vent Haven is the only museum in the world dedicated to the art of ventriloquism. The word *vent* is short for *ventriloquist*, and the museum is certainly a haven for those in the business. William Shakespeare Berger, known to his friends as W.S., was a Cincinnati businessman and amateur ventriloquist who amassed a vast collection of ventriloquism memorabilia. For years, Berger also served as president of the International Brotherhood of Ventriloquists. He even published a monthly magazine called *The Oracle*, which kept up on the lastest in ventriloquism news. By the time Berger died in 1973, his collection had grown museum-worthy.

Ventriloquism relies on the ability to “throw your voice.” Ventriloquism first began as a religious practice, where people made guttural sounds from their bellies and interpreted those sounds as the voices of the dead. Other cultures regarded it as witchcraft. Over the centuries, though, that which had been feared became entertainment. By the 1700s, traveling showmen were delighting audiences with fanciful ventriloquy, speaking mostly to imaginary friends. Before long, ventriloquists introduced their dummies and puppets.

So how do “vents” throw their voices? When noise is trapped in a larynx, it sounds as if it’s coming from a different direction or distance. Any other insights... well, those are closely held trade secrets.

Weather or Not

It may seem strange that Americans use a groundhog to help predict the weather, but those in Britain look to the sky. According to an old rhyme about July 15, St. Swithin’s Day:

St. Swithin’s Day if thou dost rain
For 40 days it will remain.
St. Swithin’s Day if thou be fair
For 40 days ’twill rain nae mair (no more).

Saint Swithin was the bishop of Winchester. At either his or other clergy’s request, he was buried outdoors where he could be among the people and where the rain could fall on his grave. After more than a century outdoors—on July 15, 971—the monks brought his remains to a shrine inside a newly built cathedral. And, as legend has it, torrential rains followed. Ever since, people have believed that the weather on St. Swithin’s Day will foretell the weather for the next 40 days. Those who have looked into the weather records from 971 say there’s no proof of 40 days of rain, but the legend lives on.

Eye-Catching Diversity

While only one out of every 100 people experience this rare genetic trait, everyone is invited to celebrate Different Colored Eyes Day on July 12.

This genetic phenomenon is most common in cats, dogs, and horses. But humans, too, can experience heterochromia, or two different colored eyes. Our eye color develops shortly after birth due to the pigment melanin. More melanin means darker eyes, and less melanin means lighter eyes. It just so happens that sometimes two eyes develop differently. In fact, sometimes one eye can have two different colors, such as a blue iris with a brown ring around the pupil, or a completely brown eye with a splash of green. This is just one way that we are each a unique work of art.