



## Los Posadas – Mexican Christmas Tradition

The word *posada* means inn or lodging, and traditionally posadas are a celebration of the Christmas story. This celebration is held for nine nights from December 16 to 24 to commemorate Mary and Joseph’s search for a place to stay in Bethlehem where Jesus was born.

Posadas in Mexico features hot food and drinks, sweets, music, and piñatas.

Throughout Mexico, churches and communities continue to celebrate these festivities with their traditional, religious elements. Most parties held around Christmas are called a posada. Schools often host posadas as end-of-the-year parties for students and teachers.

During the nine days leading up to Christmas Day, churchgoers attend mass each day. The church service would include representations of Mary and Joseph. Following mass, community members attend a party. To celebrate, there is the breaking of the piñata with a stick. This is a representation of faith defeating temptation with the help of virtue. The fruits and sweets that poured out of the piñata represented the joys of union with God. Posadas are also held in neighborhoods and people’s homes, allowing for a more familiar and tightly knit occasion in preparation for Christmas. During the first eight nights of Posada, neighbours, family and friends gather to re-enact Mary and Joseph’s trek to Bethlehem. Participants are divided in two groups, the ones “outside” representing Mary and Joseph, and the ones “inside” representing innkeepers. Everyone sings the posada litany together, re-enacting Mary and Joseph’s search, going back and forth until they are finally “admitted” to an inn. After this tradition, the party starts. Posadas has now spread to other countries — such as Guatemala, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela; the celebrations vary by location.

