

# THE 13 YULE LADS AND OTHER ICELANDIC CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS



Iceland celebrates Christmas like most Western countries, with delicious food, gifts for loved ones, and family gatherings. Unlike most countries that have a single Father Christmas or Santa Claus, Icelandic children are fortunate enough to be visited by 13 Yule Lads (or Jólásveinar) over the last 13 nights before Christmas.

The Yule Lads originate from Icelandic folklore, but are, of course, very much alive and well. In Icelandic, they are called Jólásveinar and are the Icelandic multiplied version of Santa Claus! The Yule Lads are like trolls that live in the mountains and come to town one by one, in December each year. Each Yule Lad has a very specific character trait and will, therefore, behave in a particular manner. The 13 brothers are considered to be crooks and their names explain their special behavior (see below).

They are children of Grýla (a horrible troll) and Leppalúði (her awful husband), and Icelandic children are scared of them for reasons that shouldn't be discussed here any further. Their equally scary pet, the big black Christmas Cat (Jólakötturinn) should also be mentioned here. We shouldn't go into detail about its role in the troll family, but some would say it is similar to Azrael, the cat of wizard Gargamel from the widely known comic The Smurfs. The Christmas Cat can be seen in downtown Reykjavik every day (and night) in December. It is set up with 6,500 LED lights, and luckily, therefore, looks rather festive than scary.

To continue with traditions, Icelandic children place a shoe in their bedroom window with excitement, each evening of the last 13 days leading to Christmas. Every night one Yule Lad visits, leaving sweets, small gifts, or a rotting potato, depending on how that particular child behaved the preceding day.

This tradition has been used by parents throughout the years and is nowadays considered one of the most successful ways of parenting, to make sure the kids go to bed early and behave well. No kid wants to jump out of its bed with excitement the next morning, only to find a rotten potato in its shoe, because of bad behavior the day before. With all the cold, long, and dark days in December and the melancholia that comes with it, it goes without saying that this special parenting trick is much needed. Luckily, winter is the season of the beautiful Northern Lights, and Icelanders are fortunate enough to see the spectacular phenomenon in the sky every now and then, so the long nights are only half as bad.

The 13 Yule Lads are:

- Stekkjarstaur (likes to tease sheep and has wooden legs),
- Giljagaur (likes to steal milk),
- Stúfur (is the shortest one and likes to eat the pie crust from stolen pans),
- Þvörusleikir (steals and licks all wooden spoons he can get),
- Pottaskefill (steals leftovers from pots),
- Askasleikir (hides under the bed and licks all bowls he can find),
- Hurðaskellir (likes to wake kids up by slamming doors),
- Skyrgámur (loves skyr),
- Bjúgnakrækir (hides under the roof and steals sausages),
- Gluggagægir (looks through windows, for something to steal),
- Gáttabefur (sniffs for delicious laufabrauð or "leaf-bread"),
- Ketkrókur (steals meat with his hook),
- Kertasníkir (steals candles from kids).



*Merry Christmas*





# Cruise Groups

## **JUNE 16-23, 2023—SEVEN NIGHT PERFECT DAY BAHAMAS CRUISE ABOARD RCCL'S OASIS OF THE SEAS**

When school is out for the summer, the thrills are in full session aboard Royal Caribbean's Amplified Oasis of the Seas. Set sail from Cape Liberty and visit Port Canaveral (Orlando), Nassau and their private island Perfect Day at Coco Cay. This Oasis Class favorite will introduce even more thrills for couples and kids of all ages with upgraded ways to soak up the sun or enjoy the shade, more delicious dining options to elevate date night and buzzworthy new spots to light up the evening. The Broadway hit *Cats*, the high diving AquaTheater show and the *Frozen In Time* ice skating show are just some of the excitement available on board while Up, Up and Away helium balloon ride, Daredevil's Tower waterslide and Thrill Waterpark await you at Perfect Day at Coco Cay. Sail in a balcony cabin, including all current port and government taxes and gratuities for \$1,179.00 per person double.

## **SEPTEMBER 15-24, 2023—SIX NIGHT BERMUDA ABOARD MSC'S MERAVIGLIA**

Sail from New York (Brooklyn) and spend three days at King's Wharf enjoying the idyllic, pink sand beaches while imbibing a delicious rum swizzle. Experience everything the Meraviglia has to offer. Our special balcony rate includes accommodations, all current port and government taxes, gratuities, wi-fi for two devices, and an upgraded beverage package for \$1,299.00 per person. Upgrade to Aurea features for \$1,529.00 each.

## **OCTOBER 4-15, 2023—11 NIGHT NEW ENGLAND AND CANADA CRUISE ABOARD MSC'S MERAVIGLIA**

Sail from New York (Brooklyn) and visit Newport, Rhode Island, Boston, Massachusetts, St. John, New Brunswick, Halifax and Sydney, Nova Scotia, Charlottetown, PEI, returning to New York by way of Portland, Maine. The Meraviglia is packed with extraordinary features for the perfect experience at sea. Enjoy gourmet dining, out of this world entertainment with new panoramic areas, an innovative ocean lounge, a two-deck high inside promenade with an LED dome and a spectacular amusement area connected to an outdoor water park. Rates include cabin accommodations selected, all current port and government taxes, beverage package for drinks up to \$9, wi-fi for two devices and gratuities. Ocean view \$1,277.00, Premium Balcony \$1,487.00 and Aurea Balcony \$1,877.00 (additional amenities including the solarium, spa discounts, 24 hour room service and more).

## **OCTOBER 11-19, 2023—EGYPT AND NILE CRUISE ABOARD THE BRAND NEW H/S NEBU**

Have you always wanted to take a camel ride by the Pyramids or hot air balloon over the Nile while cruising and visiting these ancient sights? Spend two nights in Cairo visiting the new and exciting National Museum, the Great Pyramids of Giza, the enigmatic Sphinx along with a camel ride. Visit Old Cairo. Fly to Luxor and board the H/S Nebu for a four night Nile cruise visiting Karnak & Luxor Temple, Valley of the Kings, Hatshepsut, Edfu, Kom Obo and more. Return to Cairo for a farewell dinner and your return to the US. Breakfast daily and full board while cruising, lunch while on Old Cairo tour. Rate per person, based on a minimum of 15 passengers is \$4,895.00 per person double including air from JFK. A limited number of singles will be available at a surcharge of \$985.00

## **NOVEMBER 2-12, 2023—10 NIGHT ULTIMATE SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN ABOARD THE CELEBRITY REFLECTION**

Cruise round trip from Ft. Lauderdale in a balcony cabin visiting Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, Martinique, St. Kitts & Nevis. Our special, always included package incorporates accommodations, all current taxes, all meals (except specialty restaurants), beverage package, wi-fi, gratuities, spectacular entertainment and a \$300 on board credit. The special rate of \$1,850.00 per person is subject to availability and must be booked by December 30, 2022. ONLY THREE CABINS LEFT. AIRFARE AND HOTEL PACKAGES WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE BEGINNING OF JANUARY.



# Bermuda Hotels Offering Credits, Up to 50% Off Rates

Bermuda's new "Endless Summer" promotion invites visitors to save up to 50 percent on accommodations at several of the island's finest hotels and enjoy a range of value-added enticements. The offer is available now until December 31, 2022, for travel through March 31, 2023.

**Cambridge Beaches Resort:** The Cambridge Beaches Resort & Spa has manicured gardens, intuitive staff and adults-only accommodations that reflect the charm of the 300-year-old property. Offer includes a \$25 food and beverage credit per room, per night.



**Coral Beach & Tennis Club:** Set among large sub-tropical gardens, overlooking the turquoise water and pink sand beach, the Coral Beach & Tennis Club is a private, members-only club. Rates include full breakfast and afternoon tea daily, and use of amenities at the Club (tennis and squash courts, gym, spa and beach facility).

**Grotto Bay Beach Resort:** Save up to 50 percent off at the Grotto Bay Beach Resort, a full-service resort with a private beach, watersports, boat rentals, and an underground, swimming cave.

**Hamilton Princess:** Save 30 percent at the grand dame of Bermuda. Guests can try some of Bermuda's best food and drink, peruse the resort's storied art collection, and lounge in a water hammock at the beach club.



**Pompano Beach Club:** Overlooking Bermuda's southwest coast, the 75-room family-owned and operated Pompano Beach Club is offering every fourth night free.

**The St. Regis Bermuda Resort:** Enjoy luxurious accommodations, impeccable service and ocean views unlike any other. Stay at least three nights and receive 10 percent off your stay and a \$100 resort credit per stay.

**The Reefs Resort & Club:** Save up to 40 percent at The Reefs, a boutique retreat perched on limestone cliffs overlooking a secluded pink-sand cove.





PUERTO RICAN

# Coquito



FROM STAR CLIPPERS' GALLEY

Coquito (pronounced ko-key-toe) is Puerto Rican coconut-flavored eggnog. The name means "small coconut," and it is made in batches with recipes passed down from generations through generations. Coquito is a staple Puerto Rican drink during the holiday season. It's a creamy, sweet, coconut-based eggnog, only it's made without any eggs! An easy 15 -minute recipe, it blends together a handful of key ingredients such as coconut, rum, and warming spices with sweetened condensed milk and evaporated milk. It's rich, boozy and perfect for holiday entertaining. For best results, chill the coquito in the refrigerator for 1-2 hours before serving. It's also common to give as a gift in lively festive bottles.

**INGREDIENTS:** One (14 oz.) can sweetened condensed milk, one (15 oz.) can of cream of coconut (Coco Lopez or Goya), one (12 oz. can) evaporated milk, one (13.5 oz.) can of coconut milk, two tsps. of vanilla or one vanilla bean, split and seeded, two whole cinnamon sticks, 1/2 tsp. grated nutmeg and one to two cups of rum. Optional grated nutmeg or cinnamon for garnish.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Steep the spices. Place all ingredients, except rum, in a large saucepan. Warm over medium-high heat until starting to simmer. Remove from heat, cover and let stand for 30 minutes. Mix in the rum. Remove cinnamon sticks and vanilla bean (if using) and pour the mixture into a pitcher. Add additional rum if you like your eggnog stronger. Pour into glasses and enjoy!



Norwegian Cruise Line is committed to delivering exceptional guest experiences at every step of their journey. It is with the dedication of their shipboard team, they are able to turn you vacation dreams into reality. As such, they make it easy for guests to show their appreciation for these vacation heroes with discretionary daily service charges which provide gratuities to key on board team members, including room stewards, restaurant servers and behind-the-scene support staff.

Beginning January 1, 2023, we will be making a nominal adjustment to our daily service charges, as follows.

- \$25.00 per person per day - The Haven & Suite
- \$20.00 per person per day - Club Balcony Suite and below

Guests who make a reservation on or before December 31, 2022, will have the option of prepaying their service charges at the current rate, if done prior to sail date. If guests booked on or before December 31, 2022 choose to pay their service charges while onboard, they will be charged the prevailing rates. Guests with existing cruise reservations who have already pre-paid their service charges at the current rate are not affected.

# When's the best time to book a flight?

Earlier this year Google debunked the **myth about Tuesdays being** the cheapest day to fly, but that doesn't mean that there's no rhyme or reason to booking a cheap flight.

Neither the day of the week nor the time you book will score you lower airfare. Airfare is dynamic and always fluctuating but the biggest driver of ticket prices is demand, which can be affected by a wide variety of things. To simplify things a bit, Here is a helpful round up of factors to help you determine the best time to book your next flight.

- **The flight route:** If you are flying a popular route or one with limited service, the ticket price will likely be higher.
- **The time of year:** If you're flying during school breaks, summer, or the holiday season, expect to pay more for tickets. Try building in some flexibility around travel dates or flying in the off-season.
- **Special events:** If you're flying for a special event, book your trip right away. Airlines know when there is a big event happening and prices will only go up.

Airfare has been at an all-time high this year as post-pandemic revenge travel raged on. Luckily, prices are expected to come down in 2023. Here are some more ways to score cheap flights:

- **Don't wait:** Though some people think booking at the last minute is a way to save on flights, in reality, that's very rare. Waiting until the last minute usually means you're paying more.
- **Domestic flights:** Generally, the best time to book is 1-2 months out.
- **International trips:** For the best deal, book 6 to 8 months out.
- **Fly mid-week:** Though there's not one day of the week that's the cheapest to fly, taking off mid-week tends to be cheaper.

