Saint Patrick`s Day
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Saint Patrick's Day or the Feast of Saint Patrick (Irish: Lá Fhéile Pádraig, "the Day of the Festival of Patrick") is a cultural and religious holiday celebrated on 17 March. It is named after Saint Patrick (c. AD 385–461), the most commonly recognised of the patron saints of Ireland.
Saint Patrick's Day was made an official Christian feast day in the early seventeenth century and is observed by the Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion (especially the Church of Ireland), the Eastern Orthodox Church and Lutheran Church. The day commemorates Saint Patrick and the arrival of Christianity in Ireland, as well as celebrates the heritage and culture of the Irish in general. Celebrations generally involve public parades and festivals, céilíthe, and the wearing of green attire or shamrocks. Christians also attend church services, and the Lenten restrictions on eating and drinking alcohol are lifted for the day, which has encouraged and propagated the holiday's tradition of alcohol consumption.
Saint Patrick's Day is a public holiday in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Newfoundland and Labrador and Montserrat. It is also widely celebrated by the Irish diaspora around the world; especially in Britain, Canada, the United States, Argentina, Australia and New Zealand.
Little is known of Patrick's early life, though it is known that he was born in Roman Britain in the fourth century, into a wealthy Romano-British family. His father was a deacon and his grandfather was a priest in the Christian church. At the age of sixteen, he was kidnapped by Irish raiders and taken captive to Ireland as a slave. It is believed he was held somewhere on the west coast of Ireland, possibly Mayo, but the exact location is unknown. According to his Confession, he was told by God in a dream to flee from captivity to the coast, where he would board a ship and return to Britain. Upon returning, he quickly joined the Church in Auxerre in Gaul and studied to be a priest.
In 432, he again said that he was called back to Ireland, though as a bishop, to Christianise the Irish from their native polytheism. Irish folklore tells that one of his teaching methods included using the shamrock to explain the Christian doctrine of the Trinity to the Irish people. After nearly thirty years of evangelism, he died on 17 March 461, and according to tradition, was buried at Downpatrick. Although there were other more successful missions to Ireland from Rome, Patrick endured as the principal champion of Irish Christianity and is held in esteem in the Irish church.
Originally, the colour associated with Saint Patrick was blue. Over the years the colour green and its association with Saint Patrick's Day grew. Green ribbons and shamrocks were worn in celebration of St Patrick's Day as early as the 17th century. Saint Patrick is said to have used the shamrock, a three-leaved plant, to explain the Holy Trinity to the pagan Irish, and the ubiquitous wearing and display of shamrocks and shamrock-inspired designs has become a feature of the day. In the 1798 rebellion, to make a political statement, Irish soldiers wore full green uniforms on 17 March in hopes of catching public attention. The phrase "the wearing of the green", meaning to wear a shamrock on one's clothing, derives from a song of the same name.
Saint Patrick's feast day, as a kind of national day, was already being celebrated by the Irish in Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries. In later times he became more and more widely known as the patron of Ireland.[17] Saint Patrick's feast day was finally placed on the universal liturgical calendar in the Catholic Church due to the influence of Waterford-born Franciscan scholar Luke Wadding in the early 1600s. Saint Patrick's Day thus became a holy day of obligation for Roman Catholics in Ireland. It is also a feast day in the Church of Ireland. The church calendar avoids the observance of saints' feasts during certain solemnities, moving the saint's day to a time outside those periods. Saint Patrick's Day is occasionally affected by this requirement, when 17 March falls during Holy Week.
This happened in 1940, when Saint Patrick's Day was observed on 3 April in order to avoid it coinciding with Palm Sunday, and again in 2008, where it was officially observed on 14 March. Saint Patrick's Day will not fall within Holy Week again until 2160. However, the secular celebration is always held on 17 March.
In 1903, Saint Patrick's Day became an official public holiday in Ireland. This was thanks to the Bank Holiday (Ireland) Act 1903, an act of the United Kingdom Parliament introduced by Irish Member of Parliament James O'Mara. O'Mara later introduced the law that required that pubs and bars be closed on 17 March after drinking got out of hand, a provision that was repealed in the 1970s. The first Saint Patrick's Day parade held in the Irish Free State was held in Dublin in 1931 and was reviewed by the then Minister of Defence Desmond Fitzgerald.
In the mid-1990s the government of the Republic of Ireland began a campaign to use Saint Patrick's Day to showcase Ireland and its culture. The government set up a group called St Patrick's Festival, with the aims:

- Traditional St Patrick's Day badges from the early 20th century, photographed at the Museum of Country Life in County Mayo
- To offer a national festival that ranks amongst all of the greatest celebration in the world
- To create energy and excitement throughout Ireland via innovation, creativity, grassroots involvement, and marketing activity
- To provide the opportunity and motivation for people of Irish descent (and those who sometimes wish they were Irish) to attend and join in the imaginative and expressive celebrations
- To project, internationally, an accurate image of Ireland as a creative, professional and sophisticated country with wide appeal.
The first Saint Patrick's Festival was held on 17 March 1996. In 1997, it became a three-day event, and by 2000 it was a four-day event. By 2006, the festival was five days long; more than 675,000 people attended the 2009 parade. Overall 2009's five-day festival saw close to 1 million visitors, who took part in festivities that included concerts, outdoor theatre performances, and fireworks. Skyfest forms the centrepiece of the festival.

The topic of the 2004 Saint Patrick's Symposium was "Talking Irish", during which the nature of Irish identity, economic success, and the future were discussed. Since 1996, there has been a greater emphasis on celebrating and projecting a fluid and inclusive notion of "Irishness" rather than an identity based around traditional religious or ethnic allegiance. The week around Saint Patrick's Day usually involves Irish language speakers using more Irish during Seachtain na Gaeilge ("Irish Language Week").
As well as Dublin, many other cities, towns, and villages in Ireland hold their own parades and festivals, including Cork, Belfast, Derry, Galway, Kilkenny, Limerick, and Waterford. The biggest celebrations outside Dublin are in Downpatrick, County Down, where Saint Patrick is rumoured to be buried. In 2004, according to Down District Council, the week-long Saint Patrick's Festival had more than 2,000 participants and 82 floats, bands, and performers and was watched by more than 30,000 people.
The shortest St Patrick's Day parade in the world takes place in Dripsey, Cork. The parade lasts just 100 yards and travels between the village's two pubs.

Christian leaders in Ireland have expressed concern about the secularisation of St Patrick's Day. In The Word magazine's March 2007 issue, Fr. Vincent Twomey wrote, "It is time to reclaim St Patrick's Day as a church festival." He questioned the need for "mindless alcohol-fuelled revelry" and concluded that "it is time to bring the piety and the fun together."
• One of the longest-running Saint Patrick's Day parades in North America occurs each year in Montreal, whose city flag includes a shamrock in its lower-right quadrant. The parade has been held annually since 1824. In Manitoba, the Irish Association of Manitoba runs an annual three-day festival of music and culture based around Saint Patrick's Day.
• In 2013, the CelticFest Vancouver Society organised an annual festival in downtown Vancouver to celebrate the Celtic Nations and their culture. This event, which includes a parade, occurs the weekend closest to Saint Patrick's Day.

• In Quebec City, there was a parade from 1837 to 1926. The Quebec City St-Patrick Parade returned in 2010 after an absence of more than 84 years. For the occasion, a portion of the New York Police Department Pipes and Drums were present as special guests.
There has been a parade held in Toronto since at least 1863. The Toronto Maple Leafs hockey team was known as the Toronto St. Patricks from 1919 to 1927, and wore green jerseys. In 1999, when the Maple Leafs played on Saint Patrick's Day, they wore green Saint Patrick's retro uniforms. There is a large parade in the city's downtown core on the Sunday prior to 17 March which attracts over 100,000 spectators.

Some groups, notably Guinness, have lobbied to make Saint Patrick's Day a national holiday.
In March 2009, the Calgary Tower changed its top exterior lights to new green CFL bulbs just in time for Saint Patrick's Day. Part of an environmental non-profit organisation's campaign (Project Porchlight), the green represented environmental concerns. Approximately 210 lights were changed in time for Saint Patrick's Day, and resembled a Leprechaun's hat. After a week, white CFLs took their place. The change was estimated to save the Calgary Tower some $12,000 and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 104 tonnes.
• In Great Britain, Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother used to present bowls of shamrock flown over from Ireland to members of the Irish Guards, a regiment in the British Army consisting primarily of soldiers from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Irish Guards still wear shamrock on this day, flown in from Ireland.

• Christian denominations in Great Britain observing his feast day include The Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church.
• Horse racing at the Cheltenham Festival attracts large numbers of Irish people, both residents of Britain and many who travel from Ireland, and usually coincides with Saint Patrick's Day.
• Birmingham holds the largest Saint Patrick's Day parade in Britain with a city centre parade over a two-mile (3 km) route through the city centre. The organisers describe it as the third biggest parade in the world after Dublin and New York.
• London, since 2002, has had an annual Saint Patrick's Day parade which takes place on weekends around the 17th, usually in Trafalgar Square. In 2008 the water in the Trafalgar Square fountains was dyed green.
- Liverpool has the highest proportion of residents with Irish ancestry of any English city. This has led to a long-standing celebration on St Patrick's Day in terms of music, cultural events and the parade.
- Manchester hosts a two-week Irish festival in the weeks prior to St Patrick's Day. The festival includes an Irish Market based at the city's town hall which flies the Irish tricolour opposite the Union Flag, a large parade as well as a large number of cultural and learning events throughout the two-week period.
- The Scottish town of Coatbridge, where the majority of the town's population are of Irish descent, also has a Saint Patrick's Day Festival which includes celebrations and parades in the town centre.
Glasgow has a considerably large Irish population; due, for the most part, to the Irish immigration during the 19th century. This immigration was the main cause in raising the population of Glasgow by over 100,000 people. Due to this large Irish population, there is a considerable Irish presence in Glasgow with many Irish theme pubs and Irish interest groups who run annual celebrations on St Patrick's day in Glasgow. Glasgow began an annual Saint Patrick's Day parade and festival in 2007.
Astronauts on board the International Space Station have celebrated the festival in different ways. Irish-American Catherine Coleman played a hundred-year-old flute belonging to Matt Molloy and a tin whistle belonging to Paddy Maloney, both members of the Irish music group The Chieftains, while floating weightless in the space station on Saint Patrick's Day in 2011. Her performance was later included in a track called "The Chieftains In Orbit" on the group's album, *Voice of Ages*.

Chris Hadfield took photographs of Ireland from earth orbit, and a picture of himself wearing green clothing in the space station, and posted them online on Saint Patrick's Day in 2013. He also posted online a recording of himself singing *Danny Boy* in space.
Saint Patrick's Day, while not a legal holiday anywhere in the United States, is nonetheless widely recognised and celebrated throughout the country. It is observed as a celebration of Irish and Irish American culture. Celebrations include prominent displays of the colour green, eating and drinking, religious observances, and numerous parades. The holiday has been celebrated on the North American continent since the late eighteenth century.
The Saint Patrick's Day Test is an international rugby league tournament that is played between the USA and Ireland. The competition was first started in 1995 with Ireland winning the first two tests with the USA winning the last 4 in 2000, 2002, 2003 and 2004. The game is usually held on or around 17 March to coincide with Saint Patrick's Day.

Traditionally the All-Ireland Senior Club Football Championship and All-Ireland Senior Club Hurling Championship are held on Saint Patrick's Day in Croke Park, Dublin. The Interprovincial Championship was previously held on 17 March but this was switched to games being played in Autumn.

The Leinster Schools Rugby Senior Cup, Munster Schools Rugby Senior Cup and Ulster Schools Senior Cup are held on Saint Patrick's Day. The Connacht Schools Rugby Senior Cup is held on the weekend before Saint Patrick's Day.