

# GLOBAL HORIZONS

A communications platform for MIA's Protocol and International Affairs Division



FEBRUARY 2026

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Serbia “The Crossroads of Europe” .....2

Diplomatic & Consular Relations.....3

Aviation, Culture, Etiquette & Protocol...4

Briefs & Notes .....5

Independence & National Days .....10

### ABOUT US

The core mission of MDAD’s Protocol and International Affairs Division is *to facilitate the movement of official guests, delegations, dignitaries, and VIPs through MIA and support the airport’s international programs and initiatives.*

#### Contact

**Tel:** + 1 (305) 876-7457

**Email:** [Protocol@FlyMIA.com](mailto:Protocol@FlyMIA.com)

**URL:** [https://www.iFlyMIA.com/protocol\\_international\\_affairs.asp](https://www.iFlyMIA.com/protocol_international_affairs.asp)

For comments, suggestions, event announcements, or to opt out, please email us.



References to any person, organization, country, product, service, or external website do not constitute or imply endorsement or recommendation by the Protocol and International Affairs Division of the Miami-Dade Aviation Department. Noncommercial reprint rights are granted with the inclusion of the copyright notice. Additional reprint rights are available upon request.

## SERBIA “The Crossroads of Europe”



[Serbia](#) stands as a cultural and historical bridge in the heart of the Balkans—a land where East meets West and centuries of tradition converge with modern aspirations. Its landscapes range from fertile plains to forested mountains, offering a striking backdrop to a nation shaped by resilience and renewal.

**Chief of State:** [President Aleksandar Vučić](#), since 5/31/2017

**Capital:** Belgrade

**Population:** About 6.6 million (2025 estimate)

**National Day:** [Statehood Day, February 15](#)  
(commemorating the First Serbian Uprising in 1804 and the adoption of the 1835 constitution)

**Currency:** Serbian Dinar (RSD)

Serbia’s story stretches deep into the past. Once part of medieval kingdoms and later under [Ottoman rule](#), Serbia regained autonomy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and emerged as a modern republic after the breakup of Yugoslavia. Belgrade, one of Europe’s oldest cities, blends Roman ruins, [Ottoman fortresses](#), and Austro-Hungarian architecture with a thriving contemporary culture.

Nature adds its own splendor: the Danube and Sava rivers carve through the country, while national parks like [Tara](#) and [Đerdap](#) shelter rare species such as the Balkan lynx and griffon vulture. Serbia is home to thousands of plant species and hundreds of protected animals, making it a haven for [biodiversity](#).

Serbia’s cultural heartbeat is equally compelling. The Orthodox tradition of [Slava](#), which honors family patron saints, is recognized by UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage. Music and dance thrive in the spirited [kolo](#), and the world-famous Guča Trumpet Festival draws thousands to celebrate folk rhythms. Five UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the Studenica Monastery and the Roman palace of [Gamzigrad](#), built by Emperor Galerius, testify to Serbia’s layered history.

### Fun Facts About Serbia

- [Birthplace of Roman Emperors](#): Serbia is the birthplace of 18 Roman emperors, including Constantine the Great, marking it as one of the most significant regions for ancient rulers.
- [Vinča – Ancient Civilization](#): Near Belgrade lies Vinča, one of Europe’s oldest urban settlements (c. 6000–5000 BC), known for early writing symbols, making it a cradle of prehistoric civilization.
- [World’s Oldest Pharmaceutical Practices](#): Archaeological finds at Belovode showcase the world’s earliest known pharmaceutical practices, dating back to c. 5000 BC.
- [Red Gold](#): Serbia is consistently one of the world’s leading producers and exporters of [raspberries](#), providing about 30% of the global supply. The “Willamette” variety is especially prized.
- [Vampire Origins](#): The word *vampire* is one of the few Serbian words used worldwide, originating from the case of Petar Blagojević in 1725.
- [UNESCO Heritage](#): Sites like Stari Ras and Sopoćani showcase medieval artistry and spirituality.
- [Cultural Icons](#): The [Guča Trumpet Festival](#) is one of the largest brass music events in the world.
- [Cuisine](#): Serbian food blends Balkan and Mediterranean flavors, think [ćevapi](#), ajvar, and [hearty stews](#).
- [Natural Wonders](#): The Đerdap Gorge, Europe’s largest river gorge, is a spectacular gateway on the Danube.
- [Nikola Tesla](#): Celebrated Serbian American inventor Nikola Tesla was born in Smiljan, near a lightning strike, and later revolutionized electricity with AC systems and the Tesla coil.

Serbia is more than a crossroads; it is a living chronicle of resilience and renewal. From its monasteries and Roman ruins to its vibrant festivals and culinary traditions, Serbia invites the world to experience a nation where history and modernity meet in harmony.



**U. Desmond Alufohai**

Division Director II

Protocol & International Affairs Division  
Miami-Dade Aviation Department (MDAD)

### Division Director’s Message

February arrives with a quiet kind of symbolism. It is the shortest month of the year, yet it carries a depth that belies its brevity. It is a month of transition—winter softens at the edges, new intentions take root, and communities often find renewed purpose after the rush of January. February reminds us that even small windows of time can hold meaning, momentum, love, and connection.

This month, our community is honored to welcome **H.E. Mohammed Abdullah Al Ahabbi**, the newly appointed **Consul General of the United Arab Emirates (UAE)**. We extend our warmest greetings as he begins his tenure and look forward to the partnerships, dialogue, and cultural exchange his presence will help foster. May his time in our community be marked by collaboration, goodwill, and shared progress.

February is also a month of national pride for several countries around the world. We salute the nations that celebrate their **Independence Day or National Day** during this month, honoring their histories, their people, and the journeys that shaped their sovereignty. These commemorations remind us of the diverse stories that enrich our global community and the enduring value of self-determination.

As we move through February, may we carry its symbolism with us—purpose in small steps, meaning in brief moments, love and unity in shared celebration. Here’s to a month of reflection, welcome, and pride. Please stay safe, always.

## DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR RELATIONS

### Meet the New Consul General of the United Arab Emirates in Miami, Florida



**H.E. Mohammed Abdullah Al Ahbabi** is a seasoned Emirati leader, diplomat, and strategic executive with extensive experience across public service, finance, and commercial sectors. He currently serves as Consul General of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Miami, Florida, advancing bilateral commercial, cultural, and people-to-people ties.

Prior to his diplomatic appointment, Al Ahbabi built a distinguished career in financial strategy, operational leadership, and organizational transformation. He has held senior finance and executive roles in the UAE's energy and government sectors, including serving as Chief Financial Officer for Economic Cities & Free Zones at Abu Dhabi Ports.

In these capacities, he led financial planning, digital transformation initiatives, and business growth strategies that supported large-scale operations and strategic investments. Mr. Al Ahbabi also serves on the boards of multiple companies, reflecting his governance experience in both domestic and international contexts.

He was a Board Member of Daman Health Insurance Company and has served on boards in the energy, utilities, and investment industries, including roles at TAQA Bratani Ltd., TAQA Morocco SA, and CMS Generation UK Operating Pvt Ltd. His academic credentials include an MBA, and his career spans both private sector leadership and public service, combining operational excellence with cross-sector engagement.

Known for his collaborative approach and commitment to enhancing UAE-U.S. relations, Mr. Al Ahbabi's work in Miami underscores a lifelong focus on strengthening international partnerships and economic diplomacy.

CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE  
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES  
MIAMI



القنصلية العامة  
للإمارات العربية المتحدة  
ميامي

### UAE–US Bilateral Relations: A Strategic Partnership



The relationship between the United Arab Emirates and the United States has grown into one of the most durable and multifaceted partnerships in the Middle East. What began in the 1970s as a modest diplomatic connection has evolved into a broad alliance grounded in shared interests, economic cooperation, and long-term strategic alignment.

#### A Strategic Security Partnership

Security cooperation is one of the strongest pillars of UAE–US relations. The two countries work closely on Counterterrorism, Maritime security, regional stability, and Intelligence collaboration. The UAE hosts U.S. forces at Al Dhafra Air Base, a key hub for regional operations, and participates in joint military exercises that reinforce interoperability and preparedness.

#### Deep Economic and Trade Ties

The UAE is one of the United States' largest export markets in the Middle East. Their economic relationship includes: Robust trade in aviation, technology, energy, and services, significant Emirati investment in U.S. infrastructure, logistics, and renewable energy, and growing cooperation in space, artificial intelligence, and advanced manufacturing. The UAE's diversification strategy, particularly in clean energy and innovation, has created new opportunities for U.S. companies and research institutions.

#### Cultural and Educational Bridges

Beyond economics and security, the UAE and the U.S. maintain strong people-to-people ties: Thousands of Emirati students study in American universities, and U.S. cultural institutions collaborate with Emirati museums, arts foundations, and academic centers.

Tourism flows in both directions, supported by strong aviation links. These exchanges help sustain a relationship that is not only strategic but also deeply human.

#### Shared Vision for the Future

Both nations increasingly collaborate on global challenges such as: Climate action and renewable energy, Humanitarian assistance, Space exploration, Food security, and technological innovation.

The UAE's role as host of COP28 and its investments in clean energy projects worldwide have further aligned its priorities with U.S. climate and sustainability goals.

### [Miami International Airport Expands Biometric Screening with TSA PreCheck Touchless ID](#)

Miami International Airport (MIA) has introduced [TSA PreCheck Touchless ID](#) across its North, Central, and South Terminals, marking a major step forward in biometric security and streamlined passenger processing ahead of the busy spring travel season.

The initiative, launched in partnership with the [Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\)](#), allows eligible TSA PreCheck members to verify their identity without presenting a physical ID or boarding pass. Instead, facial comparison technology securely matches a live image to a stored passport record within seconds, enabling faster and more efficient checkpoint clearance while enhancing security standards. The technology not only enhances security but also reflects MIA's commitment to adopting cutting-edge solutions that prioritize passenger convenience and operational excellence. The rollout covers three of MIA's busiest terminals:

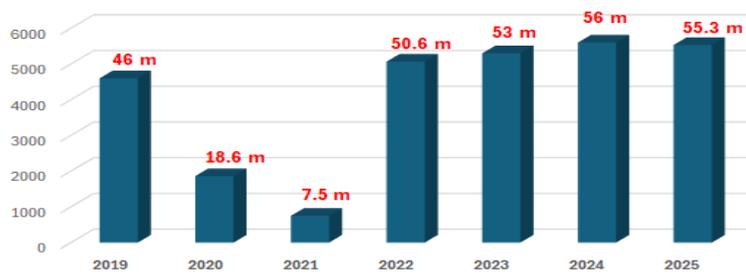
- **North Terminal** – Available for American Airlines passengers
- **Central Terminal** – Available for American Airlines and Alaska Airlines passengers
- **South Terminal** – Available for Delta Air Lines and United Airlines passengers

Airport officials noted that this deployment complements recent upgrades, including the full modernization of **TSA Checkpoint 2**, which now features advanced baggage screening systems and automated bin return technology. These enhancements are designed to increase lane throughput by up to 30% compared to conventional checkpoints, reducing waiting times and improving operational efficiency for millions of travelers.

To use the service, eligible travelers must opt in through their airline's app or customer profile to ensure their Known Traveler Number and valid passport details are correctly stored. A Touchless ID indicator will appear on the mobile boarding pass for qualifying flights. Passengers are advised to carry a physical ID as a backup in case additional verification is required.

Passenger traffic at MIA surpassed 55 million for the second consecutive year, reaching 55.3 million in 2025.

**Miami International Airport: Annual Passenger Traffic**



### [From Formal to Functional: Redefining Everyday Etiquette in 2026](#)

Because good manners should make life easier, not harder.

Etiquette has always been about creating comfort and respect in social situations. But as times change, some traditional rules feel more restrictive than helpful. In 2026, we're embracing a modern approach to manners, one that values authenticity over outdated expectations.

#### **White After Labor Day? Absolutely.**

The old rule about avoiding white after Labor Day is officially obsolete. In warm climates like Miami or during sunny days, white clothing is practical and stylish. Fashion should reflect personal choice, not rigid seasonal guidelines.

#### **Wedding Dress Codes Are More Flexible.**

Once considered inappropriate, wearing black to weddings is now widely accepted as elegant and sophisticated. Even bold colors like red are welcome, provided they don't overshadow the bride. The only color that remains off-limits? White. That tradition still honors the bride's moment.

#### **Family-Hosted Showers Are Perfectly Fine.**

The notion that close relatives shouldn't host bridal or baby showers because it appears "gift-grabby" feels outdated. Today, family involvement is seen as heartfelt and supportive. Celebrations should focus on joy, not judgment.

#### **"Ma'am" and "Sir" Are Optional.**

Politeness is about sincerity, not titles. While some appreciate these formalities, many find them unnecessary. Respect can be expressed through tone and behavior rather than rigid language.

#### **What Still Matters? Kindness.**

Principles such as gratitude, consideration, and respect never change. These aren't rules—they're values. And they remain the foundation of good manners.

Good manners should feel modern, not like a history lesson.

Etiquette isn't about rules; it's about respect, and that never goes out of style. Let's embrace kindness, reduce friction, and adapt etiquette to today's world.

The best etiquette is simple: be kind, be real, be you.

## BRIEFS AND NOTES



### Understanding the "G-Groups" in Global Governance

In 2026, Miami-Dade County will take the global stage as the host of two historic events: the FIFA Men's World Cup (June 11–July 19), the world's most-watched sporting spectacle, and the G-20 Summit of Heads of State (December 14–15), the premier forum for international economic cooperation. This extraordinary convergence of sport and diplomacy presents Miami-Dade County with a unique opportunity to lead, strengthen global partnerships, and inspire communities worldwide. In preparation for these landmark events, we are convening

the MIA Airport Operations Workshop for members of the international diplomatic community and representatives of the G-20 nations. The global power landscape is no longer a single pyramid but a complex web of "G-Groups." From the inner sanctums of the world's wealthiest nations to the expansive coalitions of the Global South, these groups act as the unofficial "boardrooms" of the planet.

#### The Alphabet Soup of Global Power

Understanding these groups is key to deciphering how international laws, trade deals, and climate policies are made. Here is the breakdown of the major "G" clubs active today.

#### The Traditional Guard (G7, G8, G10)

- **G7 (Group of Seven):** The core of the Western-led order.  
Members: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, the USA, and the EU.  
Role: Setting standards for democratic values and global security. In 2026, it remains the primary engine for sanctions and high-tech trade policy.
- **G8 (Group of Eight):** This was the G7 plus Russia. Since Russia's suspension in 2014 and its formal withdrawal in 2017, the G8 has effectively been defunct.
- **G10 (Group of Ten):** Despite the name, it has 11 members (the G7 plus Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland).  
Role: Its primary purpose is the "General Arrangements to Borrow," providing supplementary funds to the IMF (International Monetary Fund) to ensure the world's financial plumbing doesn't clog.

#### The Global Architects (G20)

- **G20 (Group of Twenty):** The premier forum for international economic cooperation.  
Members: 19 countries + the European Union + the African Union (the newest permanent member).  
Role: Represents 80% of global GDP. It is the only place where the US, China, India, and the EU sit as equals to manage global debt and climate finance. Under the 2026 U.S. Presidency, the focus has shifted toward AI safety and digital trade.

#### The Voice of the South (G77, G15, G24)

- **G77:** The largest coalition in the UN, now including 134 nations.  
Role: It provides the "collective muscle" for developing countries to negotiate as a single bloc against wealthier nations on issues like climate reparations.
- **G15:** A "think tank" within the G77, focused on South-South cooperation.  
Members: 17 developing countries (e.g., India, Brazil, Nigeria, Egypt).  
Role: It fosters practical investment projects, trade, and technology between developing nations without relying on the West.
- **G24:** The finance-focused arm of the Global South. Role: They coordinate the positions of developing countries within the IMF and the World Bank, advocating for greater voting power and fairer lending terms.



## Milano–Cortina, ITALY 2026: A New Era for the Winter Olympic Games

In February 2026, the world turns its attention to northern Italy as the Winter Olympic Games return to one of Europe’s most breathtaking regions. The Milano–Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics are already being hailed as one of the most ambitious and forward-looking editions in the history of the Games. With expanded gender equity, new sports, and a historic co-host arrangement, this year’s Olympics promise to redefine what the Winter Games can be.

For the first time ever, the Winter Olympics are co-hosted by two cities: the vibrant metropolitan center of Milan and the alpine jewel of Cortina d’Ampezzo. Events are spread across several regions in northern Italy, blending modern urban venues with the dramatic natural beauty of the Dolomites. This innovative hosting model not only showcases Italy’s diverse landscapes but also reflects the International Olympic Committee’s commitment to sustainability by reusing existing venues wherever possible.

Milano–Cortina 2026 is poised to be one of the most globally representative Winter Games in history. Approximately 2,800-2,900 athletes from more than 90 nations compete, bringing together seasoned champions, rising stars, and first-time Olympians from every corner of the world. The Games feature 116 medal events across 16 sports, making this the largest Winter Olympic program ever assembled.

**New Events and a New Olympic Sport:** One of the most exciting developments for 2026 is the introduction of eight new medal events, including the debut of an entirely new Olympic sport: Ski Mountaineering (Skimo), often called “skimo,” which makes its first Olympic appearance with three events: Men’s Sprint, Women’s Sprint, and Mixed Relay.

**New Events Across Existing Sports:** To further expand competitive opportunities, especially for women, the IOC has added new medal events in Skeleton, Ski Jumping, Freestyle Skiing, Luge, and Alpine Combined. These additions help make Milano–Cortina 2026 the most gender-balanced Winter Olympics ever, with women making up 47% of all athletes. The evolution of the 2026 program reflects a broader shift within the Olympic movement toward: Greater gender equity, more dynamic, youth-oriented sports, expanded global participation, and modernized formats designed for today’s audiences.

### Winter Olympics facts

1. All the events at the Winter Olympics take place in snow and ice!
2. The first Winter Olympics were held in 1924. About 250 athletes from 16 countries competed in Chamonix, [France](#). There were 16 events, including cross-country skiing, ski jumping, and ice hockey!
3. The Winter Olympics traditionally take place two years after the Summer Olympics. But this isn’t always the case. When the [Summer Olympic Games](#) of 2020 were moved to 2021 due to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), the Beijing Winter Olympics in [China](#) followed close behind in 2022!
4. Animals once participated in the Winter Olympics! While they haven’t been invited to join with official sports, horses and dogs have both played a role in ‘demonstration events’. Dogsledding featured in the 1932 Winter Olympics, while in the 1928 Olympics, horses demonstrated skijoring – an event that involves athletes being towed on skis behind riderless horses.
5. Athletes competing in skeleton or bobsleigh hurtle down slopes at up to 140 km/h!
6. In the first Winter Olympics, women were only allowed to compete in figure skating. This continued until 1948, when skiing also became a competitive women’s sport. Thankfully, women can now compete in all sports at the Winter Olympics!
7. Marit Bjørgen from Norway has won the most medals of any Winter Olympian. This amazing cross-country skier has won a whopping 15 medals. She secured her title at the 2014 Winter Olympics by winning three gold medals!
8. Snow and ice once had to be brought in by the army! In 1964, the Winter Olympics were set to take place in Innsbruck, Austria – but as the event loomed, the officials realized that there wasn’t enough snow! So, the Austrian army headed into the nearby mountains and carted down more than 38,200 cubic meters of snow and 20,000 blocks of ice!
9. Walt Disney oversaw the opening and closing ceremonies for one memorable Winter Olympics! These took place in the Squaw Valley, California, [USA](#) in 1960. In a quest to make the opening ceremony the most impressive yet, Disney’s performance included a whopping 3,700 musicians, 2,000 doves, and more than 30,000 balloons!
10. Only one person has ever won gold in both the Winter and Summer Olympics. American Eddie Eagan grabbed a gold medal in boxing during the 1920 Summer Olympics in Antwerp, Belgium. Then, more than 10 years later, he scored another in the 1932 Winter Olympics as part of a four-man bobsled team.



**About the Olympic Rings:** The Olympic rings symbolize the unity and universality of the Olympic movement, representing the idea that athletes from all over the world come together in peaceful competition. Designed in 1913 by Pierre de Coubertin, the five interlocking rings, blue, yellow, black, green, and red, represent the five major regions traditionally associated with the Games, while the six total colors (including the white background) were chosen because every national flag contains at least one of them. Their interlaced form conveys connection, cooperation, and the shared values of excellence, friendship, and respect that define the Olympic spirit.

### Understanding the Olympic Family of Games: Here is a quick overview of the four major Olympic Games

Type of Games	Season	Frequency	First Held	Key Features
Summer Olympics	Summer	Every 4 years	1896	Largest variety of sports; global participation
Winter Olympics	Winter	Every 4 years (offset by 2 years from Summer)	1924	Snow & ice sports
Paralympic Games	Both	Every 4 years (after each Olympics)	1960 (Summer), 1976 (Winter)	Athletes with disabilities
Youth Olympic Games	Both	Every 4 years	2010 (Summer), 2012 (Winter)	Athletes aged 15–18

## Lunar Year 2026: Year of the Fire Horse



[Lunar New Year](#), also known as Chinese New Year or Spring Festival, marks the start of a new zodiac cycle based on the Chinese lunar calendar. Each year, the date shifts within the Gregorian calendar. Lunar New Year in 2026 ushers in the Year of the Fire Horse, this year beginning on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026, and marking the start of the 16-day Spring Festival observed across many Asian cultures. Across Asia and in cities worldwide, celebrations in various formats will be in full swing, with parades, lion and dragon dances, lantern displays, cultural performances, and special community festivals.

Families will also travel to their hometowns to reunite with their loved ones to welcome blessings and prosperity for the new year.

[The horse, one of 12 zodiac signs \(animals\)](#), is often characterized by vitality, momentum, independence, and a bold, adventurous spirit. Fire, one of five traditional elements, is highly associated with passion, energy, and fierceness. As the horse’s native element is fire, 2026 is a “Double Fire” horse year, since both the horse and fire exhibit very similar characteristics. When paired together, a cycle that occurs only every 60 years, with the last Fire Horse year occurring in 1966, the year is predicted to be one of intense passion and rapid transformation. [It is expected that 2026 will reward those who take decisive action](#), making it an ideal time to start new ventures or pursue long-held ambitions.

[Those born in the Year of the Fire Horse](#) are believed to possess features such as extraordinary passion, strong leadership qualities, and dynamic energy – traits that boldly set them apart from those born in a year of the Horse paired with another element.

The Year of the Fire Horse is all about momentum and strong action, rewarding those who act with confidence and initiative. [This year encourages autonomy and self-trust, with change happening fast and situations shifting quickly](#). So, as we approach this Lunar New Year, find what motivates you and fuels your passion, and move boldly with confidence. In doing so, the Fire Horse can become an engine for real progress and advancement.

### Other Global & Widely Used Calendars

Calendar	Type	Primary Use / Region	Year Length	New Year’s Date
Gregorian	Solar	Worldwide civil calendar	365 or 366 days	January 1
Julian	Solar	Some Orthodox churches	365.25 days	January 14 (Gregorian equivalent)
Islamic (Hijri)	Lunar	Muslim-majority countries (religious)	~354 days	Varies (moves about 11 days earlier each year)
Hebrew (Jewish)	Lunisolar	Jewish communities	353–385 days	1 Tishrei (September to October)
Chinese	Lunisolar	China, East Asia (traditional)	353–385 days	Between January 21 and February 20
Hindu (various)	Lunisolar	India, Nepal	Varies by region	Varies (March to April for many)
Persian / Solar Hijri	Solar	Iran, Afghanistan	365 or 366 days	Nowruz: March 20/21
Ethiopian	Solar	Ethiopia, Eritrea	365 or 366 days	Meskerem 1: Sept 11/12
Coptic	Solar	Coptic Church	365 or 366 days	Sept 11 or 12
Buddhist (SE Asia)	Lunisolar	Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar	Varies	Mid-April (Songkran period)
Japanese (Gregorian + Eras)	Solar	Japan	365 or 366 days	January 1
Korean Traditional	Lunisolar	Korea (traditional holidays)	353–385 days	Same as the Chinese New Year
Balinese Pawukon	Cyclical (210-day cycle)	Bali	210-day cycle	No fixed annual New Year (runs continuously)

### Notes on New Year’s Variations

- Lunar calendars (Islamic) shift through seasons because they don’t align with the solar year.
- Lunisolar calendars (Chinese, Hebrew, Hindu) add leap months to stay aligned with seasons.
- Solar calendars (Gregorian, Persian, Ethiopian) keep the New Year tied to a specific season or astronomical event.
- Some calendars (Balinese Pawukon) don’t even track years in the same sense—they’re cyclical.

## Fun Facts You Probably Didn't Know



### **Fridays Are Popular for Bank Robberies**

According to U.S. crime data, Friday mornings see the highest number of bank robberies. In 2011 alone, \$43 million was stolen, but only about \$8 million ever made its way back to the banks. Experts believe Fridays are targeted because banks are well-stocked with cash for weekend withdrawals.

### **Tinder Reached Antarctica**

In 2014, Tinder made history by matching two scientists stationed in Antarctica. Proof that dating apps really do work anywhere on Earth, even in one of the most remote and icy places imaginable!

### **Collars Were Once Detachable**

Back in the mid-1800s, men's dress shirts had removable collars. Why? To save on laundry costs, since collars get dirty faster than the rest of the shirt. This clever design kept shirts looking sharp without frequent washing.

### **The World's First Novel Ends Abruptly**

*The Tale of Genji*, written in 11th-century Japan, is considered the first novel ever. Oddly enough, it stops mid-sentence, leaving scholars debating whether that was intentional or if pages were lost. Either way, it remains a literary mystery.

### **A Tourist Joined Her Own Search Party**

In Iceland's Eldgjá Canyon in 2014, a woman was reported missing, only to be found helping the search team look for... herself! A quick outfit change had caused confusion, turning a routine tour into an unforgettable story.

### **Sneezing at 60 mph Is Risky Business**

A single sneeze while driving at 60 mph means your eyes are closed for about 50 feet. That's enough distance to cause serious accidents. So, keep those tissues handy and drive carefully during the cold season.

### **You Can't Sneeze While Asleep**

Your body shuts down the sneeze reflex during sleep. Even if your nose tickles, you'll only sneeze if you wake up first. It's one of the body's fascinating protective mechanisms.

### **Earning \$1 a Second Won't Make You Rich Fast**

At \$1 per second, you'd need nearly 3,000 years to surpass Bill Gates' fortune. Talk about patience! Even at that rate, you'd still fall short of today's tech billionaires.

### **February Was Once the Year's End**

In the Roman calendar, February was the last month of the year. January and February were added later to account for winter, making February the shortest month we know today.

### **Shoe Stores Once Used X-Rays**

In the 1940s, shoe shops used X-ray machines to measure foot size, long before the risks of radiation were understood. It was considered cutting-edge technology at the time.

### **Big Ben Is Leaning**

London's famous clock tower has a slight tilt that's visible to the naked eye. Experts predict it could match the Leaning Tower of Pisa in about 4,000 years if the shift continues.

### **Australia Is a Beach Paradise**

With roughly 10,000 beaches, you could visit a new one every day for 27 years and still not see them all. It's a dream destination for ocean lovers.

### **Scotland's National Animal Is a Unicorn**

Yes, really. The unicorn symbolizes purity and strength in Celtic mythology, and it's proudly featured on Scotland's coat of arms. A mythical creature with a very real cultural legacy.

Source: <https://facts.net/fun-facts/>

## President’s Day: Honoring America’s Leaders

Presidents’ Day is a national holiday in the United States observed annually on the third Monday of February. It serves as a day to recognize and honor all individuals who have held the office of President, acknowledging their leadership and the decisions that have shaped the nation’s history.

The origins of Presidents’ Day date back to the 19th century. Initially, two separate holidays honored two iconic leaders: February 12 commemorated Abraham Lincoln, celebrated for guiding the country through the Civil War and abolishing slavery, while February 22 honored George Washington, the nation’s first president and a foundational figure in American democracy.

In the late 1960s, Congress introduced the Uniform Monday Holiday Act, which consolidated these observances into a single holiday. This change, officially enacted in 1971, created Presidents’ Day—a unified occasion to celebrate all U.S. presidents rather than just Washington and Lincoln.

How do Americans mark the day? Many enjoy a day off from work or school, while communities host parades, educational programs, and public ceremonies. Schools often incorporate lessons and activities focused on presidential history and civic leadership. Retailers and businesses often leverage Presidents’ Day as a major sales event, making it a significant shopping weekend of the year in the United States.

One enduring tradition is retelling the famous “I cannot tell a lie” Story about young George Washington confessing to chopping down a cherry tree. Though historians agree the tale is of doubtful authenticity, it symbolizes honesty and integrity, qualities admired in national leaders. Beyond commerce, the holiday also serves as a moment for civic engagement, encouraging discussions on leadership, governance, and the evolving role of the presidency in American society. Presidents’ Day remains an opportunity to reflect on the country’s democratic heritage and appreciate the individuals who have guided its course.

### **Key International "Presidents' Day" Celebrations**

While Presidents' Day is primarily a U.S. holiday, a few other nations celebrate their own versions to honor leadership:

- [Botswana](#): Celebrated in July, this holiday honors the presidency and the leaders who have served the country.
- [Palau](#): A public holiday dedicated to honoring the country's presidents.
- [Tajikistan](#) celebrates its own Presidents' Day, which was established in 2016.
- [Equatorial Guinea](#): Celebrates the birthday of long-time leader Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo.
- [Kazakhstan](#): Historically celebrates its first president after gaining independence.

### **Other International Contexts**

Many nations choose to mark national independence days, or, in the United Kingdom’s case, the monarch’s official birthday, rather than dedicate a holiday to a head of government.

Country / Realm	Monarch Title	Holiday Name	Public Holiday?	Notes
Japan	Emperor	Emperor’s Birthday	Yes	The Imperial Palace is open to the public
Australia	King	King’s Birthday	Yes	Date varies by state
New Zealand	King	King’s Birthday	Yes	Fixed the June Holiday
Canada	King	Victoria Day	Yes	Serves as the monarch’s official birthday
UK	King	King’s Birthday	No (ceremonial)	Trooping the Color
Netherlands	King	King’s Day	Yes	Major national festival
Thailand	King	King’s Birthday	Yes	Nationwide ceremonies
Bahrain	King	King’s Birthday	Yes	Linked to National Day
Brunei	Sultan	Sultan’s Birthday	Yes	Parades and celebrations
Morocco	King	King’s Birthday / Youth Day	Yes	National holiday

## INDEPENDENCE AND NATIONAL DAYS (FEBRUARY 2026)

**February 4, 1948 – Sri Lanka:** British Ceylon gained independence from Great Britain on February 4, 1948. When it became a republic on May 22, 1972, it was renamed the Republic of Sri Lanka.

**February 7, 1974 – Grenada:** After becoming a self-governing state in association with the United Kingdom in 1967, Grenada became an independent nation on February 7, 1974.

**February 11, 1929 – Holy See (Vatican City):** On this date, the Holy See signed three treaties with Italy that acknowledged its full sovereignty and established its territorial extent. Currently, its National Day is celebrated on May 8, the day Pope Leo XIV was elected.

**February 13, 1913 – Tibet:** After Tibetan troops had driven out soldiers of the collapsing Manchu (Qing) Dynasty, the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama proclaimed independence from China. The Chinese never accepted this proclamation, and in 1949, they reoccupied the Himalayan region. Tibet is currently an autonomous area within the People’s Republic of China, but it continues to fight for its independence.

**February 15, 1804 – Serbia:** Although Serbia gained independence from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro on June 5, 2006, its National Day, known as Statehood Day, is celebrated on February 15. It marks two historical events: the beginning of the First Serbian Uprising in 1804 and the adoption of the First Serbian Constitution in 1835.

**February 16, 1918 – Lithuania:** On February 16, 1918, Lithuania gained independence from Soviet Russia and Germany; a day known as the Restoration of the State Day. Lithuanians celebrate a second national day: March 11, Restoration of Independence Day, marking the day in 1990 when Lithuania declared independence from the Soviet Union.

**February 17, 2008 – Kosovo:** On this date, the Kosovo Assembly unanimously voted to declare independence from Serbia.

**February 18, 1965 – Republic of The Gambia:** The Gambia, the smallest country in mainland Africa and a British Crown colony and protectorate, gained independence from Great Britain. It remained a constitutional monarchy within the Commonwealth until it became a republic on April 24, 1970.

**February 22, 1979 – St. Lucia:** After being contested between the French and British throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, St. Lucia became a British Crown colony in 1814. On February 22, 1979, it gained full independence and chose to remain within the Commonwealth as a parliamentary democracy.

**February 23 – Japan:** Since Emperor Naruhito ascended to the Chrysanthemum Throne on May 1, 2019, Japan has celebrated February 23 as its National Day, honoring the Emperor, who was born on that date.

**February 24, 1918 – Estonia:** Estonia celebrates two independence days: Independence Day on February 24, the day they declared independence from Soviet Russia in 1918, and Restoration of Independence Day, on August 20, the day it declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

**February 25, 1963 – Kuwait:** Under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah, Kuwait gained independence from Britain on June 19, 1961. Starting in 1963, National Day celebrations were moved to February 25 to avoid the prevailing summer heat. The date was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the Sheikh’s coronation in 1950.

**February 27, 1844 – Dominican Republic:** On this date, Dominicans seized the fortress of Puerta del Conde and drove the Haitian army out of Santo Domingo. Since this day marked a turning point in the nation’s history, it is celebrated annually as Independence Day.

