

Interesting facts about Winter Solstice

The winter solstice — the day marking the beginning of winter — occurs on the shortest day and longest night of the year. Here are some interesting facts about the winter solstice that you may not know.

The winter solstice — the day that marks the beginning of winter — occurs on the shortest day and longest night of the year. After this day in late December, we say goodbye to the short days and look forward to warmer hours of sunlight in the new year. Here are **some fun facts about the winter solstice** that you may not know.



In fact, there are two winter solstices each year.

Did you know that the other side of the planet also has a winter solstice? With the planet's orbit tilted on its axis, Earth's hemispheres swap which side receives direct sunlight throughout the year.

Although the Northern Hemisphere is closer to the sun in December, the tilt away from the sun results in less direct sunlight and that causes cold temperatures—and conversely, the Southern Hemisphere receives more direct sunlight and is warm.

So while our winter solstice is around December 21, the Southern Hemisphere also celebrates it around June 21.

Winter solstice happens in the blink of an eye

Although the winter solstice is marked as a whole day on the calendar, it is actually only the brief moment when the sun is directly above the Tropic of Cancer that the event occurs.



It happens on different days in the same year.

In 2015, the winter solstice occurred on December 22, at 04:49 UTC, the standard time by which the world adjusts its time. This means that any location that is at least five hours behind UTC experiences the winter solstice on December 21.

But in 2017, almost the entire world celebrates the Winter Solstice on December 21. The Winter Solstice occurs at 4:28 PM UTC or 11:48 AM EST.

The winter solstice usually marks the first day of winter.

Meteorologists consider the first day of winter to be December 1. But ask an astronomer, and they'll probably answer that the winter solstice marks the beginning of a new season.

There are two ways to look at seasons: meteorological seasons and astronomical seasons. Meteorological seasons are based on the annual temperature cycle while astronomical seasons are based on the Earth's position relative to the sun.



The "Time" of Long Shadows

If you tend to enjoy the little things, like the shadow cast by a funhouse mirror, then the winter solstice is the time for you.

Because the sun is lowest in the sky, the shadow cast by its light is the longest. In fact, the shadow you cast at noon on the winter solstice is the longest of the year. Enjoy those long legs while you can.

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