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In this **LTE** Newsletter 2008 holiday edition I wish to share with you the wider importance of America's beloved holiday, Thanksgiving. Being born & raised in New York City, Thanksgiving always had a very special meaning to me, my family and countrymen. Thus, in juxtaposition of living & working in Europe now, questions invariably arise and in this issue, I wish to put this into perspective. If you want to share any comment or seek some further explanations, please send a mail to: [steven.hanft@conusbat.com](mailto:steven.hanft@conusbat.com)

## Thanksgiving Holiday in America – A Personal Experience



**Thanksgiving Day** is a traditional American holiday where gratitude is expressed for the harvest received during the year; yet it is a secular holiday with no religious overtones. This is important because the population in the USA is diversified in religious believe and most other holidays are not commonly shared. Thanksgiving, however, unites all Americans no matter if they are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, or atheists.

The traditional "First Thanksgiving" is venerated as having occurred in 1621 at the site of the Plymouth Plantation in Massachussettes. Here, local native American Indians helped feeding hungry Pilgrim settlers, who came to America to escape religious persecution in Nothern Europe.

Today, this holiday is a gathering of family members & friends. Traditional or symbolic foods are eaten, especially a turkey, a huge bird indigenous to Northern America with a plumage of the colors of the autumn season. The turkey feeds many, as for the "First Thanksgiving"; furthermore, sweet potatoes, pumpkin pie, cranberry sauce and a whole host of other foods are served.

### A Thanksgiving Scenario

Thanksgiving is celebrated every year on the last Thursday in November. The **Wednesday** before, the mad rush home provides traffic snarls by mid-afternoon, airports report heavy numbers of holiday travellers, yet most people meet their destinations by the late evening.

On **Thursday - Turkey Day!** in NYC, the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade is held. With bands marching down from the Upper West Side

to the famous Macy's Department Store at 34<sup>th</sup> & Broadway. An average of 3 million viewers are entertained by many floats and 'falloons' (a cross between a float and a balloon) representing familiar cartoon characters.

On Thanksgiving Day, Wall St., banks, and businesses are closed. Equally important is the fact that all universities & schools close on Wednesday and re-open the following Monday.

The meal is usually served between 16:00-18:00, however, set rules do not exist. Most important is that the family is together, and everyone has plenty to eat of what is known as the *fixings* (turkey stuffing, gravy, various salads, vegetables, etc.).

Additionally on this day, great care is taken to help those less fortunate, such as the poor & homeless. This year, in view of the distressed economic situation, even more efforts were made by religious or civic organizations.

**'Black' Friday – Beginning of Christmas Shopping Season.** The day after Thanksgiving has a longstanding tradition as the day where the Christmas season officially begins. With reduced prices shopping malls, department stores and other retailers 'open their arms' to shoppers or would be bargain hunters.

**Saturday** - If turkey & other leftovers from Thursday's meal haven't yet been consumed, well this is the day to consider eating it. Furthermore, many people like to take the kids to museums, go to an athletic event (American football or a basketball game) or visit friends or relatives they haven't yet seen.

**Sunday 'Madness'** – means the travel back home, to a university or where ever it may be!



**Cross-cultural tip - Europeans interacting with American business partners should consider sending those acquaintances a note of 'Happy Thanksgiving'. This holiday holds high importance to Americans, similarly, as the meaning of Christmas for Europeans.**



**Don't let language be a barrier to your success!**

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