In Romania, Christmas is about a lot more than decorating the Christmas trees and offering gifts. The country is well known for its numerous traditions and superstitions around orthodox holidays, and Christmas makes no exception.

In Romania, Christmas and mid-winter celebrations last from 20th December to 7th January. The 20th is when people celebrate St. Ignatius's Day. It is traditional that if the family keep pigs, one is killed on this day. The meat from the pig is ised in the Christmas meals.

St. Nicholas is celebrated on the 6th December. On the evening of the 5th December children clean their shoes or boots and leave them by the door and hope that St. Nicholas will leave them some small presents. St. Nicholas might also be called Old Man Nicholas and although he is celebrated in December, it's not part of the Christmas celebrations! A tradition says that if it snow on December 6th, Saint Nicholas has shaken his beard so that winter can begin.

The Christmas celebrations really begin on Christmas Eve, 24th, when it's time to decorate the Christmas Tree. This is done in the evening of Christmas Eve. In Romanian, Christmas Eve is called „Ajunul Crăciunului".

Carol singing (known as ,,colindatul") is also a very popular part of Christmas in Romania. On Christmas Eve, children go out carol singing from house to house performing to the adults in the houses. They normally dance as well. The children get sweets, fruit, traditional cakes called ,,cozonaci" and sometimes money for singing well. Adults go carol singing on Christmas Day evening and night.

A traditional Romanian carol is the ,,Star Carol". The star, made of colored paper and often decorated with tinsel, silver foil and sometimes bells, is put on a pole. In the middle of the star is a picture of baby Jesus or a nativity scene. Carol singers take the star with them when they go carol singing. The words of the Star Carol are:

,,The star has appeared on high,

Like a big secret in the sky,

The star is bright,

May all your wishes turn out right."

Other popular carols to sing include ,,Oh, What Wondrous Tidings" (,,O, ce veste minunata!") and ,,Three Wise men coming from the East" (,,Trei crai de la răsărit").

In many parts of Romania, it's also traditional that someone dresses up as a goat, with a multicolored mask, and goes round with the carol singers. The goat is known as the ,,capra" and it jumps and dances around getting up to lots of mischief!

There is an impressive tradition that is mainly kept in Moldova and Bucovina regions, called the Bear's Dance. The group is made up of young men costumed as bears, as well as bear-leaders, plovers, and drummers. Each of them is playing a role in the ritual. The ritual presents the bear's death and rebirth, which symbolizes the New Year that is about to come.

In Romanian, Merry Christmas is „Crăciun fericit!"

Traditional Romanian Christmas foods include:

- Roast gammon and Pork Chops (made from the killed pig!);
- „Ciorba de perișoare" which is a slightly sour vegetable soup made with fermented bran and pork meatballs;

- ,,Sarmale" cabbage leaves stuffed with ground pork and served with polenta;
- ,,Cozonac" – a rich fruit bread;
- Romanian doughnuts called ,,gogoși" and cheesecakes.

New Year's Eve is also an important celebration in Romania. It's sometimes called Little Christmas. Traditionally a small, decorated plough called a ,,Plugușorul" is paraded through the streets on New Year's Eve. It is meant to help people have good crops during the following year.

On New Year's Day, children wish people a Happy New Year while carrying around a special bouquet called a ,,Sorcova". Traditionally, the Sorcova was made of twigs from one or more fruit trees like apple, pear, cherry or plum. They're put into water in a warm place on 30th November, so they hopefully come into leaf and

blossom on New Year's Eve! Nowadays often a single twig of an apple or pear tree is used and it's decorated with flowers made from colored paper.