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CIR's Corner

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Hello everyone! "CIR's Corner" is my monthly article about international exchange and cultures around the world. I will introduce a variety of interesting international topics.

This Month's Topic: Halloween around the World

In the last two years, I have introduced various Halloween topics, such as [jack-o'-lanterns](#), [trick-or-treating](#), [horror movies](#), and [haunted houses](#). These are primarily American Halloween customs, so this month, I will share an article about how other countries celebrate. The following article is from the [National Public Radio \(NPR\) website](#). This article was written for native English speakers, so challenge your reading skills!

How Halloween is Celebrated around the World

By Giulia Heyward

While Halloween conjures images of candy and costumes around the U.S., the holiday looks different across the globe. Here's a breakdown into how the holiday is celebrated in seven other countries.

Mexico

While children in Mexico also go trick-or-treating on Oct. 31, it acts as a primer for another celebration: el Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, which takes place on Nov. 1 and 2. Observers say the Mexican holiday, which dates back 3,000 years to pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, occurs when the gates of heaven open, allowing the spirit of a deceased loved one to be reunited with their still-living family.

Family members may prepare a feast with the deceased's favorite foods or leave gifts on their gravesite. Festival-goers will don skull masks and eat skull-shaped sweets. And the holiday, once typically

celebrated only in rural, Indigenous parts of the country, is now celebrated in major cities, including the capital, Mexico City.



An ofrenda (altar) for a deceased relative (Wikimedia Commons)

England

The increasing popularity of Halloween in pop culture means that British children may partake in the holiday. But like other countries, it can often be overshadowed by another, much larger event: Guy Fawkes Day.

On Nov. 5, British citizens celebrate the failed assassination of King James I by Guy Fawkes and other participants in the plot. Because Fawkes attempted to kill the king with barrels of gunpowder — before being found by the authorities and being sentenced to death — the holiday is celebrated with bonfires across the country. And instead of trick-or-treating for candy, children will walk around asking for a "penny for the Guy."



Fireworks on Guy Fawkes Day (Scott Barbour/Getty Images)

Italy

On Nov. 1, Italians celebrate Ognissanti, or "all saints," a festival with deep religious undertones. While it's common to see Italian holidays dedicated to a specific saint, this holiday is dedicated to all of the saints as a whole.

How the holiday is celebrated varies by region: in Sicily, the deceased rise from the dead to bring gifts to well-behaved children, while children in Sardinia go door to door to ask for offerings from the deceased. Romans will eat a meal near the gravesites of loved ones, while people in the region of Abruzzo and Trentino fashion lanterns by placing candles in pumpkins.

Guatemala

Guatemalans also honor the dead during the first couple days of November. During the Barriletes Gigantes, or "giant kites" festival, Guatemalans populate the sky with massive, colorful kites.

The kites — which can go up to 40 feet in the air — are often hand-painted, and flown over the graves of loved ones who have passed away. The kites are said to represent a bridge between the living and the dead.



Giant kites (Josué Goge/flickr)

Japan

Halloween is a new holiday in Japan and the country is embracing the Western tradition and adding its own influence. Because there are other holidays in Japan meant for celebrating the deceased, including Obon, trick or treating isn't as popular.

Instead, Halloween in Japan is all about the costumes. Celebrators, who are normally adults, will don costumes and head to parties and clubs instead.

Ireland

It's an understatement to say that Halloween is a big deal in Ireland: it's where the celebration began in the first place. Halloween as it is known today originated from the ancient festival of Samhain, which celebrated the beginning of winter in pagan Ireland more than 2,000 years ago.

Festivals take place across the country: from the Púca festival, which celebrates the folklore behind the Celtic holiday to the Derry Halloween celebration in the northern part of the island.



The Púca festival. A *púca* is a type of Irish fairy. (Allen Kiely Photography)

China

In China, the Qingming festival, which is celebrated at the beginning of April, is the holiday reserved for celebrating the deceased. The event, which is also known as Tomb Sweeping Day, draws Chinese people to literally sweep — and clean — the tombs of loved ones. The act is considered to be one of the most respectful acts one can take to honor the deceased. ★

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