

Fact File: Memorial Day

Memorial Day is a national holiday in the United States. It is a day to remember those who have died serving our country.

When is it observed? Memorial Day is observed on the last Monday in May.

What do people do? Different people have different ways of spending the holiday. To those who have had a relative or friend die in service, the day is somber and one of reflection.

Here are some things you can do:

- At 3pm local time, observe the National Moment of Remembrance.
- Spend just one minute reflecting on what these heroes have done to give us our freedom.
- If you fly a US flag, be sure to fly it at half mast until noon.
- Find a good charity and donate to the families of those who have lost their lives.
- Volunteer to place flags at cemeteries.
- Attend or participate in a parade.
- Visit a war memorial and learn about the history of the battles, the war, and the soldiers who fought.
- Wear red, white, and blue to show your support.

History of Memorial Day:

Having a special day to honor fallen soldiers started during the Civil War. It didn't necessarily start in one place as many different communities had different days and ways that they observed the day. The first time the day was given an official name was in 1868 when Decoration Day was observed on May 30th.

Michigan was the first state to make Decoration Day an official holiday in 1871. Over time the day became known as Memorial Day. After World War II, the day was used to honor soldiers who died in all wars, rather than just the Civil War.

In 1967, the name of the holiday was officially changed to Memorial Day. In 1968, a law was passed to change the date of the holiday to the last Monday in May. This was to help create a three day weekend. Today this marks the start of summer for many businesses and many people go to the beach or take other vacations over this weekend.

Interesting Facts About Memorial Day:

- Two of the biggest car races of the year take place on Memorial Day, the NASCAR Coca Cola 600 race in Charlotte, North Carolina and the Indy 500 in Indianapolis, Indiana.
- May 30th was originally chosen because it was not an anniversary date of a major battle.
- The longest running Memorial Day parade takes place in Ironton, Ohio where they have had a parade every year since 1868.
- Every year the National Memorial Day concert takes place on the lawn in front of the US Capitol.
- Waterloo, New York is considered the "Birthplace of Memorial Day".