

JUNE Newsletter



Wilkins



Sweden's Midsummer Dream

After the long dark of winter, Swedes look forward to the Midsummer festival, the most important holiday of the year after Christmas. Midsummer may fall on June 20, but festivities begin on Midsummer's Eve. Midsummer is a celebration of the sun and all the life it brings. School is out of session, flowers and trees are in full bloom, and the sun does not set. For many Swedes, Midsummer marks the start of a five-week holiday, a time to enjoy the sweet summer weather while it lasts. Families load up their cars and leave the cities for the countryside, where hills and pastures are speckled with flowers.

At its heart, Midsummer is a time to gather outdoors with family and friends. The maypole, or *midsommerstång*, is central to this gathering. The first tradition of Midsummer is to decorate the tall pole with garlands and flowers. People, too, don flower crowns. The maypole is erected in a public square or park where everybody gathers to perform the customary dances. One of the most interesting is the Little Frogs dance, *Små grodorna*, where people hop around the pole pretending to be frogs.

All that hopping makes people hungry, and lunch stretches throughout the entire afternoon. Pickled herring and boiled new potatoes dressed in sour cream, dill, and chives are traditional, followed by grilled salmon or meat. Dessert consists of fresh summer strawberries with cream. Of course, beer and herbed schnapps flow freely, accompanied by popular Swedish drinking songs—the bawdier the better. Lunch blends into dinner, and before the meal's end, many are up and dancing again on stages set up along lakes or nestled between hillsides.

It's time for bed, but the sun still has not set. Sweden is awash in a mysterious twilight. Perhaps this is why Midsummer has so many magical legends. On the way home, young women are supposed to pick seven different types of wildflowers. Legend states that if you place the flowers under your pillow, you will dream of your future spouse. Perhaps the greatest magic of Midsummer lies in the many wedding vows that take place under the blessing of the midnight sun.

Birthdays in JUNE

Dorothy Sorensen 6 / 23

What's Happening in JUNE

Foster a Pet Month

Great Outdoors Month

Soul Food Month

Yo-Yo Day
June 6

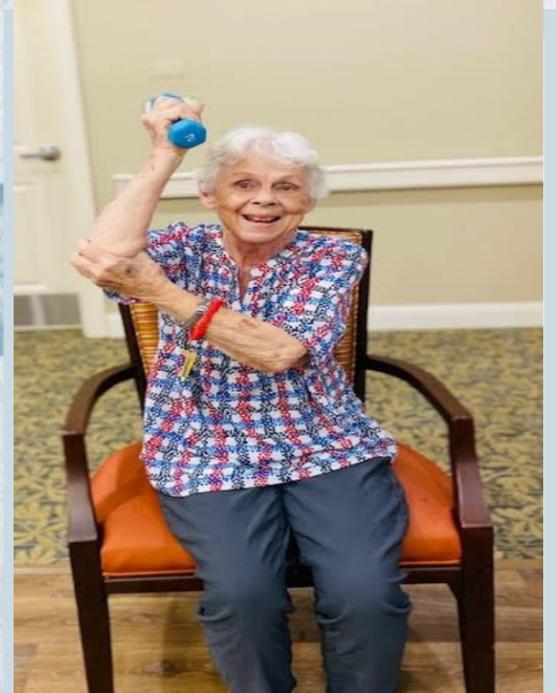
Flag Day: U.S.
June 14

Juneteenth: U.S.
June 19

International Surfing Day
June 20

Play Catch Week
June 21–27

Taking A Look BACK!!



A Monument to Love

On June 17, 1631, Mumtaz Mahal died during the birth of her fourteenth child. The emperor of India, Shah Jahan, was so devastated by the death of his wife that he commanded a mausoleum be built in her honor, one so beautiful that it would never be matched. Today, the Taj Mahal stands unmatched as a monument to undying love and marital devotion.

By all accounts, Shah Jahan and his wife were deeply close. Mumtaz Mahal's name, bestowed upon her by the emperor, means "the exalted one of the palace." The empress's residence was the finest ever built, decorated in pure gold and precious stones, with rosewater fountains. Mumtaz was both a confidant to Shah Jahan and an advisor on matters of state. She was even allowed to use the Mehr Uzaz, the emperor's personal seal, to validate imperial decrees. The empress was as beautiful as she was smart and cultured, a woman more than worthy of the mausoleum constructed in her honor.

Construction of the Taj Mahal began in 1632 and continued for 22 years, employing 1,000 elephants and 22,000 artisans from India, Persia, and Europe. The mausoleum's architect was most likely court architect Ustad Ahmad Lahauri, the same man who designed Delhi's Red Fort. Situated across the Yamuna River from the royal palace, Shah Jahan could gaze upon the final resting place of his beloved wife forevermore. The mausoleum is made of white marble and inlaid with precious and semi-precious stones such as jade, crystal, lapis lazuli, amethyst, and turquoise. Its central dome rises 240 feet, surrounded by four minarets. The Ninety-Nine Names of God are inscribed in calligraphic inscriptions on the sides of Mumtaz's tomb. Not only is the Taj Mahal an enduring symbol of India's rich cultural heritage but it remains the finest example of Mughal architecture in the world. The tomb and its surrounding gardens host eight million visitors each year, and the complex has repeatedly been included on lists of the New Seven Wonders of the World.

Horsing Around

In June of 1878, photographer Eadweard Muybridge put an end to a debate that had been raging for years: whether or not all four of a horse's hooves left the ground during a gallop. Muybridge was no mere photographer but also a savvy inventor. Cameras in 1878 had lengthy exposure times of two seconds, but over two seconds a horse in motion would have galloped across an entire field, preventing it from being photographed. Muybridge's solution was to create a mechanical wooden shutter that could close within one-thousandth of a second. His photos seemed to freeze time, capturing each movement of the horse. He not only proved that all four hooves left the ground but he created the first motion picture and laid the foundations of the movie industry.



Napoleon's "Waterloo"

Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in Belgium occurred on June 18, 1815. Napoleon is remembered as one of history's greatest military strategists. With the French army under his command, he waged war against most of Europe, vastly expanded the French Empire, and crowned himself emperor. After 1812, however, Napoleon suffered grave defeats and was exiled to the island of Elba, but Napoleon was not used to defeat. He escaped from Elba and rebuilt a massive army to march against the foes that had defeated him. At first, Napoleon was successful. On June 16, 1815, he defeated the Prussians. But on June 18 at the village of Waterloo, he commanded his force of 72,000 troops to hold off their attack until mid-day in order to allow the battleground to dry. It was a fatal mistake. During those few hours, new troops joined the opposition, and Napoleon's forces were overwhelmed and overrun. He was forced to return to Paris in defeat and abdicate the throne. Napoleon's reign was over, and the name of Waterloo would become forever synonymous with defeat and humiliation.

