



## Celebrating January

### Hot Tea Month

### International Brain Teaser Month

### Self-Love Month

### New Year's Day *January 1*

### Cuddle Up Day *January 6*

### Hunt for Happiness Week *January 15–21*

### Martin Luther King Jr. Day (U.S.) *January 16*

### Chinese New Year *January 28*

### Bubble Wrap Appreciation Day *January 30*

## An Explosive New Year

The new year is celebrated all around the world, and its arrival is most often heralded with fireworks. Why are fireworks associated with ringing in the new year all over the globe? It turns out they are part of a larger story and much more than just a loud and raucous display of joy and revelry. This story begins with their invention in China.

China is very proud of its Four Great Inventions: the compass, papermaking, printing, and gunpowder. Like so many important inventions, gunpowder was discovered by accident. In the ninth century, Chinese alchemists searching for the elixir of immortality instead discovered the formula for gunpowder. It was, of course, eventually adapted for use in warfare, but other uses were discovered more immediately, such as in the development of flares and eventually fireworks.

While the emperor may have been treated to elaborate and spectacular fireworks shows, fireworks were not all fun and games. They served another important purpose: when fireworks exploded at the beginning of each new year, they were believed to frighten away evil spirits, banish bad luck, and bring good fortune. From these superstitious beginnings, fireworks have become a mainstay of new year traditions around the world.

There may be no better time to watch a fireworks display than on the Chinese New Year, which falls on January 28. Beijing and Hong Kong often vie for the most amazing displays, which may mean—if ancient superstitions are true—that these two cities will enjoy the greatest luck. In the Chinese zodiac, 2017 is the Year of the Rooster, an animal that, thanks to its relentless crowing, is considered adept at shooing away evil spirits. It is also the year of Fire, so be on the lookout for greater, more elaborate, and more powerful fireworks displays.

## The Baseball Hall

Not many people are thinking about baseball, that great game of summer in the middle of January. But every year, baseball is front and center on the minds of those voting for the newest members of the Baseball Hall of Fame.



The idea for the Hall of Fame was born in 1935, when the Clark Foundation of Cooperstown, New York, was searching for a way to revive the small town's economy, which had been suffering since the Great Depression. The foundation, capitalizing on the legend that former Cooperstown resident Abner Doubleday had invented the game of baseball, moved ahead with plans to build the museum and Hall of Fame.

In January of 1936, five charter members were voted in by the Baseball Writers' Association of America. After the ballots had been counted, five players received at least 75% of the votes cast, establishing the standard by which players are still elected today. Ty Cobb, winner of nine straight American League batting titles, won the most votes. Tying for second was Babe Ruth, the all-star left-handed pitcher and home run king. Honus Wagner, star shortstop, eight-time National League batting champion, and member of the 3,000 hit club received the third-most votes. Christy Mathewson, the National League's winningest pitcher, placed fourth, and Walter Johnson, the reigning strikeout leader, rounded out the class. The likes of Tris Speaker, Lou Gehrig, and Cy Young did not earn enough votes and would have to wait until later to join the Hall.

Who are this winter's potential inductees? Astros great Jeff Bagwell, closing pitcher Trevor Hoffman, and the multi-talented Tim Lincecum have remained just shy of the magic 75% number, but 2017 might be their year. New to the ballot are catcher Ivan "Pudge" Rodriguez and sluggers Vladimir Guerrero and Manny Ramirez. When it comes to being enshrined in Cooperstown, anything can happen.

## Immigration Station

Three large ships waited in New York harbor on January 1, 1892, for the official opening of the Ellis Island Immigration Station. On that first day, hundreds of immigrants entered America. The very first person to be processed was 17-year-old Annie Moore, from Cork, Ireland. It is estimated that between 1900 and 1914 (the peak years of the station's operation), up to 11,000 people passed through Ellis Island every day. It has been estimated that 40 percent of all Americans can trace their lineage back to Ellis Island. For this reason, Ellis Island was made a National Park in 1965 and designated an Immigration Museum in 1990. Today, visitors to the island are invited to search a database to discover whether their ancestors were part of the great surge of immigrants passing through the center's halls between 1892 and 1924. The list of famous names who passed through Ellis Island is astounding; it includes composer Irving Berlin, bodybuilder Charles Atlas, Hollywood starlet Claudette Colbert, psychologist Sigmund Freud, and silent movie star Charlie Chaplin.

## Planting Interest

Some people are just incapable of keeping houseplants. So how, then, should they celebrate Houseplant Appreciation Day on January 10th? Perhaps by trying to care for some extremely low-maintenance plants. *Lotho* is a large-leaved plant that can thrive with minimal water and varying degrees of light, a perfect plant for those without green thumbs. Even better, this indoor plant has air-purifying qualities that can absorb toxins like formaldehyde that are emitted by carpets. Succulents like jade plants and aloe are desert plants, so they do not like lots of water. Rubber trees thrive in dimmer light and cooler climates, and just a little water allows these beauties to grow eight feet tall. Of course, an artificial plant will thrive forever—it just won't purify the air.



## A Day Built for Lego



You might want to rummage around in your attic for some old Lego building sets. The tiny toy bricks are so popular

that they have been more valuable than gold over the past 15 years, leading investors to put their money into the Danish company.

The story of Lego may have begun in 1949, when the first eight-studded toy brick went on sale in Denmark, but the more important date is January 28, 1958, when Godtfred Kirk Christiansen, the son of Lego's founder, filed a patent for the toy on his lunch break. According to the patent, the magic behind the brick is its "automatic binding," or their ability to bond tightly together. This makes the brick-made structures strong enough to remain stable but easy enough for a child to pull apart. Endless structures can be built using the same bricks.

When it comes to Lego bricks, there is no shortage. Back in 2012, Lego manufactured 45.7 billion bricks. That was 5.2 million bricks an hour, enough to reach the moon. And when you consider that Legos have been used to build life-sized cars and even a house, you may understand why the bricks are in such high demand by young and old builders alike.

Why is there so much love for Lego? It's not the *Star Wars*-themed building sets, the Lego movies, or the Lego video games. Psychologists believe that Legos provide young users with an extremely satisfying play experience. Children "are often problem-solving with the constructional aspects and involving themselves with a world of pretense at the same time." In other words, they are both building complex structures and working their imaginations, which is very satisfying and rewarding to the brain.

Lego comes from the Danish words *leg godt*, meaning "play well." And for well over 50 years, the world has indeed played well with Legos.

## Isn't That Peculiar?

January 10, Peculiar People Day, is the time to appreciate the weirdness that often comes with genius. Ben Franklin, American founding father and inventor, would give himself an "air bath" each morning, standing in front of an open window in his birthday suit. Less known, but no less peculiar, is Dr. Yoshiro Nakamatsu, inventor of the floppy disk in 1952. He developed most of his greatest ideas while underwater, depriving the brain of oxygen, when he believed the greatest inspiration would strike. Just before nearly drowning, he would write his idea on waterproof paper. Inventor Thomas Edison interviewed assistants by making them eat a bowl of soup in front of him. Those caught salting the soup before tasting it were dismissed, as Edison believed they started out with too many assumptions and were unfit for inventing. The next time you do something peculiar, remind yourself and everyone around you that it is a habit born of your great genius.

## Opposites Attract

You may be shocked to learn that January 9 is Static Electricity Day. Most every child discovers the delights of static electricity, whether by shocking themselves on a door handle, having their hair fly away after going down a slide, or by sticking a balloon to their head. But what is this strange energy? It all begins with invisible atoms. All things are made up of atoms, which hold electrons that are positive or negative. Amazingly, when two things are rubbed together, say a balloon against someone's hair, the invisible electrons move from the balloon's atoms to the hair's atoms, creating an imbalance of positives and negatives. Because opposites attract, the balloon will stick to the hair. But this imbalance of electrons is only temporary. When one side regains its lost electrons, static electricity is discharged with a shocking **SNAP!**



## Happy New Year

May 2017 bring you blessings of health, well-being and the richness of friends and family. You may say, “Well, I have no family”. But you do. You have family and friends here at Treemont. Although you may not think of your table-mate as “family”, or even a “friend”, if you don’t show up for meals for a day or two, you’ll be surprised to know that they’ve asked about you at the front desk or to the kitchen staff. You may not think of your fellow Treemonters as “family” but, we are. We are all connected – not by blood – but by common interests and situations.

Then next time you see your neighbor in the hallway, smile and greet them as if they are your friend or family member. They actually are.

Let’s make this new year a happier and healthier one. Let’s concentrate on acceptance and loving one another. You’ll be happier as a result. Have a marvelous New Year.

## Papal Protectors

Any visitor to the Papal Palace at the Vatican in Rome is bound to notice the Swiss Guards in their baggy striped uniforms and floppy hats. But these troops are more than a photo op. They have a rich history of bravery, loyalty, and nobility. The Swiss Guard first took up its duties protecting the Pope on January 22, 1506, but prior to this assignment they were Swiss mercenaries—soldiers for hire. These fighters came from an impoverished part of Switzerland and fought to earn money and food for their families. They earned renown for their fearlessness and their ingenious tactics in battle. The kingdoms of Spain and France even hired the soldiers as instructors of their own armies. But since 1506, they have officially stood as stalwart, if clownish-looking, “Defenders of the Church’s freedom.”



## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1st Margaret McCoslin
- 2nd Joyce Anderson  
Betty Meers  
Lie-Hwei Want  
Linda Hendricks
- 3rd Joyce Pederson
- 5th Maud Barth
- 7th Kathleen Clawson
- 9th Dan Kasper
- 14th Ben Conner
- 16th Bonnie Kellogg
- 18th Eugene Peeples
- 19th Anne Kruse  
Marie Lynn Hayes
- 21st Margaret Smith
- 23rd Helen Hamilton
- 27th Peggy Floyd
- 28th Eleanor Topkis
- 30th Eileen Love

Your Birthday Dinner will be Thursday, January 26th, at 5pm in the Green Room. Your RSVP is inside your birthday card and should be given to James or Mvra in the Dining Room.

## January Birthdays

In astrology, those born between January 1st and 19th are Capricorn’s Goats. Capricorns are independent, detail-oriented, patient, and self-sufficient. These qualities help the sure-footed goats achieve stability and security. Those born between January 20th and 31st are Water Bearers of Aquarius. Aquarians may be shy and quiet, but they are energetic, unique, and independent visionaries. They are often unemotional, intellectual, and will pursue wisdom to the ends of the earth.

- Isaac Asimov (writer) – January 2, 1920
- Diane Keaton (actress) – January 5, 1946
- Elvis Presley (musician) – January 8, 1935
- George Foreman (boxer) – January 10, 1949
- Faye Dunaway (actress) – January 14, 1941
- Al Capone (gangster) – January 17, 1899
- Edgar Allan Poe (writer) – January 19, 1809
- Ernest Borgnine (actor) – January 24, 1917
- Lewis Carroll (writer) – January 27, 1832
- Oprah Winfrey (mogul) – January 29, 1954
- Jackie Robinson (ballplayer) – January 31, 1919