

# Culture Cards Presents:

## Dates and Holidays

Barcelona is a beautiful, lively, and colorful city. It is the capital of Catalonia, which is an autonomous community in Spain. It is full of music, dance, art, and history. One of their largest festivals, which encapsulates all of these traits, is known as La Mercè.

La Mercè is an annual festival that is celebrated at the end of September, somewhere around the 24th, and it lasts multiple days.

The festival honors a religious figure that goes by a few different names. The Patroness of Barcelona, the Virgin of Grace, or Our Lady of Mercy. She is known in Catalan as *Mare de Déu de la Mercè*.

In 1687, Barcelona suffered from a plague of locusts. The city's government prayed to the Virgin to help rid the city of these invading insects.

When the locusts did in fact leave, celebrations commenced in her honor. Festivities have continued annually since this time and include many traditions unique to Catalonia.

There is the correfoc, or fire run, where people dress as devils, light fireworks, and run through crowds of onlookers.

There is the ball de gegants, or ball of the giants, where large paper mache puppets are paraded through the streets.

Another tradition that can also be experienced at La Mercè, is the castell, or castle, and is the name given to these human towers. These towers can be 7, 8, 9, and even 10 levels high, with higher levels each consisting of 1 to 4 extremely talented individuals.

So that's La Mercè. What other festivals and holidays around the world can we learn from?