

# White Christmas: Will It Snow This Christmas? [B1]

Il classico paesaggio innevato che associamo alle Feste è sempre più raro nel Regno Unito. Ma quali condizioni devono verificarsi affinché si possa parlare di un 'bianco Natale'?

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The classic Christmas card depicts a pristine, snowy landscape; tumbling snowflakes, rooftops covered in frost, children throwing snowballs, and cosy fires indoors. It's no surprise that a phrase still associated with Christmas is "white Christmas". This image has spread all over the world, largely thanks to Hollywood and the famous Irving Berlin song of the 1940s, made legendary by Bing Crosby. So popularised is the dream of a white Christmas that even in Australia, where Christmas might be celebrated on the beach, the idea of a "white Christmas" resonates.

## ONE SNOWFLAKE

However, even in countries where a snowy Christmas is part of the culture, like the UK, it is unlikely that Christmas will actually be a white one. That is, according to the UK Met Office, the national meteorological service that provides weather forecasts, warnings and does climate research for the UK and globally. In fact, the Met Office has a very precise definition of what is, and isn't, a white Christmas. To acquire the label, "at least one snowflake is observed falling during the 24 hours of 25 December somewhere in the UK." The observation can be made by anyone, but must be verified by an official Met Office observer or by a Met Office weather station.

## NOT SO WHITE

According to the Met Office, over the past sixty years about half of UK Christmases have been technically white Christmases. But if we focus on a single location, London, for example, the figure drops to just 10 per cent. The last time London saw snow on Christmas Day was in 1999. Statistically,

Decembers in the UK are less snowy than Januaries: on average, snow stays on the ground for three days in December, compared to 3.3 days in January, 3.4 days in February, and just 1.9 days in March.

## **PAST AND PRESENT**

Things were different (and colder) in the past: the 18th and 19th centuries saw some extremely snowy winters. White Christmases were more common before 1752, when Britain changed from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. This moved Christmas Day twelve days earlier in the season, making snow less likely.

## **THE FUTURE**

Today, in the UK at least, the chances of experiencing a white Christmas are increasingly slim: rising temperatures due to climate change are reducing the chances of seeing snow on Christmas Day. In Britain, even a small increase of just one degree Celsius can turn a white Christmas into a mere wet one.

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# Glossary

- **drops** = calare drasticamente
- **depicts** = raffigurare
- **tumbling snowflakes** = fiocchi di neve che cadono
- **weather forecasts** = previsioni meteo
- **increasingly slim** = sempre più ridotte
- **rising** = in aumento
- **wet** = umido, piovoso
- **rooftops** = tetti
- **frost** = brina, ghiaccio
- **cosy** = accoglienti
- **spread** = diffondersi
- **unlikely** = poco probabile
- **warnings** = allerte
- **label** = etichetta, definizione