

Friday the 13th

Friday the 13th is an unlucky day in English-, French- and Portuguese-speaking countries around the world, as well as in Austria, Germany, Estonia, Finland, The Netherlands, Bulgaria, Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Hungary and the Philippines. Similar superstitions exist in some other traditions: in Greece, Romania and Spanish-speaking countries, for example, it is Tuesday the 13th that is considered unlucky. In Italy, it is Friday the 17th.

Many people avoid travel and avoid signing contracts on Friday the 13th. Floors in tall buildings often skip from 12 to 14. And while the superstition is believed to be fading, it has deep roots in both Christian and pagan culture.

Why does Friday the 13th have such a bad reputation?

- Many Christians have long believed that Friday was unlucky because it was the day of the week when Jesus was crucified. The number 13 was believed to bring bad luck because there were 13 people at The Last Supper. Judas was the 13th guest.
- Thirteen was also a sinister number in Norse mythology. Loki, one of the most evil of the Norse gods, went uninvited to a party for 12 at Valhalla, their heaven. As a result, he caused the death of Balder, the god of light, joy, and reconciliation.
- During the Middle Ages, the superstition against Friday the 13th grew. On Friday 13, October, 1307, King Philip IV of France ordered the arrest of Jaques de Molay, Grand Master of the Knights Templars, the group of people who looked after the Holy Grail.
- In the 18th century, the ship *HMS Friday* was launched on Friday the 13th. Nobody heard from it again. Since then, ships are not usually launched on that date.
- Another modern myth about this unfortunate number says that if you have 13 letters in your name you will have the devil's luck. An example of this is Jack the Ripper.

1. Say if these sentences are True or False:

1. Friday the 13th is not considered a bad luck day all over the world.
2. Jesus died on Friday the 13th.
3. The superstition of Friday the 13th has only Christian origins.
4. Friday the 13th is not a good day to launch new ships.
5. Valhalla is a Norse god.

2. Can you think of other superstitions? Do you believe in them?

Answers:

1.

1. T
2. F
3. F
4. T
5. F

2.

Some examples of things which are supposed to bring bad luck:

Black cats
Walk under a ladder
Break a mirror
Spill salt
Look at yourself in a mirror by candlelight
Etc.