

# What Surprises Visitors About the Fourth of July

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Hi! I'm back with a new episode. Today, we're going to talk about a very American celebration: the Fourth of July.

Today, you'll hear some new and challenging words.

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Ok, let's start!

You probably know that the Fourth of July is Independence Day in the United States. You may know about the Declaration of Independence, the year 1776, and, of course, the fireworks.

But today, I don't want to give you another history lesson.

I want to talk about **the cultural side of this holiday**: the little **things that often surprise visitors** when they experience the **Fourth of July** for the first time.

And, yes, most visitors expect fireworks.

But they don't expect the whole day to feel like a big summer party.

They don't expect people to arrive at a park hours before the fireworks begin.

They don't expect families to bring folding chairs, picnic blankets, huge coolers, snacks, drinks, and enough potato salad to feed a small village.

And they certainly don't expect to see red, white, and blue everywhere: on houses, cars, T-shirts, cakes, sunglasses, and sometimes even on dogs.

Yes, some dogs look more patriotic than many people.

Another thing that surprises visitors is that the **Fourth of July** is not just an evening celebration. For many Americans, it is an all-day event.

In the morning, some towns have parades. You may see children waving small flags, local bands playing music, old cars driving slowly down the street, and families watching from the sidewalk.

In the afternoon, people meet with family and friends. They cook outside, relax, and prepare hamburgers, hot dogs, corn, watermelon, chips, salads, and cold drinks.

And, of course, there is always one person who takes the barbecue very seriously.

This person does not simply cook hamburgers.

No, no.

This person becomes the king of the grill.

He stands next to the barbecue like a security guard at a bank. Nobody touches the hamburgers unless he says yes.

Another thing visitors notice is the amount of food.

People say, "We're just going to watch fireworks."

But then they bring three coolers, two bags of chips, twenty hot dogs, thirty hamburgers, twelve drinks, six chairs, four blankets, and one mysterious container that nobody wants to open.

So, a visitor may think, "Are we watching fireworks, or are we moving to the park?"

Then, in the evening, something very interesting happens.

Everyone waits.

They wait in parks, in gardens, on beaches, near lakes, or in the streets.

They sit on blankets or folding chairs. They eat snacks. They talk. They look at the sky.

And they wait.

For a visitor, this can be funny. There are hundreds of people sitting quietly in the dark, looking at nothing.

But everyone knows what is coming.

And finally, when it gets dark...

**Boom!**

The fireworks begin.

For many visitors, the first firework is a real surprise. It is beautiful, yes, but it is also very loud.

Sometimes your body reacts before your brain understands what happened.

Your brain says, "Oh, fireworks."

But your body says, "Run!"

That is part of the experience.

The sky fills with color. Children shout. Adults take pictures. Dogs strongly disagree with the whole idea.

And for a few minutes, everyone looks up.

That is one of the beautiful things about this holiday. People stop what they are doing. They sit together. They look at the same sky.

So, the Fourth of July is not only about history.

It is also about summer, family, friends, food, noise, laughter, folding chairs, and waiting for the sky to explode in beautiful colors.

Let's learn grammar in context with Dorothy and Toto!

## POV-Story (Learn grammar in Context)

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Listen to the same story twice and compare the changes.

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Dorothy and Toto were swept up by a tornado.

But this was no ordinary tornado.

Instead of taking them to Oz, it dropped them in a small American town on the Fourth of July.

Dorothy was completely bewildered.

She didn't see witches.

She didn't see flying monkeys.

She didn't see a yellow brick road.

She saw hundreds of American flags.

She smelled hamburgers and hot dogs sizzling on grills.

She heard music, laughter, and people shouting, "Happy Fourth!"

Toto didn't chase witches.

He didn't chase flying monkeys.

He didn't even bother looking for the yellow brick road.

He only chased hamburgers.

Dorothy followed him.

Soon, they ended up in a crowded park.

Everyone was carrying folding chairs, picnic blankets, and oversized coolers.

Dorothy assumed they were preparing for another tornado.

She shouted, "Run! The wind is coming!"

Nobody moved.

A man smiled calmly and said, "Don't worry. We're waiting for the fireworks."

Dorothy looked up at the sky.

The fireworks hadn't started yet.

So she waited too.

Toto waited too.

Actually, Toto waited under a picnic table, dangerously close to a plate of hot dogs.

An hour later...

**Boom!**

The first firework burst across the sky.

Dorothy ducked behind a picnic table.

Toto barked furiously at the sky.

Then a little girl gave Toto a hot dog.

Toto immediately forgot all about the fireworks.

Dorothy called him.

Toto completely ignored her.

The hot dog was clearly more important.

At the end of the evening, Dorothy said, "This place is stranger than Oz."

## Different Point of View

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We are swept up by a tornado.

But this is no ordinary tornado.

Instead of taking us to Oz, it drops us in a small American town on the Fourth of July.

We are completely bewildered.

We don't see witches.

We don't see flying monkeys.

We don't see a yellow brick road.

We see hundreds of American flags.

We smell hamburgers and hot dogs sizzling on grills.

We hear music, laughter, and people shouting, "Happy Fourth!"

Toto doesn't chase witches.

He doesn't chase flying monkeys.

He doesn't even bother looking for the yellow brick road.

He only chases hamburgers.

We follow him.

Soon, we end up in a crowded park.

Everyone is carrying folding chairs, picnic blankets, and oversized coolers.

We assume they are preparing for another tornado.

We shout, "Run! The wind is coming!"

Nobody moves.

A man says, "Don't worry. We're waiting for the fireworks."

We look up at the sky.

The fireworks haven't started yet.

So we wait too.

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Toto immediately forgets all about the fireworks.

We call him.

Toto completely ignores us.

The hot dog is clearly more important.

At the end of the evening, we say, "This place is stranger than Oz."

I hope you enjoyed this story. It's inspired by *The Wizard of Oz*.

If you enjoy this story, I have a complete English course based on *The Wizard of Oz*.

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Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.



Georgiana, founder of [SpeakEnglishPodcast.com](https://speakenglishpodcast.com)

## Vocabulary:

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**fireworks** — bright lights and loud sounds in the sky during a celebration.

**folding chair** — a chair you can fold and carry easily.

**picnic blanket** — a blanket people put on the ground when they eat or relax outside.

**cooler** — a box that keeps food and drinks cold.

**barbecue / BBQ** — cooking food outside on a grill, or the event where people eat grilled food.

**patriotic** — showing love or pride for your country.

**parade** — a public celebration where people walk, play music, or drive slowly through the streets.

**grill** — the object used to cook food outside.

**king of the grill** — a funny expression for someone who takes barbecuing very seriously.

**mysterious** — strange or difficult to understand.

**suspicious** — making you feel that something is strange or not quite right.

**swept up** — carried away suddenly by wind or movement.

**bewildered** — very confused.

**sizzling** — making a hissing sound while cooking.

**oversized** — bigger than normal.

**burst into the sky** — suddenly appear or explode in the sky, usually with light or color.

**duck behind something** — quickly move down or hide behind something.

**ignore someone** — not listen or pay attention to someone.

**take something seriously** — treat something as important.

