

Holiday traditions include purchasing millions of dollars in goods from China

Retail sales by the nation's department stores (including leased departments) in December 2010 hit \$27.2 billion, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. This represented a 44 percent jump from the previous month (when retail sales, many holiday-related, registered \$18.8 billion).

Value of retail sales by electronic shopping and mail-order houses in December 2010 was \$34 billion – the highest total for any month last year.

The value of U.S. imports of Christmas tree ornaments from China between January and September 2011 was \$983 million. China was the leading country of origin for such items. Similarly, China was the leading foreign source of artificial Christmas trees shipped to the United States (\$79.7 million worth) during the same period.

California led the nation in 2009 by having 15 of the 88 U.S. locations that primarily manufactured dolls and stuffed toys.

China was the leading country of origin for stuffed toys coming into this country, as well as for a number of other popular holiday gifts. These include roller skates (\$24.6 million), sports footwear (\$253.8 million) and basketballs (\$38.9 million). China leads Thailand as the leading supplier of ice skates (\$17.7 million vs. \$9.8 million), with Canada ranking third (\$4.2 million).

Place names associated with the holiday season include North Pole, Alaska (population 2,117); Santa Claus, Ind. (2,481); Santa Claus, Ga. (165); Noel, Mo. (1,832); and – if you know about reindeer – the village of Rudolph, Wis. (439) and

Dasher, Ga. (912). There is Snowflake, Ariz. (5,590) and a dozen places named Holly, including Holly Springs, Miss. (7,699) and Mount Holly, N.C. (13,656).