

Frohe Ostern

"Happy Easter"

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Easter In Germany 2012



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Easter in Germany

In most countries Easter is considered the most important of all Christian holidays. Easter in Germany is celebrated on Easter Sunday as well as on Easter Monday. The origin of the word Easter is somewhat nebulous, but most people think that it originates from the name of the Roman goddess of dawn called "Ostera" (the German word for Easter is "Ostern"), who was honored on the first Sunday after the first full moon in spring. This was the feast of the resurrection of nature, which was changed into the feast called the "resurrection of the Lord" by the early Christians.

The earliest traditions, both pagan and Christian, are connected with the Easter egg, an obvious symbol of fertility and life, and the Easter candle, which "comes to life" when lit. Another Easter symbol is the Easter bunny. The rabbit is one of the most popular animals that multiplies very quickly and has therefore, like the egg, become a symbol of fertility and life, which resurrects in spring. In Germany, the Easter Bunny is hiding eggs and sweets for the children on "Gruendonnerstag" or Maundy Thursday.

The custom of using Easter eggs developed among the nations of northern Europe and Christian Asia soon after their conversion to Christianity. In medieval times eggs were traditionally given at Easter to all servants. It is reported that King Edward I of England (1307) had 450 eggs boiled, dyed or covered with gold leaf before Easter which he distributed to the members of the royal household on Easter Day.

Nowadays it is a universal custom among children to go egg hunting in house and garden. In Germany, little nests containing eggs, pastry and candy are placed in hidden spots and the children believe that the Easter bunny has laid the eggs and brought the candy. In many European countries, including Germany, eggs for cooking are not broken a few weeks before Easter but pierced with a needle on both ends, and the contents to be used are blown into a bowl. The hollow eggshells are then being painted on and are suspended from shrubs and trees during Easter week.



The week before Easter Sunday is considered a Holy Week in Germany and is called "Karwoche" in German. Karfreitag (Good Friday) is a German holiday and church services are well visited by many Christians on that day. Many superstitious customs especially in the rural areas still are associated with Good Friday.

Most of the religious Easter ceremonies take place on "Karsamstag" (Easter Saturday) and the services are usually celebrated in the evening hours. During the service the Pascal Candle is lit and the light symbolizes the passage from death (darkness) to life (light) and Christ as the "Light of the World". Every visitor of the Easter Service has a candle that is lit with the flame of the Easter Candle which is displayed in the church for 40 days, symbolizing the time the Risen Christ remained on earth until Ascension Thursday. After the service, people leaving the church walk to their house with the lit candle to bring the blessings of God to their home for the following year.

