

Weird and Wonderful Easter Traditions Around the World

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As the explosion of rabbit-shaped confectionery tells us, Easter will soon be upon us. While some traditions, like hunting for chocolate eggs, are widely recognised, many cultures have developed their own distinctive, sometimes surprising ways to commemorate this springtime festival. From kite-flying in Bermuda to reading crime novels in Norway, here are a few of the stranger ones from around the world...

The Pot Throwing Festival of Corfu

On the Greek island of Corfu, Holy Saturday morning is known for one of the most striking events of Easter: the “**Pot Throwing**” tradition. As church bells resonate throughout the town, residents hurl large clay pots off their balconies onto the streets below. The crashing and clattering of the pots signal the joyful anticipation of Christ’s resurrection. According to local lore, the custom may have roots in ancient Venetian New Year rituals, where people discarded old household items as a way of embracing renewal. Over time, Corfiots adopted this practice around Easter, believing it symbolises casting out misfortune, welcoming new blessings and the transition from Lenten solemnity to Easter festivity.

The Curious Witches of Finland

In northern Europe, Easter traditions take a positively Potterish turn with children dressing up as witches, complete with broomsticks and vibrantly coloured shawls in a custom reminiscent of Halloween trick-or-treating. Finnish kids go door to door, often carrying decorative willow twigs that symbolise springtime and new life. In exchange for reciting a blessing meant to bring good luck, they receive sweets from their neighbours. Historically, this tradition may have been connected to the belief that witches ran amok between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, stirring mischief in the transitional period before Christ’s resurrection.

The Good Friday Kites of Bermuda

On the island of Bermuda, Good Friday is synonymous with colourful skies. Families gather on beaches and hilltops to fly uniquely crafted kites, many of them hand-made using wooden sticks, tissue paper, and brightly coloured ribbons. The origin story tells of a teacher who had difficulty explaining Christ’s ascension to a Sunday school class. He designed a kite as a visual aid, attaching a papier-mâché depiction of Jesus so his students could see it “rise” toward the heavens. Since then, kite-flying on Good Friday has become a

beloved tradition for Bermudians of all ages. In most areas competitions are held for design and flying skill.



Smigus-Dyngus (Wet Monday) in Poland

Easter Monday, often referred to as *Smigus-Dyngus*, is known in Poland as the time for water fights. People of all ages dash about with buckets, water guns, and water-filled balloons, dousing each other in light-hearted ambushes. Tradition holds that if a woman gets soaked on Easter Monday, she'll marry within the year—an old superstition that has long lost its literal sway but remains an entertaining excuse for pranks and splashing fun. Legend suggests the custom might have pagan roots, linked to the cleansing and fertility rites of spring. Over the centuries, Polish Catholics integrated these old rituals into Easter celebrations, so that now, whether it's a casual backyard spray or an all-out drenching, *Smigus-Dyngus* provides a fun, communal release after the reflective solemnity of Lent.

The Crime Novel Obsession of Norway

Easter in Norway comes with a literary twist: *Påskekrim*, or *Easter Crime*. In the lead-up to the holiday, bookstands fill with newly released crime novels, newspapers run crime story supplements, and even milk cartons feature short detective stories printed on their sides. Many Norwegians enjoy a cozy Easter break in mountain cabins, where they can devour gripping mysteries while

sipping hot cocoa. This tradition reportedly began in 1923 when a Norwegian publisher launched a successful marketing campaign for a crime novel right before Easter. The association between Easter and thrilling whodunits stuck. Now, the entire nation seems to indulge in detective fever every spring. Not only do people devour crime fiction, but they also host murder mystery parties and watch TV shows filled with intrigue. For a country often blanketed in snow well into April, curling up with a good crime story has become a quintessential Easter pastime.

The Exploding Carts of Florence

Florence celebrates Easter Sunday with a theatrical ritual known as *Scoppio del Carro*, or *Explosion of the Cart*. In this centuries-old tradition, a grandly decorated cart, piled with fireworks and pulled by white oxen, is paraded to the front of the Florence Cathedral (the Duomo). During the Easter Mass, the Archbishop lights a fuse tied to a mechanical dove (symbolising the Holy Spirit), which zips along a wire to ignite the cart. When it bursts into fireworks, the crowd cheers as sparks shower the gathered onlookers. Folklore ties this practice to the First Crusade; it's believed that shards from the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem were brought back to Florence and used to start the "holy fire" for Easter. If the fuse travels smoothly and the cart explodes correctly, it's said to guarantee a prosperous year for the city.



The Giant Omelette of Bessières, France

Nestled in southwestern France, the town of Bessières boasts a peculiar Easter Monday tradition: cooking a giant omelette in the town square. This isn't a mere family-sized dish; local chefs use more than 15,000 eggs to create a huge communal meal. Legend attributes the origin to Napoleon Bonaparte, who, upon passing through the region, was so charmed by a local innkeeper's omelette that he ordered one large enough to feed his entire army. The modern-day festival draws visitors eager to witness the spectacle of enormous frying pans, sizzling butter, and locals stirring a pool of eggs with equally enormous spatulas. After the omelette is cooked, spectators are invited to grab a fork and partake in a meal that is entirely free, reflecting the emphasis on hospitality and communal sharing. While it may seem an odd pairing with the solemnities of Easter, it resonates with the theme of fellowship and celebration that underpins the holiday in many parts of the world.

