

PÅSKE / EASTER

Origins of Påske and Easter

Old Norse: paskar from Hebrew, Easter from Anglo Saxon. Originally a pagan feast held in England in honor of the goddess of spring, Eastr. A spring celebration with fertility rites was also held in Scandinavia during the pre-Christian period.

Norwegian Use of the Term Påske

1. God påske (pronounced go pauske) – happy Easter
2. Snart er det påske – It will soon be Easter
3. Har du påskeegg i år? – Do you have Easter eggs this year?

Påskeferie i Norge – Easter Vacation in Norway

Most Norwegians have a whole week off for Easter vacation, lasting from Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday. In reality it lasts from Friday evening before Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday. That is nine days! So how do they spend these days? Most people, for example in Oslo, are either at their cabins - in the mountains and countryside or by the sea. Visiting friends and family is also high on the list for many persons. Some Norwegians, a minority, will attend church services on Palm Sunday and/or Easter Sunday.

During Easter week a Norwegian-American friend, with her family, visited Oslo. They were shocked to find the city “almost empty.” Oslo is fortunate to have a very large open space area of forests immediately outside of the city. This allows people to ski many kilometers, from one small forest café to another, over a large distance. Or they can bring their own food in rucksacks. When hungry, they will find a nice place in the snow (hopefully with sun), where they will cook coffee and eat. I have personally done this many times in the years I lived in Oslo as a university student. To have travelled up to Northern Norway, where I came from, would have been very expensive. I could also cram in some study time between ski trips since final exams were right around the corner.

In the north where I grew up (Uløy in Troms province), my family celebrated Easter Sunday with a big dinner. In addition to eating well, skiing was a popular activity. Little kids, three years old and up, often had skis of their own, and grownups would teach us how to conquer the surrounding hills. We soon managed to climb them by ourselves, but when going downhill, a grownup or older child would place us in front of them between their skis. And down we went, with the wind blowing in our faces. It was so thrilling! We screamed with joy and demanded more – more!

If we were lucky, the sun would shine, and the willows had pussy willows (gåsunger), even though the trees were standing in the snow. The house was cleaned, with new spring runners

or tablecloths having been taken into use. Chocolate in every form, often hot chocolate, was served. Easter was a very festive holiday. The athletic clubs arranged skiing competitions, and lots of people participated – kids, grownups, even oldies. If the weather was “nasty,” we hunkered down inside with our goodies, waiting for a break in the weather so we again could be outside, even if it was wet and windy. Oh what a wonderful time we had – most of the time.