

# Easter Traditions around the World

[1] Going to church on Easter Sunday, dyeing hard-boiled eggs and hiding them in the garden for the kids, eating chocolate bunnies – these are all popular Easter traditions. However, there are many more Easter customs around the world. Have you heard, for example, of Easter Witches, Easter Bilbies and Easter Kites?



1 An Easter Witch. By Annelis (Own photo scanned) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

## [2] Easter Witches in Northern Europe

In Sweden and some parts of Finland, little girls dress up as witches on Easter Sunday or the Thursday before Easter. They wear old clothes and headscarves, paint freckles on their faces and carry decorated willow twigs. Going from door to door, they offer to bless the house and ask for candy in return. This tradition is based on an old superstition: According to folklore, the Thursday before Easter, all witches would mount their broomsticks and fly to a place called Blåkulla, where they would party and even meet the devil.



2 A bilby. By stephentrepreneur from Adelaide, Australia (I Shot the Easter Bilby!) [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

## [3] Australia: The Easter Bilby

In the US, children get up early on Easter Sunday to sneak a peek at the Easter Bunny. In Australia, however, a different animal has taken up the job of hiding the Easter eggs: The Easter Bilby. Bilbies are a species of small marsupials native to Australia. They are endangered – among other reasons because they have to compete with wild rabbits in their natural habitat. The ‘Easter Bilby’ was promoted to raise awareness of the damage that imported animals like rabbits and foxes do to local wildlife.



3 A traditional hand-made Bermuda kite. By Aodhdubh (Own work (Original text: self-made)) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>) or GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>)], via Wikimedia Commons

## [4] Bermuda: Good Friday Kites

On Good Friday, people in Bermuda fly colorful, hand-made kites. The kites rising into the sky are said to represent Christ’s Ascension to heaven. According to legend, it was a local teacher who started the tradition: When his students had trouble understanding the biblical story, he launched a kite adorned with a picture of Jesus. Today, there is always a huge kite festival on Good Friday where tourists and locals come together at the beach to fly and watch the kites. There is also live music, traditional food and lots of games that the visitors can participate in.

**TASK 1** First reaction: Which of the Easter customs did you find most surprising or interesting?

**TASK 2** Reading comprehension. True or wrong? Tick the correct answer.

	T	W
a) Easter Witches can be seen all over Finland.		
b) Rabbits are native to Australia		
c) Bilbies are a threatened species.		
d) The Bermuda kites have a symbolic meaning.		
e) The Easter Witches get sweets.		
f) People used to think that witches came together on Easter.		
g) At the kite festival you can try typical Bermudan dishes.		

**TASK 3** Vocabulary. In the four paragraphs, find words and expressions that mean the following:

[1] *färben, Brauch*

[2] *Kopftuch, Sommersprosse, segnen, Aberglaube, aufsteigen (um loszufahren/-reiten/...)*

[3] *einen Blick auf etw. erhaschen, Beuteltier, Lebensraum, Schaden*

[4] *Karfreitag, verziert mit*

**TASK 4** Grammar revision: Relative pronouns. Fill in *who, which, whose* und *where*.

a) It was a local school teacher \_\_\_\_\_ started the tradition.

b) Bilbies, \_\_\_\_\_ are native to Australia, are endangered.

c) There is a huge festival \_\_\_\_\_ you can play games and eat traditional food.

d) The kites \_\_\_\_\_ the Bermudans fly on Good Friday are usually colorful and hand-made.

e) People wanted to draw attention to the animals \_\_\_\_\_ natural habitats were being destroyed.

**TASK 5** Which Easter traditions do you know (from personal experience, from friends and family, or from other countries)? Make a list and compare your ideas with a partner.

**TASK 6** Imagine you're an exchange student at a school abroad. Before the Easter weekend, the school's German club wants to organize a fun event to teach students about Easter traditions in Germany. Your job is to plan the event and create a leaflet with pictures. Think about:

- activities the students can participate in,
- food you can offer,
- information they might be interested in.

Afterwards, present your event program and your leaflet to the class.

**Alternatively**, you can research Easter traditions in other countries, or other holidays (secular or religious).

Lösungen:

**TASK 2** Reading comprehension. True or wrong? Tick the correct answer.

	<b>T</b>	<b>W</b>
a) Easter Witches can be seen all over Finland.		x
b) Rabbits are native to Australia		x
c) Bilbies are a threatened species.	x	
d) The Bermuda kites have a symbolic meaning.	x	
e) The Easter Witches get sweets.	x	
f) People used to think that witches came together on Easter.		x
g) At the kite festival you can try typical Bermudan dishes.	x	

**TASK 3** Vocabulary. In the four paragraphs, find words and expressions that mean the following:

[1] *färben: to dye, Brauch: custom / tradition*

[2] *Kopftuch: headscarf, Sommersprosse: freckle, segnen: to bless, Aberglaube: superstition, aufsteigen: to mount*

[3] *einen Blick auf etw. erhaschen: to sneak a peek at sth., Beuteltier: marsupial, Lebensraum: (natural) habitat, Schaden: damage*

[4] *Karfreitag: Good Friday, verziert mit; adorned with*

**TASK 4** Grammar revision: Relative pronouns. Fill in *who*, *which*, *whose* und *where*.

a) It was a local school teacher **who** started the tradition.

b) Bilbies, **which** are native to Australia, are endangered.

c) There is a huge festival **where** you can play games and eat traditional food.

d) The kites **which** the Bermudans fly on Good Friday are usually colorful and hand-made.

e) People wanted to draw attention to the animals **whose** natural habitats were being destroyed.