



Easter in Italy

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The end of the period of Lent, which lasts forty days, coincides with Easter day. Palm Sunday is instead the Sunday before Easter and Jesus' triumphant entry on the saddle of a donkey is remembered. Good Friday, on the other hand, is the day when people don't eat meat and take part in processions and Vie Crucis on the streets of the villages. On Easter Sunday, instead, the Resurrection of Jesus is celebrated. The following day, Easter Monday, is also a holiday and people don't work. It is the Angel Monday, so called to remember the meeting of the winged messenger with women. This last day was added in modern times in order to lengthen the Easter holidays and spend more time with the family.

Easter Day in Italy is a tradition to spend with the family, when people eat at lunch the lamb, symbol of rebirth. There are many Easter cakes but the most common, with sugar and almonds, is the cake with the shape of a dove, while for children there are chocolate eggs.

But how is Easter celebrated in Italy? Let's take a short trip through the traditions from the north to the south of the Peninsula.

In the North, and more precisely in Bormio (in the province of Sondrio), the Easter tradition is celebrated with a propitiatory rite for the arrival of spring, during which 5 lambs are blessed.

In the province of Bergamo, instead, to the sound of the bells, the peasants go to embrace the fruit trees, as a wish for a good harvest.

Moving to Cividale del Friuli (in the province of Udine), at Easter people play at the "Truc", an ancient game where eggs slide in order to make them touch each other. Whoever manages to hit the opponent's egg wins a coin or a candy.

In Tredozio (in the province of Forlì), Easter is celebrated with the Sagra and the "Palio dell'uovo", with games, battles and parades of allegorical floats.

Going further south, you will find in Florence the "Scoppio del Carro", an event in which a cart (called

"Brindellone") is transported by oxen from Piazzale del Prato to the Duomo. A rocket, in the shape of a dove, flowing along a wire, "flies" out of the church until it strikes and ignites the cart, thus giving life to colorful fireworks in the city sky. Tradition has it that if the event is perfect it will be a positive year for Florence.

In Urbania (near Pesaro) takes place the game of "Punta e cul", inspired by ancient rural traditions. On Easter day and in the following days, in the central square of the town and at the Sanctuary of Battaglia, the game takes place in beating one's own egg against that of the opponent before with the point and then with the bottom: will win who will keep the egg intact.

Continuing the journey of Easter traditions towards the South, we arrive at Central Italy. In Abruzzo, in Sulmona, the rite of medieval origin called "Madonna che scappa" takes place: a procession runs through the streets of the city accompanied by the sound of bells and fireworks.

In Rome the main event is Easter Holy Mass, which is celebrated in the splendid setting of Piazza San Pietro or the suggestive Via Crucis, in which the Pope also participates, which takes place in front of the Colosseum, among pagan architecture and Christian rites.

On the islands of the Gulf of Naples, are organized rites such as the "Corsa dell'Angelo" in Forio, dating back to 1600 and which represents the moment of the encounter between the Madonna and the Risen Jesus.

The Holy Week in Procida, instead, is the procession of the twelve hooded apostles and with a cross and a crown of thorns on their shoulders.

In Apulia we have instead the opportunity to participate in one of the processions organized in the province of Bari. Like in Ruvo where, at the passage of the procession, witness the outbreak of the "Quarantana": a puppet that has the appearance of an old lady dressed in black, whose explosion symbolizes the victory of life over death.

Also in Galatina, in the province of Lecce, we have the puppet of an old woman who walks through the streets of the city.

Still in Apulia, in Noicattaro, on Holy Thursday, raises a bonfire in front of the church of the Madonna della Lama, and then lights it during the procession. The pyre continues to burn all night, as a sign of devotion.

In Bagnara Calabria, in the province of Reggio Calabria, during the Holy Week, the hooded faithful parade the barefoot through the city to ask for forgiveness.

The popular tradition at Easter celebrations has, in Calabria, also other examples in Spezzano Albanese and in Frascineto, where the "Vallje" is found, with dances and folk songs in Albanian.

In Sicily the Easter celebrations are inspired by ancient traditions, with the participation of all the people who enthusiastically live processions and sacred representations.

In the town of San Fratello, in the province of Messina, the "Feast of the Jews" is celebrated, during which the farmers and shepherds wear traditional costumes, embroidered with floral motifs and pearls.

In the city of Enna you will be able to participate in rituals of Spanish origin, such as the parade of the 24 symbols of the martyrdom of Christ, including the cross, the purse with thirty coins, the crown of thorns and the tools of flagellation.

In Caltanissetta you can instead witness the spectacular "Real Maestranza", with giant statues made of papier-mache representing the 12 apostles.

In addition to the evocative processions, we also have the historical re-enactments of the passion of Jesus, which see an extraordinary collective participation. Among the most famous we remember the procession of the "Mysteries" of Trapani, with the faithful dressed in long tunics that parade with bare feet. But also the Easter celebrations in Prizzi and Adrano, in the province of Palermo, where the masks of death and demons appear, who, turning this way around the country and playing particular trumpets to celebrate the death of Jesus Christ, disturb the religious procession that, on the contrary, it commemorates it.

In Sassari, in Sardinia, we have the evocative procession of the brotherhoods with the statue of the Virgin. In Alghero the faithful pray before a statue of Christ, with women dressed in mourning.

In Oliena (Nuoro) there is the rite of the Crucifixion, in which men and women go in search of the Risen Christ pausing in all the churches of the country, until Saturday, when the statue of Christ is found again.