

OSTERSITTEN UND BRÄUCHE / CUSTOMS and TRADITIONS

bayerische Osterbräuche (Bavarian Easter Customs)

True Bavarian style Easter

In true Bavarian style Easter is celebrated with a mixture of ancient traditions and 21st century goodies: "Palmbüscheln" to be blessed on Palm Sunday, Easter Bunny (Osterhase), coloured eggs, kids searching for eggs kindly left by the "Osterhase", roast lamb lunch, Easter lamb cake and more.

Palmsontag (Palm Sunday)

First of all, Palm Sunday is a religious feast-day. But beside the religious meaning it always makes people call the one who gets out of bed last this day the "Palmesel" (palm donkey). This is because the donkey is said to be a lazy and easy-going animal. So never get up to late that day (Sunday before Easter), else someone might call you the "Palmesel".

Or simply appeal to the bible: "The latter will be first!"

As spring sunshine begins to warm the cold days of Lent excitement rises as people gather to tie traditional "**Palmbüscheln**" to be blessed on Palm Sunday as worshippers pray for a year of growth. Just make sure you rise bright and early on **Palm Sunday** as the last one down is called the **Palmesel (Palm donkey)** – an animal known for its laid-back attitude to life! As Easter week continues children can be seen scurrying around the garden gathering moss and building an Easter nest for the **Easter Bunny (Osterhase)**.

Eggs of all sizes and colours are blown, painted and hung on budding twigs to create an East tree or on the branches of bushes and trees in the garden. The **Franconians** even **dress the village** well in a riot of coloured eggs and ribbons. The decoration of the **Easter wells**, perhaps the most charming custom in the Fränkische Schweiz, has experienced a great revival in the last few years and has become a popular attraction. The main reason for decorating the wells and springs lies primarily in the significance of **water as the life-giving element** for the arid plateaux of the Fränkische Alb (Franconian Alps).

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday are both dedicated to religious services with shops and many attractions closed on Good Friday. Restaurants will be open and serving traditional fish dishes for Good Friday. Tourist attraction opening times vary but Easter weekend usually marks the start of the fine weather season with lake and river cruisers, summer sled runs and leisure parks all operating about now – weather permitting of course! Talking of the weather, **Easter can vary from early March to later April** so although snow will be confined to higher mountains be sure to pack your snow suit and bathing costume! As **Easter Sunday** dawns, it's off to search for eggs kindly left by the "Osterhase". Chances are you aren't far from an organised Easter egg hunt so grab a basket and get hunting!

After a **traditional roast lamb lunch**, festive food continues with an **Easter lamb cake** baked in a special lamb-shaped tin. Easter Monday is a public holiday so shops will be closed and you need to check attraction opening times before setting off. **Easter Monday** marks a number of traditional events such as the **colourful Sword Dance and "Georgiritt" horse-backed procession** in Traunstein.