

EASTER IN GREECE

Easter in Greece is the biggest holiday of the year and is even more important than Christmas, with week long celebrations and traditions. The Greek Orthodox Church plays a large role in the Greek Easter 'Paska' or ' Pascha' celebrations.

Greek Orthodox Easter usually falls one week after the Western (Protestant, Catholic) Easter, while approximately once every four years it falls on the same date.

GREEK EASTER FOOD

Mageiritsa Easter Soup

A soup made with boiled lamb offal - liver, heart and intestines, flavoured with onions, dill, thyme and lemon.



Tsoureki



Koulourakia:

Sweet Easter biscuits

RED EGGS

HARD BOILED EGGS ARE DYED RED TO SYMBOLIZE THE BLOOD OF CHRIST



EASTER GAME WITH THE RED EGGS

A Greek Easter tradition is the game tsougrisma (knocking together). Those who have played conquers will find that it's very similar!

Two players take a red egg each. One player holds their egg in a fist while the other player taps the end of their egg against the end of the other player's egg. The egg which cracks is the loser. The winning egg goes on to play with other players / eggs.

The last player to keep their egg intact is the winner

GREEK EASTER AROUND THE ISLANDS

- ✘ Many Greek Islands have their own additional Greek Easter traditions. Some traditions even vary from village to village.
- ✘ In **Crete** (the biggest island in the north of Greece) children make an effigy of Judas which they burn on a huge bonfire outside the church after the Saturday midnight service.
- ✘ In **Corfu** (the biggest island in the west of Greece, Ionian sea) the "Pot Throwing" custom takes place on Holy Saturday at 11am and the local people throw pots out of their windows, smashing them onto the streets below.
- ✘ On the island of **Tilos** (Aegean sea) the candles are dyed red with dye from a local root.

EASTER FEAST



Roasting lamb on Easter Sunday

GREEK EASTER TRADITIONS

- ✘ There are many traditions in Greece revolving around Easter and **the week leading up to Easter** plays a major role in these. This week is known as Holy Week.
- ✘ Throughout **Holy Week** the churches hold services at least once a day. Traditionally the people fast and no meat, oil or dairy products are eaten until midnight on Easter Saturday, after the symbolic Resurrection.

HOLY OR PASSION WEEK

- × **Holy Monday**

- × The first day of Holy Week. People go to church and kiss the icon of Christ.

- × **Holy Tuesday**

- × A day of mourning. The women bake Easter biscuits 'koulouraki' with oil and eggs, to be eaten after the fast is over on Saturday.

- × **Holy Wednesday**

- × A special church service for worshippers to be blessed with oil. All household chores must be finished today.

- × **Holy Thursday**

- × Communion services in church start early morning today and churchgoers bow before Christ on the Cross. The women dye eggs red to symbolize the blood of Christ, and bake Easter bread - Tsoureki. These will be placed on the Easter table to be eaten after Saturday.

- × **Holy Friday**

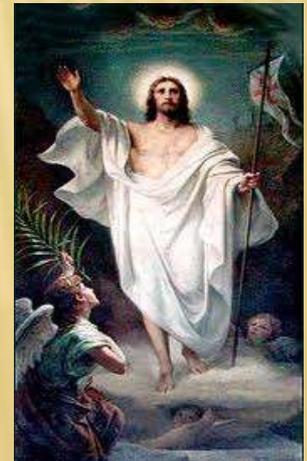
- × The most sacred day of Holy Week. It is a day of mourning. The church bells ring the death knell all morning. Girls decorate the Epitafio/Epitaph - the funeral bier and a service is held for Christ's funeral. Today is a day of rest for women and men are forbidden to play cards. At dusk the Epitafio is paraded through the village or town streets with a quiet procession. This is a somber parade.

- × **Holy Saturday**

- × The church once again holds a service in the morning, and the church is filled with flowers. In the villages men slaughter lambs for Easter Sunday. The women bake cheese pies - kalitsounia. In Crete (the biggest island in the South of Greece) children make an effigy of Judas to burn on bonfires later at the midnight celebration.

THE MIDNIGHT EASTER SERVICE & THE RESURRECTION - SATURDAY NIGHT

- ✘ The Resurrection takes place at midnight and is the culmination of Holy Week. The whole of Greece attends church for the midnight service and the lighting of the Holy Flame. The Priest passes the Holy Flame throughout the congregation and all light a candle with cries of 'Christ is Risen'. Fireworks are then let off in celebration. The people take their lit candles home and make the sign of a cross with the black from the candle flame in the doorway of their homes before entering.
- ✘ The breaking of the Fast takes place now, at midnight after the church service people go home to eat Mageiritsa - a meat soup made with offal, plus the red eggs



EASTER SUNDAY

- ✘ Families and friends meet up for the Easter Day roasting of lamb outside on a spit and a big celebration party with food, wine, music and dancing all day long.



**✘ HAPPY EASTER FROM THE MODEL
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OUR EASTER CREATIONS























