

## Easter in Czech Republic



**After a period of snow and cold, it is time to celebrate the arrival of spring. Easter weekend is a time filled with fun traditions in the Czech Republic. The whole country breaks out in a blaze of colours, with everything from exquisitely decorated eggs to folk dancers in vivid costumes.**

Since religion was forbidden during the Communist era, Easter in the Czech Republic tend to be a time to welcome spring and to celebrate the awakening of nature rather than being a religious holiday. Two weeks before Easter the Old Town Square, Wenceslas Square and squares around the country fill up with stalls for the traditional Easter market. With more than 90 stalls in Prague, you can expect to find crafts handmade in Czech, beautifully hand painted eggs, wooden toys, dolls and various Easter decorations. Apart from the markets, there are a wide range of entertainment and sightseeing in Prague. Above all, we recommend that you buy a ticket for a classical concert. Concerts in ancient churches and concert halls such as Rudolfinum are magical at this time of the year. One of the most interesting and perhaps one of the most controversial traditions is the history of pomlázka.

### **Get the beauty and health from pomlázka**

Pomlázka is a stick made of willow branches, and are often decorated with strips of coloured paper or ribbon. Originally pomlázka is a pagan ritual that was used to chase away diseases and evil spirits. According to legend, the ritual gave youth to whoever was flogged, including farm animals. On Easter Monday boys and men in cities and villages across the country arm themselves with a pomlázka. They gather in a group of friends and relatives to go out and visit as many houses in the area as possible. The girls and the women stay at home, and when the visitors arrive, they are greeted with laughter and smiles. Girls and women allow them to be whipped with this Easter stick. In fact, so cheerful, they reward their male visitors with a strong drink before the group moves on to the next house. As the legend goes, if a woman is whisked by a pomlázka, she will be both beautiful and fertile in the coming year. This explains why women are eager to take part in the festivity. Some make it a game and allow themselves to be chased around the garden a few times. The tradition can be a bit shocking for foreign visitors, but the Czech women would be humiliated if they were not whipped in this folkloric way. It all takes place in a spirit of entertainment. Experience pomlázka and other folk traditions

in the open-air museum Rožnov pod Radhoštěm. Rožnov pod Radhoštěm has a cultural program throughout the year. A large number of events take place here, all inspired by folklore and handicrafts. Each year you can take your kids for enjoyment of countless celebrations, including dance and singing performances.

### **Easter eggs, food and tradition**

The decorated Eastern eggs are called Kraslice, a name derived from the old Czech word meaning "beautiful". And they are truly beautiful! Some eggs are coloured in red to symbolize the blood of Christ. Most are decorated with motifs that are geometrical, floral or religious using ancient techniques and patterns that vary from one region to another. In Czech households the decoration of eggs has mostly been a chore for girls, because boys have been busy making whips and play with rattles. There are many stories about why Maundy Thursday has been nicknamed the "Green Thursday" in the Czech Republic. Some believe it is linked to Christian tradition, when you eat a meal free of meat and only vegetables are consumed. In Czech Republic it is also celebrated with the production of green beer, which is only produced once a year by the brewery Starobrno in Brno. Green Thursday (Zelený čtvrtek) is also the day when young boys go out on the village streets equipped with rattles to chase away evil spirits. Rattles are a symbol to ward off the apostle Judas, who betrayed Jesus. The Czechs go all-in with desserts on Easter. Sweet, fermented bread dominate, usually in the form of a lamb. Buns are popular such as "Jidáš" (Judas bread) that is decorated with a spiral that is supposed to represent the rope which Judas hung himself with after having betrayed Christ. Although chocolate Easter Bunnies have become more common, it is more traditional to form a sponge cake like a lamb.

Easter is a great time to experience Czech Republic, as summer tourists has not yet arrived, and the weather tends to show itself from its best side. With luck you might find a beautiful Czech Eastern egg hidden in the place you choose to visit. Veselé Velikonoce! Happy Easter!

More information:

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