



Sons of Norway Information Banks

#220: GOD PÅSKE! HAPPY EASTER!

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INTRODUCTION

The Norwegian's idea of having a *god påske* consists of hiding away up in the mountains and enjoying the last available good snow for skiing in the early spring sunshine. Easter is one of Norway's biggest holidays, just as big as Christmas. Norwegians celebrate it all week with parties, family time and mountain hikes. A Norwegian Easter vacation offers plenty of opportunities for winter sports and good company. Most people have at least a week off so the possibilities are countless. Hotels, chalets and cabins are packed with people intent on having a good time, whatever the weather might be. It can be said that the entire country of Norway is shut down during the week of Easter in order to enjoy the holiday and the transition of seasons with family, friends and nature.

A couple of weeks before Easter, Norwegian schoolchildren start preparing for the holidays by decorating eggs, making little chicks and other Easter-time decorations along with the typical consumption of candy and chocolate bunnies.

The Easter celebrations typically start on Palm Sunday which is the weekend before Easter Sunday. School children usually have that next week off so parents will generally take the entire week off as well. Most people do all their Easter shopping well in advance. It is wise to stock up on food early especially if the family *hytte* is the holiday destination. *Påskeaften*, Easter Eve on Holy Saturday is celebrated as the big day of parties and celebration. Children get to open their Easter eggs filled with candy, families organize ski races and hikes in the mountains and the biggest meal of the week concludes the busy day with an Easter lamb or chicken.

Easter Sunday gets underway with a special breakfast at the family *hytte* or home followed by church. Breakfast eggs, especially colored ones, are found on the breakfast plate and it is common to bake homemade Easter bread for the Sunday celebration. Decorations of pastel colored Easter bunnies, chickens, and eggs cover the table to set the mood.

Except for the TV stations and other public services, Norway gets pretty quiet. There are no newspapers, no mail, little public transportation and no shopping during the days leading up to Easter. Up in the mountains though is where you will find the hustle and bustle of vacationers and regular *hytte* goers. No Easter holiday is complete without the popular *Påskekrim* novel.





NORWEGIANS READ CRIME NOVELS ON EASTER

For many, April is a time to celebrate, reflect and savor in sweet chocolaty goodness from the Easter bunny. During this beautiful seasonal transition, flowers are blooming, weather is getting warmer, and people are taking advantage of the last snowfall in the mountains. Norwegians head to their cabins with the idea of relaxing with a good book. What many may not know, though, is that Norwegians are likely to also be reading a spine-tingling novel about robbery, deception, or murder.

This odd Norwegian tradition has a rather interesting back story. Nordahl Grieg a publisher with Gyldendahl Publishing decided he wanted to promote his new crime novel a little differently. Under the pseudo name Jonathan Jerv he wrote an article using the storyline of the book and ran it on the front page of Aftenposten. The purpose was to trick readers into thinking it was a real news story.

“Bergen’s train looted last night!” read the headline on Saturday March 24, 1923 just one week before Palm Sunday. This publicity stunt shocked readers who were fearful for passengers they knew aboard Bergen’s train. After noticing the small advertisement in the corner for the fictional crime novel they were intrigued to buy the book. The book was a huge success and so began in 1923 the tradition of reading crime novels during the Easter season.

Påskekrim, or Easter crime, is a widely acknowledged term that comes to life in Norway each Easter season. Norwegian people like to get away to their cabins (hytter) during the quiet Easter holiday. In addition to their skis, oranges and marzipan are a few new best-selling crime novels to complete the tranquil week away.

When visiting Norway at this time you will see a flourishing of fictional criminal activity. Television and radio stations play popular crime programs, newspapers release thrilling literary extras, and even the backs of milk cartons have displayed on them mysteries to be solved. Most widely recognized are the recently published crime, mystery, and thriller fiction books crowding bookstore displays everywhere. Publishers will emerge with series of books entitled Påskekrimen, or Easter Thrillers, as publication dates are decisively moved to spring time. These books take over bookstores around the country, so it is no surprise that sales for crime novels go up 50%.

With this growing popularity, there have obviously emerged a multitude of crime writing authors. Jo Nesbø, Karin Fossum, Anne Holt, and K.O. Dahl are just a few of the well-known authors keeping their readers on the edge of their seats with thrilling bestsellers. It’s interesting to note that Norway has one of the lowest crime rates in the world which might contribute to their amusement in reading these exhilarating stories.

A great way to “get away” could be to cozy up with a good crime novel along with some of your goodies left over from the Easter bunny.