



Sons of Norway Mini Presentations

#311: EASTER VACATION

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Happy Easter! Or god påske (goo POH-skeh) as they say in Scandinavia. In Norway, Easter is a major holiday, on the same level of excitement and anticipation as Christmas. From Palm Sunday through at least Easter Sunday, and a little beyond, most businesses and many shops close down while the country celebrates the holiday with parties at home, or trips to the countryside.

A couple of weeks before Easter, Norwegian schoolchildren start preparing for the holiday. The religious content of the holidays is stressed—Norway has a state church and instruction in religion is a natural part of the general education. But the children also decorate eggs and make little chickens and other Easter-time decorations.

When the Easter holiday arrives, Norwegians embrace the opportunity to get outdoors. Most people have at least a week off and nearly half a million Norwegians travel. The Norwegian idea of having a god påske is to be up in the mountains enjoying the early spring weather with sunshine flooding the wide, snow-white expanses where cross-country skiers can glide on and on forever. Others head to the coast, opening their vacation homes for the summer. Most travelers are city-dwellers, eager to get out of the city and into the countryside. Those living in rural areas are less likely to leave home, but do still enjoy nature and the outdoors in their own backyard during the Easter holiday.

Hotels, chalets and cabins are packed with people intent on having a good time, whatever the weather might be. So many people go on vacation at the same time that all of Norway is shut down, so to speak. Even the Norwegians who stay at home have no intention of doing business.

Most people do all their Easter shopping well in advance. It is wise to stock up on food, for the stores close early on the Saturday before Easter and don't open again until the Tuesday after. All offices are closed. Radio and TV operate as usual, but that is about it. Except for the phone service and a few other public services there is not much going on. There are no newspapers, no mail, little public transportation and no shopping. Even the churches are fairly empty.

But up in the many mountain areas and on the coast there is hustle and bustle and commotion with frolicking vacationers everywhere. The church moves along with the rest of the nation and people can go to Easter services in mountain chapels, hotels and trailer parks.

Regardless of whether they stay at home or head out of town, after a cold, dark winter, Norwegians relish their Easter vacation time.



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