

# Celebrating Easter Around the World

## Why do we celebrate Easter?

Christians celebrate Easter to remember that Jesus Christ was crucified and then was resurrected (rose from the dead) on Easter Day. They believe that Jesus died to save everyone from their sins.



## Why is it called 'Easter'?

The word 'Easter' comes from two pagan spring festivals. One is an old European festival called Ostara which celebrates new life. The other one is the Arabian sun festival of 'Ishtar'. As the Bible records Jesus' death during the time of the Jewish celebration of Passover, Easter is celebrated around the same time as this.

## Important events during Eastertime

Easter preparations begin on Shrove Tuesday when some people rid their kitchen cupboards of all the naughty but nice things to eat, like cakes and sweets. Ash Wednesday marks the start of Lent when Christians remember the temptations Jesus suffered in the desert. They might give something up which they like until Easter Day. For example, they might not eat chocolate or biscuits until the end of Lent, which lasts for 40 days!

1. Why do Christians celebrate Easter?

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2. When does Lent begin? What event is remembered during Lent?

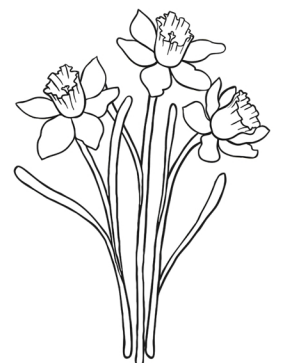
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3. What could you give up during Lent?

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## Holy Week

Holy week begins with Palm Sunday when Christians remember Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem. Maundy Thursday marks the time Jesus was arrested and Good Friday is the day when Christians believe Jesus was crucified. Easter Day is celebrated on the Sunday to remember that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Let's look at how people all over the world celebrate Easter.

## Brazil



Brazilians start to celebrate Easter on Shrove Tuesday, when they have a huge carnival called Mardi Gras. They sing and dance for several days, and have a wonderful procession through the streets. There are many exotic costumes and people are driven on 'floats'. No meat is eaten during Lent in Brazil.

4. What is the name of the carnival in Brazil?

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## Argentina

People in Argentina celebrate Easter time with a huge carnival. People sing and play the charango which is a type of stringed instrument. Women wear the traditional clothes of a wide ruffled skirt, colourful poncho and a white hat. They sing folk songs and ride on horseback to where a dance is held in honour of Pukllay – the Spirit of the Carnival.

5. What do you do with a charango? Tick one answer.

You wear it.

You eat it.

You play it.

6. What is a Pukllay?

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## Russia

On the night before Easter day, Christians in Russia go to church. At midnight, they walk around the outside of the church and sing songs. They pick branches of pussy willow and tap each other with it for good luck. They eat lamb, chicken, pork, bread and Easter cake.



Russia

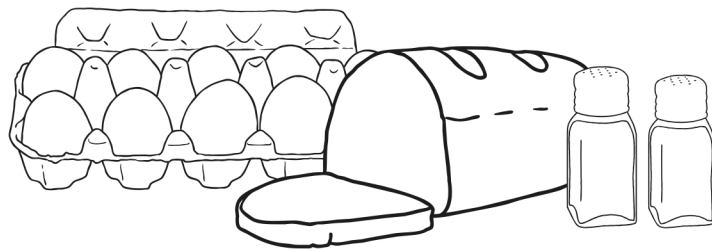
7. In Russia, why do people tap each other with the branches of pussy willow?

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## Poland

In Poland, Christians celebrate Easter with the Blessing Basket. A basket is prepared on the Saturday night before Easter Sunday. Inside the basket are: coloured eggs, bread, cake, salt, pepper and white sausages. The basket is taken to church and blessed by the priest.



8. Name three things that go in a Blessing Basket.

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## Italy

Palm Sunday is called Domenica delle Palme and olive branches are waved. Church doors are closed when everyone is inside and the priest knocks three times. When the doors are opened, this represents Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The olive branches are spread over fields for good luck for the crops.

A wonderful carnival begins in January and ends on Ash Wednesday. People wear masks which represent the different spirits.



Italy

9. What is special about Ash Wednesday in Italy?

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10. Which country would you like to celebrate Easter in, and why?

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## Comprehension Answers

1. Why do Christians celebrate Easter?  
**Christians celebrate Easter to remember the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.**
2. When does Lent begin? What event is remembered during Lent?  
**Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. Christians remember when Jesus was tempted in the desert.**
3. What could you give up during Lent?  
**Individual answers**
4. What is the name of the carnival in Brazil?  
**Mardi Gras**
5. What do you do with a charango?  
**You play it.**
6. What is a Pukllay?  
**The Spirit of the Carnival.**
7. In Russia, why do people tap each other with the branches of pussy willow?  
**For good luck**
8. Name three things that go in a Blessing Basket.  
**Any 3 of the following: coloured eggs, bread, salt, pepper, white sausages.**
9. What is special about Ash Wednesday in Italy?  
**A wonderful carnival begins and people wear masks.**
10. Which country would you like to celebrate Easter, and why?  
**Individual answers. Must be justified.**