

Easter traditions around the world



From cathedrals in the United Kingdom to parsley and potatoes in the garden, there's plenty to consider over Easter. And don't forget chocolate bilbies!

Maundy Thursday (the day before Good Friday) is not an especially important day for most people in the UK – unless they are a selected recipient of Royal Maundy Money. The lucky recipients are given two small purses of money by the sovereign: a red purse containing normal currency, and a white one containing silver Maundy coins. The value of the coins, in pence, equals the years of the sovereign's age. So when Queen Elizabeth II distributed Maundy Money in 2016, the purse contained the equivalent of 90 pence in specially minted one, two, three and four pence denominations.

The number of recipients is also determined by the monarch's age: there are equal numbers of men and women and the number also equals the years of the sovereign's age. So the purse with the 90p was given to 90 men and 90 women, all of whom had been selected for their service to church and community.

Each year, the reigning monarch visits a different cathedral in the United Kingdom to take part in the annual Maundy Thursday service: in 2014 Blackburn was selected, in 2015 Sheffield, in 2016 it was Windsor and in 2017, the Queen travels to Leicester.

Why is it called *Maundy* money? It comes from the Latin *mandatum*, meaning command and derives from the commandment Christ gave after washing the feet of his disciples: to love one another. From as early as the thirteenth century, the monarch has distributed gifts and money to recall Christ's simple act of humility, and by washing the feet of the poor. The foot-washing was stopped in the eighteenth century, but the distribution of the money has continued right until the present day.

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From British cathedrals to Easter traditions in gardens: there are plenty of gardeners who swear that Good Friday is the only day that you should plant parsley. In Ireland, the USA and England you can find plenty of advice about why you should plant it on this day: parsley is associated with death and the devil. Good Friday, with its strong Christian connections, is seen as the only safe day to get this dangerous herb in the ground!

In Ireland there is a similar tradition for potatoes. Four hundred years ago, when potatoes were first introduced into Ireland, many Catholics felt they shouldn't be eaten because potatoes weren't mentioned in the Bible. By planting them on Good Friday, the spuds could be sprinkled with holy water and made holy, and therefore become a suitable source of food. Whether it's true or not...

On Easter Sunday when you are munching your chocolate Easter bunny, think about the Australians, who will be enjoying a rather different chocolate confection: an Easter bilby. In Australia, rabbits are not a native species and are usually seen as a pest; therefore bunnies have been binned in favour of a native Australian marsupial: the bilby. Many chocolate manufacturers donate money from the sales of the Easter bilbies to conservation projects which raise awareness of this endangered species.

So depending on your taste (and location), **Easter** can be a time for monarch-watching, planting those risky herbs and vegetables or enjoying a delicious chocolate bilby.

If you would like to read more about Maundy Thursday in the UK, then click here:

<https://www.royal.uk/royal-maundy-service-0>

If you would like to read more about the Australian Easter bilby, then click here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter_Bilby

If you would like to use Easter as a topic in your lesson, we have provided you with an activity at B1 level. You'll find it in the following **Teacher's notes** and on the **Worksheet**.

Teacher's notes

Ten things about Easter (Level B1 and above, 15+ mins)

- Make a copy of **Ten things about Easter**, one for each student.
- On the board write: *Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday*. Ask students if they know when these days are. (*Gründonnerstag, Karfreitag and Ostersonntag*.) Information about Maundy Thursday is given in the text above.
- Tell students they are going to do an activity about Easter.
- Handout the **Worksheet**, one to each student and explain that they should match the two halves of each sentence.
- Circulate and help with any unknown vocabulary.
- Give students five minutes to complete the activity.
- Tell students to check answers with a partner.
- Check answers together in class. **Key: 1e, 2j, 3h, 4b, 5a, 6i, 7d, 8g, 9f, 10c.**
- Ask students whether they are surprised by any of the facts.

If you would like to use a vocabulary activity at A1 level **Spring puzzle**, then click here:

<http://www.klett-sprachen.de/best-of-ntc-easter-special/n-1/100#Spring%20puzzle>

Worksheet

Ten things about Easter

Match the two halves of the sentences.

1	_____	An estimated \$14.7 billion	a	from <i>Eostre</i> , goddess of spring.
2	_____	In Florida 9,753 children searched	b	on Good Friday.
3	_____	The biggest Easter	c	sold for more than € 9million.
4	_____	You should plant potatoes and parsley	d	egg hunt on the front lawn.
5	_____	The word Easter comes	e	is spent in total for Easter in the US.
6	_____	Easter takes place after	f	eat the ears on chocolate rabbits first.
7	_____	The White House holds an annual Easter	g	in 1873 by Fry's of Bristol.
8	_____	The UK's first chocolate egg was made	h	egg weighed 7,200 kgs.
9	_____	76% of people	i	the 40-day period called Lent.
10	_____	In 2007, an Easter egg covered in diamonds was	j	for 501,000 eggs.

Are you surprised by any of the facts? Tell your neighbour.