

Hooray for Norway's National Day on the 17th of May!

Fancy a celebration out of the ordinary? Come and join us in celebration of Norway's National Day!

Every year on 17 May, the streets in Norway are filled with cheers and flags in celebration of Norway's constitution - adopted in 1814. A must in the celebrations is the children's processions, made up of school classes marching with the school band through the local community. Most of the children carry small Norwegian flags and the route is lined with enthusiastic onlookers. Dressed in their best, the children then engage in games and activities, and for many this is the one day of the year where the supply of ice cream is endless.

Dress

It has become increasingly popular to wear the national dress, the bunad, on this occasion. The bunad varies in appearance from region to region and the magnificent sight of national costumes from all over the country is one of the reasons why this day truly represents a celebration of Norwegian tradition and history.

Food

May is the month when spring really blooms in Norway, and this influences the menu chosen for the day. While hot dogs and ice cream are popular with the children, the adult population often stick to cured meats, sausages, traditional sour cream porridge and many throw barbeques. Desserts and cakes are a must, and many schools and families give breakfast parties before the procession starts.

The "russ" celebration- ending 13 years of school

The 17 May is also the day pupils in their last year of upper secondary school celebrate the end of 13 years of school, even though many still have to pass final exams. They call themselves "russ" and illustrate their standing through colourful overalls depending on their line of study. High spirits are the norm and the festivities usually last day and night. Many transport themselves around town in self-decorated buses and vans with slogans and booming music.

17 May in the UK

Many Norwegians and people with Norwegian roots living abroad also celebrate Norway's constitution day. Several Norwegian seamen's churches, embassies, student associations and other Norwegian institutions organise processions similar to those held in Norway. The main event in London is the gathering in Southwark Park, followed by the free concert in Covent Garden.

PROGRAM

1.00 pm

National Day Festivities in Southwark Park, Jamaica Road, SE16 Tube: Bermondsey, Rotherhithe or Canada Water

- Grand Flag Parade for children and adults
- Mosterøy School Band leads the parade
- Principal Speech by the poet and writer Jan Erik Vold
- Speeches by children from the Norwegian School and the Saturday School
- 'Mini concert' by Mosterøy School Band
- Norwegian School Choir
- Show by Boo Entertainment
- Musical entertainment
- Children's games and races
- Sale of ice cream and hot dogs

Admittance:

Adults £3.00

Students £2.00

Children under 16 free

5.00 pm: Free concert in Covent Garden

Absent Elk, which has been supporting Girls Aloud lately on tour, is a Brighton-based band with a Norwegian front man. They play soaring melody driven indie pop and are tipped as 'one to watch for 2009'. Join the band to celebrate the launch of their debut single 'Sun and Water' and Norway's national day. A special free intimate acoustic performance will take place outside the West Piazza, Covent Garden at 5pm, where Norwegian frontman Kjetil Mørland and the band will play songs from their forthcoming album.

Have a look at the following website for other 17th of May happenings in the UK, hope to see you there!

<http://www.norway.org.uk/norwayuk/17may/>