



# Essential Asatru: Walking the Path of Norse Paganism

*Diana L. Paxson , Isaac Bonewits (Foreword)*

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**Essential Asatru: Walking the Path of Norse Paganism** Diana L. Paxson , Isaac Bonewits (Foreword)  
A Journey to Fulfillment and Renewal

In Essential Asatru, renowned author and priestess Diana Paxson demystifies an ancient, rich, and often misunderstood religion, and offers a practical guide for its modern followers.

Filled with clear, concise instructions on living Asatru every day, this truly accessible guide takes you on a journey from Asatru's origins in Scandinavian and German paganism to its acceptance as an official religion in the 1970s.

Essential Asatru also includes:

- A complete history of Asatru gods and goddesses, including Odin, Thor, and Ostara
- The life values, such as honor, truth, fidelity, and hospitality, that shape Asatru's tenets
- Indispensable information on rituals, rune casting, ethics, and divination

Essential Asatru is an elegant and splendid introduction to a centuries-old religion that continues to enrich and fascinate its followers today.

## Essential Asatru: Walking the Path of Norse Paganism Details

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# **From Reader Review Essential Asatru: Walking the Path of Norse Paganism for online ebook**

## **Katie says**

I liked the historical overview, but found Paxson to be somewhat biased. As a liberal feminist, I appreciate a liberal feminist interpretation. But as an historian, I cannot support some things.

In any case, I didn't read it for a history of the peoples of the region. I read it for an overview of the northern tradition, and that's what I got. I would have appreciated more depth, but as a foundational read, it was fairly good.

I also could have asked for more information about daily practices. Someone new to the path is working alone by definition, until they form or find a group that is congenial to them. It would have been nice to have even more of a focus on the household traditions.

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## **Elizabeth says**

As a beginner resource, I found it very informative and helpful. The terms were well explained, but not much detail was gone into. I didn't mind how the beginning of each chapter started with a part of the example of a kindred gathering, but the italics eventually got on my nerves, so I eventually skipped them. The chart in the section on the gods is a handy thing, and I plan on utilizing that in the future (especially in regards to the halls of each god, that is absolutely useful). I may need to read it a second time, as I read some reviews for the book before I had finished, and did not totally see what they were talking about. But that won't be a problem, if I intend to make it apart of my library at some point. Regardless, though it was a little short and offered the beginner info, I think I will definitely invest in a copy, more for general ideas a structure. The sources were also a plus.

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## **Dawnrenae says**

Diana Paxson's book Essential Asatru: Walking the Path of Norse Paganism (2006) has got to be one of the very best beginner books I have ever read, on any particular tradition.

Over the last little while, as a priestess hoping to be well versed in religions and traditions, Essential Asatru has everything I love to see in a book.

This guide teaches you not only the history behind the lore, but also the history of the Northern people, the migrations, and the conversations. it also teaches the student how to live a truly Asatru lifestyle, not just a religious practice.

It pleases me to see Diana point out that during the migration periods, the Northern people migrated as well, taking with them, thusly sharing their culture, religion and ethnicity. This leaves very little room for cultural appropriation to be claimed. (Thank you)...

I have been following the Norse tradition for many years, so, I am no stranger to Asatru, however, I have learned more from this book than I have in the last few years of my study.

I recommend this book to anyone wishing to learn more about Norse traditions, paganism as a whole, or even just those interested in learning something new.

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## **Kadin says**

It's very negatively biased in its portrayal of Loki. It doesn't capture the reasons why people choose to worship him. Other than that, it's a good book (so far).

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## **Jack says**

I have to admit that one of my life-long hobbies has been studying the different forms of religious beliefs around the world. Religious beliefs intrigue and amuse me. It has also lead me down my own personal path as a "psychological deist" - meaning that I believe in a "creator", but not a particular "god" or "goddess." As Heinlein put it:

*"History does not record anywhere at any time a religion that has any rational basis. Religion is a crutch for people not strong enough to stand up to the unknown without help. But, like dandruff, most people do have a religion and spend time and money on it and seem to derive considerable pleasure from fiddling with it."*

Paxson lays out the foundations of Asatru in a well-organized and readable manner in this book. Though by no means complete, she provides the curious with a very good introduction into the Norse theology without too much embellishment.

The author does a very good job of explaining the rituals and the meanings behind them, as well as a list of resources for those who wish to find out more about this belief system and study it a bit further or perhaps follow that particular path. All-in-all, a very good introductory book for a beginner with an interest in, or looking at/trying to understand, various non-traditional beliefs.

I was first introduced into Asatru back in the mid-70's via science fiction and Pohl Anderson's fictionalization of Norse and Danish mythology. In my reading, I discovered that this was NOT the religion of neo-Nazi's (Hitler and the Nazi Party merely co-opted some of the symbolism and distorted it - and the Neo's still distort it to this day). Instead, Asatru is a belief system of inclusion and equality among the sexes - probably more so than most other "pagan" systems.

That said, as with any religion, (IMHO) this one suffers from the same weakness, failings and shortcomings of all the others (most especially, the **major** religions). It is my personal belief that deities should not have petty human weaknesses such as "jealousy," "lust," or "anger". A deity should be above all that. In other words, a proper deity shouldn't have any human traits at all. It is their "energy" (spirit) in which we share an "image and likeness", not flesh-and-blood along with all the other mammalian bullshit.

Unfortunately, as with any system designed for control and power-wielding by the shrewd, providing deities with those traits makes them "more believable" and gives those wielding the power and control a means for

laying blame on those they wish to target. Petty behaviors among "gods" and/or "goddesses" make them less-than-omnipotent and -omnivalent (and thereby, *not* a "deity").

Again, Heinlein put it best:

*"The most ridiculous concept ever perpetrated by Homo Sapiens is that the Lord God of Creation, Shaper and Ruler of the Universes, wants the saccharine adoration of his creations, that he can be persuaded by their prayers, and becomes petulant if he does not receive this flattery. Yet this ridiculous notion, without one real shred of evidence to bolster it, has gone on to found one of the oldest, largest and least productive industries in history."*

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## **Dean Haywood says**

I found this book to be an easy read and a good starter book for anyone who has an interest in asatru

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## **Passenger B. says**

Neo-Pagan fantasy misconstrued as "spirituality," and combined with more than just a handful of new age concepts. This brand of "Asatru" is definitely not based on *\*anything\** the ancestors - be they Norse or Germanic - believed.

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## **Carry-Atlinder says**

I actually enjoyed this book a lot. I found a quick, easy *introduction* (which is what the book claims to be, so I'm not sure why so many people are complaining about that) to the faith.

The first half is history heavy, which can be a little dry. However, I found her points that the Northern people traveled to various places to be a stark contrast to the "only Northern (i.e. white) peoples can practice" ideals that are (unfortunately) associated with the religion.

The second half is about the Gods, Goddesses, holidays, blots, sumbles, and various other "religious" information. Admittedly, this part is fairly thin, but that's to be expected given that (again) it's only an introduction. Her chart of which gods and goddess are associated with which days of the week, runes, food, colors, ect to be helpful. Although I wish she would have done that for all the gods and goddesses she talked about, not just a handful of them.

The book is inter-dispersed with a sumble dedicated to the ancestors. Personally, I found it interesting. But, I will admit it didn't *need* to be there.

I think the best part is all the resources she gives and cites throughout the book.

Over-all, this is a great intro for those who are interested, and a great first step for those wishing to practice.

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## Steve Cran says

Along with the exponential growth of Wicca and Neo Paganism there has been an upsurge of interest in the Norse Gods and their mythology. Those that follow the Norse ways are often identified as heathens. Heathen do their best to reconstruct rituals from Norse sources such as the Edda and the Younger Edda. Diana Paxson give forth a great overview for the newcomer and a good refresher for someone more advanced in their studies. Hence it also makes a great reference.

Europe has had the same population for thousands of years. DNA tests show that most Europeans are inter related and there has been little change in the population. As Glaciers melted various tribes settled in the European continent. As the climate would get colder the Germanic tribes would move further south, overtaking the Roman Empire and reaching as far south as North Africa. In prehistoric times Indo European tribes moved into Europe from India. They believed in three gods; sovereign magic god, war god and the agricultural god. These people were known as the Kurgans and they buried their dead in mounds. They also had a sect that wore animal skins and would act like these animals on wild hunts. They did not impact the genetics of Europe but their culture made a profound change.

Most Europeans descend from seven women who in turn descended from 23 women that came out of Africa. These twenty three are bred from the original Eve. In the beginning there was probably a mother earth goddess and maybe a sky god. The Romans recognized the Earth Goddess as Nerthus but no Norse text supports such. According to the mythology the Fire world and the ice world came into contact with each other. This created Ymir and a giant calf. The giant calf licked the ice world and created Bor. Later Bor's children would slay him and use his remains to make the world in which we live. From the Giants came forth the Gods. Odin, Vili and Vi tied together three types of tree and Odin breathed life into them. This there is also a description of festivals, blots and sumbles.

Magic is not all that central to Heathen but it is their. There are three types the first being Rune magic where in something is inscribed with Runes to give it magical properties. There is also spoken magic where a rhyme is recited for magical effect. Lastly there is Seid or trance magic.

The book is concise and easy to read. I found it enjoyable, exciting, comprehensible and informative. This book is a must read for anyone just browsing into Norse Heathenism or someone just starting out. Five hammer out of five.

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## Michele Lee says

Review by Michele Lee and Michael Lush

Asatru is the pagan path that follows Norse tradition. For laypersons, this means Odin, Thor, Loki, their stories and their kin. Ask any pagan their views on Asatru and you'll get mixed responses. While many people, especially men, find their spiritual home as followers of the Asgardians, it's also been adopted by hateful, racist sects. Asatru, however, is not a racist belief system, in fact it's one of the few ancient paths that

holds men and women equal. Goddesses and gods are equal, Odin accepts men and women into his ranks of warriors and in the Norse lifestyle men and women could both own land and hold respected social positions. Because of Asatru's adoption by small groups of racists, and the reputation even centuries later of the Viking invaders, books on the subject often hint at the faith only being applicable to those of Northern European decent. However, Essential Asatru is different.

To begin with it points out that the Vikings traveled so far, to the Americas, even into Africa, that it's possible that many people who don't look Nordic might still have Norse blood.

Essential Asatru also focuses on the other thing that makes Asatru different from other pagan paths. Asatru is a functional religion, it's designed to blend into a life, not rule it. In Asatru the gods are allies in every day life, not overlords who must be appeased for humans to survive. Interacting with the religion is, and was, a low priority (which is not surprising when considering that the original Vikings lived with 9 months of winter a year, implying that they often had little time for anything other than survival.)

Essential Asatru is the first fully satisfying non-myth book we've added to our collection on Asatru. It's a choice pick for those interested in the faith, readers interested in religious studies in general and writers looking for research books on the Norse faiths.

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### **C.J. says**

If you're not familiar with Asatru as I was, this is a good read.

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### **Ashley says**

I'm not really into the fake story though, I'd rather have the plain facts and history when purchasing a nonfiction book. If I want a fake story about Asatru, I'd get a fiction book. Otherwise, I like it.

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### **Jeff says**

A very fluffy book that is supposed to be about Asatru, but is really just another neo-pagan fluff fest with only a vague passing resemblance to a true Heathen worldview. Maybe a decent intro to Asatru, but not really a good place to actually learn about our ancestors beliefs.

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### **Wulf says**

This was a book that going into it, I kept hearing people talking about how great it was. It was a book, also, that I could easily pick up at any bookstore locally.

Once I got it home and started reading it, I noticed there was a lot of misinformation based on the author's unfounded biased opinions. With that said, having a title such as Essential Asatru, can be misleading if the content is based more on personal opinion, rather than fact.

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## **Khara says**

While reading ---

Pros - Awesome amount of histories about Norse Paganism and the Vikings. Gives the most detailed history of any book I've read so far, so yay for that.

Cons - Very biased. I would suggest any Lokean to stop reading after page 52 because you will find yourself angry. Great detail is given on the major Gods/Goddesses (even including Hella and Fenris, Loki's children). Talking about myths they are associated with, runes they're associated with, days of the weeks, symbolisms, etc. But when it comes to Loki she's just like -- Beware of him. I almost think it would have been better and more respectful for her to have completely left Loki out of the book entirely. If you aren't gonna treat one aspect as seriously as you took the others, you shouldn't do it at all.

Post reading --

Ok, so the histories and the Asatru lifestyle sections are pretty great. The section on Gods and Goddesses is horrifically biased. If I could delete pgs 55-130, I'd have given it 5 stars.

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