

“Bei uns ist immer was los!”

ADVENTSSITTEN / ADVENT CUSTOMS
 ADVENTSKALENDER / ADVENT CALENDAR
 calendar: der Kalender, die Kalender

GENGENBACHS RATHAUS ADVENTSKALENDER



The Treasure Trove of Fantasy: Gengenbach's Rathaus Advent Calendar
 A Town Hall with twenty-four windows turns this Black Forest town into a special treat during Advent season.

GENGENBACH'S MARKET SQUARE MAKES THE PERFECT LOCATION FOR THE TOWN'S CHRISTMAS MARKET.

A white Christmas in the Black Forest? Usually not in the town of Gengenbach. Sunny summers deck the surrounding hills with grapevines for Müller-Thurgau, Riesling, and Pinot Noir wines, and the mild winters often only bring a light dusting of snow to the steep roofs of the half-timbered houses. Still, the Christmas spirit has thrived here in southwestern Germany since at least the mid-sixteenth century, when the custom of decorating evergreen trees in houses to celebrate Christmas was already practiced in this region.

In 1996 the people of Gengenbach started a new Christmas tradition that now attracts more than 80,000 visitors every year. Every December, they transform their entire town hall, *das Rathaus*, into a giant Advent calendar.

The delightful German custom of counting down the days until Christmas with an Advent calendar dates from the nineteenth century. Advent calendars are still popular and are sold in book- and stationary shops and even in supermarkets. For every day in Advent, a tiny door in a perforated paper picture can be opened to reveal an image of a Christmas gift or some other holiday motif: a candle, a sugar cookie, and so forth. Advent calendars eventually began to include Christian imagery, for example a main illustration showing the nativity scene, or shepherds or



REVEALING A NEW WINDOW EACH NIGHT IS A CEREMONIAL EVENT.