

“Bei uns ist immer was los!”

## “CANNSTÄTTER VOLKSFEST” / “WASEN STUTT GART FOLK FESTIVAL

[www.cannstatter-volksfest.de](http://www.cannstatter-volksfest.de)

The **Cannstatter Volksfest** is an annual three-week festival in Stuttgart, Germany. It is sometimes also referred to by foreign visitors as the Stuttgart Beer Festival although it is actually more of an autumnal fair. Locals to Stuttgart variously refer to the festival as the **Cannstatter Wasen** or just **Wasen**.

The Volksfest takes place from late September to early October, spanning a period over three weekends, ending the second Sunday in October. It's held on an area called the Cannstatter Wasen. The extensive Wasen area is located in the Stuttgart city district of Bad Cannstatt, near the river Neckar. A smaller variant of the Stuttgart Festival - the Stuttgart Spring Festival is also held each year on the Wasen.

### Background

Although the Volksfest is not strictly speaking a beer festival, it is considered by many to be the second largest beer festival in the world after the Munich Oktoberfest. According to estimates about 4.2 million people visited the festival in 2006. The Volksfest begins one week later than the Oktoberfest.

### History

#### **Cannstatter Volksfest – Wasen**

#### **From an agricultural event to a famous festival**

Colorful flashing lights, the squealing and rattling of unknown machines, the smell of burned almonds, “Göckele” (roasted chicken) and stockfish affects all your senses. Above the noise you can hear the bandmaster shouting out typical slogans like “die Krüge hoch”. No doubt, it's “Volksfest” time in Bad Cannstatt. Annually around four million festival people gather at the biggest carnival festival in the world since 1818.

In 1815 a gigantic eruption of the Vulcano Tambora in Indonesia led to a climatic catastrophe even in Europe. The incredible explosion hurled around 100 cubic km of rocks, ashes and dust up to 70 km high and darkened the sky. The blast equalled to 170.000 Hiroshima bombs. The shockwave could be felt 1.500 km away. 10.000 people died due to the eruption. Another 100.000 died because of the aftermath. The dust particles were distributed by the jet stream around the world and caused crop failure and famine in Europe.

The winter of 1815/16 in Wurttemberg was the coldest since weather records were kept. Snow until May, no summer, alternating rain, whipping hail and thunderstorms continued into the growth season. This made bringing in a harvest in those years not possible. Throughout Germany, people were starving. The little existing flour was stretched with sawdust and the planted potatoes were dug up again. The need of the people was indescribable.

When the young King Wilhelm I. became mayor of Wurttemberg in 1816, the crisis of the people couldn't be any worse. His brother in law, Czar Nikolaus of Russia, helped him to relieve the biggest misery with deliveries of grain.

Then, in 1817, when the first harvest wagon was brought in, King Wilhelm and his Russian wife Katharina had the glorious idea to sponsor a harvest festival. This should take place annually on the King's birthday on September, 28th in the area of the Cannstatter Wasen.