

"Bei uns ist immer was los!"

26 Nov 2013

## WEIHNACHTSMÄRKTE—CHRISTMAS MARKETS

market: der Markt, die Märkte

Christmas market: der Weihnachtsmarkt, die Weihnachtsmärkte

### A VISUAL GUIDE TO GERMANY'S CHRISTMAS MARKETS

What to expect from German-style yuletide fun.

Across the country festive lights are twinkling on little huts, sausages are roasting and wine is being mulled - yes, this is the first week of advent and Germany's famed Christmas markets are opening. Here is our annual guide.



Germany's Christmas markets opened on Monday. This is in Berlin.



Germany's *Weihnachtsmärkte*, are world famous for their seasonal cheer. Musical programmes, parades and the unique traditions in each city make the Christmas markets more than just a place to buy gifts and enjoy Yuletide treats — they are long-standing cultural events, some dating back hundreds of years.

Christmas markets typically open the last week of November and stay open until just before Christmas. Almost all markets serve *Glühwein*, or mulled wine, perfect for warming chilly fingers on cold winter nights. Vendors sell regional food specialties, as well as classics like the gingerbread-like *Lebkuchen*, roasted chestnuts, spiced almonds and sausages.

Germany's larger cities typically host a number of markets where locals and tourists stroll past craft stalls full of hand-made treats to stuff the stockings. One of the oldest and most famous of these is the *Christkindlesmarkt* in Nuremberg, which gets some two million visitors every year.

*Christkindlesmarkt*, well-known for its 180 stalls and specialty sweets, dates to 1628. The appearance of the Nuremberg Christmas Angel, known in German as *Christkind* or "Christ-child," gives this and many other German Christmas markets the name *Christkind(e)l(s)markt*.

The Christmas Angel, a girl aged between 16 and 19-years-old, is chosen every two years by Nuremberg residents and opens the Christmas market by reciting a short speech. She also visits charities, children's hospitals and other Christmas markets. Representing the Christ child, the *Christkind* was first suggested by Martin Luther to replace the Catholic gift-giving figure of Saint Nikolaus.

Bavaria's capital **Munich** also has a historical *Christkindlmarkt*, lit by 2,500 candles that bedeck the 30-metre Christmas tree in the city centre's famous Marienplatz. Merrymakers can try Munich's culinary specialties such as *Bratäpfel*, or fried apples, and honey cake called *Honigkuchen* while they watch spectacles such as the *Krampuslauf*, when St. Nick's trolls march through the market.

Just around the corner from Munich's *Christkindlmarkt* is the *Krippelmarkt*, or manger market, which features nativity scenes.

The *Römerberg Weihnachtsmarkt* in **Frankfurt** was first referred to in documents some 600 years ago. These days it receives some three million visitors per year. The carillon bells at Frankfurt's *Nikolaikirche* can be heard three times daily during the Römerberg Christmas market, and visitors can enjoy visits from St. Nicholas and a number of choir performances.

**Berlin** also offers a number of markets to choose from, with at least one in each of the city's twelve districts. For an upscale market, the *WeihnachtsZauber* - which charges a small admission fee - occupies the refined *Gendarmenmarktsquare*. Covered tents provide gourmet food specialties and pricey handmade goods - offering much more than standard kitsch.

The charming Scandinavian-influenced *Lucia Weihnachtsmarkt*, nestled into the courtyard of a former brewery in the gentrified former East Berlin district of Prenzlauer Berg, also has a cozy atmosphere. There is even a sauna for those who want to beat the chill alpine style.

Berlin's largest market in the Spandau district old city centre has about 200 stalls on weekdays and 400 on weekends. But the biggest attraction is a big nativity scene with live animals in front of the Nikolai church.

**Hamburg** also has several markets to offer. The old-fashioned *Rathausmarkt*, named for its location in front of town hall, is one of the most popular. Styled by a former circus director, it holds rarities like an old carnival organ, vending trolleys from the turn of the century, an art nouveau coffee house, and a 1920's merry-go-round.