

“Bei uns ist immer was los!”

WEIHNACHTSMÄRKTE—CHRISTMAS MARKETS

market: der Markt, die Märkte

Christmas market: der Weihnachtsmarkt, die Weihnachtsmärkte

Germany has many Christmas festivities

Question: My husband and I are going to Germany just before Christmas. Where can we obtain information about holiday-related celebrations? D.K., Philadelphia

Answer: Germany has a wealth of Christmas celebrations, including many holiday fairs that have been going on for centuries. Most of the events run from late November until just before or just after Christmas. Among them:

- The Christmas fair in Munich, more than 600 years old, held in the square in front of City Hall and featuring creches, tree ornaments and Bavarian folk art.
- Nuremberg hosts the country's largest Christmas market, dating from the late 17th century. Besides dolls, tinsel angels and candles, the market is known for its gingerbread and figures made of prunes, figs, walnuts and raisins. On Dec. 10 there is a huge procession of schoolchildren with lanterns passing through Old Town to the Imperial Castle.
- Berlin's main Christmas market is held along the Kurfürstendamm, with a concentration of activity near the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. Another market is on Marx-Engels-Platz, featuring ornaments and woodcarvings.
- Frankfurt's holiday market is in Römerberg Square, within earshot of trumpeters playing carols from the spire of Old Nikolai Church.
- For information on other markets and Christmas events, contact the German National Tourist Office, 122 E. 42d St., 52d Floor, New York, N.Y. 10168; phone 212-661-7200. There also is a brochure called “Wunderwinter Holidays in Germany.”

IF YOU GO

GERMANY'S CHRISTMAS MARKETS: <http://tinyurl.com/5c9n9d> is a compendium of information from Germany's tourism agency about hundreds of Christmas markets. It features a map of cities with markets with links for more information as well as details on various German Christmas traditions.

NOTEWORTHY MARKETS:

Nearly every German city and town has an annual Christmas market. Some of the largest, oldest and most picturesque ones are in the southern states of Baden-Wuerttemberg and Bavaria.

Among the most noteworthy:

- **Nuremberg:** Most famous and biggest in terms of visitors — roughly 3 million last year. Known for toys and Lebkuchen (gingerbread).
- **Stuttgart:** Largest in size — 234 vendors last year — and second in visitors. Known for elaborate stand decorations.
- **Munich:** Third-most-visited. One section of the market features only creche, or Nativity scene, vendors.
- **Rothenburg ob der Tauber:** In addition to the annual market in this walled medieval city, the Kathe Wohlfahrt company offers a year-round Christmas store with a Disney feel and high product quality.
- **Ulm:** World's highest church steeple is the backdrop for a life-size Nativity scene and high-quality local craft vendors.
- **Augsburg:** Town hall windows in this Baroque city are transformed into a giant Advent calendar.
- **Heidelberg:** Favorite tourist stop for U.S. military personnel.
- **Esslingen:** Medieval market adds Saturnalian flair to the traditional Advent market in 1,200-year-old, non-touristy town.

Other famous Christmas markets include Frankfurt am Main, the largest market with the tallest tree; Dresden, the oldest market with the longest tradition - the first one was held in 1434; Rothenburg ob der Tauber, a magical medieval town; Lübeck, the marzipan mecca of the north; Berlin, with about a dozen markets including one near the iconic Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche and one at the Gendarmenmarkt; Munich, with a market dating back to 1642; and Augsburg, with its angel play and life-size advents calendar.