

"Bei uns ist immer was los!"

TANNENBAUM / CHRISTMAS TREE

The German roots of the Christmas tree

Germans will drape decorations on around 30 million Christmas trees this year, after shelling out way over half a billion euros on a holiday tradition with Teutonic roots.



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According to German wood industry association the HDH, Germans bought around 100,000 more trees than last year. But the mighty Tannenbaum is no passing trend. The first Christmas tree was planted around 500 years ago by Germans, and the tradition has grown stronger ever since.

For such an international phenomenon, the history of the Christmas tree remains a mysterious to many. But the historical roots of the Tannenbaum are fairly surprising - a group of young German merchants in a Baltic country.

Christmas does of course have a pre-Christian history, and decorating the house during the dark winter months is a tradition that precedes Christianity, and its German connection, by thousands of years.

Many ancient societies included the custom of bringing evergreen plants into homes during the cold months as a reminder of the summer. From northern European Vikings, to the Romans and Ancient Egyptians, urging the sunny months back and warding off evil spirits with evergreens was commonplace.

Skip forward a millennium or so, and a more recognizable Christmas tree was beginning to take shape, thanks to a guild of German merchants who supposedly erected the first Weihnachtsbaum in 1510, in the Baltic metropolis of Riga, Latvia.