

VORWEIHNACHTENSITTEN (PRE-CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS)

Brief an das Christkind / Letter to Christ Child

To Santa, care of Himmelfort post office

It's last call for seasonal letters to Saint Nick's official German post office if you want to get a reply before you see what's under the tree this year.

After the doors opened this year on November 6, around 150,000 letters have been delivered from around the world to the tiny depot in the Brandenburg village of Himmelfort.

All will be answered by a member of Santa's team of helpers in one of 16 languages at their disposal.

Families Minister Manuela Schwesig added to the pile on Wednesday, arriving with bundles of letters from schoolchildren from her home state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

The flood of letters to the depot has grown steadily since its humble origins thirty years ago.

The history of the small but industrious post office began in 1984 when a local postwoman wasn't sure what to do with two letters she received for Santa from children in Berlin and Saxony.

Not wishing to return them with the distinctly un-Christmassy message "Recipient unknown", she decided to answer them herself.

Word got around, and the amount of post arriving for Santa in Himmelfort, which translates as 'Heaven's gate', kept growing, reaching about 2,000 a year by the early nineties.

In 1995, Deutsche Post decided to lend a hand, or many hands, providing helpers and according the depot the official status of post office for two months of the year.



Good luck with those 150,000 letters Santa!

But letters must reach Santa's desk at least ten days before Christmas Eve to ensure a reply is sent out in time.

Children hoping to boost their gift hauls should address letters 'An den Weihnachtsmann, Weihnachtspostfiliale 16798 Himmelfort', making sure that their own details are legible.

Or if you are within striking distance, you can just go there and enjoy various [additional activities](#) like baking and handicrafts. Himmelfort is located 95 kilometres north of Berlin.

For those further afield, there are also a number of other regional [Christmas letter sorting offices in Germany](#).