

“Bei uns ist immer was los!”

FEIERTAGE UND FESTE IM MAI SITTEN UND GEBRÄUCHE MAIBAUM

May pole: der Maibaum, die Maibäume

MAYPOLE—Villagers put up a pole outside the town to represent spring. The pole stands all through the summer.

Erster Mai / May Day

Many towns and villages in Germany celebrate the first of May by putting up a maypole. A maypole is a tall tree, often a spruce pine, which has had its lower branches cut off and the bark removed. The stripped tree is carried to the town center, decorated with figurines, ribbons and garlands, and set up for everyone to see. There is an age-old tradition for young men from neighboring villages to sneak over at night to try to steal the maypole from the other town. So the pole must be guarded; often a group of boys will camp out next to the maypole and keep watch in shifts to make sure it is not stolen.



Maypole

Der Maibaum

In Austria and many parts of Germany, especially in Bavaria, the tradition of raising a Maypole (**Maibaum**) on May 1 still serves to welcome spring—as it has since ancient times. Similar Maypole festivities also can be found in England, Finland, Sweden, and the Czech Republic.

A Maypole is a tall wooden pole made from a tree trunk (pine or birch), with colorful ribbons, flowers, carved figures, and various other decorations adorning it, depending on the location. In Germany the name *Maibaum* ("May tree") reflects the custom of placing a small pine tree atop the Maypole, which is usually set up in a town's public square or village green. Traditional dances, music, and folk customs are often associated with the Maypole. In small towns virtually the entire population turns out for the ceremonial raising of the Maypole and the festivities that follow, with *Bier und Wurst* of course. In Munich a permanent *Maibaum* stands at the Viktualienmarkt.