

## NACHWEIHNACHTZEIT / POST CHRISTMAS SEASON

### Neujahrstag (der 1. Januar): New Years Day

#### Neujahrstagsitte: New Years Day custom New Year's Day in Germany

*New Year's Day (Neujahr, Neujahrstag) is a public holiday in Germany. It is on January 1, also known as the first day of the year in the Gregorian calendar. Many people begin the New Year at midnight between December 31 and January 1 with sparkling wine and fireworks.*

#### What do people do?

Many people begin January 1 by celebrating the end of the old year and the start of the new one at midnight. These celebrations include public concerts, parties and fireworks and may last into the early hours of January 1. Many people spend the rest of the day quietly, but some organize a communal lunch or evening meal with friends or family.

In some regions, local media compete to find and publish a photograph of the first baby born in the New Year. Classical orchestras may present a special music program known as a New Year's Concert in the afternoon or evening. Germany's Chancellor makes a televised New Year's speech.



*Firework celebrations occur on New Year's Day in many parts of Germany.*

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#### Public life

New Year's Day is a public holiday in Germany. Post offices, banks, stores and other businesses are closed. However, some tourist stores may be open and stores at railway stations, airports and along highways are usually open. There are some restrictions selling alcohol, public performances and dancing. Public transport service schedules vary depending on where one lives or where they want to travel.

#### Background

There have been winter celebrations in Europe for thousands of years. The origins of these celebrations lie in pre-Christian beliefs about the need to entice the sun back to the earth during the long winters in the northern hemisphere. However, January 1 has not always been the first day of the New Year. Until around 153 BCE, the ancient Roman New Year was celebrated on March 1 in the area that is now Germany.

From 153 BCE and in the Roman empire, New Year's Day was on January 1. However, in some parts of Germany, March 25 was observed as New Year's Day until the 13th century or even the 16th century. January 1 was widely accepted as New Year's Day after this period.

- **1. Januar** - New Year's Day is often a time of gift-giving for people who serve you throughout the year, such as the postman or the garbage men.

#### Neujahrskarte

Some Germans prefer to send a New Year's card rather than a Christmas card. They wish their friends and family "**Ein gutes und gesegnetes neues Jahr!**" ("a good and blessed New Year") or simply "**Prosit Neujahr!**" ("Happy New Year!"). Some also use the New Year's card to tell family and friends about events in their life during the past year.

#### Die Fledermaus

Austrians have a long tradition of welcoming the New Year with a performance of **DIE FLEDERMAUS** operetta (1874) by the Austrian composer **Johann Strauss, Jr.** (1825-1899). Musical sentiments like "Glücklich ist, wer vergisst, was doch nicht zu ändern ist..." ("Happy is he who forgets what can't be changed...") and the story of a masquerade ball make this popular *Operette* appropriate for the New Year. Besides the annual New Year's Day performance, both Vienna's **Volksoper** and **Staatsoper** offer more performances of the most popular of Strauss' operettas in January. A New Year's performance of **DIE FLEDERMAUS** ("The Bat") is also a tradition in Prague, in neighboring Czech Republic, as well as in many other parts of the world. English versions of **DIE FLEDERMAUS** by John Mortimer, Paul Czonka and Ariane Theslöf, or Ruth and Thomas Martin (and other translators) are performed frequently in the US and other English-speaking countries.