

OKTOBERFEST FROM A TO Z
Sitten und Gebräuche / Customs and Traditions

Oktoberfest Turns 200!



Imagine throwing a party and six million people arrived! As Oktoberfest turns 200, Munich is gearing up for a celebration like no other!

Millions are planning to attend this year's special two hundredth anniversary party of the Oktoberfest. Munich Lord Mayor Christian Ude expects public interest in the event to be even stronger this year.



Waitresses in the beer tents are agile and strong enough to pick up and carry six one-liter glass mugs of tasty brew for patrons. With as many as one hundred thousand visitors drinking at the same time, this capability is a must. Courtesy Munich Tourist Office.

The “Wiesn” is the Reason—

This time of year, as summer comes to a close and the air turns cool, you can just about hear the buzz in the air in Munich.

That buzz comes from the annual rite of the world's largest festival—Oktoberfest—that excites the city, enlivens this Bavarian enclave of 1.3 million people and brings together as many as six million people from all over the world to partake in this bedazzling event.

However, this time around is special: this year's Oktoberfest is underlined, capitalized, and has an exclamation point on it, as 2010 signals the 200th anniversary of this phenomenal festival. To celebrate the occasion, Bavarians have been working feverishly since the closing minutes of the 2009 Oktoberfest to lay the groundwork for this gargantuan spectacle, which has been held every year since 1810, except for interruptions caused by war or the plague.

Dressed in a rainbow of colorful dirndls, leather lederhosen and alpine hats bedecked with huge brushes, feathers, and pins, thousands of people will pour into a thirty-one-acre plot of land on the western edge of downtown Munich to join in song, down large mugs of delicious beer,

taste the warm, tantalizing sausages and king-size fifteen-inch pretzels, and delight in some friendly Gemütlichkeit.

Over seventeen days, this two-centuries-old get-together, which is really more than drinking beer and enjoying the famous German foods, is a chance to celebrate Bavarian culture and traditions, and to highlight the event that started the festival in the first place—the wedding of Bavarian Crown Prince Ludwig to Princess Therese of Saxony-Hildburghausen. Everyone in Munich was invited then—now the whole world is invited to the party.

The biggest—and longest—Oktoberfest ever, officially begins at noon on September 18 with the ceremonial tapping of the first beer barrel in the Schottenhamel tent. Munich Lord Mayor Christian Ude will officiate the event, finally shouting out, “O'zapft is!” (it is tapped!)

“We Muenchners are very aware of our traditions,” says Mayor Ude, “which is why, although this year's Oktoberfest is a special one, I'll be cracking open the first barrel of beer in just the same manner as always.” Following this ceremony, which began in 1950, twelve volleys from guns are fired, signaling that all beer tents on the Theresienwiese, where the Oktoberfest takes place, may begin serving.