

traveltips

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Christmas markets in Germany

The Christmas markets in many towns and cities across Germany capture the spirit of the festive season. Depending on local tradition, they might be known as a *Christkindlesmarkt*, *Adventsmarkt* or *Glühweinmarkt*. Christmas in Germany just wouldn't be the same without these enchanting markets and their beautifully decorated booths. Highlights alongside the *Glühwein* include Christmas cookies, decorations, handicrafts and regional specialities.

The Nuremberg *Christkindlesmarkt* in Bavaria is one of the most famous Christmas markets in the world. Much of its charm is due to the historical setting on the main square with the Church of Our Lady and views of the Gothic church in the old quarter. It is often called 'the little town of wood and cloth' on account of the 180 or so wooden stalls with their red-and-white awnings.

www.christkindlesmarkt.de

Many things that are associated with Christmas in Germany originate in Dresden, such as *Christstollen* (traditional Christmas cake), wooden pyramids, incense burners and Pulsnitz gingerbread. The Christmas *Striezelmarkt* in the Saxony city dates back as far as 1434. This market would not be complete without the *Christstollen*, originally known as a *Striezel*. Every year on the second Saturday in Advent, a three-tonne stollen is paraded through the city.

www.striezel-markt.de

Frankfurt's Christmas market features around 240 booths set against the charming backdrop of Römerberg square and Paulsplatz square. Creative decorations and a Christmas tree illuminated by 5,000 lights make this one of the most beautiful markets anywhere in Germany. The great poet Goethe was fond of some of the regional festive treats that are still found at the market, such as the traditional marzipan biscuits and little figures made of prunes.

www.frankfurt-tourismus.de

The Christmas market in Cologne, North Rhine-Westphalia, is the largest in Germany, attracting four million visitors every year. On the square outside the cathedral, up to 160 semi-circular booths wind their way around the Christmas tree like a coil. The market supplements its choice of regional dishes with many international specialities.

www.koelnerweihnachtsmarkt.com

A Christmas market with a difference is held on the Theresienwiese festival grounds in Munich, Bavaria. The 2011 Tollwood Winter Festival will be a 'market of ideas'. Anyone looking for an unusual Christmas present is sure to find something to suit. International stallholders at more than 240 booths offer gift ideas in countless colours, designs and variations. Visitors can also enjoy a varied programme of entertainment featuring theatre, comedy and shows.

www.tollwood.de

Health & Wellness in 2011: mud, peat and Felke cures

Open-air peat moonlight spa

Since as long as ago as 1881, the town of Bad Saarow in Brandenburg has been a destination for health tourism. Visitors, including the writer Theodor Fontane, first began to take health breaks here in the 19th century. Thanks to the local sources of medicinal mud, excellent air quality and thermal salt water from the Catherinenquelle spring, the town was officially accredited as a spa resort (*Bad*) in 1923. Today, this elegant town in the Rauhen and Dubrow hills stands out for its wide choice of health treatments. The SaarowTherme baths is highly regarded and offers a variety of pools including for thermal saltwater bathing. Treatments harnessing the natural healing properties of mud are among the options in its wellness oasis. One highlight here is an open-air moonlight peat spa on the shores Scharmützel Lake in the Oder-Spree lakeland. Both the Scharmützel Lake conservation area and the Dahme-Heideseen nature park are great places to enjoy the great outdoors close to Berlin.

Information

Bad Saarow Kur GmbH
Am Kurpark 1
15526 Bad Saarow
Tel.: +49 (0)33631 8680
Email: info@bad-saarow.de
www.bad-saarow.de

Mud, glorious mud

Nutrient-rich muds, or peloids, are among the oldest natural remedies known to man. Mud has been used both internally and externally to restore and maintain health since time immemorial. Therapies using mud-like substances such as moor peat, volcanic mud, *schlick* and 'healing earth' are referred to as peloid treatments. These stimulate the body in a variety of ways, including through heat, and can help restore balance to the metabolism, for example. Also highly regarded is the Felke cure. This is named after the Protestant pastor Emanuel Felke, who treated members of his congregation with clay.

Information

Rheumazentrale
Langenhorner Chaussee 384
22419 Hamburg
Tel.: +49 (0)40 5528 9300
Email: info@rheumazentrale.de
www.rheumazentrale.de

Harmony and balance just outside Hamburg

The mud and saltwater spa resort of Bad Bramstedt is located within easy reach of Hamburg in the heart of Schleswig-Holstein. Spa treatments here focus on the mineral spring in the Osterau valley. Visitors can also harness the benefits of local peat to relieve a variety of ailments. A special feature of Bad Bramstedt is the mud exercise pool – a deep basin in which patients can immerse themselves in mud up to their necks. Not only is this a relaxing experience, but it can also help rheumatism, muscular complaints and problems with the spine and joints. After a dip in the mud, many people pay a visit to Bad Bramstedt's Garden of the Senses. This contains five hydrotherapy pools based on the principles of Sebastian Kneipp, in which health is promoted using the element of water. Getting good exercise and restoring balance play a huge part in the resort's appeal, but there is also plenty to see and do outside the spas – including horse-riding, canoeing and leisurely walks in the surrounding region.

Information

Tourismbüro der Stadt Bad Bramstedt
Bleek 17-19
24576 Bad Bramstedt
Tel.: +49 (0)4192 50627
Email: touristinfo@bad-bramstedt.de
www.bad-bramstedt.de

Germany's only Felke spa resort

Bad Sobernheim in Rhineland-Palatinate is the only Felke spa resort in Germany. It is situated between the Rhine and Moselle amid the region's vineyards. Three medical wellness hotels in the resort offer the Felke cure – an active, holistic therapy used to relieve many complaints and which is known to help with aching joints, obesity and high blood pressure. Treatments focus on clay in different variations, combined with exercise and a healthy diet or fasting.

Information

Kur- und Touristeninformation
Bahnhofstrasse 4
55566 Bad Sobernheim
Tel.: +49 (0)6751 81241
Email: touristinfo@bad-sobernheim.de
www.bad-sobernheim.de

A unique health experience

One of Germany's premier destinations for mud and mineral treatments, Meinberg is also the only state-approved spa resort in North Rhine-Westphalia. It combines conventional medicine, medical wellness and Asian health practices. Among the options available are traditional spa therapies and short treatment courses for specific complaints. As well as being a pleasant place to swim, the thermal baths with their natural mineral waters work wonders for visitors' health. In Meinberg, the spring water is taken straight from the ground and enriched with beneficial, invigorating minerals. Visitors to the spa here can relax in harmony with nature. A sauna suite and sea salt grotto round off the health and wellness facilities, and for those who like to get active outside, there are well signposted walking trails.

Information

Staatsbad Meinberg GmbH
Parkstrasse 17
32805 Bad Meinberg
Tel.: +49 (0)5234 9010
Email: info@staatsbad-meinberg.de
www.staatsbad-meinberg.de

125th anniversary of the automobile: events

Classic car race at the Nürburgring

Historical racers with more than 500 hp and smaller classic cars will be brought together at the ADAC/RGB season finale at the Nürburgring in Rhineland-Palatinate. From 7 to 9 October, the international drivers will be focused on securing those decisive championship points in various historical racing series. And, of course, there will be a chance to see vehicles that have made motor racing history. But the Youngtimer Trophy also gives modern classic passenger cars from the 1970s and 1980s an opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities. The historical Cup & Classic Trophy long-distance race is another special treat for automotive enthusiasts and vintage car fans, with a wide variety of vehicles taking part. Cars with a one-litre capacity compete alongside those with several hundred horsepower. The drivers battle it out for rankings and championship points. The line-up also includes the Formula Vee, the HRA German Open with historical racing cars, the Triumph Competition and the 'Cup und Tourenwagen' Trophy.

Information

Nürburgring Automotive GmbH
Nürburgring Boulevard 1
53520 Nürburg
Tel.: +49 (0)2691 3020
Email: info@nuerburgring.de
www.nuerburgring.de

Film heroes on four wheels

A car is not merely a means of transport – it is also a lifestyle choice and a companion. Some have even gone on to become film stars. Take the VW Beetle 'Herbie', for example, who sped onto our screens for the first time in 1968 in 'The Love Bug'. In the 1980s, the Manta sports car produced by Opel acquired cult status. Millions flocked to cinemas to see 'Manta – The Film' and 'Manta Manta'. Visitors to Babelsberg Film Park in Potsdam, Brandenburg, get to see genuine cars that have featured in movies. Against the backdrop of a film set, the two-wheeled and four-wheeled stars show just what they are capable of. Crashes, motorcycle jumps and high-speed chases are as much a part of the daily show as pyrotechnics and fight scenes. Stuntmen even explain the acts to the audience, revealing the preparations that are necessary for a fire stunt, how a car stunt works and what safety precautions need to be taken. The one thing that counts above all else is split-second timing between man and machine.

Information

Filmpark Babelsberg GmbH
August-Bebel-Strasse 26-53
14482 Potsdam
Tel.: +49 (0)331 721 2735
Email: marketing@filmpark.de
www.filmpark-babelsberg.de

Chrome and horsepower at Essen Motor Show

Visitors to the Essen Motor Show between 26 November and 4 December will be greeted by gleaming chrome and purring machines. There's so much to see at this automotive event in North Rhine-Westphalia. Those who want to have their finger on the pulse come here to discover the latest models from major manufacturers. Particular emphasis is placed on innovation and sports production vehicles. The experience is even more spectacular in the show hall, as car enthusiasts get to see what's under the bonnet. Racing drivers do laps around the hall floor and the sound of screeching tyres and humming engines fills the air. Various racing series are presented to the public. However, the Essen Motor Show is also a source of inspiration for tinkerers and tuners. This is where they get the parts to improve and convert their cars. The motor show also features its fair share of vintage vehicles, bringing classic car enthusiasts to Essen to discover an array of collectors' pieces. Motorcycling fans will also be in their element with a separate hall exclusively dedicated to two-wheelers.

Information

Messe Essen GmbH
Norbertstrasse
45131 Essen
Tel.: +49 (0)201 72440
Email: info@messe-essen.de
www.essen-motorshow.de

Art at the Mercedes-Benz Museum

Automotive history meets modern art: the Mercedes-Benz Museum in Stuttgart brings past and present together with its Art & Stars & Cars exhibition. Modern and contemporary art provides a fitting backdrop for a range of classic cars. Until 25 September, visitors will be able to see around 250 works by 120 international artists at the museum in Baden-Württemberg. The exhibits come from the Daimler Art Collection and include examples of constructivism and concrete art from southern Germany as well as photographs and videos by contemporary artists. In total, the museum collection features more than 2,000 works with the focus on 20th century abstract art.

Information

Mercedes-Benz Museum
Mercedesstrasse 100
70372 Stuttgart
Tel.: +49 (0)711 173 0000
Email: classic@daimler.com
www.mercedes-benz-classic.com

Haldenhof Revival on Lake Constance

Ludwigshafen will be transformed into one giant drivers' paddock for the Haldenhof Revival between 7 and 9 October. Unlike the legendary hillclimbs of the 1960s and 1970s, however, this modern version of the event is not all about achieving the fastest time. Pre-war vehicles, classic cars, motorcycles and racecars vie for the top position in the regularity tests over 2.6 kilometres through Baden-Württemberg. Starting in Ludwigshafen on Lake Constance, the route features a number of twists and turns on the way to Bonndorf.

Information

MSC-Sernatingen, Oldtimerfreunde e.V.
Schorenstrasse 7
78351 Bodman-Ludwigshafen
Tel.: +49 (0)7773 938 993
Email: vorstand@msc-sernatingen.de
www.haldenhof-revival.de

200th anniversary of Franz Liszt's birth: guided Liszt tours

Bayreuth from the perspective of a genius

The Bavarian town of Bayreuth celebrates the 200th anniversary of Franz Liszt's birth in 2011 with a high-calibre programme of events, including two special themed tours showing the town from the perspective of the visionary genius who died here on 31 July 1886. The composer's works, his intriguing personality and his career are also explored in a series of talks and exhibitions. At the Franz Liszt Museum, visitors can see the room in which the piano virtuoso died. It contains the remarkable death mask of the acclaimed artist. The route then leads through Hofgarten palace garden and the New Palace, across Residenzplatz and Jean-Paul-Platz squares to the Steingraeber & Söhne piano manufacturers, already a musical institution in Bayreuth in Liszt's day. Also part of the guided tour is Fantaisie Palace west of Bayreuth, where visitors can get a close-hand look at the town's cultural history. The tour ends at the memorial chapel where the famous composer is buried in the town cemetery.

Information

Bayreuth Marketing & Tourismus GmbH
Opernstrasse 22
95444 Bayreuth
Tel.: +49 (0)921 88588
Email: info@bayreuth-tourismus.de
www.bayreuth.de

A journey through the history of music

Just like the musical greats Wagner and Brahms, Franz Liszt was a frequent guest of Duke Georg II of Saxe-Meiningen. On this guided walk, the music historian Maren Goltz provides a detailed insight into the composer's connections with the Meiningen Court in Thuringia, taking visitors on a journey into the innovative music scene of the 19th century in which Liszt, Bülow, Brahms and Wagner were heavily involved. Of particular significance for Meiningen's musical history were the years between 1880 and 1885 when Liszt's favourite pupil and former son-in-law Hans von Bülow was the director of the Meiningen Court Orchestra. During this time, Von Bülow succeeded in turning the orchestra into one of the best in Europe. Stops along this tour led by Maren Goltz include the palace park, the English Garden and the permanent exhibition on the history of music: Meiningen – a 'court of the muses' between Weimar and Bayreuth.

Information

Stadt Meiningen Bürgerbüro
Schlossplatz 1
98617 Meiningen
Tel.: +49 (0)3693 45 45 45
Email: buergerbuero@stadtmeiningen.de
www.stadtmeiningen.de

A musical treat in Erfurt's old quarter

During Liszt's lifetime, Erfurt was the centre of Catholicism in Thuringia and it attracted a number of famous figures. The famous musician gave concerts here, both as a pianist and a conductor. Liszt also attended a performance of his 'Elisabeth' and many more of his works in the city between 1872 and 1883. On a guided walk through Erfurt's historical quarter, visitors discover various sites associated with Liszt – including merchants' houses, churches, monasteries and the Old Synagogue. The walk also passes over the Merchants' Bridge. Dating from the 12th century, the 120-metre structure has buildings and houses still in use along its entire length. The historical centre is overlooked by the towering spires of St. Mary's Cathedral and the Church of St. Severus. These buildings offer a fascinating insight into the medieval history of the city around which Franz Liszt once strolled. Visitors should allow around two hours for the walk entitled 'Erfurt - A Fascinating History Experience' to numerous places of interest in the medieval city centre. Guided tours run daily.

Information

Erfurt Tourismus und Marketing GmbH
Benediktplatz 1
99084 Erfurt
Tel.: +49 (0)361 664 0120
Email: citytour@erfurt-tourismus.de
www.erfurt-tourismus.de

Liszt's life and work in Weimar

This musical tour through Weimar focuses on the places where Liszt lived and worked. The years he spent in Weimar were his most prolific. When he left the Thuringian town in 1860, he had already produced an extensive body of work. He did not return until 1867, after which he spent several months of the year here. The tour goes in search of Liszt, taking in historical sites associated with the composer's life. These include Liszt's residences, Altenburg House and the former gardener's house (Hofgärtnerhaus). Weimar's German National Theatre, the Liszt School of Music and the statue of Goethe and Schiller with Franz Liszt in the background are also part of the guided tour entitled 'In the footsteps of Franz Liszt in Weimar'.

Information

Weimarer Gästeservice
99439 Buttstedt
Raupengasse 9A
Tel.: +49 (0)36451 60830
Email: info@weimartrip.de
www.weimartrip.de

On the trail of the maestro in Sondershausen

Franz Liszt stayed in Sondershausen twelve times in all. The last time was just before his death in 1886 when he attended the 23rd Musicians' Festival of the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein (General German Music Society). A guided tour takes in the well-known places around the town where Liszt left his mark. The twin exhibitions at the Sondershausen Palace gallery and the Thuringian State Music Academy in Sondershausen also reveal much about the composer's work.

Information

Stadt Sondershausen
Markt 7
99706 Sondershausen
Tel.: +49 (0)36 326 220
Email: info@sondershausen.de
www.sondershausen.de

Traditional Christmas markets

A medieval Christmas at Wartburg Castle

The historical Christmas market at Wartburg Castle in Eisenach, Thuringia, turns back the clock to a time of merchant trade and traditional crafts. Makers of candles, lanterns and soaps, glassblowers, costumiers, stonemasons, herbalists, pewterers and travelling merchants offer a huge range of wares. For most people, this is a great opportunity to buy an unusual Christmas gift. There will also be a varied programme of entertainment suitable for all ages, with minstrels, storytellers and puppeteers among the highlights. Advent concerts in the ceremonial hall and the medieval musicians and performers in the courtyards add to the captivating charm of this fantastic event. The Christmas market is also a great opportunity to explore the individual parts of Wartburg Castle including the half-timbered buildings and banqueting hall.

Information

Eisenach-Wartburgregion Touristik GmbH
Markt 9
99817 Eisenach
Tel.: +49 (0)36 917 9230
Email: info@eisenach.info
www.eisenach.info

A baroque Christmas in Ludwigsburg

The baroque Christmas market in Ludwigsburg, Baden-Württemberg, is a festive feast for all the senses. Aromas of piping-hot *Glühwein*, roasted almonds and fresh gingerbread waft through the air, and there are many delightful Christmas concerts to enjoy. The Christmas lights and decorations adorning the arcaded market square and the 175-plus festive stalls are a true sight to behold. This is the perfect place to go on a leisurely stroll in search of great gifts – and there's plenty of inspiration, with everything from glass baubles, Nativity figures and candles to traditional incense burners made in the Erzgebirge mountains. Attractions for the little ones include a carousel, a kids' Ferris wheel and a rustic-style stage for performances by the puppet and marionette theatre, and by magicians and clowns. In the evening, captivating music adds to the magical atmosphere.

Information

Stadt Ludwigsburg
Wilhelmstrasse 11
71638 Ludwigsburg
Tel.: +49 (0)7141 9100
Email: rathaus@ludwigsburg.de
www.ludwigsburg.de

Floating Christmas market in Cologne

The 'floating Christmas market' in Cologne, North Rhine-Westphalia, is the biggest of its kind in Europe. It is held on board the *MS Wappen von Köln* across several decks. This year, the panorama deck returns with a brand-new look: market-goers will now be able to sip *Glühwein* in an outdoor lounge, while enjoying magnificent views of the beautifully decorated old quarter and Cologne Cathedral. The 40 or so stalls on board offer lots of traditional treats, delicious food and drink and delightful seasonal wares under a sea of festive lights. Genuine gift ideas from Cologne – including the world-famous 4711 Eau de Cologne – feature alongside everything from candles, toys, woolly hats, bags and leather goods to books, photos, coins, decorations, teas, oils and even African art pieces. All this choice and the unusual location make this a Christmas market that is truly unique.

Information

KölnTourismus GmbH
Kardinal-Höffner-Platz 1
50667 Cologne
Tel.: +49 (0)221 2213 0400
Email: info@koeln-tourismus.de
www.koeln-tourismus.de

A Christmas market on a farm

Every year, the Christmas market at Gut Stockseehof farm in Schleswig-Holstein attracts visitors in their droves. In a heated barn, more than 100 stalls offer antiques, jewellery, home accessories, soaps, fragrances, books, toys and handicrafts and all kinds of other gift ideas. Holstein delicacies made on the farm or in the region are particularly popular, and include game specialities, meat, sausages and cheeses, jams, freshly baked rye bread and Christmas cookies. It's even possible to buy Christmas trees in all sizes sourced from the farm's own forest. Adults pay €3.00 admission at the weekend, which will be refunded upon purchase of a Christmas tree.

Information

Gut Stockseehof
24326 Stocksee
Tel.: +49 (0)4526 309 716
Email: gvs@stockseehof.de
www.stockseehof.de

Advent calendar in Quedlinburg

The castle, the Church of St. Servatius and 1,300 medieval buildings provide the delightful backdrop to the Christmas market in Quedlinburg, home to Germany's biggest Advent calendar. Every day at 4.30pm sharp, the door to a historical half-timbered house on Schlossberg hill is opened, revealing surprises for young and old. 'Advent in the courtyards' is another festive highlight in this UNESCO World Heritage town in Saxony-Anhalt. In the courtyards of 25 Quedlinburg houses, the focus lies firmly on handicrafts, festive entertainment and delicious food and drink.

Information

Quedlinburg-Tourismus-Marketing GmbH
Markt 2
06484 Quedlinburg
Tel.: +49 (0)39 4690 5620
Email: qtm@quedlinburg.de
www.quedlinburg.de

News and dates

Via regia – the royal route

Eight hundred years ago, the via regia was one of the main trade routes in Europe. From the west came cloth merchants from Flanders, from the east wood and furs. A series of events based on the via regia and its associated themes is currently taking place in and around Görlitz and will end in October. 'Via regia – 800 Years of Mobility and Movement' is the title of the main exhibition. Further along the Oder-Neisse Cycle Route, in Prince Pückler Park in Bad Muskau, is another exhibition 'Pückler! Catch him if you can?' which offers a fascinating insight into the prince's influence on the landscape around the Neisse river. The next stop is St. Marienthal Cistercian convent near Ostritz, followed by a trip through the Neisse valley to Zittau. The exhibition 'For Crown, Salt and Chalice' will be on display in the cultural history museum in Zittau's Franciscan abbey until October.

Information

Tourismus Marketing Gesellschaft
Sachsen mbH
Bautzner Strasse 45/47
01099 Dresden
Tel.: +49 (0)351 491 700
Email: info@sachsen-tour.de
www.sachsen-tourismus.de

Exotic wildlife at Gondwanaland Leipzig

The Gondwanaland tropical experience is a new attraction at centrally located Leipzig Zoo – visitors can look forward to seeing 40 animal species, 500 different plant varieties and 400 trees measuring up to twelve metres in height. The river is home to piranhas and giant otters, and there are sloths swinging lazily from branch to branch in the trees. The footpaths lead through the continents of the world, and the choice of food is equally international. Leipzig Zoo has put sustainability at the forefront of its Gondwanaland concept.

Information

Zoo Leipzig GmbH
Pfaffendorfer Strasse 29
04105 Leipzig
Tel.: +49 (0)341 593 3385
Email: safaribuero@zoo-leipzig.de
www.zoo-leipzig.de

Cycling at its best

Varied routes, glorious scenery and way-side services are the hallmarks of the Saarland Cycle Route, which has been given a three-star rating by the German Cyclists' Federation (ADFC). This makes it the second premium cycle route in the Saarland region alongside the Saar Cycle Route. The testers were particularly impressed with the quality of information: maps, brochures and the website, for example, tell holidaymakers everything they need to know about the route and what there is to see and do. Along this loop trail, which runs from St. Wendel and Saarbrücken to the borders with France and Luxembourg, cyclists get to discover the cultural highlights of the Saarland – including the UNESCO World Heritage Völklingen Ironworks.

Information

Tourismus Zentrale Saarland GmbH
Franz-Josef-Röder-Strasse 17
66119 Saarbrücken
Tel.: +49 (0)681 927 200
Email: info@tz-s.de
www.tourismus.saarland.de

Until 15 January

'Life in the Roman Empire': exhibition at the German Ivory Museum illustrating how people lived around 2,000 years ago, both along the Odenwald limes frontier and in Rome itself.

Information

www.roemer-in-erbach.de

22 September to 2 October

The deLIGHTed festival in Berlin brings styles of music together that at first glance seem polar opposites – it turns out tango, Mozart and breakdance can be mixed with Anatolian folk and Broadway musicals!

Information

www.delightedfestival.de

17 to 25 September

Whether it's kayaks, sailboats or rubber dinghies, the Interboot trade fair by Lake Constance showcases the latest trends in water sports. There will also be a sailing regatta and other competitions.

Information

www.interboot.de

24 September to 6 November

At the Lusatian Fish Festival, the fish farmers will be setting up early to offer the 'haul of the year' – a great chance to join in with the locals and enjoy Lusatian carp, grilled, baked or cooked with the skin on.

Information

www.lausitzer-fischwochen.de

22 September

The Pope is returning to his homeland of Germany and his first stop takes him to Berlin. Around 70,000 believers will make the pilgrimage to Berlin's Olympic stadium to celebrate Holy Mass with His Holiness.

Information

www.papst-in-deutschland.de

30 September to 19 February

Max Liebermann brought modernism to German painting. Works of his ranging from bucolic scenes and portraits to pictures of gardens feature in a retrospective at Hamburg's Kunsthalle gallery.

Information

www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de