

German Christmas Traditions Are Well Preserved

German Christmas traditions have enriched the modern day celebrations with a number of delightful rituals and routines that make it one of the most vibrant and exciting Christmases in the world. In fact, there's so much to do that [German Christmas](#) begins well before Christmas Eve.

Things take on a momentum of its own by 6th December with the celebration of St. Nicholas Day. Children hang a stocking by the fireplace in the hope of getting gifts from this Saint. He is supposed to go from house to house to reward good deeds and punish bad ones with twigs in their stocking in the place of exciting gifts. (This Saint is not to be confused with Santa Claus though.)

A truly German Christmas tradition is the marking of CMB plus year on the doorway to indicate the names of the three Wise Men, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar as a prayer for protection of the home.

Another fun-filled day according to the German Christmas calendar is St. Thomas Day that falls on the shortest day of 21st December. Though not a holiday from work, it's an occasion to bestow on those who come in late or sleep in the title of Thomas Donkey as a mark of their tardiness.

Thomasplitzchen or iced currant buns are a specialty that adds to the merriment.

On Christmas Eve (*Heiligabend*), that is 24th December, the magical Christmas tree is put up and decorated with anything from cookies and fruits to a variety of ornaments. The tree can be either store-bought or cut down fresh from the forest.

The tradition of putting up a decorated tree for Christmas is Germany's beautiful gift to the world and is said to have been started by none other than Martin Luther himself. Here it is known as the Paradise Baum and is said to commemorate the tree of Paradise in the Garden of Eden. The presents are heaped up beside it.

According to German Christmas traditions this is when the family members break forth into carols and the story of Christmas is read to the children. Families then make their way along the decorated streets to the Church for Christmas Eve service replete with carols and *Krippenspiel* which is dramatization of the Christmas story. Then they make their way back home and it's time for exchanging gifts (*Bescherung*).

Christkind or the Child Jesus is supposed to have left gifts under the tree for all.

Then comes the grand Christmas Eve dinner where the whole family gathers around a well-laden dinner table carrying suckling pig, rice porridge (*Reisbrei*), and sausages of all kinds among a host of other dishes. This goes by the apt name of *Dickbauch* which means "fat stomach."

Christmas Day itself (actually two days) is another feast with a scrumptious banquet of roast goose,

Christstollen which is a long loaf with raisins and nuts, *Lebkuchen*, marzipan, and the fabulous fruit-filled bread called *Dresdener Stollen*.

Then there is the typical German Christmas tradition of *Christbaumloben* where people visit each other and compliment their decorated trees. In turn they're rewarded with a shot of schnapps.

Germany has two Christmas Days — December 25th and 26th — which are national holidays to fully celebrate Christmas (although, on December 24th, stores close on midday).

One German Christmas tradition known the world over would be the [ubiquitous Christmas Markets](#). This beautiful feature is to be found in all corners of Germany adding considerably to the charm of the season.

They are lit up with candles at night while purveying local delicacies such as the *Lebkuchen* — a spicy ginger bread, *Glühwein* — the unforgettable and unique hot sweet red wine, ornaments and countless knick knacks that spread good will and cheer.

By the way, the first German Christmas Market dates back to 1628 and is said to have been set up in [Nuremberg](#).

To sum things up, what may be considered a splendid aftermath of age old German Christmas traditions would have to be the fact that it is still a heart-warming religious experience and not given solely to crass commercialism.