

LEISURE / TRAVEL / INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Germany's Christmas Markets: An old-fashioned tradition



Next: Michelle Obama dissed for headscarf gaffe: What else went wrong in Saudi Arabia?

December 10, 2014
3:30 PM MST



Germany's Christmas Markets Rock!

©Steve Haggerty/ColorWorld

CHRISTMAS trees and choir singers came early for me this year, thanks to airline mileage and a week's vacation. With visions of twinkling lights and sugar plums dancing in my head, I left sunny California behind to cross the pond in early December, heading for [Christmas markets](#) in **Dresden**, **Berlin** and **Weimar**.



©Steve Haggerty/ColorWorld

Long before Nick and his reindeer were due on rooftops in Los Angeles, I was already in wonderland, strolling Germany's historic city centers, thrilled by falling snowflakes and discovering that what they say is true. When it comes to celebrating **Christmas** the old fashioned way, nobody does it like **Germany**. From north to south, courtyards and plazas in historic town centers are transformed, reborn as festive holiday villages. Looking much like the Saturday morning farmers' market near me, they come alive with rows and rows of outdoor market stalls decorated with garlands and laden with specialty foods, Christmas decorations and handmade wares.

As twilight settles down over medieval streets -- and it comes early in these northern latitudes -- the lights twinkle on and holiday revelers, swaddled in thick coats, gather to stroll, gawk, shop and meet their friends for an evening's merriment. For me, that meant hours in the shadow of **Dresden's** restored **Frauenkirche** church and a snowy morning wandering through Weimar's doll-house-sized Market Square. In **Berlin**, where my hotel was two blocks from the huge market on bustling **Alexanderplatz**, the lights and music enticed me over on more than one occasion. And at each market I found time to sample the traditional holiday fare: a roasted bratwurst in a bun half the size, and cup of traditional "**gluhwein**" (mulled red wine with citron and spices).

I didn't buy much -- carry-on suitcases impose unwelcome limits. But that didn't lessen the delight in wandering among the stalls, admiring a cornucopia of treasures: handmade wood **toys**, carved winter

scenes, **blown glass** ornaments, shiny glass **icicles**, sparkly stars, gilded **angels**, knitted scarves, leather **handbags**, tiny painted round-headed **dolls**, **nutcrackers**, bird houses and candle-powered **Christmas “pyramids,”** their windmill blades revolving slowly. Food was there as well: fresh-baked Christmas cakes, fruity stollen loaves, frosted cookies, cheeses from every corner of Germany and dozens of spicy sausages.

Despite the cold, often below freezing, mothers in thick coats pushing baby carriages swaddled in blankets were as common as bakers with their loaves. And all around me, the world's languages and their owners drifted past, evidence that Christmas markets attract international visitors. Russian couples here, Turkish there, a moment of Italian lyric vowels and a French family outfitting their kids with wool mittens. A Spanish woman who thought I was German stopped and asked me for directions. Nor was I the only American. Listening hard, I heard echoes of Texas, Tennessee and Brooklyn.

For Europeans, holiday visits to Germany are a popular weekend getaway. But even long journeys, like mine – **AirBerlin's** nonstop flight from Los Angeles to Duesseldorf – seemed (literally) to fly by. And since I didn't spend much longer sitting on the plane than I would have spent parking and shopping around Los Angeles, Germany seemed a better option.

Though **Germany's Christmas market** sales have extended the holiday shopping season – now until New Year in many places, and opened the door to commercial vendors (did the last century's markets really have Mickey Mouse-themed toddler rides?) the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker were still on hand and were practicing their crafts as I bid farewell to Berlin.

By the time you read this, **Saint Nick** may have parked his sleigh on my roof and come down the chimney, filling the stockings and flying away like the down on a thistle. But I'll never forget the year Christmas came twice.

[Report this content](#)



SHARE THIS ARTICLE

**SUBSCRIBE
TO
AUTHOR**

YOU MAY LIKE

Promoted Links by Taboola

