

1. Seasonal Customs
  2. Nürnberg News
  3. Erlangen News
  4. Fürth News
  5. Regensburg News
  6. The Crib Manger Museum, Herzogenaurach
  7. The largest „Adventskalender“ of the world, Forchheim
  8. Christmas spirit at the Open Air Museum, Bad Windsheim
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## 1. Seasonal Customs

The month of December derives its name from the Latin word “decem” for ten. The earliest known version of the Roman calendar contained only 10 months and December then was the last one.

December is also called the month of Christ. Yet before Christ, December had the additional name “wolf’s moon” according to this meaning, the wolf caused the darkness of this month by “swallowing” the light.

Nowadays the month of December starts with the very special time of “Advent” which means arrival, arrival of Christ. During this period the Christians prepare for the birth of Christ and it starts the fourth Sunday before Christmas. This year this is Sunday, December the 2<sup>nd</sup>.

In almost every German household you will then find an Advent wreath. This is a ring with a set of four candles, usually made with evergreen cuttings. The wreath is meant to represent God’s eternity. The candles are illuminated through these four weeks leading up to Christmas. You can buy these wreaths in flower shops or super markets.

Another custom around this season is the “Adventskalender”. This calendar starts on the first of December and ends on the 24<sup>th</sup>, when we celebrate our Christmas eve. Behind every “door” there is a little surprise, a picture referring to the Christmas season, or there are also Advent calendars with a chocolate filling. In many families the calendars are also tinkered at home: like 24 small parcels filled with little surprise are then waiting for the children to be opened day by day.

Advent calendars are offered in book stores or supermarkets.

See also: [7. The largest “Adventskalender” of the world, Forchheim](#)



## 2. Nürnberg News

- During the time of Advent the nicest way to spend your time is to go to one of the Christmas markets. Nürnberg is the Christmas City No 1 with the most famous Christmas market in Germany.



It all starts at 5.30 p.m. on Friday before the first Advent Sunday. Then the Christkind (Christmas Angel) opens her market standing on the balcony of the Frauenkirche speaking the prologue. Since 1969 the Christkind is elected every second year by the inhabitants of Nürnberg and a jury. It is the dream of many young girls in Nürnberg to be chosen as Christmas Angel.



This Christmas market is, of course, the perfect place for Christmas shopping. About 180 wooden stalls then offer their traditional goods like gingerbread, fruitbread, cookies, and Christmas articles like tree ornaments, candles, toys, crafts products. A speciality of the Nürnberg Christkindles Markt are the plum people, little figures made from prunes. And, of course, all kinds of snacks. The most famous ones are the Nürnberger Lebkuchen, the Nürnberger Bratwurst and, not to forget, the mulled wine! See also: [www.christkindlesmarkt.de](http://www.christkindlesmarkt.de)

- Since 1999 there is an additional Christmas Market specially for smaller children on Hans-Sachs-Platz right next to the regular Christmas Market. There you find nostalgic carousels and a steam train.  
On Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays at 2.30 p.m. the Christmas Angel invites the little ones to a free ride on the steam carousel!  
And right next to the Christmas Market there is the Heilig-Geist-Haus "House of Stars" where the Christmas Angel reads fairy tales to the children every Tuesday and Thursday at 2 p.m.



Over two million visitors come to Nürnberg every year from all over the world. You better not visit on a Saturday because then many buses come to Nürnberg. Sunday or during the week is a better time to go to avoid the large crowd. The Nürnberg Christmas Market has been a model for other towns to open up their own markets. Please see also: [Erlangen](#), [Fürth](#), [Regensburg](#), [Forchheim News](#).

- Nürnberg has a very famous zoo. One of the main attractions are the dolphins. Between November the 5<sup>th</sup> and December the 21<sup>st</sup> you can watch the dolphins during their training for free. The training times are every day at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. On Sundays, for the regular shows at 1 and 3 p.m. there is an entrance fee.

Also at the Nürnberg zoo is the "Living manger" (the nativity scene with real animals), specially for children, between December 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup>.

And Saturday the 8<sup>th</sup> and Saturday the 15<sup>th</sup> there is a "light parade" for children at 4.30 p.m. starting at the main entrance of the zoo. It is free for children, grown-ups pay 3 Euros.

For more information about these events and more about the zoo: [www.tiergarten.nuernberg.de](http://www.tiergarten.nuernberg.de)

- Winter time is – of course – also theater time. There are three opera performances in Nürnberg we want to mention specially:  
The opera "**Hänsel und Gretel**" by Engelbert Humperdinck is an event for young and old. The story refers to one of the most famous German fairy tales. So follow Hänsel and Gretel to the fairy tale forest and.....

For opera lovers the month of December holds also one of the nicest operas ever written: "**Così fan tutte**" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

For friends of the Italian opera "**Don Carlos**" by Giuseppe Verdi should be a very special treat.

But there is a lot more for you to discover as well as the dates under:  
[www.staatstheater-nuernberg.de](http://www.staatstheater-nuernberg.de) (/spielplan/veranstaltungen)

- Circus, circus! The world famous „Roncalli Circus“ celebrates it's 30th birthday this year and offers a special jubilee program in Nürnberg from November 9<sup>th</sup> until December 2<sup>nd</sup>. There are also special price offers like “Family/friends tickets” (4 tickets for a reduced price) etc.. Find out more through this free hotline 0800-125 1255 or [www.roncalli.de](http://www.roncalli.de)
- The Museum for Industrial Culture has an exhibition starting October 28th regarding historical and newer Spy Technics.  
One of the many highlights is the remote controlled BMW shown in the James Bond movie "Tomorrow never Dies"  
More at: <http://www.museen.nuernberg.de/industriekultur/ausstellungen.html#secret>

### 3. Erlangen News

- It's Christmas market time also in Erlangen. There is a real nice one in front of the castle starting November 30<sup>th</sup> until December 24<sup>th</sup>.



And, in addition, there is a historical Christmas market on the Neustädter Kirchenplatz between December 7<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>.

Both markets are worth visiting – especially in the evening with all the lights on along with the smell of ginger bread and mulled wine as well as Christmas music. Come and get the right “Weihnachtsstimmung”!

- Erlangen has a concert hall, called “Heinrich Lades Halle” with over 1200 seats. All year long you find a nice concert programm with different orchestras there and for the Christmas season the “Stadtkapelle Erlangen” offers a special treat, the so called “Weihnachtskonzert”. The “Stadtkapelle Erlangen” was founded in 1935 and is well known in our region. If you like Christmas songs and music this is the right event for you then.  
It takes place December 21<sup>st</sup> at 8 p.m. The entrance fee is Euro 12,--. It is advisable to reserve or buy tickets soon. (Erlanger ticket: Phone: 09131-22195)
- Another Christmas concert is offered by the “Amazingers”. This is the gospel chorus of the Erlangen church community St. Bonifaz. 50 singers perform a Christmas concert at the church of St. Sebald, Egerlandstr. 24, on Sunday December 16<sup>th</sup> (3<sup>rd</sup> Advent) at 5 p.m. More information under: [www.amazingers.de](http://www.amazingers.de)

## 4. Fürth News

- There are two Christmas markets in Fürth as well: The bigger one is at the market square called "Fürther Freiheit". It starts November 29<sup>th</sup> and lasts till December 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The second one is on "Waagplatz" which is different and really worth visiting between December 7<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>.

First of all "Waagplatz" is situated in the old town surrounded by historical buildings therefore there is this special atmosphere. And on this market you can find a lot of special gifts in the field of art and crafts. 35 dealers have an outstanding variety and some craftsmen can be watched at work. Every evening the night watchman ends the market with music. For children there are 3 different fairground rides.

Both markets have a number of surprise actions almost every evening.

- Three days of high-class professional gospel music should be one of the high lights in Fürth this year. Outstanding gospel musicians and singers from the US are guests in Fürth. The first concert starts Thursday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November and there are concerts the following Friday and Sunday. For details see: [www.gogospel.com](http://www.gogospel.com)

## 5. Regensburg news

- One of the nicest Christmas markets in Germany are certainly the ones in Regensburg. There are actually 3 different markets. They all start Sunday December 2<sup>nd</sup> and last until December 23<sup>rd</sup>. One market is called "Christkindl-Markt" and takes place at the Neupfarrplatz near the dome St. Peter. The second one is called "Weihnachtsmarkt der Kunsthandwerker" this one you find at the Haidplatz and Kohlemarkt. The third market is called "Romantischer Weihnachtsmarkt" and is placed next to the castle of "Thurn und Taxis". To get an idea of what they are like look at: [www.christkindlmarkt-regensburg.de](http://www.christkindlmarkt-regensburg.de)

- The "oldest boy-group of the world" are the "Regensburger Domspatzen"! They are not part of a rock band but the official choir of the liturgical music at St. Peter's Cathedral in Regensburg.

The Domspatzen, literally "Cathedral Sparrows" trace their origins back to the year 975 when bishop Wolfgang of Regensburg founded a cathedral school that - among other things - instructed boys to sing in the liturgy. In the meantime they are world famous and perform all over the world.

Every year in December they sing in a Christmas concert in Regensburg. The concerts this year take place the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of December at the Auditorium maximum, Albertus-Magnus-Str. 2. More: [www.domspatzen.de](http://www.domspatzen.de)

It is worth going there as well as to the unique Christmas markets even if you don't live in the Regensburg region. While you are there don't forget to visit the world famous cathedral St. Peter.

## 6. Crib Manger Museum in Herzogenaurach

- Crib mangers showing the nativity scene of Christ belong to every German Christmas season. Many German families have their own crib manger at home. Some are given from one generation to the next and are proudly arranged under the Christmas tree every year. In Herzogenaurach there is a museum for crib mangers at the "Welkenbacher Weg 15". The museum is open every Sunday between 2 and 5 p.m. and the entrance is free. There you can find all different kinds of crib mangers from all over the world. There is also a club called "Kippenfreunde Herzogenaurach" They offer courses where you can learn how to make your own crib manger too. For more information: [www.krippenfreunde-herzogenaurach.de](http://www.krippenfreunde-herzogenaurach.de)

## 7. The largest "Adventskalender" of the world, Forchheim

- The Christmas market in Forchheim is on daily between December 1<sup>st</sup> and December 24<sup>th</sup>. There you find a very, very special attraction and it seems to be unique: The biggest "Adventskalender" of the world. The town hall itself, a timber framed historical building, IS the calendar. Every evening an angel opens the window of the day. These "windows" show Christmas motives and are closed with specially made window shutters. A night watch man and Christmas music "support" the angel's action! And the Christmas market in front of the town hall offers everything you could wish for. The historical town hall as well as the whole old town of Forchheim are one of the nicest historical sights in our area. So come and enjoy this very special event, the calendar, the Christmas market, the old town with many interesting historical buildings and beautiful shops.



## 8. Christmas spirit at the Open Air Museum, Bad Windsheim

- In our newsletter of August we introduced to you the Open Air Museum (Fränkisches Freilandmuseum) of Bad Windsheim.

This is really a very unique place with all the historical buildings and around Christmas there is a special spirit all over this little village: Christmas musique in the farm houses along with biscuit baking, singing, the reading of Christmas poems, the smell of ginger bread and candles as well as Christmas decoration and a lot more....

So come and enjoy all this Sunday the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup> of December between 12noon and 4 p.m.

For more see: [www.freilandmuseum.de](http://www.freilandmuseum.de)

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This information has been taken from the book "Feste & Bräuche" by Sybil Gräfin Schönfeldt/Otto Maier Verlag Ravensburg, 1980, and from the websites of the addresses given above in this newsletter. (photos taken with the permission of Stadt Nürnberg, Presse- und Informationsamt, Stadt Erlangen, Tourismus und Marketingverein, Stadt Forchheim)  
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