

Newsletter – December 2019

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Dear Expats,

The pre-Christmas season is a great time to be in Germany. The inner cities light up and being outside is just a tad bit more enjoyable as the days get shorter (shortest day of the year is December 21st). Many towns also set up temporary ice-skating rinks complete with skate rental and holiday music. For a listing of the markets in the area as well as some background information, check out Christmas Markets. Each market has its own charm. Look for smaller markets in your neighborhood – often just one day. If it's cold out, remember to wear warm socks!

Important dates in December

December 6 — Saint Nikolaus (Nikolaustag). Put your shoes out the night before and maybe they will be filled with sweets and other goodies – or a birch branch if you were naughty. Eat a Dambedei, the yeast dough formed like a man, sometimes with a pipe.

December 24 — Christmas Eve. Most stores close early and already have signs up listing when and if they are open during the holidays. Christmas Eve is considered the most important time for family in Germany. Those celebrating will probably have a decorated Christmas tree set up on that evening. Presents are distributed on Christmas Eve.

December 25 and 26 are national German holidays. Just about everything is closed on December 25th. If you would like to eat out, be sure to make reservations. December 26th is like a Sunday — stores and government institutions are closed; most museums and restaurants are open.

January 1 is a national German holiday. December 31st stores usually close earlier.

At midnight on **December 31st** (Silvester), you are allowed to shoot your own firecrackers — these may only be purchased a few days ahead of time and may only be used on New Year's Eve. Even if you are at a private party or a celebration inside a club or restaurant, around midnight most people go outside to watch fireworks. One of the best spots for viewing in Karlsruhe is the Turmberg in Durlach – but you won't be alone! If you live in a town with lots of old buildings, your town council **may forbid fireworks**. Fireworks are forbidden near hospitals and nursing care homes. If you have pets, please keep them indoors away from the firecrackers and noise.

New this year – the area in front of the castle (Schlossplatz) including the ice-skating rink are off-limits for fireworks, as is the old part of Durlach (Altstadt).

Christmas Music

Look for special concerts in the local churches – most often organ concerts or choirs. Try the Evangelische Stadtkirche am Marktplatz, the Durlacher Stadtkirche, St. Bonifatius, Christuskirche, Lutherkirche, St. Stephan and more. Expect to pay something – either for a ticket or a donation.

On **November 30th**, the bells of St. Stephan's church will ring in the season starting at **4 p.m.** Free.

If you would like to sing Christmas carols with others, on **December 14** is [Christmas Carol-Singing](#) at the Kleine Kirche in the middle of Karlsruhe. Organized by the German-English Friendship Society and the Protestant Church in Karlsruhe. Start at 4 p.m. Come early — it fills up fast.



Local Christmas Markets

More information about Christmas Markets can be found on our [Christmas Market](#) page.

Karlsruhe (Nov 26 - Dec 23) : In Karlsruhe the main [Christmas market](#) is at Friedrichsplatz spreading out to Kaiser- and Lammstrasse. For children, a special train is set up by St. Stephan church, along with dioramas. Don't miss the flying Santa on his sleigh as he soars from the roof of the ECE Center — daily at 5 and 7 p.m. A temporary ice-skating rink is set up in front of the castle and is open until February 2nd, 2020.

Karlsruhe Durlach (Nov 26 - Dec 22): Medieval Christmas market in one of the oldest Karlsruhe neighborhoods.

Ettlingen (Nov 28 - Dec 29): Sternlesmarkt throughout the center of town. Closed on Dec 25.

Rastatt (Nov 25 - Dec 23): The market is at the Marktplatz. In addition, a SchlossWeihnacht im Ehrenehof (Dec. 5 - 15) highlights food and handmade goods - just outside the castle.

Baden-Baden (Nov 28 - Jan 6): Most of the market is in front of the Casino/Kurhaus.

Heidelberg (Nov 25 - Dec 22): The old town is charming, as is the market. Outdoor ice-skating rink open through January 7.

Strasbourg (Nov 22 - Dec 30): One of the oldest Christmas markets in Europe and the oldest one in France. The city is worth a visit anytime, but the Marche de Noel makes it that much nicer. Because of heightened security, be prepared for lines entering into the old town and expect bags and backpacks to be inspected at the pedestrian checkpoints.

Stuttgart (Nov 27 - Dec 23): Over 290 stands selling Christmas goodies and food. Also ChristmasGardenStuttgart - a light and laser extravaganza in the Wilhelma Zoo and Botanical Garden until Jan 6, 2020.

Weekend-Only Christmas Markets

Durlach - Artvent#18 in the [Orgelfabrik](#) on **November 29 - December 1**. More than 20 regional artists and designers sell their works on the first weekend of Advent.

Lametta —at [Tollhaus](#) in Karlsruhe on the **6th and 7th of December**. About 60 artists and craftspeople exhibit their unique products — often in limited supply. Live music, food, chill zone. €3 entry fee.

Bad Herrenalb — is hosting a market on **December 7th and 8th**.

Kloster Maulbronn (UNESCO World Heritage Site) hosts a Christmas market on the **7th and 8th of December**.

Weihnachtsmesse (December 12 - 15) — very high quality hand-made articles for purchase just in time for the holidays at the Regierungspräsidium (Rondellplatz) in Karlsruhe.

Schloss Neunbürg (southwest of Pforzheim): **December 14 and 15** — Advent market with artists and artisans selling their wares.

Bad Wimpfen — it's not that close, but many consider this to be one of the most picturesque markets around. Be prepared for crowds. **First three weekends of Advent** (Fri-Sun).

Karlsruhe News

At the end of October, Karlsruhe was named a UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts – the first one in Germany. Peter Weibel, Artistic and Scientific Director of the ZKM: "This award is a global recognition that Karlsruhe has become more and more of a capital of art and creativity. We accept the title with gratitude and joy, because it is clear that the long-standing cultural work in Karlsruhe has led us to the Champions League of media art." Congratulations, Karlsruhe!

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Transportation

Public transportation within the city of Karlsruhe (Wabe 100) is free on all Saturdays in Advent, i.e., **November 30, December 7, 14 and 21**. In addition the entire S1, S11 and S2 lines are free of charge on these Saturdays. If you live further away, take advantage of the Park and Ride spots ([link here](#)) which are within the city and then take the free tram or bus to enjoy the Christmas markets or do your Saturday Christmas shopping.

The prices for the local transportation system, kvv, increase (average 1.8%) starting December 15, 2019. This coincides with changes in some tram/train/bus schedules within the kvv region. Old tickets are valid until June 30, 2020.

The Deutsche Bahn also enacts schedule changes on December 15, 2019.

Because of the Christmas market on Friedrichsplatz, the **bike street** is closed, and a detour route is marked. As a bicyclist in winter remember to turn on your lights and wear reflective clothing! Just because you can see a car doesn't mean the driver (or the pedestrians) can see you.

Snow

If you own a car, be sure you have winter tires or all-weather tires. Weather is unpredictable, so best be prepared. If you are in an accident and don't have tires appropriate for the situation, your insurance may not pay.

Depending on where you live and your house arrangements, you may be responsible for snow removal from in front of the building. This should be stated in your lease. In Karlsruhe, the sidewalks must be clear between 7:30 am and 9 pm on weekdays and starting at 9 am on Sundays and holidays. In addition, in Karlsruhe you may not use salt to clear the ice – only gravel, sand or ashes are allowed. The same holds true for houses. Your apartment may have a Hausmeister or have engaged a snow removal service, in which case you can enjoy the snow. The amount of snow in Karlsruhe is not great, but some years it takes everyone by surprise.

What to do in Karlsruhe in December

Regular English-language Events

Karlsruhe's very own [English-Speaking Meetup Group](#) (sponsored by expat-karlsruhe.com) is a way for anyone to organize events and activities or plan adventures. The most popular regular event is the monthly Stammtisch where you can meet nice people who speak English in a relaxed atmosphere. Start is 6:30 p.m. until around 11:30 p.m. It's a mix of young and old and all those in-between, who come and go throughout the evening. The next one is December 17th.

The [American Library](#) has regular events in English for kids and adults: **LitNite** (December 3 & 17), **Poetry, Please!** (), **MovieTalk** (December 11), **Storytime for kids 3-5** (December 11 (with yoga)), **Teen Time** (December 13) and **Storytime for kids 6 and up** (December 13).

The [Karlsruhe Toastmasters](#) meet every 1st, 3rd and 5th Monday of the month from 7:15 to 9:15 p.m. to practice public speaking in English with friendly, relaxed support from speakers from around the world.

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Improve your German!

Sprecht miteinander!

Practice your spoken **German** in a relaxed atmosphere. People of similar language ability form groups moderated by a native speaker volunteer. Free and no registration required. Wednesdays and Fridays from 6:30 to 8:00 pm. Just stop by!

Bürgerzentrum Mühlburg (BZM)

Hardtstr. 37 A/2

76185 Karlsruhe

The **IBZ** (Internationales Begegnungszentrum Karlsruhe - International Meeting Center Karlsruhe) offers a number of projects to help with integration. A listing in English is available [here](#).

Non-Christmas Calendar of Events

November 15 - December 1 — [Karlsruhe Book Fair \(Karlsruher Bücherschau\)](#). Guest country is Iceland. Browse, listen to lectures and podium discussions or readings - most in German - at the Regierungspräsidium in Karlsruhe. Admission charged.

December 5 - [Reading and discussion in English at ZKM](#) at 7 p.m. Arthur I. Miller will present his book *The Artist in the Machine. The World of AI-Powered Creativity* followed by a discussion. Free.

December 7 - 18 — [Jahresausstellung 2019](#). The students of the art academy (Karlsruhe Kunstakademie) display their art works in this juried show. See the stars of tomorrow. Mo-Sa 9:15 - 22:00. Su 14:00 - 18:00. Free.

December 17 — [Stammtisch](#) organized by the Karlsruhe English-Speaking Meet-Up group at [Old Chapel Pub](#) in Karlsruhe starting around 6:30 p.m.

Relocation Service move-in

With 15+ years of experience in the region, Relocation Service move-in can help with your move to Karlsruhe, your move from Karlsruhe and with all those day-to-day problems expats experience.

If you enjoyed this newsletter, please pass it on!

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We wish everyone a very merry holiday season and all the best in 2020!