



Dear Expats,
December is all about Christmas markets, Christmas shopping, Christmas cookies, Christmas concerts etc. etc. The shortest day of the year and the beginning of winter is December 22nd, and the lights from the markets and decorations are a great “pick-me-upper.”

Important Days in December

December 6 — Saint Nikolaus (Nikolaustag). This is a traditional but not official holiday. 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, with raisin eyes and sometimes with a pipe.

*This year, the dates for Christmas mean a bit of planning! Be sure to get your grocery and Christmas shopping done by **Saturday, December 23rd**, because all stores are closed on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday (Dec 24 – 26)!*

December 24 — Christmas Eve. All stores are closed this year because it's a Sunday! 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. If you would like to eat out, be sure to make reservations. December 26th is like a Sunday — stores and government institutions are closed; many museums and restaurants are open.

*This year, the dates for New Year's also mean a bit of planning! Be sure to get your grocery shopping done by **Saturday, December 30th**, because all stores are closed on Sunday and Monday (Dec 31 – Jan 1)!*

January 1 is a national German holiday. All stores are closed. Some museums and restaurants are open.

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. If you live in a town with lots of old buildings, your town council may forbid fireworks. 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. If you have pets, please keep them indoors away from the firecrackers and noise. There are movements to discourage firework purchasing and usage because of the environmental damage, the cost, the wars etc. On the other hand, they can be beautiful.

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.

[Christmas singing](#) in the BBank Wildpark on Dec 22 starting at 6 pm (doors open at 4:30 pm) – everyone sings together - Christmas classics and KSC songs alike. Tickets are €3 per person.

Local & Regional Christmas Markets

[Karlsruhe \(Nov 28 - Dec 23\)](#): The Christmas markets are mainly at Friedrichsplatz and Marktplatz. For children, a special train is set up at Kirchplatz St. Stephan along with dioramas. Don't miss the flying Santa on his sleigh as he soars over the Marktplatz — daily at 5 and 7:30 pm. A huge Ferris Wheel at Marktplatz has closed gondolas. The temporary ice skating rink can be found in front of the castle and is open until January 28th.

[Karlsruhe Durlach \(Nov 29 - Dec 22\)](#): Medieval Christmas market in one of the oldest Karlsruhe neighborhoods.

[Ettlingen \(Nov 30 - Dec 28\)](#): Sternlesmarkt throughout the center of town. Closed on Christmas Day.

[Rastatt \(Nov 26 - Dec 23\)](#): The main market is at Marktplatz.

[Baden-Baden \(Nov 23 – Jan 6\)](#): Most of the market is in front of the Casino/Kurhaus.

[Heidelberg \(Nov 26 - Dec 22\)](#): The old town is charming, as is the market. Outdoor ice skating rink open through January 7.

[Strasbourg \(Nov 24 - Dec 24\)](#): One of the oldest Christmas markets in Europe (400 + yrs. old) and the oldest one in France. The city is worth a visit anytime, but the Marché de Noël makes it that much nicer.

[Stuttgart \(Nov 29 - Dec 23\)](#): Over 290 stands selling Christmas goodies and food.

Weekend-Only Christmas Markets

[Bruchsal Palace](#) from **December 6th through the 11th** Adventsmarkt im Ehrhenhof.

[Kloster Maulbronn](#) (UNESCO World Heritage Site) hosts a Christmas market on the **9th and 10th of December**. A special shuttle train travels between Maulbronn West and the Kloster on these days.

[Schloss Neunbürg](#) (southwest of Pforzheim): **December 9 and 10** — Christmas 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)**.

Christmas Shopping

For hand-made or special articles, try these:

[Durlach - Artvent#21](#) in the Orgelfabrik in Durlach on **December 1 - 3**. More than 20 regional artists and designers sell their works on the first weekend of Advent.

[Lametta](#) — staged at Tollhaus in Karlsruhe on the **8th and 9th of December**. About 60 artists and craftspeople exhibit their unique products — often only available as limited issues. Live music, food, chill zone. €5 entry fee valid for both days.

[Weihnachtsmesse \(December 7 - 10\)](#) — very high quality hand-made articles for purchase just in time for the holidays at the Regierungspräsidium (Rondellplatz) in Karlsruhe. €3 entry fee for all days.

Christmas Market Primer (taken from our [website](#))

There are many names for the same thing, so keep an eye out: Weihnachtsmarkt, Christkindlesmarkt, Adventsmarkt, Sternlesmarkt.

- If you are looking to do serious shopping, go during the day or during the week when it is less crowded. To feel the great atmosphere, you have to go at night when the booths are lit up. Stroll with a Glühwein (mulled wine) or Kinderpunsch (warm, sweet drink without alcohol meant for children) and enjoy. The larger markets are a mixture of commercial products and local handmade goods. The smaller markets, which are just on weekends, are often an opportunity for choirs, sports groups and various clubs to earn some extra money. Special markets with high quality handmade goods are often held on weekends only.
- If you buy food or beverages at the markets, the price may be higher than anticipated — this is because there is a deposit on mugs, glasses, plates and silverware. Germans use the real thing

and wash up rather than use paper plates etc. After enjoying your Glühwein or Sauerkraut, take the utensils back to the booth for a refund (Pfandrückgabe).

- Many Christmas markets are serviced by public transportation, which is a good idea if you plan to indulge in more than one Glühwein.
- As with any crowded area in the city, watch out for pickpockets. Keep your purse/wallet close to you - especially after a Glühwein or two. This is especially important when getting on and off trams/trains and throughout the markets. Prevention is better than going through the hassle of cancelling all your credit cards and getting new ID cards.

Snow

If you own a car, be sure you have winter tires or all-weather tires. The past few years were unusually mild, but we've already had a snow dusting this year. 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.

Winter sports

We've already had snow in the region and nearby ski lifts are ready for skiers! Check before leaving home, because some regions tend to fill up fast, especially the parking lot at Feldberg. Cross-country skiing is also possible south and east of here. Check Bergflex, for instance, for current conditions for [cross-country skiing](#) (Langlaufen) and [downhill skiing](#) (Skifahren) in Baden-Württemberg including the amount of snow and cost for a lift ticket.

Miscellaneous News

- Recommended dates to send Christmas packages so that they arrive on time via DHL: within Germany - December 20; neighboring countries - December 14; other European countries - December 11; outside of Europe - November 28. Other carriers have other dates, but the closer to Christmas, the more expensive it will be.
- The Regional Express between Karlsruhe and Heidelberg (RE73) is not running from November 13th until the end of the year because there is a worker shortage.
- Workers of the Deutsche Bahn were striking in November with threats of more in December. There was talk that there would be no strikes over Christmas, but who knows? Check before leaving home to make sure that your trains are running.
- The normal timetable adjustment for the Deutsche Bahn starts on December 10th. If you are used to taking a particular train, check that the times haven't changed.
- If your child has a German passport, this will need to be replaced with a new passport with a chip. Currently the children's passports are only valid one year; the new ones will be valid for six years. For travel within the EU, the child needs a personal ID (Personalausweis); for travel outside the EU, a passport. Many countries no longer accept documents without a chip. The new passports can be obtained at your Bürgeramt.
- If Christmas is getting too much for you, take a small break at one of the local museums, a movie theater or simply take a walk in the woods to clear your brain.
- The free exhibition "[Jardin Artificiel](#)" from Heinz Mack in the foyer of the EnBW building is a welcome non-Christmas respite. This is a part of the "[Mack at ZKM](#)" exhibit.

What to do in Karlsruhe in December

Regular English Language Events

Karlsruhe's [English-Speaking Meetup Group](#) (sponsored by [Relocation Service move-in](#)) is a means for anyone to organize events and activities. 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 pm until around 9:30 pm. The **December Stammtisch** is on **Tuesday, December 5** at Vogelbräu Karlsruhe (see below). Other popular events are hiking and jazz concerts. Anyone can participate, but it helps the organizers if you sign up first – and remove your name if you can no longer attend!

The [American Library](#) has regular events in English for kids and adults.

For adults: LitNight (Dec 5 & 19), New(s) Views (Dec 12), Poetry?Please! (none in December).

For kids and teens: Storytime in English for Kids 3 to 5 (Dec 13 @2pm), Stories for Kids 6 & up (Dec 15), TeenTime (Dec 15). The American Library is closed for winter break from December 23rd through January 8th.

The [Karlsruhe Toastmasters](#) meet every 1st, 3rd and 5th Monday of the month from 7:15 to 9:15 pm to practice public speaking in English with friendly, relaxed support from speakers from around the world. To check if the events have moved from online to in-person, please check the website.

Calendar of Events

If you have an event you would like advertised, please let us know a few days before the end of the month (info@expat-ka.com). Keep in mind that it should be something of general interest or specifically of interest to an English-speaking community.

November 23 – January 7 — [Christmas Garden](#) at the Karlsruhe Zoo. Lots of lights! Food. Timed tickets.

November 28 – January 28 — Ice skating in front of the Karlsruhe palace.

December 5 — Monthly [Stammtisch](#) hosted by the English-Speaking Meet-Up Group. This time at Vogelbräu in Karlsruhe. It's a great way to meet new people, chat with old friends — all in English! Please sign up if you plan to attend. And please remove your name if you can no longer attend! It helps those planning the event.

December 9 – 17 — [Annual Exhibition](#) at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Karlsruhe (State Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe). See what the budding artists are working on in this juried show!

Want to improve your German?

[Sprecht miteinander! Speak with each other!](#)

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

Bürgerzentrum Mühlburg (BZM) Weinbrennerstr. 79a 76185 Karlsruhe
Just stop by!

The [IBZ](#) also offers practice in speaking German via Skype on Mondays and in person on Thursdays from 6:30 to 8:00 pm. More info [here](#).

Look through their website for other events.

Relocation Service move-in

With more than 20 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.

Wishing you all a wonderful, peaceful holiday season and all the best in 2024!

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