

# Germany



The **adventskranz** or **advent wreath** is made of holly with four red candles in the center. One candle is lit each Sunday of Advent and the last on Christmas Eve. Children count the days until Christmas using an Advent calendar. They open one window on the calendar each day and find a Christmas picture or candy inside.

December 6<sup>th</sup> is **St. Nicholas Day** and small gifts, such as sweets and chocolates are left in the

shoes of the children, who usually place them by their doors on the previous evening.

Christmas trees are very important in Germany as well. They were first used in Germany during the middle ages. If there are young children in the house, the trees are secretly decorated by the Mother of the family. The Christmas tree was traditionally brought into the house on Christmas Eve, and that evening the family would read the bible and sing Christmas songs such as *O Tannenbaum*, *Ihr Kinderlein Kommet* and *Stille Nacht (Silent Night)*.

In some parts of Germany, on Christmas Eve, children decorate their Christmas Lists with drawings and glued sugar, and then leave them on the windowsill overnight so they won't be missed by **Christkindl**. Christkindl is believed to be a messenger sent by the Christ Child. She is a beautiful fair-haired girl with a shining crown of candles who visits each house with a basket of presents.



Other parts of Germany leave notes for **Father Christmas**, or **Weihnachtsmann**, to bring the presents. Christmas Eve is the main day when Germans exchange presents with their families.

Germans make beautiful gingerbread houses and cookies. The German Christmas tree pastry, **Christbaumgebäck**, is white dough that can be molded into shapes and baked for tree decorations. Carp or goose is often served for the main Christmas meal. Stollen is a popular fruited yeast bread that is eaten at Christmas.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, there is the tradition of the **Sternsinger** (or **star singers**) who go from house to house, sing a song and collect money for charity (this is a predominantly Catholic tradition).

They are four children, three who dress up like the Wise Men and one carries a star on a stick as a symbol for the Star of Bethlehem. When they're finished singing, they write a signature with chalk over the door of the house. The sign is written in a special way, so Christmas 2008 would be: 20\*C\*M\*B\*08. It is considered to be bad luck to wash the sign away - it has to fade by itself. It has usually faded by the **Epiphany** on January 6<sup>th</sup>.

**“Merry Christmas”** in German is pronounced, **“Frohes Weihnacht.”**



**Resources:**

Australian Media. Santa's Net. "Christmas in Germany". <http://www.santas.net/germanchristmas.htm>

Echelon Internet. The North Pole. "Germany". <http://www.northpole.net/world.htm#GERMANY>

Kimmel, Celine. Why Christmas? "Christmas in Germany". <http://whychristmas.com/cultures/germany.shtml>