

## January

### 1 *Neujahr* (New Year's Day)

The first day of the year is celebrated with a festive family lunch and visits to relatives. Children are often given extra pocket money.

### 6 *Heilige drei Könige* (Epiphany) (Religious holiday in Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Sachsen-Anhalt)

This marks the end of the Christmas season and time to take down the Christmas tree.

In Catholic areas the church organizes collections for charity and three young church members, dressed as the three wise men, go from house to house in order to collect money. While doing so, they bless the house and its occupants by writing *C + M + B 04* (the numbers stand for the year) with chalk on the front door, which means *Christus mansionem benedicat* (Christ bless this house).

## February

### 2 *Mariä Lichtmess* (Candlemas)


Processions with burning candles take place in Catholic areas. For farmers this marks the beginning of the new agricultural season.

### 14 *Valentinstag* (Valentine's Day)

Couples give flowers and go out for a meal.

### *Weiberfastnacht* (women's carnival)

This takes place on the Thursday before Shrove Tuesday and women are definitely in charge. In southern areas, women dress up in fancy dress and, according to tradition, even cut off men's ties in restaurants and pubs!

 = official bank holidays in the whole of Germany.

In addition to these dates there are many festivals and traditions celebrated by the various ethnic and religious communities living in Germany, such as *Diwali* (Hindu Festival of Light in October/November) and *Hanukkah* (Jewish Festival of Light in December).

## March

### Carnival (*Karneval* in north Germany, *Fasching* in south Germany)

On Shrove Tuesday and the preceding five days people dress up and celebrate the beginning of Lent (*die Fastenzeit*) with balls, parties and carnival parades. The most famous parades take place in Mainz, Köln and München on the Monday (*Rosenmontag*).

Carnival ends on Ash Wednesday (*Aschermittwoch*).



## April

### 1 *April, April* (April Fool's day)

Everybody tries to play humorous pranks. If people fall for it you say *April, April!*

### *Palmsonntag* (Palm Sunday)

On the Sunday before Easter, Christians celebrate Christ's arrival in Jerusalem.

### *Ostern* (Easter)

Festivities start on Maundy Thursday and end on Easter Monday.

Children often embark on Easter egg hunts to search for coloured eggs, chocolates and sweets hidden by Easter bunnies.



## May

### 1 *Tag der Arbeit* (Labour Day)

International holiday which is enjoyed with walks and barbecues.

### *Muttertag* (Mother's Day)

On the second Sunday of May, mothers are given flowers, presents and breakfast in bed and are taken out to lunch.

### 40 days after Easter

### *Christi Himmelfahrt* (Ascension Day)

Religious meaning: the ascension of Christ to heaven. Since the 19th century it is also known as *Vatertag* (Fathers' Day).

## June

### *Pfingsten* (Whitsun)

On the seventh Sunday and Monday after Easter, Christians commemorate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. It is often an occasion for family outings.

### *Fronleichnam* (Corpus Christi)

Corpus Christi Day is a Catholic festival with processions and prayers.

## July

No official festival on the calendar but time for lots of beer and wine festivals, barbecues and parties.

## August

### 15 *Mariä Himmelfahrt* (Assumption Day)

A Catholic holiday which commemorates Mary's (the mother of Christ) reception into heaven.

## September

### *Oktoberfest*

The biggest beer festival takes place in Munich and lasts from September to October.

### *Erntedankfest* (Harvest festival)

Church services are held to give thanks for the harvest (*die Ernte*).

October

3  **Tag der Deutschen Einheit**  
(Day of German Unity)

Since 1990, when East and West Germany were reunified, this has been an official bank holiday.

31 **Halloween**

This is not really a traditional German celebration, but has become increasingly popular in recent years.

November

1 and 2 **Allerheiligen und Allerseelen**  
(All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day)

A Catholic festival in memory of all saints and all the dead. People visit cemeteries and decorate graves with flowers and lanterns lit with candles.

11 **Martinstag (Feast of Saint Martin)**

This is the "official" start of winter, the Christmas season and carnival.

16 **Volkstrauertag**

National day of mourning in memory of the victims of the Third Reich and the First and Second World Wars.

December

Advent

The Advent Wreath (*Adventskranz*), made of fir branches with four red candles, is the traditional decoration during the weeks leading up to Christmas. It is placed either on the table or hung from the ceiling by ribbons. On every Sunday a candle is lit until all four burn on the Sunday prior to Christmas.



6 **Nikolaustag (St Nicholas)**

St Nicholas brings presents on 6 December to children who have behaved well throughout the year.



**Christkindlmarkt (Christmas Market)**

A very German tradition and a dazzling experience for young and old. One of the most famous markets is in Nuremberg (*Nürnberg*).

24  **Heiligabend (Christmas Eve)**

This is the most important day of the festive season. The Christmas tree is put up and presents are laid out underneath. Children receive their gifts (*die Bescherung*) on Christmas Eve. They believe that baby Jesus (*das Christkind*) brings them. People wish each other *Fröhliche Weihnachten* (Merry Christmas). At midnight there is mass in church.

25  **Erster Weihnachtstag (Christmas Day)**

Families enjoy a festive meal, which may be goose (*die Weihnachtsgans*) or carp (*der Karpfen*).

26  **Zweiter Weihnachtstag (Boxing Day)**

Another big meal and a walk in the afternoon to burn off some calories. People also visit friends and distant relatives.

31  **Silvester (New Year's Eve)**

This is celebrated with parties, dancing and games. A traditional activity is *Bleigießen* where lead is melted and each person pours a spoonful of liquid lead into cold water. The shapes that form as the metal cools down are used to predict the future. At midnight there are fireworks and people wish each other a healthy new year (*ein gesundes neues Jahr*).



Read pages 28 and 29 and answer the questions.

1 Look at all the German holidays and traditions.

- a Which ones are also celebrated in your own country?
- b Choose one of the festivals celebrated in both countries.

In which way is it similar or different in Germany?

2 When does the carnival season start and end?

3 a Who is St. Nicholas and when does he appear in German tradition?

b Compare the role of St. Nicholas with Santa Claus in British tradition and discuss in class and with your teacher.

4 Using the Internet, research one German tradition in December. Create an IT poster using your research.