# Christmas in Salzburg: Feel the Magic

*UNESCO’s World Heritage Sight around Christmas time could not be more romantic: the historic city under a cover of freshly fallen snow provides a truly magical setting for a traditional alpine Christmas. Take a leisurely stroll through narrow alleyways and across the beautiful squares. Enjoy the special atmosphere of the Christmas markets, peaceful music and nativity plays. Feel the magic.*

Today's Christkindlmarket on Dom- and Residentzplatz Square has a long history. Its origins go back to an ordinary city market, a "Tandlmarkt". Its first mention in the accounts of the Salzburg Bürgerspital dates back to the period between 1491 and 1500, making it the oldest market in Salzburg.

**A noble history**

In addition to the *Tandlmarkt*, which operated all the year round, a seasonal Christmas market started on the site of today’s Old Market Square. It is repeatedly mentioned in the city chambers’ archives between 1679 and 1798, where it is referred to as "Nikolaimarkt" (market of St. Nicholas). In his *Beschreibung der Stadt Salzburg* (Description of the City of Salzburg) from 1793, the chronicler Lorenz Hübner speaks of the *Nikolaimarkt* as being "*a so-called Christ market dedicated to the inhabitants of the city. It starts 14 days before St. Nikolas and goes on for another 14 days thereafter. Within this period, dolls and sweets can be purchased, and everyone is free to offer goods for sale.* "

In 1849, the authorities restricted the opening period of the Christmas market to a mere 14 days. The restriction was, however, ignored which, in 1903, led to its inclusion in the municipal market regulation as follows: "*St. Nicholas Market will be open under the Cathedral arches from November 11 until December 24. Only residents of Salzburg will be allowed to offer goods of any kind for sale, with the exception of food, beverages and tobacco.*” In the 1930s the market remained closed. At the end of the Second World War, it re-opened as the *Salzburg Christmas Market*. After several re-locations – from Kurpark (Spa Gardens) to Mirabell Square – the market has been on Cathedral and Residence Square since 1973, keeping up the tradition of the old Nikolaimarkt under a new name.

**Great for Salzburg – loved throughout the world**

Today, one million visitors from all over the world come to see the Salzburg Christkindlmarket. About half of them are Salzburg based, the other half come from the neighboring provinces of Upper Austria and the Tyrol as well as from Bavaria, Italy, Britain, France and the USA. While this main christmas market generates an estimated 230,000 overnight stays, the total value of commerce amounts to around 60 million euros. 95 percent of the stand operators are from Salzburg and create 500 jobs for people living in the area.

The Salzburg Christkindlmarket has received a top commendation from the Institute for Comparative Urban Research of the University of South Westphalia Hagen in a study comparing the ambiance and quality of Christmas markets in the German-speaking region. CNN, the international news channel, has ranked the Salzburg Christmas Market among the top markets in the world many times. The romantic setting in the Old City - below the impressive fortress and in front of the Cathedral - and the lovely atmosphere of the market with its traditional wooden huts on a starry winter night are truly captivating.

**The tradition lives on**

With over 90 events, the Salzburg Christkindlmarket market offers visitors a varied social and cultural programme. These include an exhibition of Christmas mangers, exciting processions of *Perchten* in their frightening masks and costumes, as well as genuine folk song and dance performances. One of the highlights is the *Advent Brass Concert*, which the Christkindlmarket has helped to maintain through the ages. Every Thursday and Saturday in Advent, at 6.30 pm, brass bands from around the country play Advent music from different locations of the Cathedral and Residence Square. Individual trumpeters performing in the spotlight in the dimmed square add to the romantic atmosphere. [www.christkindlmarkt.co.at/](http://www.christkindlmarkt.co.at/)

On the other side of the river, the ornately decorated booths of the **Christmas Market on Mirabell Square** are positioned in front of the impressive setting of the Mirabell Palace. Every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, visitors can enjoy music performances. [www.weihnachtsmarkt-salzburg.at](http://www.weihnachtsmarkt-salzburg.at)

***Adventzauber* (Advent Magic)** in Hellbrunn has received many accolades. Visitors are led along a torch-lined path to the Palace of Hellbrunn whose facade is transformed into a giant-sized Advent calendar. With its magical atmosphere, magnificent handicrafts and inspiring gift ideas as well as a stunning entertainment programme for the entire family, this has become the most popular Christmas market in Salzburg. The programme includes a spooky exhibition of traditional Krampus, an illuminated Christmas Angel, as well as an entertaining programme for children with a petting zoo, fairy tales, sausage barbecue and campfire. [www.hellbrunneradventzauber.at](http://www.hellbrunneradventzauber.at)

The natives of Salzburg know that there are numerous smaller Christmas markets in the Old City. A real insiders’ tip is the **Salzburg Fortress Advent Market** in the courtyard of Hohensalzburg Fortress**,** high above the rooftops of Salzburg. The medieval fortress is easily accessible by cable car or on foot. This Advent market offers genuine art handicraft, great gift ideas and culinary Christmas delicacies. You don’t want to miss the wax and honey specialities, and especially not the fun entertainment programme for children and adults. [www.salzburg-burgen.at](http://www.salzburg-burgen.at)

Tucked away in the medieval houses between Getreidegasse and Griesgasse is the **Stern Advent Market.** Take a stroll through the Christmas market, meet the artists and find extraordinary ideas, unconventional shapes, genuine traditional and ultra-modern arts and crafts. The Stern Advent Market turns into a Winter Market and is open until the beginning of January. [www.sternadvent.at](http://www.sternadvent.at)

Outside the city of Salzburg is the **Advent Market St. Leonhard** (Saturdays, Sundays and Dec 8). Since 1973, it has been offering crafts and exceptional gift ideas from all over Austria as well as from Bavaria and Southern Tyrol, which include a great number of contributions made by schools and disability associations. Highly recommended are the St. Leonhard Advent bakery for children and the high number of events, all free of charge. The net proceeds of the Christmas market go to the charity organisation *Lebenshilfe* to help people with disabilities. [www.adventmarktsanktleonhard.at](http://www.adventmarktsanktleonhard.at)

**Advent Events in the City**

An amazing variety of musical events makes Advent in Salzburg very special. The most famous event is the world-renowned **Salzburger Advent Singing,** which was initiated in 1946 by the musician, singer and curator, Tobi Reiser. In 1960, the event was moved to the newly built Large Festival Hall. Since then, 1.6 million visitors have enjoyed the performances focused on traditional alpine music, songs and customs as well as play readings. [www.salzburgeradventsingen.at](http://www.salzburgeradventsingen.at)

For 30 years, St. Andrew's Parish Church on Mirabell Square in the centre of Salzburg has offered a romantic setting for an unforgettable Advent experience, the **original “Salzburg Advent” ®.** The programme will take you on a contemplative journey back to the Christmas of an idyllic childhood. A memorable Advent experience encompassing authentic folk music, romantic Christmas poetry and prose, and a theatre play. [www.salzburgeradvent.at](http://www.salzburgeradvent.at)

**Salzburg Advent Serenades** in the Gothic Hall/St. Blasius. Enjoy romantic candlelight performances of folk music, Advent and Christmas songs, instrumental works, classical songs and duets as well as thought-provoking readings in the festively decorated Gothic Hall. Top Salzburg artists and an attentive concert manager will ensure an enjoyable performance of the highest standards. Information on programmes, dinner concerts, and tickets can be found at [www.adventserenaden.at](http://www.adventserenaden.at/)

One of the highlights of the smaller events is the ***Hirtenadvent Advent Singing*** in the Large Auditorium of the University of Salzburg. In thought-provoking performances, with peaceful songs and melodies from traditional folk music, the event harks back to the origins of the Salzburg Advent Singing. Get yourself in the right frame of mind for the upcoming celebration of Christ’s birth as you enjoy a Nativity play and performances of well-known singers and ensembles. Dates can be found at[www.hirtenadvent.at](http://www.hirtenadvent.at)

Set in the magnificent Mozarteum, the *Salzburger Landeshilfe* presents ***A Special Time*** to support Salzburg citizens in need. Enjoy Nativity plays, traditional alpine folk music and readings in keeping with this peaceful time of the year.

<http://www.salzburg.gv.at/themen/gs/soziales/soziale_und_finanzielle_leistungen/landeshilfe_sbg/landeshilfe_bsondere_zeit.htm>

For those looking for cultural delight and a nice shopping opportunity, the **Christmas Museum** on Mozartplatz Square offers exhibits from Austria and Southern Germany that portray traditions around Christmas. The museum is open all year. [www.salzburger-weihnachtsmuseum.at](http://www.salzburger-weihnachtsmuseum.at)

For more than 20 years, lovers of international variety shows have been stunned by the performances of the **Winter Festival in Volksgarten**. It is the largest contemporary circus festival in the German-speaking world. The contemporary circus shows with breath-taking acrobatics, unforgettable images, enchanting stories and subtle humour provide a charming contrast to Salzburg’s traditional Advent programme. The combination of various disciplines ranging from visual arts to the performing arts with a mix of music, dance, drama, acrobatics, and puppet theatre make it highly popular. Since 2001, numerous outstanding productions by internationally renowned circus companies have been on show in the Salzburg Volksgarten including: *La Famiglia Dimitri, The Tiger Lillies Freakshow, Cie Akoreacro,* and *The 7 Fingers.* [www.winterfest.at](http://www.winterfest.at)

**Further details:**

Tourismus Salzburg, Auerspergstrasse 6, 5020 Salzburg, Austria

Tel.: +43/662/889 87 - 0, #visitsalzburg, [www.salzburg.info](http://www.salzburg.info/)

presse@salzburg.info

(as of July 2023)