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# PLAN AHEAD

By Katie Wells



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## BAVARIA

### Nuremberg Christmas Market

NOV. 28–DEC. 24, 2025

The **Nürnberger Christkindlesmarkt** is one of the oldest and most famous Christmas markets in the world, dating back to the 17th century. My spouse and I visited the “little town of wood and cloth” last year and adored it. The freshly roasted Nuremberg bratwursts with horseradish and the *Lebkuchen* (gingerbread) cookies warmed us right up on the cold, rainy days we were there. A couple of market stalls even had gluten-free *Lebkuchen*! Music concerts fill the square as you shop the many stalls and Nuremberg offers official licensed products like special wax sealing stamps and ornaments. We purchased a delicate traditional Nuremberg angel for our tree. There is also the **Twin Cities Market**. These stalls are run by non-profit organizations and the proceeds benefit local charitable projects. When we attended, we sampled specialty food and drinks from Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Nicaragua and more. Plus, we purchased a beautiful hand-decorated bowl from Poland and a glass hot air balloon from Türkiye. Don’t miss the largest *Feuerzangenbowle* in the world at **Feuerzangenbowle Village**. A 340-meter-high cauldron holds 9,000 liters of the sweet, more potent rum-infused *Glühwein*.



## KAISERSLAUTERN

### Kaiserslautern Christmas Market

NOV. 17–DEC. 23, 2025

Kaiserslautern’s **Lautrer Weihnachtsmarkt** is one of my favorite markets; although, I may be biased since it is the closest to my home. It’s a very cozy market that offers all the traditions of a larger market and more. Every year, my spouse and I love seeing the various designs for the mugs, sipping *Glühwein*, having bratwursts for dinner and shopping the market stalls. There is a ride section for kids. On select dates, the historic **Fruchthalle** hosts a culture market where visitors can find unique handicrafts and fair-trade products from charitable organizations that make for great Christmas gifts. For a more intimate Christmas market experience, you can visit the **Edith Stein House** in Kaiserslautern’s old town. There is a cafeteria that offers cinnamon waffles, home-made cakes and lunch that you can enjoy while shopping the lovingly handmade only items.



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## STUTT GART

### Stuttgart Christmas Market

NOV. 26–DEC. 23, 2025

Spread across the city center (Schlossplatz, Schillerplatz, Karlsplatz and Marktplatz) is the **Stuttgarter Weihnachtsmarkt**. It is one of Europe’s oldest Christmas markets, dating back to 1692 and possibly further. You can enjoy the holiday magic as you stroll past wooden huts with decorated roofs, listen to the sound of choirs singing your favorite Christmas carols as well as many other musical performances and shop for crafts and antiques from over 300 vendors. There is also an ice rink, and for kids, check out fairy land where they can ride on a mini wooden train around a miniature village or do fun activities like baking gingerbread hearts. Part of the city’s holiday program is the **Stuttgart Glanzlichter**, where over 110 trees are decorated with lights on the shopping street, Königstrasse. Light sculptures around the city highlight some of the biggest attractions, like an elephant to represent the Wilhelma Zoo and a Mercedes and Porsche to represent the automobile museums. The lights typically stay up through the new year.



## WIESBADEN

### Shooting Star Market

NOV. 25–DEC. 23, 2025

Wiesbaden’s **Sternschnuppenmarkt** has plenty to do and see. Visitors can explore market stalls and gaze at 21 large, illuminated lilies and dozens of smaller lilies, snowflakes and stars which create a magical atmosphere along the streets of Wiesbaden. The **Kindersternschnuppenmarkt**, or the children’s market, on Luisenplatz offers special activities for kids such as crafts, Christmas stories and the Shooting Star Express. Visitors can enjoy a stroll through Gnome Forest with characters and fir trees illuminated in a fairy-tale atmosphere. There is an ice rink where you can skate or practice curling and after all the fun, you can try *Kaiserschmarrn*, sweet bits of fluffy pancake served with apple or cranberry sauce. If you’d like to warm up, head to the foyer of the **Kurhaus** where over 2,000 red poinsettias make up a special Christmas tree that lights up. ■

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# The Gutenberg Bible



By Kat Nickola

S ometime around 1436, a German goldsmith in Mainz began putting his knowledge of metalwork to a new use by creating a set of metal letters that could be reused to print different pages of text. The motivation to mass-produce printed materials like indulgences, Latin grammar guides and calendars made Johannes Gutenberg's moveable-type printing press a commercial success by 1450. His claim to fame, however, began in 1452 when Gutenberg's workshop began printing Latin Bibles.

You can see two of the original Gutenberg Bibles and experience a medieval printing workshop at the [Gutenberg Museum](#) in Mainz. It is currently housed at the Natural History Museum while a new building is being constructed. ■

Get ready for the  
Christmas markets  
of Mainz!





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# HANAU'S ANNUAL BROTHERS GRIMM FESTIVAL

By Tamala Malerk

## THE BROTHERS GRIMM AND HANAU

Roughly 90 minutes from the Kaiserslautern Military Community (KMC) and less than an hour from Wiesbaden, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were born in Hanau, Germany, in the late 1700s. The brothers and their fairy tales left such an impression on Germany and the world that Hanau is also known as the "Brüder-Grimm-Stadt" (Brothers Grimm City).

The brothers spent their childhood years in the city before their father was transferred elsewhere for work. Unfortunately, their childhood home, along with much of the city center, was bombed in 1945. However, today, there is a memorial stone across from where the house stood in the Freiheitplatz.

You can also visit the national monument, which was erected in 1896, depicting the brothers in the market square. This statue is considered the starting point of the "German Fairy Tale Route" which runs from Hanau to Bremen.

**FUN FACT:** SINCE 1983, HANAU HAS AWARDED THE VERY PRESTIGIOUS "BROTHERS GRIMM PRIZE FOR LITERATURE" IN HONOR OF THE BROTHERS.

## THE FESTIVAL

**Die Brüder Grimm Festspeile**, or The Brothers Grimm Festival, premiered in 1985 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the brothers' births. Since then, over one million people have attended this event. This award-winning festival occurs annually from May through July. It features five different plays every year, with three commissioned fairy tale adaptations (one play with music, one dramatization and one musical). In 2025, the shows included "Rapunzel," "The Bremen Town Musicians," "Tschick," "Bunbury. Being Serious is Everything" (known as "The Importance of Being Earnest" in English) and "Hansel and Gretel."

**FUN FACT:** IN 2025, 50 PEOPLE VOLUNTEERED TO CROCHET THE SIX-METER-LONG HANDMADE BRAID THAT MAKES UP RAPUNZEL'S HAIR. THESE PEOPLE WERE RANDOMLY CHOSEN FROM OVER 1,000 PEOPLE WHO SIGNED UP TO VOLUNTEER.

In addition to the performances, the festival also provides the community with a supporting program so you can get in on the fun all summer long. Cheer for your favorite football team in the Fairy Tale Cup match, enjoy guided tours or take part in workshops (they have them for adults and kids).

The next festival performances begin May 8, 2026 and ticket sales began this month. Visit [festspiele-hanau.de](https://festspiele-hanau.de) for details.

## WHILE IN TOWN

While you are in town, there is plenty to do before and after your festival activities.

You can live out your own fairy tale at the **Philippsruhe Castle**. The castle is home to Hanau's History Museum, a courtyard terrace restaurant and, for those who really want to feel royal, a more upscale restaurant inside the castle's vaulted cellar. Make your reservations to visit the castle and/or eat at [schlossphilippsruhe-hanau.de](https://schlossphilippsruhe-hanau.de).

Continue the fantasy of childhood wonder at **The Hessian Doll and Toy Museum**, which features interactive stations and create-your-own exhibits along with a variety of permanent as well as temporary exhibitions. Much like how Hanau connects with the Grimm brothers, the city also leans into the local history of this museum, grown from the collection of local resident Gertrud Rodemann. Note that the museum is closed on Mondays.

Conclude your fairytale adventure by meeting all of the forest creatures at **Wildpark Alte Fasanerie Klein-Auheim**. See over 300 animals that inspired your favorite stories, such as the European wolf (no grandmother glasses or cloaks included), forest goats, red deer, otters, bison and lynx. ■



© BRÜDER GRIMM FESTSPIELE HANAU, PHOTO: HENDRIK NIX



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# Grimm Legacy

By Kat Nickola



Over 200 years ago, the first published version of German folk tales was printed

by the Brothers Grimm. In doing so, they inspired people across Europe to revive and record their own folklore in print. But it was stories from the brothers' German "Kinder-und Hausmärchen" (Children and Household Tales) that came to represent classic fairy tales.

Most of these fairy tales are dark, gory, violent and supernatural. Many are far different from the versions relayed to kids today.

In fact, the stories gathered by the brothers weren't originally intended for children at all, but were analyzed academically, even though they are often about kids, families and rural households. As students of literature, and later librarians, the Grimm brothers gathered traditional tales to help firm up a sense of German cultural identity, creating the field of folklore studies. The Grimms were proponents of a movement to unite the roughly 200 unique Germanic-speaking territories into a single state.

This led them to research connected mythologies like those of the Norse, Danish and Irish, as well as to delve into historical languages. In fact, Jacob Grimm became a premier philologist, writing a history of the German language and establishing "Grimm's Law," which is still used today to study the way languages evolve. The brothers also started the "Deutsches Wörterbuch" (German dictionary), a 33-volume work that was not fully completed until 2016.

The Grimm brothers didn't create any of the fairy tales or legends in their publications. Instead, they recorded folklore gathered from people across the German-speaking population. As time went on, Wilhelm edited and updated the stories. At first, his goal was to edit and re-write the tales to align them with the brothers' Germanic cultural research. However, later versions of the stories were edited to appeal to wealthy audiences, or written for children, which meant that older mythological aspects, violence and sexuality were sanitized and Christian themes were added.









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# How the Grimm Brothers changed fairy tales ♦

There were seven versions of the “Kinder-und Hausmärchen” book of folklore, and Jacob Grimm edited and updated the tales over time. The number of stories was also expanded with new versions; more folktales were added, but some were also removed. The first edition was published in 1812, and the final version came out in 1857.



In **Rapunzel**, Frau Gothel is originally a fairy, not a sorceress. Also, Rapunzel gets pregnant by the prince who visits her in the tower; in later editions, she marries him.

In the first written version of **Hansel and Grätel**, the biological mom and dad abandon the kids in the woods, while in later editions, the blame is placed on an evil stepmother in cahoots with the witch.



The first Grimm version of **Cinderella** mirrors one written earlier by Charles Perrault; birds sent by her deceased mom help Cinderella and they peck out her stepsister's eyes. By the final Grimm version, a fairy godmother has replaced the birds, and the sisters are forgiven.

In the earliest Grimm version of **Snow White**, the prince obsesses for a long time over her body in the glass coffin and she is eventually woken when his servant gets frustrated with the situation and hits her; in the final tale, she stirs because her coffin is dropped on the day the prince finds her. Also, the queen is originally her biological mother but is later changed into an evil stepmother using witchcraft.



# The German Fairy Tale Route

2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the German Fairy Tale Route! Beginning just west of Frankfurt, the **Deutsche Märchenstrasse** travels north for 600 kilometers to destinations from the Grimm brothers' lives and from the stories they collected.

In the city of **Hanau**, a bronze statue of the brothers is the route's starting point. The town is the birthplace of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and also the home of the yearly Brüder Grimm Festspiele, which lasts from May to July and hosts numerous performances.

Next up is the village of **Steinau**, where you cannot miss a tour through the brothers' childhood home. It is now a museum decked out in period décor and presents a great overview of the brothers' lives.

Beyond that is **Rotkäppchenland**, or the land of Little Red Cap (also known as Little Red Riding Hood in English). The traditional costume of a young unmarried girl in this region, called Schwalm, inspired the use of the red cap in the famous story from this area. Don't miss wandering in the fairytale town of **Alsfeld**, with its cobblestone streets and crooked medieval half-timbered homes.

If you would rather have a home base to explore Grimm country, choose **Kassel**. This is the town where the Grimm brothers spent most of their lives, and the place from which they ventured out to gather fairy tales and legends. Set aside time to visit **Grimmwelt**, a modern museum dedicated to the brothers' works which also offers a glimpse at the brothers' original manuscripts.

In a nearby town, you can visit Rapunzel's tower at **Trendelburg Castle**, which is also a hotel and restaurant. Or venture to Cinderella's inspiration at **Sababurg Castle**, before spending some time exploring the trails in the deep, dark forests of the **Reinhardswald** or **Habichtswald**.







Further north lies **Hameln**, famed for the way the village cleared its rat problem. Follow the Pied Piper Trail, marked by brass cobblestone rats, past historic buildings and art representing the famous piper who led rodents to their death in the river and then took the kids as payment. There is also a musical called "Rats," a Pied Piper Museum and walking tours led by folks dressed as the famed musician.

There are numerous small towns and villages, castles and forts along the Deutsche Märchenstrasse to visit. At [www.deutsche-maerchenstrasse.com](http://www.deutsche-maerchenstrasse.com) you can explore them all.

At the northern end of the route is **Bremen**. "The Bremen Town Musicians" loom large in this Hanseatic city where a recreation of the famous story is set to stage every Sunday at 12 p.m. (in German) and 1 p.m. (in English) at the **Domshof Square**. Don't miss a visit across the river to the quaint, colorful shops in former merchant houses of the Schnoor neighborhood.

**Buxtehude** marks the northern terminus of the Deutsche Märchenstrasse, and it seems fitting that the town is known for being the source of the tale "The Hare and the Hedgehog," in which the slow, steady hedgehog (a modification the Grimm's made from Aesop's fabled tortoise) races the lazy hare to death. The pace here is slow; it's the perfect spot to channel your inner hare and stop for a drink along the canals. ■

2025 marks the  
50th anniversary  
of the German  
Fairy Tale Route!





By Rachel Kersey

**W**hen I come home from college every summer, one of my first stops is the library. I LOVE books so much! There is always a fun story between the covers to transport me to another world. Every bookworm needs a good library, just like every resident of a foreign country needs to discover her host nation's culture. Check out these German libraries for a little bit of both.

## JACOB AND WILHELM GRIMM CENTER | BERLIN

Of course I had to include the library of the brothers that inspired this entire issue of "What's Up." The **Jacob-und-Wilhelm-Grimm-Zentrum** is home to approximately 1.5 million volumes, including nearly 6,000 volumes from the private library of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, the literary masters who brought us fairytales like "Hansel and Gretel," "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and "Little Red Riding Hood."

Completed in 2009, the Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm Center is part of the central library at Humboldt University in Berlin. Visitors have access to 450 computer workspaces; copying, printing and scanning services; wireless internet, video and graphic editing; and an electronic publishing service. There's even a parent-child section called the **Berliner-Volksbank Nursery**, making this library a family-friendly environment!

## THE GERMAN NATIONAL LIBRARY | FRANKFURT

For a bit of culture, check out the **Deutsche National Bibliothek** in Frankfurt. This library collects all German and German-language publications since 1913 as well as foreign publications about Germany and works translated from German. Additionally, the library houses the works of German-speaking emigrants published abroad between 1933 and 1945, which means that visitors can likely find interesting perspectives on World War II from those who left Germany. This library also affords access to Germany's scientific heritage.

*Users must be at least 16 years old, and there is an admission charge, though monthly and annual passes can be purchased.*



*German Exile Archive 1933-1945 with the expatriation card of Albert Einstein.*

## STUTTGART CENTRAL LIBRARY | STUTTGART

Located within the grassed area at Mailänder Platz, the **Stadtbibliothek Stuttgart** houses more than one million books and media on nine floors in this modern building. It was created to be a new intellectual and cultural center, and it is accordingly a compilation of literature, art and music from the city and region.

This library is also family friendly. There is a central children's library as well as a music library, study rooms and a café. The library also has a roof terrace with a viewing platform that offers panoramic views of Stuttgart and the surrounding area. As a bonus, at night the building's entire facade lights up in blue! ■



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**SNAPSHOT**

## BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

# Photo by Kevin Brown



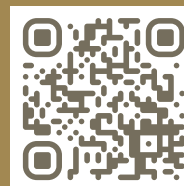
The **Palace of the Parliament** in Bucharest, Romania, is the heaviest building in the world at 4.1 million tons! The building has a complicated history. It was built during the dictator, Nicolae Ceaușescu's, regime from the rubble of demolished buildings. This demolition displaced over 57,000 families. During that time, the building was a statement of communism, totalitarianism and socialism; now, it is an emblem of democracy and houses the Romanian Parliament.

The building features other oddities, including underground tunnels and a bunker, plus it can be seen from the moon. Additionally, it sinks .24 inches each year. It's no surprise that it is also believed to be haunted by ghosts who wander the extravagant corridors whistling and setting off security systems. ■



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