

## **“Christmas Markets in East Germany” – Crafts, Art, Music, Nostalgia**

**Tour 1: Nov 26 – Dec 05, 2010** (10 days, Friday – Sunday)

**Tour 2: Dec 10 – Dec 19, 2010** (10 days, Friday – Sunday)

Berlin – Potsdam – Leipzig – Dresden – Erzgebirge – Erfurt – Thuringian Forest - Berlin

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Our escorted Advent Tours take you on a fascinating journey to Germany during the pre-Christmas season. Discover the magic spirit of the Advent time, explore traditional German handcraft and listen to the magnificent sounds of church music, choirs and organs. Germany's capital **Berlin** offers various Christmas Markets, both nostalgic and artistic. It's the perfect destination to explore German history, culture, classical music and arts - not to forget about all the fantastic shopping opportunities! Enjoy the still vivid charm of the old kingdom Prussia in **Potsdam** with its world famous palaces. Glass and porcelain manufacturers in the rural **Thuringian Forest** and woodcraft in the **Saxon Ore Mountain region Erzgebirge** are only two examples of lively German traditional handcraft. In Thuringia's capital **Erfurt** the over 150-years old Christmas Market is located at the foot of the magnificent Cathedral. **Leipzig's** city center turns into one big Christmas Market and offers a unique selection of art and design. In the UNESCO world heritage city **Dresden** you will feel like traveling in a time machine – modern car production right next to Germany's oldest Christmas market. The tours take you on romantic bus rides through the beauty of fairy-tale forests in **Thuringia** and **Saxony** as well as through the "land of lakes" **Brandenburg**. The Advent season in late November and December is also the perfect time to savor local culinary delights at family-run restaurants. We always travel in small groups of 4-6 or 10-18 guests in order to provide a flexible individual travel experience. Groups are escorted 24/7 by an English speaking guide. We consider your wishes and ideas...

### **Itinerary - Overview:**

**Day 1 Friday:** Individual departure from the USA or elsewhere.

**Day 2 Saturday:** Individual arrival in Berlin, the capital of Germany. At the hotel you will be greeted by your tour guide. You will have time to rest, get to know your fellow passengers, or go on individual excursions to Christmas Markets or museums (tips and maps will be provided). Later, we will have our welcome dinner together at the typical Berlin corner pub "Sophienkeller". Overnight Berlin.

**Day 3 Sunday:** Today we will explore the centre of Berlin – one of the most vibrant cities in the world. On our sightseeing tour we will visit historic Berlin's highlights and UNESCO World Heritage Sites. We will meet for individual lunch at the brewpub "Lindenbräu" at Potsdamer Platz with its modern style Christmas Market. You have time to visit art and crafts museums, galleries or manufacturers of your choice – such as the New National Gallery or the Royal Prussian Porcelain Manufacturer KPM. We will spend the evening at Berlin's most magic Christmas Market with a special and acrobatic high-class stage program. Overnight Berlin.

**Day 4 Monday:** In our private coach we will travel to the former capital of the kingdom Prussia, Potsdam. We will go on a guided tour to the UNESCO World Heritage Site, the castle Cecilienhof, the Dutch Quarter Potsdam and more. We will have group lunch at the residential palace restaurant "Krongut Bornstedt" at a

historic setting including a fine nostalgic Christmas Market. Afterwards we will proceed to Leipzig. Leipzig, the city of music, books and art, presents itself with history and flair. Leipzig has a great musical tradition: J. S. Bach and Robert Schumann worked here, Richard Wagner was born here. After check-in, you have time to relax, to explore Leipzig and its Christmas Markets or to go shopping in the Arcades. Overnight Leipzig.

**Day 5 Tuesday:** On a guided walking tour we will experience history, culture and modern European lifestyle in Leipzig. The sightseeing tour include the old and the new town hall, market plaza, St. Thomas Church, St. Nicholas Church, Opera House, Gewandhaus, Auerbach's Keller at the Arcades "Maedler Passage" and much more. We will enjoy Leipzig coffee & cake specialties at the nostalgic coffee house "Zum Arabischen Coffe Baum" in a historic setting. In the afternoon we will explore Leipzig's rich, young and dynamic art scene. Depending on your personal interest, you can visit the Museum of Fine Arts (opened in 2008), the Museums Grassi and/or the "Cotton Mill" Leipzig modern art centre or you can stroll the city in the footsteps of J.S. Bach, Mendelssohn and Schumann. Later that day we will attend Leipzig's Christmas markets spread all over the historic town with its advent calendar, medieval Christmas Market and wind instruments concert at the town hall's balcony and – we will go there when the locals go. Overnight Leipzig.

**Day 6 Wednesday:** In our private coach we will travel to the former capital of the kingdom Saxony, Dresden. We will stop at the fairy-tale castle Moritzburg. We will go on a guided city tour in Dresden visiting the many historic sites of the former capital of the Saxon kingdom: Church of Our Lady, Semper Opera House, the palace "Zwinger", the Bruehl Terrace, Altmarkt Square and much more. In an old gas-storage building, the artist Yadegar Asisi created an impressive 360° panoramic painting "Dresden 1756". From an elevated viewing platform you can enjoy a magnificent view over the rooftops of baroque Dresden with light and sound effects. You can visit the world-known Treasure Chamber "New Green Vault" with its unbelievably fantastic treasures of the Saxon Kings. In Dresden, the oldest German Christmas market "Striezelmarkt" is centrally located. It has taken place since 1434, and presents the world's tallest Christmas pyramid. We will have a group dinner at the one of the authentic restaurants with typical Saxon culinary delights and local wine. If available, we will enjoy an Organ concert at a church. Overnight Dresden.

**Day 7 Thursday:** We continue our journey through the Saxon ore mountains Erzgebirge to the city Erfurt in Thuringia. On our way you will discover a hidden pearl of living German Christmas tradition, the toy-maker village Seiffen. Here the handcraft of manufacturing toys, wooden angels, pyramids, nutcrackers and smoking manikins was elevated to a unique local art, which you can still experience in its original active form. Today these charming and nostalgic Christmas decoration are famous all over the world. We will visit typical workshops and watch the making. The last stop before Erfurt will be in one of the unique and typical small towns of the Erzgebirge region, Annaberg-Buchholz with a authentic Christmas Market and Saxony's biggest Gothic hall church. You will enjoy scenic rides through a romantic countryside with villages whose countless windows are lit up with traditional Christmas decoration. Overnight Erfurt.

**Day 8 Friday:** This day we will spend in the Luther town and Thuringia's capital Erfurt. Erfurt's medieval heart that is one of the best preserved in Germany and here we will find Europe's longest inhabited bridge housing small shops and handcraft workshops, aptly named The Merchants' Bridge (Krämerbrücke). The magnificent St. Mary's Cathedral, the Church of St. Severus and the Citadel Petersberg preside over Erfurt's nostalgic Christmas market. We will explore the historic town on a guided sightseeing walking tour. We will enjoy Thuringian culinary specialties at our group lunch in one of the many traditional restaurants. Especially during Advent season you can enjoy numerous organ recitals, choral concerts and other musical

performances. We will visit the unique exhibition "Floral Art" located in the cellars underneath the Cathedral Plaza – showing floral Christmas decoration made by local artists. We will visit the local Chocolate manufacturer including a tasting of fine handmade chocolate delicacies. Overnight Erfurt.

**Day 9 Saturday:** Today we will explore the Thuringian village Lauscha, the historic centre of artistic glass-blowing manufacture. In 1847, the Christmas glitter ball was invented by a poor Thuringian glassblower who could not afford the original Christmas tree decoration: expensive walnuts and apples. But Lauscha is also well known for modern style glass art, such as vases, jewelry and glass decoration. You can not only buy the glassy art and watch the process of making, but you can also try to blow a glass ball or paint one yourself. On our way back to Berlin you will enjoy the scenic ride along the *Transromanica* route through the Thuringian forest – the home of the brothers Grimm's fairy tales. In Berlin you will have some time left for individual activities. We will have our Farewell Dinner together at a popular restaurant in the "scene district" Mitte in East Berlin – Bar crawl afterwards optional. Overnight Berlin.

**Day 10 Sunday:** Individual departure for the USA or elsewhere & Arrival.

**In ground package included:**

- 8 overnight stays at selected hotels/pensions/Inns with buffet breakfast
- Private van or coach transportation and experienced driver
- English speaking tour guide throughout & Experienced local city guides
- Admission fees & expenses for tour related visits & excursions
- Welcome dinner & Farewell dinner including beverages
- Three additional meals (dinner/lunch) including beverages
- One traditional Coffee House visit & Two Tastings (Wine / Beer / Chocolate)

**Air fare, travel insurance, optional activities and non-tour-related excursions are not included.**

**Itinerary and accommodation are subject to change. Please make your reservations before August 10<sup>th</sup> for Tour 1 (Nov 26 - Dec 05) or before August 20<sup>th</sup> for Tour 2 (Dec 10 - Dec 19).**

The tour also includes local classical concerts and/or organ/choral performances at Christmas markets and in churches. We will provide more specific information as soon as the information is available. For your purchases we can organize a shipping service. This Advent Tour to Germany includes several local city/town sightseeing tours and Christmas market visits on foot. Walks of around 1 hour up to 2 hours (including stops) might be involved at several occasions.

**Tour price\* 2010** (ground package, double occupancy, air fare not included)

\$2,389 per person

+ \$450 Euro per person (single supplement)

**Minimum participants: 4 persons for group size 4-6 and 10 persons for group size 10-18**

\* \$ price is subject to currency fluctuations. This preliminary tour price is based on 1 EUR = 1.40 USD.

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**For more information and reservations please contact:**



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