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Christkindlmarket 2012, Chicago

November 22, 2012



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When we were in Europe last year late in November, the annual Christmas markets were just being set up. We watched in the small town of Rudesheim, Germany as pieces and panels were fitted together to create charming gingerbread house-style booths where in the next few weeks they would be selling a wide assortment of food items, crafts and gifts. We missed it all by just a few days and I was so sad.



But I cheered up when I realized there is a Christmas market in Chicago every year which is based on the European Christmas markets. And it looks pretty fabulous.

Chicago's first Christmas market, which they named Christkindlmarket after the German open-air festivals which had been held for a hundred years, was first held in Pioneer Court 1996. Because it was immensely popular and attracted huge crowds, the festival was moved to the large and central Daley Plaza in 1997 and has become an annual and very popular event ever since.

The name Christkindlmarket is taken from the fairy story about the Christkindl, a fairy being dressed in a gold and white robe with a crown on her golden hair. Depending on the region of Europe, either the Christkindl or Father Christmas will deliver gifts on Christmas day.

With the first festival in 1996, city officials from Nuremberg, Germany were invited to partner with Chicago for the event and companies in Germany and the Chicago area were invited to participate. The market is a wonderful place to purchase a variety of seasonal items and foodstuffs, but it's also an educational experience as well. Students who are studying German can practice by conversing with the many German speaking vendors and there are also scavenger hunts, crafts and German holiday songs to enjoy.

The market is the perfect place to find truly unique gifts such as hand-blown and painted ornaments, nutcrackers, cuckoo clocks and beer steins, as well as toys, jewelry, clothes, home decor and wooden crafts. Many vendors demonstrate how items are made, such as wood carving.

But by far the most popular items are the large assortment of wonderful food and drinks. Sauerkraut, potato pancakes, waffles and other typically German delicacies are available and you can sample Gluehwein, a hot spiced wine which comes in a souvenir cup shaped like a boot and decorated with the market's logo.

A variety of events are scheduled throughout the time the festival is open, from a tree-lighting ceremony to performing choirs to lots of activities especially for children.

Location: Daley Plaza between Washington, Clark and Dearborn Streets

Admission and Parking are Free

Dates: November 20, 2012 – December 24, 2012

Hours: Open Daily Sun – Thu 11am – 8pm Fri – Sat 11am – 9pm

Special Hours: First Day: Nov. 20th 2 pm – 8 pm, Thanksgiving Day: Nov. 22nd 11am – 4pm, Christmas Eve: Dec. 24th 11am – 4pm

For more information, check the website here: <http://www.christkindlmarket.com/en/>

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