



Christmas market in Köln, Germany

Christmas is a very important celebration in Germany. Every year, several major cities will host one or more Christmas markets, also known as a *Weihnachtsmarkt*. One of the most famous one is in the city of Köln (Cologne).

I had the amazing opportunity to visit the *Weihnachtsmarkt* in Köln in 2013 when a German friend invited me to visit her and her family in Köln.

At the *Weihnachtsmarkt*, I saw many beautifully decorated stands draped with thousands of Christmas lights and bold signs advertising their wares. Every stand sold something different, from delicious *apfelstrudel* (apple strudel) and *Lebkuchen* (traditional Christmas cookies) to stunning handcrafts.



My friend insisted that I try out *glühwein*. *Glühwein* is hot wine mixed with special spices that is traditionally drunk at the *Weihnachtsmarkt*. While I usually don't like to drink wine, *glühwein* was indeed a nice warm drink to sip on during the cold winter night. Traditionally, you can buy *glühwein* in a cup, like I did, and then you can return the cup back to the stand and receive money back for the cup. I however, kept the cup as a souvenir.



Near the *Weihnachtsmarkt* was the *Eau de Cologne* shop. *Eau de Cologne* ("water of Cologne") is Köln's most famous perfume. Festively decorated like many of the other shops in the city, the shop was stocked full of bottles of different size and shapes. Many were all wrapped up ready to be presented as Christmas gifts. I bought a small bottle for my grandmother for Christmas because it is her favorite perfume.

Together with the cold night air, huddling in my thick winter jacket, dazzling Christmas lights, and the smell of delicious food, the *Weihnachtsmarkt* in Köln was truly a magical place!

