

Press Release

Light Amid the Shadows Celestial festivals of light and fire

STUTTGART – Southwest Germany is known for its ancient customs and continued traditions, which often revolve around light and fire - glowing discs flying through the sky, streams of light flowing, and wheels of flames rolling. Locals celebrate such festivities annually, however for visitors they present an opportunity to experience something truly unforgettable.

Glass Breaking in Bernau

“Schiibi, Schiibo!” Loving, congratulatory, or mocking verses such as this are closely linked to the historic tradition in Bernau of breaking glass. Alongside this, glowing wooden disks are sent down into the valley by a beater making sparks fly and drawing glowing patterns of fire in the evening sky. Unlike in other Black Forest communities, this disc throwing in Bernau takes place over the entire Shrove Tuesday week - so there is plenty of time to experience the spectacle.

schwarzwald-tourismus.info

Fire Wheel Rolling in Brombach

Every year on Shrove Tuesday, Brombach in the Odenwald plays host to a huge fire spectacle. The ‘fire wheel’ is an old Germanic custom used to celebrate the driving out of winter. Stuffed with dried straw as fuel, the wheel is driven downhill by a damp beechwood pole before reaching the last stretch of slope where it freewheels to a standstill in a special hollow. Then, for those brave enough, a fire jumping challenge takes place.

www.burgenstrasse.de/uk/Castles-and-Palaces/Tour-1/Eberbach.html?show=about

Spark Fires in Upper Swabia and Lake Constance

On ‘Spark Sunday’, four days after Ash Wednesday, fires blaze on many hills in Upper Swabia and surrounding Lake Constance to herald the end of winter. Often it is old Christmas trees that are piled up and lit, with a ‘Spark Witch’ or other symbolic straw-filled figure placed at the top. The fires mark the end of carnival season until the cycle begins again on the Epiphany.

narrenzunft-wilflingen.de

Swimming Lights in Wurmlingen

On the evening of 19th March, St. Joseph's Day, children in Wurmlingen float small homemade boats lit with candles on ropes across the Faulenbach. This tradition of “De bach abi schwimma” or “Liachtliabischwimma”, which is documented in historical local chronicles, symbolises the ice and snow being washed into the sea as spring returns.

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The Swabian Alb Association also cultivates this heritage tradition with boards adorned with lights that float from the local 'Kindlebrunnen' into the Faulenbach, transforming it into a sea of lights.

wurmlingen.de

Turnip Spirits in Denkingen

Just like at Halloween with pumpkins, children in Germany hollow out turnips on All Saints' Day and give them a grimacing face. In Denkingen, at the foot of the Swabian Alb, every year after the harvest, sometime between September and October, the Fool's Guild organizes a Rübengeist, or 'Turnip Spirit', parade during which they even sing their own Rübengeist song. Once illuminated they are either placed in windows or carried through the streets according to an old folk custom. In the Neuhausen ob Eck Open Air museum a few kilometres away, such turnip ghosts are traditionally carved before All Saints' Day and then used to illuminate the museum village.

narrenzunft-denkingen.de

<https://whichmuseum.com/museum/freilichtmuseum-neuhausen-ob-eck-34628>

St. Nicholas' Fire in Hirrlingen

An unusual celebration of St. Nicholas' Day is practised in Hirrlingen, a small town near Tübingen, whereby the community uses fire to guide the saint to visit. On 5th December, a large fire is piled up on a hillside near the village and, once lit, they all await the arrival of St. Nicholas. The children also make homemade lanterns lit with candles, which when carried around create a very special atmosphere. Afterwards, St. Nicholas and his companion Knecht Ruprecht visit some of the local houses.

hirrlingen.de

Christmas Torches in Altensteig

The annual Christmas Torches in Altensteig is an impressive event. Torchers build two 12 metre towers from logs high above the town in the Black Forest from 6 a.m. on Christmas Eve. Decorated with a fir tree at the top, the towers are set alight in the evening as the bells chime after mass. Once the towers are ablaze the torchers, known as 'Fackler', light their torches, which can be up to 5 meters long, and position themselves across the mountain meadows. One by one, spectators also light hundreds of handheld torches and wave them together with the torchers until a whole sea of lights descends over the Nagold valley.

www.schwarzwald-tourismus.info/orte/altensteig-8b6d6386c0

Easter Sponges in St. Peter

Easter bonfires are a widespread custom throughout Baden-Württemberg, with them traditionally being lit on fields and mountain ridges on Good Friday or Easter

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Sunday. In St. Peter in the Upper Black Forest however, a special Easter tradition involves the collection of 'Zunderschwämme' from the forest. This tree fungi, which in the past was used as a source of fire and light, is blessed during Easter Sunday mass and then set alight. Young people then go from house to house with these glowing 'Easter Sponges' distributing pieces of them as an Easter blessing.
www.schwarzwald-tourismus.info/orte/st.-peter-09c473a5a3

'Z'Licht Go' and 'Stubede' in the Upper Black Forest

Historically, as winter arrived and the days got shorter and colder, friends and neighbours in the Black Forest gathered together in a 'Stubede'. This cosy custom was not only born out of a desire for conviviality – they would often play cards, make music, tell stories, carve, embroider, and snack together – but gathering together in one farmhouse parlour also saved firewood and energy. This is why the old tradition of getting together is also known as 'Z'Licht go' - going into the light together.
www.hochschwarzwald.de/en

A digital version of this press release - as well as more detailed information on Southwest Germany - is available on our website <https://www.tourism-bw.com/press>

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