

How the Erzgebirge became a Christmas wonderland

During the darker time of year, when outside the icy cold envelops everything around it, the people of the Erzgebirge are busily setting themselves to work. The furnaces of the workshops are emitting a pleasant heat, while the fragrance of incense candles wafts through the rooms. At the workbenches, expert hands stroke delicate brushes over the bodies of wooden horses. White eyes and a brown tail – every detail is hand-finished, just like the animals themselves. They are cut from a wooden tyre in a technique known as 'Reifendrehen' (tyre turning). Like Spanbaumstechen (carving chiselled wooden trees), this is a wood processing method that exists only in the Erzgebirge. The resourceful people of the Erzgebirge developed the technique four centuries ago, when the mining of ore was no longer sufficient to earn a living.

During this time, bobbin lace-making, the manufacture of dress trimmings and artistic metalworking all increased in significance. Back then, the native residents had no idea that their folk art would one day become world famous. Today the 'authentic Erzgebirge folk art' seal protects the unmistakable and elaborately crafted figures from the Erzgebirge, even at an international level. This is a well-earned seal of approval, as the woodcarving, wood turning and whittling requires the most skilled of hands. It takes around 40 hours before a 30 centimetre tall miner is complete. Today, around 220 workshops, ranging from family businesses to medium-sized enterprises, work using these handed-down techniques. In the exhibition workshops, these wood artists allow you to take a look over their shoulders.

It is primarily during the advent period that the people of the Erzgebirge proudly present their lovingly manufactured nutcrackers, incense burner figurines and angels. It is at this time that the pyramids are turning in the cosy rooms and the enchanting Schwibbogen (half-arched candleholders) are glowing in the windows. The residents congregate at Hutzenabend (chatting evenings) to tell stories, sing songs and breathe new life into old customs. The smell of fresh Stollen cakes and roasted almonds spreads throughout the gathering. At a total of 35 Christmas markets, stallholders sell wooden toys and folk art. During this season, the sounds of celebratory fanfares accompany the miners as they march in their magnificent traditional costume. Cosy inns and pubs offer their guests 'Neunerlei', a meal comprising nine dishes.

All of these are traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation, and that are still as alive as ever in the Erzgebirge. All of these are traditions that make the Erzgebirge a unique Christmas wonderland.

Tourismusverband Erzgebirge e.V.

Adam-Ries-Straße 16
09456 Annaberg-Buchholz

Fon: +49 (0) 3733 188 00 – 0

Fax: +49 (0) 3733 188 00 – 20

Mail: info@erzgebirge-tourismus.de

Web: www.erzgebirge-tourismus.de