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# German Public Holidays 2026 — Dates, Traditions and Bridge Days

All statutory holidays in Germany 2026: federal and regional holidays, traditions and bridge days.

**Deutsche Begriffe:** Feiertag | Gesetzlicher Feiertag | Brückentag | Weihnachten | Ostern | Karneval

## Statutory Holidays 2026

On public holidays, work is **off** — shops, authorities and many services are **closed**. Your salary is still **paid** (Holiday Law).

### Federal Holidays 2026

These holidays apply in **all 16 federal states**:

| Date | Day of Week | Holiday |
|---|---|---|
| **January 1** | Thursday | **New Year's Day** |
| **April 3** | Friday | **Karfreitag** (Good Friday) |
| **April 6** | Monday | **Ostermontag** (Easter Monday) |
| **May 1** | Friday | **Labour Day** |
| **May 14** | Thursday | **Christi Himmelfahrt** (Ascension Day/Father's Day) |
| **May 25** | Monday | **Pfingstmontag** (Whit Monday) |
| **October 3** | Saturday | **German Unity Day** |
| **December 25** | Friday | **Christmas Day** |

| Date | Day of Week | Holiday |
|---|---|---|
| **December 26** | Saturday | **Boxing Day** |

### Regional Holidays 2026

These holidays apply only in **certain federal states**:

| Date | Holiday | Federal States |
|---|---|---|
| **January 6** | Epiphany | BY, BW, ST |
| **March 8** | International Women's Day | BE, MV |
| **April 5** | Easter Sunday | BB |
| **June 4** | Corpus Christi | BY, BW, HE, NW, RP, SL, SN (partial), TH (partial) |
| **August 8** | Peace Festival | Augsburg only (BY) |
| **August 15** | Assumption of Mary | BY (partial), SL |
| **September 20** | World Children's Day | TH |
| **October 31** | Reformation Day | BB, HB, HH, MV, NI, SN, SH, ST, TH |
| **November 1** | All Saints' Day | BY, BW, NW, RP, SL |
| **November 19** | Day of Penance and Prayer | SN |

**Abbreviations:** BY=Bavaria, BW=Baden-Württemberg, BE=Berlin, BB=Brandenburg, HB=Bremen, HH=Hamburg, HE=Hesse, MV=Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, NI=Lower Saxony, NW=North Rhine-Westphalia, RP=Rhineland-Palatinate, SL=Saarland, SN=Saxony, ST=Saxony-Anhalt, SH=Schleswig-Holstein, TH=Thuringia

## Bridge Days 2026 — Smart Holiday Planning

**Bridge days** are working days between a holiday and the weekend. With minimal vacation, you can get **many free days**:

| Holiday | Bridge Day(s) | Vacation Days | Free Days |
|---|---|---|---|
| **New Year's Day** (Thu, 1.1.) | Fri 2.1. | 1 day vacation | 4 days off (Thu–Sun) |
| **Ascension Day** (Thu, 14.5.) | Fri 15.5. | 1 day vacation | 4 days off (Thu–Sun) |
| **Labour Day** (Fri, 1.5.) | — | 0 | 3 days off (Fri–Sun) |

| Holiday | Bridge Day(s) | Vacation Days | Free Days |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Christmas** (Fri, 25.12.) | Mon 28.12.–Wed 30.12. | 3 days vacation | 9 days off (Fri 25.12.–Sun 3.1.) |

**Tip:** Request bridge days **early** — they are very popular with colleagues!

## What's Open on Holidays?

### Closed

• **Shops** — supermarkets, shopping centres, DIY stores (exception: some bakeries in the morning, petrol station shops)

• **Authorities** — registration office, immigration office, tax office

• **Banks** — branches closed (ATM works)

• **Schools and kindergartens**

• **Post office** — no delivery

### Open

• **Restaurants and cafés** — many are open (especially Christmas markets!)

• **Hospitals and emergency rooms** — always

• **Pharmacies** — emergency pharmacies

• **Petrol stations** — always open

• **Public transport** — runs (weekend/holiday schedule!)

• **Cinema, museum, zoo** — often open

## Traditions of Major Holidays

### Christmas (December 25–26)

Christmas is the **most important festival** in Germany:

• **Christmas Eve** (December 24) — the main celebration: gift-giving, Christmas tree, family dinner

• **Christmas Markets** — from late November, mulled wine, bratwurst, handicrafts

• **Typical Food:** Potato salad with sausages (Christmas Eve), roast goose (25.12.)

• **Shops:** Open only until 2 p.m. on 24.12., closed 25–26

### Easter (Good Friday to Easter Monday)

- **Good Friday:** Quiet day, dancing ban in many states
- **Easter Sunday:** Easter egg hunts for children, family meals
- **Easter Monday:** Free day, walks, family visits
- **Typical Food:** Easter lamb cake, Easter eggs, Easter roast

### Carnival/Fasching (February/March)

Carnival is **not a statutory holiday**, but in some regions (Rhineland, southern Germany) it's **celebrated on a large scale**:

- **Women's Carnival Day** (Thursday) — women cut men's ties
- **Rose Monday** — big parade (Cologne, Düsseldorf, Mainz)
- **Ash Wednesday** — end of carnival
- Many companies in the Rhineland give **Rose Monday off**

### New Year's Eve (December 31)

- **Not a statutory holiday** (but many have the day off)
- **Fireworks** at midnight (firecracker sales only 28–31.12.)
- **Raclette or fondue** for dinner
- **"Dinner for One"** — short film broadcast on TV every year since 1963

### Ascension Day / Father's Day

- **Statutory holiday** (always Thursday, 40 days after Easter)
- **Father's Day:** Men traditionally go on **hiking trips with hand carts and beer**
- **Bridge day** on the following Friday is very popular

## Employment Law and Holidays

### Wage Continuation

- On statutory holidays, you receive your **normal salary** — even if you don't work (§ 2 EFZG)
- If a holiday falls on a **Saturday or Sunday**, there is **no replacement day off** (exception: some collective agreements)

### Working on Holidays

- Work on holidays is generally **prohibited** (§ 9 ArbZG)
- **Exceptions:** Hospitals, gastronomy, police, fire brigade, media, transport
- **Holiday Surcharge:** 50–150% surcharge (depending on collective agreement)

### Vacation

- Holidays are **not** deducted from vacation entitlement
- If a holiday falls during your vacation, that day is **not** counted as a vacation day

## Tips for Foreigners

**1. Know your state's holidays** — Bavaria has the most (13), Berlin/Hamburg the fewest (10)

**2. Stock up** — supermarkets are crowded before holidays, plan ahead

**3. Use bridge days** — get many free days with minimal vacation

**4. Join in traditions** — Christmas markets, carnival, Easter egg hunts — it's fun and helps with integration

**5. Respect quiet holidays** — Good Friday has a dancing ban and special silence

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