



STEYR – Austria

Austria's official Christmas Town

Can anything be more beautiful than a pre-Christmas visit to the town where the "Christkindl" lives? Where age-old traditions come back to life and so many things evoke happy childhood memories. During the festive season, the hamlet of Christkindl is one of Steyr's focal points. Its church was built 300 years ago, after Ferdinand Sertl, a Steyr citizen, had put a waxen figure of the Infant Jesus into the hollow of a tree in the woods around Steyr. He often returned to this place to pray in solitude and was finally cured of his illness. To this very day numerous pilgrims visit this waxen figure of the Infant Jesus in the "tree under the heavens" that is now at the centre of the church. The Christkindl Post Office founded in 1950 is right behind the pilgrimage church. Every year its 16 employees postmark more than 2 million letters with a special Christmas (first-day stamp until 25 December) or Epiphany (26 December until 6 January) postage stamp. Each and every one of the numerous children's letters addressed to the "Christkindl" are answered. The Christkindl Town of Steyr has a long tradition of iron industry. As early as the Middle Ages it was a centre for the production and trading of iron. During the winter months the nail forgers eked out a scanty living earning some extra money by building nativity scenes. Small baked-clay figurines were put into wooden boxes that were covered with a glass pane. In this way the box nativity scenes typical of our region and also known as nail forger nativity scenes came into being. Today these nativity scenes can be viewed for example at the exhibition "Nativity Scenes Past and Present". Other very special nativity scenes are the Mechanical Nativity Scene, in which more than 200 figurines fixed onto bike chains wander through a biblical landscape, or the Steyr Nativity Scene – one of Europe's last stick puppet theatres still playing. The texts and lyrics have been passed down orally from generation to generation and have hardly changed for decades. In Steyr, traditions and customs are continually being rediscovered. In the 1st Austrian Christmas Museum more than 14,000 antique Christmas tree decorations dating from 1830 – 1930 are on display. Blacksmiths meet every year for the Steyr Blacksmith's Christmas while a shuttle post bus from the 1950s travels between Steyr and Christkindl and Advent carols are sung at the Christmas Fair and at stirring Advent concerts.

Contact person for press:

Mrs Kerstin Plank – info@steyr.info

Tourismusverband Steyr, Stadtplatz 27, A-4402 Steyr

Phone: +43-7252-53229-0, www.steyr.info