Unit 7

Mehr wissen: über Feiertage in Deutschland

*Wie in anderen europäischen Ländern sind die Ursprünge der meisten deutschen Feiertage kirchlich. Das zeigt zum Beispiel das englische Wort „holiday“, das in der Tat „holy day“ bedeutet.*

The calendar of public holidays reflects its religious origins. It is built around the feasts celebrating the main events of the life of Jesus Christ. These are either variable, depending on the date of Easter, **Ostern**, or fixed like Christmas, **Weihnachten**. Where the religious feast (**kirchlicher Feiertag**) always falls on a Sunday, the public holiday (**gesetzlicher Feiertag**)is the following day (hence **Ostermontag** and **Pfingstmontag**).

There are other holidays with a religious origin, two of which are Protestant: **Reformationstag** (31 October) and **Bet- und Bußtag** in November. Catholic holidays include All Saints‘ Day, **Allerseelen**, on 1 November, and Corpus Christi, **Fronleichnam**, one of several holidays that punctuate the early summer, to the puzzlement of visitors from the UK. Everywhere is closed on 1 May and then, surprisingly, on two Thursdays (both the feast of the Ascension, **Christi** **Himmelfahrt** and **Fronleichnam** are always on a Thursday). And between those two Thursdays, Pentecost (Whitsun), **Pfingsten,** means a Monday off. That’s what distinguishes a **gesetzlicher Feiertag**: it is **schulfrei** (there’sno school), **arbeitsfrei** (everybody is off work) and the shops are all shut!

Although most holidays are celebrated throughout the country, Germany’s strong regional identities are still evident in the variations, which reflect the predominant religious tradition in each of the 17 federal states (**Länder**). The South and the Rhineland are mainly Catholic and the North and East overwhelmingly Protestant. For an illustration of this regional factor, compare the profiles of the states celebrating on successive days **Reformationstag** and **Allerseelen**.

Finally, there are just three public holidays without religious significance: New Year’s Day, **Neujahrstag**, on 1 January; Labour Day, **Tag der Arbeit,** on 1 May; and **Tag der deutschen Einheit,** 3 October, the anniversary of the day in 1990 when the five states of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) joined the Federal Republic, which is now Germany’s national day.

Find out about German public holidays.

| **Name of holiday** | **Date** | **Where celebrated** |
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| **Neujahr**  New Year’s Day | 1 January | All of Germany |
| **Heilige Drei Könige**  Epiphany | 6 January | Bayern,\* Baden-Württemberg, Sachsen-Anhalt  \*only in predominantly Catholic areas |
| **Karfreitag**  Good Friday | 2 days before Easter Sunday | All of Germany |
| **Ostermontag**  Easter Monday | 1 day after Easter Sunday | All of Germany |
| **Tag der Arbeit**  Labour Day | 1 May | All of Germany |
| **Christi Himmelfahrt**  Ascension Day | Thursday, 4 weeks after Easter | All of Germany |
| **Pfingstmontag**  Whit Monday, Monday after Pentecost | 51 days after Easter Sunday | All of Germany |
| **Fronleichnam**  Corpus Christi | 60 days after Easter Sunday | Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Hessen, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Rheinland-Pfalz, Saarland, Sachsen,\* Thüringen\*  \*in certain areas only |
| **Mariä Himmelfahrt**  Assumption | 15 August | Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Hessen, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Rheinland-Pfalz, Saarland |
| **Tag der deutschen Einheit**  Day of German Unity | 3 October | All of Germany |
| **Reformationstag**  Reformation Day | 31 October | Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Thüringen |
| **Allerheiligen**  All Saints’ Day | 1 November | Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Nordrhein-Westfalen Rheinland-Pfalz, Saarland |
| **Buß- und Bettag**  Day of repentance and prayer | November (variable) | Sachsen |
| **1. Weihnachtstag**  Christmas Day | 25 December | All of Germany |
| **2. Weihnachtstag**  Boxing Day/St Stephen’s Day | 26 December | All of Germany |

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