

# HOLIDAY DRIVING

staying safe while celebrating

-LeeAnn Shattuck

After a long, hot summer, autumn has finally arrived in the Carolinas. With it come shorter days, cooler temperatures (finally!) and the beginning of the holiday season. Although the holidays bring us joy and excitement at the thought of festive parties, family gatherings and delicious food, they also bring many driving dangers.

You may have noticed that the sun has already set by the time most people leave work. Between the decreasing daylight and numerous holiday party invitations, people drive more at night during the holiday season than any other time of year. Yet, most people do not realize the dangers of night driving. According to the National Safety Council, traffic death rates are three times greater at night than during the day. Ninety percent of a driver's ability depends on vision, which can be greatly impaired after dark. Depth perception, color recognition, and peripheral vision are compromised during and after sundown. In fact, twilight is one of the most difficult times to drive, because your eyes are constantly changing to adapt to the growing darkness.

Another holiday driving danger is fatigue. During the holiday season, it is easy to wear yourself out shopping, decorating, and going to parties. Many people drive long distances at a time to visit family and friends. The holiday rush can lead to exhaustion, which makes driving more difficult by dulling concentration and slowing reaction time. College students driving home for the holidays may face a particular risk, especially if they've been sacrificing sleep for studying.

Holiday party-goers should be extra careful driving home from those festive events. While indulging in a cup of eggnog or two can be fun, it is important to remember that alcohol is the leading factor in fatal

traffic accidents. Alcohol also increases the risk of falling asleep behind the wheel. When you are tired, one drink can feel like four or five. Driving home from a party can be especially dangerous if you combine alcohol with fatigue. Watch your own alcohol consumption, don't drive if you feel sleepy, and be alert for other drivers on the road who may be under the influence.

You can further minimize after-dark dangers by following special driving guidelines and properly preparing your car. Turn on your headlights as soon as the sun begins to set. This will not only improve your vision, but it will also make you more visible to others. Reduce speed and increase your following distance at night. No matter how good your vision is, you cannot see beyond your headlights, so maintain a speed that allows you to stop in that distance. Clean your headlights, taillights and the inside and outside of windows at least once a week to maximize your ability to see clearly. Keep flares, a flashlight and a blanket in your car, just in case you have a nighttime breakdown.

The holiday season is the most dangerous time of the year to be on the road. Increased traffic, reduced visibility, exhaustion and alcohol consumption can turn holiday joy into tragedy. However, taking these simple precautions and using good judgment can help you arrive safely at your destination. Happy Holidays!

*LeeAnn Shattuck is the President and "Chief Car Chick" of Women's Automotive Solutions, Inc. Women's Automotive Solutions is a car buying service dedicated to helping women through the entire car selection and buying process. LeeAnn's contact information is included in our Local Business Directory on page 15.*

# CHRISTMAS IN GERMANY

a European treat

-Shirley Moskow

Trees trimmed with glittering ornaments, gingerbread houses, and such familiar carols as "Away in the Manger" are just a few of the holiday season's most enduring traditions that German immigrants brought with them to America.

Christmas in Germany is a special time of year and travelers often plan shopping trips to the country's popular Christmas markets for handicrafts. There are three in Lübeck, a medieval city about 60 miles northeast of Hamburg. And while the stalls do a brisk business catering to holiday shoppers, the long line travelers are likely to encounter in the heart of Old Town leads to Niederegger Chronix.

For more than 200 years, the shop has excelled at the art of marzipan. Marzipan is a simple almond-sugar paste with roots in ancient history. Café Niederegger uses a secret recipe with as little sugar as possible to preserve the almond flavor and aroma. More than 300 kinds of marzipan delicacies fill the elegant shop.

In the practiced hands of baker/artists, marzipan takes the form of fruits, flowers, ships, and life-sized humans as well as tiny figures—whatever the maker can conjure. At Christmas, the marzipan makers go all out. Santas and elves, sleighs and stars, mangers and churches are only a few of the traditional treats that define the season. Talented confectioners carefully paint the marzipan creations with food coloring for amazingly true-to-life effects.

Ardent marzipan aficionados may dispute history books. Books claim that Lübeck's fame rests on its role during the Middle Ages. With a natural harbor near the Baltic Sea, the city served as leader of the union of German trading cities known as the Hanseatic League. The modern city straddles the banks of the Trave River, but the older neighborhoods retain the architecture and ambience travelers

appreciate as "Old World charm."

In the rain or wet with snow, Lübeck's narrow stone streets shine like Christmas ribbon, wrapping blocks of venerable buildings as a gift to travelers. Many of the buildings are open to the public. At the Haus de Schiffergesellschaft, the seamen's meeting place, built in 1535, diners enjoy traditional foods in a softly lit room among model ships and coats of arms. Thirteenth century frescoes decorate the Hellig-Geist-Hospital, Holy Ghost Hospital, now a home for the aged and the setting for one of the city's popular Christmas markets.

Several house museums also welcome visitors. The 18th century Buddenbrooks House is named for author Thomas Mann's 1901 novel "Buddenbrooks." It was the home of the Nobel Prize-winning writer's grandparents, whom he visited frequently. The two front rooms are furnished as he described them in his book. Readers will recognize the view out the front windows, too.

The arcaded Town hall, Rathaus, has many small paned windows and a roof crowned with steeples and typical triangular, crow-stepped gables (stair-steps). Begun in 1230, it is among the oldest and most magnificent buildings in Germany.

Two of the original four gates to the old part of town remain, the Burgtor (1444) and Holstentor (1478). The western gate, the Holstentor is impressive. It may be the architectural feature most identified with the city.

The Holstentor, sometimes called the "Holstein Gate," is conveniently located opposite Niederegger's Café, just the place to stop and enjoy a marzipan treat with coffee or tea. Before leaving, visit the museum on the second floor. It recounts the company's history and displays extraordinary examples of marzipan art.

## READER REFERRAL<sup>SM</sup> FORM

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### PLANNING A PROJECT???

**Within the next few months, I plan to purchase the following goods or services (and will need a new service provider).**

**CHECK ALL BOXES THAT APPLY, AND CIRCLE ANY CHOICES WITH MULTIPLE OPTIONS.**

#### CHILDREN SERVICES

- School: Pre-school/Daycare, Private
- Camp
- Music Lessons or Classes
- Language Services

#### HOME DECORATING

- Interior Decorator
- Supplies: Paint/Wallpaper, Hardware, Etc.
- Drapes & Blinds
- Fireplace Accessories
- Picture Framing
- Closet Organizers
- Weekly Cleaning Service

#### HOME IMPROVEMENT

- Fences/Sheds/Gazebos
- Painter/Painting Co.
- New Deck/Patio, Addition/Sunroom
- Above-ground or In-Ground Pool
- Spa/Jacuzzi
- New Boiler/Heating System, Central A/C
- Security Systems
- Kitchen Remodel: Cabinets, Storage, Etc.
- Bath Remodel: Showers, Tubs, Faucets, Etc.
- Lighting
- Countertops: Tile, Granite, Etc.
- Flooring: Hardwood, Tile, Carpet, Etc.

#### HOME FURNISHINGS

- New Furniture (Bedroom, LR, DR, other)
- Mattress/Futon
- Oriental Rugs, Area Rugs, Etc.
- New Major Appliance(s)
- Wide Screen TV/Home Theatre/Sound System/Wireless Network
- Wholesale Furniture/Furnishings

#### LAWN & GARDEN

- Landscaper/Gardener/Tree Removal
- Garden Equipment/Lawn Mower
- Bird Feeders
- Patio Furniture

#### PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

- Dentist (Adult/Family)
- Optician
- Chiropractor
- Electrologist
- Hospital/HMO
- Tax Preparer/Accountant
- Insurance Agent: Home, Life, Auto, Health
- Bank/Mortgage Company
- Real Estate Broker
- Veterinarian

#### PERSONAL SERVICES

- Computer Training/Consulting/Troubleshooting
- Therapeutic Massage
- Hair Salon
- Pet Sitting/Pet Walking
- Daily/Weekly Newspaper Subscription

#### SPORTS & RECREATION

- New Fitness Club
- Golf Course
- Golf Supplies
- Martial Arts (Adult/Children)
- Sports Equipment

#### OTHER

- Automotive Repair (Collision, Mechanical)
- Cars (New/Used)
- Boats, RVs
- Major Jewelry Purchase(s)
- Apparel
- Books
- Major Vacation (Airline, Hotel)
- Computer/ Internet Services

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