

Inside the Alabama Town Rising as a National Christmas Attraction

Alabama town of 20,000 hosts one of America's largest German Christmas markets, welcoming 370,000+ visitors to its 9-acre wonderland

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EINPresswire.com/ -- In a small Southern town of just 20,000 people, Christmas has become both big business and an even bigger source of joy. Each winter, Cullman transforms into a charming European- style holiday village known as the [Cullman Christkindlmarkt](#), now regarded by many as one of the largest and most authentic German-style Christmas markets in the United States.



Guests enter the Cullman Christkindlmarkt under the Christmas Pyramid and Ferris Wheel

“

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Founded in 1873 by German settlers, Cullman has long celebrated its heritage through its architecture, cuisine, and community traditions. The Christkindlmarkt feels like a natural continuation of that legacy, a modern expression of the same craftsmanship and community pride that shaped the town more than a century and a half ago.

What began in 2019 with just eight wooden vendor huts and a handful of local artisans has evolved into a nine-acre festival that welcomed over 370,000 visitors from 48 states in 2024. Wooden huts, built by local craftsmen, line the

walkways under a canopy of twinkling lights. The smell of roasted nuts, chimney cakes, and warm Glühwein fills the air as families gather around fire pits, carolers sing in both German and English, and Saint Nicholas stops to greet smiling children.

“From our humble launch to now reaching nearly nine acres of German-themed wonderland, our

small community has shown what vision, teamwork, and authenticity can create,” said Nathan Anderson, Executive Director of Cullman Parks, Recreation & Sports Tourism. “We set out to bring the charm of Germany’s Christmas markets to the heart of the South, and today, Cullman is delivering that experience on a scale that rivals some of the most iconic holiday destinations in the country.”

This year’s event will be the largest yet, featuring nearly 80 merchants and European-style food vendors spread across more than 1,500 linear feet of handcrafted wooden stalls. Among the newest additions is Käthe Wohlfahrt, Germany’s most famous Christmas store, opening its first Alabama location inside Festhalle Market Platz, the state’s largest timber-frame structure. Visitors can browse handmade goods, sip mulled wine, and watch master craftsmen at work.



Christkindlmarkt Visitors shop and talk with vendors down a cozy market alley.



Bird eye view of the largest outdoor ice skating rink in Alabama and warming igloos at night.

Around every corner, guests find something unexpected. The market offers Alabama’s largest outdoor ice rink, a 108-foot Ferris wheel, a rare Venetian-style double-decker carousel, a 100-foot tubing slide, a festive swing ride, and live artisan demonstrations by a world-record-holding glassblower, a Ukrainian blacksmith, and a traditional coppersmith. Each brings a piece of Old-World artistry to the American South.

At the center of it all stands a new showpiece: a 46-foot-wide, 21-foot-tall walk-through Schwibbogen, or candle arch, inspired by the arch at Dresden’s famous Striezelmarkt. Built entirely of wood and anchored to a steel bridge that allows guests to climb for a sweeping view of the Christmas market below, the structure is believed to be the largest walk-through wooden Schwibbogen in the world.

“Walking through the market, surrounded by the sounds of carols, the scent of fresh-baked pretzels, and the glow of beautifully decorated huts, it truly feels like an experience you’d have to travel to Germany to find,” said Cullman Mayor Woody Jacobs. “It’s a proud moment for our city, seeing our staff, local businesses, and volunteers come together to create an event that celebrates our heritage and welcomes visitors from across the nation.”

Located in downtown Cullman's Depot Park and the nearby Warehouse District, the Christkindlmarkt has become the city's hallmark winter celebration, blending German heritage with Southern hospitality. What began as a seasonal attraction has also become an important boost to the local economy, helping nearby restaurants and shops stay busy throughout the holiday season.

"The Christkindlmarkt has completely transformed our holiday season," said Ryne Ashley, owner of Ashley Mercantile, a boutique general store located near the market's south entrance. "People come in looking for something they can't find at a big-box store—handcrafted gifts, local goods, and a personal touch. We meet visitors from all over the country who are drawn to the charm of our downtown. It's brought incredible energy and opportunity for small businesses and a real sense of pride to Cullman."

Even as the event grows to national prominence, it hasn't lost the charm that makes it unique. Guests linger by the fire with mugs of Glühwein, watch children skating under strings of lights, and often stop to talk with Mr. Clark and Mr. Caples—the local craftsmen who helped bring this Bavarian-inspired village to life. Those personal touches are what give the Christkindlmarkt its unmistakable sense of authenticity and hometown pride.

"What makes Cullman special is that even as the Christkindlmarkt draws more tourists, it still feels close and personal," Anderson said. "You can sense the pride people take in welcoming visitors here. That feeling of connection is what truly sets this market apart."

As word spreads, one of America's most remarkable Christmas experiences is no longer hidden in a major city. It's found in a small Alabama town where history, heart, and holiday spirit have turned Cullman into one of the nation's most talked-about Christmas destinations.

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