



# *PODCAST*

# *TRANSCRIPT*

Episode 152:

Title: "Christmas Markets: Alsace and Beyond"

Duration: 19:01

How to use this transcript:

1. Print this transcript:

We try to reduce our paper consumption, but we really recommend that you print out this document.

2. Write on it and take notes:

Circle, highlight and note anything that you want. We have even provided space for you to do so!

3. Listen first **without** the transcript:

Don't worry about understanding every single word. Just focus on training your ears to the sound of English.

4. Listen again **with** the transcript:

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00:00	<p>Welcome to the Déclic Anglais Podcast, THE podcast for intermediate, French-speaking learners of English. This podcast is like a steppingstone (<i>un tremplin</i>) to help you understand more advanced materials in English. There is a transcript (<i>une transcription</i>) available for this and every episode of this podcast. You can download the transcript for free from the link in the description of this episode. Or go to <a href="http://www.declicanglais.com/podcast">www.declicanglais.com/podcast</a>.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
01:06	<p>Hello, dear listeners, and welcome to this special, winter episode! As always, thank you very much for joining me. If you don't know me already, my name is Tom – I am your guide to the English language.</p> <p>I am a British English teacher, living in Alsace, France. This episode is being released in December 2025. I love this time of year for one simple reason: the Christmas markets (<i>les marchés de Noël</i>).</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
01:59	<p>If you have ever walked through rows of wooden stalls decorated with lights, smelled the hot mulled wine and roasted chestnuts (<i>le vin chaud et les marrons grillés</i>), and felt that special warmth in the cold winter air, you know what I'm talking about.</p> <p>Christmas markets are now famous all over the world, but where did they come from? How did they start? And what makes them so special? Let's find out together!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

02:50	<p>Our story begins in Germany, in the late Middle Ages. That's around the 14th and 15th centuries - over 600 years ago!</p> <p>Back then, winter was a difficult time for people. Just think about it, dear listeners. They didn't have all of the modern comforts that we have today. The days were short, cold, and dark. Food was harder to find. But there was one bright spot in the middle of winter: Christmas. And people needed to prepare for it.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
03:45	<p>In some German-speaking regions (including Alsace!) towns began organizing special markets in December. In these special markets, people came together to buy what they needed for the long winter and for the Christmas celebrations.</p> <p>One of the very first Christmas markets was the "Striezelmarkt" in Dresden, in the east of Germany. The Striezelmarkt started in 1434. Can you imagine? That's almost 600 years of Christmas market tradition! The word "Striezel" comes from a special kind of Christmas bread - kind of like a fruit cake.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

04:50	<p>These early markets were quite practical. Farmers and craftspeople (<i>des artisans</i>) sold winter supplies, such as warm clothes, tools, preserved food, and yes, special treats for Christmas. There were candles (<i>des bougies</i>), toys made of wood, and decorations for the home.</p> <p>But the most important market day was often the Monday before Christmas. In German, this day was called "Klausenmarkt" - named after Saint Nicholas, or "Klaus" in German.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
05:56	<p>So why did these markets become so popular? What made them different from regular markets?</p> <p>First, they happened at a special time - Advent (<i>l'Avant</i>), the four weeks before Christmas. This made them feel special because they were temporary. You couldn't go to a Christmas market in July! This limited time made people excited to visit them, which is also the case today. Part of the attraction of Christmas markets is that they are seasonal.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
06:46	<p>Second, they sold special things that you couldn't find at other times of the year. There were handmade Christmas decorations, special foods, and treats. Everything was about celebrating the season.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

07:10	<p>Third, these markets brought light to the darkest time of year. Remember, dear listeners, there was no electricity back then. The markets had lanterns, candles, and fire. In the cold, dark winter, this light was beautiful and comforting.</p> <p>And finally, these markets were social events. The dark winter nights could be lonely, especially if you lived in an isolated part of the country. So, the Christmas market was a place to see your neighbours, meet friends, and feel part of a community.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
08:06	<p>Now, let's talk about a region that's very special in the history of Christmas markets: Alsace. For many of you, my French listeners, you might know Alsace well – or you might even live in Alsace, yourself.</p> <p>For those of you who are not sure, Alsace is the region in the northeast of France, between the Vosges mountains and the Rhine River (<i>le Rhin</i>), near the German and Swiss border. Alsace is also my adoptive region of France!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
08:55	<p>Alsace has a unique history. For many centuries, it was part of the German-speaking world. It was under the influence of the Holy Roman Empire (<i>le saint-Empire romain germanique</i>), and also the Habsburg Empire, based in today's Austria.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

09:25	<p>It later became French, then German again, then French again. This back-and-forth (<i>this exchange</i>) created an interesting mix of French and German culture. And nowhere is this mix more visible than in the Christmas markets!</p> <p>The most famous Christmas market in Alsace is in Strasbourg. The "Christkindelsmärik" - that's the Alsatian name - started in 1570. That makes it one of the oldest Christmas markets in Europe! For over 450 years, people have been coming to Strasbourg in December to experience this magical market.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
10:28	<p>What makes Strasbourg's market so special? Well, first, the setting is lovely. The old town of Strasbourg, with its half-timbered houses (<i>les maisons à colombages</i>) and narrow streets, looks like something from a fairy tale. Personally, my favourite view of Strasbourg during the Christmas season is looking up the Rue Mercière, from near Place Gutenberg. It gives you an amazing view of the façade of the cathedral, Notre Dame de Strasbourg. And when you add the Christmas lights and decorations, it becomes even more beautiful.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
11:24	<p>But dear listeners, Strasbourg is not my favourite Christmas market in Alsace.</p> <p><i>QUOI ?! Comment ça, Tom – Strasbourg n'est pas ton marché de Noël préféré ? Verdommi noch à mol !**</i></p> <p><i>**Exclamation alsacien, exprime la surprise et/ou quand quelque chose ne va pas comme on veut.**</i></p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

11:42	<p>Aaah no, I'm sorry to all of my listeners in Strasbourg... I love Strasbourg, but unfortunately, it's a little bit too crowded for me, there are too many people.</p> <p>Personally, I prefer the smaller Christmas markets in smaller towns along the Alsatian Wine Road. <i>(Personnellement, je préfère les petits marchés de Noël dans les petites villes le long de la route des vins d'Alsace)</i>. For example, Kayserberg, Riquewihr, or Eguisheim.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
12:23	<p>So, dear listeners, what can you find in the Christmas markets of Alsace?</p> <p>Well, you can always find stalls <i>(des stands)</i> selling traditional Alsatian crafts. You can find ornaments, wooden toys, pottery, and beautiful nativity scenes. But for me, naturally, my favourite is always the food and drink. Yes, dear listeners, I always think with my stomach first!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
13:02	<p>There are the famous Alsatian Christmas biscuits: "<i>les bredele</i>" (if you live in the Bas-Rhin), or "<i>les bredala</i>" (if you live in the Haut-Rhin). Oh yes, you can find thousands of varieties of bredala! <i>(Oui, il existe un débat entre les Alsaciens sur la prononciation correcte – bredala ou bredele. Il vaut mieux que je reste neutre, car je ne veux pas me retrouver banni d'Alsace !)</i>.</p> <p>And of course, we must not forget the famous <i>pain d'épices</i> (or gingerbread in English).</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

13:44	<p>I also love the savoury food that we can find at Christmas markets. (<i>Savoury food = des plats salés</i>). Like choucroute or Schupfnudeln... Good food for insulating your body against the cold!</p> <p>And talking of protecting yourself against the cold, there is of course the famous <i>vin chaud</i> – in English “mulled wine”! You might also hear it called by its German name “Glühwein”. On a cold December evening, holding a warm cup of mulled wine while walking through the market – ah, what could be better than that, dear listeners?</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
14:40	<p>So, as I mentioned earlier, Strasbourg isn't the only city in Alsace with a beautiful Christmas market. Colmar, Riquewihr, Obernai, Mulhouse... all well-known Christmas markets. And you will find that quite a few towns and villages in Alsace have some smaller ones that take place perhaps only over one weekend. It's important to check the dates!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
15:14	<p>The Christmas markets began in the German-speaking parts of Europe, and now that tradition has spread (<i>s'est répandue</i>) across Europe.</p> <p>In my native United Kingdom, Christmas markets are becoming increasingly popular. Growing up in Wales during the 1990s and 2000s, I never saw a Christmas market. But now, it seems that more and more towns and cities are having them.</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>



15:57	<p>It's always interesting to note that, at least in Britain, the Christmas markets always have a bit of a German theme to them: Glühwein, Bratwurst, and sauerkraut. But as some of you listeners may know, I am a bit of a Germanophile – so I certainly don't mind!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
16:19	<p>While I was researching for this episode, I discovered that there are even Christmas markets in Australia! For example, the Jolly Night Market takes place in Sydney. It has Christmas lights, Christmas music, stalls selling handmade gifts and Christmas food. December is the summer in Australia, and the temperatures can reach 25 to 30 degrees Celsius. It must be quite different celebrating Christmas in such hot weather!</p> <p>But I can't imagine that the mulled wine (<i>le vin chaud</i>) is very nice in 30-degree heat. Perhaps a nice cold glass of Christmas beer would be better!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

17:23	<p>So there you have it, dear listeners - the story of Christmas markets, from medieval Germany to modern times, with special attention to the beautiful markets of Alsace.</p> <p>Whether you're in Strasbourg, Dresden, London, or Sydney Australia - Christmas markets carry the same spirit: bringing people together, celebrating tradition, and making the dark winter days brighter.</p> <p>If you ever get the chance to visit a Christmas market, I highly recommend it. And if you're in France, the markets of Alsace are absolutely worth the trip!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>
18:13	<p>Thank you very much for listening today, dear listeners. Don't forget to like our podcast, perhaps leave us a nice message. And if you are very motivated, why not check out <i>The Déclic Anglais Club</i> – our online learning platform. Just go to <a href="http://www.declicanglais.com">www.declicanglais.com</a> for more information.</p> <p>Until next time, dear listeners - happy learning, and happy holidays.</p> <p>Bye for now!</p> <p><i>(Ecrivez vos notes ici).</i></p>

## How did it go?

Take a moment to revisit the notes that you took.

List here 3 words or expressions (minimum) that you would like to remember from this podcast. We recommend that you consult a free, online dictionary like

[www.wordreference.com](http://www.wordreference.com) to ensure that you have the correct definition and context.

### **WORDS/EXPRESSIONS THAT I WANT TO REMEMBER:**

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