

EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS & TRADITIONS

Linnea and Wolf Koch have been visiting European Christmas Markets together since 1982. Wolf, born in Germany, was familiar with these markets from an early age and wanted to introduce them to Linnea after they met. The markets are full of colors, lights, traditional foods and music, and best of all, regional handcrafts. The sights and sounds put one in the Christmas Spirit. Small towns “share” vendors, who will set up their booths for several days in one town and travel on to the next for several days and so on for the period of Advent to Christmas Eve. The cities’ Christmas Markets run the full Advent season.

Farmers Markets in the cities and small towns of Europe are the precursors of Christmas Markets and date back millennia. Learn the history of these markets as they have grown through the centuries into the huge multi-day events of today. Visit the city markets of Cologne and Nuremburg and travel to the Black Forest towns of Saint Blasien, Waldshut, Freiburg and Basel. The market stalls offer various Christmas food specialties and handcrafts that are specific to the city or region. Store windows display both traditional and modern holiday decorations and gift ideas. Larger markets offer entertainment and Christmas programs. Enjoy the many Christmas lights as the sun sets and night falls. The program ends with a visit to the German markets in Chicago and suburban Naperville.

Linnea Koch, the daughter of an artist, has had an interest and worked in many different media, from painting and sculpture to etching and weaving. While she had fun with a simple camera during childhood, photography really became interesting when she received her first SLR camera in high school, a used early Exa (Exakta). That camera kept her looking for unusual subject matter, creating a new way of seeing common place subjects. From the beaches on Lake Michigan to travels around the country, as well as explorations in Europe, she has searched for intriguing subjects to photograph. Her photos have been published in corporate publications, calendars, books, including covers of nautical chart books. She has owned and operated a graphic design studio for over three decades, is an Illinois Master Gardener with a special interest in native shade plants, and has given many talks on local landmarks, shade gardening and some of the wonderful gardens here and in Europe.

Wolf Koch was photographing with an old Agfa in his his early teens. He acquired one of the iconic range finder cameras, a Canon 7s, in the late 1960s, moved on to SLRs and twin-lens reflex cameras, established a darkroom and processed his own color slides. His engineering job brought him to the Midwest, where he spent two decades also teaching as an adjunct professor of engineering and became a founder of SciTech-Hands-on Museum in Aurora, Il, one of the first science centers in the Midwest to portray difficult concepts in easily understood demonstrations and displays. In 1995, Wolf founded Technology Resources International, Inc., a consulting firm specializing in petroleum products distribution technology. With more than 50 publications and 30 patents, he continues to consult, lecture and write on energy-related and other technical topics. Balancing these left-brain activities with more creative matters, he has spent the last two decades also developing presentations on a wide range of historical topics and various photography seminars.