



in.Stuttgart

Veranstaltungsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG

## Press-Information

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Gastronomic variety and breathtaking attractions

## The history of the Cannstatt Folk Festival

Stuttgart - "Landwirtschaftliches Fest zu Kannstadt" - that was the name of the folk festival at its premiere in 1818. And this name was no accident. When the Tambora volcano - located on the Indonesian island of Sumbawa - erupted more than 200 years ago, throwing so much debris and ash into the atmosphere that a kind of veil formed around the earth, this led to climate changes in large parts of Europe. In the Kingdom of Württemberg, cold and gloomy summers followed in 1815 and 1816, with crop failures. When people finally had food again after a long period of hardship, the monarch drew his lessons from the hard years. He wanted to reform agriculture and educate the farmers. In 1817, King Wilhelm I founded the "Centralstelle des landwirtschaftlichen Vereins" (Central Office of the Agricultural Association) together with his wife Katharina. He also wanted to endow a festival out of gratitude to his people.

### The first Cannstatt folk festival

The following year, on September 28, 1818, one day after the king's 36th birthday, the time had come: the Cannstatt Folk Festival was held for the first time. And since then, the Cannstatter Wasen has also been the venue for the great festivity. At that time, it was an idyllic, probably also somewhat damp Neckar meadow without surrounding buildings, situated between meadows and vineyards on the Neckar, which had not yet been dammed. Within sight was the royal Villa Bellevue at the Wilhelma, the only zoological-botanical garden in Germany. A short journey by carriage for the founder of the festival, who did not miss the opportunity to ceremoniously open the festival and witness a successful start.

First the work, then the pleasure - with this original Swabian and down-to-earth motto, the foundation of the folk festival as a harvest festival can be appropriately described. In the form of the main agricultural festival, which now takes place every four years parallel to the actual folk festival and is the largest trade exhibition for agriculture, forestry and the food industry in southern Germany, the original idea of the "king among farmers and farmer among kings," as Wilhelm I was called by his contemporaries, lives on to this day.

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### **Folk festival procession for the first time in 1841**

There have almost always been parades through the streets of Stuttgart to the folk festival at the Cannstatter Wasen. From the year 1841 is reported of a parade with more than 10,000 participants and well over 100,000 spectators along the streets. At that time the city had only 40,000 inhabitants. The Volksfest parade in today's sense with official start at the Cannstatt Kursaal took place for the first time in 1927. In 1911, the hometown of Gottlieb Daimler and Wilhelm Maybach hosted the first Volksfest motorcade.

In the early days, the Volksfest booths with carnies and beer dispensing were still few in number and remained on the outskirts of the actual festival grounds in favor of the royal box and the honorary grandstands. Then, in 1860, the Amts- und Intelligenzblatt für das Oberamt Cannstatt spoke of a scene similar to today's, according to which the stalls were "arranged in three main streets and numerous side streets" for the first time. From 1882 on, on the instruction of King Karl, son and successor of Wilhelm I, the Cannstatt Folk Festival was no longer held annually, but only every two years. This regulation remained in place until the death of the king in 1891. It is due to this circumstance and the effects of both world wars that a total of 28 years remained without a folk festival.

### **Largest festival in the southwest a crowd puller from the start**

Over the decades, the Cannstatt Folk Festival has constantly evolved and managed to combine tradition with modernity in an appealing and unique way. The largest festival in Baden-Württemberg attracts around four million visitors every year. Even in the early years, the number of festival participants was noticeably higher than the combined population of Stuttgart and Cannstatt. According to contemporary records, more than 30,000 participants and guests attended the festival from 1818 onwards. A journey from all parts of the kingdom, sometimes lasting several days, was even made by some put up with. And if you consider that the first Cannstatt Folk Festival lasted just one day, namely September 28, 1818, the number of visitors for that day is really impressive. The event was therefore a real crowd-puller even in its early days and has remained so to this day. Few times has the folk festival lasted as long as it does today. In the 19th century there was at first only one, a little later three, then four, and from the late twenties of the 20th century finally five festival days. After the Second World War, at the beginning of the fifties, the festival lasted ten

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days, then twelve, and since 1972, 16. Since 2007, the folk festival has lasted 17 days, as the opening was brought forward from Saturday to Friday. In the meantime, it is no longer just the largest and most important festival in Baden-Württemberg, but the second largest folk festival in the republic and thus one of the largest in the world.

### **Landmark visible from afar - the fruit column**

The fruit column is the landmark of the Cannstatt Folk Festival. Already at the first folk festival in 1818, there was a towering column decorated with many fruits, grains and vegetables. Thus, this symbol still reminds us of the origin of the Volksfest as an agricultural festival. The first fruit column had been donated by King Wilhelm I and designed and built by the then Württemberg court architect Nikolaus Friedrich von Thouret.

After the First World War, because of this origin and the royal blue color, it was considered a "monarchist relic" and was not erected for several years. For the 100th folk festival in 1935, this tradition was resumed. Since then, it decorates the fairground every year. Today's fruit column was created in 1972 and was modeled on the historical model in diameter, height and color. It is 26 meters high, stands on a five meter high pedestal and weighs about three tons. The bowl, which sits on the top of the column and is decorated with pointed cabbages, giant apples and sunflowers, weighs an additional 600 kilograms. The outer part of the column is made of wood, inside there is a steel structure. The appearance of the fruit column has changed many times over the decades. Since 1976, four Stuttgart Rössle have been enthroned on the top - which did not immediately please every Cannstatt resident with a strong sense of tradition and home. In the meantime, it is impossible to imagine the decorative bowl without the heraldic animal of the state capital.

In recent years, the fruit column has been given a makeover. The base has received a border with tall grasses, from which the column visually "grows out" like a plant. Above it is a stylized crown of grain. This symbolism is intended to recall the origins of the tradition-rich event as a harvest festival and its founder King William I. The central section of the blue steel structure is adorned with garlands, while a two-tone banderole of glossy foil in yellow and red sets off the fruit column at the top. Finally, for the 172nd Cannstatt Folk Festival in 2017, the "Pferdle" shining in Stuttgart's city colors was renewed.

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While the fruit column was dismantled and stored every year after the end of the fair until 1995, in the following years it remained on the Wasen grounds all year round on a trial basis. Consequently, it could also be seen during the Stuttgart Spring Festival. For a few years now, only the column and the bowl are dismantled and the substructure - a permanently installed pavilion that supports the Cannstatter Kanne during the Spring Festival - is left standing.

[www.cannstatter-volksfest.de](http://www.cannstatter-volksfest.de)

[www.facebook.com/Wasen.de](https://www.facebook.com/Wasen.de)

[www.instagram.com/cannstatterwasen/](https://www.instagram.com/cannstatterwasen/)

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