



Press release

03/2023

A foray through the history of the Wiesn (Oktoberfest fairground)

The origin

Four years after Bavaria became a kingdom, Crown Prince Ludwig, later King Ludwig I, married Princess Therese of Saxe-Hildburghausen on October 12, 1810. The official wedding celebrations lasted five days. The festivities in the city centre, which were already called a “folk fair” at the time, ended on October 17 with a horse race on the grasslands outside the gates of Munich. Children in traditional Bavarian costumes paid homage to the attending members of the royal family with poems, flowers and fruits of the land. In honour of the bride, the fairground was named “Theresens-Wiese”. This is still the name of the Oktoberfest grounds today: “Theresienwiese” – in Munich parlance called the “Wiesn” for short.

Public popularity takes root

The decision to repeat the popular horse race at the same time the following year gave rise to the tradition of the "OktoberFeste". In 1811, the horse race was supplemented by the first agricultural festival as a trade exhibition to promote the Bavarian farming sector.

While the horse race, the oldest part of the event, disappeared from the Wiesn after 1938 for organisational reasons, the "Bayerische Zentral-





Landwirtschaftsfest (Bavarian Central Agricultural Fair" (ZLF)) is still held every four years in the southern part of the grounds during the Oktoberfest. Since visitor statistics were first recorded in 1980, between 5 and 7 million people have visited the Munich Oktoberfest every year, making it the most popular and largest folk festival in the world to this day.

From beer stalls to beer castles

The tiny booths rapidly became more numerous and supplied the visitors with beer. The first huge beer castles were set up from 1896 onwards by enterprising innkeepers in cooperation with the breweries. Soon, hearty light meals and traditional Munich delicacies were also on offer and, over time, the so-called Wirtsbudenstrasse (street of the beer tents) came into being. Today, 14 large and 20 small beer tents offer all the culinary delights that visitors need for their Oktoberfest bliss and that make the Wiesn so unique in the world.

Public entertainment

The other part of the fairground is shaped by the operators rides. In 1818, the first merry-go-round and two swings were set up – a modest offering of public amusement during the early decades. In the 1880s, the German showman's trade and the carousel industry began to flourish. This laid the foundation for the Wiesn as we know it today: a wide range of rides, entertainment, fairground booths and much more to delight young and old.

The dark chapters of the Wiesn history

Since 1810, the Oktoberfest was cancelled 26 times, mostly due to wars. But the fair could not take place either because of inflation in 1923 and




1924 and because of the cholera epidemics in 1854 and 1875. After each of the two world wars, replacement festivals were held on a smaller scale. Most recently, the Oktoberfest had to be cancelled twice due to the corona pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

On the evening of 26 September 1980, a bomb exploded at the main entrance to the fairgrounds. In the explosion, 13 people lost their lives and more than 200 suffered injuries. Each year, on the anniversary of the assassination, a commemoration ceremony is held with the head mayor at the specially erected memorial near the main entrance of Oktoberfest.

The Wiesn here and now

The Oktoberfest is still the major traditional Munich folk fair, where Munich hospitality reigns and Munich beer is consumed. Therefore, according to the fair's operating regulations, "only Munich beers from the efficient and proven traditional Munich breweries (these are currently: Augustinerbrauerei, Hacker-Pschorrbrauerei, Löwenbräu, Paulanerbrauerei, Spatenbrauerei and Staatliches Hofbräuhaus that comply with the Münchner Reinheitsgebot (Munich Purity Law) of 1487 and the Deutsches Reinheitsgebot (German Purity Law) of 1906, may be served."

For more than 180 years, the Oktoberfest has been hosted by the City of Munich and the development of the fair is controlled by the municipal authorities. Clemens Baumgärtner, Head of the Department of Labor and Economic Development, is responsible for organising and running the event. At his suggestion, all important decisions are made by the Economics Committee of Munich City Council. Over 1,000 applications



from ride and attraction operators and market traders are received and assessed each year. In the end, around 550 applicants are admitted.

Today, the Oktoberfest – a fair of the state capital Munich – is considered the largest folk festival in the world and enjoys an international reputation. What is special about the Wiesn is that it successfully manages the balancing act between a folk festival for Munich locals and a major international event and that it always remembers its roots but is open to new developments. In 2010, the world-famous folk fair was duly celebrated with the anniversary festival called "200 Years of Oktoberfest": Nostalgic charm and a cosy atmosphere characterised the fairgrounds on the southern part of the Theresienwiese. Due to the event's great success with the public, the Munich City Council had the "Oide Wiesn" designed as a permanent attraction in 2011, reminiscent of the Oktoberfests of yesteryear.

To protect the term "Oktoberfest", the City of Munich has registered various word trademarks and word and figurative trademarks in 2022. For example, they managed to protect the "Oktoberfest" as a trademark internationally at the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO). For the first time in its history, a uniform brand identity and central visual framework was developed for the consistent marketing of the "Oktoberfest". To this end, all the classic elements of corporate design were integrated into the creative process: a logo, a word/ figurative mark, as well as the development of an own font. Since then, this logo has carried the values and zest of the fair into the analogue and digital world.



Contact

Oktoberfest Press Office
Tel.: +49 (0) 89 233-82813
E-Mail: oktoberfest.presse@muenchen.de
www.oktoberfest.de/presse



Facebook: www.facebook.com/oktoberfest



Instagram: www.instagram.com/oktoberfest



Offizielle Oktoberfest App: www.oktoberfest.de/app

Oktoberfest – das Fest der Landeshauptstadt München