



**Press release November 2009**

## **Dazzling new attractions at the Magic of Advent in Vienna**

**A novel lighting concept ensures that the Magic of Advent in Vienna will make an even bigger impression in 2009. The event — featuring the Vienna Christ Child and numerous attractions for children inside and in front of Vienna City Hall — has been named Europe’s most child-friendly by the international press. This year it will be even more enchanting with the addition of thousands of glittering new arrivals.**

“The Vienna Christmas Market, the beautifully decorated Rathauspark and the Christmas Workshop inside City Hall provide the perfect blend of traditional and contemporary attractions,” said Deputy Mayor of Vienna, Renate Brauner at the presentation of this year’s program.

On November 14 the Magic of Advent Christmas market will open its doors on City Hall Square where countless highlights await. A mouth-watering aroma of roast chestnuts, gingerbread and punch hangs in the air around the 140 festive stands. Here, visitors quickly find that the Christmas shopping more or less takes care of itself. One thing, however, is definitely not on sale – toy weapons of any sort are taboo.

The Magic of Advent in Vienna’s fun-packed kids’ program brings countless yuletide fairytales to life. The magnificent Christmas tree — this year from Carinthia — is a favorite meeting point for young and old. This year’s spruce is about 100 years old, towers 27 meters into the sky and comes from the municipality of Gurk. At the opening ceremony the tree will twinkle with about 1,000 LEDs. This technology saves 90% of the cost of traditional tree lighting. Choral concerts, brass bands, the crib exhibition and the delightfully and imaginatively decorated trees in Rathauspark are among the perennial favorites.



### **Dazzling lighting**

At this year's Magic of Advent all eyes will be on the special lighting concept. **Glittering angels** line the Rathauspark – a total of 18 can be found along the section of the Ringstrasse boulevard between the Parliament and the University. And as night falls they really start to shine. The entrance areas are marked by the Starry Night and Falling Snowflakes archways which beckon visitors to cross the threshold and enter the enchanting world of the Magic of Advent in Vienna. The sheer variety and beauty of the snowflakes and the twinkling stars creates a wonderful wintry charm as they shimmer and sparkle in a wealth of colors and designs.

The new lighting concept extends into the Rathauspark where two new trees await: the Sun Gold Oak and a traditionally decorated Christmas tree. The light reflects off the Sun Gold Oak's outsized leaves in constantly changing patterns, making the new tree a favorite sport for souvenir photos. The second tree featuring new decorations is adorned with traditional Christmas baubles. The red bows on each bauble are set with numerous light sources to create a three-dimensional effect.

All of these lighting displays use LEDs, a technology that combines excellent effects with energy efficiency. Energy saving will continue to play a central role at the Magic of Advent. The light installations throughout the entire Rathauspark require the same amount of electricity as an electric oven – a technological advance that makes the twinkling lights even more enjoyable.

### **Smiling eyes and rosy cheeks**

The Magic of Advent in Vienna is famed for its packed and varied kids' program. The wonders never cease for the little ones – they are constantly smiling and laughing as they enjoy the attractions in the Rathauspark and join in the arts and crafts fun inside City Hall. All the classics will be returning to the park once again this year – pony rides, the merry-go-round and the Christmas Express are an absolute must for children of all ages. Even the youngest visitors can be heard to confidently cry "I want a ride on the Christmas Express train!"



There will also be storytelling at the Reading Tower pavilion where readers bring the magical world of books to life for young and old. And with any luck Erich Schleyer will put in an appearance and hold the children at the Reading Tower in thrall with a story of his own.

And on the other side of the Rathauspark visitors will find Robert Steiner and cheeky rat Rolf Rüdiger at Radio Wien's interactive **WOW-Studio**. There is plenty to learn about the world of radio broadcasting. And anyone who knows Rolf Rüdiger will know that his questions such as "What is a microphone for?", "How do you conduct an interview?", "What is a live intro?" aren't all that easy to answer. Even the adults will have trouble keeping a straight face.

At the **Frosti and the Talking Owl Pavilion** visitors press the buzzer to bring the talking tree to life and enjoy a Christmas tale complete with plenty of lively facial expressions. But while the tree is telling the story the owl awakes from its slumber and starts talking to the children! The story is of course all about the Magic of Advent in Vienna and the beautifully decorated Rathauspark. The pavilion is run by a team of entertainers who sing a Christmas song with the children once the tale draws to an end. And even the very youngest quickly learn what they have to do to make the story start all over again. And on it goes to the **tour bus with angel band** fountain decoration and the Teddy Bears' Christmas Market archway where smiling eyes and red cheeks are the order of the day.

### **Christmas workshop**

The Christmas Workshop inside City Hall is always a major highlight, no matter what the weather is like outside. And if the children don't already have glowing cheeks from the chilly temperatures outdoors, they certainly will here thanks to all the concentration and excitement! The young craftfolk and bakers really get into the swing of things as they feverishly work away, with their parents looking on.

Anyone who thinks that it is always the same year in, year out is sorely mistaken. New creative projects are introduced each year at the Christmas Workshop – after all, the aim is to encourage the children's love of arts and crafts. Besides it simply wouldn't do for mum and dad or grandma and grandpa to find the same homemade gift beneath the tree every single year.



In 2009 the projects for the various age categories include vase decoration, picture frame or tea light holder painting, necklace making, candle decoration, tissue box making and coaster design. Now it is time for the children to follow their noses to the bakery just by the exit. Here you will find budding bakers aged three and over at work — and stamping out Christmas cookies is a tiring job. Afterwards, they have to test the goods to make sure all that hard work paid off. The cookies stand little chance of going stale as they are usually polished off in just a few minutes!

The Christmas Workshop is open daily from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. This year children can carry on making gifts right up until 5 p.m. on Christmas Eve.

### **Punch & Judy**

The traditional Punch & Judy puppet show inside City Hall is a firm favorite every year. There will be two Punch & Judy shows every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from Friday, November 27 to Sunday, December 20 and again on December 24. First show 1.30 – 2 p.m., second show 2.30 p.m. to 3 p.m.

### **Vienna Christ Child**

The Vienna Christ Child has the most charming task of all at the Magic of Advent in Vienna. The children's eyes always light up as the Christ Child tours the Rathauspark. They look on in wonder as it answers their questions, takes their wish lists and tells stories and recites poems. It can be seen bringing smiles to the faces of young and old alike every Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. from November 14. From 5 p.m. the Christ Child will be reading stories aloud in front of the crib beneath the Christmas tree. The Christ Child will also be out and about elsewhere, visiting people who are unable to make it to the Christmas Market. Destinations include retirement homes, hospitals and other care facilities where the Christ Child will be telling Christmas tales and handing out small gifts.

### **Leisurely strolls in the Rathauspark**

As night falls the Rathauspark starts to fill with people, its attractively decorated trees drawing friends, acquaintances and couples. Alongside the new trees, old favorites such as the Vienna



Heart Tree await visitors. The tree has played a role in many a love story, and even took center stage in a wedding last year. The lovingly decorated park is the perfect place for a gentle stroll among the pavilions, archways and magical trees, taking photographs or just sitting and watching the world go by.

The Rathauspark is the perfect place to take time out, switch off and leave the Christmas hustle and bustle behind. Trees decorated with angels, rocking horses, snowmen, snowflakes and much more transform the park into an unforgettable winter wonderland. Stroll and wander to your heart's desire and get away from it all.

### **Post Office in the Clouds to Advent Choirs**

The countless attractions on offer at Magic of Advent in Vienna are not just for the little ones — there are many highlights for adults too. There will be a **giant Advent wreath** at the Ringstrasse entry point for the third time this year. The Parks and Gardens municipal department and the florists of Hirschstetten Flower Gardens have joined forces to turn two tons of brushwood into a resplendent Advent wreath measuring 12 meters in diameter. The four candles on this magnificent wreath will be lit one after on each of the Advent Sundays. On Saturday November 28, St. Stephen's Cathedral Priest Toni Faber will bless the wreath.

**The Post Office in the Clouds** is where people go to send their Christmas mail. This special post office is also popular among stamp collectors due to the personalized Christmas 2009 postage stamps (nominal value 65 cents, sales price EUR 1.50). Together with the three special Magic of Advent postmarks, these stamps give Christmas cards and postcards a special festive touch. From November 14 to December 23 the Post Office in the Clouds is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 7.p.m. from Monday to Thursday, and until 8 p.m. on Fridays. On Saturday, Sundays and December 8 it is open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. The very last Christmas cards can be posted on December 24 from 10 a.m. to 5p.m..

Inside City Hall various international choral concerts will get everyone in the Christmas mood from the first week of Advent. Choirs from all over the world get visitors in the Christmas spirit with music ranging from classical, traditional carols to gospel songs. Entry is free and visitors



can come and go as they please. Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from Friday November 27 from 3.30 p.m. to 7 p.m., December 24 from 3.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

From November 27 traditional brass bands perform against the backdrop of the giant Christmas tree in front of the City Hall from 8 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

### **Economic impact and advertising value**

In these testing economic times the Magic of Advent event secures numerous jobs in a range of industries. It has a significant impact on the Austrian economy, making the event much more than just a special attraction for local and international visitors. It helps maintain around 30,000 jobs in the hotel and catering industries and also creates several hundred jobs for the people responsible for running Magic of Advent in Vienna as well as the crews that assemble and take down the pavilions. The event employs sculptors, artists, puppeteers, hosts, carpenters, electricians and painters and decorators. Cleaning crews, security personnel and temporary staff are also needed to ensure that the event runs smoothly.

More than three million people – including some 500,000 overseas visitors – flock to the Magic of Advent in Vienna on City Hall Square and inside City Hall. The tourism industry has recorded an impressive increase in the number of overnight stays linked to the event. The number of overnight stays in November and December grew from 1,284,365 in 2004 to 1,615,440 in 2008, an increase of almost 25.8 percent.

(Source: Vienna Tourist Board).

Vienna's Christmas markets have a history dating back some 700 years. New attractions are integrated sensitively to ensure that the event's traditional Christmas charm is not compromised. Vienna City Council sets aside a budget of over EUR 1 million for the Magic of Advent project, with a further EUR 240,000 for PR work (brochures, insertions/trade press, internet, cooperation projects and press work) from the Vienna Chamber of Commerce. These investments – managed and supported by the Vienna Business Agency – ensure that the project is successfully implemented and safeguard its future as a pre-Christmas highlight that is enjoyed by over three million people each year.



The advertising and public relations value for Vienna at home and abroad is exceptional. In the run-up to Christmas scarcely a single day passes without a report of some kind on the Magic of Advent in Vienna. The Christmas market was also covered extensively by the international media. There are reports in neighboring Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Czech Republic and Slovakia as well as Poland, Russia, Denmark, Norway, the United Kingdom and even as far away as Canada. In the USA and South America Vienna has featured prominently as a European Advent highlight on TV, radio and in print.

### **www.christkindlmarkt.at**

The Magic of Advent in Vienna website raises awareness of the event. It provides a window on Vienna from afar – and even features a 360° panorama. Many visitors share their thoughts in the online guestbook, recounting their impressions in countless languages.

The site also features all press releases and images (print-ready quality) for downloading.

### **Further information**

A copy of the brochure with a schedule and full details of all the attractions of this year's Magic of Advent in Vienna has been available since September in German/English, French/Italian, Spanish/English, Hungarian/Czech and Russian/Polish. It can be obtained free of charge from branches of the Austrian National Tourist Office or from the Vienna Tourist Board by calling (+43 1) 24555 or faxing (+43 1) 24555-666.

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### **For queries please contact:**

Andreas Zenker  
**Press office**  
Zenker & Co  
+43 (0)664 2443242  
info@zenkerundco.at