



Press Release

Holly Berry The Magic of Winter Berries

Saturday, 7 November 2026 – Sunday, 31 January 2027

For centuries, holly has been associated with winter and Christmas traditions, thanks in part to its bright red berries and evergreen leaves. Even in pre-Christian times, plants that stayed green throughout the winter symbolised vitality, protection and good fortune during the darkest time of the year. Christianity gave holly additional layers of meaning: its evergreen foliage came to represent eternal life, its berries the blood of Christ, and its prickly leaves the crown of thorns. In Victorian Britain, holly became a popular festive decoration. Since the nineteenth century, it has adorned homes, book illustrations and greetings cards throughout the festive season. The rich red and green of holly continue to shape the visual world of Christmas.

As a symbol of constancy, hope and the ideal of a harmonious family Christmas, holly remains an enduring emblem of the festive season.

Today, the term “holly berries” is often used for winter berry decorations made not only from holly but also from the fruits of plants such as mistletoe, hawthorn and rose hip. This exhibition traces their history from the pagan customs with which they first became associated, through their use in cooking and traditional medicine, to their role as a symbol of Christmas. Historic tree ornaments, festive decorations, Christmas cards and many other objects tell the story of why these bright red berries have symbolised hope, protection and the joy of life for centuries. Children can follow their own trail through the exhibition, searching for birds hidden among the holly berries.

Accompanying programme

Saturday, 7 November 2026, 10 am–5 pm

EXHIBITION OPENING

Make your own festive wreath from winter greenery and berries with Julie Knorr of Blumique
15 CHF/wreath

Saturday, 14 November 2026, 2–6 pm

MAKE TRADITIONAL CRANBERRY GARLANDS

Craft activity with Junioratelier

Saturday /Sunday,

21 & 22 November 2026, 1–3 pm

DRAW FESTIVE MOTIFS

Illustrate holly, berries and other wreath designs with Romana Schrift, ages 10 and older, places are limited.

Registration: event@swm-basel.ch • 15 CHF/person

Wednesday, 2 December 2026, 10 am–12 noon

WEDNESDAY MATINÉE

Corinne Staffelbach of Chrüterhüsli in Basel speaks about the medicinal properties and mythological significance of berry-bearing shrubs. Afterwards, you'll have the chance to blend your own tea. Places are limited.

Registration: event@swm-basel.ch • Admission: 5 CHF/10 CHF

Saturday, 6 December 2026, 2–5 pm

A VISIT FROM SANTIGLAUS

It's that time again! Santiglaus (that's what they call Saint Nicholas in German-speaking Switzerland) is looking forward to hearing your Christmas verses and has a small surprise for everyone.

Sunday, 6 December 2026, 11 am and 2 pm

TEDDY CINEMA

Screening of "Ein Weihnachtsfest für Teddy" (2022)
German, FSK 0

Wednesday, 23 December 2026, 10 am–12 pm

WEDNESDAY MATINÉE

Celebrate the festive season with a short, guided tour of the Christmas exhibition, followed by a traditional Christmas pudding – a classic British dessert made with rum and spices – at Ristorante La Sosta.

Admission: 5 CHF/10 CHF

Saturday, 9 January 2027, 10 am–12 pm

TALK ON THE HEALING PROPERTIES OF EVERGREEN PLANTS

Corinne Staffelbach of Chrüterhüsli in Basel speaks about the medicinal properties and mythological significance of berry-bearing shrubs. Afterwards, you'll have the chance to blend your own tea. Places are limited.

Registration: event@swm-basel.ch

Admission: 5 CHF/10 CHF

Friday, 22 January 2027, from 6 pm

MUSEUM NIGHT

Sunday, 31 January 2027, 2–6 pm

GOODBYE, HOLLY BERRY

Round off the exhibition with a cosy afternoon tea at Ristorante La Sosta, with tea, scones and seasonal treats.

10 CHF/person

You can find the full accompanying program at www.swmb.museum (Events/Calendar)

Further information and images relating to the exhibition

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Images available at: www.spielzeug-welten-museum-basel.ch/de/museum/medien.html

Exhibition texts are available in German, French, English, Italian and in Easy Language. The entire museum is fully accessible for wheelchair users.

Want to stay up to date with our exhibitions, programmes and events? Sign up for our **newsletter** at: news@swm-basel.ch

Admission

CHF 7.–/5.–, no surcharge for the special exhibition

Children and teenagers aged 16 and under enter free.

Children aged 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult.

Opening hours

January to November: Tuesday to Sunday, 10 am to 6 pm

In December: Daily from 10 am to 6 pm

For special opening hours, visit www.swmb.museum

About Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel

A doll playing shop, teddies in pedal cars racing one another, an entire amusement park springing into motion at the press of a button: with more than 6,000 objects, Spielzeug Welten Museum Basel is unique worldwide in both scope and quality. Housed in a building dating from 1867, it stands in the very heart of Basel. Its cheerful window displays, created with great care and a healthy dose of imagination, are known far beyond the city: they enchant visitors of all ages and invite them to step into a world of wonders. Twice a year, changing special exhibitions on a wide range of themes offer fresh opportunities for cultural discovery. They draw out the unexpected and place the objects in historical contexts that often reveal more than you might think.