Christmas Balloon Flight Covers
The Austrian Special Christmas Balloon Flight covers are an interesting subject for a philatelic exhibition. The Christmas Balloon Post is a private operation by the Ergee Co. Net income from the flights is used to maintain the Pestalozzi Children’s villages in Austria and Germany. The village is named for a famous Swiss educator who did a considerable amount of work with underprivileged and orphaned children.

The original plans called for the first Christmas Balloon Flight to land at the famed village Christkindl, but plans were changed and all of the flights (except for the third, which started at Linz on the Danube) have begun at Christkindl. The number of spectators at the launching depends on the weather conditions at the time, which are often very cold and windy during Austrian winters. Large crowds are usually present, though, which adds to the festivities. Since 1961, these flights have taken place every year during the Christmas season (minus one year), with only minor problems.

This exhibit contains examples of mail transported by the Christkindl Christmas Balloon Flight over the years. The landing point and the distance covered are noted on each item’s flight chart. This exhibit was started by Daniel G. Hammell of Beloit, who passed away in 2009. Daniel was inducted into the Wisconsin Hall of Fame in 1999. He was a member of the Janesville Stamp Club, Walworth County Stamp Club, Rockford Stamp Club, Wisconsin Postal History Society, the Pitcairn Island Study Group, and the ATA Space Study Group. He sold his balloon flight collection to Gary Wentworth, of Janesville, who continues to expand it. Many thanks to Gary for sharing this beautiful and most interesting collection.
The “ERGEE” before taking off from the church at Christkindl.

The gaily decorated “ERGEE” on a Christmas flight.
The first special Christmas flight from Christkindl to St. Florian on December 9, 1961. It also has the first balloon post label with the onboard stamps of the “D-ERGEE AUGUST IX.”
This cover is franked with a definitive stamp showing the Christkindl church. It was flown on the second special Christmas Balloon Flight in the balloon “D-ERGEE AUGUST IX” from Christkindl to Kremsmunster. It has a second Christmas Balloon Post label, onboard and flight stamps of the balloon, the seal of the Kremsmunster Abbey, and the Christkindl Christmas cancellation on the day of the flight December 9, 1962.
A first day cover of the 1963 Christmas stamp cancelled November 29, 1963, with the Christkindl cancel carried on the third special Christmas flight from Linz to Altenberg by the balloon “D-ERGEE.” This also has the third balloon post label with the flight information.
The fourth special Christmas flight was from Christkindl to Steyr on the balloon “D-ERGEE.” The flight took place on December 6, 1964.
A cover flown on the fifth special Christmas balloon flight from Christkindl to Muhlbach on December 5, 1965. There is also a special “Fifth Christmas Balloon Post” label with the flight information table. The Christkindl cancel was on December 15, 1965.
The sixth and seventh Christmas balloon flight from Christkindl to St. Peter/Au and Wolfsback with the “D-ERGEE III” onboard stamp and appropriate balloon post label with the flight information table.
A first day cover of the 1968 Christmas stamp cancelled by a commemorative cancel of Oberndorf bei Salzburg. It was flown from Christkindl to Pesendorf bei Garsten on the balloon “D-ERGEE II” on the eighth special Christmas balloon flight. This cover also bears the onboard stamp of the balloon, plus a 20g definitive stamp cancelled by the current Christkindl cancellation of November 29, 1968.
This ninth Christmas Balloon Flight of December 14, 1969, has the onboard stamp of “D-ERGEE III” and the label for the balloon post from Christkindl to Markt Aschbach.
The tenth and eleventh balloon flight on “D-ERGEE III” with the appropriate onboard labels and flight information.
This cover for the twelfth Christmas Balloon Flight from Christkindl on December 3, 1972, to Sierning, has the onboard cancel and the appropriate label. It also has the Christkindl cancel for December 3rd.
The thirteenth and fourteenth flight from Christkindl to Althartsberg and Kematen/Kreme with the labels and onboard stamp from “D-ERGEE III” and the Christkindl special cancellation.
The fifteenth flight was on December 12, 1975, to Seitenstetten from Christkindl at a distance of 19 km. This also has the appropriate onboard stamp and label.
The sixteenth and seventeenth flight from Christkindl to Rosenau and Lochen/ÖÖ on the balloon “D-ERGEE IV” with onboard cancels and appropriate labels and flight information. These are numbered covers.
The flight on December 3, 1978, was the eighteenth flight from Christkindl to Kremsmunster onboard the balloon “D-ERGEE IV.” This cover is franked with the Christmas stamp and a label with the onboard stamp and flight table.
The nineteenth and twentieth flights from Christkindl to Purgstall and Samendorf were onboard the “D-ERGEE IV.” There is also the onboard stamp and label with the flight information table.
The twenty-first flight from Christkindl was on December 5, 1981. The flight was from Christkindl to Wachtberg aboard the balloon “D-ERGEE IV” for a distance of 5 km. It is franked with the Christmas stamp issued November 27, 1981. There is also the special label associated with this flight.