

NEW YORK

Manhattan Christmas Trees, Ranked from Most to Least Touristy

By **STEPHANIE CAIN** | DEC. 18, 2018

We may live here, but that doesn't mean we're immune to the majesty of a towering evergreen, twinkling with thousands of lights. Unfortunately, our attempts at holiday cheer are too often thwarted by hordes of selfie-snapping visitors. So we took it upon ourselves to rank Manhattan's most impressive Christmas trees on one unique criterion: their tendency to draw big crowds. While there are no hard numbers to go by, we can tell you from experience which ones attract more out-of-towners. And to be clear, they're all gorgeous and worth seeing—it just depends on your willingness to give up personal space.



DIANE BONDAREFF/AP IMAGES FOR TISHMAN SPEYER

TREE: ROCKEFELLER CENTER

This is easily the most famous Christmas tree in the city—if not the country/world—so it's no surprise that it's also the most tourist mobbed. Looming over an ice rink among the shops of midtown, this year's Norway spruce stands 72 feet above its revelers. Getting a close look at its 50,000 lights, however, takes some serious maneuvering through the crowds, and even late-night visits won't save you from oblivious photobombers. The consolation prize is that you cannot miss the nine-foot-wide Swarovski star tree topper that debuted this year. Plus, Saks Fifth Avenue, just across the street, puts on quite the evening light show.

30 Rockefeller Plaza; rockefellercenter.com



COURTESY OF BANK OF AMERICA WINTER VILLAGE AT BRYANT PARK

TREE: BANK OF AMERICA WINTER VILLAGE AT BRYANT PARK

New Yorkers know that Bryant Park's Christmas tree rivals that of Rockefeller Center, and this year is no different. The 90-year-old Norway spruce from upstate New York towers over the park, which turns into an ice-skating rink and holiday market in the winter months. Fireworks were shot off during the lighting ceremony (which included a skating performance by Johnny Weir), but even without flares, the tree continues to sparkle thanks to thousands of lights. Grab a hot chocolate at the Lodge, a pop-up food hall, while you take in the view. But beware of the crowds—it is blocks away from Times Square, after all.

West 42nd Street and Sixth Avenue; bryantpark.org



NOAM GALAI/GETTY IMAGES

TREE: LINCOLN CENTER

If there's one thing that holiday tourists love besides Rockefeller Center, it's seeing *The Nutcracker*. That makes the tree near Lincoln Center in Dante Park a magnet for out-of-towners. Its location at the intersection of Broadway and Seventh Avenue, near the Metropolitan Opera, New York Philharmonic, Juilliard and the Empire Hotel means there's no eluding culture-loving visitors. The tree is beautiful, though, and after taking in the decor you can wander over to the Lincoln Square fountains or pop into [Bar Boulud](http://BarBoulud) for a glass of wine.

East 63rd Street and Broadway; winterseve.nyc



COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE

TREE: NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE

Head to FiDi to see New York's tallest Christmas tree, which stands a whopping 80 feet, just in front of the New York Stock Exchange. The tradition of lighting up an evergreen here dates all the way back to 1923, and its particularly pretty location along the slope of the famous road makes it perfect for photos. Expect a cluster of people, though: Most tourists do hit this area to strike a pose in front of the iconic bull, and on the way they are sure to stop by this well-lit spruce. We recommend going in the evening, when its 500 ornaments are illuminated, and the few other humans are merely after-work tipplers on their way home.

11 Wall St; nyse.com



COURTESY OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

TREE: METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

If you're looking to admire a Christmas tree without freezing your butt off, head to the Medieval Sculpture Hall at the Met. There you'll find a stunning 20-foot blue spruce set against a backdrop of the reja of a Spanish cathedral. Admire the 18th-century Neapolitan angels and cherubs that adorn the tree as well as the crèche (nativity scene) at its base. You'll likely be short of space—tourists are no strangers to the popular art mecca—but there's some solace: New Yorkers can enter the museum for free with proof of residence, whereas out-of-towners will be forking over an admission fee.

1000 Fifth Ave.; [metmuseum.org](https://www.metmuseum.org)



CMART7327/GETTY IMAGES

TREE: WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK

The downtown gathering place might be one of the most festive spots to admire a twinkling evergreen: The park is always swarming with musicians, especially carolers during the holidays, and since most park-goers are locals, you won't be fighting as many backpacks and cameras to snap your Instagram. Hint: Swing by at night for a truly picturesque shot of the tree in front of the marble triumphal arch. Bonus points if there's snow.

Fifth Avenue and Washington Square North; [washingtonsquarenyc.org](https://www.washingtonsquarenyc.org)



JANE KRATOCHVIL FOR THE HOWARD HUGHES CORPORATION

TREE: SOUTH STREET SEAPORT

This quaint area of lower Manhattan isn't on your typical tourist's shortlist, meaning you can admire this tree without too many crowds. In fact, you can walk right up to it. We suggest bringing along a mug of hot cocoa and taking in the views, then strolling the cobblestone streets and perusing the area's shops for holiday gifts. Note that the area can get busy—but busy with locals hitting the bars for happy hour.

19 Fulton St.; [seaportdistrict.nyc](https://www.seaportdistrict.nyc)

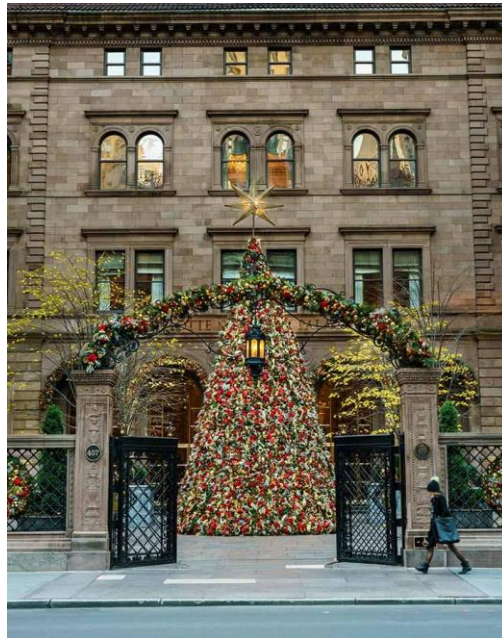


EILEEN BARROSO

TREE: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

OK, we know this is not technically a Christmas tree, but it is one of the most festive and least touristy spots for a romantic photo. Every year, Columbia University covers the trees that line College Walk with hundreds of lights, which creates a rather stunning image. At most, you'll compete with some students, but to be honest, most of them want to be far away from school at night, so you just might have the place to yourself.

West 116th Street and Broadway; columbia.edu



COURTESY OF LOTTE NEW YORK PALACE

TREE: LOTTE NEW YORK PALACE

A sleeper hit among Christmas trees, the 35-foot stunner in front of the Palace Hotel just might be the least touristy public pine in Manhattan. Set in the middle of the property's Villard Mansion courtyard off Madison Avenue, the tree is covered almost entirely with ornaments and lights. Definitely plan to set up a holiday card shoot here, because hardly anyone will be there admiring the decorations—just the occasional passersby heading inside to the hotel bar.

455 Madison Ave.; lottenypalace.com