

This Is How to Have the Best Holiday Ever In NYC

ELLE DECOR Editors 16 hrs ago



© Xinhua News Agency - Getty Images Experience the most wonderful time of the year in the most magical holiday city with these brilliantly festive ideas.

New York City is perhaps the only city in the world that, during the holidays, is immersed in its own typical hustle *and* a serene sense of seasonal magic.

If you're searching for a generous dose of yuletide, the "Big Apple" is sure to impress.

The magical city has been featured in endless holiday movies and TV shows—proving just how special this destination becomes when the season is in full swing. From gazing at the Rockefeller Center tree, to window shopping on Fifth Avenue (or, of course, if you're Kevin McCallister from *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York*, frolicking through The Plaza Hotel), there are endless ways to get into the spirit of the holidays in NYC.

Bundle up and get jolly, because there is a bounty of holiday activities and lesser-known delights that await you in the city of 8.5 million (FYI, that adds up to a lot of Christmas cheer).

Whether you're visiting the Big Apple for the first time, or are a local who forgot about your hometown's Christmas charms, read on for the ultimate New York City holiday wish list.

Where to Cruise: Holiday Brunch Cruise Aboard the Yacht Manhattan



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What's better than cruising around the island of Manhattan in a climate-controlled yacht, Bloody Mary in hand, surrounded by magical holiday decor?

This [Holiday Brunch Cruise](#) takes place on a 1920s-style motor yacht complete with a 360-degree view of the island and an enclosed back-deck observatory. For 2 hours and 45 minutes, enjoy a four-course brunch buffet, complete with plenty of drinks and a narrated tour by the captain. If you're looking to keep things leisurely (and stay warm), this cruise is for you. All aboard?

Where to Tour by Bike: Christmas on Wheels



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This year, see the city by bike on a 2.5 hour guided tour of some of Manhattan's most iconic holiday installations. Totally unique (and calorie-burning), you will ride into the spirit of the holidays, starting in Central Park, and making stops at places like [the Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree](#), Macy's holiday displays, the holiday fairs at Grand Central Terminal and Bryant Park Winter Village.

Where to Hear Holiday Gospel: The Apollo



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Explore the city like a native and make your way to Harlem to enjoy the iconic Apollo Theater. Each year, The Apollo gets into the spirit with "[Holiday Joy: A Gospel Celebration](#)," where attendees can enjoy an afternoon of soulful holiday gospel featuring Hezekiah Walker & the Love Fellowship Choir. According to the site, "Cece Winans will warm your soul and Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Choir will take you higher. Marcus Wiley, host and comedian, promises to delight you and your loved ones throughout the afternoon."

Where to Watch the New Year's Eve Fireworks: Brooklyn Bridge Walk Into the New Year



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Skip the chaos of Times Square and enjoy the holiday from a calmer perspective, with the "[Brooklyn Bridge Walk Into the New Year](#)." Guided by a trained historian and tour guide, enjoy New Years celebrations from an iconic NYC landmark, where fireworks will light up the city skyline and ring in 2019.

Where to Stay: Lotte New York Palace



© Lotte New York Palace Things to do NYC Holidays

If you're searching for the quintessential holiday landing spot in New York City, look no further than the [Lotte New York Palace](#). Centrally located on Madison Avenue, this historic landmark hotel is only minutes from some of New York's best holiday sight-seeing spots, including Rockefeller Center, Radio City Music Hall, and Saint Patrick's Cathedral.

During the holidays, The Palace (as it's called) is best known for its 30-foot Christmas tree that glows from the courtyard, and a magical lobby full of elegantly festive decorations. Children are even welcome to send their wish lists off to Santa in their "Santa Mail" box. Awarded as one of the top hotels in New York, The Palace is the epitome of urban luxury and exudes the upper crest of New York City.



© Lotte New York Palace Things to do NYC Holidays

Where to Hear the Symphony: The New York Philharmonic



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The [New York Philharmonic](#) is one of the most renowned American orchestras, and one of the oldest musical institutions in the U.S. While people make their way to Lincoln Center year-round to be serenaded by the iconic orchestra, the holidays are when the Philharmonic truly shines.

During the Christmas season, enjoy the [*Holidays with the Philharmonic*](#), where performances of "Winter Wonderland," "O Tannenbaum," "White Christmas," and more are in the holiday lineup.

Where to See Santa: Macy's Santaland



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Take a trip to the New York North Pole this year at Macy's iconic Santaland. Perfect for the whole family, the 13,000-square-foot holiday display and indoor wonderland is located inside the Herald Square Macy's at 151 West 34th Street. Inside, you'll be met with caroling snowmen, prancing reindeer, a whimsical array of decor, and of course, Santa himself. Santaland opens on Friday, November 24, 2018, and runs through Christmas Eve.

Where to Enjoy Seasonal Art: The Metropolitan Museum of Art



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The [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) is the crown jewel of New York City's Museum Mile any time of year, but it takes on a dusting of Christmas magic all its own around the holidays.

During the Christmas season, visitors to the storied museum can stop by the Medieval Sculpture Hall to take in the Met's magnificent tree—a 20-foot blue spruce—and spend long minutes marveling at the gorgeous 18th-century Neopolitan nativity scene displayed at its foot. For a little extra sparkle, catch a tree-lighting, daily at 4:30 p.m., with encores at 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. on weekends.

Where to Indulge: Sant Ambroeus



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An inevitable side effect of wandering around New York City at Christmas? Chilly hands and a serious cocoa craving.

Indulge in one of the city's most decadent cups of hot chocolate at [Sant Ambroeus](#), where the beverage is made free of milk and water; instead, it's simply pure, melted chocolate. Best of all, you can satisfy your sweet tooth whether you're uptown or down. The legendary Italian restaurant has two locations on the Upper East Side—one in Soho, and one in the West Village.

Where to Ice Skate: Wollman Rink



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With shorter lines than The Rink at the Rockefeller Center and a killer view of the city skyline, the Wollman Rink at Central Park is the perfect place to go for a twirl with tourists and natives alike. Opened in 1949, the rink offers ice hockey, a skating school, party facilities, and skate rentals-so all you need to do is pack your mittens.

You might recognize this rink from *Home Alone 2*, where crooks Marv and Harry attempt to ice skate and plot crime respectively. Instead of getting up to no good yourself, you can stroll through the park afterwards and stop for a holiday weekend brunch at the famed Tavern on the Green restaurant, or head to the Central Park Zoo to watch the penguins race for fish.

Where to Eat: Rolf's



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Christmas lovers: If being surrounded by hundreds of dazzling decorations as you dine is up your alley, make Rolf's a must during your New York City holiday. The German restaurant is located in the city's Gramercy Park neighborhood and is decked out in lights and decor for the holidays until May. Does it get much cheerier than that?

But in addition to cheer, Rolf's serves up lots of German beer-and Wiener Schnitzel, Jaeger Schnitzel and Paprika Schnitzel. Not into Schnitzel? (Gasp.) You can also find dishes such as sausage platters, meatloaf, pork chops, steamed mussels and apple crepes at the joint. A seasonal roast suckling pig is also served, and there are crispy potato pancakes and wursts resembling hot dogs to keep the kids happy.

"It's super crazy in there with all the lights," says Dominguez. "It's a really fun spot to go to eat, and they have really good spiced eggnog, too."

Count us in. However, expect a bit of a wait to be seated, especially during the holidays. If possible, it may be worth stopping by on a weeknight before the dinner rush.

Where to Drink: Betony



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This fine dining establishment located just off Fifth Avenue has been heralded as one of the best restaurants in the world and has one Michelin star-but during the holidays, you'll want to stop by Betony specifically for its 35-seat bar.

If the restaurant's stunning carved stucco walls and luxurious velvet banquettes don't make you feel like you're in a magical winter fairytale, the drinks will. On the menu you'll find Mister Crane (a blend of apple brandy, maple and ginger), hot chocolate with Australian black truffles and reserve milk punch selections.

Bonus points if you go on a snowy day: The restaurant has large windows adjacent to the bar that are perfect for gazing at falling snowflakes.

Where to Sight-See: Bergdorf Goodman Holiday Windows

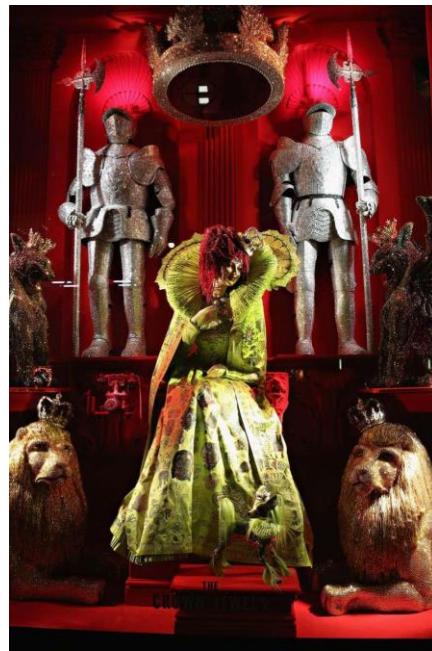


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Perhaps the most magical part about famously holiday-spirited Fifth Avenue is its brilliant window displays, with the most iconic being Bergdorf Goodman.

"Bergdorf Goodman windows are such an important part of Christmas culture in New York," says Kaler. "But watching the big reveal is mostly a thing that locals do, and because of that, it's not a mob scene like a lot of the other holiday events."

Insider Christmas events? Always a good thing. The windows will be revealed in November, but you'll be able to see them throughout the holidays.



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But if you're dropping by Fifth Avenue, don't stop window shopping at Bergdorf Goodman.

"You also have Macy's windows, Lord & Taylor, Saks Fifth Avenue, Barneys and Bloomingdales," says Kaler. "All the windows are really something to go see, and they're all on Fifth Avenue. If you're there, you have to go see all the windows."

Where to Shop: Bryant Park Winter Village



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Not only will you find plenty of beautiful seasonal goodies at the [Bank Of America Winter Village at Bryant Park](#) shops, but you'll discover a rare sense of small-town charm in the middle of Manhattan's [sprawling skyscrapers](#).

The open-air village showcases sprawling rows of artisanal shops selling jewelry, decor, local food, clothing and one-of-a-kind gifts. Funds from every purchase help support the park's maintenance, letting you nix any guilt from seasonal splurges.

In between your shopping sprees, skate in the village rink, check out the giant Christmas tree or sip on hot cider and extravagant treats (like chocolate-covered waffles) at the Bryant Park food kiosks.

"Although a lot of visitors don't know about the winter village, it's probably one of my favorite things to do in the city," says Kaler. "It's like a holiday oasis in the middle of midtown Manhattan. If you're visiting Times Square, you can walk just a couple of blocks east and stumble upon it."

Where to Take the Family: The New York Botanical Garden Holiday Train Show



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Either take your kids to this show or go yourself and *feel* like a kid again with its enchanting miniature railroads and trains. The [Holiday Train Show](#) showcases more than 150 landmark replicas like Grand Central Terminal and The Statue of Liberty made of plant materials such as bark and leaves.

Meanwhile, nearly half a mile of track lays down the path for zipping trains, evoking memories of childhood Christmases that were anchored by the sound of a train twirling around the tree. The show runs from November 17 until January 21 in [The New York Botanical Garden](#), located in the Bronx.

Another family favorite in New York City? Undoubtedly, "[The Nutcracker](#)" performed by [The New York City Ballet](#).

"You'll see a lot of families at the matinee shows because the evening shows go a bit late, but it's also a very romantic thing to do as a date," says Kaler. "The New York City Ballet is one of the premier ballet companies in the world, so seeing that ballet company perform 'The Nutcracker' in such a festive city is just really spectacular."



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The show runs from November 24 to December 31.

Where to See Christmas Lights: Dyker Heights



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Head over to Brooklyn to see a beloved Christmas tradition in New York City: the neighborhood of Dyker Heights.

The neighborhood hosts an "unspoken" competition in which every house tries to outshine and out-decorate the other, making the neighborhood a destination for walking tours and cars rolling by.



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"It supposedly all started in the '80s when one woman put Christmas decorations all over her house," says Kaler. "Her neighbors weren't happy about it, so they started to do it too as a competition, and now 30 years later, it's an event."

Grab a cup of hot cocoa to go and observe the marvels of the neighborhood. But warning: You might just need sunglasses.

Where to Find a Great Photo Op: Top of the Rock



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Yes, yes, yes: We *know* this is touristy. But there's a good reason why.

Soar to the top of the Rockefeller Center via an elevator to take in the views at its observatory, [Top Of The Rock](#). Why? Because, during the holidays, you'll be able to take in the many lights of the city from above, including a red-and-green Empire State Building.

"It's touristy, but it's also really gorgeous," says Dominquez. "It's an activity you can do early in the evening as the sun sets, and then go explore the nearby events."

After taking in the city sights from 850 feet above street level, head downstairs to see [The Rockefeller Center's Christmas tree](#) and ice skating rink, or the holiday display outside [Saks Fifth Avenue](#).



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AKA, a perfectly New York Christmas. 🎄