

MY TRIPS

Best Places to Visit During the Holiday Season

For many, the most ideal winter vacation is escaping the cold and sitting poolside with a drink (my kind of choice for sure!) But for those who want to fully embrace the holiday spirit, a little cold weather is worth the magical decor and activities. Sometimes you can even have the best of both, warm weather and a full Christmas extravaganza. Many gorgeous cities around the world become even prettier, decked in twinkle lights, shiny baubles, and wreaths of green. You can skate the rink at Rockefeller, shop the Christmas markets in France, ski the slopes in Colorado, or attend a Catholic mass at the Vatican. There is something for everyone! For anyone planning a future winter holiday themed vacation, here are my top picks around the world.



UNITED STATES

New York, New York

Highlights: Get some sight-seeing in at St Patrick's Cathedral, Radio City Music Hall, and Rockefeller Center. Send Santa your wish list at Lotte New York Palace. Listen to the

renowned New York Philharmonic orchestra at the Lincoln Center, or sing along with the carolers at Carnegie Hall. Visit the North Pole at Macy's Santaland. Indulge in some hot chocolate at Sant Ambroeus. Get some ice skating in at the Rockefeller Center or Wollman Rink. Take in all the splendor of the window displays along the high-end shopping avenues. Get a bit of shopping in at the Bryant Park Winter Village.



Washington D.C.

Highlights: View the National Christmas Tree and the Pathway of Peace while enjoying daily musical groups singing in front of the White House. Enjoy one of the many spectacular light displays in the D.C. with a leisurely drive or stroll. Enjoy an icy adventure at Gaylord National Resort's ICE, consisting of 5,000 blocks of ice hand-sculpted by international artists into an interactive ice attraction. Enjoy the festive holiday decor at the various historic homes in the D.C. area. Take in one of the many holiday shows or live entertainment, like the classic Nutcracker. Taste some yummy hot latkes and donuts at the lighting ceremony of the National Hanukkah Menorah.



Orlando, Florida

Highlights: Enjoy a magical Christmas at the happiest place on Earth, Walt Disney World (multiple parades, parties, live entertainment, and light displays). Enjoy similar findings with their own unique twist at Universal Studios.



Las Vegas, Nevada

Highlights: Stroll through the various hotels on the strip to take in their spectacular holiday displays, especially the Bellagio's Conservatory and Botanical Gardens. Ice skate at one of several rinks in the area; this includes the winter wonderland at the Cosmopolitan, where you can enjoy some hot cocoa, rooftop views, fire pits for s'mores and warm cocktails. Step back in time at Excalibur Hotel, to the reign of King Arthur, where you can enjoy a spectacular three-course feast, a medieval holiday wonderland, some jaunty jousting, and a mythical

Merlin. Be awed by the acrobatics of Mystere, by Cirque du Soleil at TI Hotel. Ride the world's largest Ferris wheel at the LINQ Promenade and take in the holiday lights.



North Pole, Alaska

Highlights: It's a place you can enjoy Christmas all year-round, with candy canes painted on city streets and endless festivities at the Santa Claus House (the general store turned holiday shop). At the store you can enjoy live reindeer, a coffee shop, gift items and the world's largest Santa statue.



Park City, Utah

Highlights: Glimpse a rare sighting of Santa descending the Town Life on his sleigh, enjoyed with hot cocoa, cookies and a possible Santa photo-op. Get some prime people-watching in with the skiers making their way down Deer Valley Resort's ski run in their most festive (and possibly battery-pack lighted) suits. Get a little skiing in yourself or enjoy the outdoor skate

rink at Park City Mountain's Base Area. Take a sleigh ride up the mountainside to the Viking Yurt, and be serenaded by the piano as you eat your six-course meal.



Chicago, Illinois

Highlights: Shop at Christkindlmarket, a delightful German open-air market with handcrafted items like nutcrackers and cuckoo clocks, along with yummy potato pancakes and steaming hot spice wine. Take in the transformation of lights at the Lincoln Park Zoo. Ice skate among the Chicago skyline at Millennium Park. Splurge on a reservation at the Walnut Room and take in the gorgeous holiday decor while you enjoy a meal, or view it for free from outside the restaurant. Join in some caroling at “The Bean.”



AROUND THE WORLD

Santa Claus Village, Finland

Highlights: Watch Santa depart for his trip around the world. Cross off several bucket list item like crossing the Arctic Circle and viewing the Northern Lights. Visit with Santa's reindeer and his other furry friends. Mush with the best of them with a husky ride or snowmobile through the snowy terrain.



Rome, Italy

Highlights: Get some gift shopping done at the Christmas Markets in Piazza Navona. Have Catholic mass at the Vatican, the ultimate church service. Or visit the other numerous churches for their beautiful Nativity scenes. Walk around the city center to enjoy the spectacular lights.



Nuremberg, Germany

Highlights: Try some of their world-famous Nuremberg gingerbread while you sip some traditional hot mulled wine. Shop the vast Christmas Market, with its hand-made gold foil angels, gorgeous ornaments, funny little prune men, and wooden nativity figures. Listen to one of the many holiday concerts, or bring the children to the “Sternenhaus” children’s theater. Enjoy a tour of the city with a stage coach, all cozied up while the coachman plays his trumpet.



Zurich, Switzerland

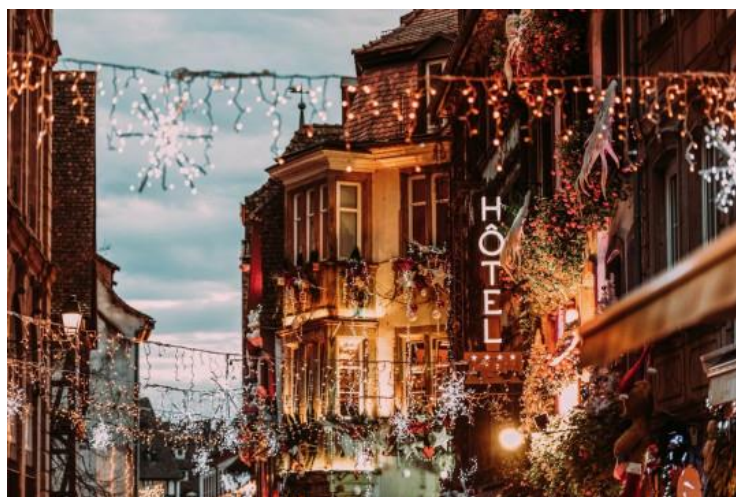
Highlights: Shop til you drop at the extensive Christmas markets. Attend the candle-floating event at the Lichterschwimmen or an Advent concert. Stay for the New Year to enjoy the spectacular fireworks displays by the Zurich hoteliers.



BEST CHRISTMAS MARKETS

Whether they are sprawling across a public square, or tucked into the winding alleys, these Christmas markets are a magical shopping and interactive experience. Find the perfect gifts for your loved ones (and maybe some for yourself), sip on some hot chocolate or warm wine, and take in the twinkling lights, decorations and musical treats.

Strasbourg, France & Vienna, Austria





Montreal, Canada & Prague, Czech Republic



Florence, Italy & Krakow, Poland



Birmingham, United Kingdom & Copenhagen, Denmark



Brussels, Belgium & Barcelona, Spain



Budapest, Hungary & Stockholm, Sweden



