



Christmas Markets

Across Europe

By Genevieve Northup

The holiday season is upon us, and your choices for European Christmas markets are endless. Here are some highlights to aid in deciding where to celebrate this special time of year.

Foods to Devour

Tivoli Gardens, Copenhagen, Denmark

The city's historic amusement park, Tivoli Gardens, is the setting for one of Copenhagen's markets. An area devoted to cuisine from around Europe will thrill adventurous eaters.

Brussels, Belgium

At this market, you'll find Belgium's world-renowned beers, waffles and chocolates, as well as steamed mussels, escargot and *pommes frites*. When you get the chills, sip a mug of smooth, rich hot cocoa made from the country's famous confections.

Trento, Italy

A section of Trento's market pays tribute to the foods that make Italy famous: handmade pastas, local cheeses, decadent desserts and a plethora of wine. Come hungry!

Sensational Shopping

Prague, Czech Republic

Enjoy breathtaking scenery at Prague's markets, but make sure that shopping is at the top of your list. The Czech Republic's elaborate lace, handpainted marionettes, colorful Bohemian crystal and more are available wherever you look.

Champs-Élysées Market, Paris, France

Chalets line a kilometer of the famous Parisian avenue at this market, which claims the title as the largest in the city. You'll also have the chance to browse at the boutiques in this first-class shopping district.

Vörösmarty Square Christmas Fair, Budapest, Hungary

Budapest has several markets, but all of the items at this fair are handcrafted and have passed a rigorous review by a panel of judges.

Greenwich Christmas Market, London, England

Greenwich is home to one of London's top year-round markets, brimming with antiques, apparel, jewelry and artwork. During the holiday season, additional vendors showcase all things Christmas.

The Bigger, the Better

The **Frankfurt**, **Dresden**, **Leipzig** and **Mannheim** markets each feature approximately 200 booths, and the **Dortmund** market has more than 300, making them among the largest in Germany. The **Strasbourg** market, with more than 300 kiosks, is touted as the largest in France. The **Birmingham** Christmas market is said to be the largest in the U.K.



and retains the character of traditional German markets. **Zurich, Switzerland** boasts the largest indoor market in Europe with 150 stalls at the main train station, providing an experience unspoiled by inclement weather.

Age-Old Favorites

Vienna, Austria's Christmas market dates back more than 700 years. The *Striezelmarkt* in **Dresden, Germany** began in 1434, and **Bautzen, Germany** founded a meat exchange in 1384. Since the 16th century, **Strasbourg, France** has hosted a marketplace at one of the world's tallest cathedrals.

Traditional or Old World Scenery

Basel, Switzerland

Basel boasts the longest Christmas promenade in Europe, illuminated by sparkling lights strung in 100 pine trees. And two of the city's gorgeous squares, Barfüsserplatz and Munsterplatz, are dotted with chalets during the Christmas season.

Erfurt, Germany (pictured right)

More than 200 wooden stands decked in lights border St. Mary's Cathedral, the Church of St. Severus, a Ferris wheel, Christmas pyramid and grand Christmas tree to create a quintessential Christmas market.

Leipzig, Germany

This traditionally decorated market is surrounded by buildings from the Renaissance era and offers one of the largest Advent wreaths in the world, a model train exhibit and the angelic vocals of St. Thomas Church's choir.

Romance in the Air

Tallinn, Estonia

On the cobblestones of Old Town Square is a small, delightful market. The huge Christmas tree and quaint buildings create a cheery backdrop that adds to the cozy ambiance. A white Christmas is almost guaranteed, so snuggle with your sweetie at this peaceful market.

Old Town & Hungerburg, Innsbruck, Austria

The architecture, traditional Christmas decorations and snow-capped mountains make the Old Town market of Innsbruck a romantic Alpine experience. To reach Innsbruck's Hungerburg market requires a steep ascent on aboard a funicular. At the summit, you'll be greeted by wonderful food and fantastic mountain views.

Hamel, Germany

Renaissance buildings surround this lovely market, including the Hochzeitshaus where the city's Pied Piper legend is recounted each day on the *Glockenspiel*. Book a Christmas river cruise along the Weser to take a break for a mini date.

Family Fun

Brussels, Belgium

A sledding track, Ferris wheel, 130-foot-long dinosaur made of ice, two ice rinks and whimsical

carousels are top attractions for families. At night, the historic facades in the Grand-Place are illuminated during a brilliant light exhibition.

Hamburg, Germany

Parades are scheduled for each Saturday of Advent, and Fairy-Tale Ships near the Binnenalster offer immersive entertainment for kids. Santa flies above the Rathausmarkt in his sleigh daily.

Marktplatz Market, Innsbruck, Austria

This family market has a petting zoo, live nativity scene, puppet shows and a storyteller to amuse little ones, as well as food, cocktails and shopping for parents. Continue the adventure with a ski trip to the nearby Stubai Glacier.

Sizzling Nightlife

Liseberg Market, Gothenburg, Sweden

Hold on tight through twists and turns on roller coasters, and dine at one of several restaurants at Sweden's largest Christmas market, located in Gothenburg's amusement park.

Madrid, Spain

Don't miss Madrid's Christmas festivities, fabulous late-night bar scene and mild winter weather. Take daily siestas so that you can keep up with the locals.

Santa Pauli Market, Hamburg, Germany

Adult gifts, snow sledding and plenty of beverages are highlights of this irreverent market in Hamburg's red light district.

For dates, websites and more about these Christmas markets, flip to our Christmas Market Calendar of Events on page 20. ■

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