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Planning

12 of the **best** Christmas markets to
enjoy in the UK and Europe in 2022

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If you want some festive cheer, a Christmas market is perfect.

From stalls filled with seasonal treats to entertainment like carol singers, they can really put you in the mood for the holidays. Whether you want to visit an event locally or combine it with a weekend away in Europe, there are hundreds of Christmas markets to choose from.

These magical Christmas markets are ideal if you're making festive plans this year.

Did you know Christmas markets started in Germany in the Late Middle Ages? Dresden is one of the oldest recorded and dates back to 1432.





7 of the best Christmas markets to visit in the UK

You don't have to travel far to visit a magical Christmas market – there are plenty to choose from across the UK. Whether you're searching for gifts or simply want to enjoy a mulled wine surrounded by lights, here are seven of the best Christmas markets in the UK.

1. Birmingham's Frankfurt Christmas Market

When: 3 November to 23 December 2022

Every year Birmingham hosts one of the largest German Christmas markets outside of Germany and Austria, with visitors travelling to the city from across the UK and Europe.

The stalls start in Victoria Square and run along New Street, so allow yourself plenty of time to explore everything. Whether you're looking for jewellery as a gift or handcrafted wooden decorations for your home, there's something for everyone. Of course, there's plenty for your tastebuds too, including German bratwursts, schnitzels, and roasted almonds.

As well as stalls, the event features an ice rink, a big wheel, and live music on Victoria Square – make sure you check the programme when you're planning your trip to make the most of the entertainment.

Find out more: visitbirmingham.com

Christmas tradition: Ukraine

While spider decorations are more commonly associated with Halloween in the UK, in Ukraine, they are often hung on Christmas trees. The tradition comes from a heartwarming story about a widow and her children who couldn't afford to decorate their tree. They wake up Christmas morning to find it decorated in beautiful silver and gold webs.





2. Bath Christmas Market

When: 24 November to 11 December 2022

The streets of Bath are picturesque all year round, but they transform into a magical experience in the weeks before Christmas as 150 chalets are installed offering crafts from the local area and beyond.

Pop-up chalets and Christmas carts on Bath Street also feature small businesses for a limited time only. These are often micro-businesses that can't attend the Christmas market for the full duration, but they offer a chance to support small business owners and purchase some unique items.

Bath Christmas Market supports local charities too. The last time the market was held in 2019, visitors raised more than £25,000 through charity stalls.

Find out more: bathchristmasmarket.co.uk

3. St Nicholas Fair, York

When: 17 November to 23 December 2022

York is the perfect place to visit if you want to experience a beautiful Christmas market. The Shambles – one of the best-preserved medieval shopping centres in Europe – is already a tourist hotspot that features independent shops packed with gifts.

During the festive period, alpine chalets line Parliament Street and Saint Sampson's Square to give you even more choice. Many local artisans and traders set up in these stalls.

2022 will be the 30th anniversary of the York Christmas Market and in 2018 it was voted the best in the UK by the National Association of British Market Authorities. So, it's well worth adding to your festive plans this year.

Find out more: makeityork.co.uk

4. Victorian Christmas Market, Stratford-Upon-Avon

When: 8 December to 11 December 2022

While it's only on for a few days, the Victorian Christmas Market in Stratford-Upon-Avon is deserving of a spot on the list.

The award-winning event is themed, with stallholders dressing up in Victorian costumes for some extra magic. It's the perfect market to visit with a family. As well as traditional stalls, there is a funfair at the bottom of Wood Street, a stage in Henley Street with a programme of festive performances, and entertainment held throughout the town over the four-day event.

Stalls selling items will run down Waterside, Bridge Street, Henley Street, High Street, and Meer Street, while food and drink is available on Wood Street.

Find out more: stratford.gov.uk

Christmas tradition: Iceland

This Icelandic tradition is perfect for bookworms. On Christmas Eve, it's common to gift a book to loved ones, so the whole family can curl up to enjoy a book with a hot chocolate. Known as "Jolabokafloð", which roughly translates to Christmas book flood, the tradition has led to books being the most popular Christmas gift in the country.



5. Christmas at Blenheim Palace

When: 18 November 2022 to 2 January 2023

Blenheim Palace is over 300 years old and a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site, so it makes for a great destination for a Christmas market.

In the Great Court, you can find designers and craft makers in wooden chalets offering a range of gifts such as wooden toys, artisan ceramics and beautiful textiles.

The Christmas market is free to enter, but you will need to pay for parking, which you need to pre-book.

There are several events you can purchase tickets for if you want to make the most out of your trip to Blenheim Palace. The after-dark illuminated trail will take you through the incredible gardens filled with millions of lights, while The Kingdom of the Snow Queen will take you through the Palace rooms with a festive and fairy tale twist.

Find out more: blenheimpalace.co.uk

6. Cardiff Christmas Market

When: 10 November to 23 December 2022

Cardiff Christmas Market has a vibrant festive atmosphere and is packed with talented makers selling handmade items and more. Of course, there's plenty of seasonal food to sample as you stroll through the streets too.

Cardiff's Winter Wonderland is split across two sites – the City Hall Lawn and Cardiff Castle. There's something for everyone, from funfair rides that children will love to an ice bar that's perfect for a festive drink. As well as an ice rink, you can test your skating experience with a 150-metre ice walk around the castle grounds.

Find out more: cardiffchristmasmarket.com



Christmas tradition: Mexico

While some Mexican families put up Christmas trees, nacimientos are more common. These are elaborate nativity scenes that families display in their homes and gardens, and local communities may also install one. Each day, families add a new character to tell the story of Jesus's birth, so the scene evolves during the festive period.

7. Edinburgh Christmas Market

When: 19 November 2022 to 3 January 2023

The quaint Old Town of Edinburgh means it's a great place to visit in winter. Winding streets and stunning buildings that are centuries old, including the famous Edinburgh Castle, offer an excellent backdrop to the Christmas market.

The Christmas market on Princes Street not only boasts traditional stalls but a Christmas tree maze and Santa's grotto that make it ideal for families. Several festive light trails throughout the city offer sparkling tunnels, huge illuminations and trees lit up in bright colours.

If you want to extend the festive cheer, Edinburgh is a great place to visit during Hogmanay, or New Year's Eve, too. The celebrations last for three days and include a torchlight procession, concerts, fireworks, and a huge street party. It's traditional to take a leap into the freezing River Forth on the first day of the new year if you're feeling brave.

Find out more: [visitscotland.com](https://www.visitscotland.com)





5 stunning Christmas markets you should experience across Europe

A weekend away to these stunning destinations can help you embrace the Christmas spirit this year thanks to the markets, as well as offering lots more for tourists to explore.

1. Prague, Czech Republic

When: 26 November 2022 to 6 January 2023

Prague is pretty at any time of the year, but it becomes a winter wonderland during the festive season. The main Christmas market is situated between the famous astronomical clock and the stunning gothic church Our Lady Before Tyn.

As you wander through the stalls, you can find plenty on offer from local artisans, including handblown glassware, embroidered lace, and traditional puppets.

One of the things that set Prague Christmas Market apart is the entertainment on offer. Head to the Old Town Square in the late afternoon and you'll find folk groups in traditional costumes and school choirs, who travel from all over the country, performing. The Old Town Square is also the perfect place to head if you're travelling with children. It features a traditional nativity scene and stable with animals waiting for some attention.

You won't want to leave the market without sampling some of the food on offer. From freshly made pancakes to traditional sausages, there's something for everyone. Don't forget to try a glass of grog while you're in Prague too – it's a mix of Rum, hot water, lemon, and sugar.

Find out more: pragueexperience.com



Christmas tradition: Spain

Spain's Christmas Lottery is famous for giving out the most prizes per ticket in the world – the total prize money represents around 70% of the ticket sales. Every year on 22 December since 1812, Spaniards purchase a lottery ticket for El Gordo (The Fat One) to be in with a chance of winning.



2. Cologne, Germany

When: 21 November to 23 December 2022

Cologne is home to several Christmas markets, and the most popular is in the city centre. Right in front of the beautiful gothic cathedral, which also holds the shrine of the Three Wise Men, you'll find lavishly decorated stalls filled with arts and crafts.

Markt der Engel is a must-visit section as it features hundreds of suspended lights and stars for a magical atmosphere. If you're travelling with children, Nikolausdorf in Rudolfplatz Square is ideal and tells the story of St Nicholas, you might even catch a glimpse of the man himself.

For travellers that want to avoid the hustle and bustle of the main market, the Stadtgarten Christmas market is often quieter. Many of the stalls sell handmade items, so it could be the perfect place to pick up a unique gift or festive decoration.

Find out more: cologne-tourism.com

3. Strasbourg, France

When: 25 November to 24 December 2022

Dubbed France's "Capital of Christmas", Strasbourg is a fantastic place to visit this winter.

The streets are beautifully illuminated and shops get into the spirit too with elaborately decorated windows – you'll feel like you've stepped straight into a fairy tale. There's been a Christmas Market held in Strasbourg since at least 1570, making it the oldest one in France.

You'll find the most popular market at the towering Cathedrale Notre Dame de Strasbourg, and smaller ones scattered around the city in pretty squares. There are more than 300 stalls to explore and hand-painted decorations are a speciality.

Traditional treats also fill stalls, including small biscuits called "bredle". There are many different varieties to try, including ones flavoured with aniseed and orange.

Find out more: christmas.alsace



4. Salzburg, Austria

When: 17 November 2022 to 1 January 2023

Salzburg's Christmas Market was mentioned as far back as the 15th century. Today, the market is designed to pay homage to these roots with stalls looking much the way they would have done in centuries past.

When it comes to the items sold, there's a focus on handcrafted, quality items. It makes it a great place to do your Christmas shopping. Even a simple walk through the markets is guaranteed to help get you in the Christmas spirit as the smell of baked apples and roasted chestnuts waft through the air.

For a dose of festive cheer, each day at 5 pm, you can head to the front of the cathedral to enjoy a concert for free – on Tuesdays, this is followed with a carol singalong too. 'Silent Night' was written and first performed nearby, so it's the perfect carol to sing here.

Find out more: austria.info

Christmas tradition: Portugal

Christmas is a time when many families enjoy getting together, and in Portugal, they also remember those that are no longer with them. In some regions, it's common to set extra places at the dinner table for deceased relatives – a tradition that's said to ensure good fortune.



5. Gothenburg, Sweden

When: 19 November to 30 December 2022

Gothenburg's Christmas market is unusual in that it's held every year in Liseberg Park – an amusement park filled with attractions for thrill seekers. So, as well as browsing stalls and drinking mulled wine, you can step onto a Ferris wheel or carousel to really take in the magical atmosphere here.

You can also ice skate and take children to visit Santa or see the elves busily working in the workshop too. There are also performances to take in, including ice shows that are guaranteed to delight and live music.

If you're looking for something a little more traditional, the neighbourhood of Haga is perfect. The cobbled streets are filled with decorations and the market is held on weekends throughout Advent.

Find out more: goteborg.com



Christmas is the time for giving, and if you're thinking about gifting more than a present under the tree this year, we can help make it part of your financial plan. From providing loved ones with a lump sum to making charitable donations part of your finances, please contact us to discuss your goals:

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