TRAVEL MAGIC NETWORK

European Christmas Markets

The Full Planning Guide

Wooden chalets, mulled wine, hand-carved ornaments, and the town square lit up for Advent.

20 markets in 13 countries · the 2026 season dates
where to stay · and the best ways to see them
by river, by train, or both.

Personalized planning from first call to final itinerary.

START HERE

Timing decides the trip



Markets do not share one calendar. They open across three weeks in November and close anywhere from December 23 to January 7 - so the dates you can travel should choose the markets, not the other way around.

The single most important planning fact: most German markets end on December 23 or 24, while Prague, Krakow, Tallinn, Budapest, Vienna's Schönbrunn, Salzburg and Brussels keep going into the New Year - Italy to January 6 for La Befana - and Zagreb runs latest of all, to January 7.

Sweet spot: the weekend of December 19-20, when every market is fully open before the Christmas Eve shutdowns. For fewer crowds and lower hotel prices, go on weekdays between December 1 and 15.

What is inside

2026 dates at a glance - all 20 markets

Christmas Markets

By sail, rail, or both

The short list: Five trips we recommend booking now

Where to stay: Our hotel picks and why

Need to know before you go

When to book - and festive extras beyond the markets

Season: November 6, 2026 - January 7, 2027. Dates are the published 2026 dates from market and city sources. Prices in this guide are December planning estimates, confirmed in a free quote before anything is booked.

PLAN BY THE CALENDAR

2026 dates at a glance

All 20 markets.

City & market	2026 dates	Best for	Good to know
AUSTRIA			
Vienna - Schönbrunn Palace	Nov 6 - Jan 6	Longest season	The pick after Christmas, in the palace courtyard
Vienna - Rathausplatz	Nov 13 - Dec 26	First-timers	The flagship: about 150 stalls, giant tree, ice rink (rink to Jan 6)
Salzburg - Christkindlmarkt	Nov 19 - Jan 1	Christmas away	Mozart's city, in the cathedral square; open through the holidays

City & market	2026 dates	Best for	Good to know
BELGIUM			
Brussels - Winter Wonders	Nov 27 - Jan 3	Easy weekend	Grand-Place light show, Ferris wheel, 200+ chalets
CROATIA			
Zagreb - Advent in Zagreb	Nov 28 - Jan 7	Latest finish	A whole-city festival across 25+ squares and parks
CZECHIA			
Prague - Old Town Square	Nov 28 - Jan 6	After Christmas	Daily carols and a towering tree beneath the Astronomical Clock
DENMARK			
Copenhagen - Christmas in Tivoli	Nov 13 - Jan 3	Families	Markets and rides inside Tivoli Gardens; ticketed entry, closed Dec 24
ESTONIA			
Tallinn - Town Hall Square	Nov 20 - Jan 6	Medieval fairytale	Snowy UNESCO Old Town; a tree has stood on this square since 1441
FRANCE			
Colmar - old town markets	Nov 23 - Dec 29	Fairytale	Six small markets in a storybook Alsatian town; pair with Strasbourg
Strasbourg - Christkindelsmärik	Nov 27 - Dec 24	Most atmospheric	France's oldest market (1570); 11 markets across the Grande Ile
GERMANY			
Cologne - Cathedral market	Nov 16 - Dec 23	Market crawl	Dates listed as provisional by the organiser; closed Sun Nov 22
Dresden - Striezelmarkt	Nov 25 - Dec 24	History	One of Germany's oldest markets (since 1434), named for Dresden Stollen
Munich - Marienplatz	Nov 20 - Dec 24	Grand + Alpine	100-foot tree under the Glockenspiel; easy day trips to the Alps
Nuremberg - Christkindlesmarkt	Nov 27 - Dec 24	The classic	About 180 red-and-white striped stalls; opens with the Christkind's prologue
HUNGARY			
Budapest - Advent Basilica	Nov 13 - Jan 1	Value	Light show on St. Stephen's Basilica; repeatedly voted among Europe's best
ITALY			
Arezzo - Città del Natale	Nov 14 - Dec 27	Alpine in Tuscany	34 Tyrolean chalets in Piazza Grande; wider festival runs to Jan 6
Montepulciano - Christmas Village	Nov 21 - Jan 6	Families + wine	Selected days only until Dec 19, then daily; Santa's Castle in the Fortezza
POLAND			
Krakow - Rynek Główny	Nov 27 - Jan 6	Grand square	Europe's largest medieval square; szopki nativity competition Dec 3
SLOVAKIA			
Bratislava - Main Square	Nov 26 - Jan 3	Danube add-on	Compact and local under the castle; closed Dec 24-25; one hour from Vienna

City & market	2026 dates	Best for	Good to know
SWITZERLAND			
Basel - two old-town squares	Nov 26 - Dec 23	Swiss Christmas city	Switzerland's biggest market, about 150 stalls; Rhine sailing endpoint

Montepulciano's Christmas Village runs on selected days until December 19, then daily. Cologne's dates are listed as provisional by its organiser.

Christmas Markets

Every market in this guide.

Jump to a country: Austria · Belgium · Croatia · Czechia · Denmark · Estonia · Finland · France · Germany · Hungary · Italy · Netherlands · Norway · Poland · Slovakia · Sweden · Switzerland

Austria

Vienna, Austria

Rathausplatz: Nov 13 - Dec 26 · Schönbrunn: Nov 6 - Jan 6

The grandest market scene in Europe. The Rathausplatz Christkindlmarkt fills the square in front of City Hall, and a dozen more markets run across the city, from the imperial Schönbrunn Palace courtyard to the artisan stalls at Spittelberg.

Eat & drink: Roasted chestnuts, potato pancakes with garlic sauce, and a mug of Punsch - keep the souvenir mug or return it for your deposit.

Belgium

Brussels, Belgium

Winter Wonders, Nov 27 - Jan 3: hundreds of wooden chalets centered on the Grand-Place, with its massive tree and 3D light projection show over the guildhalls. One of the easiest market weekends in Europe.

Croatia

Zagreb, Croatia

Advent in Zagreb: Nov 28 - Jan 7

Not one market but a whole city celebrating: more than 25 squares, parks and promenades - the ice park at King Tomislav Square, lantern-lit Zrinjevac, concerts in the Upper Town - running later than anywhere else in this guide, to January 7. Voted Europe's best Christmas market three years running.

Eat & drink: Fritule (warm mini doughnuts) dusted with sugar, kuhano vino mulled wine, and štrukli, Zagreb's baked cheese pastry.

Personalized planning from first call to final itinerary.

Czechia

Prague, Czechia

Old Town Square: Nov 28 - Jan 6

The market that keeps Christmas going: Prague's Old Town and Wenceslas Square markets run through Three Kings Day, making this the best choice if your trip falls between Christmas and New Year. A huge tree, a stage with daily carol concerts, and the Astronomical Clock as a backdrop.

Eat & drink: Trdelník filled with ice cream, Prague ham carved off the spit, and hot medovina (honey wine).

Denmark

Copenhagen, Denmark

Christmas in Tivoli: Nov 13 - Jan 3 · ticketed entry

Christmas inside a fairytale: Tivoli Gardens, the pleasure park open since 1843, dresses its rides, lake and pavilions in lights, with market stalls and Father Christmas. Book entry ahead for weekend evenings. Beyond Tivoli, wooden huts line the Nyhavn canal, and the Hans Christian Andersen Market adds handcrafted gifts and a vintage carousel.

Eat & drink: Æbleskiver (warm pancake balls) with jam and sugar, gløgg, and roasted almonds.

Estonia

Tallinn, Estonia

Town Hall Square: Nov 20 - Jan 6

The market for people who want their Christmas with real snow. Tallinn's UNESCO-listed Old Town centers on Town Hall Square, where a Christmas tree has stood since 1441 and is claimed as Europe's first public tree. Small, storybook, and open right through Christmas Day and New Year.

Eat & drink: Verivorst (blood sausage) with sauerkraut and lingonberry, gingerbread, and a mug of hot glögi.

Finland

Porvoo, Finland

Porvoo's Old Town Hall Square market is the quiet one - handmade decorations, regional woolens and baked goods, under an hour from Helsinki.



Rovaniemi, Finnish Lapland

Santa Claus Village straddles the Arctic Circle: reindeer sleigh rides, husky safaris, Santa's official post office, and prime Northern Lights viewing. Part market season, part Arctic adventure.



France

Strasbourg, France

Nov 27 - Dec 24

The self-declared Capital of Christmas. Markets have been held here since 1570, and today 11 of them spread across the Grande Ile - around 300 wooden chalets - anchored by the Great Christmas Tree in Place Kleber and the chalets in the cathedral's shadow. Nearby Colmar becomes six distinct, interconnected markets of its own.

Eat & drink: Vin chaud (the Alsatian white-wine version is the local move), bredele cookies, and tarte flambee from a market stall.

Germany

Cologne, Germany

The Cathedral Christmas Market spreads over 100 vendor huts beneath the twin spires of the UNESCO-listed Gothic cathedral, with an entertainment stage and an illuminated central tree.

Nuremberg, Germany

Nov 27 - Dec 24

The Christkindlesmarkt is the market other markets are measured against: roughly 180 stalls in red-and-white stripes on the Hauptmarkt, opened each year by the Christkind - a local teenager in gold robes - reading the prologue from the church balcony.

Eat & drink: Nürnberger Rostbratwurst (three in a roll), Lebkuchen gingerbread, and Zwetschgenmännle, the little prune figures sold as good-luck charms.

Hungary

Budapest, Hungary

Advent Basilica: Nov 13 - Jan 1

Chalets ring St. Stephen's Basilica while a 3D light show plays across its facade each evening. Budapest runs later than almost anywhere, costs noticeably less than Vienna or Strasbourg, and pairs a market night with an evening soak in the Széchenyi thermal baths.

Eat & drink: Chimney cake (kürtőskalács) rolled in cinnamon, lángos with sour cream and cheese, and a glass of Tokaji.



Chimney cake, or kürtőskalács, fresh off the coals at the Budapest markets.

Italy

Arezzo, Italy

Città del Natale: Nov 14 - Jan 6 · Tyrolean Village: Nov 14 - Dec 27

The surprise of the Italian season: a full Tyrolean village - 34 wooden chalets from Tyrol, Germany and Austria - filling the sloping, medieval Piazza Grande, with light projections over the palazzi every evening. Santa's House sits in the Medici Fortress, and Florence is only about an hour away by train.

Eat & drink: Two traditions on one piazza: speck, dumplings, strudel and Tyrolean beer alongside Tuscan specialties and vin brulé.

Montepulciano, Italy

Christmas Village: Nov 21 - Jan 6 · selected days, daily from Dec 19

A Renaissance hilltop town in the Val d'Orcia turns its Piazza Grande into one of central Italy's largest Christmas villages - and its medieval Fortezza into Santa's Castle, a ticketed walk-through of themed rooms and elf workshops. Book ahead on December weekends; the village itself is free to wander.

Eat & drink: A glass of Vino Nobile, the town's own famous red, plus pecorino from nearby Pienza, cinta senese salumi, and panforte.

Why Italy stays open until January 6 – La Befana

Christmas in Italy does not end on Christmas Day. The season closes on January 6, Epiphany, with La Befana, the kindly Christmas witch. Legend says she turned down the Wise Men on their way to Bethlehem, then set out after them too late, and she has been searching ever since. On the night of January 5, she flies in on her broomstick, filling stockings with sweets for good children and coal - usually sweet black sugar - for naughty ones. Italian markets stay open to celebrate her, which is why Arezzo's wider festival and Montepulciano's Christmas Village both run to January 6.

Netherlands

Amsterdam, Netherlands

The Christmas Village on Museumplein transforms the square in front of the Rijksmuseum with an outdoor ice-skating rink and festive market chalets - glide a lap, then warm up among the stalls.

Norway

Oslo, Norway

Jul i Vinterland lights up the city with an ice rink, carnival rides and stalls pouring spiced gløgg. The Norwegian Museum of Cultural History hosts a weekend market with historic farmsteads, folk dancing and artisanal crafts.

Poland

Krakow, Poland

Rynek Główny: Nov 27 - Jan 6

Europe's largest medieval market square becomes Poland's Christmas living room: rows of stalls circling the Renaissance Cloth Hall, the hourly trumpet call from St. Mary's tower, and the szopki - Krakow's glittering, many-towered nativity scenes, a UNESCO-listed tradition judged on the square on December 3.

Eat & drink: Grzaniec (spiced mulled wine), oscypek smoked cheese grilled with cranberry, and pierogi from a market stall.

Slovakia

Bratislava, Slovakia

Main Square: Nov 26 - Jan 3 · closed Dec 24-25

The Danube's quiet achiever. Around 70 stalls fill Main Square beneath the Old Town Hall, spilling onto Franciscan and Hviezdoslav Squares, with the castle watching over it all - compact, local-feeling, and barely an hour from Vienna. Danube river cruises dock here, so it is the easiest market in Europe to add to a sailing.

Eat & drink: Kapustnica (hearty sauerkraut soup), lokše potato pancakes with sweet or savory fillings, and medovina honey wine.

Sweden

Stockholm, Sweden

At Skansen open-air museum, vendors in historic dress sell traditional crafts around bonfires.

Switzerland

Basel, Switzerland

Barfüsserplatz & Münsterplatz: Nov 26 - Dec 23

Basel calls itself Switzerland's Christmas City: some 150 chalets across two old-town squares, a 13-metre Christmas pyramid at Barfüsserplatz, and the quieter, prettier Münsterplatz in the cathedral's shadow. It is the natural start or finish of a Rhine sailing, and Colmar is just 45 minutes away by train.

Eat & drink: Raclette scraped over potatoes, Basler Läckerli spiced biscuits, and a flaming Feuerzangenbowle.

Personalized planning from first call to final itinerary.

By sail, rail, or both

By sail – river cruise



Unpack once and wake up in a new market town. Christmas Markets sailings on the Danube and Rhine are built entirely around the markets, with guided walks straight from the dock.

Danube: Budapest, Vienna, Bratislava, Passau, Regensburg, Nuremberg.
Rhine: Amsterdam, Cologne, Strasbourg, Basel.

Best for: couples, friend groups, anyone who wants the logistics handled. These are the most in-demand river sailings of the year, and the most desirable December departures sell out many months ahead.

By rail – train, city to city



Pick two or three cities and let Europe's rail network connect them. You set your own pace in each place.

- Vienna + Budapest: 2.5 hours by Railjet - add Prague (4 hours) for a grand triangle
- Vienna + Bratislava: one hour apart - two capitals in a single easy day trip
- Strasbourg + Colmar + Basel: 30 minutes to Colmar, under an hour on to Basel
- Munich + Nuremberg + Dresden: a Bavaria-and-Saxony market loop

Best for: independent travelers, and trips between Christmas and New Year using the markets that stay open.

On a guided tour

Escorted tours hand the whole trip to a tour director: hotels, intercity transport and market timing arranged, with guided sightseeing and free time at the stalls. **Best for:** first-timers, solo travelers who would like company, and anyone who wants zero logistics.

Adventures by Disney

Disney's guided adventures pair a small group with two Adventure Guides who handle every detail - hotels, transport, activities and luggage - so you can simply enjoy the trip. On the river, Adventures by Disney cruises are operated with AmaWaterways, including Christmas markets sailings on the Danube and the Rhine, with family-focused excursions and Disney storytelling woven through market days.

Best for: families and multigenerational groups who want a guided trip with the logistics - and the magic - handled. Ask us about Adventures by Disney when you request your free quote and we will walk you through the options.

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Belmond - a rail journey worth adding

Our Christmas markets training highlighted Belmond for Florence's Epiphany celebrations, paired with a stay at Villa San Michele, A Belmond Hotel. Belmond's legendary trains - including the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express - turn the journey itself into part of the celebration, and a luxury rail chapter pairs beautifully with a markets trip through Italy and Austria. Ask us how Belmond could fit your itinerary when you request your free quote.

Do Both - river cruise + train days

Start with a 7- or 8-night Danube or Rhine sailing as the centrepiece, then add rail days before and/or after in market cities the ship only touches briefly - or does not reach at all. We secure the sailing, hotels, rail tickets and transfers as one trip, with market timing checked for every stop.

THE SHORT LIST

Five trips we recommend booking now

Our full guide covers 20 markets in 13 countries - wonderful for dreaming, but a lot to choose from. These five trips are the ones we are recommending right now.

Two river cruises with cabins still open

Cruise 1 · Our recommendation

Iconic Christmas Markets - AmaWaterways

7 nights · Nuremberg, Germany to Budapest, Hungary · cabins still open on December sailings

Markets included: Nuremberg's Christkindlesmarkt; Regensburg and Passau along the way; Vienna - Rathausplatz, Schönbrunn and Spittelberg; Budapest's Advent Basilica market and light show.

Combines easily: Munich and Nuremberg rail nights slot onto the front; Budapest connects onward to Vienna and Prague by Railjet.

$453 per person, per day - package from $4,530 per person · $9,060 for two (10 days, with a hotel night before and after the sailing, plus transfers). Cruise fare from $4,249 per person.

Cruise 2 · The Rhine

Christmas Markets on the Rhine - AmaWaterways

7 nights · Amsterdam, Netherlands to Basel, Switzerland · cabins still open on December sailings

Markets included: Amsterdam's Christmas Village on Museumplein; Cologne's Cathedral market; Strasbourg, the Capital of Christmas; Basel's Barfüsserplatz under the Christmas pyramid.

Combines easily: the Rhine & Alsace rail tour runs along this same river and shares Strasbourg and Basel with the sailing.

$453 per person, per day - package from $4,530 per person · $9,060 for two (10 days, with a hotel night before and after the sailing, plus transfers). Cruise fare from $4,249 per person.

Two railway tours

Prefer the train? These routes were chosen because the dates still work, the market in every city is open while you are there, and each shares a city with a cruise above. We secure every ticket for you.

Rail Tour 1 · Trains + hotels · 10 days

The Grand Triangle by Rail

Prague, Czechia to Vienna, Austria (with Bratislava, Slovakia as a day trip) to Budapest, Hungary · 9 hotel nights, 3 in each capital

Markets included: Prague's Old Town Square; Vienna's Rathausplatz, Schönbrunn and Spittelberg; Bratislava's Main Square; Budapest's Advent Basilica market.

Hotel tier	Per person	Per day
Value - well-located 3-star and family-run hotels	$1,490	$149/day
Moderate - central 4-star hotels, breakfast included	$1,990	$199/day
Premium - 5-star stays, the market-season picks in this guide	$2,690	$269/day

From $1,490 per person · $2,980 for two (land only). Estimate: 9 hotel nights at the tier allowance plus rail tickets for both intercity legs and the Bratislava day trip.

Rail Tour 2 · Trains + hotels · 10 days · Europe's newest rail tour

The Rhine & Alsace by Rail

Amsterdam, Netherlands to Cologne, Germany to Strasbourg, France (with Colmar as a day trip) to Basel, Switzerland · 9 hotel nights

Markets included: Amsterdam's Christmas Village on Museumplein; Cologne's Cathedral market; Strasbourg's Christkindelsmärik; Colmar's old-town markets; Basel's Barfüsserplatz.

Hotel tier	Per person	Per day
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Moderate - central 4-star hotels, breakfast included	$1,990	$199/day
Premium - 5-star stays, the market-season picks in this guide	$2,690	$269/day

From $1,490 per person · $2,980 for two (land only). Estimate: 9 hotel nights at the tier allowance plus rail tickets for the three intercity legs and the Colmar day trip.

Personalized planning from first call to final itinerary.

River + rail, combined in one trip

Every cruise and rail tour on the short list shares an endpoint or a city, so combining them is one short train ride - not a second trip to plan.

The combined trip · Cruise + rail, one booking · 13 days

Cruise + Rail, One Trip

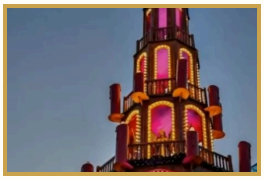
Munich and Nuremberg by rail, then a 7-night Danube sailing, then Budapest to linger: 5 hotel nights wrapped around the sailing.

- **Rail days first:** Munich (2 nights) and Nuremberg (1 night) at your own pace, then the short train ride to Passau to embark - tickets secured for you
- **The cruise core:** a 7-night Danube Christmas Markets sailing through Vienna and Bratislava to Budapest
- **Rail days after:** 2 extra nights in Budapest for unhurried Basilica market evenings and the thermal baths
- **Booked as one trip:** sailing, hotels, rail tickets and transfers in a single itinerary

Tier - sailing + hotels	Per person	Per day
Value	$3,100	$238/day
Moderate	$4,980	$383/day
Premium - the tier most Do Both clients book	$6,250	$481/day

From $3,100 per person · $6,200 for two (13 days, land and river only). The Rhine version - Strasbourg and Colmar rail nights around a Rhine sailing - prices the same way.

Easy add-on trips - short hops, big payoff



- **Esslingen Medieval Market** - 15 minutes by train from Stuttgart: costumed merchants and artisan workshops among half-timbered houses
- **Mainz** - 35 minutes from Frankfurt: a 36-foot wooden Christmas pyramid beneath the 1,000-year-old cathedral
- **Frankfurt's Römerberg** - 1 hour from Cologne: hot apple wine and marzipan pastries
- **Krakow** - 1 hour by flight from Budapest or Prague: hand-painted baubles, oscypek smoked cheese, folk caroling
- **Munich's Marienplatz** - 1 hour from Nuremberg: alpine chalets, Stubenmusik, and the Krampuslauf parade
- **Stuttgart** - 1 hour from Strasbourg: nearly 300 decorated chalets, one of Germany's largest and oldest markets

Make it yours

These five are starting points, not fixed departures. Swap Danube for Rhine, add nights in a favorite city, upgrade the cabin or hotel tier, or stretch across Christmas and New Year using the markets that stay open into January. Tell us your dates and the markets on your list and we will reprice a trip around them.

Not included in the estimates: flights to and from Europe (we arrange them as part of your trip and price them into your quote), meals and drinks beyond what your sailing or hotel breakfast includes, ticketed entries such as Christmas in Tivoli, travel insurance (recommended), and personal spending. We can obtain any additional event or entry tickets mentioned here for you - tell us which ones you would like and we will secure them and price them into your quote.

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Where to stay: Our hotel picks and why

The right hotel makes a market trip: out the door and into the chalets in minutes, and back to a warm room when your feet give out. Most of these picks come with advisor-only perks when we book them for you - at no extra cost to you.

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

Hotel Amigo, a Rocco Forte Hotel

5-star · Fora Reserve

Steps from the Grand-Place and moments from the Winter Wonders chalets and light show - the most walkable base in Brussels. Tintin memorabilia, Italian dining at Ristorante Bocconi, cocktails at Bar Magritte.

Why we like it: For art lovers and couples who want a romantic stay in the heart of Brussels.

Booked through Travel Magic Network: $100 food & beverage credit · daily breakfast · upgrade & extended check-in/out whenever possible.

AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

INK Hotel Amsterdam (MGallery)

4-star · Fora Reserve

A former newspaper headquarters turned storytelling-driven boutique stay, a five-minute walk from Dam Square and a short stroll from Central Station.

Why we like it: For design enthusiasts and first-time visitors who want a chic, central boutique.

Booked through Travel Magic Network: $100 hotel credit · daily breakfast · upgrade & extended check-in/out whenever possible.

AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

Mandarin Oriental Conservatorium

5-star · Fora Reserve

A Museum Quarter landmark across from the Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh Museum, with an underground spa - and the Museumplein Christmas Village within easy reach.

Why we like it: For culture lovers and wellness seekers, with the museums right across the street.

Booked through Travel Magic Network: $100 hotel credit · welcome amenity · daily breakfast · upgrade & extended check-in/out whenever possible.

AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

Sofitel Legend The Grand Amsterdam

5-star · Fora Reserve

A 15th-century landmark in the Old Town, walkable to the main market squares and canal bridges, with fine dining at Bridges and butler service.

Why we like it: For history lovers who want a serene Old Town retreat with spa and butler service.

Booked through Travel Magic Network: $100 hotel credit · daily breakfast · upgrade & extended check-in/out whenever possible.

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ZURICH, SWITZERLAND

The Dolder Grand

5-star · Fora Reserve

A fairytale-castle city resort on forested slopes above the city, with a museum-grade art collection and sprawling spa. The Dolderbahn funicular runs down to Zurich's central holiday markets.

Why we like it: For art lovers and wellness seekers who want quiet forest air above the city.

Booked through Travel Magic Network: $100 hotel credit · daily breakfast · upgrade & extended check-in/out whenever possible.

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

Villa Copenhagen

5-star · Fora Reserve

The former Central Post & Telegraph head office, now an eco-conscious luxury hotel with a rooftop lap pool - directly adjacent to Tivoli Gardens and its Christmas market.

Why we like it: For design lovers and couples, with Tivoli's Christmas market right next door.

Booked through Travel Magic Network: $100 food & beverage credit · daily breakfast · upgrade & extended check-in/out whenever possible.

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

Hotel D'Angleterre

5-star · Virtuoso

A grand palace hotel established in 1755, dressed each winter in fairytale facade illuminations, with Michelin-starred Marchal - steps from the Nyhavn canal market.

Why we like it: For luxury travelers and food lovers who want a grand, festive landmark stay.

Booked through Travel Magic Network: $100 food and beverage credit · daily breakfast · upgrade & extended check-in/out whenever possible.

DÜSSELDORF, GERMANY

Breidenbacher Hof

5-star · Fora Reserve

A grand hotel on the Königsallee at the edge of the Altstadt - about a five-minute walk to Düsseldorf's Christmas market squares, with luxury shopping on the doorstep.

Why we like it: For luxury shoppers and couples who want a classic grand hotel on the Königsallee.

Booked through Travel Magic Network: $100 food & beverage credit · daily breakfast · upgrade & extended check-in/out whenever possible.

OSLO, NORWAY

The Thief

5-star · Fora Reserve

A waterfront design hotel on Aker Brygge, its art curated from the neighboring Astrup Fearnley Museum - a 15-minute stroll to the Karl Johan Gate Christmas market.

Why we like it: For art and design lovers who want a quiet waterfront retreat by Aker Brygge.

Booked through Travel Magic Network: $100 hotel credit · welcome amenity · daily breakfast · upgrade & extended check-in/out whenever possible.

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OSLO, NORWAY

Amerikalinjen

4-star · Preferred Platinum

The restored 1919 Norwegian America Line headquarters, directly across from Oslo Central Station - a short stroll to the main markets, with a basement jazz venue for the evening.

Why we like it: For culture and music lovers, with a basement jazz venue by Central Station.

Booked through Travel Magic Network: $100 hotel credit · welcome amenity · daily breakfast · upgrade & extended check-in/out whenever possible.

PORVOO, FINLAND

RUNO Hotel Porvoo

4-star

A rustic-chic boutique hotel in an Art Nouveau building at the gateway to Old Porvoo, with a fireplace-warmed Attic Sauna - under an hour from Helsinki, at the entrance to the old town's winter markets.

Why we like it: For Nordic design lovers and couples after a peaceful, sauna-warmed retreat.

Booked through Travel Magic Network: Perks confirmed at booking.

ROVANIEMI, FINNISH LAPLAND

Santa Claus Holiday Village

4-star

Directly on the Arctic Circle: heated red timber cottages and glass igloos, each with a private sauna - with Santa's official office, reindeer and husky rides on the doorstep.

Why we like it: For families and winter adventurers who want Santa's official office on the doorstep.

Booked through Travel Magic Network: Perks confirmed at booking.

Perks vary by property and are confirmed at booking - tell us which city you are dreaming about and we will check what is on offer for your dates.

BEFORE YOU GO

Need to know before you go

Dress like you mean it

Market weather is cold and damp, and you will be outdoors for hours. Start with a thermal, moisture-wicking base layer, add insulating wool mid-layers, and finish with a heavy, weather-resistant coat. Warm hat, scarf and insulated gloves are non-negotiable - and wear comfortable waterproof walking shoes or boots.

Historic squares, real footing

These markets fill centuries-old squares, so expect uneven cobblestones, temporary power cables underfoot, and dense crowds. Seating is scarce - most eating and drinking happens standing at high tables. Plan your footwear and your pace for it.

Personalized planning from first call to final itinerary.

Keep valuables close

Crowded squares are prime territory for petty theft. Carry valuables in a front-facing crossbody bag or an internal coat pocket, and keep your phone tucked away between photos.

Money matters

Many countries use the euro, but Switzerland, the Czech Republic and Denmark use their own currencies. Cards and contactless work at larger markets and across the Nordics, but cash is essential for most markets - especially in Austria and Germany.

Coins for the restrooms

Keep small coins handy: public restrooms commonly use paid turnstiles or attendants.

The mug deposit

Hot drinks come with a small refundable deposit on the ceramic mug. Return it for your deposit back - or keep it as a souvenir. Every market's mug is different, and plenty of clients come home with a small collection.

Carry your trash

Trash bins are surprisingly scarce at markets. Do not litter - carry cups and wrappers until you find a bin.

WHEN TO BOOK

Booking from now through the end of the year

Right now – last 2026 cabins

A handful of late-November and December 2026 river departures still show cabins, and market-city hotels still have rooms - especially for weekday trips December 1-15. This is the final call for traveling this season.

Early December – season in full swing

Every market is open. If you are not traveling, this is when 2027 sailings are being snapped up by everyone watching the photos roll in.

By December 31 – book 2027 at launch pricing

Christmas Markets river cruises are the first river product to sell out each year. Booking before the end of the year means the full choice of ships, dates and cabins.

What we handle: flights, the sailing or hotels and trains, travel insurance, and a market-by-market plan for your days.

Personalized planning from first call to final itinerary.

Festive experiences beyond the markets

Florence, Italy - January 6

The Epiphany Cavalcata dei Magi: a Renaissance procession of costumed figures on horseback through the historic center.

Rome, Italy - Epiphany morning

La Befana at Piazza Navona: street performers, puppet theaters, and La Befana bringing gifts and sweets to children in the historic square.

Milan & Lake Como, Italy

Villa d'Este on Lake Como opens for the holiday season with grand gala dinners, seasonal wellness programs, and twinkling garden light displays.

Innsbruck, Austria - mid-November through January

LUMAGICA turns the 15th-century imperial Hofgarten into an open-air light-art gallery of glowing animal sculptures and musical projections.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Ready when you are

Tell us your dates and the markets on your list. We will confirm your exact cabin, current fare and hotel rates in a free, no-obligation quote - and secure the whole trip for you as one itinerary: sailing or hotels and trains, transfers, and a market-by-market plan for your days.

One more date to plan around

Edinburgh, Scotland - December 31 to January 2

Hogmanay: torchlight processions, street parties, traditional caroling, and midnight fireworks beneath Edinburgh Castle.

Get your free quote

Email **tiffany.hern@fora.travel**

Visit **travel.magicnetwork.studio**

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A short list, not the whole guide - on the web

This guide is the dreaming version. When you are ready to decide, our packages page short-lists the five trips in this guide - two cruises, two railway tours, and one combined trip - with a price calculator for your dates.

Prices in this guide are December planning estimates built from published 2026 fares and hotel planning allowances by tier. Availability changes fast in market season; your exact fare, cabin and hotel rates are confirmed in your free quote before anything is booked. Market dates are the published 2026 dates; markets that stay open into January are the right picks for travel between Christmas and New Year.

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