

Christmas Markets in Austria: Feel the Winter Magic

Festive lights, seasonal treats, sing-along carols, and snow-covered roofs and treetops as far as the eye can see: Christmas in Austria is a truly magical time, with locals and visitors alike flocking to the cities and small towns from mid-November to join in the celebrations leading up to Christmas Eve. The festive period has become one of the most popular times to visit Austria – and one of the best to experience the true Austrian spirit, or, as we like to call it, the “Lebensgefühl”.

Austria’s Christmas markets date back to the 18th century and started out as day-time food and drinks markets. The festive lights were added in the 20th century, making the markets even more attractive – and romantic. Today, kids (and kids at heart) can not only browse through a huge variety of stalls, selling everything from punch to chestnuts, traditional handicrafts, and unique local gifts, but also mingle with angels or meet the “Christkind”, the traditional gift-bringer in Austria.

Let us show you some of the best places to experience Austrian Christmas like a local – from big cities to the lakes and mountains.

Christmas Markets in the city

Every major Austrian town has at least one Christmas market and it goes without saying that [Vienna](#) has by far the most. Austria’s capital is home to more than 20 festive markets, with some of the biggest and most well-known ones right in front of attractions such as the [town hall](#) (including a giant Advent calendar on the building!), [Schönbrunn Palace](#) (combine it with a visit to Sisi’s palace) and [Belvedere Palace](#). The Christmas markets in the [Spittelberg](#) artist district and in front of the [Karlskirche](#) are long-term local favourites and great places to shop handicrafts and sustainable gifts, while the [Old Viennese Christmas Market](#) at Freyung is where the city’s Christmas market magic started in 1772.

Then there’s [Salzburg](#). Its [Christmas Market at Residenzplatz](#) was first mentioned in the 15th century, and celebrates its 40th birthday in its current form this year. The market sits right in the old town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and is the perfect place to sample local festive delights while listening to choral tunes. Want to experience Christmas with an Imperial (and “Sound of Music”) touch? Head straight to [Mirabellplatz](#). And if sipping punch with the city at your feet sounds like your cup of tea, hop on the cable car train to [Hohensalzburg Fortress](#) and check out their Christmas market in the courtyard. Just outside of Salzburg, the [Advent Magic at Hellbrunn Palace](#) awaits, one of the most romantic markets in the region, with over 700 conifers decorated with 10,000 red Christmas balls and strands of lights, and the palace’s windows turned into an XXL advent calendar.

Linz is more accessible than ever from London thanks to a new direct Ryanair flight – and its Christmas markets are well worth a trip. [Linz’ main Christmas Markets](#) are on the main

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square, the Volksgarten park and Pfarrplatz, while the new kid on the block, the market on the Domplatz, right in front of the city's main Cathedral, was an instant success in 2023. A local favourite is the slightly hidden Winter Magic at the [Stiegl-Klosterhof restaurant](#), where the spacious garden is transformed into a winter wonderland with lights, festive decorations, music, and mulled wine. There's a free hop-on hop-off Christmas train running between the markets every weekend from 3 to 7 PM.

[Innsbruck](#) has markets right under the famous Golden Roof, on the main square, the shopping street Maria Theresien Straße, the Nikolaus district (just cross the river) as well as at Hungerburg Castle, where visitors can enjoy spectacular views over the town. A special highlight: The Kaiserweihnacht market at the Bergisel Ski Jump with traditional delights, Tyrolean handicrafts, and spectacular views over the city. An annual jour fixe is Innsbruck's [Christkind Parade \("Christkindleinzug"\)](#) on 22 December this year, featuring the "Christkind" riding down Maria-Theresien-Straße and the historic lanes in a splendid carriage, accompanied by a marching band, shepherds, angels, sheep, and 600 local children. And then there's [LUMAGICA Innsbruck](#), a festive light park in the Imperial Garden.

In Graz, head to the Christmas markets on the [main square](#) (with an XXL advent calendar projected on the town hall), the [Karmelliterplatz](#) (with a postcard-perfect view of the Clock Tower), [Nikolaipplatz](#) (Graz' most sustainable Christmas market), [Südtirolerplatz](#) (with a traditional Styrian hut), [Tummelplatz](#) (handicrafts from four continents), or [Eisernes Tor](#) (the most relaxed market). The ["Aufsteirern" market](#) on the Schloss Hill is open on five weekends leading to Christmas and features culinary delights and local handicrafts high above the roofs of Graz. Arriving with children? Schedule in extra time for the [Children's Advent Fair – Kleine Neutorgasse](#) and the [Graz Winter Wonderland](#) (a festive XXL ice skating rink).

Christmas markets in the mountains

Skiing followed by a romantic stroll through a mountain Christmas market? It almost goes without saying that Austria's Alpine regions, too, top up their game to get guests into the festive spirit.

Besides Innsbruck, Tyrolean resorts such as [Kitzbühel](#), [Seefeld](#), [St. Johann](#), Zillertal (check out [Mayerhofen's](#) festive highlights), [Ski Juwel Alpbachtal Wildschönau](#), [St. Anton am Arlberg](#) and [Kufstein](#) await with punch and chestnut stalls, traditional handicrafts, cookie baking workshops, and Christmas trails. Love high altitudes? [SkiWelt Wilder Kaiser Brixental](#) is the proud home to Europe's highest Christmas market at 1,555 m.

[Zell am See-Kaprun](#) in SalzburgerLand also has several Christmas markets, with a handful right in the heart of the skiing hotspots and one at Kaprun castle, while [Altenmarkt Zauchensee](#) scores with festive markets, classical music and light installations. Salzburg's [Mountain Advent in Grossarlal](#) is a long-term go-to place for festive family markets.

In Austria's westernmost province Vorarlberg, [Kleinwalsertal](#) and [Schwarzenberg](#) in Bregenzer Forest are great places to experience Christmas magic amidst the Alps. And for

holidaymakers wanting to add some Advent themed concerts on top, [Montafon](#) makes a great Christmassy destination (there are punch stalls too!).

Christmas markets at the lake

Floating candles on the water and festive lights and stalls on the shores: There's little more romantic than a Christmassy trip to the lake districts. And Austria has plenty of options for lovebirds!

Salzkammergut, the European Capital of Culture, is home to [Lake Wolfgangsee](#) and its villages St. Wolfgang, Strobl and St. Gilgen turn into a Christmas wonderland every year, think markets, open fires, musical events, and a chance to experience all the Austrian festive traditions first-hand. The 16 m high, floating "Peace Lantern" on the lake, just off St. Wolfgang's shore, is the official symbol of the region. However, lights can be found all over the lake. The best way to enjoy all the festive decorations and markets is an advent-themed [boat tour](#).

Another great region for markets at the lake promenade is Austria's southernmost province [Carinthia](#). Head to [Lake Wörthersee](#) and check out all the stalls and festive lights in [Pörtlach](#) and the famous floating Advent wreath in [Velden](#), then book yourself into a guided torchlit walk to experience even more Christmas magic.

As always, we are happy to assist you with additional information, images, and research trips to Austria. Please get in touch at pressuk@austria.info.

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