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30 Best Christmas Markets Around the World

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Get into the holiday spirit with a visit to one (or more) of the world's most festive Christmas markets

For most of us, the **Christmas season** is both enchanting and daunting. Yes, it's the time of year when the world becomes just a little bit more whimsical and beautiful. But it's also the time when gift shopping can begin to feel like a burden. Luckily, many towns around the world manage to maintain the holiday magic (and offset the often overwhelming commercialization of the holiday) with their unique and whimsical Christmas markets. From late November through the **New Year**, you can find amazing candlelit displays, winter delicacies, delicious mulled **wine**, and spectacular crafts at seasonal markets around the world. These markets are time-honored traditions — some have been around for centuries — that make the historical magic of Christmas feel a bit more present-day.

These Christmas markets, also known as holiday markets, Christkindlmarkts (the spelling of this varies from city to city), or Weihnachtsmarkts, are based on a tradition that dates back to the late Middle Ages in German-speaking parts of **Europe** — a time when decorations and ornaments only came in handmade form from talented artisans. Traditionally, these markets were held across Germany, Austria, Northern Italy, South Tyrol, and Alsace, but today these spirited celebrations can be found all over the world.

Less expected cities, such as Sapporo, **Japan** (which fell into the mix because Munich is its sister city), and Québec City, **Canada**, host holiday markets as well, turning sections of their cities into winter wonderlands you'd have to see to believe. In the United States, cities such as **New York, Chicago**, and **Philadelphia** have introduced traditional artisanal Christmas markets, some of which are outdoor pop-ups, while others invoke the ritual of incorporating a Christkind into an established market program, à la Nuremberg, one of Germany's original markets.

What is a Christkind, you ask? While it literally translates to "Christ child," the Christkind is an angelic woman with long, flowing blond locks, a gilded crown, and a robe of white and gold who is responsible for reciting the customary prologue to commence the festivities. At some markets, you'll find the Christkind schmoozing with guests, spreading holiday cheer, and even reading Christmas stories to children.

If you find yourself in any of these cities during the holiday season, make it a point to explore the Christmas market to see the lights, trees, and tinsel, to smell the pine and spiced wine, and to gawk at the gorgeous pieces of art and antiques on display and for sale. You'll be able to score eclectic gifts for everyone on your list, and no matter how Grinch-like you may naturally be, if you celebrated Christmas growing up, you're pretty much guaranteed a (momentary at least) flashback to your former, childlike self (if not a full-on regression to a stuttering, awestruck tyke at the sight of Santa Claus sitting in his cushy red chair).

Think of this slideshow as **your passport to the markets around the world**, or those nearest to where you are — these amazing venues are sure to get you into the holiday spirit!

Shannon Darnall, Bianca Bahamondes, and Aly Walansky contributed to this article.



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Québec City, Québec

During the holiday season, **Le Marché du Vieux-Port** is home to thousands of gifts, ornaments, and home decorations amid the Old World splendor of **beautiful Québec City**, making the Christmas Market at Old Port Market the perfect place to explore, shop, and stimulate your senses. The selection of gourmet snacks will overwhelm you, so opt for **cheesy poutine** to warm your insides if the weather is extra-frigid — and to make decision-making especially easy.