

Christmas Markets in Austria: Step into the Winter Magic

Festive lights, spiced punch, choirs in historic squares, and rooftops dusted with snow: Christmas in Austria is pure magic. From mid-November the whole country shifts into Advent mode, with locals and visitors wandering from market to market until Christmas Eve (and, in many places, right through New Year). It's also one of the best times to feel Austria's Lebensgefühl - that easy, joyful, "this is the life" spirit that bubbles up the minute the lamps switch on and the brass bands start.

Austria's markets go way back, some to the 18th century when they were simple daytime food stalls. The lights, music, and romantic glow arrived later, and today you'll find everything from traditional woodcarving and glass baubles to hot chestnuts, handmade cookies and ginger bread, and creative, sustainable gifts. Kids (and kids at heart) can meet angels, spot the "Christkind," and join craft workshops, while grown-ups browse the stalls, sip mulled wine, and soak it all in.

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

Christmas markets in the city

It goes without saying that, among the cities, [Vienna](#) is the heavyweight. Austria's capital has more than 20 markets sprinkled across the city, with some of the most well-known ones right in front of attractions such as the [town hall](#) (with a giant Advent calendar right on the building), [Schönbrunn Palace](#) (perfect for those wanting to pop into Sisi's palace) and [Belvedere Palace](#). The bohemian markets in the [Spittelberg](#) artist district and in front of the [Karlskirche](#) are favourites among the locals and great places to shop handmade and sustainable gifts. If you like traditions and history, the Old Viennese Christmas Market at [Freyung](#) is where the city's Christmas market magic started in 1772.

[Salzburg](#)'s old town (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) turns into a postcard the second Advent starts. Its Christmas Market at [Residenzplatz](#) was first mentioned in the 15th century, and has been around for over 40 years in its current form. For a classic "The Sound of Music" feel, drop by [Mirabellplatz](#). And if sipping punch with the city at your feet sounds like your cup of tea, hop on the funicular to [Hohensalzburg Fortress](#) and check out their Christmas market in the courtyard. Just outside town, the Advent Magic at [Hellbrunn Palace](#) awaits, one of Austria's most romantic Advents, with over 700 conifers decorated with 10,000 red Christmas baubles, and the palace's windows turned into an XXL advent calendar.

[Linz](#) is a slightly off-the-beaten-path city destination and its Christmas markets are well worth a trip. Markets pop up on the Hauptplatz (main square) and in the Volksgarten (great

for families), with Pfarrplatz and Domplatz adding to the mix. A sweet extra is the free hop-on hop-off Christmas train that loops between the markets on Advent weekends. A local favourite is the slightly hidden [Winter Magic at the Stiegl-Klosterhof restaurant](#), where the spacious garden is transformed into a glowing forest with lights, festive decorations, music, and mulled wine.

[Innsbruck](#) has markets right under the famous Golden Roof, on the main square, the shopping street Maria Theresien Straße and the Nikolaus district (just cross the river). At the [Hungerburg Castle](#) and the market at the [Bergisel ski jump](#) visitors can enjoy crafts with postcard-perfect city views over the town. An annual jour fixe is Innsbruck's Christkind Parade ("Christkindleinzug"), every year on the forth Advent Sunday, which sees 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. Another seasonal highlight worth pencilling in: [LUMAGICA](#), a light-art trail through the Imperial Garden that's made for an after-dark stroll.

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).

Carinthia's cities go big on atmosphere. [Villach](#) decorates its old town and sets up skating by the town hall, while [Klagenfurt's Neuer Platz](#) market spreads out under the Lindwurm dragon, often with harbour pop-ups and cathedral concerts rounding out the programme. Both are easy add-ons if you're touring the south or heading for the lakes.

Christmas markets in the mountains

Ski first, market later is a very Austrian way to do December. In Tirol, [Kitzbühel's](#) medieval streets glow with Advent stalls and live music, [Seefeld's](#) pedestrian zone turns into a daily Christmas village through to early January, and [St. Johann](#), [Kufstein](#), [Lech-Zürs](#) and [St. Anton am Arlberg](#) and [Zillertal](#) all run cosy, family-minded events. Mayrhofen hosts a fireside-style market at the [Waldfestplatz](#) on select dates, and [SkiWelt](#) cranks up the romance with a high-altitude market on the Hartkaiser above Ellmau, one of Europe's highest Advent spots and a brilliant excuse to take the gondola after dark.

SalzburgerLand has standout mountain markets too. [Zell am See-Kaprun](#) brings stalls to the lakeside and up to Kaprun Castle on Advent weekends, while [Altenmarkt-Zauchensee](#)

layers in classical concerts and light installations around its festive programme. If you want the “traditional Alps” feel, aim for the Salzburg Mountain Advent in [Grossarlal](#): lanterns, choirs, pony sleighs, and plenty of regional crafts, mostly on weekends to keep it intimate.

In Austria’s westernmost province Vorarlberg, Kleinwalsertal and Schwarzenberg in Bregenzer Forest are great places to experience Christmas magic amidst the Alps, and [Montafon](#) adds Advent concerts to its hut-and-punch routine.

Further west, Vorarlberg’s valleys sprinkle their own charm across December. [Kleinwalsertal](#) and [Schwarzenberg](#) in the Bregenzerwald forest keep things classic and handcrafted, and [Montafon](#) adds Advent concerts to its hut-and-punch routine—a good call if you love your markets with live music tucked around every corner.

Christmas markets at the lake

Floating candles on the water and festive lights and stalls on the shores. Few things beat Advent by the water. And Austria has plenty of options! Around [Lake Wolfgangsee](#) in the Salzkammergut, the villages of St. Wolfgang, Strobl, and St. Gilgen go all-in on tradition with fires and music. A 16 m high, floating “Peace Lantern” just off St. Wolfgang’s shore is the star of the show, and the best way to see everything is to ride the Advent boats between the villages at dusk.

Down south on [Lake Wörthersee](#) in Carinthia, Pörschach lines its promenade with stalls and lights while Velden floats an enormous Advent wreath offshore. Book a guided torchlit walk for even more Christmas magic.