

Christmas Markets of Central Europe

<https://www.irtsociety.com/journey/christmas-markets-of-central-europe/>



Overview

The Highlights

- Travel through three European countries, with two 5-star hotel nights in Budapest, three nights on board the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*, and two 5-star hotel nights in Munich.
- Sample bountiful Christmas Markets in Budapest, Vienna, Salzburg, and Munich
- Enjoy a Christmas concert of classic Viennese folk songs
- Ride on a 'Fiaker' (horse-drawn carriage) and sample traditional Pirker gingerbread by St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna
- Tour iconic palaces: Hofburg Palace, Schönbrunn Palace, and Mirabell Palace

- Sample Munich's Bavarian traditions with mouth-watering Brätwurst and freshly roasted chestnuts
- Dynamic guided city tours across Central European cities

The Tour

Explore one of Central Europe's finest traditions — the 600-year-old holiday spirit of “Christkindlesmarkts,” or Christmas Markets. Enjoy a magical foray across Hungary, Austria, Germany, and the snow-capped Alps, all while relishing top-level service and dining aboard the [Golden Eagle Danube Express](#).

Itinerary

Day 1: Budapest

Arrivals day in Budapest, where you will be met and privately transferred to the Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace (or similar) for a two-night stay. Enjoy a welcome reception dinner this evening where you will meet your fellow travelers.

Day 2: Budapest

Budapest is actually two cities separated by the Danube. The old city of Buda and the imposing Royal Palace dominates the city with stunning views across the Danube to the commercial heart of Pest. Our city tour includes the Castle District, St. Mathias Church, and a panoramic view of the city from Gellert Hill. We will also see the Citadel, the Opera House, St Stephen’s Cathedral, Heroes Square, and the City Park.

Enjoy the rest of the day at your leisure. Make sure to take the opportunity to stroll through the many Christmas Markets scattered around the city. You may want to visit the historic Great Market Hall, with its endless variety of delicious foods and wines, or warm up and head to one of the city’s famous thermal baths for a rejuvenating Christmas dip.

Day 3: Vienna

Late morning, you will be transferred to Budapest Nyugati station to enjoy a drinks reception before boarding the *Golden Eagle Danube Express* for departure. To mark the beginning of your voyage of a lifetime, a private brass band will perform as the train departs from the station, and the uniformed train staff will escort you to your private en-suite cabin.

As you settle in and enjoy your first delicious lunch onboard, the train will weave its way out of Budapest, before winding through Hungary’s whimsical wintery landscapes and arriving at our first stop – Vienna, Austria.

In the afternoon we will explore this beautiful city, with a panoramic tour of the breath-taking grand boulevard encircling Vienna's historic quarters. From here we will enjoy a traditional 'Fiaker' (horse-drawn carriage) ride through the charming city streets, before sampling the traditional Pirker gingerbread in front of magnificent St Stephen's.

We will then return to the train to indulge in a decadent dinner – freshly prepared, using the finest locally sourced ingredients and delicacies.

Day 4: Vienna

Vienna is a beautiful city to explore at any time of the year, but wintertime is an extra special experience. Exquisitely illuminated with hanging lights of the Christmas markets, Vienna's squares are brimming with culinary treats, handmade gifts, and quaint ornaments.

This morning we will visit the Museum of Fine Arts, which is the largest art museum in Austria and located right in the heart of the city. Opened to the public in 1891, the main part of the museum's collection is made up of artworks acquired by the Habsburg dynasty. We will also enjoy a trip to the Christmas market situated on Maria-Theresien Platz.

Following that, we visit the Hofburg Palace. This location has been the heart of power in Vienna since 1279. Once the Habsburg's winter residence, this massive palace complex now serves as the workplace and home of the President of Austria. During our visit we'll meet a choir who will provide a short concert of traditional Viennese Christmas folk songs.

After lunch we continue to the Schönbrunn Palace, with a tour included. The palace also provides the perfect backdrop for the Christmas Market and is perhaps the most classically stylish of all the Vienna markets. The exclusive assortment of booths includes traditional handicrafts, along with lovely Christmas decorations and toys. Sweet, spicy, and hearty temptations are waiting on every corner and enchant the huge square in front of the palace with enticing aromas. Savor a cup of punch at the famous Café Residenz booth and enjoy some time for Christmas shopping before we head back to the train for dinner.

Day 5: Salzburg

Like a picture from the pages of a fairy-tale, Salzburg perfectly captures the charming coziness of the festive season. The city sits snugly in the northern foothills of the Alps, against a backdrop of snow-capped peaks, cut in half by the curves of the Salzach River. The Christmas markets, Advent concerts, and local traditions continue to charm visitors in the magical city of Mozart.

This afternoon we explore the heart of the city, starting at Mirabell Palace. Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the baroque 17th-century palace is easily one of the most stunning landmarks in the city and made famous in more modern times as a location used in *The Sound of Music*.

A short distance from the palace on Market Square (Marketplatz) we will see the former Mozart Residence, now a museum. From here we will cross the Makartsteg bridge into the Old Town and walk along the Getreidegasse, Salzburg's most famous street which is renowned for its

wrought-iron trade signs and the birthplace of Mozart.

The rest of our time in Salzburg will be spent at the Salzburger Christkindlmarkt, one of the most beautiful and oldest Christmas markets in the world, located on Domplatz and Residenzplatz. Its unique location in the middle of the World Heritage Old Town of Salzburg, the traditional stalls, and its long history make the Salzburg Christmas market something very special. The Christkindlmarkt offers incomparable holiday ambiance – bells ring out from onion-domed churches, the scent of fresh pine mingles with the aroma of cinnamon-sprinkled mulled wine in the crisp winter air, and cheerful groups huddle around festive market stalls.

Day 6: Salzburg

Following a leisurely breakfast onboard our private train, we make a visit to the DomQuartier, a unique cultural highlight in the heart of Salzburg. Over 400 years ago, the powerful prince-archbishops began to transform the wealthy city of Salzburg into a baroque jewel. Through their efforts, an urban masterpiece was created, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Residenz and cathedral area, complemented by the Benedictine monastery of St. Peter, can be experienced as a continuous tour. The terrace above the Cathedral Arches reveals stunning views of the Salzburg historic district as well as the mountains surrounding the city. A special view to end our time in Salzburg.

We return to the train for lunch and from the dining cars enjoy the spectacular Bavarian scenery as we head across the border into Germany for our final stop in Munich for a two-night hotel stay.

Electrified by the indescribable buzz of yuletide cheer, Christmas in Munich is true magic. One of the most famous of all the city's Christmas markets is located on Marienplatz in the heart of the city. This centuries-old market, which had its beginnings in the 1600s, is a fresh mix of old and new – keeping to older Bavarian traditions, with mouth-watering Brätwurst and freshly roasted chestnuts, presented alongside decadent sweet treats and intriguing electric creations. A majestically illuminated Christmas tree casts a charismatic glow over the bustling square – perfectly adding to the festive feel.

Day 7: Munich

This morning you will get to know Munich's unique Haidhausen district. Haidhausen has developed from working -class quarter into popular residential area. When strolling along the narrow streets with small shops and green courtyards, it almost feels like being in a village in the middle of the city. Haidhausen has always been extremely important for Munich's beer tradition. The area's former inns, dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries, have now been lovingly restored. We will also visit also the charming and cozy Christmas market at Weißenburger Platz.

The morning ends in a typical Bavarian inn where we can taste different kind of beers and enjoy traditional Bavarian White Sausage with Pretzel.

This evening we enjoy a Farewell Dinner and reflect on the memories made from this wonderful winter escapade across Central Europe.

Day 8: Munich

Following breakfast in the hotel, you will be transferred to the airport for flight departures.

Reverse itinerary

Day 1: Munich

Arrive in Munich, where you will be met and transferred to the five-star Sofitel Munich Bayerpost for a two-night stay. An elegant, modern hotel in the historic setting of Munich's former Bavarian Royal Post Office, the hotel is perfectly located in the vibrant heart of the city. Just a five-minute leisurely stroll takes you to Karlsplatz Stachus, which leads onto one of the city's most popular shopping streets, Neuhauser Strasse. At the other end of this street is Marienplatz, in the Altstadt (Old Town).

Tonight, enjoy a welcome reception dinner in the elegant surroundings of this contemporary hotel.

Day 2: Munich

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We will also visit the charming and cozy Christmas market at Weißenburger Platz. The day ends in a typical Bavarian inn where you can taste different kind of beers and enjoy traditional Bavarian White Sausage with Pretzel.

Day 3: Munich to Salzburg

After breakfast, you will be transferred to the Munich railway station to enjoy a drinks reception before boarding the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*. A Bavarian-inspired Oompah brass band will perform as the train departs from the station. Your cabin attendants will be there to escort you to your private en-suite cabin.

As the train weaves its way out of Munich, enjoy lunch in the Restaurant Car as you head across

the border into Austria for your first stop this afternoon in Salzburg.

Like a picture from the pages of a fairytale, Salzburg perfectly captures the charming coziness of the festive season. The city sits snugly in the northern foothills of the Alps, set against a backdrop of snow-capped peaks, cut in half by the curves of the Salzach River. The Christmas markets, Advent concerts and local traditions continue to charm visitors in the magical city of Mozart.

This afternoon, explore the heart of the city, starting at Mirabell Palace. Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the baroque 17th century palace is easily one of the most stunning landmarks in the city — made famous in more modern times as a location used in *The Sound of Music*. A short distance from the palace on Market Square (Marketplatz) we will see the former Mozart Residence, now a museum. Cross the Makartsteg bridge into the Old Town and walk along the Getreidegasse, Salzburg's most famous street, which is renowned for its wrought-iron trade signs.

The rest of the evening in Salzburg will be spent at the Salzburger Christkindlmarkt, one of the most beautiful and oldest Christmas markets in the world, which is held on Domplatz and Residenzplatz. Its long history, unique location in the middle of town, and its traditional stalls make the Salzburg Christmas market something very special. The Christkindlmarkt offers incomparable holiday ambiance – bells ring out from onion-domed churches, the scent of fresh pine mingles with the aroma of cinnamon-sprinkled mulled wine in the crisp winter air, and cheerful groups huddle around festive market stalls.

Day 4: Salzburg

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This afternoon, back onboard the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*, traverse the Semmering Pass en-route to Vienna as you sip hot tea and enjoy treats in the bar car.

This evening, enjoy a private concert featuring the Vienna Supreme Orchestra.

Day 5: Vienna

Wintertime in Vienna is an extra special experience. Exquisitely illuminated with hanging lights of Christmas markets, Vienna's squares are brimming with culinary treats, handmade gifts, and quaint ornaments. Explore this beautiful city with a panoramic tour of the grand boulevard encircling Vienna's historic quarters. Next, enjoy a traditional 'Fiaker' (horse-drawn carriage) ride through the charming city streets, before sampling the traditional Pirker gingerbread in front of magnificent St Stephen's.

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residence, this massive palace complex now serves as the workplace and home of the President of Austria. During our visit we'll meet a choir who will provide a short concert of traditional Viennese Christmas folk songs.

After lunch, continue to Schönbrunn Palace, with a tour included. The palace also provides the perfect backdrop for the Christmas Market and is perhaps the most classically stylish of all the Vienna markets. The exclusive assortment of booths includes traditional handicrafts, pretty Christmas decorations and toys. Sweet, spicy, and hearty temptations are waiting on every corner and enchant the huge square in front of the palace with enticing aromas. Savor a cup of punch at the famous Café Residenz booth and enjoy some time to do Christmas shopping before you head back to the train for dinner.

Day 6: Vienna to Budapest

This morning, visit the Museum of Fine Arts, which is the largest art museum in Austria, located right in the heart of the city. Opened to the public in 1891, the main part of the museum's collection is made up of artworks acquired by the Habsburg dynasty. We will also enjoy a trip to the Christmas market situated on Maria-Theresien Platz.

Return to the train for lunch as you wind through whimsical wintery landscapes of Hungary, before arriving at our final stop of Budapest, where you will check in for a two-night stay at Four Seasons Gresham Palace.

Day 7: Budapest

Budapest is an alliance of two cities separated by the Danube. The old city of Buda and the imposing Royal Palace dominate the city skyline. Across the river is the commercial heart of Pest. Your city tour includes the Royal Palace, St. Mathias Church, and a panoramic view of the city from Gellert Hill. You will also see the Citadel, the Opera House, St Stephen's Cathedral, Heroes Square, and the City Park.

Enjoy the rest of the day at your leisure. Make sure to take the opportunity to stroll through the many Christmas Markets scattered around the city. You may want to visit the historic Great Market Hall with its endless variety of delicious foods and wines, or warm up and head to one of the city's famous thermal baths for a rejuvenating Christmas dip.

This evening, enjoy a Farewell Dinner and reflect on the memories made from this wonderful winter escapade across Central Europe.

Day 8: Budapest

Following breakfast in the hotel, you will be transferred to the airport for onward departures.

Dates & Prices

2024 Dates

December 3 - December 10

December 7 - December 14

Accommodation	Double	Single	Deposit
Deluxe Class	\$9,995	\$14,995	\$2,000
Superior Deluxe Class	\$12,495	\$20,595	\$2,500

All prices are per person.

2025 Dates

December 3 - December 10

December 7 - December 14

Accommodation	Double	Single	Deposit
Deluxe Class	\$10,495	\$15,695	\$2,000
Superior Deluxe Class	\$13,395	\$22,095	\$2,500

All prices are per person.

2026 Dates

December 3 - December 10

December 7 - December 14

Accommodation	Double	Single	Deposit
Deluxe Class	On request	On request	\$2,000
Superior Deluxe Class	On request	On request	\$2,500

All prices are per person.

2026 dates and prices are preliminary and are subject to change.

More

For a first-hand report of Angela Walker's journey on the *Golden Eagle Danube Express*, [click here](#)

Included in the tour price:

- Arrival and departure transfers
- A generous drink allowance, including wine, with lunch and dinner
- All gratuities
- All off-train touring, with personal headsets to make it easy to hear your guide
- Complimentary tea, coffee, and bottled drinking water are available in your cabin 24 hours a day
- An on-board doctor, with medical facilities, is available, should the need arise
- 24-hour service attendant
- Porterage of bags; your bags will be stowed for you on the train and transported to your hotel at the end of your trip