

12 Of The Best Places To Go For Christmas in 2021

(Courtesy of Matt Moffitt, SMARTERTRAVEL)

Christmas last year was quite a different affair to celebrations past, so the 2021 festive season is shaping up to be a big one!

If you're looking for a traditional Christmas experience, we've got a number of suggestions in Europe and North America. But if you want to head to warmer climes in Latin America or Asia, we've also got you covered.

Here is a list of the top places to celebrate Christmas and the holiday season in 2021. All of these destinations are accessible by fully vaccinated travellers from the U.S.

Salzburg, Austria

Austria's fourth-largest city in the north of the country is a well-known destination during the festive period. Its famed Christmas Markets will run again this year, from November 18 until December 26, 2021.

Dating back to the 15th century, this Austrian tradition offers travellers an enchanting experience at the foot of the Hohensalzburg Fortress. The main cathedral is flanked by stalls offering warm Christmas cider and punch, unique ornaments for purchase, and nightly concerts. And if you're into snow activities, The Alps are just a hop, skip and jump away.

Edinburgh, Scotland

If you're looking for another Christmas Market option in Europe, you can head to Scotland's capital. It's captivating in any season but especially during Christmas, when a six-week winter festival takes place.

After a two-year hiatus, the festival is due to return to its former glory, with thousands of people flocking to Princes Street Gardens, running between November 20 and January 4, 2021. There, you can browse market stalls, hop on a fairground ride, and skate around a custom-made ice rink.

It's also worth checking out the Castle of Light exhibition at the world-famous Edinburgh Castle, but be sure to buy your tickets in advance.

Madrid, Spain

Spain's regal capital and largest city is often overlooked in the wintertime, but the streets of the downtown are beautifully decorated with festive lights. Take a walk around Plaza del Sol, the Royal Palace and Plaza Mayor. And make sure to grab some churros con chocolate and a hot cocoa drink from the most popular place in town, Chocolatería San Gines.

Hawaii, United States

If you're looking for a tropical getaway that is easily accessible from the west coast, then the Hawaiian Islands are a great choice. Forgo a chilly Christmas for a chance to experience jaw-dropping beauty, majestic waterfalls, and pristine beaches.

If you're looking to get away from the crowds, Hawaii (the Big Island) and Kauai tend to be less busy than Oahu and Maui.

With COVID cases decreasing, Hawaii once again started welcoming (fully-vaccinated) tourists to the island from November 1, 2021.

Florida, United States

Another popular winter destination is the most southeastern state in the U.S.—and it's got it all.

If you want to party, Miami is the place to go. Want the thrill of theme parks? Orlando is an obvious choice.

You could also grab a rental car and head down to the Florida Keys for some rest and relaxation. Or you jump on a cruise through the Caribbean, departing from megaport Fort Lauderdale.

Rocky Mountains, United States

If you're looking to hit the powder instead of the sand this winter, head to the Rocky Mountains, where you can choose from one of the many ski resorts in the largest mountain range in North America. Jackson Hole in Wyoming offers world-class powder skiing, and Park City in Utah puts on a solid festive show.

Looking for a bunch of ski resorts in one area? Then Colorado is your bet, with Aspen, Vail and Telluride all easily accessible by plane or via Denver.

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Looking to get far away for the holidays? Dubai might just have everything you're looking for.

You can go skiing at the world's largest indoor ski facility. And if you are looking for all the Christmas trimmings, you'll find that hotels and restaurants will offer takeaway turkey and sides packages for you to enjoy a festive meal just like at home.

In December, temperatures rarely pass 85°F and it's dry heat, allowing you to comfortably explore the city.

Baja California Sur, United States

Cabo San Lucas is a popular year-round destination for North Americans but is an especially welcome reprieve at Christmas time. The water temperature in December is still as warm as it is in June, meaning you can celebrate the festive season...on the beach.

If you have a rental car, it's worth taking a daytrip an hour north to Todos Santos, one of Mexico's 121 'Magic Towns', where you can find artisan crafts and textiles at local markets.

Québec City, Canada

With the US-Canadian border now open again, why not head to the charming city of Québec? It packs a punch with its stunning architecture, walkability, and beautiful five-star hotel and castle Fairmont Le Château Frontenac.

If flying from the U.S., you will probably need to connect in Montréal or Toronto. So why not incorporate a stopover in one (or both) of Canada's two largest cities, offering some of the best food and entertainment in the world?

Cali or Medellín, Colombia

At the tip of South America lies an underrated tourist destination and one of the top 10 most biodiverse countries in the world. If you're looking for something unique, you'll find an array of nature excursions, from the warm Caribbean coast to the windswept Alps.

Visit Cali and its surrounding areas for delicious coffee and salsa dancing, and be sure to spend time in Medellín, one of the most up-and-coming destinations on the backpacker trail.

Thailand

There's a reason the Land of Smiles is the most visited country in Southeast Asia. It combines warm hospitality, mouth-watering food, and stunning beaches and mountains.

The country reopened to fully-vaccinated tourists on November 1. Best to get there before tourists swarm its pristine beaches again.

Singapore

This tropical island sitting *just* above the equator might not be your first choice to celebrate Christmas. However, thanks to its multiculturalism and British colonial heritage, it celebrates the festive season big.

Gardens By The Bay is Singapore's top-rated activity on TripAdvisor and puts on a Christmas Wonderland festival from November 29 to December 26, with dazzling lights and family-friendly activities and performances.

Southeast Asia's most-vaccinated country is once again welcoming tourists. If you are fully vaccinated and travel on one of Singapore Airlines' nonstop flights from New York, Los Angeles or San Francisco, then you can skip mandatory quarantine upon arrival.