



Winter Wanderlust

Your travel guide
to Europe's winter magic





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Winter in Europe is a season of magic, when festive lights illuminate historic streets and winter markets come into full swing.

You can embrace the crisp, chilly days in Northern Europe or opt for some warmer temperatures around the Mediterranean. With fewer tourists and more affordable prices, it's an ideal time to plan an unforgettable winter escape that is friendly to both your wallet and the planet.

But with so many cool cities to choose from and so many possible itineraries to follow, where do you start? This guide is here to inspire your next winter adventure, blending sustainability with the pure joy of discovering Europe at its most enchanting.

Where to go

Classic winter destinations



London, England

From bustling winter markets to iconic landmarks and an all around festive atmosphere, London has it all. Enjoy Hyde Park's Winter Wonderland, Oxford Street's dazzling lights and Covent Garden's unique gifts. After exploring the Southbank Centre Winter Market for delicious street food and crafts, enjoy warming up with some signature afternoon tea.



Vienna, Austria

Imagine enchanting palaces draped in twinkling lights and grand boulevards adorned with festive decorations. During the colder months, the city comes to life with classical concerts, ballet performances and outdoor activities. Be sure to check out Vienna Ice World – and its enormous 8,500m² ice rink – sitting beneath the capital's iconic Rathaus city hall.

Paris, France

Paris in winter is like a scene from a romantic movie. Stroll along the Seine, sip hot chocolate at a cozy café and marvel at the Eiffel Tower sparkling against the night sky. Don't miss the charming markets, ice skating at Hôtel de Ville and the festive lights on Champs-Élysées. Paris in winter? C'est magnifique!





Prague, Czech Republic

The city's historic centre is a haven for budget travellers, a mecca for architecture aficionados and just an epic winter destination for anyone. Enjoy free walking tours, affordable eateries and the magical Prague Castle under a dusting of snow. Try not to get lost in the maze of cobblestone streets—Google Maps can only do so much.



Budapest, Hungary

With its majestic thermal baths, Budapest is a top pick for those seeking relaxation and wellness. Take a dip in the Széchenyi Baths, explore the city's budget-friendly museums, and stroll along the Danube for breathtaking winter views. To go all-out on romance, finish your day at a charming restaurant with local cuisine and live music.

Less obvious picks

Edinburgh, Scotland

Culture vultures will love Edinburgh's take on New Year's Eve, the Hogmanay festival. The city offers free museums, stunning vistas from Arthur's Seat and cozy cafes perfect for warming up with a cup of tea—or whisky. Just be prepared for the wind to give you a new hairstyle, free of charge.





Wrocław, Poland

Head to budget-friendly Wrocław for impressive architecture, mouth-watering food and romantic strolls along the Odra River. Your inner child will love the fairylike winter market and the charming gnome statues scattered over the city. This calls for a quirky scavenger hunt, illuminated after dark by one of Europe's last lamplighters.



Florence, Italy

Florence in winter offers Renaissance charm without the crowds. Enjoy the Uffizi Gallery and Michelangelo's David in peace. Warm up with Italian hot chocolate in cozy cafes and explore festive Christmas markets in Piazza Santa Croce. With fewer tourists you'll save a few extra euros too—and gain priceless elbow room.



Barcelona, Spain

Barcelona's mild winter days are perfect for exploring. Stroll down La Rambla, admire Gaudí's masterpieces and enjoy quiet beaches. Visit Mercat de Sant Josep de la Boqueria for delicious Catalan cuisine. And if you find yourself at the beach, just wave winter farewell.



The Hague, Delft and Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Each of these iconic Dutch cities are charming destinations. They're only minutes away from each other by train. On the same day you can sample Rotterdam's street art and food, explore the quaint architecture of canal-ringed Delft and end on The Hague's Royal Christmas Fair — or even in The North Sea for a traditional (and ice-cold) New Year's Dive.

Europe by rail

Interrailing across Europe in winter offers a unique opportunity to explore multiple destinations in a way that doesn't cost the Earth.

Train travel takes you right into the city centres of your choice, while allowing you to experience the scenic beauty of Europe at a leisurely pace.

Central European capitals

Discover the iconic cities of Berlin, Prague, Vienna and Budapest on a single journey. Each city offers a mix of history, culture and winter activities, all connected by efficient (night) train services. If you fancy some winter sports, head up to the world-renowned Alps or the more affordable Carpathians.

On track to Scandinavia

This convenient night train runs from the irreverent German capital of Berlin to the picture-perfect Swedish capital of Stockholm. Between the long railway bridges that link Scandinavia with the European mainland, it's possible to stop over in the Danish capital of Copenhagen for some more winter hygge.

Northern lights express

Start in Stockholm, Sweden and travel through Norway to Narvik, where the Northern Lights await. This route combines stunning landscapes with the magic of the Arctic Circle, including the opportunity to go free skiing on the illuminated slopes of Narvikfjellet.

Mediterranean meander

For a less frosty experience, start in Paris with festive markets and the Eiffel Tower, then head south to Lyon for gourmet delights. Then you could explore Barcelona's Gaudí wonders and detour to Madrid's vibrant tapas scene. End your journey in Florence's art-filled streets and Rome's ancient landmarks.



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Train, not plane

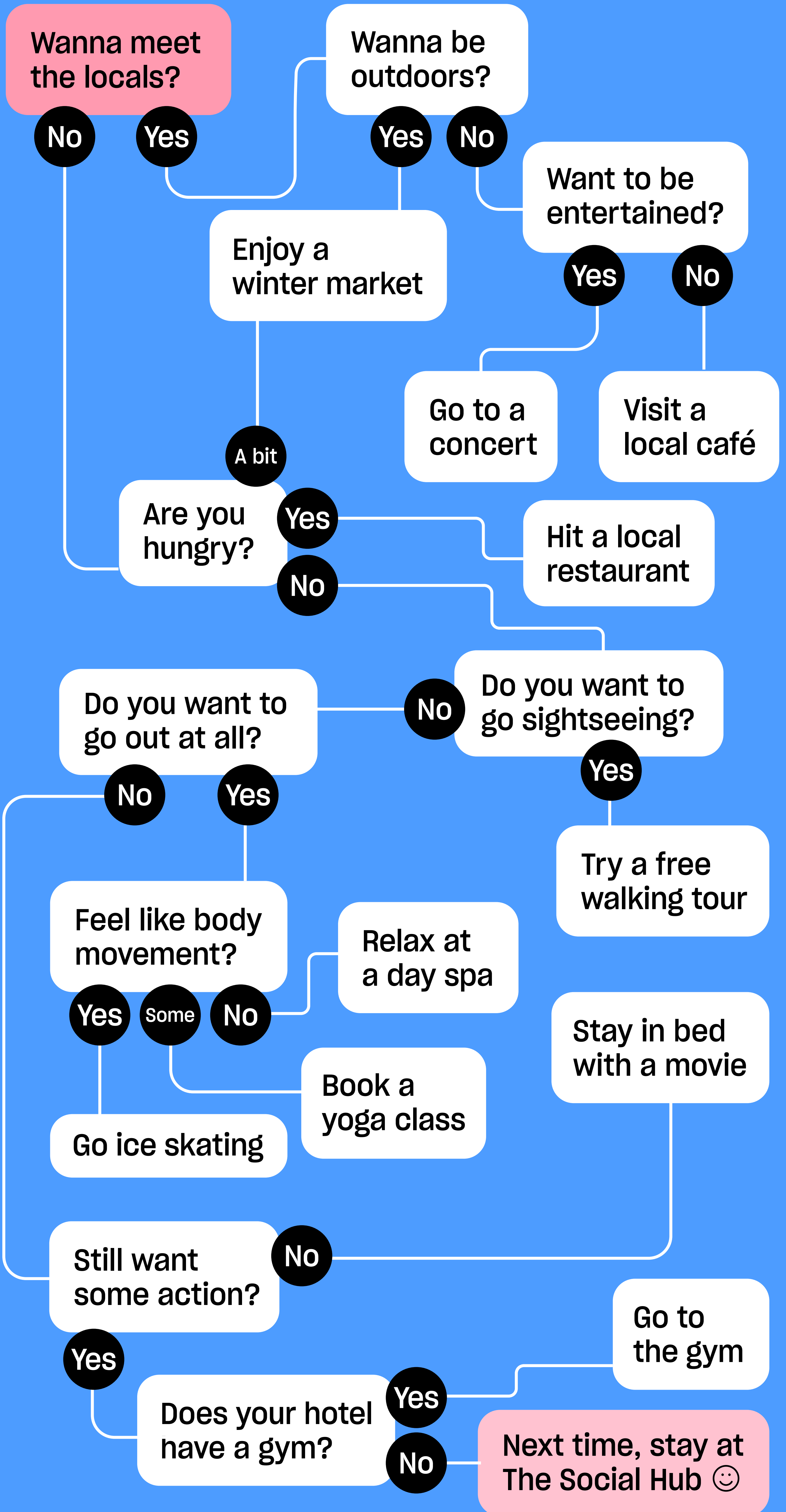
According to Eco Passenger you can cut your footprint by up to 40% on average if you choose to travel by train, not plane. Trains are energy efficient and often powered by renewable energy, making them more eco-friendly than cars and planes. And have you considered that train travel requires less security checks and city transfers, saving you much time and hassle in the end? Win-win.

→ Green tip:

Apps like [MyClimate](#) can help you offset your carbon footprint.

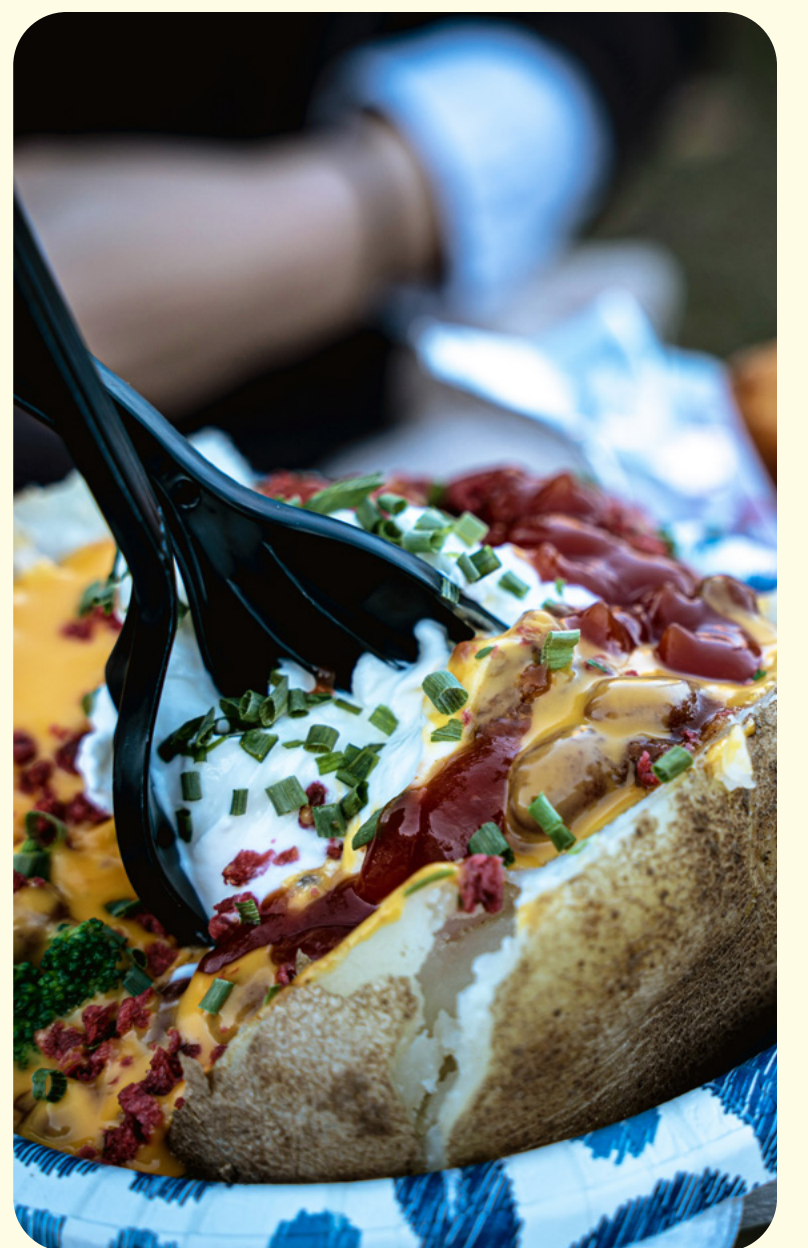
What to do

Plan your next adventure



Iconic winter markets

Winter markets are a European tradition, where the scent of mulled wine fills the air and handmade crafts are on display. We've hand-picked three unique markets that are sure to leave lasting memories.



Vienna, Austria

→ What makes it unique:
Viennese food

The Viennese Winter Market, also known as Weihnachtsmarkt, is a great opportunity to stuff your face with some traditional Austrian food, like baked potatoes, fresh bread, strudel, hot pretzels and candied nuts. After you've gotten your fill, how about getting active on the ice-skating rink. If you're lucky, snowy weather will blanket the already well-decorated market, creating an instantly instagrammable scene that will make the home front jealous.



Copenhagen, Denmark

→ What makes it unique:
Big 'hygge' and twinkling lights

While the city hosts several winter markets, the events at Tivoli Gardens steal the spotlight as the biggest and brightest. The gardens are adorned with half a million twinkling lights, which you can also take in from above when riding the Ferris wheel or even the many faster rides in the park. And when hunger strikes, indulge in local treats like caramelised almonds, gingerbread hearts and cinnamon-infused gløgg—Denmark's delicious twist on mulled wine.



Berlin, Germany

→ What makes it unique:
Alternative markets

Naturally, Berlin puts its own spin on the beloved German tradition of winter markets. With over 80 different markets scattered across the city, there's something for everyone, from the traditional to the delightfully quirky.

For something unique, check out the Dog Christmas Market held especially for the four-legged, or head to Potsdamer Platz for winter sports like tobogganing and curling. Spandau hosts Berlin's largest market, complete with daily shows and a medieval arts & crafts section, while the Weihnachtszauber at Gendarmenmarkt dazzles with picture-perfect glittering lights.

Pro tips

for winter wanderers

How to make your European winter travels extra comfy and affordable.

1

Tour for free

Explore the city's history and culture at no cost (just tips!) on free walking tours. Some museums even offer free admission days during the winter or discounts for younger travellers.

2

Ride for less

In most European cities public transport is cheaper on day passes or weekend travel cards. For travel between cities and countries, consider an Interrail pass or car sharing apps.

3

Eat in, then out

To save money, order from surplus food app 'Too Good To Go' or cook simple breakfasts and dinners. Then you can visit local markets and restaurants for lunch, where midday menus are often cheaper.

4

Scan the skies

European weather is volatile. Sudden changes in sunshine, wind and rainfall can feel like you've moved continents. Before every outdoor outing, inspect the forecast, plan accordingly and bring layers just in case.

5

Layer up

If you plan to explore colder parts of Europe, woollen underlayers and woollen socks are your friend. Also pack lip balm, gloves, hats, boots and a warm, windproof jacket.

6

Reuse

Bring your own reusable cutlery, cups and shopping bag. This avoids plastic waste on winter markets and enables you to comfortably snack from budget supermarkets.

Powered by The Social Hub

This guide to Europe's winter magic was brought to you by The Social Hub. With hotels in 17 of Europe's coolest cities, we offer perfect traveller launchpads for you to stay, connect and play.



Our amenities

Comfy rooms

With your own bathroom, desk and climate control.

Restaurant & Bars

For refuelling throughout the day and carry on into the night.

Wi-Fi

Lightning-fast internet so you can always stay connected.

Community Spaces

Your place to relax, meet others and play ping pong.

24/7 gym

Stick to your fitness routine while you're away.

Bike hire

Why not tour the city on two wheels? Upon availability.

Local facilities

From rooftop bars to courtyard pools and cinema rooms.



Check us out at

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to explore our winter deals,
book your hotel stay and start planning
your next adventure across Europe.

