

VIENNESE CHRISTMAS

International News

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Vienna is the quintessential Christmas city. Aesthetically, Christmas was born in the 18th-century, when the northern European image of tannenbaum, chestnuts and gingerbreads became all the rage, finally cemented by Prince Albert's presence in the British Royal household. This aesthetic that gave us the notion that Christmas should be cold, white and sparkling pervades today ? so much so that Christmas in a hot country seems quite perverse. Anyway, the place to get the most clichéd, most ?traditional? Christmas of the lot has to be Vienna.

Most persuasively arguing its case are its numerous Christmas Markets. Imitated the world over but never bettered, these focal points for all things Christmassy are heaving with hundred of stalls, selling perennial favourites of candyfloss, hot roasted chestnuts, that glorious gingerbread in all manner of guises, every kind of succulent wurst, baubles, candles and thousands of different wooden toys and gifts. These markets attract an astonishing three million visitors every year, but never seem to take on the full air of a soulless commercial venture ? suffused, as they are, with that discarnate spirit of Christmas. Mulled wine is ladled out by the bucket load, and the air is heavy with those rich dark spices that waft tantalisingly, and up through the festooned branches of the trees. It truly is a magical place ? surely enough to melt the heart of even the most cynical of Scrooges.

Spittelberg is another place of Christmas merriment, where visitors may perch on upturned barrels and sip their hot, spiced drinks and watch the horses and dray clatter up the cobbled streets. And, as one might expect from the city that birthed Mozart and Strauss, music infiltrates the whole affair, with traditional Christmas carols being sung in throngs around the markets, and more imperious operas and concerts being conducted in the city's plethora of musical venues.

Vienna truly is the place to stir your childhood Christmas feelings and share it with your loved ones. Just be aware that, because it is such a popular Christmas destination, booking in advance is entirely necessary. [Travel Insurance](#) may be acquired from AA Travel, and flights to and from the city are available through several budget airlines, and are extremely frequent.