THE AI PLAYBOOK

Free Christmas Events

20 cities, one guide

“Make your Christmas trip around the globe simple.”

Christmas 2026 · Researched November 2026

How to use this guide

Everything in this guide is free to enter or watch. That is the whole point of it. Where something costs money — a rink, a ride, a ticketed attraction — it is clearly marked **[PAID]** or listed under “Not free” at the end of the city.

Food, drinks, rides and skate rental are paid extras at the markets unless an entry says otherwise.

All dates are for the 2026 season (November–December 2026). Where a date had not been announced when this guide was researched (15 November 2026), it is flagged in the entry — “date not yet announced”, “expected”, or “unconfirmed”. Check the official page for the event before you travel.

A few famous names are **not** free, and this guide says so honestly: the Rockefeller rink, Hyde Park Winter Wonderland, Christmas in Tivoli, the Shin-Toyosu Christmas Market — and the Ravenna Gorge Christmas Market, which is ticketed and sold out for 2026. Its section lists the free alternatives nearby instead.

How to use it: pick a city, check the dates, go. The last page is a quick-reference table — the single most visual event in each city, for when you only have one evening.

The 20 cities

01	New York City, USA	02	London, UK
03	Paris, France	04	Vienna, Austria
05	Tokyo, Japan	06	Seoul, South Korea
07	Zurich, Switzerland	08	Budapest, Hungary
09	Chicago, USA	10	Prague, Czechia
11	Strasbourg, France	12	Copenhagen, Denmark
13	Nuremberg, Germany	14	Cologne, Germany
15	Brussels, Belgium	16	Edinburgh, Scotland
17	Amsterdam, Netherlands	18	Craiova, Romania
19	Ravenna Gorge Area, Germany (Black Forest)	20	Rothenburg ob der Tauber, Germany

01 · New York City, USA

1. Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree Lighting
Where: Rockefeller Plaza, Midtown (49th–50th St)
When: Lighting ceremony Wed 2 Dec 2026, 7–10pm ET (televised NBC show); tree on view until 9 Jan 2027 (some sources say mid-Jan)
Highlight: The 2026 tree is a 76-foot Norway spruce from West Edmeston, NY, with 50,000+ LED lights and the Swarovski crystal star.

2. Bank of America Winter Village at Bryant Park
Where: Bryant Park, 40th–42nd St
When: Holiday Shops 28 Oct 2026–3 Jan 2027 (Mon–Fri 11am–8pm, Sat–Sun 10am–8pm); rink to 28 Feb 2027. Tree lighting Tue 1 Dec, 5:30–6:30pm
Highlight: 180+ vendors; NYC's only free-admission rink. Skating is free with your own skates (free timed ticket required, released daily one week ahead); rentals from ~$18.72.

3. Dyker Heights Christmas Lights
Where: 83rd–86th St between 11th–13th Ave, Brooklyn
When: From Fri 27 Nov 2026 (day after Thanksgiving) to ~30 Dec, dusk to 9–10pm
Highlight: Around 100 houses compete with animated reindeer, 15-ft inflatable Santas and thousands of bulbs. Resident-run, no official switch-on.

4. Saks Fifth Avenue Holiday Light Show
Where: 611 Fifth Ave (at 50th St), Midtown
When: From Mon 23 Nov 2026, nightly 5–11pm, repeating every ~10 min
Highlight: The whole 10-storey limestone facade becomes a projection screen synced to music.

5. Union Square Holiday Market
Where: South plaza, Union Square Park, Manhattan
When: 12 Nov–24 Dec 2026 (Mon–Fri 11am–8pm, Sat 10am–8pm, Sun 11am–7pm)
Highlight: Around 200 independent makers under red-and-white striped roofs.

6. Fifth Avenue & Macy's Holiday Windows
Where: Fifth Ave (Saks, Bergdorf Goodman) and Macy's Herald Square
When: Macy's windows debut Thu 19 Nov 2026, up until 4 Jan; viewable 24/7
Highlight: The classic holiday window displays along Fifth Avenue and at Herald Square.

7. Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade (100th)
Where: Central Park West & 6th Ave
When: Thu 26 Nov 2026
Highlight: The parade's 100th edition. Free to watch from the street.

Not free: The Rink at Rockefeller Center (ticketed, from ~$22); Radio City Christmas Spectacular (from $50).

02 · London, UK

1. Regent Street "Spirit of Christmas" Lights Switch-On
Where: Regent Street & St James's, West End
When: Thu 5 Nov 2026, free traffic-free event 5–9pm; lights stay up into January
Highlight: The famous angel lights span the full boulevard.

2. Trafalgar Square Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony
Where: Trafalgar Square, WC2
When: Thu 3 Dec 2026, carols from 5pm, switch-on 6pm by the Lord Mayor of Westminster and the Mayor of Oslo. Date not yet officially confirmed — re-check london.gov.uk
Highlight: The Norwegian spruce is a gift from Oslo every year since 1947.

3. Carols Around the Trafalgar Square Tree
Where: Trafalgar Square
When: 1–24 Dec 2026, charity choirs and brass bands, hourly sessions ~4–8pm weekdays, 2–6pm weekends
Highlight: Free, no booking needed.

4. Southbank Centre Winter Market
Where: Queen's Walk, South Bank (by the London Eye)
When: 2 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027 (Sun–Thu 11am–10pm, Fri–Sat 11am–11pm; closed Christmas Day). Some sources say to 4 Jan, closed 25 & 31 Dec
Highlight: Alpine chalets along the Thames with the London Eye behind.

5. Trafalgar Square Christmas Market
Where: Trafalgar Square
When: 6 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027, 10am–10pm. Note: one source lists 15 Nov 2026–5 Jan 2027 instead
Highlight: Christmas market on the square beneath the tree.

6. Covent Garden Christmas Lights & Tree
Where: Covent Garden Piazza
When: Lights switch on 12 Nov 2026
Highlight: Giant tree with oversized baubles and chandeliers over the Piazza.

7. Oxford Street Christmas Lights Switch-On
Where: Oxford Street
When: Mon 9 Nov 2026, lights on ~4:30pm
Highlight: Oxford Street's Christmas lights switch on for the season.

8. King's Cross Winter Market (new for 2026)
Where: Granary Square, King's Cross
When: 26 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027 (closed 25 & 26 Dec)
Highlight: A new market for 2026 at Granary Square.

Not free: Hyde Park Winter Wonderland (19 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027) — entry £1 off-peak to £8.25 peak; Christmas at Kew (from £25.50).

03 · Paris, France

1. Champs-Élysées Illuminations Switch-On
Where: Avenue des Champs-Élysées, 8th arr.
When: Sun 22 Nov 2026, 6:30pm ceremony (avenue closed to traffic); lights then nightly 5pm–midnight (1am weekends; all night 24 & 31 Dec) until ~3 Jan 2027
Highlight: Around 400 trees lit; 2026 patron Cate Blanchett, with a live concert by Feu! Chatterton; lights twinkle on the hour and quarter-hour.

2. Champs-Élysées Christmas Market (back after ~10 years)
Where: Lower avenue gardens, Place de la Concorde to Rond-Point
When: 22 Nov 2026–4 Jan 2027 (Mon–Thu 10am–10pm, Fri–Sun 10am–11pm; closes 8pm 24 Dec; closed 31 Dec)
Highlight: Around 200 wooden chalets — the first market on the avenue since 2017 — plus a carousel, Father Christmas house and a rink.

3. Marché de Noël des Tuileries — "La Magie de Noël"
Where: Jardin des Tuileries, 1st arr.
When: 14 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027, daily 11am–11:45pm
Highlight: A 70-metre Ferris wheel, ice rink and funfair between the Louvre and Concorde. Rides paid.

4. La Défense Christmas Market
Where: Esplanade de La Défense
When: 12 Nov–31 Dec 2026
Highlight: The largest market in the Paris area, 350+ chalets.

5. Galeries Lafayette Windows & Giant Tree
Where: Boulevard Haussmann, 9th arr.
When: Unveiled 12 Nov 2026 at 6pm
Highlight: The giant tree hangs under the store's Belle Époque dome. Free to view from the street (and inside the store).

6. Notre-Dame Christmas Market
Where: Square René Viviani / Notre-Dame forecourt, 5th arr.
When: Dates conflict between sources: 26 Nov–27 Dec 2026 vs 29 Nov–25 Dec 2026 — check before going. Forecourt tree and lit façade 29 Nov 2026–6 Jan 2027
Highlight: Christmas market by Notre-Dame with a tree and lit façade on the forecourt.

7. Free First Sunday at Museums
Where: Citywide (Arc de Triomphe, Panthéon, Musée Rodin and others)
When: Sun 6 Dec 2026
Highlight: Free entry to participating museums and monuments on the first Sunday of the month.

8. Gare de l'Est Alsatian Market
Where: Gare de l'Est forecourt
When: 2–18 Dec 2026
Highlight: Alsatian market at the Gare de l'Est.

04 · Vienna, Austria

All Vienna Christmas markets have free entry.

1. Wiener Christkindlmarkt, Rathausplatz
Where: Rathausplatz, 1st district
When: 13 Nov–26 Dec 2026, daily 10am–10pm (closes 6:30pm 24 Dec)
Highlight: Austria's largest Christmas market — around 150 stalls in front of the neo-Gothic City Hall, plus a giant tree and ice rink through the park.

2. Schönbrunn Palace Christmas Market
Where: Schönbrunn Palace forecourt, 13th district
When: 6 Nov 2026–6 Jan 2027, daily 10am–9pm
Highlight: Opens first and closes last; baroque palace backdrop. Palace tour separate.

3. Stephansplatz Christmas Market
Where: Stephansplatz, by St Stephen's Cathedral, 1st district
When: From 6 Nov 2026 (closing date not stated in sources)
Highlight: Christmas market beside St Stephen's Cathedral.

4. Spittelberg Christmas Market
Where: Spittelberggasse, 7th district
When: 13–23 Dec 2026
Highlight: The neighbourhood/artisan market in Biedermeier lanes.

5. Art Advent, Karlsplatz
Where: Karlsplatz, 1st/4th district
When: From 13 Nov 2026
Highlight: Artisans' market with a straw-bale children's area in front of Karlskirche.

6. Christmas Market at Belvedere Palace
Where: Upper Belvedere
When: 20 Nov–31 Dec 2026
Highlight: Christmas market at the Belvedere Palace.

7. Wiener Eistraum (ice rink), Rathausplatz [PAID]
Where: Rathausplatz
When: 13 Nov 2026–6 Jan 2027, same hours as the market, closed 31 Dec
Highlight: Skating is PAID (price not confirmed in sources); watching from the sidelines is free.

05 · Tokyo, Japan

Street and shopping-complex illuminations are free. The Tokyo Christmas Market at Shin-Toyosu charges entry (¥1,000 weekdays, ¥2,000 on 24–25 Dec) and is excluded from this guide.

1. Roppongi Hills Keyakizaka Illumination
Where: Keyakizaka-dori, Roppongi
When: 5 Nov–25 Dec 2026, 5–10pm
Highlight: Around 970,000 white and blue LEDs along a 400-metre slope, with Tokyo Tower framed at the end of the street.

2. Tokyo Midtown Christmas
Where: Tokyo Midtown, Roppongi
When: 26 Nov–25 Dec 2026, 5–11pm (golden walkway to 23 Feb 2027)
Highlight: Music-synced light show in the Midtown Garden.

3. Marunouchi Illumination
Where: Marunouchi Naka-dori, near Tokyo Station
When: 12 Nov 2026–14 Feb 2027, 4–11pm (to midnight in December)
Highlight: Around 1.2 km of champagne-gold lights along the business district's main street.

4. Omotesando Illumination (Dior)
Where: Omotesando Avenue, Harajuku
When: 1–27 Dec 2026, sunset–10pm (low plants lit to 5 Jan 2027)
Highlight: Zelkova trees draped in warm gold lights along Tokyo's "Champs-Élysées".

5. Roppongi Hills Christmas Market (20th edition)
Where: O-yane Plaza, Roppongi Hills
When: 21 Nov–25 Dec 2026, 11am–9pm
Highlight: 10 German-style stalls with mulled wine and Christmas goods.

6. Ebisu Garden Place Illumination
Where: Ebisu Garden Place, Shibuya
When: From 14 Nov 2026
Highlight: The giant Baccarat crystal chandelier centrepiece.

7. Blue Cave (Ao no Dokutsu), Shibuya
Where: Shibuya Koen-dori to Yoyogi Park
When: Expected 11–27 Dec 2026 — 2026 dates not yet officially published, treat as expected, not confirmed
Highlight: A tunnel of around 600,000 blue LEDs.

06 · Seoul, South Korea

Seoul Winter Festa (Seoul Winta), run by the Seoul Metropolitan Government, ties the downtown sites together 11 Dec 2026–31 Jan 2027; outdoor walking zones, lights, lanterns and markets are free.

1. Gwanghwamun Market (Christmas Market)
Where: Gwanghwamun Square, Jongno
When: 11 Dec 2026–10 Jan 2027; Sun–Thu 5:30–10pm, Fri–Sat 5:30–10:30pm
Highlight: Wooden chalets run by small businesses under the statue of King Sejong, at the foot of Gyeongbokgung.

2. Seoul Lantern Festival
Where: Cheonggyecheon Stream, from Cheonggye Plaza
When: 11 Dec 2026–31 Jan 2027, 6–11pm
Highlight: Illuminated Hanji paper lantern figures line ~1 km of the sunken stream; running since 2009.

3. Seoul Light Gwanghwamun
Where: Gwanghwamun Gate, Gyeongbokgung
When: 11 Dec 2026–10 Jan 2027, 6–11pm
Highlight: The palace gate becomes a giant media-facade screen.

4. Seoul Light DDP
Where: Dongdaemun Design Plaza
When: 11 Dec 2026–31 Jan 2027, 6–10pm (planned)
Highlight: Projection mapping across the building's 220-metre curved facade.

5. Shinsegae Department Store Christmas Facade
Where: Myeongdong (Shinsegae main store)
When: From early Nov 2026; end date and nightly hours not announced
Highlight: A building-wide LED media facade with a looping Christmas film — the most photographed facade in the city.

6. Lotte Department Store Lights & Lotte Town Light
Where: Myeongdong (Lotte main store & Young Plaza)
When: Store lights from 30 Oct 2026; Young Plaza's 77 m × 21 m media facade shows its full programme from December
Highlight: 20,000 bulbs on the main store's light street.

7. The Hyundai Seoul Christmas Village
Where: 5th floor Sounds Forest, The Hyundai Seoul, Yeouido
When: 10 Nov–31 Dec 2026
Highlight: Free, but entry by advance reservation via the store's app (The Hyundai Hi).

8. Seoul Plaza Ice Rink [PAID]
Where: Seoul Plaza, in front of City Hall
When: 18 Dec 2026–9 Feb 2027 (Sun–Thu 10am–9:30pm, Fri–Sat 10am–12:30am)
Highlight: NOT free: 1,000 won (~$0.70) per 1-hour session including skates, helmet and knee pads — a price unchanged since 2004.

Not free: Lotte Town Christmas Market, Jamsil (19 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027) sells tickets in rounds — price not published; not counted as free.

07 · Zurich, Switzerland

All six Zurich Christmas markets open Thu 19 Nov 2026 and are free to enter.

1. Bellevue Noël (new for 2026)
Where: Sechseläutenplatz, by the Opera House
When: 19 Nov–23 Dec 2026; Mon–Sat 11am–10pm, Sun 11am–8pm
Highlight: Replaces the Wienachtsdorf after 10 years; 100+ stalls and a giant walkable Advent wreath — reported as 40 m wide by Zürich Tourism, 50 m by other guides — free to walk on with a timed ticket, ~5 m above the square.

2. "Lucy" Christmas Lights Switch-On
Where: Bahnhofstrasse (main station to Paradeplatz)
When: Switched on Thu 19 Nov 2026 at 6pm during Night Shopping; lit until 4 Jan 2027
Highlight: 11,550 light crystals over ~1 km, named after the Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds".

3. Singing Christmas Tree
Where: Werdmühleplatz, just off Bahnhofstrasse
When: 19 Nov–23 Dec 2026; market Mon–Thu 4–9pm, Fri 4–10pm, Sat 1–10pm, Sun 1–9pm. Free choir concerts daily (Mon–Thu 5:30 & 6:30pm; Fri also 7:30pm; Sat–Sun 2:30, 3:30, 5:30 & 6:30pm; ~30 min each)
Highlight: 40+ choirs sing from a tiered stage shaped like a giant Christmas tree.

4. Polarzauber (Christmas Market in the Main Station)
Where: Main hall, Zürich HB
When: 19 Nov–24 Dec 2026 (Sun–Wed 11am–9pm, Thu–Sat 11am–10pm; 11am–4pm on 24 Dec)
Highlight: 100+ stalls inside the station hall — the indoor option in bad weather.

5. Münsterhof Christmas Market
Where: Münsterhof, Old Town
When: 19 Nov–24 Dec 2026
Highlight: Christmas market on Münsterhof in the Old Town.

6. Christkindlimarkt Dörfli
Where: Niederdorf, Old Town
When: 19 Nov–23 Dec 2026
Highlight: The old-town village market in the medieval lanes.

7. Zürcher Weihnachtsallee
Where: Europaallee, by the main station
When: 19 Nov–23 Dec 2026
Highlight: Christmas market on Europaallee by the main station.

08 · Budapest, Hungary

Entry is free at every outdoor Christmas fair in Budapest.

1. Advent Basilica (Advent Bazilika)
Where: Szent István tér, in front of St Stephen's Basilica, District V
When: 13 Nov 2026–1 Jan 2027; Sun–Thu 11am–10pm, Fri–Sat 11am–11pm (24 Dec 11am–3pm; 25–26 Dec 11am–8pm; 31 Dec 11am–3am)
Highlight: A 3D light show projected onto the basilica facade every 30 minutes from 5:30pm, plus a 12 m tree and a small children's rink.

2. Vörösmarty Classic Xmas
Where: Vörösmarty tér, end of Váci utca, District V
When: 13 Nov–31 Dec 2026; Mon–Thu & Sun 11am–9pm, Fri–Sat 11am–10pm (craft stalls and kids' railway end 28 Dec; square open 11am–3am on 31 Dec)
Highlight: Budapest's oldest and largest market, running since 1998, with a free children's mini-train and the gift-wrapped Lion Fountain.

3. Városháza Winter Park
Where: Deák Ferenc tér (City Hall Park)
When: Opens Tue 17 Nov 2026 (closing date not stated in sources)
Highlight: An outdoor ice rink and skating corridor in the city centre; rink pricing not confirmed in sources.

4. Advent in Óbuda
Where: Fo ter, Óbuda (District III)
When: 27 Nov–23 Dec 2026
Highlight: The local, less touristy Advent fair with a nativity and concerts.

5. Vajdahunyad Castle Christmas Market
Where: City Park (Városliget)
When: 2026 dates not published in sources consulted; entry free
Highlight: Market in the grounds of a fairytale castle by the City Park ice rink.

09 · Chicago, USA

1. Christkindlmarket Chicago (30th anniversary)
Where: Daley Plaza, the Loop
When: 20 Nov–24 Dec 2026; Sun–Thu 11am–8pm, Fri–Sat 11am–9pm (shorter hours Thanksgiving & Christmas Eve)
Highlight: The flagship German market turns 30 in 2026, with the collectible annual Glühwein mug.

2. Christkindlmarket Wrigleyville
Where: Gallagher Way, 3635 N Clark St, Lakeview
When: 20 Nov–31 Dec 2026
Highlight: Stays open the week after Christmas, beside Wrigley Field.

3. City of Chicago Christmas Tree Lighting
Where: Millennium Park (Michigan Ave & Washington St), the Loop
When: Fri 20 Nov 2026, gathering 4pm, ceremony 6pm, lighting ~6:30pm; tree on display to 10 Jan 2027
Highlight: The city's 113th official Christmas tree.

4. McCormick Tribune Ice Rink
Where: Millennium Park
When: Opens 20 Nov 2026, runs into Feb 2027
Highlight: Free admission (skate rental extra). Free skating under the Chicago skyline with the Cloud Gate ("Bean") next door.

5. Wintrust Magnificent Mile Lights Festival
Where: Michigan Avenue (Magnificent Mile)
When: Sat 21 Nov 2026, one night only — parade, tree-lighting and fireworks
Highlight: 1 million+ lights switched on across 200+ trees along Michigan Avenue.

6. ZooLights — Free Mondays
Where: Lincoln Park Zoo
When: Season 20 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027, 4:30–9pm (closed most Tuesdays, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve & Day); free on Mondays 23 & 30 Nov and 7 & 14 Dec 2026 with advance registration (free tickets released a week ahead at 11am CT); otherwise $7–$20
Highlight: 3 million+ LED lights across the zoo grounds.

7. Millennium Park Holiday Market
Where: North Promenade, Millennium Park
When: 20–22 Nov 2026 (noon–8pm Fri–Sat, noon–5pm Sun)
Highlight: 40+ local vendors, opening weekend only.

8. Maggie Daley Park Skating Ribbon
Where: Maggie Daley Park, the Loop
When: 13 Nov 2026–7 Mar 2027
Highlight: Free admission (timed reservation required; skate rental extra). A looping ice path about twice the length of a lap around a standard rink.

10 · Prague, Czechia

Entry to Prague's Christmas markets is free.

1. Old Town Square Christmas Market
Where: Staromestske namesti, Old Town
When: 28 Nov 2026–6 Jan 2027, daily 10am–10pm (shorter hours 24 Dec)
Highlight: Around 100 wooden huts beneath the Týn Church and Old Town Hall; the tree is a spruce from a different Czech region each year, ~26 m tall with ~95,000 LED lights.

2. Old Town Square Tree Lighting Show
Where: Old Town Square
When: First lighting Sat 28 Nov 2026 at ~4:30pm; in recent seasons a short light-and-music show repeated hourly 4:30–9:30pm — 2026/27 show times not yet published, so treat the hourly pattern as expected, not confirmed
Highlight: The tree lighting show on Old Town Square.

3. Nativity Scene with Live Animals
Where: Old Town Square (part of the market)
When: 28 Nov 2026–6 Jan 2027
Highlight: A life-size nativity with a stable and live animals, plus a stage with carol concerts.

4. Wenceslas Square Christmas Market
Where: Lower Wenceslas Square, New Town
When: 28 Nov 2026–6 Jan 2027, daily 10am–10pm
Highlight: Christmas market on Lower Wenceslas Square.

5. Smaller Neighbourhood Markets (Namesti Miru, Republic Square)
Where: Various squares
When: Open earlier in November, close Christmas Eve (exact 2026 dates not published in sources consulted)
Highlight: Namesti Miru is the local favourite with a tree in front of St Ludmila Church.

Note for 2026: there is no Christmas market at Prague Castle — it has not been held since 2022.

11 · Strasbourg, France

Strasbourg, “Capital of Christmas” — entry to all markets is free (security bag checks at bridges into the Grande Île).

1. Christkindelsmärik
Where: Place Broglie, Grande Île
When: 27 Nov–24 Dec 2026; opening day 2–9pm, then daily 11:30am–9pm (10pm on 11–12 & 18–19 Dec; 6pm on 24 Dec)
Highlight: France’s oldest Christmas market, founded in 1570; 300+ chalets across 8 markets in the old town.

2. The Grand Sapin (Great Christmas Tree) & Musical Light Show
Where: Place Kléber
When: Lit from Fri 27 Nov 2026, staying lit until early January (to 5 Jan per one guide); musical light show every hour 4–9pm (lights only 10pm–midnight)
Highlight: Around 30 m tall, 7–9 tonnes, the tallest real Christmas tree in France, from a sustainably managed forest.

3. Village du Partage (Village of Sharing)
Where: Place Kléber, beside the Grand Sapin
When: 27 Nov–24 Dec 2026
Highlight: Chalets run by local charities — the market’s humanitarian heart.

4. Cathedral Markets (Place de la Cathédrale & Place du Château)
Where: Around Strasbourg Cathedral
When: 27 Nov–24 Dec 2026, same hours as the main market
Highlight: Stalls beneath the 142 m cathedral spire, with the Hôtel de Ville video mapping nearby.

5. Petite France Illuminations
Where: Petite France quarter (canals)
When: Illuminations on from 27 Nov 2026 into early January
Highlight: Half-timbered houses and canal bridges lit and reflected in the water.

6. Porte des Lumières (Gate of Lights)
Where: Rue du Vieux-Marché-aux-Poissons area, Grande Île entrance
When: During the market, 27 Nov–24 Dec 2026
Highlight: An illuminated gateway guarded by two giant lit bears.

Note: one older guide lists a 26 Nov start; the majority of sources and the city’s official Noël à Strasbourg site confirm 27 Nov 2026.

12 · Copenhagen, Denmark

The street markets are free; Christmas in Tivoli (13 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027) is PAID (~DKK 210 adult entry) and is excluded from this guide.

1. Christmas Market at Nytorv & Gammeltorv
Where: Nytorv and Gammeltorv squares, off Strøget
When: 6 Nov–21 Dec 2026; Mon–Wed 11am–8pm, Thu 11am–9pm, Fri–Sat 11am–10pm, Sun noon–7pm
Highlight: Claims to be Denmark's largest Christmas market — and its small ice rink is free, including free skate hire.

2. Nyhavn Christmas Market
Where: Nyhavn canal quayside
When: Likely 5 Nov–21 Dec 2026, daily 10am–7pm (8pm Fri–Sat) — 2026 dates not officially published as of late Oct 2026, so treat as expected
Highlight: Stalls in front of the painted 17th-century townhouses and wooden ships — the city's most photographed spot after dark (from ~3:30pm).

3. Copenhagen Winter Wonderland, Kongens Nytorv
Where: Kongens Nytorv
When: Market 13 Nov–29 Dec 2026; ice rink 13 Nov 2026–mid-Feb 2027, daily 10am–9pm (closed 24–25 Dec)
Highlight: The city's big open-air rink on its grandest square. Free to wander; skate rental available on site (rink admission details not confirmed in sources).

4. Santa Lucia Kayak Parade (Lucia i Kajak)
Where: Canals around Slotsholmen: Nyhavn, Christianshavn, BLOX, Højbro Plads
When: Sun 13 Dec 2026, kayaks leave Kayak Bar, Børskaj at 5pm, passing Nyhavn ~5:15pm
Highlight: Kayakers decorated with lights and garlands paddle the canals singing carols. Free to watch from public quays and bridges.

5. Rådhuspladsen Christmas Market
Where: City Hall Square
When: 11–20 Dec 2026 (confirmed by the organiser in Oct 2026)
Highlight: The big tree on City Hall Square, lit for the first Advent weekend.

6. Strøget & Kronprinsensgade Christmas Lights
Where: Strøget pedestrian street and side streets
When: All season, Nov–Dec 2026
Highlight: Kronprinsensgade's canopy of lights is the city's best light installation for photos without crowds.

7. Christiania Christmas Market
Where: Grey Hall (Den Grå Hal), Freetown Christiania
When: Around 6–20 Dec 2026 (dates unconfirmed)
Highlight: The alternative-living Freetown's own market.

Conflict: one source says the Højbro Plads market is cancelled for 2026; two others list it running 14 Nov–20 Dec 2026. Do not rely on it.

13 · Nuremberg, Germany

Entry to all Nuremberg Christmas markets is free.

1. Nuremberg Christkindlesmarkt
Where: Hauptmarkt, old town
When: 27 Nov–24 Dec 2026, daily 10am–9pm (24 Dec 10am–2pm)
Highlight: Around 160–180 wooden stalls with red-and-white striped cloth roofs; one of the world's oldest and most famous Christmas markets, recently ranked the world's best Christmas market for 2026 by Christmas Tree World.

2. Opening Ceremony: The Christkind's Prologue
Where: Frauenkirche balcony, Hauptmarkt
When: Fri 27 Nov 2026, 5:30pm (stalls pause 5:25–6pm)
Highlight: The Christkind — a young Nuremberg woman elected for a two-year term — recites the traditional prologue from the church gallery above a packed square.

3. Kinderweihnacht (Children's Christmas Market)
Where: Hans-Sachs-Platz
When: 27 Nov–30 Dec 2026 (reopens 26–30 Dec after Christmas)
Highlight: Merry-go-round, Ferris wheel and hands-on craft activities for children.

4. Markt der Partnerstädte (Sister Cities Market)
Where: Rathausplatz
When: 27 Nov–23 Dec 2026
Highlight: Stalls from Nuremberg's twin cities around the world.

5. Winterdorf (Winter Village)
Where: Near the main market (Augustinerhof area)
When: 12 Nov 2026–9 Jan 2027
Highlight: The only Nuremberg Christmas site open well into January, with a Ferris wheel. Ferris wheel paid.

14 · Cologne, Germany

All Cologne Christmas markets are free to enter.

1. Weihnachtsmarkt am Kölner Dom (Cathedral Market)
Where: Roncalliplatz, beneath Cologne Cathedral
When: 16 Nov–23 Dec 2026; Sun–Wed 11am–9pm, Thu–Fri 11am–10pm, Sat 10am–10pm; closed Sun 22 Nov (Totensonntag)
Highlight: Around 150 stalls under the twin Gothic spires of the UNESCO-listed cathedral, with a canopy of lights; the market's 2026–2030 contract was awarded to a new organiser in March 2026.

2. Heinzels Wintermärchen (Gnome Market)
Where: Alter Markt & Heumarkt, Old Town
When: Alter Markt 23 Nov–23 Dec 2026; Heumarkt 23 Nov 2026–10 Jan 2027; daily 11am–10pm (shorter hours after 30 Dec); closed 24–25 Dec
Highlight: Themed on the Heinzelmännchen, the legendary gnomes who did Cologne's work at night; Heumarkt has an ice rink and curling. Ice rink paid.

3. Harbour Christmas Market (Hafen-Weihnachtsmarkt)
Where: Rheinauhafen, by the Chocolate Museum
When: 13 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027
Highlight: The first market to open in 2026, with a maritime theme and a giant wooden ship.

4. Markt der Engel (Market of Angels)
Where: Neumarkt
When: 16 Nov–23 Dec 2026
Highlight: Angel-themed stalls with a star canopy over the square.

5. Nikolausdorf (St Nicholas' Village)
Where: Rudolfplatz
When: 2026 dates not published in sources consulted; runs with the other markets in recent years
Highlight: The "village" market at the Hahnentor gate.

6. Stadtgarten Christmas Market
Where: Stadtgarten, Belgisches Viertel
When: One source lists it opening 13 Nov 2026; another says 2026 dates were unconfirmed — treat as unconfirmed
Highlight: Christmas market in the Stadtgarten, Belgisches Viertel.

Note: since 1 July 2026, tourist entry inside Cologne Cathedral costs €12 (children to 13 free); entry for worship/prayer remains free. The market outside is free.

15 · Brussels, Belgium

Winter Wonders (Plaisirs d'Hiver / Winterpret) — entry to every square is free.

1. Winter Wonders Christmas Market
Where: Grand-Place, Bourse, Place de la Monnaie, Sainte-Catherine, Marché aux Poissons, Place de Brouckère
When: 27 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027, daily noon–10pm (closes 6pm on 24 & 31 Dec and 3 Jan)
Highlight: 200+ chalets (238 per one guide) along a 2 km route through the old centre, plus a Ferris wheel and ice rink (rides paid).

2. Grand-Place Sound-and-Light Show
Where: Grand-Place (UNESCO World Heritage Site)
When: Nightly during Winter Wonders, 27 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027, several shows each evening from ~5pm to 10pm (10:30pm Fri–Sat); no show on 24 & 31 Dec or 3 Jan
Highlight: Music and imagery projected across the Gothic Town Hall and guildhouse facades — the festival's signature event.

3. Grand-Place Christmas Tree & Nativity Scene
Where: Grand-Place
When: 27 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027
Highlight: The market's largest tree, with a nativity scene featuring live animals.

4. Place Sainte-Catherine & Marché aux Poissons (Vismet)
Where: Sainte-Catherine quarter
When: 27 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027, same hours as the market
Highlight: The foodie end of the route, with the big wheel and ice rink nearby (paid).

16 · Edinburgh, Scotland

1. Traditional Christmas Markets
Where: East Princes Street Gardens, city centre, beneath Edinburgh Castle
When: 14 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027, daily 10:00–22:00; closed Christmas Day (25 Dec); reduced hours 17 Nov (16:00–22:00), 24 & 26 Dec (to 20:00), 31 Dec (to 17:00)
Highlight: Around 70 stalls spread through the gardens under the castle and the Scott Monument. Entry free (pay only for food, drink and rides).

2. Light Night Concert with LNER — Ross Bandstand
Where: Ross Bandstand, West Princes Street Gardens, beneath Edinburgh Castle
When: Sunday 22 Nov 2026, from 15:00
Highlight: Headlined by Girls Aloud star Nadine Coyle, with a festive sing-along (Phoenix Choir, Voice of the Town), a lantern procession and a visit from Santa; part of a £75,000 charity fundraising drive. Free, unticketed.

3. Edinburgh's Christmas Kick-Off Concert — Ross Bandstand
Where: Ross Bandstand, West Princes Street Gardens
When: Saturday 14 Nov 2026 (opening day of the season)
Highlight: Headlined by bagpipe supergroup the Red Hot Chilli Pipers, with The Eves — the inaugural kick-off concert for the seven-week festival.

4. Taste of Scotland — St Andrew's Day weekend, Ross Bandstand
Where: Ross Bandstand, West Princes Street Gardens
When: Sat 28–Sun 29 Nov 2026
Highlight: A free outdoor ceilidh to celebrate St Andrew's Day (30 Nov), with local music and a mini market.

5. Community Christmas — Ross Bandstand
Where: Ross Bandstand, West Princes Street Gardens
When: Saturday 21 Nov 2026 (exact time not published — check edwinterfest.com)
Highlight: Community choirs, local musicians, dance performances and roaming entertainers. Free, family-friendly.

6. Edinburgh Sings! — Ross Bandstand
Where: Ross Bandstand, West Princes Street Gardens
When: Saturday 5 Dec 2026 (exact time not published — check edwinterfest.com)
Highlight: A massed-choir sing event in the festival's free Ross Bandstand programme (14 Nov–12 Dec).

7. Santa Fun Run & Santa Paws — Ross Bandstand (watch free)
Where: Ross Bandstand / Princes Street Gardens
When: Sunday 6 Dec 2026
Highlight: Hundreds of Santas — plus dogs in festive dress (Santa Paws with Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home). Free to watch; participation is in aid of charity partner When You Wish Upon A Star (runners register/donate).

8. The Mound Norwegian Christmas tree & the city lights walk
Where: The Mound (giant illuminated EDINBURGH letters and the Norwegian tree), George Street, St Andrew Square, Princes Street, the Royal Mile and Cockburn Street
When: Mid-November 2026–early January 2027 (evenings). 2026 light-up date still to be confirmed
Highlight: The Norwegian Christmas tree on the Mound is the city's main free tree, overlooking the gardens below the castle; The Dome on George Street is a photo favourite for its exterior lights.

9. Free museums with festive-season exhibitions
Where: National Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street; Scottish National Gallery, The Mound (beside the market)
When: Daily, year-round (National Museum of Scotland 10:00–17:00; closed 25 Dec)
Highlight: Two of the UK's most-visited free museums sit right beside the Christmas festival sites. Free general admission.

Not free / not happening in 2026: No George Street ice rink in 2026 (first time in ~30 years), so there is no free skating; Polar Ice Bar and Family Ice Experience are ticketed. Big Wheel, Star Flyer, Santa's Stories, Christmas at the Botanics (19 Nov–30 Dec) and the Hogmanay street party are all ticketed. Castle of Light is not returning in 2026.

17 · Amsterdam, Netherlands

1. Amsterdam Light Festival — Edition 15 (the Light Walk)
Where: Central canals and the Amstel; new 2026/27 route runs mainly through the Plantagebuurt. Information point: Amstel 1
When: 26 Nov 2026–17 Jan 2027; artworks lit daily 16:30–23:00 (until 21:00 on 31 Dec). Light Nights with performances along the route: 26 Nov, 12 & 19 Dec
Highlight: The 15th-anniversary edition, themed “Legacy”, with ~20 large-scale light artworks by international artists along a 4.5 km walking route. Viewing from streets, bridges and quays is free (optional app guide ~€7; canal cruises from ~€22.75–€29.75 are paid).

2. Christmas Village — Museumplein
Where: Museumplein, in front of the Rijksmuseum
When: 3–27 Dec 2026, daily 12:00–21:00 (12:00–19:00 on 25 & 26 Dec; to 18:00 on 27 Dec)
Highlight: 45+ vendors with food, glühwein and gifts, set beside the city’s most photographed ice rink with the Rijksmuseum glowing behind it.

3. Arrival of Sinterklaas (Intocht)
Where: By steamboat along the Amstel to the Scheepvaartmuseum (Maritime Museum), then a parade on horseback through the city centre to Leidseplein (arriving ~15:00)
When: Sunday 15 Nov 2026, approx. 10:00/10:30–15:30
Highlight: Thousands of children line the route as Sinterklaas arrives by steamboat from “Spain” — the traditional start of the Dutch festive season.

4. Dam Square Christmas tree
Where: Dam Square, in front of the Royal Palace
When: December 2026 (tree stands all month). 2026 lighting-ceremony date not yet published (in 2025 it was lit on 16 Dec)
Highlight: Amsterdam’s largest Christmas tree — over 20 m (65 ft) tall, decorated with more than 40,000 lights — with the De Bijenkorf façade’s hundreds of thousands of LEDs as a backdrop.

5. Funky Xmas Market — Westergas
Where: Westergas, Westerpark
When: Sunday 20 Dec 2026, 12:00–18:00 (date subject to change)
Highlight: Independent designers, vintage rails, handmade art, craft beer and a DJ in the old gasworks — the locals’ gift-shopping market.

6. Pure Markt — winter edition, Park Frankendael
Where: Park Frankendael, Amsterdam-Oost
When: Sunday 20 Dec 2026, 11:00–17:00
Highlight: Small-makers food and craft market in a leafy park — the neighbourhood alternative to the tourist markets.

7. Sunday Market — Westergas
Where: Westergas, Westerpark
When: Sundays 6 & 20 Dec 2026, 12:00–18:00
Highlight: Amsterdam’s monthly design market in festive mode.

8. Christmas Eve services in central churches
Where: Large Protestant churches in the centre (e.g. Oude Kerk, Nieuwe Kerk area); Sint Nicolaaskerk offers free services with Gregorian music
When: Evening of 24 Dec 2026. 2026 service times not yet published — check each church’s website in early December
Highlight: Candlelit carol services in churches some 700+ years old. Open to all, free.

Day trip: Haarlem Christmas Market, Grote Markt beneath St Bavo church, 11–13 Dec 2026, free entry, 15 min by train.

Not free: Museumplein ice skating (paid; rink open 24 Oct 2026–16 Jan 2027), Winter Paradise at RAI (17 Dec–3 Jan, paid), World Christmas Circus at Carré (from 20 Dec, paid), Light Festival cruises.

18 · Craiova, Romania

1. Craiova Christmas Market 2026 — “Land of Elves”
Where: Five squares in the historic centre: Mihai Viteazul Square (main), Fratii Buzesti Square, William Shakespeare Square, Casa Baniei, Doljana area
When: 13 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027 (52 days); cottages daily 10:00–22:00; festive lighting until midnight
Highlight: Around 280,000 sqm — the largest Christmas market in Europe by area — with 90+ hand-painted cottages (no two alike); voted Best Christmas Market in Europe 2026 by European Best Destinations, ahead of Zurich and Riga; 2M+ visitors per edition. Admission completely free in all five areas (per Craiova City Hall).

2. Santa Claus’s Flying Sleigh
Where: Above Mihai Viteazul Square, over the main stage and central square
When: Daily shows at scheduled times throughout the market, 13 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027 (arrive 15–20 min early for a viewing spot). Exact daily show times are announced by the organisers closer to each date
Highlight: The tallest aerial show of its kind in Eastern Europe and a Romanian premiere (introduced 2024) — the sleigh glides across the sky above the square with music and special effects.

3. Free weekend concerts & carol shows — main stage
Where: Main stage, Mihai Viteazul Square
When: Every weekend, 13 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027 (evenings are liveliest 18:00–22:00); carol shows at the tree-stage
Highlight: Free concerts each weekend with Romanian artists performing winter carols and songs, plus surprise guest artists.

4. The giant Christmas tree with its own train — Mihai Viteazul Square
Where: Mihai Viteazul Square
When: 13 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027
Highlight: A newly designed giant tree for the 2026 “Land of Elves” edition, with a miniature train running around it — new for this year.

5. Fairy-tale character parades & children’s workshops
Where: Across the five themed squares; children’s areas centred on Fratii Buzesti Square
When: Throughout the market, 13 Nov 2026–3 Jan 2027 (daytime workshops; parades on event days)
Highlight: Each of the five squares has its own distinct themed world with no repetition, linked by the “Land of Elves” story.

6. Christmas Night & New Year’s Eve special programmes
Where: Mihai Viteazul Square (main stage)
When: Evening of 24 Dec 2026 and 31 Dec 2026
Highlight: Special programmes with fireworks on both nights — the two biggest nights of the 52-day season.

Not free: Ice rink (Mihai Viteazul Square), the 40 m Ferris wheel (largest in Romania, William Shakespeare Square) and the themed amusement park charge separate fees, announced on-site.

19 · Ravenna Gorge Area, Germany (Black Forest)

READ THIS FIRST — Ravenna Gorge is NOT free

The Ravenna Gorge Christmas Market itself is NOT free — and is SOLD OUT for 2026. Adult entry €7.50 (afternoon) / €9.50 (evening) for a ~2-hour timed slot, online presale only, no ticket office — and all ~100,000 tickets sold out within about six hours of the 14 Oct 2026 sale. Children aged 6–15 enter free with an adult. The gorge is officially closed in winter and even hikers must hold a valid ticket. The market's ~40 stalls sit beneath the 36 m, nine-arch Ravenna Viaduct (built 1926–27). The events below are the genuine free alternatives in the immediate area.

1. Freiburg Christmas Market
Where: Rathausplatz, Franziskanerstraße, Kartoffelmarkt, Unterlinden, Turmstraße, Rotteckring and Colombipark, Freiburg old town (~30 min by train from the gorge area)
When: 19 Nov–23 Dec 2026; Mon–Sat 10:00–20:30, Sun 11:30–19:30; closed Sun 22 Nov
Highlight: One of the largest markets in the region, a tradition of almost 50 years, spread across eight locations in the old town.

2. Gengenbach Advent Calendar House — nightly window opening
Where: Rathaus (town hall), Marktplatz, Gengenbach (Kinzig valley, ~1 h from the gorge)
When: One window opens every evening at 18:00, 30 Nov–23 Dec 2026; the finished calendar stays lit until 6 Jan 2027
Highlight: The world's largest Advent calendar house — 24 illuminated windows on the 1784 town hall, a tradition of 20+ years (since 1996/97). The 2026 motifs are by illustrator Olaf Hajek ("Paradiese"), theme "Verhüllt. Verwandelt. Erleuchtet."; this year the façade is recreated full-size in front of renovation scaffolding.

3. Gengenbach Advent Market
Where: Marktplatz, in front of the town hall, Gengenbach
When: 27 Nov–23 Dec 2026; Mon–Fri 14:00–20:00, Sat–Sun 11:30–20:00
Highlight: Around 60 stalls of crafts and winter food in a half-timbered old town, timed so visitors can catch the 18:00 window opening.

4. Seemer Christmas Market — Titisee
Where: Kleiner Kurpark Titisee, Parkstraße 4, Titisee-Neustadt (a shuttle hub for the gorge, ~15 min away)
When: Sat 28 Nov 2026, 14:00–20:00; Sun 29 Nov 2026, 10:00–17:00 (first Advent weekend)
Highlight: A small local market with mulled wine, farmer's sausages and music from the kindergarten and youth band; St Nicholas visits at 15:00 on both days.

5. Baden-Baden Christmas Market
Where: Kaiserallee / Kurhaus, Baden-Baden (northern Black Forest)
When: 26 Nov 2026–6 Jan 2027
Highlight: Runs until Epiphany (6 Jan), so it is open between Christmas and New Year when most German markets have closed.

Notes: The illuminated viaduct can be glimpsed from passing Höllentalbahn trains (Freiburg–Titisee line; regular rail fare applies, not free). The shuttle buses from Hinterzarten/Himmelreich/Titisee are free only in combination with a market ticket.

20 · Rothenburg ob der Tauber, Germany

1. Reiterlesmarkt (Rothenburg Christmas Market)
Where: Marktplatz, Grüner Markt, Kirchplatz (by St Jakob's Church) and the Rathaus courtyard, inside the walled medieval old town
When: 20 Nov–23 Dec 2026; Sun–Thu 11:00–19:00, Fri–Sat 11:00–20:00; closed Sun 22 Nov (Totensonntag, day of remembrance); no market 24–26 Dec
Highlight: Just 61 stalls in one of Germany's best-preserved walled medieval towns — the market is described by Deutsche Bahn as more than 500 years old, and its white mulled wine and Schneeballen (snowball pastries) are local signatures.

2. Opening ceremony — the Reiterle rides in & the tree is lit
Where: Marktplatz
When: Friday 20 Nov 2026, ~17:00 (ceremony has begun at 17:00 in recent years; confirm exact 2026 time on rothenburg.de). A second Reiterle opening takes place Friday 27 Nov 2026 at 17:00
Highlight: The Reiterle — the spectral horseman of Franconian folklore who gives the market its name — rides across the square on horseback in a red cloak, greets the crowd, and helps the mayor light the big Christmas tree.

3. Daily brass music — Grüner Markt stage
Where: Stage on the Grüner Markt
When: Daily during the market, 20 Nov–23 Dec 2026
Highlight: Brass groups from the region play on the market stage every single day of the Reiterlesmarkt.

4. Advent windows at the Rathaus (town hall)
Where: Second floor of the Rathaus, Marktplatz
When: Every evening during the market, 20 Nov–23 Dec 2026
Highlight: A new Advent window, designed by local school classes and youth groups, is revealed each evening — a living Advent calendar on the town hall.

5. Live Advent music from the town hall balcony
Where: Rathaus balcony, Marktplatz
When: Sunday–Thursday evenings during the market, 20 Nov–23 Dec 2026
Highlight: Bavarian folk music, brass bands and choirs perform from the balcony above the square.

6. Käthe Wohlfahrt Christmas shop — Herrngasse
Where: Herrngasse 1, old town
When: Open all year (own hours; open during the market season)
Highlight: The flagship of the world-famous Christmas-decoration maker — a year-round Christmas shop in the town that is Germany's Christmas capital. Free to browse (the adjoining German Christmas Museum charges admission).

7. Town walls walk & the Plönlein in Advent lights
Where: The medieval town walls (walkable circuit) and the Plönlein (the famous forked lane with the Siebers Tower)
When: Year-round; the old town is lit for Advent during the market, 20 Nov–23 Dec 2026
Highlight: Rothenburg's fully walkable medieval wall circuit and the Plönlein — one of Germany's most photographed street corners — under Advent lighting.

Note: The official rothenburg.de Reiterlesmarkt page was unreachable on 15 Nov 2026; the dates above are cross-checked across five independent guides, all citing Rothenburg Tourismus / rothenburg.de and agreeing exactly (20 Nov–23 Dec, closed 22 Nov). One source notes a possible afternoon opening on Totensonntag (22 Nov) — treat the closure as expected but check the town programme if 22 Nov is the only possible day.

Quick reference — the one event not to miss in each city

One evening in a city? Start here. The single most visual free event in each of the 20 cities — full details in the city sections.

City	Most visual event	Why it stands out
New York City	Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree (lit 2 Dec)	76-ft spruce, 50,000+ LEDs, Swarovski star, skaters below
London	Regent Street “Spirit of Christmas” angels	Glowing angels over the boulevard, red buses passing beneath
Paris	Champs-Élysées illuminations switch-on (22 Nov, 6:30pm)	400 trees lighting at once down the avenue, traffic-free
Vienna	Wiener Christkindlmarkt at Rathausplatz at dusk	Neo-Gothic City Hall glowing behind 150 stalls and the ice rink
Tokyo	Roppongi Hills Keyakizaka Illumination	970,000 LEDs down a 400 m slope with Tokyo Tower at the end
Seoul	Seoul Lantern Festival, Cheonggyecheon	Lantern figures glowing on the stream at night
Zurich	“Lucy” lights on Bahnhofstrasse	11,550 crystals over 1 km of shopping street
Budapest	Advent Basilica 3D light show	Projections dancing across the basilica facade every 30 min
Chicago	Magnificent Mile Lights Festival (21 Nov)	Parade, fireworks and 1M+ lights switching on together
Prague	Old Town Square tree light-and-music show	26 m spruce, 95,000 LEDs, hourly show under the Týn Church
Strasbourg	Grand Sapin musical light show, Place Kléber	30 m tree choreographed to music every hour
Copenhagen	Santa Lucia kayak parade (13 Dec, 5pm)	Light-decorated kayaks singing carols through the canals
Nuremberg	Christkind’s Prologue opening ceremony (27 Nov, 5:30pm)	The Christkind in white and gold on the Frauenkirche balcony
Cologne	Cathedral Christmas Market at night	Market lights under the twin Gothic spires of the Dom
Brussels	Grand-Place sound-and-light show	Projections across the UNESCO guildhouses and Town Hall
Edinburgh	Light Night Concert, Sun 22 Nov, Ross Bandstand	Lantern procession and pop concert beneath the illuminated castle
Amsterdam	Amsterdam Light Festival Light Walk (26 Nov–17 Jan)	~20 giant light artworks reflected in the canals
Craiova	Santa’s Flying Sleigh (daily, Mihai Viteazul Square)	Tallest of its kind in Eastern Europe; a sleigh flying over a square of millions of lights
Ravenna Gorge Area	Gengenbach Advent Calendar window opening, daily 18:00 (30 Nov–23 Dec)	A new illuminated artwork revealed on the world’s largest Advent calendar house
Rothenburg ob der Tauber	Reiterlesmarkt opening ceremony, Fri 20 Nov ~17:00	The Reiterle on horseback and the tree lighting on the medieval Marktplatz

Researched 15 November 2026 from official tourism and organiser pages, cross-checked across multiple guides. Dates can change — check the official page for the event before you travel.

The Ai Playbook