

Travel

Winter WONDERLANDS

Plan a seasonal escape somewhere snowy, to get you into the festive spirit...

Walk through a fairy-tale snowscape in Bavaria

While we can't always guarantee a white Christmas in the UK, you'll marvel at the beautiful snowy scenes in Bavaria, southern Germany. Take a walking trip around the lakeland and woodland trails of the Königswinkel region, where you'll enjoy the stunning landscapes around the pretty medieval town of Füssen, with views that inspired Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. You'll encounter snow-capped mountain peaks, ice-frosted forests and glittering fairy-tale castles such as Neuschwanstein, Hohenschwangau and Linderhof. There's also a visit to the charming village of Oberammergau, famed for its Easter Passion Play and 'Lüftmalerei', a form of mural art used to make trompe l'oeil facades on the front of houses.

How to do it: A seven-night, full-board holiday with **Ramblers Walking Holidays** starts at **£1,399 per person** including return flights from the UK and all local transport; ramblersholidays.co.uk.



Pick up presents at Vienna's Christmas markets

Recapture the joy of browsing for gifts at one of Vienna's many Christmas markets - lit with fairy lights, there are stalls for everything from handmade decorations to homemade cakes and biscuits. Fortify yourself with a steaming glass of glühwein or tuck into a bratwurst as you go, admiring the handsome backdrop of Austria's capital. The most popular markets include Maria-Theresien-Platz, on one of the main squares, and the one in front of Schönbrunn Palace, a baroque palace once owned by the Habsburgs. And don't miss the Vienna Magic of Advent market on Rathausplatz in front of the elegant City Hall. It has more than 145 stalls, plus an ice rink for the adventurous.

How to do it: A three-night stay with **British Airways Holidays** at the **Hotel Schani Wien**, near the main station, starts at **£258 per person**, including return flights from **Heathrow**; britishairways.com.

* Always check the latest travel advice before booking a trip

See Santa in Finnish Lapland

Go in search of Santa at Rovaniemi, the picturesque capital of Finnish Lapland and the official residence of Mr Claus himself. Nestled between two scenic lakes in Rovaniemi is the beautiful Apukka Resort, where you can enjoy a trip that takes you in search of the Christmas spirit. Whether you're travelling with kids or are still a kid at heart yourself, there are plenty of activities to get you in the festive mood, from building snowmen to tobogganing down hills or trying cross-country skiing. There's also the chance to spot the Aurora Borealis, with a Northern Lights hunt by snow train through the wilderness. The best part has to be a visit by reindeer-pulled sleigh to



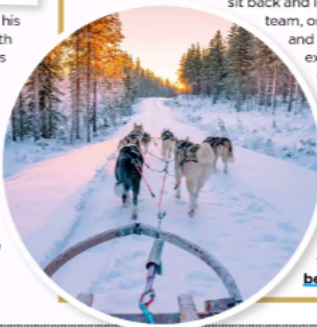
Santa's Hidden Hut, where his jolly elves will greet you with Christmas songs, hot drinks and cookies - and some one-on-one time with the bearded man himself.

How to do it: A four-night 'In the Search of the Christmas Spirit' package starts at **£1,354 per person**, including various activities; apukkaresort.fi. Return flights from London to Rovaniemi start at **£237**; finnair.com.

Go husky-sledding in Swedish Lapland

Throw yourself into all the winter activities this stunning region has to offer. In the snowy wilds of Swedish Lapland, you can experience a range of seasonal excursions, from husky sledding and guided snowmobiling to ice fishing and snowshoe hikes. Based at Brändön Lodge, overlooking the snow-dusted islands of the Lulea Archipelago, it's the perfect setting from which to start your adventures, with a sauna on site to keep you toasty after you've been out in the cold. One of the highlights is the husky safari, where you can either sit back and let a skilled driver lead the team, or 'mush' them yourself, and enjoy the sounds of the excitable hounds as they dash through the snow.

How to do it: A three-night Winter Cabin break with **Best Served Scandinavia** starts from **£1,625 per person**, including return flights from the UK, full-board accommodation and various excursions; best-served.co.uk.



SOURCE: LAURA MILLAR, PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK, VISUALS CONTACT (AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE)