



Europe's lesser-known winter markets by rail

Winter 2026

With thoughts turning to cooler seasons and festive celebrations, [Byway](#), the European leader in no-fly holidays, has put together a selection of trips that include visits to some of the most authentic winter markets in Europe. Sourced by expert, local teams these are five Byway favourites, where travellers can experience long-held winter traditions, artisan shopping and magical seasonal escapes without the crowds:



For historic charm:

[Dome Square Christmas Market, Riga, Latvia](#)

For a festive escape that feels like stepping into a winter fairy tale, Riga's Christmas market in Dome Square offers one of Europe's most atmospheric seasonal settings. Set among the medieval architecture of Riga's Old Town, the market combines centuries of history with Baltic Christmas traditions.



For local traditions:

[Pilsen Winter Market, Czechia](#)

Leaving the crowds of Prague behind, you'll gain a more intimate glimpse into Czech culture at the Pilsen Winter Market. Here, the market is less a tourist attraction and more a community meeting place where locals gather after dark to catch up with friends over seasonal drinks and enjoy simple winter rituals.



For unique artisan gifts:

[ART ADVENT, Vienna, Austria](#)

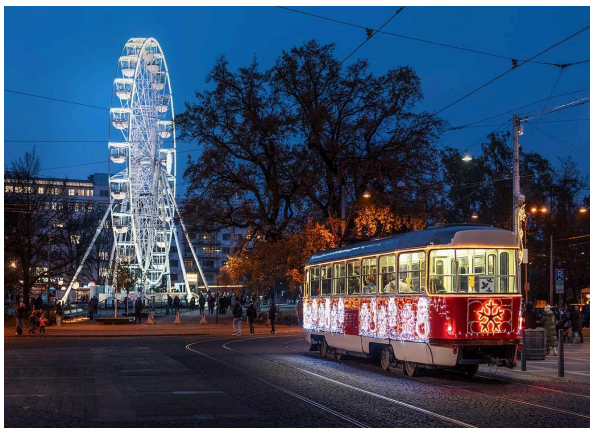
Vienna's ART ADVENT market offers a carefully curated celebration of craftsmanship. The market showcases independent makers creating handmade jewellery, ceramics, artwork and everyday objects with a story behind them, allowing visitors to support local artisans.



For family adventure:

[Christmas at Bratislava Castle, Slovakia](#)

Bratislava Castle's Medieval Christmas celebrations transport visitors back in time with traditional food, historic crafts and interactive family experiences. The seasonal charm and rich storytelling make a memorable alternative to traditional city-centre markets.



For standout festive atmosphere:

[Brno and Olomouc, Czechia](#)

Brno, which was named the European Capital of Christmas in 2024, combines lively seasonal celebrations with beautifully decorated squares; while nearby Olomouc showcases regional delicacies and artisans among atmospheric, centuries-old architecture.

Cat Jones, Founder and CEO of Byway, clarifies:

"Byway trips encourage and enable deeper exploration. The magic of a winter market is found in the conversations, the craftspeople and the food; travelling by rail to these festive events gives people the chance to absorb the cultural backdrop to each one, making the moments between the markets as memorable as the events themselves."

Why does travelling by rail transform a winter market break?

A winter market trip is about so much more than the destination; choosing rail allows the journey itself to become part of the experience. With some wonderful advantages:

Bring home the flavours of Europe	Without airline liquid restrictions or tight luggage limits, travellers can stock up on local delicacies, from regional wines and artisanal mead to jars of honey and festive treats.
Arrive straight into the heart of the celebration	European trains typically arrive directly in city centres, meaning visitors can step off the platform and into historic streets, festive squares and Christmas lights, avoiding lengthy airport transfers.
Discover places beyond the airport map	Rail opens up charming towns and smaller communities that are often overlooked by conventional holiday routes, making it easier to find authentic seasonal experiences.

Byway's insider tips for the perfect winter market escape:

Pack for the evening magic	The atmosphere comes alive after dark, so warm layers, thick socks, gloves, scarves and hats are essential for lingering over food stalls and festive lights.
Explore before you shop	Take time to wander before buying. The most memorable finds are often hidden among smaller artisan stalls rather than the first displays you see.
Arrive hungry	Winter markets are made for grazing. Skip formal dining and sample regional specialities, from bratwurst and lángos to chimney cakes, paired with warming mugs of Glühwein, mead or hot chocolate.

ENDS

Notes to editors

For more Christmas market trip inspiration read our [Christmas Market Guide](#)

About Byway

Byway is on a mission to help more people discover Europe and beyond by travelling through, not flying over. All self-guided itineraries include overland transport and accommodation, package protection, disruption replanning and 24/7 in-trip support from our no-fly travel experts. Whether you design your trip from scratch, travel our favourite routes or enlist personalised planning help from our team, the result is a seamless slow travel adventure through landscapes, cultures and the places in between.

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