

# Where To See the World's Most Epic Christmas Trees

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## World's Most Epic Christmas Trees

While the Tannenbaum tradition may have originated in Germany, festively decorated fir trees have since become a universal symbol of the Christmas celebration. The yuletide evergreens symbolize the season's spirit of hope and generosity, bringing light and warmth to residences and communities even during the darkest, coldest days of the year. Over the centuries, the lights and decorations we use to adorn them have gotten grander, and so have some of the trees themselves. Ahead are some of the modern world's biggest and most magnificent Christmas trees erected each year.

### Rockefeller Center - New York City, USA

For U.S. audiences, the Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree is likely the first mammoth Tannenbaum to spring to mind. Since Rockefeller Center decided to make the plaza tree and its lighting ceremony an annual tradition in 1933, its arrival in Midtown Manhattan has kicked off the Christmas season for New Yorkers and drawn visitors from around the nation, and even the world. The tree, traditionally a Norway spruce between 69 and 100 feet tall, became, as Rockefeller put it "a holiday beacon for New Yorkers and visitors alike". While the pandemic has reduced the number of visitors the attraction receives each year, in 2017 it had been estimated to be 125 million.

### Trafalgar Square - London, U.K.

Since 1947, the Christmas tree that's placed in Trafalgar Square is traditionally gifted to the British people from the Norwegians, as a token of Norway's appreciation for England's support during World War II. A Norway Spruce measuring over 60 feet high, the tree is decorated in traditional Norwegian style, with hundreds of white lights strung vertically, the tree is prominently displayed in the iconic public square in central London from early December until just before the Twelfth Night of Christmas (January 5). A public tree-lighting ceremony is led by the Lord Mayor of Westminster on the first Thursday in December, with thousands typically in attendance.

### Capitol Building - Washington DC, USA

Every year for the holiday season, a new U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree or "The People's Tree" is sourced from one of the national forests and erected on the west lawn of the U.S. Capitol building, located on Washington D.C.'s National Mall. This year's specimen is an 84-foot-tall white fir that came from Northern California's Six Rivers National Forest. The House Speaker in 1964, John W. McCormack (D-MA), placed the first Capital Christmas Tree on the Capitol lawn, and that specimen lived for three years before wind and root damage finally did it in.

### **Strasbourg - Alsace, France**

'The Great Christmas Tree of Strasbourg' is the most celebrated Christmas tree in France. At 60 feet tall, it's one of the tallest decorated natural Christmas trees in Europe and stands in Strasbourg's central square, Place Kléber, throughout the festive season. The city is also home to France's oldest Christmas market, the Christkindelsmärik. The nearby town of Sélestat, also in the Alsace region, is actually where scholars found the first written mention of the Christmas tree tradition, dating back to 1521 CE.

### **St. Peter's Square - Vatican City, Italy**

To officially kick off the festive season at the Vatican, the St. Peter's Square Christmas Tree and life-size Nativity Scene was unveiled on December 10, lit up with low-energy-consumption LED bulbs. This year's tree is a 90-foot-tall, 113-year-old fir that weighs around eight tons and is decorated with 600 wooden ornaments, which were hand-carved by the craftsmen of Andalo—the small village Dolomites of Paganella where the tree was sustainably sourced.

### **Brandenburg Gate - Berlin, Germany**

With the Tannenbaum tradition having originated in Germany, it's no wonder that there's no shortage of big, beautiful Christmas trees to be found in Berlin. The massive tree that stands before the city's iconic Brandenburg Gate lends a soft, serene glow to the Pariser Platz, befitting the neoclassical monument that was once appropriated as a symbol for the Nazi party, but in modern times has come to represent European unity and peace.

### **Rodrigo de Freitas Lagoon - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**

Rio de Janeiro isn't known for its subtlety when it comes to celebrations, so it's really no surprise that the city came up with an enormous metallic Christmas tree that floats atop the Rodrigo de Freitas Lagoon. It's covered in over 900,000 color- and pattern-changing LED bulbs, synced to musical accompaniment—and sometimes fireworks—creating an over-the-top spectacle. At 85 meters (279 feet) tall, it holds the Guinness World Record for being the largest floating Christmas tree on the planet.

### **Comercio Square - Lisbon, Portugal**

While it varies in height a bit from year to year, the tree (albeit not a live one) in Lisbon's waterfront Comercio Square has been as tall as 249 feet and, in years past, has earned itself the title of 'Europe's tallest Christmas tree'. You can actually go inside this enormous tree-shaped structure and gaze up at the blanket of twinkling lights, some of which shine in the shapes of stars, baubles and ribbons. From the outside or its interior, the colorful display is a feast for the eyes.

### **Old Town - Gdansk, Poland**

The medieval city of Gdansk, Poland is a charming holiday destination, largely thanks to its celebrated Christmas Market and those of its two neighboring cities, Sopot and Gdynia. Gdansk's main Christmas tree is located in Long Market square, which is already a favorite among tourists because of its centuries-old architecture that now houses shops and restaurants. Standing 17 meters (56 feet) high, the luminous Christmas tree is situated near the Neptune Fountain, which dates from 1549 CE.

### **Palace Square - St. Petersburg, Russia**

According to the practices of the Russian Orthodox Church, the New Year arrives first and Christmas Day

actually follows on January 7. So, the Christmas tree in St. Petersburg is actually a New Year's tree, but serves the same overall function. The giant tree that's erected annually outside the city's baroque Winter Palace, which was formerly an official residence of the Russian monarchy. This, the city's largest Christmas tree, is actually a wireframe construction to which green boughs are attached, according to a Conde Nast Traveler report.

### **Mount Ingino - Gubbio, Italy**

The medieval town of Gubbio in Italy's Umbria region is famed for being home each holiday season since 1981 to the most gargantuan Christmas "tree" in the world, which sits on the slopes of nearby Mount Ingino. Granted, it isn't actually a three-dimensional tree, but rather is a depiction of a Christmas tree that's created using 3,000 multi-colored lights and more than five miles of electrical cable. It stretches 2,362 feet high and 1,475 feet across at its base, and can be seen from up to 30 miles away. The insanely large illuminated display is also pretty environmentally friendly, having been powered since 2010 by solar-generated electricity.

