ADVENT IN TIROL 2026

EIGHT CHRISTMAS MARKETS OFFERING AN AUTHENTIC ADVENT EXPERIENCE

Eight Christmas markets, one authentic experience: As the run-up to Christmas gets underway, the traditional Christmas markets in Seefeld, Innsbruck, Hall in Tirol, Schwaz, Rattenberg, Kufstein, St. Johann in Tirol and on the shores of Lake Achensee will once again welcome visitors from near and far. While each market has its own unique flair, all eight share a common commitment to offering an authentic experience drawing on customs and traditions dating back centuries. Highlights include regional delicacies, traditional handicrafts and charming Advent music, creating an atmosphere that brings to life the true spirit of Advent in Tirol.

Seefeld – A winter wonderland with 100,000 lights

The first snows of winter transform the Seefeld Region, perched on a high plateau north of Innsbruck at 1,200 metres above sea level, into an enchanting winter wonderland. The mountain panorama provides a stunning backdrop to the wooden huts, the bell tower and the Christmas which form the heart of the market. Throughout the village visitors will also find a series of light installations designed by international artists as part of the 'Lichterzauber' (Magical Lights) project. Just a stone's throw from the Christmas market itself is the snowy 100,000 Lights Trail, while the tranquil 'Engerlpostamt' (Angels' Post Office) and the fearsome Krampus processions in early December also offer memorable moments for guests of all ages.

Innsbruck – One city, seven markets

The regional capital of Tirol, Innsbruck, has a total of seven markets spread across the city. The oldest and most traditional can be found in the medieval oldtown, where a natural Christmas tree around 20 metres in height is erected directly in front of the famous Golden Roof. Just a few metres away are the 'Märchengasse' (Fairytale Street) and 'Riesengasse' (Giant Street), two narrow alleys where visitors will find many characters from traditional fairytales and legends. At the nearby Marktplatz square there is a more modern take on the traditional Christmas tree, a glass pyramid made up of 112,445 crystals, whilst in Innsbruck's main shopping street, Maria-Theresien-Straße, huge Christmas baubles light up the sky. A little further away, on the southern edge of the city, is the Christmas market at Bergisel. There, 25 exhibitors present unique hand-crafted items, while children can post a letter to

the 'Christkind' at the Christkindl Post Office. Visitors in search of a truly traditional Christmas market experience should head to the St. Nikolaus district of the city, where a small but perfectly formed market with a smattering of wooden huts, hot mulled wine, good food and gentle, contemplative music performed live every evening create an atmosphere particularly reminiscent of days gone by. There is a similar village-like atmosphere at the Wiltener Platzl square right in the heart of the city. At the market in the Hungerburg district, visitors are rewarded with a sweeping panorama of Innsbruck itself and the mountains to the south of the city.

Hall in Tirol – Two markets for double the fun

This year, for the first time, the town of Hall in Tirol to the west of Innsbruck will be hosting not just one but two Christmas markets. The traditional market on the Oberer Stadtplatz square in the centre of town has long been popular with visitors thanks to its huge Advent calendar, brass-band concerts, carol singing, children's stories and traditional handicrafts sold at numerous wooden huts. New this year is a second market at nearby Marktanger with an ice-skating rink, children's carousel, curling rink and petting zoo – plus plenty of hot mulled wine and traditional food, of course. There is also a nativity scene there featuring figures crafted from broken mirror glass. The alleys in the medieval oldtown are resplendent with handmade Christmas decorations sparkling in the sunlight or glowing in colourful lights in the evening.

Schwaz – Advent in the 'silver town' with a rich history

The Advent season begins in Schwaz with the ceremonial lighting of the Christmas tree. The market on the Maximilianplatz square in the centre of town invites visitors to enjoy traditional food such as 'Zillertaler Krapfen', 'Kiachl' and roasted chestnuts. The music ranges from traditional to modern. Whilst children can get creative in the Elves' Workshop, listen to fairytales or write letters to the 'Christkind', who in Tirol traditionally brings children their presents, adults will enjoy browsing the arts and crafts market open on selected days. Last but not least, don't forget to check out the 'Advent wie damals' (Advent As It Used To Be) display in the historic Marchiodi-Innenhof courtyard on the Fuggergasse street, where the magic of Christmas in times gone by comes to life with open fires and traditional delicacies.

Rattenberg – Austria's smallest town by candlelight

From 20 November to 20 December 2026, candles will glow in the windows and open fires will burn in the streets of Rattenberg on each of the four Advent weekends leading up to Christmas. Unlike anywhere else in Tirol, Austria's smallest town uses almost no artificial lighting for its Christmas market. This medieval settlement on the Inn river is home to just 450 people but has been renowned for centuries for its glassblowing tradition. As Christmas approaches, the town comes to life for the Advent market, with many of the local shops, including those selling hand-blown glass objects, staying open longer than usual. Visitors feeling hungry will be pleased to know that there are plenty regional delicacies on offer as well as Rattenberg Advent wine to wash it down. On Saturday afternoons, music groups play in various squares around the town, creating a festive atmosphere. This year, for the first time, the children's programme has been expanded to include pony rides. The main programme on stage begins with the 'Procession of the Torchbearers'. This is followed by numerous musical performances, culminating in an Ave Maria sung by Austrian classical soprano Elisabeth de Roo. At regular glassblowing workshops, children can try their hand at blowing glass

baubles. There is also Advent Walk each Friday taking visitors through the town, while on Sundays and during the 'Silent Advent' on 8 December, carol-singers and brass bands make their way through the narrow streets. Admission is free on all days.

Kufstein – Christmas magic in the shadow of the fortress
Located at the foot of the famous Kufstein Fortress, the town of Kufstein is full of historic alleyways where locals and visitors alike come together in the run-up to Christmas. In the town main park there's hot mulled wine and traditional food such as 'Kiachln', served either with savoury Sauerkraut or sweet cranberry jam, accompanied by live music and warm lighting. On all four Advent weekends, the Kufstein Fortress is transformed into a winter wonderland with arts and crafts workshops, the 'Engelpostamt' (Angels' Post Office), brass bands and carol-singers bringing Tirolean traditions to life. As the countdown to Christmas begins, oversized illuminated figures – a knight, a dancing couple and a Haflinger horse – make their way into the centre of Kufstein and light up the town's squares. Indeed, the fun continues until well after Christmas – on 29 and 30 December 2026 as well as on 5 January 2027 there is the '1,000 Lights' event featuring candles, light installations and fireshows.

St. Johann in Tirol – A cosy Advent experience for all the family
The St. Johann Christmas market is an insider tip for those in search of a peaceful and contemplative Advent experience. A special highlight awaits on the Kirchplatz square, where every weekend until Epiphany (6 January), the Graz-based projection artists OchoReSotto bring the local parish church to life with their spectacular light displays. The culinary offerings are even more varied. Alongside classics such as 'Germkiachl', 'Zillertaler Krapfen' and 'Baumstriezel' there is fried chicken, raclette bread and Advent bratwurst. Children can write letters to the Christkind and look forward to a personal reply, bake biscuits, enjoy a pony ride or take a spin on the carousel.

Lake Achensee – Advent adventures on the water's edge
The largest lake in Tirol, Lake Achensee, has several charming Christmas markets dotted along its shoreline: two in Achenkirch (Sixenhof and Kräuterhüttl), one in Pertisau (Fischergut) and one in Eben. There is even a special Christmas cruise over the water connecting the markets, with the journey taking around 40 minutes. One highlight not to miss out on is the traditional visit by Saint Nicholas on 6 December. He arrives by boat in Pertisau and then makes his way with the local children to the Christmas market at Fischergut in the centre of the village.

Further information and opening times for the eight Christmas markets that make up *'Advent in Tirol'*: www.tyrol.com/activities/events/christmas-markets

Text: ProMedia