



# Britain's winter experiences 2024

Britain is pulling out all the stops this festive season! From illuminated woodland trails and dazzling Christmas displays to torchlit parades, there are countless ways to embrace the season.

December 2024

*Indulge in Christmas shopping at iconic stores like Selfridges and Fortnum and Mason, or browse for unique, handmade gifts at local craft fairs. For a more adventurous touch, try ice skating in the shadow of stately homes, or skiing down a Scottish mountain. And for something truly memorable, experience local traditions like Northumberland's flaming barrel parades or brave a chilly New Year's Day swim in Edinburgh. Experience Britain differently with these winter experiences in 2024.*

## **Gather around the Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square**

Standing tall in the heart of London, the [Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square](#) is a festive focal point conveniently close to the capital's major shopping hotspots. Since 1947, it has been gifted annually by the city of Oslo as a gesture of gratitude for British support during the Second World War. Don't miss the tree-lighting ceremony held on the first Thursday in December, a much-anticipated event that usually draws a large crowd. Not in London for the switch-on? Fear not, there is still plenty of festive cheer to be had, including traditional Christmas carols sung by choirs gathered around the tree.

## **Follow festive light trails**

Experience Britain in a new light this winter with an illuminated trail. In Cardiff's [Bute Park](#), visitors can go on an enchanting journey of light and sound in the shadow of the city's castle. This award-winning trail offers a multi-sensory experience across different themed zones, ensuring it is both immersive and accessible. For more dazzling displays, head to Manchester's RHS Bridgewater

for [Glow 2024](#), Birmingham's Botanical Gardens for the [Winter Light Trail](#), or stroll down the [illuminated trail](#) at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

### **Experience Hogwarts in the Snow at Warner Bros. Studios, Hertford, England**

The wizarding world becomes even more magical during the winter season as Warner Bros. Studio Tour London is transformed for '[Hogwarts in the Snow](#)'. Just a short drive or train journey from London, the attraction becomes a winter wonderland, featuring sparkling Christmas trees, festive wreaths and seasonal decorations. Even the tour's iconic Hogwarts model receives a wintry makeover, complete with snowflake details, while tiny snowman figures are hidden around the attraction.

### **A Royal Christmas at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, England**

*15 November 2024 – 1 January 2025*

Nestled in the Oxfordshire countryside, the grand estate of [Blenheim Palace](#) warmly embraces the festive season. Step into the enchanting world of Peter Pan with 'Neverland in the Palace', an immersive experience set against the stately home's opulent backdrop. Tuck into a Neverland-inspired afternoon tea in the Orangery, or hunt for gifts at the festive market. Also new for 2024 is The Great Skate, a covered ice rink in the magnificent Great Court.

### **Northern Lights Newcastle, north-east England**

*22 November – 31 December 2024*

Follow [Newcastle's immersive light trail](#), running through Leazes Park. Explore vibrant displays, including the kaleidoscopic Rainbow Road and the dazzling giant Lily installation. Afterwards, drop by the Christmas Village to indulge in festive treats and warm up with a mulled wine.

### **Kingdom of the Elves at Bluestone, Pembrokeshire, south Wales**

*4 November 2024 – 2 January 2025*

Explore the 'Kingdom of the Elves' at [Bluestone National Park Resort](#) in Pembrokeshire. Sign up to Elf School to learn some festive skills, meet Father Christmas at Santa's Lodge and join Rudolph for a festive breakfast. Set within 500 acres of natural woodland and countryside, the holiday resort also offers a range of other outdoor activities, from nature trails and water sports to cycling and zip-lining.

### **Twelve Days of Christmas, Belvoir Castle, Midlands, England**

*23 November 2024 – 1 January 2025*

Familiar from appearances in Netflix hit series *The Crown* and blockbuster *The Da Vinci Code*, [Belvoir Castle](#) is particularly charming at Christmas. Visitors can shop for local crafts at the Christmas market, or feast on the Festive Afternoon Tea. For younger visitors, highlights include a magical Christmas Trail at the Adventure Playground and 'Breakfast with Father Christmas' at the Belvoir Bistro, including a special gift for every child.

### **Glasgow Festive Silent Disco, west Scotland**

Dance like nobody's watching at this festive themed [silent disco](#) walking tour through Glasgow. Kitted out with wireless headphones and a free choice of favourite tunes, go on a musical adventure through Glasgow's iconic streets with an expert guide and a flash mob of fellow dancers (taking place on select dates throughout the holiday season).

### **Castle of Light, Edinburgh, south-east Scotland**

*22 November 2024 – 4 January 2025*

Returning for a fifth year, [Castle of Light](#) transforms Edinburgh Castle into a spectacular backdrop of illuminated displays and projections. Explore the castle grounds while enjoying a visual journey through Edinburgh's rich history and legends with this immersive experience.

### **Winter Lights, The Alnwick Garden, Alnwick, north-east England**

*18 November 2024 – 1 January 2025*

This Christmas, see [The Alnwick Garden](#) transformed into a glowing spectacle. Explore the illuminated gardens and follow a winter light trail. The ticket price also grants access to Lilidorei, one of the world's largest play structures, ensuring a full day of festive fun for families.

### **Winter Funland, Midlands, England**

*7 December 2024 – 1 January 2025*

[Winter Funland](#) at Birmingham's NEC promises a full festive experience, as one of the UK's largest Christmas funfairs brings an array of attractions together under one roof. From thrilling ride and an ice rink to a 1,200-seat circus showcasing dazzling performances, live entertainment and festive food stalls, the event runs throughout the festive season.

## **Winter sports**

*Embrace winter thrills while gliding past iconic London landmarks on the capital's seasonal ice rinks or take to an urban slope in Manchester...*

### **Bath on Ice, Bath, England**

*15 November 2024 – 5 January 2025*

[Bath on Ice](#) returns this winter, offering an outdoor ice-skating experience in the picturesque surrounding of Bath's Royal Victoria Park. Open from November to January, the event also features glow-in-the-dark mini-golf and a cosy themed alpine bar serving seasonal treats.

### **Chill Factore, Manchester, England**

Love skiing, but don't want to venture out of the city? [Chill Factore](#) in Manchester is the UK's longest indoor real-snow slope, offering skiing and snowboarding year-round. Catering to all abilities, from pros to absolute beginners, it provides lessons, equipment hire and a fun snow park.

### **Brighton Royal Pavillion Ice Rink, East Sussex, England**

*26 October 2024 – 5 January 2025*

Set against the backdrop of Brighton's ornate Royal Pavilion, the seasonal [ice rink](#) offers a magical skating experience in the heart of the city, an hour by train south of London. The rink also features a cosy bar and restaurant, to indulge in festive treats after a skate.

### **Hampton Court Palace Ice Rink, Greater London, England**

*22 November – 5 January 2025*

Hampton Court Palace's winter [ice rink](#) provides a picturesque setting for skaters during the festive season, with the grandeur of the Tudor palace as a backdrop. After dark, visitors are treated to a magical spectacle, with the palace illuminated in a warm glow.

### **Birmingham Ice Rink, West Midlands, England**

*1 November 2024 – 5 January 2025*

Located in Centenary Square, [Ice Skate Birmingham](#) is a spacious open-air rink in the heart of the city. Set in the shadow of Birmingham's architecturally impressive library and running through the festive season, the rink is accompanied by a 40-metre observation wheel, providing panoramic views of Birmingham's winter skyline.

### **Glide at Battersea Power Station, London, England**

8 November 2024 – 5 January 2025

Framed by Battersea's iconic towers, [Glide](#) at Battersea boasts three interconnected rinks, offering skaters plenty of space to whizz around while taking in the views of the River Thames.

### **Skate Manchester, north-west England**

8 November 2024 – 1 January 2025

Enjoy a wintry day out at [Skate Manchester](#) in the heart of the city. Set within the surroundings of Cathedral Gardens, seasonal food stalls add to the festive charm of this city centre ice rink. This year, money from every ticket will go towards supporting crucial environmental initiatives making it a festive as well as sustainable day out.

## **Winter walks around Britain's towns and cities**

*Join friends and family, wrap up warm and explore Britain's cities as the season lights up their grand architecture. For more immersive experiences, venture beyond the well-known spots on a tour led by an expert guide, offering unique insights into the history and hidden gems of these popular destinations.*

### **Windsor Great Park, Windsor, England**

Take a stroll on the Long Walk in [Windsor Great Park](#), a tree-lined avenue stretching for almost three miles, or go deer spotting in the meadows and woodlands, all with scenic views of Windsor Castle. The park is also home to a variety of walking trails and scenic picnic spots all year round.

### **Cardiff Bay Walking Tour, Wales**

Explore Cardiff Bay's colourful history and secret spots on a guided [Cardiff Bay Walking Tour](#). While strolling along the waterfront, visitors can learn about the transformation of the bay from a bustling multicultural port in the 19th century to a modern-day entertainment and leisure hub. Highlights of the tour include The Senedd-Welsh Parliament building, the shops and restaurants of Mermaid Quay and Norwegian Church.

### **Bath Skyline Walk, Somerset, England**

For spectacular views of the historic city of Bath, visitors can wander the [Skyline Walk](#), a circular National Trust Trail. Stroll through lush woodlands, open fields and charming countryside, and soak in the picturesque landscapes that surround the UNESCO World Heritage city. Along the way, enjoy vantage points that reveal the iconic Georgian architecture of Bath, as seen in many *Bridgerton* scenes, including the Royal Crescent.

### **London Walking Tours, England**

Explore the lesser-known gems of London with a variety of self-guided [walking tours](#) that run daily, each focusing on different themes and locations. Visitors can wander through intriguing neighbourhoods, while uncovering hidden stories and unique architecture that often goes unseen. From the favourite haunts of Oscar Wilde to the chase scenes from the 2018 *Mission: Impossible* film around Blackfriars, there is a tour to suit every interest. Meander at a leisurely pace, pausing

to enjoy local cafes, shops and historical landmarks along the way.

## **Festive food and drink experiences**

*Experience Christmas differently in Britain with a festive afternoon tea on a Routemaster bus or a mince pie-making workshop in an Oxfordshire country hotel for a hands-on culinary experience.*

### **Bridget's Christmas Afternoon Tea Bus Tour, London, England**

*11 November 2024 – 5 January 2025*

See the sights of Britain's capital while sipping tea (or prosecco) and indulging on decadent cakes and other delightful treats aboard this unique [bus tour](#). Set on a classic Routemaster double-decker bus, take a seat on the top deck and enjoy views of attractions like Big Ben, The Houses of Parliament and Hyde Park.

### **Festival meal on the Strathspey Railway, Aviemore, Scotland**

*30 November – 23 December 2024*

Celebrate the festivities with afternoon tea on board a [heritage steam train](#) chugging through the Scottish Highlands. Tuck into festive cakes, home-made scones, and sip sparkling wine while enjoying scenic view of mountains and valleys as the train runs from Aviemore to Broomhill, and back.

### **The Great Christmas Feast, London, England**

Enter the world of Charles Dickens and experience a Victorian Christmas at the [The Great Christmas Feast](#). Travel back in time to the Dickens' home on Christmas Eve 1843 where a festive dinner is woven into a retelling of *A Christmas Carol*. Expect a night of storytelling, live music and a yuletide feast.

## **Traditional winter events**

*As the nights are drawing in, there is a wealth of unique traditional events to discover across Britain. From Stonehaven's mesmerising fireballs to Scotland's Hogmanay celebrations, these age-old customs offer unique ways to experience something quintessentially British.*

### **Stonehaven Fireballs, north-east Scotland**

For an exhilarating New Year's Eve, visitors should head to [Stonehaven](#), south of Aberdeen. At midnight, watch on as locals swing flaming balls on metal chains around their heads while parading up and down the streets. The traditional ceremony dating back centuries lasts approximately 20 minutes and is followed by a fireworks display.

### **New Year's Eve celebrations, London and nationwide**

See in 2025 with lavish fireworks displays around Britain on 31 December. The world-famous [London New Year's Eve fireworks display](#) takes place in Westminster every year. Gather along the River Thames and hear Big Ben ring out at midnight before the sky lights up over the illuminated London Eye.

### **Allendale Tar Bar'l, Northumberland, north-east England**

Another weird and wonderful New Year's Eve tradition is the Allendale [Tar Bar'l](#) in Northumberland, which has been celebrated for over 160 years. See in 2025 while watching 45 local men carry burning whiskey barrels through the town, culminating in a big bonfire in the town centre.

### **Hogmanay, Edinburgh, south-east Scotland**

Or join the Hogmanay celebrations in [Scotland's capital](#). Find everything from Ceilidh dances and live concerts to street parties, silent discos and fireworks displays at midnight. The next day, watch swimmers brave the icy Firth of Forth in the annual Loony Dook dip.

### **Festive shows and spectacles in Britain**

*Capture the magic of the season with carol concerts by candlelight, festive ballet and traditional festive shows...*

### **Advent and Christmas at St Paul's Cathedral, London, England**

[St Paul's Cathedral](#) will once again open its doors to all for a series of Advent and Christmas services in 2024. The season will feature a rich programme of festive music led by the cathedral's renowned choir and candlelit carol services. Highlights include the Advent Procession, Christmas Eve Midnight Mass and family-friendly events throughout December. Most of these popular events are free, but tickets must be booked in advance to secure a place.

### **Hallé Christmas Concerts, Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, north-west England**

*1 December – 4 January*

The Hallé Orchestra returns to [Bridgewater Hall](#) this December with a series of festive Christmas concerts. A key highlight is the Hallé Christmas Family Concert and the orchestral rendering of the popular children's classic, *The Snowman*.

### **The Nutcracker, London Coliseum, England**

*12 December 2024 – 12 January 2025*

This festive season, the English National Ballet presents a brand-new production of [The Nutcracker](#), taking audiences on a magical journey with Clara through Edwardian London and the Land of Sweets. With a choreography by Aaron S. Watkin and Arielle Smith, expect over 100 dancers and musicians, spectacular sets and Tchaikovsky's iconic score performed live by the ENB Philharmonic.

### **Leeds Playhouse Christmas shows, Leeds, northern England**

[Leeds Playhouse](#) is set to bring festive theatre magic this winter with two family-friendly productions. *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* runs from 18 November 2024 to 25 January 2025, offering a journey to C.S Lewis' wintry world of Narnia, while *Mr Snow*, aimed at younger audiences, runs from 30 November 2024 to 4 January 2025.