



# Christmas films that inspire to explore Britain

With heart-warming tales of connection and togetherness, these popular Christmas films not only evoke the holiday spirit, but can inspire travellers to explore Britain's diverse landscapes. From quaint snow-covered cottages to regal central squares, these locations have played starring roles in festive hits and serve up a visual feast alongside the traditional Christmas turkey.

England

Scotland

Wales

December 2024

## ***Love Actually: A London love story***

For his [film director's debut](#), Richard Curtis came up with so many plots that he couldn't choose, so he combined them all into one film. Shot at locations all over London, Curtis' romantic British Christmas classic includes several iconic settings, alongside some of the capital's lesser-known spots. Packed with glistening lights and yuletide cheer, look out for Trafalgar Square and the Millennium Bridge, as well as [Tate Modern](#), housed in the old Bankside Power Station, and the skyscrapers of Canary Wharf. From Gabriel's Wharf on the [South Bank](#) to outside 10 Downing Street, other notable locations include St Luke's Mews in Notting Hill, where Andrew Lincoln's character uses cue cards to profess his love, and the department store Selfridges. It's here the late Alan Rickman waits as Rowan Atkinson takes an age to wrap a necklace.

### ***Last Christmas: Christmas Eve in London***

Set against the vibrant backdrop of London, [Last Christmas](#) weaves a tale of personal growth and romance. Iconic locations like [Covent Garden](#), [Regent Street](#) and Piccadilly Circus come alive with twinkling Christmas lights that capture the city's holiday spirit. Featuring some of the capital's most popular shopping destinations and festive shopfronts, visitors should also look out for Cecil Court, a charming narrow street near Leicester Square packed with bookshops and antiques stores.

### ***Paddington 1, 2 & 3: Heartwarming London adventures***

Though not a traditional Christmas film, [Paddington](#) warms hearts during the festive season. Paddington Station's iconic statue and picturesque backdrop invite travellers to embark on their own adventures. From the leafy streets of North London to manor house grandeur in Hertfordshire, the film's locations inspire wanderlust. The Notting Hill residence of the Brown family was effectively portrayed in [Primrose Hill](#) (close to [London Zoo](#) and [Camden Lock](#)). [Hatfield House](#) in Hertfordshire played the role of the interior corridors of the Geographers Guild. Just in time for the release of the new *Paddington in Peru* movie on 8 November, fans can now journey through Paddington's iconic stories at the brand new [Paddington Bear Experience](#) in London. Join the little bear in solving puzzles, complete challenges, and explore themed environments from his world in this interactive adventure.

### ***The Holiday: Rural Surrey in the limelight***

Director Nancy Meyers' hit festive flick [The Holiday](#) uses several idyllic locations to depict the quintessential English country setting where stars Cameron Diaz and Jude Law find romance. The villages of Shere and [Godalming](#) in [Surrey](#), where the British part of the film was shot, look exactly the same in real life as they do on the screen, with cobblestone streets and houses with colourful shutters and moss-covered roofs. Visitors can even enjoy a drink at the historic [White Horse](#) pub in Shere, which featured in several scenes. And while the characterful Rosehill Cottage was only developed for filming, it was inspired by Honeysuckle Cottage in the small picturesque commuter village of [Holmbury St Mary](#).

### ***Nativity: Coventry's comedy gem***

Starring Martin Freeman as a schoolteacher looking to put on an unforgettable Christmas play, this [festive comedy](#) features many locations in director Debbie Isitt's hometown of Coventry, the UK City of Culture in 2021. The historic Spon Street and Priory Street were transformed for filming, with camels seen grazing outside the war damaged ruins of Coventry Cathedral! The film portrays the city's vibrant atmosphere, cultural offerings, and historical attractions, which include the [Belgrade Theatre](#) and the [Herbert Art Gallery and Museum](#).

### ***Bridget Jones' Diary: A Cotswolds love affair, Snowhill, Gloucestershire***

Although primarily set in London, Renee Zellweger's first meeting with Mark Darcy – played by the inimitable Colin Firth – in *Bridget Jones' Diary* is set against the snow-dusted backdrop of the Cotswolds. The village of Snowhill, near Broadway, provided the setting for a party at her parent's home, with the crew using fake snow as filming took place in the middle of summer. Packed with stone cottages and with hills rising up on three sides, the region is known for its unspoilt beauty, whatever the season.

### ***A Christmas Carol: A Victorian ghost tale in Warwick and Shrewsbury***

Warwick's Lord Leycester Hospital takes centre stage in Steven Knight's three-part adaptation of Dickens' [A Christmas Carol](#). This medieval gem, with its exceptional architecture, adds a ghostly charm to the story. Developed in partnership between the BBC and American channel FX, and co-produced by Tom Hardy and Ridley Scott, it mixes one of Dickens' most-loved works with the splendour of Warwick. East London's [Rainham Hall](#), a Grade II Georgian period property in Havering, also features.

The [1984 production of Dickens'](#) classic tale saw the streets of [Shrewsbury](#) transformed into Victorian London. This traditional market town in the heart of Shropshire featured in the opening scenes, and you can still view the grave of Ebenezer Scrooge, played by George C Scott, at St Chad's Church. His name was chiselled into a gravestone prop within the grounds of the distinctive Grade I-listed building that overlooks the Quarry, an area of parkland by the banks of the River Severn, and remains there to this day.

### ***The Princess Switch: Switched Again: Edinburgh and Glasgow's festive fantasy***

Vanessa Hudgens returns in the [sequel](#) to the feel-good 2018 Netflix hit *The Princess Switch*. Scotland provides the backdrop, with the atmospheric surroundings of the 12th century [Glasgow Cathedral](#) and [Mimi's Bakehouse](#) in Leith among the locations transformed into the fictional world of Belgravia for filming. To fully embrace the Christmas spirit and feel like a royal, stay in accommodation like the [Grand Central Hotel](#) in Glasgow, where a harmonious blend of Victorian design and contemporary amenities await. Alternatively, in Glasgow, [One Devonshire Gardens](#), a Hotel Du Vin, is renowned for its exceptional dining experiences. In Edinburgh, travellers can opt for [The Witchery](#), situated just beside [Edinburgh Castle](#), or the [Balmoral Hotel](#), which offers scenic views of the city.

### ***The Downton Abbey Christmas Special: Elegance across Britain***

[Downton Abbey](#) captivates audiences with its depictions of aristocratic life, filmed at iconic British locations like [Highclere Castle](#) in Berkshire, [Alnwick Castle](#) in Northumberland and [Inveraray Castle](#) in the county of Argyll. These settings transport viewers into the grandeur of England and Scotland, where historic castles offer unique experiences. In December, Highclere Castle beckons with an array of [festive events](#), all open for early bookings, while tickets for [The Alnwick Garden Winter Light Trail](#) are now on sale.

### ***Doctor Who TV Series: Welsh wonders***

The landscapes of Wales have played host to the iconic British science fiction TV series, [Doctor Who](#). This popular long-running show has embarked on adventure-packed journeys across the country, especially in the cherished Christmas specials. [Cardiff](#), the vibrant capital of Wales, has emerged as the epicentre of a few *Doctor Who* productions, welcoming the TARDIS to its city streets and parks. Visitors can stroll through the very locations where the Doctor's adventures unfolded, like [Roald Dahl Plass](#) in [Cardiff Bay](#), a public plaza paying homage to writer Roald Dahl. This picturesque setting has graced the screen in multiple *Doctor Who* episodes, as well as the medieval architecture and expansive grounds of the majestic [Caerphilly Castle](#).

### ***Harry Potter: Spell-binding Britain***

Another Christmas favourite, *Harry Potter* has put Britain firmly on the map for film-location hopping. Head to King's Cross station's Platform 9¾, to York's own wonky timber-framed version of Diagon Alley, the giant cauldron located in Wiltshire's [Lacock Abbey](#), and creep around the cloisters of [Gloucestershire Cathedral](#) – the corridors of Hogwarts. Check out Oxford, the 'city of dreaming spires', with the famous [Bodleian Library](#) doubling up as the one at Hogwarts, while the vaulted Divinity School next door became Hogwarts Hospital – admitting students with broomstick injuries and back-firing spells. Budding wizards can also take part in broomstick flying lessons at

Northumberland's [Alwick Castle](#). For a full experience, the [Warner Bros. Studio Tour: The Making of Harry Potter](#) gives fans the opportunity to check out original sets, animatronic creatures and special effects.