

## 10 of Italy's Best Christmas Markets

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Selling everything from local food specialties to woven items to decorations and candles, we put together a selection of some of our favorite markets in all of Italy to get in the holiday spirit.

Due to its proximity to Austria and Germany, the Trentino-Alto Adige region has a long tradition of Christmas markets. However, from Northern Italy down the peninsula to Sicily, the festive atmosphere spreads throughout the country. Here are some of the most popular, all offering local handicrafts, seasonal food and wine, and, most of all, Christmas cheer. With gift ideas for everyone and fun activities for all ages, these markets are perfect for shopping and having a jolly good time.

### **Bressanone, South Tyrol, Trentino-Alto Adige** **11/25—01/06**

Centered around the venerable Cathedral, amidst centuries-old buildings, the markets here truly capture the magic of Advent. The Cathedral's 800-year-old Gothic cloister lends a unique aura



matched with the multimedia music and light show. Taste Valle Isarco's specialties, share a carriage ride, or splurge on the traditional handicrafts, like carved wooden figures, candles, and glass and ceramic souvenirs.

### **Merano, South Tyrol, Trentino Alto Adige**

**11/25—01/06**

Known for being a city of relaxation, it's only fitting that this year's theme of the Merano markets is "Enjoyment and Recreation." The whole town is embellished for the season, and in the central square you can watch figure skating shows or hit the ice yourself. Afterwards, warm up with a cup of tea or mulled wine in the heated stalls, while admiring the backdrop of snow tipped mountains. The products on deck range from toys to knitted goods to fresh pastries.

### **Bassano del Grappa, Veneto**

**11/22—12/28**

Housed in charming, little wooden chalets, these markets take over the whole town. Located in three different piazzas, Piazza Garibaldi, Piazza Montevecchio, and Piazza Libertà, they offer handicrafts, food, and festive gifts. Hop on the Lilliputian train and chug throughout the city, but get off at the Piazza Libertà for a ride on the antique carousel. If you visit on the weekend, keep your eyes out for Father Christmas and his elves.

### **Milano, Lombardia**

**12/7—12/9**

The city of Milan celebrates the feast of its patron saint, Sant Ambroeuus (Milanese dialect for Sant'Ambrogio), annually on December 7. And the Milanese love Christmas. So as a means to get in the holiday spirit while honoring the 4th century archbishop, they start the festivities early with a fair known as [Oh Bej! Oh Bej!](#) [2] Taking the form of street markets arranged around the Basilica of Sant'Ambrogio, they offer everything from antique stalls and buskers to roast chestnuts and candy floss. This three-day celebration is a great way to get some Christmas shopping done early.

### **Santa Maria Maggiore, Piemonte**

**12/09—12/11**

Be sure to mark your calendars for Piedmont's biggest Christmas market, only one-weekend long. For the occasion, more than 200 exhibitors will display their crafts and homemade specialties. The craftsmen even open the doors of the workshops for a behind-the-scenes look, allowing everyone to get in touch with the traditions of the Viegazo Valley. Between the splendid decorations, the Christmas carolers, and the food, including 'stincheèt' - a thin sheet of flour cooked on a stove topped with butter and a pinch of salt - it's an event not to miss.

### **Firenze, Toscana**

**11/30—12/18**

There are many Christmas markets in Florence, but the biggest one is located in the beautiful Piazza di Santa Croce. Inspired by the tradition of the German city of Heidelberg, the 55 wooden huts house a mixture of Italian and German delicacies and other unique gifts. This year, for the first time, a monastery from [Belarus](#) [3] will attend the event to sell its holiday handicrafts. Of course the children will enjoy the decorations and illuminations, but the carousel is usually their favorite.

### **Roma, Lazio**

**12/01—01/06**

The Eternal City's most famous markets are in the Piazza Navona, built on the site of the Stadium of Domitian and now home to three spectacular fountains. During the season, the square transforms into a bustling, colorful shopping spot, selling nativity scenes and Christmas sweets, like biscuits and nougat. Wander around and watch the street artists and acrobats and of course, visit Santa Claus. But be sure to come back on January 6, when Befana hands out presents to good kids and coal to the



not-so-good ones.

### **Napoli, Campania** **12/05—12/28**

More than a market, Via San Gregorio Armeno is dedicated all year long to its presepi (nativity scenes), but the narrow alley truly comes alive during December. Crammed full of stalls, the artisans are known for their beautiful handcrafted figurines, as Neapolitans make the best in all of Italy. Buzzing with locals and tourists alike, the nativity scene statuettes, made from wax, bronze, cork, and clay, are definitely the most popular purchases. However, the figures on sale also encompass athletes, politicians, and international stars.

### **Cagliari, Sardegna** **12/15—12/23**

Every year, Cagliari hosts a 12-day Christmas fair, which showcases products like local food and wine, toys, and handmade crafts. The markets in the Piazza del Carmine and on Corso Vittorio Emanuele are a great opportunity to experience the best of "Made in Sardinia" and the perfect place to taste Sardinian Christmas sweets, like pabassinas - iced raisin-nut cookies with anise seeds and a citrus flavor. So, though the region is better known as a summer beach destination, the capital sure knows how to embrace the holiday season.

### **Taormina, Sicilia** **12/01—1/06**

Taormina, though beautiful all year round, becomes even more magical in Christmas time, and it's a great spot for those who prefer mild temperatures to snow. During December and through Epiphany, a folkloric atmosphere takes over the small, hilltop town with concerts, exhibitions, nativity scenes, and historical enactments. The stands are full of sweets, like Sicilian cakes, crafts, and everything you need to decorate for the season.

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- [1] <http://newsite.iitaly.org/files/christmasmarketsjpg>
- [2] <http://dreamofitaly.com/event/milan-oh-bej-oh-bej-fair/>
- [3] <http://www.belarus.by/en/>