

# XMAS TRAVEL DEMAND JUMPS, SO BOOK EARLY



Munich Christmas markets (image courtesy of Trafalgar Tours)

Interest in Christmas travel packages is soaring, with more Australians seeking to escape for the festive period. Whether it is indulging in a traditional European white Christmas, or experiencing the wilds of Africa – agents should urge their clients to book early.

By Jenny Burns

**B**OOK early is the message from wholesalers selling Christmas tours. The number of Australians looking to celebrate the festive season abroad has risen rapidly over the years, and with the slump in international travel now seemingly a distant memory, even more Australians are likely to head overseas this year.

Bentours still has availability on Christmas tours to Scandinavia, but agents are urged to book quickly.

“Our Christmas packages are selling very well and for this reason we do suggest agents book as quickly as they can,” said Bentours business head Jeremy Hearst.

According to Albatross Travel managing director, Euan Landsborough, some of Albatross Travel’s Christmas

tours are already full. “The rest, as usual, have guaranteed departures,” he said.

Landsborough said European White Christmas Tours were not just winter tours but magical, festive trips with a distinct, unique appeal.

“They often fulfil a dream. To better sell one of these magical packages agents need to understand how the key decision makers in most households think about Christmas and what they really want, just once, out of life. Who are these decision makers? They are the mothers, wives, cooks and bottle washers.

“And what they often say is I want a real Christmas. I want to relax and savour the true festive spirit, to really laugh and enjoy good company and let someone else do all the planning and hard work. I want time to dress for dinner and let someone else set the

table and serve me. I want a Christmas I’ll always remember. One with some style, romance and nostalgia.

“I would suggest agents explain to their clients that Christmas tours offer travellers these experiences. I suggest they shortlist a few of their clients they can suggest this to and thus plant the seed for future business – be it for this Christmas or the next.”

Insight Vacations’ national marketing manager, Maureen Van Metter, said experiencing a traditional white Christmas in Europe has never been more popular with Australian travellers.

“To meet this growing demand, this year we have extended the number of departures which include Christmas market visits, plus have added an entirely new itinerary, the eight-day ‘German Christmas Markets.’

“In addition to experiencing Europe during this special time, travelling throughout the winter period offers significant savings for travellers. This year our itineraries are up to 27 per cent less expensive than comparable summer tours.”

Trafalgar Tours managing director Paul McGrath says Germany, Switzerland, Cologne and Austria all offer great traditional Christmas experiences which are a definite drawcard for Australians wanting to enjoy an iconic European white Christmas.

“Winter in Europe with Trafalgar attracts a broad clientele, a real mixture of travellers from couples to families to single travellers looking to enjoy the camaraderie of a group holiday. Clients looking for the ultimate traditional Christmas experience should certainly consider the European Christmas markets. Not only do they offer fantastic shopping, with unique regional arts, crafts, decorations and gifts, but also a vast array of traditional foods and a warm festive atmosphere.”

Globus Family of Brands marketing manager Australasia, Christian Schweitzer, said the company will feature its largest Christmas tour program ever in 2011, offering travellers more choice of tours from Globus, Cosmos and Avalon Waterways.

“The numbers of Australian travellers visiting Europe at Christmas time has been increasing for the past few years, with more travellers keen to experience the traditions and novelty of a white Christmas,” he said.








“The spectacular Christmas markets also offer a great opportunity to finish off the Christmas shopping for friends and family before returning home.”



# Make this Christmas White

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Nuremberg Christmas market

## Trafalgar promotes Christmas holidays

TRAFALGAR'S Christmas Spectacular program, featured in its 2010/11 Autumn, Winter and Spring brochure, features four Christmas holidays as well as Trafalgar and *The Australian Women's Weekly* "Christmas in Europe" reader tour.

This year Trafalgar is also offering a second tour with the *Weekly*, the inaugural "Christmas in the Canadian Rockies".

Trafalgar managing director Paul McGrath said all previous tours with *The Australian Women's Weekly* had been a great success.

"Drawing on the overwhelming popularity of our original Christmas reader tour, we have designed a Canadian tour exclusively for *The Australian Women's Weekly* offering its readers another opportunity to experience a Christmas like no other," he said.

The 15-day "Christmas in the Canadian

Rockies" tour is priced from \$5199 per person twin share (land only) while a single supplement is available from \$2800 and travellers under the age of 17 pay \$2800.

The tour departs Vancouver on December 19 and travels to Victoria, Jasper, Banff, Lake Louise and Kelowna with visits to Yoho, Glacier and Mt Revelstoke national parks.

McGrath said the "Christmas in Europe" tour was a best seller and historically sold out quickly. The 20-day "Christmas in Europe" reader tour costs from \$6899 per person, twin share (land only).

Both tours include first class accommodation, all on-tour transport, breakfast daily, most other meals including Christmas and New Year dinners, locally guided sightseeing and a six month subscription to *The Australian Women's Weekly*.

## Albatross festive tours embrace 'romantic and nostalgic locations'

THE Albatross Travel Group is this year offering a range of 14 dedicated Christmas and New Year tours that focus on romantic Germany, Switzerland, the Austrian Tyrol, Slovenia, Italy and the United Kingdom. The tours are included in the 48-page European White Christmas and New Year brochure.

"Our tours have been designed specifically for the Australian festive traveller wanting to be released and looked after in those incredibly romantic and nostalgic locations," said Albatross Travel managing director, Euan Landsborough.

"Each tour usually starts with an in-depth visits to the more major cities but then, as Christmas approaches, they escape to the forest covered mountains, medieval castles and nostalgic, selected (first class) smaller hotels for four, five or seven nights to capture that essential European winter magic.

"That means enjoying sleigh rides and festive Christmas markets with clusters of wooden stalls selling mulled wine, ginger biscuits, hand crafted toys and decorations in cobble stoned medieval villages, chestnuts roasting on an open fire, carols, brass bands and crowds of locals intent on laughter and happiness."

Tours include the "Swiss Christmas Break" package which is available for travel from December 21 to 28 and sees the group celebrate Christmas in an old wooden chalet style hotel in the Bernese Oberland.

The tour includes train rides through mountains and lakes of Switzerland together with seven nights' accommodation with private facilities, a Swiss rail pass including excursions to Luzern, Bern and to Lake Geneva, buffet breakfast daily, four-course evening dinners, Christmas Eve dinner and lunch on Christmas Day. The tour costs \$1649 per person (twin share).

## Get your skates on for Christmas in Lapland

For the ultimate festive surprise, Bentours has pulled its 2010 Christmas in Lapland tours out of the stocking, where families can visit the home of Santa on a mesmerising escape to the snow-filled wonderland.

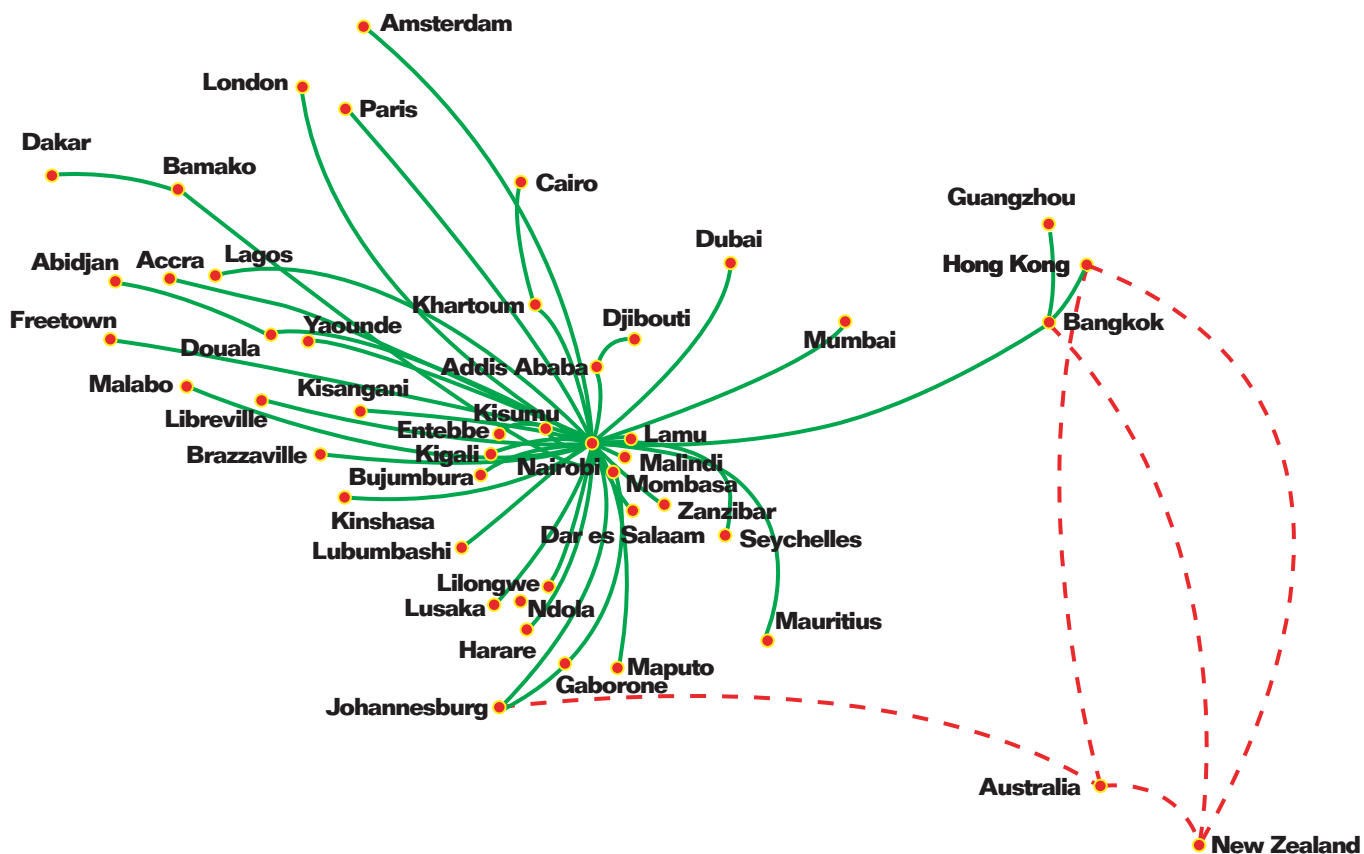


Santa's guest list fills up every year so get your skates on and book now to avoid missing out!

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## christmasHolidays

# Bentours packages Xmas touring in Santa's 'homeland'



BENTOURS is offering a number of tours ideal for the Christmas holiday period with several visiting Santa's homeland including "Christmas in Lapland".

Starting on December 23, the five-day tour through Santa's home includes a traditional Finnish Christmas dinner on December 24 and the opportunity to attend a Lutheran church service on Christmas morning.

Other highlights include a sleigh ride with Santa's reindeers, snow mobile rides, tobogganing and ice fishing.

The package is available with three levels of accommodation and starts from \$2560 per person (twin share) based on accommodation at the Sokos Vaakuna. Bentours is also offering optional excursions such as a visit to a husky musher's camp

and an igloo dinner on December 26.

Lapland, the Northern Lights and cruising on Norway's Fjords are amongst the highlights of the "Follow the Lights Lapland Cruise" tour. The tour which runs 12 days from Helsinki to Bergen and 13 days in the reverse direction includes visits to Rovaniemi and Inari and a six-day Hurtigruten Norwegian Coastal Voyage cruise.

Tours cover such topics as reindeer farming and century's old Sami culture and a visit to Santa Claus' home.

Bentours business head, Jeremy Hearst, said Christmas was a magical time to cruise in Scandinavia and special programs were provided daily on all ships cruising from December 21 to New Year's Eve.

## Kenya offers holiday experiences with a difference

KENYA Airways is urging agents to consider Kenya as a Christmas holiday destination.

Kenya has much to offer all year around, but the Christmas holiday period is especially appealing, said Kenya Airways general manager, Peter McKeon.

No other country on earth can offer visitors as much to see and do. Within Kenya's borders there are national parks full of big game, timeless cultures unchanged by the modern world, pristine beaches and coral reef, equatorial forests and snow-capped mountains, searing deserts and cool highland

retreats. The recreational opportunities are endless with everything from swimming to mountain trekking. And of course there are the ever popular wildlife safaris. The annual migration of wildebeest, zebra and gazelle across the Serengeti-Mara ecosystem is extraordinary.

McKeon said the airline offered competitive and flexible fares from Australia via Bangkok to Nairobi and beyond with partners Qantas and Thai International, and via Hong Kong to Nairobi with Cathay Pacific and Qantas.

■ APT has produced its first brochure combining White Christmas tours for Europe and Canada/Alaska.

APT's Debra Fox said the combined brochure meets the demand from customers exploring the idea of a white Christmas in the northern hemisphere.

"This one brochure covers two of the most popular destinations for fully-inclusive packaged white Christmas experiences," she said.

The brochure launches with a fly free to Europe deal (\$800 airline taxes is extra) for November 21 and December

3 departures of the 15-day river cruises between Amsterdam and Budapest, featuring Europe's Christmas markets.

■ VIKING River Cruises is predicting its "Danube Holiday Explorer" will be very popular with Australians looking to experience the magic and festivities of Europe at Christmas.

"Passengers on the eight-day cruise will experience the beauty of Austria and Germany while mingling with locals as they celebrate the Christmas season," said Viking's Teresia Fors.

The cruise costs from \$2550 per person (twin share) based on booking and payment by July 31.

■ AVALON Waterways is offering several European Christmas cruises.

These include the 12-day "Christmas-time in Germany and Austria" which is priced from \$4212 per person (twin share) including gratuities and port charges. The cruise travels between Frankfurt and Vienna and features guided sightseeing in Miltenberg, Würzburg, Bamberg, Nuremberg, Munich, Regensburg and Melk.