

The Best Places to Spend Christmas

The "most wonderful time of the year" is quickly approaching, and even though holiday celebrations might look different this year due to the [coronavirus pandemic](#), you can still find the festive spirit in destinations across the United States and the world. The best Christmas vacations offer cheerful decorations and festive events that capture the holiday spirit, all set against the backdrop of a beautiful destination. And with many ideal holiday destinations located across the country, you're never further than a [road trip](#) from a perfect [December vacation](#).

Rovaniemi, Finland

Why not spend the holidays in Santa Claus's hometown? Rovaniemi, the capital of [Finnish Lapland](#), is home to Santa Claus Village and SantaPark, where you'll find the man himself plus reindeer and more festive activities. During the winter, the arctic landscapes are covered in snow, and you'll even have a chance to spot the [northern lights](#). There are several hotels with the famous [glass igloos accommodations](#), offering stunning views of the northern lights from your own room.



New York, New York

There's truly nothing like Christmas in New York City. Seeing the city decorated with [winkling lights](#) and impressive trees as you shop for last-minute gifts or sip hot cocoa is really an experience everyone should have at least once in their life. Beloved holiday traditions, like the Christmas Spectacular Starring the Radio City Rockettes and holiday markets, are back for the 2021 season, so it might be the perfect time to spend Christmas in the city.



London, United Kingdom

There's just something magical about spending the holidays in London. Between the glittering lights, holiday markets, themed pop-up bars, and ice skating outside the Natural History Museum, the city really comes alive during the holiday season. Stay at [The Lanesborough, London](#) for a truly festive experience – the luxurious hotel has beautiful holiday decorations, a festive afternoon tea in collaboration with popular Peggy Porschen, and even private, in-suite shopping from Harvey Nichols.



Where is the real St. Nicholas buried? It's a mystery.

The story of how St. Nicholas became the red-suited chimney hopper we know as Santa is fascinating in its own right. But the final chapter of the holy man's own story is equally intriguing—and controversial.

Though his remains are venerated worldwide, nobody knows for certain where he rests in peace—or more accurately, in pieces. In the early and medieval Christian tradition, the mortal remains of popular saints were scattered among various churches in various places to be displayed as sacred relics.

Dating and DNA tests may allow scientists to piece together which relics are actually from the same man. In 2017 Oxford University scholars announced a first step in that direction: A radiocarbon study that shows a bone long thought to be a St. Nicholas relic and housed in St. Martha of Bethany Church in Morton Grove, Illinois, does in fact date to the time of the saint's death.

The Greek bishop, known as a patron of children, likely died in A.D. 343 in Myra, a small town now called Demre in modern-day Turkey. Though the year of his death is disputed, the day is not—December 6, now celebrated as St. Nicholas Day.

"Many relics that we study turn out to date to a period somewhat later than the historic attestation would suggest," archaeological dating expert Tom Higham said in a statement. "This bone fragment, in contrast, suggests that we could possibly be looking at remains from St Nicholas himself."

Here are a few more places where the real Father Christmas could be buried.

Bari, Italy

St. Nicholas's remains, or most of them, may have been spirited from what's now Turkey to the Adriatic port city of Bari in 1087, according to Reverend Michael Witzak, professor of liturgical studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

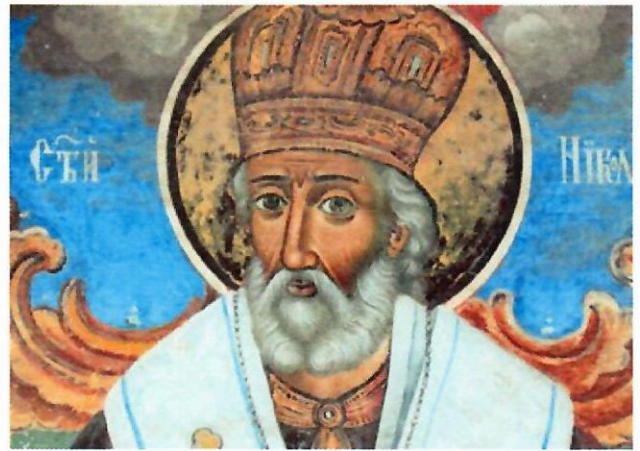
"During the time of the Crusades, when the Byzantine Empire was slowly eroding, a group of Italians removed his body from Myra and brought it to Bari with the goal of safeguarding a number of the relics from the Turks who really didn't have any interest in Christian saints," Witzak says.

These remains still lie in the Basilica of Saint Nicholas, a destination for both Orthodox Christian and Roman Catholic pilgrims. Each May a festival celebrates their homecoming, re-enacted by priests who arrive by boat with an icon-style painting of the saint.

Adam English, author of the book *The Saint Who Would Be Santa Claus*, notes the people who moved the bones documented their journey in detail.

"We have a pretty good amount of confidence that these are bones of Nicholas in Bari. But of course, even that can be contested," adds English, a Christian theologian and philosopher at Campbell University in North Carolina.

Intriguingly, the Bari relics include only a partial pelvis. So it's also anatomically possible that the Illinois fragment is part of the same skeleton.



Venice, Italy

Bari isn't the only Italian city with a claim to the saint's body parts. Venice's Church of St. Nicholas in the Lido contains small bone fragments from the saint that Venetian sailors claimed to have unearthed in 1099 at the nearly abandoned church in Myra.

The story goes that the Bari sailors who took the remains from Turkey in left some of them at the Church of St. Nicholas. "It was essentially a holy robbery. They feared not only the locals coming after them, but also the bones and power of Nicholas. So, it seems they left some small fragments behind, which the Venetians took later." (See [amazing pictures of cathedrals and churches worldwide.](#))

Decades ago, anatomy professor Luigi Martino examined the Bari and Venice bones and concluded that they could have come from the same skeleton. But that explanation hasn't entirely extinguished the controversy.

Demre, Turkey

For more than seven centuries after St. Nicholas's death, until his remains were allegedly taken to Italy, Christians had no doubt where his corpse was located: The Cathedral of Myra, where the saint had served the faithful.

In October 2017, Turkish authorities suggested that St. Nicholas may still be in Demre after all. Various types of imaging, they claim, revealed an unexplored chamber beneath the mosaic floors of the city's ancient St. Nicholas Church, leading some Turkish archaeologists to hypothesize it could include Santa's tomb.

Campbell University's English is skeptical. For one, nothing has been found, he says. What's more, "the church has been sacked and abandoned and rebuilt, so it has a long, checkered history with many gaps," he says.

"What's left in the church to find if they ever do open up that space? Who knows?"





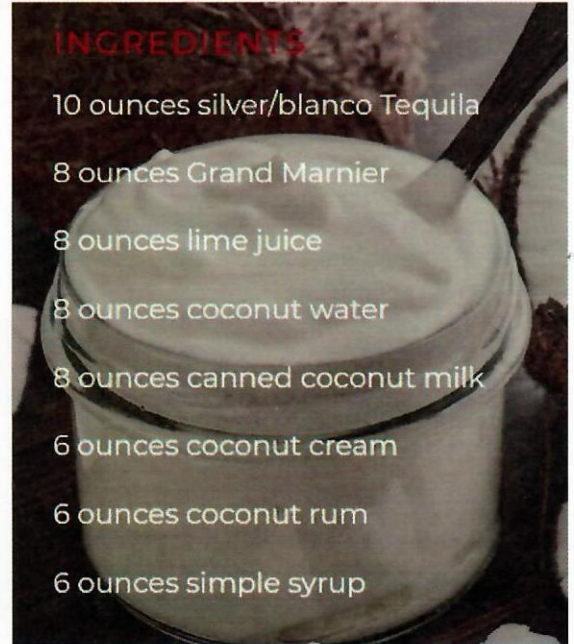
Make this holiday margarita for 2 or for a whole crowd (it looks so festive in a punch bowl!) and put a little tropical in your winter cocktail. This really is one of the best Christmas tequila cocktails you'll ever taste and it's easy to make. You will definitely be in the holiday

DIRECTIONS

1. Mix all ingredients together well with a whisk
2. Taste; add more simple syrup if needed
3. Garnish with Rosemary sprigs and/or fresh cranberries
4. Sing your favorite holiday song and enjoy!

White Christmas Margarita

~FROM STAR CLIPPERS' GALLEY~



INGREDIENTS

- 10 ounces silver/blanco Tequila
- 8 ounces Grand Marnier
- 8 ounces lime juice
- 8 ounces coconut water
- 8 ounces canned coconut milk
- 6 ounces coconut cream
- 6 ounces coconut rum
- 6 ounces simple syrup

THERE MAY SOON BE A NEW OPTION TO RENEW YOUR PASSPORT



Travelers looking to renew their passports may soon be able to do so online after President Joe Biden signed an executive order requiring the government to design a new digital system.

The [order](#), which Biden signed on Monday, mandates that the secretary of state "design and deliver a new online passport renewal experience that does not require any physical documents to be mailed."

Currently, the most convenient way to [renew a passport is by mail](#). Travelers may use this service if they were at least 16 years old when they got their last [passport](#), it is undamaged, and it was issued in the last 15 years. To renew by mail, the passport must either show the traveler's current name or they must have documentation proving their name change.

Travelers must then send in a form, which they can find [online](#), along with a new photo, a check, and their old passport.

Earlier this year, [passport applications saw an immense backlog](#), taking up to 18 weeks to process and mail out (12 weeks for processing and up to six weeks for mailing). That has since dropped to eight to 11 weeks for normal processing and five to seven weeks for [expedited processing](#), which costs an additional \$60, [according to the State Department](#).

These Are the Most Expensive Cities in the World Right Now

City living isn't cheap, no matter where you do it. Some cities, though, are more expensive than others. If you're looking for a new place to put down roots or just want to know that things could be worse, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) has you covered. The company just released its annual Worldwide Cost of Living index, a list of the most expensive cities in the world.

In putting together its list, EIU looked at the cost of living in 173 cities by comparing more than 200 everyday products and services. According to its findings, the prices of goods and services increased by almost 3.5% from 2020, which it says is the highest rate of inflation in five years.

EIU's list features some well-known pricey places, but also some new ones. Tel Aviv, Israel, for example, topped the list for the first time ever. The city climbed five places in the rankings from its previous spot. Paris and Singapore, on the other hand, fell in the rankings. Only two American cities cracked the top 10, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, they were New York City and Los Angeles.

Here are the top 10 most expensive cities in the world in 2021:

- | | |
|--------------|------------------|
| 1. Tel Aviv | 6. New York City |
| 2. Paris | 7. Geneva |
| 3. Singapore | 8. Copenhagen |
| 4. Zurich | 9. Los Angeles |
| 5. Hong Kong | 10. Osaka |



Vegas is getting ready to ring in the new year

The city kept things low-key last New Year's Eve but is ready to celebrate it in style again this Dec. 31.

 PRINCESS

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Mexican Riviera

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Promises something for everyone

Enjoy a special sail-away celebration. The Love Boat trivia and games, Gavin's shows on Movies Under the Stars, themed cocktails, Q&A and photos with Jill Whelan and other cast members and more.



The Love Boat soon will be making another run

Set a course for adventure on our seven-day, Love Boat-themed cruise to the Mexican Riviera, roundtrip from Los Angeles. We'll be honoring the life and legacy of Gavin MacLeod who played "Captain Stubing" and served as our brand ambassador for more than 35 years. Enjoy special activities hosted by our Celebrations Ambassador Jill Whelan and fellow cast members Bernie Kopell ("Doc"), Ted Lange ("Isaac"), Fred Grandy ("Gopher") and Cynthia Lauren Tewes ("Julie McCoy").

Pizza Candy Cane Crescent

One 8-ounce tube refrigerated rolled crescent dough

1/3 cup prepared pizza sauce, plus more for dipping

1/2 cup shredded mozzarella

24 slices pepperoni

2 tablespoons sesame seeds

2 large fresh basil leaves



- Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Unroll the crescent dough and separate the triangles along the perforated lines. Cut the triangles in half lengthwise so that you have 16 triangles.
- Overlap 2 pieces of parchment to make a 24-inch-long piece. Arrange the crescent triangles lengthwise in a long row on top of the parchment, with the pointy ends upright and the flat ends overlapping just slightly (the row should be as long as the parchment paper). Gently press the overlapping pieces of dough together so to seal.
- Spread the pizza sauce over the thickest part of the strip of dough (about 1 1/2-inches). Sprinkle the cheese over the sauce and top with a layer of pepperoni.

Fold the pointy ends of the dough over top of the pepperoni tucking them under the dough to enclose the filling. Gently curve the top end of the dough to the left to make a candy cane shape that is the length of the back of a baking sheet. Transfer the parchment onto the back of a baking sheet. Sprinkle the sesame seeds on top of the dough. Bake until the dough is golden brown and the cheese is melted, 8 to 10 minutes. Tuck the basil leaves into the candy cane to make a bow. Serve with more sauce for dipping.

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