



# White Christmas

Families wanting a break to remember? Time to sell a Santa trip, says Laura French

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**T**here's no denying it – Christmas is magical, regardless of age.

While we all know that circumnavigating the world in one night isn't quite in the realms of possibility, there's still something enchanting about seeing Santa and his elves in the North Pole surrounded by snowy slopes, twinkling fairy lights and wild pine forests.

Which is probably why Santa

breaks are still so popular, appealing to parents as much as to kids, with a string of unforgettable Arctic experiences that range from bounding through snowy tracks on skidoos to baking gingerbread with the big man.

We've scoured the operators to find some of the best, with breaks from a day to a week – many of which can still be booked this year.

## ▶ SEE SANTA IN A GLASS IGLOO

The tiny, peaceful village of Luosto is exactly what you'd expect of the snowy reaches of far north Finnish Lapland, surrounded by deep green pines and shimmering lakes that make up Pyhä-Luosto National Park.

Best Served Scandinavia offers a four-day package in the village staying at Santa's Hotel Aurora, including two nights in a room

with its own private sauna and one in a glass-domed igloo. Here guests can witness the northern lights dancing above them from the warmth of their bed – there's an alert system so they know when to look – while Santa pops by on a private visit. They'll also have the option to try the likes of ice fishing, snowmobiling or snowshoeing, plus visit a reindeer farm or embark on a sled ride amid the snow-laden firs that



**FAR RIGHT:**  
Snowmobiling

**RIGHT:**  
Hotel Levi  
Panorama &  
Apartments



**EXPERT TIPS**

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Hannah Eldridge,  
agency sales  
executive at  
Santa's Lapland,  
gives her top tips  
for selling Santa-  
themed breaks

- ▶ It's nigh-on impossible to visit Santa independently, so highlight this to clients and encourage them to book through a tour operator.
- ▶ Check what's included in the package; a decent operator will think of everything, including clothing.
- ▶ Don't sell to families with kids under three. We'd recommend for kids up to 10.
- ▶ Encourage clients to book early to get the trip they want.
- ▶ Look for local UK airport departure points.
- ▶ Market these breaks to grandparents – they're popular for multi-generational groups.



➔ lace the area; from £1,130 per adult and £490 per child, including flights to Rovaniemi, return transfers and reindeer excursion.

▶ **SKI IN LEVI**

Ski fans looking to combine the slopes with some festive cheer need look no further than Levi, where the annual Christmas market brings local handicrafts, traditional Lappish food (reindeer hotdogs included) and mulled wine to snow-covered, fairy-lit wooden huts.

Beyond the market there's a jam-packed programme of Christmassy shenanigans plus plenty in the way of cross-country and downhill skiing.

Inghams offers three and four-night Santa breaks here for those looking

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**Tui offers an 'elf school' excursion, taking families on a husky ride to meet Santa's elves and hear stories by the campfire**

to take in the best of it, throwing in gingerbread baking at one of Santa's workshops, a Christmas-themed buffet with Santa and friends and a souvenir (from November 25 to December 19), plus optional ski lessons available as an add-on.

Three nights at the four-star Hotel

Levi Panorama & Apartments, new to the operator this year, start at £699 per person half-board, including return flights from Newcastle on December 2.

▶ **GO TO ELF SCHOOL**

Do you have families who want to learn a little? Tui offers an 'elf school' excursion in the ski resort of Ruka (two hours' drive east of Rovaniemi), taking kids and parents on a husky ride to meet Santa's elves and hear stories by the campfire, before enjoying a tobogganing lesson, a traditional lunch, games with the elves and, of course, a visit to see Santa.

Three nights' B&B at the four-star Cumulus Resort Rukahovi costs from £709, including activities and flights from Gatwick on December 9. ➔





**Families meet Saint Nicholas following a 'search for Santa' down a secret path illuminated with twinkling lights**

LEFT: Elves on Santa's Lapland tour

**EXPLORE ONE OF FINLAND'S MOST-REMOTE VILLAGES**

Tucked away in the northeast corner of Finland is the remote, minuscule village of Kilpisjärvi, located on the official Northern Lights Route. Transun has just added the resort to its collection, bringing an alternative option to the table for those who want a proper Arctic escape in silent surrounds - think remote log cabins set on the banks of the frozen Lake Kilpisjärvi.

"The area is shrouded in myths and legends and offers some of the best log cabin accommodation in Lapland," says James Crawshaw, commercial director for the operator. Transun offers three and four-night, full-board breaks with snowmobiling, husky sledding and a reindeer sleigh ride, as well as a private family meeting with Santa.

Prices are from £1,269 per

adult and £1,179 per child (with a limited number of half-price child places available), including thermal suits, snow boots and charter flights from regional UK airports.

**VISIT SANTA IN A DAY**

Clients short on time but big on ambition? Suggest Newmarket Holidays' day trip to Swedish Lapland, which features a special Christmas-themed chartered flight to Pajala airport, where families are met by a Sami and taken to the rather magical Santa's village. Snowmobiling, husky sledding and a reindeer sleigh ride through the forest are all on the agenda, as is a private family meeting with Saint Nicholas following a 'search for Santa' down a secret path illuminated with twinkling lights.

They'll also get a two-course lunch of hot soup and Swedish meatballs, plus a hot berry

juice to drink and cosy thermal clothes, all in a day's play.

"It's a great product to sell to people looking for a multigenerational experience," says head of trade sales Richard Forde, who says most bookings are for groups of six or more. It costs from £499 for adults and £449 for children aged two to 15.

**GO ON A NEW YEAR BREAK**

Christmas might be over by the end of December, but the magic doesn't have to be. Santa's Lapland offers post-Christmas versions of its Santa's Magic break, taking families to the mountain resort of Saariselkä - a hub for winter sports, 150 miles north of the Arctic Circle in Finland - with activities including snow hockey, ice fishing, tandem skiing, mini skidoo rides, kick-sledding and plenty more.

Kids will be able to thank Mr

**Lapland in luxury**

At the heart of Finland's Christmas scene is Rovaniemi, capital of Lapland and home of Santa Claus Village. Here ice sculptures, snowmobile tours, reindeer rides, restaurants and souvenir shops cluster around the central attraction, the Santa Claus Office, glowing amid a magical, snowy scene that looks like it's come straight off a Christmas card.

There are plenty of places to stay in the region but for something extra special, suggest

the Arctic TreeHouse Hotel, a collection of luxury Scandi-style stilted 'GlassHouses' and suites nestled among the trees, offering panoramic views over the snow-covered forest.

Carrier combines a two-night stay at the hotel with a gingerbread masterclass with Santa, private excursions including snowmobiling, aurora hunting and a husky safari, from £20,930 for a family of four, with flights from Gatwick on December 23.

Claus and his helpers in a private meet and greet, stretching out the fun beyond Boxing Day, and round it all off with a memorable gala dinner.

The three-day trip costs from £1,209 per person based on two

adults and two children aged two to 10 years departing December 27, 2019, including activities, thermal clothing, half-board accommodation and return flights to Ivalo from a choice of UK airports.

**GET CRAFTY**

For those looking to linger longer, Activities Abroad (part of Artisan Travel) has the answer - a week-long, action-packed stay at a quaint, cosy cottage in Jeris over the Christmas period.

Alongside a private visit to

see Santa on Christmas Eve in a hidden cabin in the forest, there's an impressive string of activities thrown in, ranging from gift-making to cookie-decorating, treasure hunts to snow games (think ice hockey and toboggan racing) plus husky safaris, a

snowmobile trip, a Finnish spa experience and lunch at the ice restaurant.

Prices start at £2,395 per adult and £1,395 per child, including activities, flights from London and seven nights' full-board, departing December 23.



EXPERIENCE THE MAGIC OF SANTA IN LAPLAND

Are your customers heading to Lapland this winter? For the ultimate family break, book with Best Served Scandinavia.

Prices from £995 per child & £1,295 per adult incl. flights, transfers, 3 nights' accommodation, all meals, a host of fun-packed winter activities & a private audience with Santa.

020 7838 5833 | best-served.co.uk

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