



FESTIVE TOURS

From Christmas market breaks to winter-sun escapes, **Laura French** rounds up tours that make the festive season fizz



ICELAND NORTHERN LIGHTS & GOLDEN CIRCLE

For a true winter adventure, it's hard to beat seeing the aurora's ribbons of colour dance across the sky. Combine it with caving through lava tunnels, horse riding among Icelandic landscapes, witnessing the Great Geysir and hiking on the Sólheimajökull glacier and you have a glimpse into G Adventures' five-day Iceland Northern Lights & Golden Circle tour, which also takes in Reykjavik, Thingvellir National Park, Skógafoss and more.

Book it: From £1,053 for a January 1 departure, including accommodation, transport and some meals. gadventures.com

YORK CHRISTMAS MARKET & GRASSINGTON DICKENSIAN FESTIVAL

For clients looking not to travel too far, there are plenty of reasons to stay put for the Christmas season, with markets back in many UK cities. Among them are Leeds, home of the Christkindlmarkt – selling German handicrafts and souvenirs among scents of gluhwein and gingerbread – and York, whose St Nicholas Christmas Festival (pictured) sees Alpine chalets line the cobbled streets. Both feature on this Leger Holidays tour, along with a festive visit to the village of Grassington.

Book it: From £279, including coach travel and three nights' B&B, departing December 3. leger.co.uk



EGYPT FAMILY HOLIDAY

Winter doesn't have to mean snow, so if the kids missed out on sunshine during the school summer holidays, look to this family-friendly Egypt tour. It whisks guests from the markets of Cairo and Pyramids of Giza to Luxor and the Valley of the Kings. Highlights include a visit to the Egyptian Museum, a tour of the Abu Simbel temples and a felucca boat ride.

Book it: From £1,265 for a December 18-25 trip, including accommodation, transport, some meals and sleeper train. intrepidtravel.com

PRAGUE CHRISTMAS MARKETS

The fairytale streets of Prague enchant at any time of year, but in December they really come into their own, with the Old Town Square and Wenceslas Square transformed into a wintry wonderland selling handmade gifts, warming grog and Czech delicacies. Newmarket Holidays pairs three nights here with a guided walking tour of the city and the option to hop over to Dresden for more festive fare, with a tour manager on hand throughout to give guests tips on the best spots.

Book it: From £515 including accommodation, transfers and flights departing November 26. newmarketholidays.co.uk



FAMILY SLOVAKIA WINTER ADVENTURE

For those wanting to get a little more active, suggest this adventure-focused trip through Poland and Slovakia from Explore, which packs in cross-country skiing, night-time sledding, snowshoeing, ice skating, hiking, Slovakian cooking and more over eight active days. Other adventures include learning rescue techniques in an avalanche situation, downhill skiing from the highest ski resort in Slovakia and a visit to Krakow to see festive stalls filling its medieval lanes.

Book it: Celebrate Christmas in Krakow with a December 19 departure from £1,425, with accommodation, transport and some meals. explore.co.uk



PICTURES: Shutterstock/cge2010; Explore/Caroline Haines; G Adventures Inc; Leger Holidays; Intrepid Travel