

WIN AT WINTER ADVENTURES

WORDS SUE WHITE

MEET SANTA IN FINLAND

When dreaming of a magical winter escape with kids, at some point your thoughts will turn to Santa. The 'real' Santa that is, in Lapland, Finland. Many families know how magical the experience can be, so you will need book 12 months in advance (more, if possible). Scrutinise your potential itinerary to ensure experiences like sleigh rides are included, and confirm just how much time you'll get with the jolly bearded man himself - these trips don't come cheap, so you'll want to dot the i's.

MAKE TIME FOR MARKETS

Christmas markets can provide a 'White Christmas' experience without the expense of a trip to Lapland. European cities like Prague, Krakow, Strasbourg and Vienna offer a healthy dose of a winter wonderland via lights, gluhwein, reindeer rides and more. Canada does a good job with Christmas markets too - Montreal and Quebec City in particular. The action can begin as early as December 1, which is helpful if you have other commitments on December 25.

FIND SOME SNOW

While options in New South Wales, Victoria and even New Zealand can satisfy your snow desires in July or August, if you've missed this season, start looking north for a winter adventure in the Aussie summer. Japan's famous powder is a winner, but if you travel further north don't limit yourself to the known entities. Skiing in Zagreb, Croatia, is far cheaper than France, while North America has hundreds of small ski resorts that are far quieter than the big names like Whistler or Aspen.

BOARD A TRAIN

Older kids will enjoy sleeping on The Ghan from Adelaide to Darwin (take plenty of board games for the three-day trip). Thailand offers a shorter option - bunks are available on the 12(ish)-hour journey from Bangkok to Chiang Mai. Or plan ahead and try Switzerland's Bernina Express in the Aussie summer; viewing the Swiss Alps and its glaciers from one of the cosy carriages in winter is often likened to travelling in a snow dome. **ft**



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