



The main event

See Frankfurt at its most festive
on a Christmas markets break

@Katie_McGonagle

PICTURE: TOURISMUS + CONGRESS GMBH FRANKFURT AM MAIN; NEWMARKET HOLIDAYS; GNTB/JOCHEN KEUTE

“It’s like the City of London, but without the interesting bits,” said a friend when I asked what to expect from Frankfurt. Despite being a total Germanophile and able to talk at length about pretty much every other part of the country, he couldn’t find a thing to recommend this centre of German business.

“If you told a German person you were going to Frankfurt for a holiday, they would ask why on earth you’re going there,” he added.

Well, now I’ve got an answer: because this banking hub is beginning to throw off

its reputation for being, frankly, a bit dull, with a burgeoning foodie scene and a thriving community of young designers gradually giving the city a trendier vibe more akin to Dalston or Brooklyn than London’s financial heart.

And if it weren’t clear by now that Frankfurters have more of a sense of fun than they’re given credit for, a couple of days exploring the city’s kitsch Christmas markets certainly confirms it. It may not be one of the city’s new attractions – the earliest recorded Christmas market in Frankfurt was held in 1393 – but it’s definitely changed with the times. This year, the Christmas market runs from November 26 to December 22.



A couple of days exploring the kitsch Christmas markets confirms Frankfurters have a sense of fun

MARKET FORCES

After a session baking crescent-shaped vanilla kipferl biscuits and gingerbread-like spekulatius under the expert eye of Jumeirah Frankfurt’s pastry chef, I was feeling more festive than my natural Scrooge-like

tendencies would normally allow.

Yet even without that head start, it wouldn’t have taken long to get into the Christmas spirit with a first stop at Frankfurt’s ‘Pink Market’. The market’s gay area sparkles with hot-pink Christmas trees and is, I’m reliably informed, home to the market’s best mulled wine, short of the stalls manned by wine dealers and local vineyards.

Just a couple of euros is enough for a ladleful from a steaming vat of red or white, spicing the air with the fragrance of cinnamon and cloves. The mulled cider smells just as enticing and there are options with rum, calvados and even Jägermeister. But I’m afraid I →

FAST FACT

Osprey Holidays has reported a 20% rise in Christmas market bookings over the past five years



A new perspective...

the **FINEST** **ESCORTED** **SHORT BREAKS** *by EUROSTAR* *or AIR*

- ❖ SHORT BREAKS BY EUROSTAR WITH OVER 50 REGIONAL DEPARTURES
- ❖ CITY BREAKS BY AIR INCLUDING ROME, KRAKOW & VENICE
- ❖ CITY BREAKS BY EUROSTAR INCLUDING PARIS, BRUGES & NORMANDY

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT
AGENCY SALES ON 01283 744307
AGENCYSALES@RIVIERATRAVEL.CO.UK



3 OF THE BEST

GERMAN MARKETS



BERLIN has 80 Christmas markets, plus street entertainers, a toboggan run and an ice rink. SuperBreak features 36 Berlin hotels. Two nights at its latest addition, the Quentin Boutique, starts at £150 in December, including flights.



COLOGNE boasts some of Germany's prettiest markets, with its Gothic cathedral and labyrinthine Old Town providing beautifully festive backdrops.

It's new to Newmarket Holidays' programme, with a four-day markets tour and flights starting at £399.



DRESDEN, Germany's oldest market, is the birthplace of the Dresden Christstollen cake and is best known for hand-made gifts and decorations. It's included on Insight Vacation's eight-day Christmas Markets of Germany tour, from £1,179.

➔ draw the line at the more unusual concoctions – hot mojitos or hot caipirinhas are a step too far.

▶ GIFTS GALORE

The sizeable market square at the Römerberg is every bit as Christmassy as you'd expect. Backed by the neo-Gothic facade of the city hall, it's jam-packed with timber-framed stalls selling wooden toys, tree decorations, jars full to the brim with old-fashioned boiled sweets or towering stacks of stollen cakes wrapped up for Christmas Eve.

Yet as pretty as it is by day, the market comes to life from mid-afternoon, when it's dark enough for the 30m tree to twinkle with fairy lights and the fairground-style carousel to reawaken that sense of nostalgia that goes hand-in-hand with the season.

Just as indispensable are the plentiful treats on offer, so I'd recommend arriving with a hearty appetite. Choose from huge sides of salmon and pans of chestnuts grilling above roaring flames, tinfoil-wrapped baked potatoes and griddles stacked with schnitzel and spicy bratwurst.

Alternatively, stop for a sugar boost from the trays of sticky pretzels, brightly iced gingerbread and paper bags full of sugared almonds from one of Frankfurt's most famous stalls, selling 50 almond varieties ranging from vanilla and rhubarb to less-traditional flavours such




as Red Bull and Oreo cookies. In fact, spend more than a couple of days here and the post-Christmas diet will need to start early.

Despite its staggering array of goodies and gifts, there isn't a hint of commercialisation here. Historically, the market was only for citizens of Frankfurt to sell their wares, and it still feels rooted in the locality, with everything from traditional styles of earthenware on sale to the 300-year-old Honey House on St Paul's Square, a wooden cottage selling local honey and beeswax candles.

▶ HIPSTER CHIC

The market might be the thing to bring visitors, but it's not the only attraction in town. Frankfurt isn't a city packed with sights, but its compact centre offers enough to occupy an afternoon or two.

The skyscraper-dominated skyline and position on the banks of the River Main have earned 

RIGHT:
Frankfurt
Christmas
market



ASK THE EXPERT



Ross Merchant, reservations consultant, Osprey Holidays: "The best time to book Christmas market breaks for your customer is now – with fantastic hotel availability and ideal prices on flights, you'll be sure to grab a magical break at a fraction of the cost."

osprey  **holidays**

The City Break Experts

Prague • Berlin • Paris • Venice • Rome • Amsterdam • Reykjavik



Call 0131 243 8098

book@ospreyholidays.com | www.ospreyholidays.com



→ it the nickname 'Mainhattan', and while the financial district is unexciting architecturally, heading up to the observation deck of the 56-floor Main Tower offers a view far beyond the centre (€6.50 adults, €4.50 concessions).

It's also home to an impressive number of museums, filling the cultural void created by a relative lack of historic buildings, many of which were flattened by Second World War bombing raids.

Most, including the famous Städel Museum, are clustered around Museumsufer on the banks of the Main (two-day combination tickets covering 34 museums cost €18). My personal favourite was the MMK Museum of Modern Art, as interesting for its wedge-shaped architecture – dubbed the 'piece of cake' museum by locals – as the Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol artworks inside. Anyone with a penchant for modern

design will also enjoy the quirky shops along the same street.

And if all that browsing works up an appetite, this area of the city also boasts some trendy eateries reflecting the city's cosmopolitan mix. There's every chance of stumbling across a pop-up restaurant or supper club, but for a more permanent option, recommend the pastrami sandwich from Maxie Eisen (it's attracted praise from as far afield as the *New York Times*), east African cuisine at Im Herzen Afrikas (literally, in the heart of Africa), Moroccan fare at cosy cafe Picknickbank, or fine dining at Heimat. Alternatively, cross the Iron Bridge to the district of Sachsenhausen, an area of cider pubs and restaurants serving traditional Frankfurt dishes, or head back to the market for your choice of festive fare.

frankfurt-tourismus.de



Discover Experience Explore

MALTA & GOZO

CLASSIC
COLLECTION
— HOLIDAYS —



Fly direct from up to 19 UK airports

For more information on holidays to the Maltese Islands
Call 0800 008 7288 or visit www.classic-collection.co.uk

✓ Tried & Tested

JUMEIRAH FRANKFURT

There's no chance of getting lost when staying at this city centre hotel: its 96m-high, 25-floor tower stands out even in a city full of skyscrapers. Yet while it has all the bells and whistles you'd expect of the luxury Dubai-based brand – cutting-edge in-room technology, Bose sound systems, Nespresso machines in every room, and that's barely scratching the surface – there's a warmth and sense of hospitality that belies its imposing size.

The 218 spacious rooms feel incredibly luxurious, with super king-sized beds, huge standalone bathtubs and dual sinks with TV screens mounted into the bathroom mirrors.

But it's the low-tech touches such as paintings by a local artist in every room and the bee colony on the roof (a pet project of the executive chef) producing honey for the restaurant and spa that really give it character.

The Talise spa has a sauna and separate steam rooms for men and women, with direct access to a Fitness First gym in the neighbouring shopping mall. The fact that it offers spa treatments for couples, kids and mums-to-be, plus accommodation packages



themed around food, Christmas markets or year-round shopping at nearby Chic Outlet Wertheim Village, shows this hotel is leading the charge in proving Frankfurt is more than just a place to do business.

Book it: Jumeirah Frankfurt has a one-night festive season package starting at €279 for two sharing a deluxe room, including breakfast and a three-course set meal in signature restaurant Max on One. jumeirah.com



Tested by Katie McGonagle