

Best European Cities to Visit in Winter

1. Rome, Italy

Ah, Roma! With the Catholic Church at its side, European civilization revolved around Rome for thousands of years. The iconic city has served as the backdrop for everything from the 1953 film “Roman Holiday” to “The Lizzie McGuire Movie.” Tourists come from all over the world for the ruins, the church, the art and the food. So what are you waiting for? Grab your bags and head to the land of pasta, prosciutto and pizza.

Popular Attractions: Vatican City, The Colosseum

Under the Radar: The Roman Ghetto is home to a unique and ancient Jewish population, with a distinct dialect and style of worship. Go for the history, stay for the bakeries.

Tips: Eat Gelato. Every Gelato. All the Gelato.

2. Paris, France

Oscar Wilde once said that “When good Americans die, they go to Paris.” Why wait? Move Paris to the top of your bucket list. It's the city of love, the height of European romance. The picturesque cityscape evokes images of streetlight glances and romantic strolls along the River Seine. Whether you come to Paris for the wine, the art or the high fashion, you're sure to fall in love with what is universally recognized as one of the most famous cities in Europe.

Popular Attractions: The Sun Palace, The Eiffel Tower, The Louvre (free for students Fridays after 4:30pm)

Under the Radar: Live your "Whip It" fantasy and roller skate around the city for 3 hours every Friday night with Pari Roller

Tips: Leave room in your suitcase for all those French souvenirs

3. Barcelona, Spain

An unrepressed celebration of Catalan culture. An otherworldly metropolis that moves to the beat of its own drum. Located on the coast of Catalonia, Barcelona is full of personality and mystery. Lined with living statues, the pedestrian street La Rambla divides the Gothic Quarter from El Raval, an infamous neighborhood known for its cabarets, nightlife and diversity. Set out to see the Magic Fountain of Montju and lose yourself among the mosaic walls and peculiar sculptures on the way.

Popular Attractions: La Sagrada Família monument, Park Güell, Picasso Museum

Under the Radar: Watch the sunset from Montjuïc Castle for only 5€

Tips: Sometimes locals call the city “Barna.” Don’t call it by its international abbreviation, “Barsa,” as locals only use that term to refer to their professional football club

4. London, United Kingdom

London is the New York City of Europe...sort of. As the home of the Beatles, the historic capital of the British Empire, and half the inspiration for “A Tale of Two Cities,” London can’t really be compared. Make sure you have time to dive into this physically and culturally humongous city (without breaking the bank). Retrace history in one of the most popular cities in Europe, and don't forget to look out the window of your double decker bus as you cross the River Thames!

Popular Attractions: The British Museum, Buckingham Palace, Tower of London, Platform 9 ³/₄

Under the Radar: Spend a day walking along the lively South Bank

Tips: The London Underground can be confusing af. Carry a map, but don't be afraid to get lost. #notallhowwander

5. Amsterdam, Netherlands

Amsterdam is the quintessential kick-off to any student’s European adventure. Many people believe the city has two sides (riding a yellow bicycle over a picturesque bridge vs smoking the devil's lettuce at a Red Light District coffeeshop), but to the people of the Netherlands, these things coexist naturally. There’s plenty to do in Amsterdam, but, as with any city, use your judgement. Also, be sure to spend some time by the water—in 2010 the Canal Belt neighborhoods were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Popular Attractions: Red Light District, Van Gogh Museum, Anne Frank's House

Under the Radar: Check out Bloemenmarkt, the daily floating flower market

Tips: Do not bring your camera to the Red Light District

6. Dublin, Ireland

In Dublin, you’ll discover the resilient spirit of the Irish people. Take the bus to Kilmainham Gaol and stand in the courtyard where Joseph Plunkett, a leader of the 1916 Easter uprising, was executed, having only just married his fiancée in the dim prison chapel. It’s a somber reminder of the country’s struggle for independence. For a lighter evening, you can head to any of Dublin's nightclubs, like Spirit or POD, for a night of "mighty craic." If you find yourself falling in love with the emerald island (as many who come here do), remember that it’s an excellent place to study or work abroad.

Popular Attractions: The Guinness Factory and Storehouse, Book of Kells (at Trinity College), Temple Bar

Under the Radar: Explore the city's wide variety of green spaces, including Phoenix Park, which houses the Dublin Zoo, and the unusual Dillon Garden.

Tips: While Northern Ireland uses the pound, the rest of the island uses the Euro, so keep an eye on the exchange rates

7. Athens, Greece

Legend has it that Athena, the goddess of wisdom, competed with Poseidon to see who could better serve as the city's patron god. When Athena presented the Athenian people with an Olive Tree, a symbol of peace and prosperity, they chose her as their city's namesake. With thriving nightlife, the Monastiraki Flea Market and plenty of hip cafes, it seems like she's still watching over the ancient civilization today. Come explore the ancient landmarks of the Acropolis, one of the most famous places in Europe.

Popular Attractions: Athena's Temple, Theatre of Dionysos

Under the Radar: Neighborhoods like Psirri and Exarchia are great if you like political street art

Tips: Consider saving some money by backpacking Athens

8. Edinburgh, Scotland

Scotland's capital is less daunting than London, but equally dynamic. Tourists typically flock to the Royal Mile (a stone road that delivers kilts and street art with old-timey flair), so take your time exploring the Edinburgh Castle and University of Edinburgh campus. If you high-key feel like you're at Hogwarts, you're not wrong. J.K. Rowling wrote Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone from the back room of The Elephant House, a cafe tucked inside Edinburgh's Old Town. Rowling has said that whenever she got stuck, she drew inspiration from the magical city around her.

Popular Attractions: Arthur's Seat, Greyfriars Kirkyard, Camera Obscura

Under the Radar: Check out the art and jewelry at the Grass Market near the castle

Tips: When compared to London's gigantic museums, the Scottish National Gallery may seem negligible, but don't write it off just yet! They showcase incredible pieces by Botticelli, Van Gogh, Magritte and more.

9. Istanbul, Turkey

Istanbul, formerly known as Constantinople, has long served as the bridge between Europe and the east, where cultures collide and evolve into an exciting new world. With a seamless blend of

bars, bazaars, galleries and bathhouses, the capital of the former Ottoman Empire is quickly becoming one of the hippest cities to visit in Europe. In the words of 1989 rock band They Might Be Giants: "Why did Constantinople get the works? That's nobody's business but the Turks."

Popular Attractions: Aya Sofya Monument, Grand Bazaar, İstanbul Archaeology Museums

Under the Radar: Climb up slopes of Ottoman tombstones to reach the Pierre Loti Café, named after the French naval officer and novelist, for the best views of the Golden Horn (the world's largest natural harbor)

Tips: Bring sunscreen

10. Milan, Italy

If Rome tells the story of Europe's past, then Milan represents the future. Here, locals hustle past grey limestone buildings and graffitied walls, rushing to work with an espresso in hand. At the outset, Milan seems to lack the historic romance of Old Italy, the leisurely pacing of Florence and Venice. The urban atmosphere catches many travellers off guard, but don't be fooled -- this city has everything: Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper," a bar designed by filmmaker Wes Anderson and a 120 ft tall "Tree of Life" sculpture made of steel and wood for the 2015 World Expo. Take your time discovering the many layers of Milan, traversing the cobbled streets of the world's most famous shopping district, Quadrilatero d'oro della moda (Golden Fashion Quad) and watching a fascinating new opera premiere at La Scala.

Popular Attractions: Quadrilatero d'oro, The Duomo, Brera Art Gallery

Under the Radar: If you liked the sound of Italian graffiti, visit the funky design district of Isola, recognized as the heart of Milani street art

Tips: Milan is home to two of the country's major football teams, so try to catch a game before you leave.

By StudentUniverse