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Paris is magnificent, it is impressive, it is exceptional, and it is superlative. It has been called many things, but quaint is not usually one of them. But when I first set out to find places within the city that felt a little like a Hallmark Christmas movie could be filmed here, Paris surprised even me by how many places make you completely forget that you are in a glamorous capital city and which feel village-like, charming, cozy and so Christmassy. So, forget the garish red lights on the Champs Elysées and the enormous Christmas tree in Galleries Lafayette (or just take a quick peek while you're here) and follow me to some quaint little places, which exude Christmas cheer just like a Hallmark movie. Photo Credit: Amelie Dupont / Paris Tourism 1. Montmartre The most obvious location is Montmartre, which is not only a village within the city but simply bursting with Hallmark charm. The many stairs leading up to the hilly neighborhood, the small squares, the cobbled streets, and the many charming restaurants, all under the imposing, and shining white Sacre Coeur church, make this quarter look as if it was a movie set. And many times it has been, just think of Amelie (2001), proving that Paris could not be more quaint if it tried. Twinkling lights are strung across all the streets, café terraces have their heaters on, or provide blankets, so you can enjoy the Christmas hustle and bustle with a mulled wine or chocolat chaud in hand, and you will notice that, apart from the visitors, everybody seems to know each other. Just like in a proper village, making it one of the friendliest neighborhoods in Paris. Pro Tip: Check out Sacre Coeur's timetable to enjoy a Christmas concert or sermon inside the church. Photo Credit: Daniel Thierry / Paris Tourism 2. Saint-Germain-des-Prés One of my favorite neighborhoods, especially in winter, is Saint-Germain-des-Prés, with its many wonderful café terraces, Christmas market stalls nestled alongside the beautiful church, the pretty Christmas lights, and the many individual, small boutiques off the main drag to the sides of Boulevard St-Germain, which all have decorated shop windows and cute presents to buy. Pop into the old Ladurée store for some macaron treats and a warm chocolate drink, and meander down to the cutesy square Rue de Furstenberg, and then onward along Rue Saint André-des-Arts and the tiny, cobbled street of Cour du Commerce Saint-André. Pro Tip: Don't miss the covered St-Germain-des-Prés market which has many stalls where you can enjoy a platter of something nice accompanied by a glass of wine. Rrainbow / Shutterstock.com 3. The Latin Quarter Another village within the city is the ancient Latin Quarter dating back to Roman times, complete with a Roman amphitheater. It is a neighborhood full of students, with the Sorbonne at the heart of it, of lovely market streets, such as Rue Mouffetard, and it is where Netflix's Emily in Paris lived, in Place de l'Estrapade. Tiny restaurants, cobbled streets, and palatable history all around make for a lovely place to linger and imagine yourself starring in a Hallmark Christmas movie. Walk along the decorated Pantheon area, stroll down the ancient Rue de la Montagne Ste Geneviève, and sit on the steps where Midnight in Paris (2011) was filmed. Walk up to Place de la Contrescarpe and warm up over a mulled wine. Pro Tip: For a charming place to eat in the Latin Quarter, head to Le Poldiro which comes with tiled floors and red-checked napkins, and serves simple, traditional meals with a modern twist. El ghissassi / Shutterstock.com Not unlike Montmartre, La Butte aux Cailles is another separate quarter on a hill, which feels as if it is not part of Paris at all. The hilly neighborhood was named for Pierre Caille but means, literally translated, Quail Hill. It is famous for its many murals and street art, its historic Art Deco swimming baths, and its village charm. Many small, family-run restaurants and boutiques complete the Hallmark charm, and, when you add twinkling lights, it gets even quainter. Next to the swimming pool lies the small square Place Paul Verlaine, which hosts a market of some sort most days of the week and adds Christmas cheer to it in December. Pro Tip: Look out for the golden plaques on the ground, which signify the course of the subterranean River Bièvre, which was once a major river in Paris. Petr Kovalenkov / Shutterstock.com 5. Ile De Saint-Louis The island of St. Louis, the second of the two large islands in the Seine in the center of Paris, offers a charming backdrop any time of the year: small lanes, impressive, yet quaint residences, cutesy individual shops, and lovely café terraces with views of Notre Dame across the river, and which are just as inviting in winter as in summer. Those terraces are decorated with green Christmas trimmings, pretty lights, and window decorations, and are charming beyond belief. Pro Tip: Despite it being winter, you will simply have to try the famous Berthillon ice cream that originates on this city island. To make it more suitable for the season, just choose a Christmas flavor, such as cinnamon. pixels outloud / Shutterstock.com 6. Place Dauphine Hopping across to the next island, the Ile de la Cité, the one with Notre Dame on it, and you will find what is probably my favorite square in Paris: Place Dauphine. It is one of the most picturesque squares, if more of a triangle, and in summer filled with people from the neighborhood playing boules or morkky, a game with numbered wooden stamps, in the shade, while in winter with the trees void of leaves, the square shines in it true beauty, revealing the architecture. Lined with tiny restaurants, one better than the next, this is a spot to linger and soak up the atmosphere. Pro Tip: On the same island, you'll find the stunning La Chapelle, with its superb stained-glass windows, and a wonderful setting for a Christmas concert. Photo Credit: Ulrike Lemmin-Woolfrey 7. Galerie Vivienne Flanked by the lovely Place des Victoires and the gorgeous Palais-Royal Garden, Galerie Vivienne is probably my favorite Christmassy spot in Paris. Twinkling lights and decorations are everywhere, and the already gorgeous, covered shopping arcade dating to 1823, is at its prettiest at Christmastime. Utterly photogenic, totally romantic, beautiful, and inviting, if you can't see a happy ending happening right here, then I don't know where you could. The small boutiques, the old bookstore, the gorgeous floor tiles, and the lovely restaurants invite you to stay awhile, and, if it is chilly and wintery outside, why not? Pro Tip: While you are there, for once, forgo the traditional French brasseries and have lunch at the Italian restaurant Daroco, at the far end of the arcade. The two-story-high dining area is simply stunning, as is the Pizza al Tartufo. Trust me. Photo Credit: Ulrike Lemmin-Woolfrey 8. Avenue Montaigne Forget the Champs-Elysées and walk down Avenue Montaigne instead. Stretching from the Champs-Elysées all the way down to Pont de l'Alma, this street has, in my opinion, the prettiest Christmas lights in the entire city and serves up romance as only Paris can. Add luxury boutiques, from Chanel to Dior, and Balenciaga to Prada with its decorated windows, and the lovely little Theatre des Champs Elysées, and you have a lovely, warm Christmas feeling emanating through the street. But the prettiest sight of them all, a perfect movie setting if you've ever seen one, is the Plaza Athénée Hotel. Each window and balcony is decorated, the entrance is flanked by twinkling Christmas trees, and the entire building is shimmering. Inside the magic continues, in the courtyard and the lobby, and even if your budget might not allow you to stay at the hotel, pop in for a hot chocolate for a Christmas cheer overload. Pro Tip: If you are into celebrity spotting, peek into Restaurant l'Avenue, between the Chanel boutique and the hotel: pop stars and models like to be seen here. Have lunch instead in the café inside the Petit Palais, just a couple of hundred feet down the road. Jerome LABOUIRYIE / Shutterstock.com 9. Passy Passy is one of my favorite residential neighborhoods in Paris, and one which a tourist hardly ever sets foot in. A true village, with the added bonus of having the Eiffel Tower peek at you from nearly every corner, the stunning Haussmannian buildings, and the proximity of the Seine, together with a couple of bustling markets and many cafes, all decorated at Christmas, make this a secret Hallmark movie set worth searching out. Pro Tip: Walk down Rue L'Annonciation, a pedestrianized market street and head straight to number 29, where you find the tiny Pâtisserie Aux Merveilleux de Fred. They sell little, sweet clouds of meringue, not surprisingly called Les Merveilleux, "the marvelous ones." These are so scrumptious that you will go back for more. Oliverouge 3 / Shutterstock.com 10. Le Marais Last, but certainly not least, is the Marais. This old Jewish quarter is surprisingly Christmassy, and so friendly and cozy, that I am seriously amazed that no Hallmark Christmas movie characters have been spotted here. Especially the little square by Rue des Hospitaliers Saint Genevieve, off Rue des Rosiers, with the two cutesy restaurants Chez Marianne and Le Voltigeur, famous for its gigantic teddy bears, is so charming, it (nearly) hurts. Pro Tip: In an area full of great restaurants, sometimes it just takes one thing to make you stand out, and that is the traditional onion soup served at Bar du Marché des Blancs Manteaux. Perfect for warming up after a Christmassy winter stroll. The classic Londoner's lament - usually felt when boarding the same bus as an entire class of primary school students or braving the sweaty crush of the Central Line in mid-July - is that peace and tranquillity could be yours only if you got out of the city. But you don't actually have to travel that far for a bit of peace and quiet if you know where to look. Unlike other cities with their fancy-pants grid systems and forward planning, London's haphazard history - it was abandoned as a city in 410AD and only started growing 900 years later - has created plenty of unexpected micro-pockets of calm. It's less ordered, but it's also a lot of fun to explore. With the city's population forever on the rise, the quest to find places that allow you to draw a breath and get a bit of respite from the relentless onslaught has never been more important. There are tons to choose from, but here's our pick of the best:By entering your email address you agree to our Terms of Use and Privacy Policy and consent to receive emails from Time Out about news, events, offers and partner promotions. Awesome, you're subscribed!Thanks for subscribing! 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