



# Festive family days out

From mesmerising light trails to vibrant markets and interactive experiences, these unforgettable days out will light up your Christmas calendar. Words: Anna Paul

A CRACKING DAY OUT AT LONGLEAT/LLOYD WINTERS

**Christmas at Blenheim Palace**  
Blenheim Palace's Illuminated Trail remains one of the UK's most awe-inspiring, with impressive new installations from local and international artists transforming the UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Great Skate also returns this year, a covered ice rink set against the incredible backdrop of the Christmas market and twinkling lights. After marvelling at the light trail, finish your day by gliding around the sparkling rink and warming up with a hot chocolate or mulled wine. Inside the palace, visitors can go on an adventure through the State Rooms with an immersive Palace of Oz experience. Open until 3 January 2026. Outdoor trail tickets start from £24 for adults and £18 for children. Free entry for kids aged under two. [tickets.blenheimpalace.com](https://tickets.blenheimpalace.com)

**St Albans Christmas Cracker**  
Kick off the festive season in St Albans at the Christmas Cracker festival on 16 November, featuring live music, glittering lights, festival stalls and a free Santa's grotto. If you can't make it, head to St Albans Cathedral on 13 December for the Live Nativity Trail (12-3pm) and Carols on the Hour (11am-5pm), both free. Finally, A Christmas Carol returns to the walled Vintry Garden, a magical open-air experience that will delight both children and adults alike (from 5-30 December, with tickets from £15). [enjoystalbens.com](https://enjoystalbens.com)

**Chelsea Winter Village**  
Beat the crowds and enjoy an intimate family-friendly day at the Chelsea Winter Village, central London's only festive light trail. Just minutes from Sloane Square,

the mile-long light trail features spectacular large-scale installations and sensory experiences, before leading into a boutique winter village with vintage rides, firepits, street food, live music, apres-ski-style bars, curling and so much more. From 26 November to 28 December, with tickets starting at £15 for adults and £5 for children. [chelseawintervillage.com](https://chelseawintervillage.com)

**Longleat's Festival of Light**  
Get ready for a cracking day out at Longleat's sensational lantern trail experience, themed around 'British Icons'. Meet the illuminated characters of Wallace & Gromit, Shaun the Sheep and others, and traverse through cultural landmarks across the country, all reimagined as lanterns — from Stonehenge to the Giant's Causeway. Day tickets include access to the Wiltshire estate's safari, offering the chance to see the animals that live there, including tigers, lions, hippos and more. Until 11 January 2026. Day tickets start at £49.95 for adults and £37.45 for children. Under twos go free. [longleat.co.uk](https://longleat.co.uk)

**The Polar Express at South Devon Railway**  
All aboard the most magical journey of the season, the Polar Express. This immersive train journey takes passengers on a festive adventure where they'll meet characters from the film, as well as the main man himself, Father Christmas. Tickets include a hot chocolate, a cookie and even a gift from Santa. Just don't forget your festive pyjamas! Jump on between 28 November and 23 December, with prices starting at £40.95. [southdevonrailway.thepolarexpressride.com](https://southdevonrailway.thepolarexpressride.com)

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\*£12 DISCOUNT ONLY AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS JOINING BY ANNUAL DIRECT DEBIT WHO HAVEN'T HELD A DIRECT DEBIT MEMBERSHIP IN THE LAST YEAR. THEATRE PICASSO IS PRESENTED IN THE GEORGE ECONOMOU GALLERY. IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WHITE & CASE. ALSO SUPPORTED BY THE HUO FAMILY FOUNDATION. WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM THE THEATRE PICASSO EXHIBITION SUPPORTERS CIRCLE, TATE AMERICAS FOUNDATION AND TATE MEMBERS. STAGED BY WU TSANG AND ENRIQUE FUENTE BLANCA WITH THE COLLABORATION OF EXHIBITION DESIGNER LUCIE REBEYROL FROM THE STUDIO ROLL.