

## 4 BEST TRAVEL DESTINATIONS FOR DECEMBER 2021

Celebrate your new year in The Arctic Circle

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**Arctic Circle**, parallel, or line of latitude around the Earth, at approximately 66°30' N. Because of the Earth's inclination of about 23 1/2° to the vertical, it marks the southern limit of the area within which, for one day or more each year, the Sun does not set (about June 21) or rise (about December 21). The length of continuous day or night increases northward from one day on the Arctic Circle to six months at the North Pole. The Antarctic Circle is the southern counterpart of the Arctic Circle, where on any given date conditions of daylight or darkness are exactly opposite.



### 4 COUNTRIES WITH 5-STAR HOTEL FACILITIES

- **Glass Resort, Rovaniemi, Finland:** It provides premium accommodation in Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi, Lapland, Finland. Glass Resort is nestled amidst the natural beauty of the Arctic Circle, far away from everyday worries. Yet the activities, attractions and services of Santa Claus Village lie only a minute's walk away. Pure northern nature unfolds from the doorstep in Glass Resort: its soothing effect can be felt not only outdoors, but inside the





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apartments through the large window walls. The world's cleanest air has been measured in Lapland.

- **Icehotel, Sweden:** Every year, when Torne River turns to ice, a new Icehotel is created in the small village of Jukkasjärvi in the north of Sweden. The ice of the river transforms to design and architecture - an ephemeral art project and the world's first, and largest hotel built of snow and ice.



- **Funken Lodge, Svalbard, Norway:** A boutique hotel with stunning views over Longyearbyen and the nearby glaciers. Here you can unwind after a long day of thrilling experiences on Svalbard. Enjoy exclusive food and drinks from an international cuisine, in a relaxed and luxurious atmosphere.



- **Borg Hotel, Reykjavik, Iceland:** Dignified and imposing, Hotel Borg overlooks the beautiful square of Austurvöllur, in the heart of Reykjavik, across from Althingi, the Icelandic parliament and the cathedral. The Borg, which has become one of Reykjavik's landmarks, is conveniently located within walking distance of variety of restaurants, businesses, souvenir shops, art galleries and specialty shops. The hotel's 99 rooms and suites, with Art Deco style throughout, are elegantly appointed yet offer an extensive array of modern amenities.





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### ACTIVITIES / SIGHT SEEING

- **Northern Lights:** Witnessing this is a transformational bucket-list experience that many people wait years—even a lifetime—to see, since the conditions need to be perfect for this spectacular display to take place. December through March is usually the best time to observe this elusive natural phenomenon. The best places in the world are usually closer to the Arctic Circle, including Alaska, Canada, Iceland, Greenland, Norway, Sweden and Finland. In order to increase your chances of seeing this spectacle, you should time your trip to a new moon. Since the northern lights can appear—and disappear—in a snap, it's important to be on alert throughout the night. Another tip: Weather is also key. Try to find a place where the sky is clear, dark and free of clouds.



- **Glimpse of Polar Bear:** A list of the best things to see in the Arctic wouldn't be complete with an ode to the magnificent polar bear. Scarce by nature and decreasing in numbers, it can be difficult to spot one. Thrust into the spotlight as the symbol of the devastating effects of climate change, polar bears have become the world's best known endangered animals and more and more travellers are now lining up to see them – while they still can. Nicknamed the “Polar Bear Capital of the World”, Canada's small community of Churchill is the best place in the world to spot these elusive creatures, but you can also witness polar bears in their native habitat in Svalbard (Norway), Kaktovik (Alaska), Wrangel Island (Russia), and Greenland. If you do manage to catch a glimpse of the incredible creature as it makes its way across its natural home in the Arctic terrain.





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## INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND THEIR CULTURE

One of the Arctic's best kept secrets is its indigenous people, who count for around 10% of an estimated 4 million people that call the Arctic their home. They used to be called Eskimos, which came from a Native American word for 'eater of raw meat'. Now the Arctic people are officially known as the Inuit, which means 'the people', or singularly, Inuk, which means 'the person'. Still surviving today, the admirable Inuit culture has continued its trait of adaptation to their surroundings whilst fully integrating with the local European population. Today, both live in harmony and learn from each other. To be able to experience this is a must-see that you can't put into words. Indigenous peoples of the Arctic have adapted over centuries to a life on ice. Their lifestyle, traditions, economy, and history are tightly linked to one of the harshest environments in the world.

### SNOW ACTIVITIES, ICE FISHING, ICE DIPS, ICELANDIC HORSES, HUSKY SLEDDING

- **Skiing and Snow Shoeing Tours:** These traditional ways of moving on snow are still today the best choice when you like to get close to nature! No matter if you are a beginner or a semi-professional cross country skier, one can find activity as per their level of expertise.
- **Ice Fishing:** on a frozen lake is probably one of the most relaxing winter experiences! Different options are available: Go by car or by snowshoes. Walk on the ice-covered lake, drill a hole in the ice, and start fishing. Of course, they will have something to eat by the warming fire!
- Snowmobiling might get you there faster, but there is nothing more exhilarating or satisfying than mushing your own team of **Huskies** through the frozen wilderness of the Arctic. Once off on your canine-powered thrill ride, the huskies will settle into a steady rhythm and all you will hear is their panting and the rasp of snow beneath the sled's runners. Despite their wild appearance and manic barking prior to departure, the dogs are incredibly affectionate, and you will quickly bond with them.
- Quite simply, the secret of **plunging into icy water** lies in the feeling that surges through your body once you get out of the water. Even though lowering yourself into the water requires a certain amount of courage, the initial shock and momentary loss of feeling in your legs soon pass. As soon as you are back on dry land your circulation kicks in and your body starts to warm up.





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- **The Icelandic Horse** is as local to this volcanic land as its people. It arrived here on the very first ships of the settlers and has, ever since, remained a loyal friend and vital servant. The horse, therefore, holds an incredibly special place in the people's hearts and souls, and if you ever have the honour of meeting a member of its species, you will immediately understand why. Notably more curious, intelligent, and independent than other horse breeds, the Icelandic horse is loved by all.

### FEATURED PRODUCTS

- **Iceland Seafood:** There is a long tradition of fishing in Iceland. We source it sustainably from rich fishing grounds, they take pride in delivering the best possible fish to your plate. Fishing is deeply ingrained in Icelandic culture. Since day one, the fishing grounds have been lifeline. Generation after generation, Icelandic fishermen have battled weather and waves for the catch. Wolffish/Atlantic Catfish, Capelin, and Cod.



- **Iceland North 66 clothing** - 66°North was founded in 1926 by Hans Kristjánsson with the purpose of making protective clothing for Icelandic fishermen and workers braving the North Atlantic elements. Hans Kristjánsson lived in Suðureyri in Súgandafjörður in Westfjords of Iceland where weather conditions were very harsh and suitable clothing was simply a matter of life and death for Icelandic fishermen.



- **Finland Wooden Handmade Cup:** Typically, Kuksa is a hand carved, wooden cup with a holder. Most of them have a string from where you can hang the cup from your belt or rucksack. Kuksa is always a personal cup, supposed to be carried along and since it is made of wood, it should not be washed.
- **Finland Arctic Dolls** - Arctic Doll is an authentic Finnish and Lappish product. It is one hundred percent designed and made in Lapland. Arctic Doll has a long and colourful history. It was founded in the autumn of 1953 in a barn belonging to the vicarage in the Finnish town of Vihti and called Dollytex. At the beginning of the 1960's a new factory was built on the riverbank in Vihti.



- **Finland Handmade Jewellery:** Lappish handmade jewelries are made of gold and silver in the shapes and forms of nature and animals. Many mythical creatures, the Samí beliefs and believing in the nature are still visible in the local design. Samí people's festive dresses also include symbols in shapes of jewelry and jewelry is often inherited from the family, so they are well kept and given as gifts still in today's Lappish lifestyle.



- **Norway Animal Skin Rugs:** The reindeer is intrinsically linked to Scandinavia and in particular the Sami people, an indigenous population who have inhabited the local lands of Sweden, Norway and Finland for over 5,000 years. The importance of the reindeer to the Sami people can be seen in many aspects of their culture. It even runs throughout their language where the word for herd is 'eallu' and the word for life is 'eallin.' As reindeer are an Arctic animal their hide is well equipped for the harsh climate and their coat can withstand even the worst possible weather conditions. The reindeers are harvested at certain times of the year and the hide is salted in salt tumblers in the Sami villages EU-certified abattoir and processed in a tannery with years of tradition and experience behind it. The sheepskin rug comes from the old Norwegian breed called Norse sheep. They are the oldest breed in Norway, appearing in history way before the Vikings of old. They belong to the family of North Atlantic short tailed sheep.



- **Rosette Cookies, Norway:** Sweet and crispy, these Scandinavian origin cookies are a perfect gift for your family and friends. They are considered a tradition during Christmas time in Norway. Rosettes are characterized by a golden brown colour, lemon flavour and intricate designs. Most often they are sprinkled with powdered sugar or dipped into frosting, thus they end up looking like giant snowflakes. They are paper thin and tend to crumble. Rosette cookies usually break into small pieces upon the first bite. These soft and extremely delicious Norwegian cookies have been a treat for many generations. Price: \$3 - \$6.



## COVID-19 TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

**Finland:** From 12 July 2021, Finland welcomes fully vaccinated travellers and travellers who have recovered from COVID-19 from EU and Schengen countries. From 12 October, leisure travel is possible between Finland and the Vatican. Leisure travel is also possible from China (based on reciprocity) Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Rwanda, South Korea, Thailand, and Uruguay. Essential, work-related, and return travel is possible from the UK, all Schengen and EU countries. Except for the countries listed as open for leisure travel, self-isolation for 14 days is recommended upon arrival.



**Sweden:** Borders are open without restrictions to travellers from the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Iceland, and the UK. Citizens from outside the EU and Schengen Area from approved countries are allowed to enter.



**Norway:** From 5 July, travellers from the UK will be required to quarantine at a suitable location for 10 days; a negative test may allow this period to be shortened. From 29 March, all travellers entering the country for non-essential reasons must complete a self-declaration form prior to arrival and spend the first ten days in Norway in a quarantine hotel. A negative PCR test taken no earlier than seven days after arrival may allow you to shorten your stay in the quarantine hotel. Entry to Norway is restricted. Anyone arriving in Norway from countries where the level





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of infection is high (marked as "red" on the map here) must self-quarantine for 10 days. If you arrive from a "yellow" area, you are exempt from quarantine.

**Iceland:** From 20 July 2021, travellers who have had a full course of the COVID-19 vaccine, the certificate will only be valid for travel to Iceland on or after the 15th day since your second vaccination (or from the single dose of the Janssen / Johnson and Johnson vaccine). From 26 July you will also need to present a negative PCR or antigen (rapid) test that is no more than 72 hours old before departing to Iceland. Fully vaccinated travellers (including those from the US) can enter Iceland without the need to be tested or undergo quarantine. However, travellers from outside the European Economic Area and Switzerland are not allowed if they have not been vaccinated and must pre-register and take two tests after arriving as well as quarantining for five days in between the two tests.



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