

TRAVEL + LEISURE

A Love Letter to Italy

DESTINATION OF THE YEAR

DECEMBER 2020
DISPLAY UNTIL DECEMBER 16, 2020



FOUR FRESH WAYS TO LEAN IN TO WINTER

TRAVELERS HAVE finally warmed up to winter-centric wilderness itineraries. Take Denali National Park & Preserve, which has seen such an increase in demand that it will implement new measures this season: plowing an additional 12 miles of roads; grooming more trails; and installing a footbridge near Mountain Vista, the rest area known for its views of the 20,310-foot peak, to improve access to cross-country-skiing and snowshoeing routes. And with AAA forecasting continued demand for outdoorsy and socially distanced vacations into 2021, here are four ways to capitalize on cold-weather pursuits. **BY RACHEL CHANG**

Rest and Recharge

New York's Finger Lakes aren't typically top of mind this time of year, but the **Inns of Aurora** (inns.of.aurora.com; *doubles from \$200*) is set to open a 15,000-square-foot spa in early 2021, with hydrotherapy circuits, pools, and winter-themed activities, like tea-blending classes. Outside Montreal, the resort **Spa Eastman** (spa-eastman.com; *\$169 per person per night, all-inclusive*) roars to life in winter, with treatments in the Finnish sauna, hammam, and outdoor whirlpools. Meanwhile, some innovators have started "snowga" classes that combine yoga and a wintry outdoor setting. "Practicing in these mountainscapes connects us to the elements and to spaciousness within," says instructor **Rebecca Black** (balancebec.com), a snowboarder who's pioneering the practice with retreats in the Tarentaise Valley of the French Alps.

Chase the Night Lights

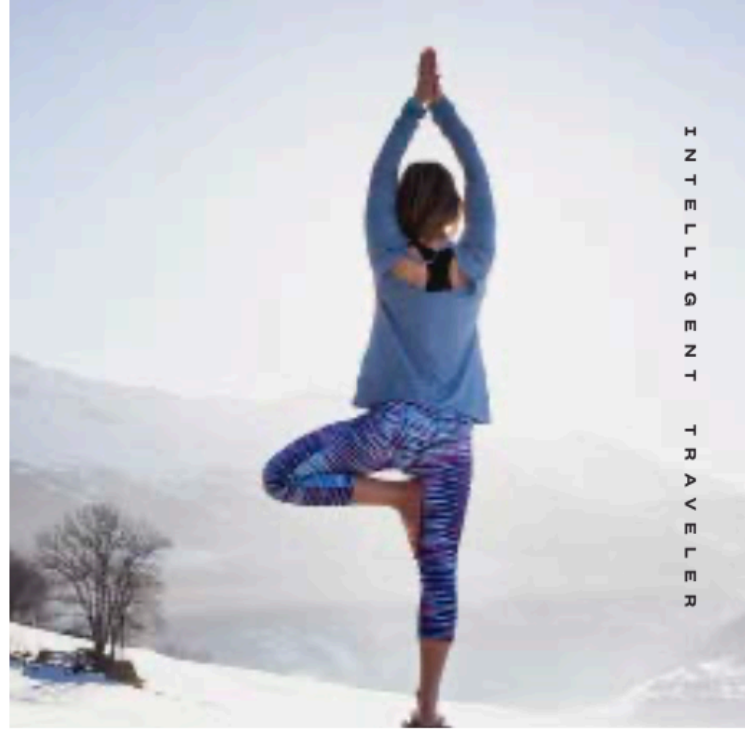
The northern lights are on view in Alaska through April 21, according to Don Hampton of the Geophysical Institute at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. "You need clear, dark skies since the aurora borealis is a very high-altitude phenomenon—clouds will block your view," he says. (It's also smart to avoid weeks closest to the full moon, whose brightness can spoil the show.) Fairbanks is a hub for aurora tourism, and operators including **A Taste of Alaska Lodge** (atasteofalaska.com; *doubles from \$195*), **Borealis Basecamp** (borealisbasecamp.net; *doubles from \$389*), and **Northern Alaska Tour Co.** (northernalaska.com; *overnight tours from \$559 per person*), are running trips with COVID-19 precautions in place. Travelers can also spot the lights in central Canada and Scandinavia.

Stomp Through the Snow

State parks in South Dakota are out to sell travelers on snowshoeing this winter. Rangers at **Custer and Good Earth** (gfp.sd.gov/parks), among others, will set visitors up with free rentals for hikes through snowy terrain. Many high-end resorts offer guests free snowshoes, including the **Lodge & Spa at Brush Creek Ranch** (brushcreekranch.com; *\$950 per person per night, all-inclusive*), in Wyoming, and **Rabbit Hill Inn** (rabbithillinn.com; *doubles from \$209*), in Vermont. Also in Vermont, the **Trapp Family Lodge** (trappfamily.com; *doubles from \$200*), in Stowe, is a great spot for cross-country skiing, with nearly 100 miles of groomed and backcountry trails. Those who prefer to power through powder will find more than 2,500 miles of snowmobiling trails in Wyoming. **Brooks Lake Lodge & Spa** (brookslake.com; *\$477 per person per night, all-inclusive*), near Yellowstone National Park, can get new riders up to speed.

Go All Out for Christmas

Germany is where many holiday traditions originated, and the country still holds the crown for the world's most festive Christmas markets. They don't get more storybook than the one held from late November to early January in the Bavarian town of **Rothenburg ob der Tauber** (rothenburg-tourismus.de). Visitors can try Bavarian snacks, sweets, and mulled wine while shopping the stalls for handmade gifts and ornaments. Stateside, the town of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, earns the nickname of "Christmas City" with its **Christkindlmarkt** (christmascity.org). It mimics European counterparts with more than 150 booths, plus live holiday music (and, this year, extra health and safety measures). In San José, California, the long-running **Christmas in the Park** (christmasinthepark.com) festival will be drive-through-only this year—but the light sculptures and holiday displays will be bigger than ever.



Getting into the "snowga" flow in France.