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'There are narrow streets of relentless energy, full bars and lots of good restaurants'

Rick Stein on a foodie weekend in Palermo

OLIMPIO FANTUZ/SIME/ACORNERS



2 Neuschwanstein Castle, near Füssen, Bavaria

20 of the best winter holidays

Chase the northern lights, go rambling in the shadow of Bavaria's fairytale castles, or book a winter city break, says **Will Hide**

Activity holidays

1 Snowshoeing in the French Alps

You can tuck into guilt-free meals of fondue and red wine when you've been snowshoeing all day. On this eight-day holiday based in the village of Samoëns in Haute-Savoie, guests will reach the

top of several summits, including Pointe Ratti, Le Parteset and Tête de la Sallaz, with great views of Mont Blanc. If it all sounds a bit daunting, the organisers say it's suitable for enthusiastic novices too.

Details The eight-day holiday costs from £1,245pp, half board, including guiding and snowshoe rental, but not flights or transfers (01768 773966, keadventure.com). FlyBe (flybe.com)

serves Geneva from Southampton and Exeter from £90 return

2 Walk in Bavaria

Get into the winter spirit on a walking holiday in Bavaria. Amble through wintry forests on snowy paths by day and spend evenings in Füssen, a small town in the shadow of Neuschwanstein, one of several fairytale castles you'll see on this trip. And there's plenty of time for warming Bavarian meals and a beer or two along the way.

Details Seven nights' half board, including guiding, costs from £1,035pp in January and February, with flights

from Heathrow or Manchester (01707 331133, ramblersolidays.co.uk)

3 Family Finland

The Arctic Treehouse Hotel near Rovaniemi opens this month with snug treetop cabins that have large picture windows. Some are interconnecting, for families, with hideaway children's "nests". Snowmobiling and a visit to a reindeer farm are part of the package.

Details A three-night half-board stay, including flights from Heathrow, transfers and activities, costs from £1,629pp (020 7666 1244, regent-holidays.co.uk) ▶



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