

Experience the *magic* of...

# Christmas *in* Exeter

Countdown  
to Christmas  
Family Trail  
until 27 Dec



[visitexeter.com/Christmas](http://visitexeter.com/Christmas)



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## InExeter Christmas 2024 Review

This document provides a review of Christmas 2024 in Exeter and includes:

- An **overview** of the InExeter Christmas campaign and its delivery.
- A **data analysis** of the Christmas period to assess performance compared to previous years and the factors that influenced it.
- **Key insights** and **learnings** from 2024 to guide planning for 2025 and future campaigns.

# Introduction

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For 2024 InExeter instigated a citywide Christmas campaign, designed to **bring the whole city together**, drawing in visitors from near and far.

Christmas is the most important season for Exeter, a time when the city becomes a hub of festive celebration, offering a magical experience for everyone who visits. The goal was to **put Exeter on the map** as the must-visit destination in the South West at the festive season.

A design was created that **showcased all of Exeter**, from stunning Christmas lights and lively markets to unbeatable shopping, dining, and entertainment options.



# Campaign objectives

- Position Exeter as a **premier Christmas destination**: Create awareness of Exeter's unique attractions during Christmas.
- **Increase footfall and visitor engagement** across the city: Develop initiatives to encourage movement around all parts of the city.
- **Collaborative promotion** with stakeholders: Unite key city stakeholders to strengthen the Exeter Christmas brand and experience.



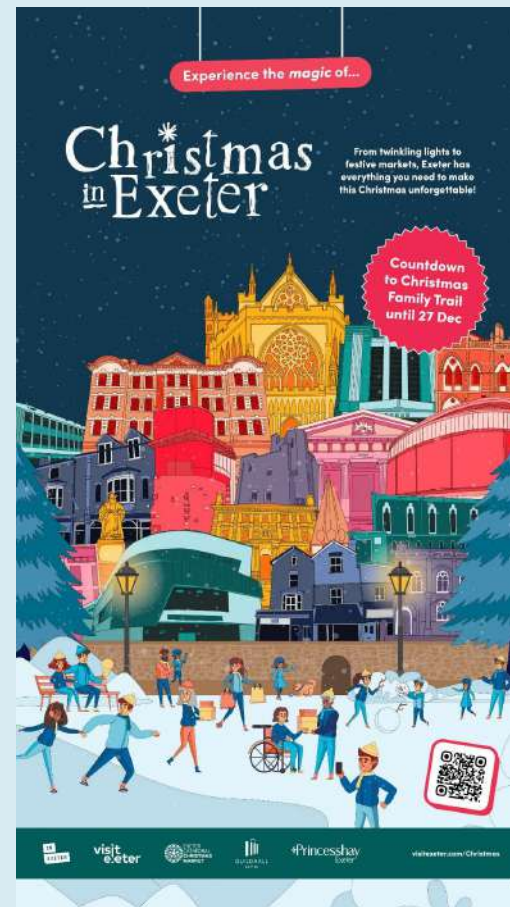
Experience the *magic of...*

# Christmas in Exeter

In Exeter partnered with **Visit Exeter**, **Exeter Cathedral**, **Guildhall Shop & Dine** and **Princesshay** to produce an awareness campaign promoting Exeter as the destination in Devon to visit at Christmas time.

We incorporated the recently commissioned Exeter buildings into a campaign designed to celebrate and **focus on the city**.

The campaign included an **awareness campaign** which included advertising and a digital presence as well as a **family trail** as a free activity to do in the city.





From twinkling lights to festive markets, Exeter has everything you need to make this Christmas unforgettable!



# Key Messages

- Exeter as the city in the South West to visit at Christmas
- Destination Shopping
- Spectacular Lights
- Festive Attractions
- Family Christmas Trail



**KEY DATES**

There is so much to see and do this Christmas in Exeter!

<b>Easter Cathedral Christmas Market</b> Cathedral Green 15 Nov - 17 Dec, 10am - 5pm (Mon-Fri), 10am - 6pm (Sat-Sun), 10am - 4pm (Sun) Tickets: £10 (incl. 1 drink)	<b>Winter Wonderland</b> Northcross Colliery 22 Nov - 24 Dec, 10am - 5pm
<b>Easter Cathedral Events</b> Easter Collation: 10am - 5pm (incl. 1 drink) Christmas Market: 10am - 5pm (incl. 1 drink) Guide online for the full list	<b>Magdalen Road Christmas Fair</b> 20 Sunday 7 Dec, 10am - 4pm
<b>Quillfoot Shopping Centre</b> Growing business opportunities 22 Nov - 1 Dec, 10am - 5pm	<b>Princeshay Shopping Centre</b> Christmas Village Princeshay Square 25 Nov - 1 Dec, 10am - 5pm
<b>Barry Road Beer with Father Christmas</b> 20 Sunday 7 Dec, 10am - 4pm	<b>Barry Road Beer with Father Christmas</b> 20 Sunday 7 Dec, 10am - 4pm

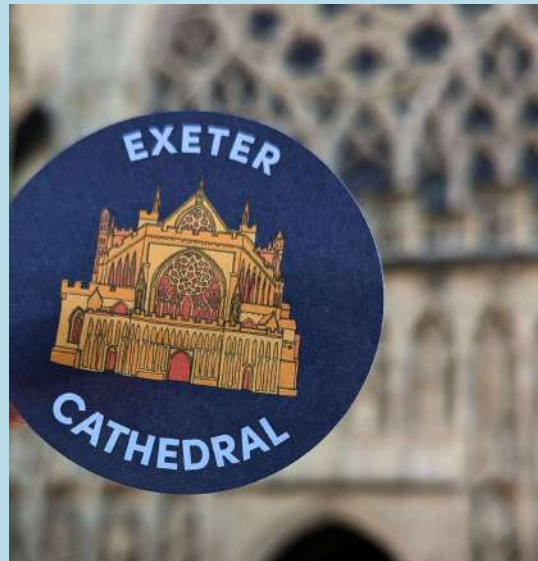
Visit locations in any order, you have until 22 December 2024 to complete the trail.

# The Countdown To Christmas Trail

In addition to the awareness campaign, we created a free, family-friendly trail to encourage exploration of the city.

This initiative had several goals:

- To understand how we could **encourage movement** across the city, as some areas report lower footfall compared to previous Christmas seasons.
- To address the challenge of **limited-time events** drawing visitors to specific locations, which can detract from other parts of the city.
- To help people **rediscover** lesser-known shops and areas off the main routes, as habits have shifted and exploration has declined.
- Looking ahead to 2025, with the introduction of a new Christmas lighting scheme and potential features like projections, we aimed to test how willing people were to **visit different areas** when we provided a reason to visit.





**COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS TRAIL**

**FREE FAMILY TRAIL!**  
Solve the Christmas word and receive an exclusive Exeter sticker sheet! There are 9 clues around the city!

Scan here to get involved!

**WHO IS HOLDING THE STAR BALOON?**

**PLUS!**  
One of five £100 Exeter Independent Gift Cards up for grabs!

**COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS TRAIL**

**FREE FAMILY TRAIL!**  
Solve the Christmas word and receive an exclusive Exeter sticker sheet! There are 9 clues around the city!

Scan here to get involved!

**WHICH CHRISTMAS TREAT HAVE WE MADE? USE THE CLUES TO FIGURE IT OUT. THE CORRECT TREAT IS THE LETTER YOU NEED!**

1 IT HAS HOLLY DECORATION  
2 IT IS FRUITY  
3 THERE IS ICING ON THE TOP

**PUZZLE #2**

**WHAT DID THE SNOWMAN SAY TO THE OTHER SNOWMAN?  
CAN YOU SMELL CARROTS?**

**THE LETTER YOU NEED IS**

**PUZZLE #9**

visitexeter.com/Christmas

# Trail in detail

- 9 key locations across 8 areas of the city.
- Each location included a QR code with information on the trail.
- Participants collected letters and stickers along the way, completing an activity booklet or following online.
- There were 4 finish locations across the city where participants could claim a sticker sheet on completion. Each had poster boards advertising the trail.
- The Countdown to Christmas Trail page had 1,134 views (771 unique visitors).
- 44 participants entered the online competition.

**COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS TRAIL**

**FREE FAMILY TRAIL!**  
Solve the Christmas word and receive an exclusive Exeter sticker sheet! There are 9 clues around the city!

Scan here to get involved!

**WHICH SHADOW MATCHES THE MAIN PICTURE?**

**PLUS!**  
One of five £100 Exeter Independent Gift Cards up for grabs!

visitexeter.com/Christmas





Reach



Exeter  
City Council



# Advertising

- City **poster** sites in locations in ECC car parks, plus within Princesshay and Guildhall Shop & Dine.
- Key dates **leaflets** and the *Countdown to Christmas* guide, distributed to Visit Exeter information points, trail locations, and businesses.
- City Centre **Digital Screens**.
- **Radio Exe** 'Sleeps 'til Santa sponsorship in December.
- **Bus rear** campaign w/c 25 November, running for two weeks
- A targeted **digital advertising campaign** aimed at the local audience.
- **Content packs** supplied to stakeholders, with dedicated packs created for the trail and distributed to participating locations and schools.

# Out of Home Advertising

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Our aim was to position Exeter as the place to visit this Christmas. We booked **20 bus rears** across a fleet serving Exeter and the surrounding area. Unfortunately, before the campaign launched, we were informed that our booking could not be fully delivered, resulting in our artwork appearing on **12 buses instead**.

Other notable advertisers on the buses included the “**Find Christmas in Cornwall**” campaign which was a collaboration between Cornwall Councils, funded partly by the **Levelling Up fund** and GWR.

Local nursery located just outside the city Bernaville Nurseries also invested significantly in bus advertising on the lead up to Christmas.



## Digi Screens

The ads ran on **20 screens** throughout the course of the campaign, with an average footfall of over **1.5 million** across these locations.

This provided Exeter with a **strong presence** in the city centre, showcasing everything happening during the festive season, as well as promoting in other locations outside the city, such as Riverside Leisure Centre.

The screens were provided in-kind, further **enhancing** the city campaign's visibility. With Cornwall also advertising on these screens during the festive period, it was valuable to have a **counterbalancing** message that highlighted the breadth of experiences Exeter has to offer.



# Radio Exe

## Sleeps 'til Santa sponsorship

Radio Exe is Devon's local radio station, reaching **49,000 listeners** weekly on-air and attracting **27,000 unique users online monthly**, according to February–July 2024 data.

The station's FM coverage area includes **Exeter, Dawlish, Crediton, Exmouth, Sidmouth, Seaton, and Honiton**, with DAB coverage extending across Devon, including **Plymouth, Torquay, and Barnstaple**.

Each weekday morning, Matt Rogers invited a listener to call in and share their Sleeps 'til Santa dedication, creating an interactive and festive feature.

Our involvement was highlighted through **pre-recorded promotional trails** and presenter reads during other shows throughout the month. This sponsorship provided an excellent opportunity to connect with a family-focused audience and promote Exeter as a festive destination.



# Radio Exe

## Sleeps 'til Santa sponsorship

### What we received:

- 3 daily promotional trails
- 2 presenter reads each weekday
- A dedicated page on Radio Exe's website
- Commercial production
- Ad hoc social media

### Promotional messages included:

*"Sleeps 'til Santa with InExeter – Get that festive feeling and experience the magic of Christmas across the city."*

*"Sleeps 'til Santa with InExeter – From twinkling lights to Christmas markets, Exeter has everything you need to make this Christmas unforgettable!"*

*"Impacts" are similar to online impressions, i.e. how many pairs of ears heard the message.*



49,000  
LISTENERS  
REACHED

157,000  
IMPACTS  
DELIVERED

EACH LISTENER  
HEARING AN  
AVERAGE OF 3.2  
TIMES

69 X 30  
SECOND PROMO  
TRAILS  
01.12.24 -  
23.12.24

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## Social Media

The Christmas social media campaign launched on 14<sup>th</sup> November, just before the opening of the Cathedral Christmas market.

Content focused on celebrating the city, promoting events, and sharing updates from local businesses through posts and stories.

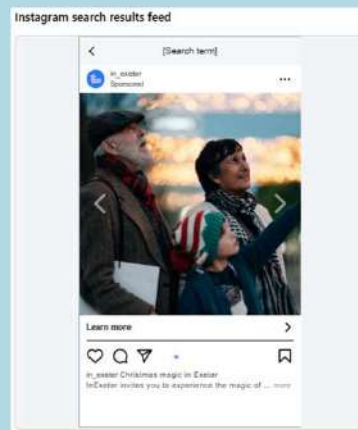
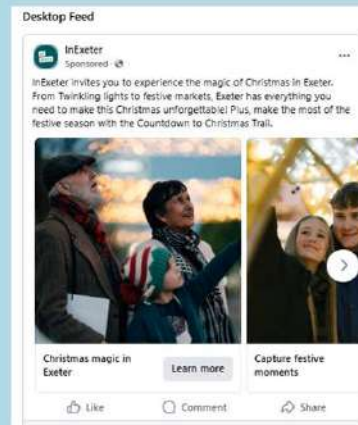
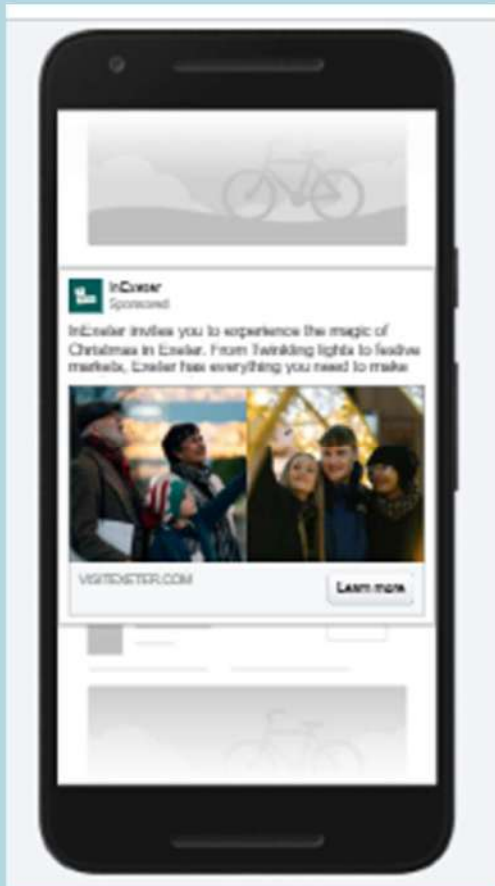
### Key focuses included:

- Christmas lights
- What's On
- Highlighting businesses and the Exeter areas

Content featured reels grouped multiple activities, such as '10 things to do this weekend' and '6 things to do while late-night shopping.'

As well as making our own content, InExeter organised a Christmas photo shoot to use on socials and on adverts on Meta platforms.





## Meta Ads

The "**Experience the Magic of Christmas in Exeter**" campaign was advertised on Meta platforms to inspire visitors to explore the city during the festive season.

Launched at the start of December, the advert ran for 19 days, reaching 29,882 people and generating 1,422 clicks to the Visit Exeter Christmas page.

Other businesses advertising during the period included Princesshay, West Point Ice Skating and Clarks Village Ice Skating.

29,882  
REACH

1,422  
CLICKS


# Trail promotions

The Countdown to Christmas trail was promoted on social media with reels introducing the campaign as well as dedicated adverts.

The adverts were hosted to a local audience over 20 days reaching 18,489 and receiving 705 clicks.



🎄 ✨ Join the Countdown to Christmas Trail and experience the magic of Exeter this festive season! ✨  
🗺️ Visit the 9 puzzle locations and collect the letters to reveal the secret Christmas word, and claim your exclusive Exeter sticker sheet. PLUS! Enter the...  
[Learn more](#)



18,489  
REACH

705  
CLICKS





# Local support



VisitDevon  
www.visitdevon.info

Pay absolutely nothing  
in commission on most global stocks  
IG Invest  
Investing cuts your capital at risk.

HOME NEWS THINGS TO DO WHAT'S ON EATING OUT HOTELS

## Christmas in Exeter

Event Date: November & December, Across Exeter

Discover the festive charm of Exeter this Christmas, with magical markets, sparkling lights, family-friendly events, and late-night shopping – there's something for everyone to enjoy!

- Cathedral Christmas Market (15 Nov – 15 Dec):** Enjoy over 100 festive chalets, a new Cloister Garden area, and entry to the Cathedral, by donation.
- Christmas Lights (from 15 Nov):** See Exeter's giant bauble, new High Street light arch, and a Guildhall light switch-on event featuring the Grinch at 4pm.
- Countdown to Christmas Trail (22 Nov – 27 Dec):** Collect letters around Exeter to claim a sticker sheet and enter a gift card draw.
- Christmasday Village (28 Nov – 22 Dec):** Shop for unique gifts, enjoy outdoor bar refreshments, and live performances.
- Late-night Shopping:** Princesshay shops open until 8pm Thursdays (28 Nov – 19 Dec), starting with Spark Drummers performances. Guildhall shops open until 7pm (21 Nov – 19 Dec) with

See more  
Christmas | Exeter

gWR

## What to expect in Exeter this Christmas

Christmas in Exeter is a wonderfully atmospheric time of year

Visit the **Cathedral Christmas Market** £5 on the Cathedral Green from Friday 15 November to Sunday 16 December, to explore a labyrinth of winding lanes, festooned with fairy lights and faced with the seasonal sights and smells of festive chalets.

New for 2024, you can follow the Countdown to Christmas Trail around Exeter, until 27th December. Explore the city, visit key locations and collect the letters that spell out a secret Christmas word to claim a special Exeter sticker sheet. You'll also get the chance to be entered into a draw to win one of 5 Exeter Independent Gift Cards.

The Christmasday Village in Princesshay (28th November – 22nd December) will offer the chance to shop for unique gifts from local traders, with refreshments in the festive chalet outdoor bar and regular live entertainment and performances throughout the festive period.

## When are the Exeter Christmas events?

This year you can experience Christmas happenings in Exeter from 15 November until late December.

## How to get to the Exeter Christmas events

Getting to Exeter by train is easy. The closest station is **Exeter Central**. Minimize time from London and Cornwall stop at **Exeter St Davids**. You can either change for a train to Exeter Central from here, or it's a 20-minute walk to Exeter city centre.

Exeter City Council

Home > News > [Take advantage of free events in Exeter this Christmas](#)

# Take advantage of free events in Exeter this Christmas

Published: 26 November 2024

Take advantage of free events in Exeter

People looking to stretch their pennies a little further in the run-up to the big day might be interested in a handy guide to free Christmas events in Exeter.

## Countdown to Christmas in Exeter

Discover Exeter's festive trail: find clues, solve puzzles, and celebrate the season together.



Image: iStock

- News & What's On
- Competitions
- Newsletter
- Blog Latest
- Opening Hours Click here to get details on Princesshay's core opening hours.

## Experience the magic of Christmas in Exeter!

Join the Countdown to Christmas Trail and experience the magic of Exeter this festive season!

- Explore the city
- Visit the 9 puzzle locations
- Collect the letters to spell out a Christmas word

Solve the puzzles, reveal the secret Christmas word, and claim your exclusive Exeter sticker sheet at one of these finish locations:

- Jolly Charity Shop
- John Lewis
- Exeter Library
- The Shop at RAMM

PLUS! Enter the competition online for a chance to win one of five £100 Exeter Independent Gift Cards!

Make magical memories this Christmas in Exeter!

More details here: [www.visitexeter.com/exetraill](http://www.visitexeter.com/exetraill) #Exeter #CountdownToChristmasTrail #ChristmasInExeter

**Christmas in Exeter** COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS TRAIL

**9 clues around the city!**  
Solve the Christmas word and receive an exclusive Exeter sticker sheet!

**WIN!** One of five £100 Exeter Independent Gift Cards up for grabs!

## Families invited to join free countdown to Christmas trail in Exeter

Published: 27 November 2024



Countdown to Christmas trail

As part of Exeter's vibrant Christmas celebrations, InExeter is delighted to offer families a fun, free, and festive adventure around the city with the launch of the Countdown to Christmas Trail. Running

### Menu

- Latest News
- News Archive
- Exeter Citizen
- Media Enquiries

### Useful Links

- Sign up for email updates
- BSS Feed

# Visit Exeter Meta Ads

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The "Experience the Magic of Christmas in Exeter" campaign was further extended by Visit Exeter, which promoted it to a broader audience through their Meta channels to **extend its reach**.

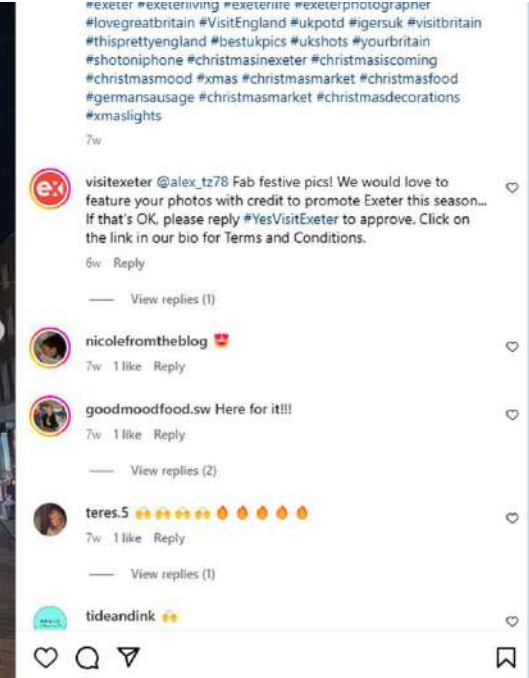
Visit Exeter aimed to **encourage overnight stays** within the South West and South Wales (excluding Devon as InExeter promoted to the local audience), targeting individuals with interests in theatre, music, holidays, culture, history, heritage, tourism, staycations, hotels, and travel.

Launched on 15<sup>th</sup> November, the campaign ran for 16 days, achieving a reach of **38,006** and generating **2,009 clicks** to the Visit Exeter Christmas page.

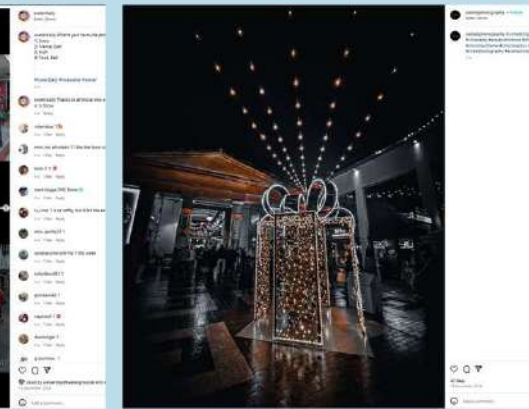
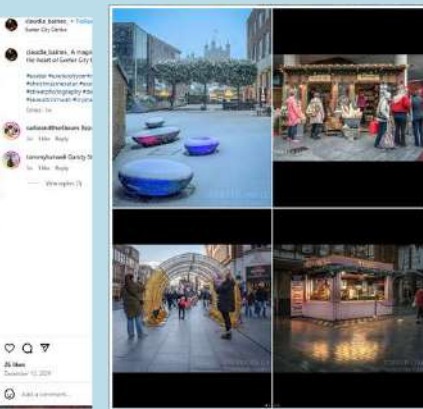
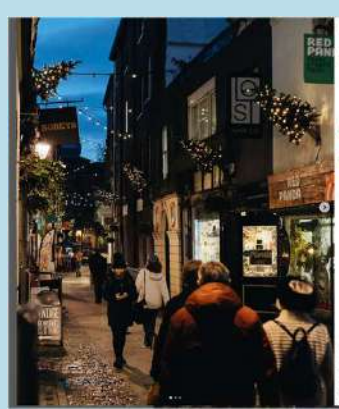
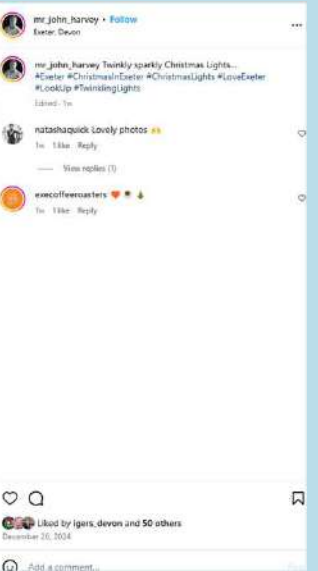
38,006  
REACH

2,009  
CLICK  
THROUGHS





# Public posts on Christmas in Exeter



# Google Ads

Visit Exeter and InExeter ran campaigns on the lead up to Christmas.

InExeter focused on the local audience, covering Devon with the campaign running 29 November – 20 December:

130,081  
IMPRESSIONS

2,000  
CLICKS

Visit Exeter covered the wider area – focusing on **domestic tourists** in the South West. The campaign was live from 21<sup>st</sup> November – 16<sup>th</sup> December:

296,182  
IMPRESSIONS

2,427  
CLICKS

Breakdown: Bristol 87,160, Dorset 72,521, Wiltshire 62,092, Cornwall 19,699, 427 clicks



The image shows two Google Ad cards for 'Christmas in Exeter'. The top card features a colorful illustration of Exeter's cityscape at night with festive lights and trees. The text on the card reads 'Christmas magic in Exeter' and 'From twinkling lights to festive markets. Festive shopping, dining, and Christmas catch-ups. Explore all Exeter has to offer.' There is an 'IN EXETER' logo and a right-pointing arrow button. The bottom card is smaller and features a similar illustration. The text reads 'Christmas magic in Exeter - Capture festive moments - Free family Christmas trail' and 'Ad InExeter'.

**Christmas in Exeter**

**Christmas magic in Exeter**

From twinkling lights to festive markets. Festive shopping, dining, and Christmas catch-ups. Explore all Exeter has to offer.

**IN EXETER**

**Christmas magic in Exeter - Capture festive moments - Free family Christmas trail**

Ad InExeter

# Reach Advertising

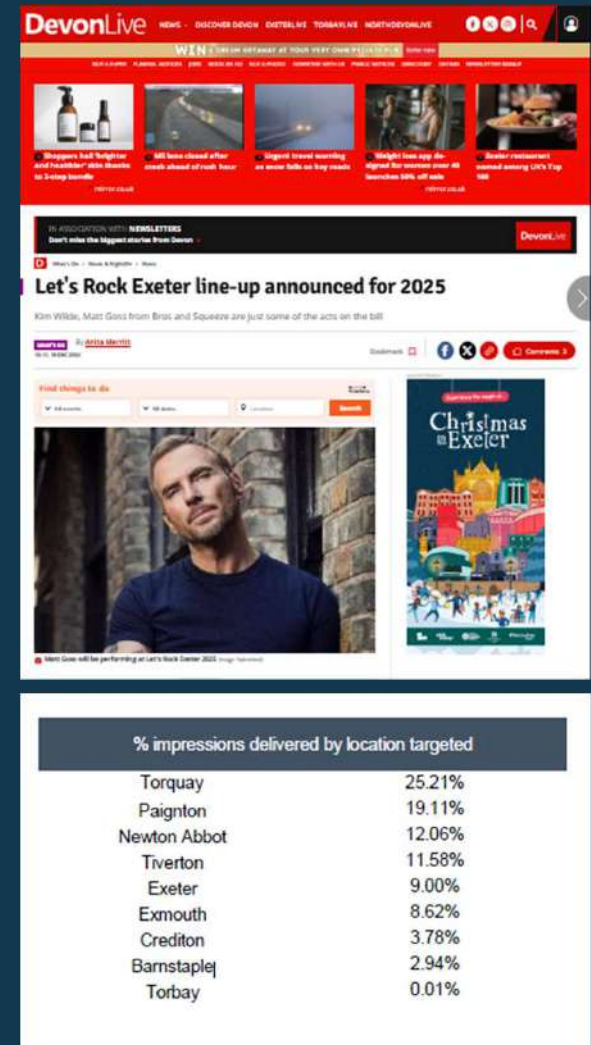
We ran a **two-week** Devon Live multi-format ad campaign from 26th November to 10th December to raise awareness of Exeter's Christmas offerings. This period was strategically chosen to coincide with the start of late-night shopping, **targeting a local audience** who didn't need to plan travel. The goal was to ensure Exeter remained **top of mind** for Christmas activities, encouraging visits to the city.

## Key results:

- 100,008 impressions delivered
- 449 hours of total ad visibility (In-View time)
- 75% In-View rate (the percentage of impressions where at least 50% of the ad was visible for at least one second)
- 167 click-throughs (a 0.17% return rate)

100,008  
IMPRESSIONS  
DELIVERED

167 CLICK  
THROUGHGS



The image shows a screenshot of a news article on the DevonLive website. The article is titled "Let's Rock Exeter line-up announced for 2025" and features a photo of a man, likely a band member, and a promotional poster for the event. Below the article, there is a table showing the percentage of impressions delivered by location targeted.

% impressions delivered by location targeted	
Torquay	25.21%
Paignton	19.11%
Newton Abbot	12.06%
Tiverton	11.58%
Exeter	9.00%
Exmouth	8.62%
Crediton	3.78%
Barnstaple	2.94%
Torbay	0.01%



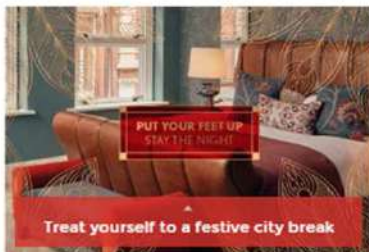
You are here: [What's On](#) > [Seasonal](#) > [Christmas](#)

## CHRISTMAS IN EXETER

Experience the magic of Christmas in Exeter. There is so much to see and do you'll want to stay longer, so why not make the most of the season and treat yourself to an overnight stay at one of the city-centre hotels, all of which are offering [fantastic festive packages](#).

New for 2024, you can follow the [Countdown to Christmas Trail](#) around Exeter, from 22nd November until 27th December. Explore the city, visit key locations and collect the letters that spell out a secret Christmas word to claim a special Exeter sticker sheet. You'll also get the chance to be entered into a draw to

[Read More](#) ↓



**11,200  
UNIQUE  
VISITORS**

## Website

Visit Exeter was the website where all Christmas content was hosted. Their Christmas landing page [visitexeter.com/Christmas](#) was updated with the campaign branding, and it detailed all that was happening in Exeter.

The Christmas landing page had 11.2k unique visitors and 20.7k views.

The most popular pages were:

- The 12 (free) days of Christmas
- Exeter Cathedral Christmas Market
- Pantomime season in Exeter
- Magdalen Road Christmas Fair
- Countdown to Christmas Trail
- Where to visit Santa in Exeter
- Winter Wonderland
- Twixmas in Exeter
- What's On in Exeter
- Christmas in Princesshay





# Footfall



- **November** footfall was significantly impacted by the weather, with a 7.5% decline compared to November 2023. **Storm Bert** is a contributing factor to these figures, during the weekend of November 23rd, footfall was down in the city **-43.9% compared to the previous weekend**.
- **December** footfall showed improvement from November, with a 5.9% increase. However, it was impacted by **Storm Darragh**, which caused shop closures and the cancellation of the Cathedral Christmas Market on the Saturday. During the week of the storm (week 49), footfall dropped by 11.8% compared to the same week in 2023. These factors contributed to an **overall decline** in December 2024 footfall, down 1.8% compared to December 2023.

## November

## December

2024 2,113,690

2,798,657

2023 2,286,000

2,850,406

-7.50%

-1.80%



# Weekly footfall

Week	46	47	48	49	50	51	52
2024	581,357	470,096	653,599	553,961	692,025	514,250	384,822
2023	590,756	679,965	638,972	627,914	686,742	530,101	366,677
	-1.6%	-30.9%	2.3%	-11.8%	0.8%	-3.0%	4.9%

This weekly breakdown highlights the significant impact of weather on Christmas 2024.

In week 47, Storm Bert led to a **30.9% drop in footfall** due to a stay-at-home advisory.

Week 48 was affected by Storm Conall, which, though less severe, still contributed to disruption however this was also Black Friday and the only week pre-Christmas which saw an **uplift** in footfall.

Week 49 saw Storm Darragh cause an **11.8% decrease in footfall** compared to the same week in 2023. Despite this, the year ended on a positive note, with footfall in week 52 up 4.9% from 2023 as people visited post-Christmas sales.



# Final costs

The **overall cost** of the campaign, including contributions from all partners, amounted to **£12,723**.

InExeter received a total of **£5,756** towards this initiative.

The **total expense** for InExeter to deliver the campaign was **£6,967**, alongside an additional **£5,000** attributed to **staffing time** required to execute the Christmas campaign.

Visit Exeter supported the campaign by **hosting** all the Christmas content on their **website**. The page was already established and integrated with their main website which linked to additional information on Exeter including their "What's On" section, ensuring everything was conveniently housed in one central location. They also ran the Countdown to Christmas competition and the **data collection**.

This figure does not account for the **invaluable in-kind support** provided by city businesses, which hosted trail clues, served as finish locations, promoted the campaign and the trail, or contributed resources such as assistance with installation and takedown.

The **collaborative efforts** and united support from the city played a crucial role in strengthening the success of this campaign.

## Key Learnings – Overall Campaign

- This campaign established a **cohesive visual identity** for Exeter, bringing together key city partners to collaboratively promote Exeter as a must-visit destination during Christmas.
- The power of this collaboration should not be underestimated. Uniting the logos of key stakeholders under a single city campaign strengthened the message and demonstrated collective support. This initiative represents a positive **first step** toward achieving a unified Christmas campaign that brings together Exeter's stakeholders effectively.
- The artwork was both **striking and recognisable**. Notably, our design prominently featured Exeter's iconic buildings, making it immediately identifiable—a key strength compared to similar campaigns, such as Cornwall's, which used a similar design style but lacked this city-specific focus.
- We **maximised our strengths** by utilising collective resources effectively—for instance, leveraging the Visit Exeter website allowed us to allocate more budget toward increasing campaign awareness.



## Key Learnings – The Trail

- The trail had a **strong visual impact**, offering a cohesive and festive addition throughout the city.
- Operationally, the trail was a success, with **easily accessible** locations including the large window graphic at John Lewis and Guildhall Shop & Dine, where we collaborated on a floor sticker installation within the indoor space. For areas where space was limited, we got creative with our installations. We worked with Exeter Cathedral School to feature a window display on South Street, which **enhanced** the area and has opened up possibilities for future collaborations.
- The campaign achieved **strong awareness**, reaching a wide audience and contributing to the visibility of the broader Christmas campaign. This was a trial to see whether we could encourage movement around the city, the response shows that the competition's popularity wasn't sufficient to warrant a repeat effort.
- For future initiatives, resources would be better allocated toward an **awareness-focused** campaign rather than a trail. Christmas lights are likely to be a more effective way of drawing people across the city.



# Christmas in Exeter



**Thank you** to everyone who was involved in the Christmas campaign. If you have any feedback or wish to discuss further, please get in touch.

IN EXETER

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