

View the Trees

If you think the tree looks large on television, wait until you see it in person at Rockefeller Center (30 Rockefeller Plaza; www.rockefellercenter.com). In 1931, construction workers erected a tree at the working site. Decorated with tin cans and paper, the tree symbolized prosperity and hope during the Depression. Little did the workers know that they were starting a time-honored tradition. Today, over 25,000 multi-colored lights are strung on the tree, each branch individually wrapped. There are no other decorations, except for the star on top.

Only in New York City can the lighting of the most popular Christmas tree bring the city locals and visitors together. The annual lightening proclaims the official start of the holiday season. If you cannot make it out to see the actual lighting on November 30, the tree stays lit from 5:30 a.m. – 11:30 p.m. every day through January 6.

Even though these trees are on a smaller scale, they are not to be missed. The American Museum of Natural History (Central Park W and 79th St; www.amnh.org) decorates its tree with origami figures depicting the museum's vast collections. A 20-foot blue spruce decorated with 18th century angels and cherubs can be found at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1000 5th Ave at 82nd St; www.metmuseum.org) until January 6. The tree is lit every Friday and Saturday evening. Take a glimpse into New York's maritime past along the South Street Seaport (207 Front St., www.southstseaport.com). The seaport's Chorus Tree stands 50 feet tall and is decorated with white lights. You can also enjoy the sounds of St. Cecilia's Chorus performing on the weekend through January 1. Cathedral of St. John the Divine's (1047 Amsterdam Ave; www.stjohndivine.org) Peace Tree is decorated with over 1,000 paper cranes.

Winter Scene: Tell everyone at home that you skated underneath the branches of the tree at Rockefeller Center. You can, if you don't mind the long wait; the rink can only hold 150 skaters. Ice skating at The Rink at Rockefeller Center (www.therinkatrockcenter.com) is another New York must. Even if you don't skate, the rink is worth a look.

