

December, 2024

Extended

WEEKEND

Getaways

- Last Minute Getaways
- Merry Christmas
- Countdown To A New Year

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HOLIDAY MARKETPLACE *magic*

Sat, Dec 14
10am-5pm
Sun, Dec 15
11am-4pm

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Get Ready to Rock Around the Christmas Tree in Dayton!

Mark your calendars for December 14-15 and join us at the 10th Annual Mistletoe Magic Holiday Marketplace at the Montgomery County Fairgrounds! Step into a holiday wonderland filled with unique exhibitors in the beautiful Main Exhibit Center, perfect for those last-minute gifts for friends and family.

Admission is \$5 and covers the whole weekend with a visible hand stamp. Kids under 12 get in free, and military personnel enjoy BOGO admission. With plenty of safe parking, it's an event you won't want to miss. Let's make this holiday season unforgettable!

Wander through a festive selection of shops featuring, farmhouse, primitive, contemporary, repurposed treasures, jewelry, vintage, home and beauty products, décor, women and children's boutiques, collectibles and more. Watch live as artists create stunning works—from jewelry to paintings and embroidery—and let the scent of gourmet artisan food add to the seasonal magic.

Don't miss out on an exclusive selection of direct sales favorites, including Scentsy, Color Street and Tastefully Simple. Holiday decorations, music, and visit Santa himself and complete the festive experience! Snap photos with Santa for the perfect family Christmas card. Don't forget your camera.

For the love of shopping, and the joy of giving. Visit the shops of Mistletoe Magic!



Make it a Tradition



The Artisan Line



TOYS FOR TOTS

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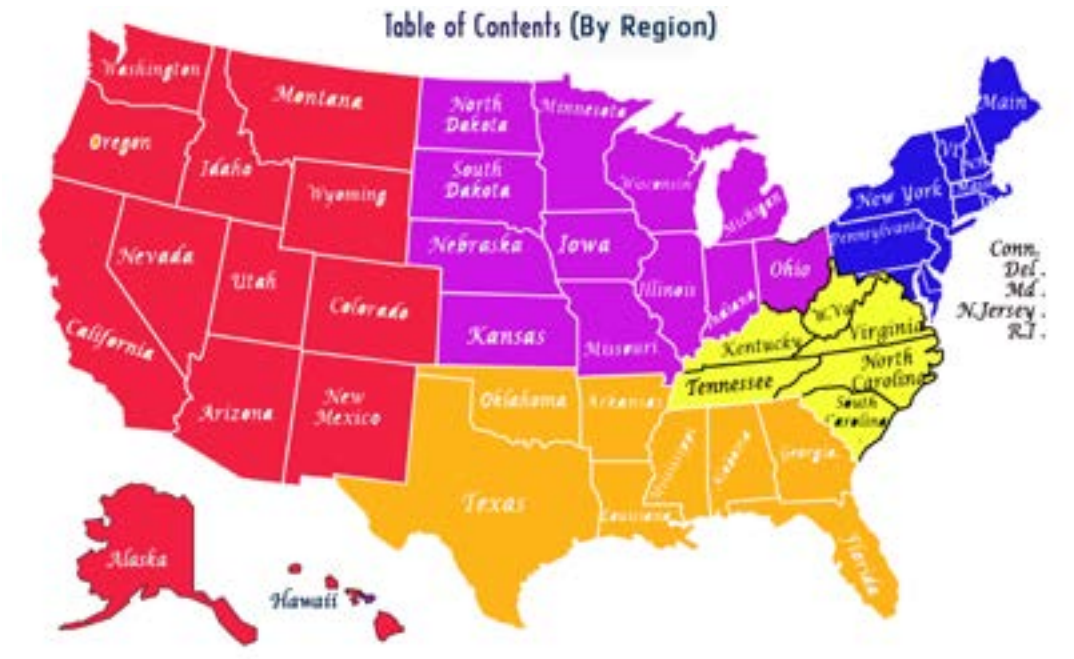
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Up Close:



From the Editor

The burgeoning phenomenon, Travel Tuesday, is a lot like Black Friday - the post-Thanksgiving bonanza that sees retailers offer special one-day deals and discounts. However, instead of flat-screen TVs and other electronics, this bargain binge addresses airline flights, cruises, hotels, and other travel-inspired gifts. I say we should give our loved ones a better way to explore wellness, sustainability, culinary adventures and just plain much-needed weekend getaways. Try using destination ideas from this issue.

For Wellness Wanderers

Wellness travel continues to grow as more people seek out experiences that restore both mind and body. How about a gift certificate to a luxury spa or massage? ([See P. 6.](#))

For Sustainability Seekers

Sustainable travel is a way of traveling that considers the environmental, economic, and social impacts of tourism. See the Soul of [Macon, \(P.24\)](#) or [Schnepf Farms, \(P. 41\).](#)

For Culinary Enthusiasts

For foodies in your life, give the gift of hands-on culinary experiences, a cookbook, dinner out or both. ([See P. 12](#))

For Purposeful Adventurers

There are so many choices!. There is St. Augustine ([P.23](#)) Louisville ([P32](#)) and Chicago ([P62](#)) Anywhere across Idaho ([P.45](#)) Actually, ALL of this month's articles fit this category. Read all...

For Luxury Escapists

How about a brand new hotel in Las Vegas for the high-rollers? ([P.16](#))

And For The Road-Trippers

If your loved ones dream of simple getaways as long as they see something new and interesting, a road trip is the best choice. It's easy to just slow down and take the scenery as it comes. See the Holiday Gems Trail ([P.50](#)), Rt 6 across PA ([P. 54](#)).

They're all so meaningful, ways to bring joy and connection to those we hold dear. This Travel Tuesday, let's celebrate the gift of travel—because the best memories are made on the journey.

Have a Very Merry Christmas and Happy Travels

Norman Reed
Managing Editor

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Cover Photo:

Beyond Times Square, a destination management company and tour operator, specializes in New Year's Eve packages to New York City and more. [See P. 18.](#)

TRAVEL TRENDS

A Year In Tra

Travel has always been a gateway to adventure, discovery, and personal growth. During the past year, I have showcased various travel trends and highlighted places where you could travel to enjoy each trend. According to Marketwatch.com, Americans will take over 800 million interstate trips by the end of the year. These trips are influenced by travel trends, which contribute to the reasons people travel.

Let's look at the trends we covered in 2024 and what is on the horizon for 2025.

Tasty Sips With Dry Tripping



**Crimson Zest - Submitted by
Vinoy Resort & Golf Club**

Following Dry January, we focused on Dry Tripping—traveling alcohol-free with drinks that look and taste like their alcohol counterparts. Throughout the year, I have noticed an increase in the number of alcohol-free drinks available across the country.



*By Robin O'Neal Smith
Associate Editor*

<https://RobinOnealSmith.com>



**Bedford Bath Ritual Pool in Eternal Spa -
Submitted by Robin O'Neal Smith**

Health and Wellness Travel

Health and Wellness Travel includes everything from luxury spas to guided hikes in the woods. Even Dry Tripping could be included. Two of the areas we focused on were spas and forest bathing. Spas are offering new and different treatments. I experienced several unique treatments, from multi-step rituals like the Bedford Bath Ritual at the Omni Bedford Springs Hotel to a Signature Seaweed Detox Massage at the Pallavi Luxury Spa, Wyndham Grand Clearwater Beach.

Everyone has heard of a spa, but forest bathing was a new trend for many. Since writing about Forest Bathing, I have visited several places that offer it and talked to numerous people who have experienced it. Forest bathing is genuinely immersing oneself in nature for a therapeutic escape from the hustle and bustle of life.

Solo Travel on the Upswing

Solo travel continues to gain popularity, driven by a desire for self-discovery and indepen-

Travel : 2024 Recap



Veilbreaker Skybridges. in Alaska

dence. Travelers increasingly choose to explore on their terms, creating personal itineraries and engaging in activities they love without companions. Solo trips are easier to schedule and tailor to your liking, making them great for resetting after a busy week. According to an American Express survey, 57% of respondents agreed they were more likely to travel solo for a quick extended weekend getaway than for a longer or more expensive trip.

I often travel alone to a des-

ination, but then I'm with a group. My friend and fellow writer, Julie Diebolt Price, is a true solo traveler. Not only does she often travel and visit new destinations by herself as a solo traveler, but she also embraces car camping. Yes, she camps in her car by herself at campgrounds.

Adventure Travel Reaches New Heights

Adventure travel is evolving with an emphasis on unique and thrilling experiences. From hiking in remote mountain ranges to scuba diving in

lesser-known reefs to zorbing down hills to hang gliding and sky diving, adventure seekers push their boundaries to experience new, exciting adventures. This trend offers adrenaline-pumping activities and opportunities to ignite a sense of thrill and excitement in travelers.

While I enjoy a little adventure in my travels, I'm more into softer adventures. However, I did try zorbing down a hill and found it to be a thrilling experience that I would definitely do again.



Winery at Bull Run – Submitted by Robin O’Neal Smith

food-focused tours are popping up in cities around the world.

Bleisure Travel Blends Work and Leisure

I’ve been doing this for years, long before it became a trend. Bleisure travel, the combination of business and leisure, is reshaping how people travel for work. Professionals are extending business trips to explore their destinations, blurring the lines between work and play. This trend maximizes the value of travel by combining productivity with relax-

ation. According to Marketwatch, most travelers add at least one extra day to their business travels to enjoy leisure.

With the current cost of airfare and gas, this trend will expand. When some travel costs are covered, staying a few extra days in an exciting location makes sense. These trends offer novel and memorable ways to engage with destinations, helping to drive travel around the world.

Future of Travel

What can we expect for travel in 2025? Many of the above trends will continue to soar.

With the advent of artificial intelligence and other technological innovations, we will see a significant increase in personalization and enhanced tailored travel recommendations. As the industry promotes responsible travel practices, we will also see a rise in sustainable travel initiatives, making travelers feel catered to and special.

As different travel trends emerge, providing travelers with additional curated and niche offerings, it becomes increasingly important to stay informed about these trends. This knowledge empowers you to make the most of your journeys, ensuring you have the best travel experiences possible.

In the January issue of Extended Weekend Getaways, we will cover the travel trends we think will be hot for 2025.

Agritourism Travel

Agritourism invites travelers to experience rural life by visiting farms, vineyards, petting zoos, corn mazes, gardens, and other venues related to the business of agriculture.

This trend fosters a deeper appreciation for the food and drink we consume and the people who produce it. Agritourism will continue to grow in the coming years.

Over the past year, I’ve experienced an abundance of agritourism in my travels: wineries, distilleries, breweries, llama farms, a farm sanctuary, a lavender farm, an Amish tour, a u-pick flower farm, an alpaca farm, horseback riding stables, Goat’s milk candle and soap businesses, buggy rides, and so on. Even if you haven’t traveled beyond your community, I’m sure you have experienced agritourism in some form.

Set Jetting

Set Jetting, visiting locations from popular films and shows, captures travelers’ imaginations worldwide. I’ve noticed more and more destinations are promoting visiting set locations.

Food Tours

Food tours are gaining momentum as travelers look to indulge in their culinary passions. It is a great way to try various restaurants in a new location, learn about the culture, and taste delicious foods. From sweet treats to ethnic cuisine,

SPORTS SPOT:

Top 10 Golf Outings

A new study has identified the states best equipped for a round of golf, with North Dakota claiming the top spot.

Casino Zonder Registratie analyzed data from Golf Link to tally the number of golf courses in each US state. This data was then adjusted for population size to calculate the number of courses per 100,000 residents. The ranking was based on states with the highest number of courses. Additional insights were gathered from Tripadvisor to assess the average ratings of all golf courses in each state.

North Dakota ranks top, with 14.67 golf courses per 100,000 people. The state is home to 115 golf courses which are made up of 69 public, 42 municipal and four private courses. North Dakota boasts an average course rating of 4.31 out of 5, with its longest course measuring 7,166 yards and its oldest course being established in 1907.

Second place is South Dakota, with 13.27 golf courses per 100,000 residents. Out of 122 golf courses, the state has 81 public, 34 municipal and seven private courses. South Dakota's oldest golf course was founded in 1905, and its longest course is 7,245 yards from the back tees. All the courses in the state have a combined average score of 4.26 out of 5.



Third place is Iowa, with 11.35 golf courses per 100,000 inhabitants. Iowa's oldest course was established in 1888, now having 364 golf courses. The average course rating is 4.01 out of 5.

Nebraska places fourth, with 11.12 golf courses per 100,000 people. The state is home to 220 golf courses. Nebraska scored an average course rating of 4.31 out of 5.

In fifth is Vermont, with 10.50 golf courses per 100,000 residents, a total of 68 golf courses. Vermont's oldest golf course was founded in 1886. Every course has a combined average score of 4.04 out of 5.

Wyoming is #6, 10.27 golf courses per 100,000 inhabitants. There are 60 courses with average course rating 4.34 out of 5.

Maine is #7 with 9.67 golf courses per 100,000 people. The state is home to 135 golf courses, with an average course rating of 4.25 out of 5.

Montana is #8 with 9.18 golf courses per 100,000 residents with total of 104 golf courses. Montana's oldest golf course was founded in 1900, and all have a combined average score of 4.37 out of 5.

Wisconsin is #9 with 8.81 golf courses per 100,000 inhabitants. Wisconsin's oldest golf course was established in 1893, and the state has an incredible 521 courses, the average course rating is 4.39 out of 5.

Michigan is #10 with 8.62 golf courses per 100,000 people. The state is home to 865 courses – the greatest number among the top ten. Michigan scored an average course rating of 4.14 out of 5.

California ranks last, with 2.40 golf courses per 100,000 residents. From a total of 937 golf courses, the state's oldest golf course was founded in 1893. Every course in the state has a combined average score of 4.15 out of 5.

This report was supplied by <https://casinozonderregistratie.net/>

GOING GLOBAL Croatia

Where Holiday Ma

The Christmas countdown has begun, and Croatia is ready to welcome travelers with a blend of holiday traditions, cultural experiences, and festive cheer. From medieval towns to stunning coastal vistas, Advent in Croatia offers unique celebrations for every type of traveler.

“Advent in Croatia isn’t just a celebration—it’s an immersive journey through our country’s cherished traditions and warm hospitality,” said Leila Krešić-Jurić, Director of the Croatian National Tourist Board, North America. “With its rich customs and extraordinary settings, Croatia offers a holiday experience like no other.”

Here’s a curated guide to Croatia’s most magical holiday destinations this season:

Zagreb

A three-time winner of Europe’s Best Christmas Market, Zagreb’s festivities this year celebrate the charm of traditional Croatian toys. With 129 outdoor concerts across the city’s lively streets and squares, visitors can enjoy a mix of nostalgia and



Advent Zagreb | Credits: CNTB, Julien Duval

modernity. Highlights include Advent at LADO, celebrating Croatia’s National Folk Dance Ensemble, and the Christmas Garden at the Academy of Fine Arts. Families and groups will enjoy the Toys in Augmented Reality game, while the Zagreb Jingle Mingles food initiative delights with special holiday menus. Hotels across the city add to the magic with themed packages and dining experiences.

Learn more about Advent in Zagreb at <https://www.adventzagreb.hr/en/>.

Split

Split transforms into a holiday wonderland under the motto “To You and Yours.” Festivities center around iconic locations like Pjaca, Riva, and Prokurative, where music, lights, and shared joy abound. Historical landmarks such as Diocletian’s Cellars

and the Peristyle shine with festive decorations. Nearby areas, including Stobreč and Žrnovnica, join the celebration with events for all ages, including a children’s program and traditional concerts. Ring in the New Year with Dubioza Kolektiv

at a lively performance in the heart of the city. For more information, visit <https://split.hr/advent-u-splitu-2024!>

Dubrovnik

Dubrovnik’s Winter Festival offers an elegant blend of culture and holiday cheer. The iconic Stradun hosts a bustling Christmas Fair, featuring handcrafted goods and traditional sweets. Landmark venues like Lazaretti



Advent in Dubrovnik | Credits: CNTB,

gic Comes To Life

and Pile light up with themed events, while the Cod Festival showcases Dubrovnik's culinary creativity with a modern twist on a beloved classic. Celebrate New Year's Eve in style with cocktails at Gradska Kavana, as the city sparkles with holiday lights. Find out more information at <https://www.dubrovackizimskifestival.com/en>

Opatija

On the Kvarner Riviera, Opatija shines as a haven of romance and winter magic. The city's Advent program transforms its parks, promenades, and historic buildings into a festive fairy tale. Visitors can enjoy culinary delights at local restaurants, explore the Lungomare promenade lit by hundreds of thousands of lights, or unwind in world-class wellness centers. Running through early January, Advent in Opatija offers the perfect mix of relaxation and holiday cheer.

Discover more about



Advent Split | Credits: CNTB, Julien Duval

Opatija's Advent at <https://www.visitopatija.com/en/opatija-advent/>

Varaždin

Located in the heart of northern Croatia, Varaždin transforms into a magical wonderland during Advent. This historic baroque city is renowned for its festive charm, featuring the "Ice Wonderland" skating park with over 1,200 square meters of ice, offering excitement for all ages, including a dedicated rink for younger visitors. Visitors can explore the picturesque Korzo square, enjoy the Ferris wheel's panoramic views, and stroll through the Christmas markets brimming with unique crafts and culinary delights. The enchanting

"Santa's Magical City" also offers workshops and activities, making it an ideal holiday destination for families. <https://www.adventuvarazdinu.com/en/>

Osijek

This city in transforms into a festive wonderland during Advent, offering a blend of traditions and modern holiday magic. The Advent fair in the historic Tvrđa

district, hailed as one of Croatia's most romantic, showcases unique crafts, local delicacies, and holiday treats like mulled wine and Osijek beer. A highlight is the enchanting "Lampionada," a lantern exhibition created by schoolchildren, symbolizing light and hope. Families can enjoy rides on the Christmas Tram, complete with performances and Santa Claus, delighting thousands each year. The festivities extend to the city center with sparkling light displays, inviting visitors to explore Osijek's vibrant streets and indulge in its rich holiday offerings. <https://www.tzosijek.hr/advent-u-osijeku-2024-1426>



Julien Duval

DELICIOUS DELIGHTS

Kalaya's Southern Thai



*By Michael C. Upton
Freelance Writer*

In 2020, I was scouring Philadelphia looking for out-of-the-way, non-descript eateries—trying to find a hidden gem—when I heard about Kalaya, a restaurant by Chef Chutatip “Nok” Suntaranon in Bella Vista.

Philly’s Bella Vista neighborhood, often overshadowed by the north-bordering South Street, butts up against Little Italy on the southern side and is a good spot to look for locally popular eateries or chefs not yet on the national radar. I set my sights on visiting Kalaya and then COVID mandates closed doors around the world. Resilient, Chef Nok traded her 32-seat Bella Vista location for a bigger spot in Philly’s hip Fishtown neighborhood in 2022 and the move put her on everyone’s radar,



including the folks at The James Beard Foundation—she was named Best Chef: Mid-Atlantic in 2023.

Furthering her success, she released “Kalaya’s Southern Thai Kitchen” (Penguin Random House) on November 5, 2024, and the entire book is punctuated with joyful and funny expositions, recalled memories of her past, and more than 100 recipes. Nok’s writing (with Natalie Jesionka) has an immediate familiarity, which exudes trust and care.

THE INTRO

Nok, the airline flight attendant turned chef and restaurateur, takes the reader back to Southern Thailand where she grew up in a home of minimal means, yet she is surrounded by grand hospitality and great flavor. Her mother is her greatest influence in both cooking and life, shining brightly on the beautifully penned page. Nok’s tone is strong, uncompromising, and fiery—necessarily, like the flavors in her cooking. Hers is the story of

ai Kitchen

new beginnings, of food in modern America rooted in a past filled with tradition and love. Tales of making curry with her mother or searching Philly's markets for years for the proper ingredients makes the reader laugh, sigh, and—best of all—hungry.

NAM PRIK PAO

“Kalaya’s Southern Thai Kitchen” is filled with tips and tricks, insider know how, and there is a strong emphasis on not cutting corners. Nok wants you to do things her way, at least at first. Who am I to argue. But dedication to her recipes requires collecting or creating a set of staples used throughout the book, and the first thing I need to do is make Nam Prik Pao, a.k.a. Mom’s chili jam. Nok calls this the “accessory of the season” (and for her a lifetime).

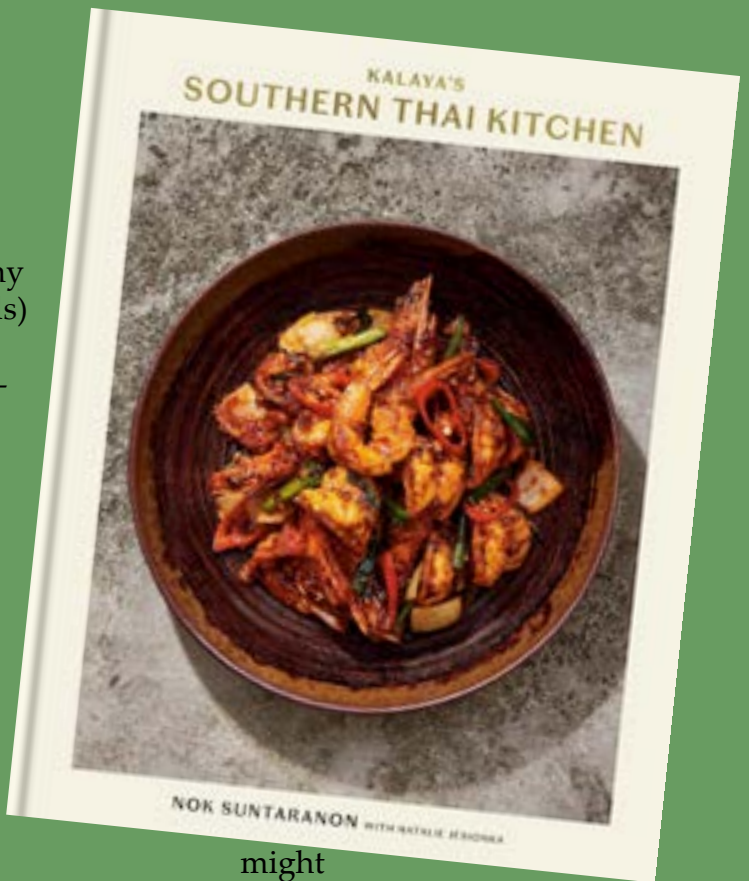
Seemingly daunting, the process was in fact easy and not at all time-consuming. However, do not take for granted you may have enough spice on-hand. Chances are you will need more. And this is a safe tip for all recipes in this book. The result is a jelly-like condiment created with 11 ingredients from thinly sliced shallots to ground dried shrimp. An advance trip to a specialty store allowed me to procure some

rare (at least in my neck of the woods) ingredients like tamarind concentrate—buy the biggest jar you can find. With this first recipe I learned to trust the process and follow Nok’s advice. The process is more like performing magic than cooking.

Halfway through this recipe book, I will have amassed a cupboard and refrigerator full of handcrafted, specialty ingredients, which will make cooking the rest of the recipes a delicious breeze. This is Nok’s intent. She needs you to create the base for a culinary exploration of Southern Thai cuisine (via Philadelphia).

YUM MA KUER YAO

After dining at Kalaya, I somehow felt like I knew the chef. There is a unique personal connection, an umami of feelings one gets when eating Nok’s dishes. My wife fell in love the restaurant’s Laab Ped, which to her dismay is not in “Kalaya’s Southern Thai Kitchen.” I guess Nok has the right to keep some dishes solely for her restaurant. So, I picked a recipe I thought



might be close ... Yum Ma Kuer Yao is a spicy eggplant salad with chili jam and coconut cream.

FINAL THOUGHTS

“Kalaya’s Southern Thai Kitchen” requires a bit of adventurous spirit. There are no prep or total times, so it is best to set aside an evening where you can get to know a recipe, and essentially come to know Nok. That said, my experiences with the book were all rather easy—I just had to trust Nok. After cooking through a few recipes, I feel like she is an old friend. Her goal is to offer the world “honest and elevated Thai food,” and this book allows her legacy and goals to climb into, and be welcome in, our kitchens.

TRAVEL TREASURES

Last Minute Gifts



Health Realities Care Pack

A thoughtful, health-conscious gift that's as delicious as it is purposeful. With four functional chocolate bars—Sleepy, Energy, Carefree, and Painfree—each designed with a blend of decadent chocolate and powerful botanicals—it's the best way to share a little wellness through the winter season. Beautifully packaged and ready for gifting.

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<https://funcho.co/products/health-realities-care-pack>

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<https://flightpathgolf.com/>



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<https://www.amazon.com/>

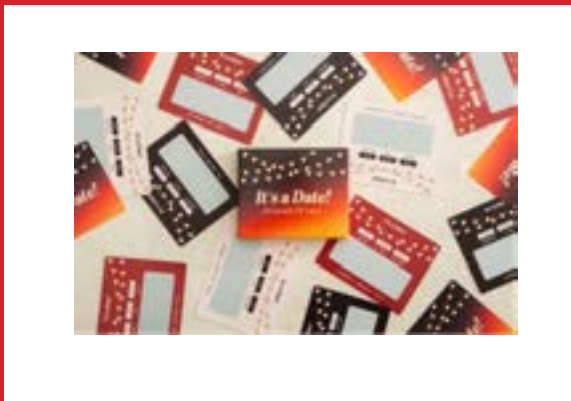


It's A Date Game

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Price: \$14.99

<https://www.amazon.com/stores/ItsADate>



HOTEL HOSPITALITY : Las Vegas Magic & Luxury at



The holidays are the perfect time to indulge in luxury, and Fontainebleau Las Vegas delivers an unforgettable seasonal escape. As the Strip's newest crown jewel, this \$3.7 billion resort promises festive cheer, world-class entertainment, and unparalleled hospitality that will leave you longing for more.

Deck the Halls with Holiday Spirit

This holiday season, Fontainebleau transforms into a first - ever, resort-wide magical "Winter Wonderland. Seasonal décor, Oasis Ice Rink (the Strip's largest ice rink), exclusive pop-up activities, elevated Santa brunches and enchanting holiday entertainment create an experience like no other.

The Oasis Ice Rink: Glide across the Strip's largest ice rink under the sparkling Vegas lights.

"Feliz Navidad Gaudy Christmas Bar at Azul: Immerse yourself in the holiday spirit with extravagant cocktails and over-the-top décor.

Veuve Clicquot Chalet: Enjoy luxe champagne experiences in a cozy alpine-inspired setting.

Holiday Movies on the Pool Deck: Snuggle with family and friends for festive classics by the pool.

Brunches with Santa: A treat for all ages, dine with Santa and make holiday memories to cherish.

A New Icon of Luxury

Fontainebleau Las Vegas has redefined opulence on the Strip, standing tall as a 67-story marvel at the northern end of the Strip. This luxury desti-

Fontainebleau



nation has earned a slew of prestigious accolades, including Best New Hotels in North America and Europe, Travelers 2024 Hot List, and 100 Best New Hotels of the Year.

As we approach our one - year anniversary on Dec. 13, the unveiling of our Winter Wonderland makes this holiday season even more special,” says Fontainebleau Las Vegas President Maurice Wooden. “We are grateful for the Las Vegas community embracing us in our first year, and we can’t wait to celebrate with our guests as they discover all of the magic, the joy, and the unforgettable surprises we have in store.”

The resort boasts 3,644 luxury rooms and suites, including the ultra-exclusive Fleur de Lis suites that stretch up to 10,000 square feet. At its heart, a golden chandelier sparkles over a columned gaming floor surrounded by 36 bars, restaurants, and nightclubs, each promising exceptional culinary and nightlife experiences.



Dining and Entertainment Highlights

Mother Wolf by Evan Funke: Indulge in handcrafted pasta by L.A.’s famed “pasta king.”

Bar Ito: Savor exquisite handrolls at this Michelin-starred satellite omakase bar.

LIV Club: Dance the night away in one of the most electrifying clubs imported from Fontainebleau Miami Beach. BleauLive Presents Thomas Rhett. For country music fans, Fon-

tainebleau delivers an added treat this month with four intimate performances by ACM award-winning artist Thomas Rhett. Known for hits like “Die A Happy Man” and “Craving You,” Rhett will perform at the BleauLive Theater on Dec. 6, 7, 13, and 14.

Winter Wonderland Pkge.

Enhance your experience with up to 25% off room rates with minimum 2-night stay, a \$75 resort credit and valet validation through Dec. 26. See <https://www.fontainebleaulasvegas.com/experiences/winter-wonderland-2024/> for more information and to make reservations.

From snow showers at the Lapis Spa to the sprawling six-acre Oasis Pool Deck, Fontainebleau Las Vegas invites you to revel in the season and beyond. This is where holiday magic meets luxury, offering memories to last a lifetime.

Guided Getaways

Holiday Travel Tip



*Written by
Carole A. Peck*

*Content
Manager at
BTSQ*

As the holiday season approaches, the quest for a perfect winter escape becomes a top priority for many. Amid the festive cheer and busy schedules, planning an ideal holiday getaway can be daunting. This is where the expertise of a destination management company and tour operator becomes invaluable – and why we would like you to think of Beyond Times Square as your very own Christmas consultant, holiday helper, seasonal secretary – or any other catchy title you can think of!

Specializing in luxury and tailor-made experiences, BTSQ



offers discerning travelers unique and memorable holiday adventures in some of the most iconic destinations on the Eastern Seaboard – including New York City, Washington DC, Philadelphia, Boston, Charleston and Savannah.

Whether it's for families, couples, solo travelers or even large groups – BTSQ's bespoke holiday experiences offer many ways to enjoy the festive season that are as effortless as they are enchanting.

Personalized Planning

At BTSQ, we understand that every traveler has unique needs and desires. Our team of Experience Designers listens to your preferences and crafts personalized itineraries that go beyond typical tourist experiences. Whether it's securing a private viewing of New York City's Christmas lights or arranging an exclusive tour of Washington's political heart during the festive season, our tailored planning ensures your holiday aligns perfectly with your vision.

Exclusive Access and Experiences

Holidays are about the magical moments, and BTSQ's insider access allows travelers to enjoy exclusive events and attractions without the hassle.



os With BTSQ



Thanks to our partnerships in each destination, we are able to offer you more personalized experiences. From a VIP Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade Viewing Party to a private yacht tour in Charleston - BTSQ makes it happen, allowing you to enjoy access to extraordinary activities that elevate your holiday experience.

Stress-Free Travel

Every aspect of your journey is handled with care, ensuring a stress-free holiday experience. From 5-star accommodations to luxury transportation to private tours and once-in-a-lifetime events – our team ensures that your stay is comfortable, luxurious and perfectly suited to your tastes. Our commitment to personalized service means your holiday plans are not just met but exceeded. Our 24/7 support team, on-ground support and ability to adapt to real-time changes ensure that your holiday experience is seamless and exceptional.

Expert Local Knowledge

The BTSQ team is equipped with extensive local knowledge that enriches your travel experience. Our on-site experts guide you to the best local eateries, hidden gems and cultural hotspots that tourists often miss. Want to learn how



to whip up Lowcountry cuisine? We've got a private class in Savannah! This insider access not only enhances your understanding and appreciation of the destination but also adds an authentic flavor to your travel experience that is rarely achieved through generic tours.

Travel during the holidays doesn't have to be stressful. With Beyond Times Square,

you're not just booking a trip – you're crafting an unforgettable experience filled with joy, luxury and festive magic. Let BTSQ take the reins of your holiday planning and help you create new holiday traditions this year. For a comprehensive look at our customizable experiences contact our Experience Designers today and make this festive season one to remember!



Southern States



A Southern Christmas



Downtown areas throughout North Alabama are bustling with activities. From the streets of Huntsville to the historic covered bridges of Blount County and the music of Muscle Shoals, the past and present are side-by-side here and offer so much for every traveler to enjoy, especially during the holidays. Here are a few highlights:

Places to Visit

RICKWOOD CAVERNS- Wonderland Under Warrior welcomes guests for a unique experience that celebrates the sights and sounds of Christmas and the natural beauty of the cavern.

Visitors come to see more than 100,000 twinkling lights and to walk the lighted path among the stalactites, stalagmites and other unique geological formations. The whimsical journey underground transforms the already magnificent cave into a special holiday experience. [>MORE](#)

HUNTSVILLE - Families are invited to step into a holiday wonderland at EarlyWorks Museum for Nights of Santa. Children have a chance to meet Santa and his North Pole elves. Additional family-friendly activities adding to the whimsical fun include nightly snowfalls, making holiday crafts, mingling with costumed characters, decorating a freshly made gingerbread cookie and shopping in Santa's gift shop. [>MORE](#)

CULLMAN - The must-see attraction here is the towering Christmas pyramid. At 30 feet tall, the Cullman Christmas pyramid is the tallest structure of its kind in the United States. Known in German as Weihnachtspyramide, the Christmas pyramid in Cullman has six tiers with each one featuring a different scene, including one that will pay tribute to the local law enforcement, first responders, as well as everyday citizens.



The Cullman Christkindlmarkt features a host of local vendors set up German-style in small wooden tents. The market is a great opportunity to find German ornaments, unique gifts and other handcrafted goodies.

ARAB - Every year on the day after Thanksgiving, Arab City Park is transformed into Christmas in the Park, a festive, over-the-top display of holiday magic. capture the spirit of the season at Arab City Park and Arab Historic Village. Santa's Village is open from 6-9 p.m., weather permitting, beginning Black Friday and running Fridays and Saturdays

until the weekend before Christmas. [>MORE](#)

LAWRENCE COUNTY - Celebrating Christmas on the Square, locals and visitors are invited to join in on the spirit of the holiday season with a magical stroll among a beautiful display of live Christmas trees trimmed in festive decorations. Selfie stations, food trucks live music entertainment, hot chocolate and [>MORE](#).

Activities To Check Out

The Oneonta downtown area gets into the holiday spirit with a host of activities for everyone to enjoy including a live nativity, horse drawn carriage rides, holiday lights, visits with Santa, parades and lots of Christmas cheer. Head to Athens for its annual Sippin' Cider Festival and sip on everyone's favorite holiday drink while shopping or stop in Decatur for the Historic Decatur Christmas Tour, a self-guided tour featuring around a dozen tour sites including homes, churches and historic places in the cities two historic districts, Albany and Old Decatur.

For more information on things to see, do and experience, visit <http://www.northalabama.org>.

[More on Alabama >HERE](#)

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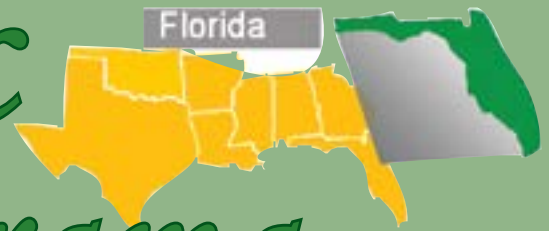


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Festive Music Dance and Drama



ST. AUGUSTINE – Holiday performances without the snow and ice? Yes, please. In addition to the world-famous Nights of Lights, St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra and The Beaches bring the holiday spirit with music, dance, and dramatic performances that range from rockin' to traditional.



Cabaret, from Dec. 12-22, showcases the region's top talent, while Christmas with Mrs. Flagler at The Waterworks is an intimate storytelling experience of Victoria-era Christmas tales. Experience the classic It's a Wonderful Life in two unique performances: A Live Radio Play presented by A Classic Theatre at The

Waterworks on Dec. 6-15 and APEX Theatre presents "It's a Wonderful Life" Live from the Backyard Stage at The AMP on Dec. 20-21.

Draped in millions of lights and festive cheer, a trip to Florida's Historic Coast is bound to be a new holiday tradition. Located midway between Daytona Beach and Jacksonville, Florida's Historic Coast includes historic St. Augustine, the outstanding golf and seaside elegance of Ponte Vedra, the rural beauty of Hastings, Elkton, St. Johns, and 42 miles of pristine Atlantic beaches. For advance travel information, call 1.800.653.2489 or go to the Visitors and Convention Bureau website at www.FloridasHistoricCoast.com.

Choral Performances

For a traditional holiday choral experience, join the Anastasia City Baptist Choir for "The Silence and the Sound" – Christmas Cantata on Dec. 8. The St. Augustine Community Chorus has two-holiday performances this year. "Noel! Noel!" on Dec. 14-15 kicks off the St. Augustine Community Chorus' 76th season with voices rising in melody throughout the Cathedral Basilica. The Messiah Sing-A-Long on Dec. 21 is a fun and immersive experience that closes out its landmark 75th anniversary season.

Orchestra Sounds

The St. Augustine Orchestra performs "The Sounds of the Season" on Dec. 8, a delightful

holiday extravaganza of holiday songs that will bring back memories for the entire family. The EMMA Concert Series welcomes the Gainesville Symphony Orchestra on Dec. 17 for a Holiday Pops Concert.

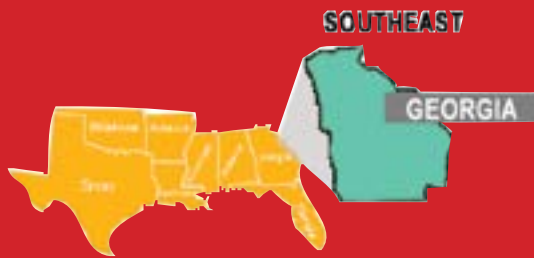
Delightful Dance

The St. Augustine Ballet's annual performance of Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*, Dec. 20-22, is a holiday tradition performed by professional and student dancers from across the region. *Christmas Fantastique*, a modern interpretation of *The Nutcracker*, was created and is performed by Zoika's Dance School Dec. 7-8. The St. Augustine Winter Spectacular, Dec. 14-15, features high kicks, acrobatics, and plenty of holiday spirit.

Top Plays in Theaters

Limelight Theatre's Christmas

[More on Florida >HERE](#)



The Soul of S

“I Try to write songs that people can relate to, that touch their hearts make them feel something.”

Otis Redding



*By Renée Gordon
History Travel
Writer*

Macon is located in the Piedmont province on the west bank of the Ocumulgee River, in the place where soul was created and is sustained. The area was settled in 1806 under the auspices of Thomas Jefferson when he established a military outpost, Fort Hawkins, and a center for trading with the natives in the then Indian Territory. #VisitMarconGA

The Cherokee, Muskogee and Uchee Indians ceded the territory of Macon, and in 1823, named it after Senator Nathaniel Macon. Ocumulgee Mounds National Historical Park stands as a stark reminder of 17,000 years of native culture. A highlight of the site is the rebuilt Earth Lodge with a 1,000-year-old floor.

The earliest group of enslaved Africans in the region accompanied the Spanish Explorers, most notably among Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón’s 600 colonists in



1526. Later the majority of the enslaved from Charleston, Savannah and St. Augustine. Whenever and wherever Africans went they carried their music with them in the form of instruments, dance and song. The music eased the daily burdens, expressed religious beliefs, emotions and celebrated small victories and joys.

Soul music is a blending of blues, gospel, jazz and is defined by the Rock and Roll Hall of

Fame as the “music that arose out of the black experience in America.” Soul music is participatory in that the audience is encouraged to dance, sing, clap, respond, etc. It was popularized in America in the 60s and 70s and went on to be influential worldwide. Macon, Georgia emerged as the womb of Southern rock and soul music and the spiritual and physical home of the Allman Brothers, Little Richard and Otis Redding.



Macon

The annual King of Soul Music Festival honors Redding's ongoing contributions to music and culture as well as his personal legacy. The festival benefits the Otis Redding Foundation for the Arts and its current goal is to erect a center with labs, studio space and an amphitheater. Otis Redding's stated in 1967 his desire to establish a summer camp for children and teach economic and civic responsibilities.

Otis Redding Museum relates the story of Redding's life through a curated series of photographs, artifacts and memorabilia. An on-site shop enhances your tour with unique books and customized items.

The Allman Brothers, 70s pioneers of Southern rock, lived in The Big House, along with their posse, from 1970 to 1973. Now a museum, each room is a gallery dedicated to an aspect of their music. Nearby H&H Soul Food was a particular favorite of the Allman Brothers and other musicians.

Little Richard House Resource Center is charged with preserving his childhood home. The Architect of Rock and Roll, Richard Wayne Penniman, was born in Macon on December



5, 1932. His home is on view at 416 Craft St. A birthday celebration will be held Dec. 4-7.

Macon was designated one of the 2024 Great American Main Street Award winners for excellence in historic preservation. The city has 15 historic districts with more than 6,000 structures, on the National Register of Historic Places. Visitors can access a "Tour Mobile" app that interprets African American sites along the "Black Heritage Trail" trail.

The Macon Visitor's Center creatively presents the people and history of the city. Highlights are a giant music legends mural and a literal walk-through history. A one-hour guided riding tour is offered that includes the major sites.

The Tubman Museum is a jewel in Macon's crown. Highlights of the exhibits are a 63-foot-long mural depicting the Afri-

can American experience from Africa to the 21st-century and an outstanding gallery display on the life and career of Tyler Perry. The Tubman is one of the largest museums of its type in the region.

Charles Douglass built the Douglass Theater in 1921. The theater was one of the first black owned theaters and presented all of the renowned entertainers of the era. It was on the Chitlin Circuit. Otis Redding won

the singing competition here so often that he was barred from the competition. The Douglass has been lovingly restored and tours are available.

The Macon Terminal Station was constructed in 1916 by the architect who built Grand Central Station. The station closed in 1975 but the city elected to retain the exterior carved sign reading "Colored Only" as a memorial.

Hotel Forty Five is located in the Business District and is within walking distance of the most significant locations. It is a full-service boutique hotel with three dining venues. There are 94 guestrooms, deluxe amenities and designer touches with a music theme. Hotelfortyfive.com

"If these streets could talk, they'd sing."

More on Georgia >HERE

Gulf Coast Christmas

HOLIDAY CRAFT & VENDOR SHOW

ARTS, CRAFTS & MIXED VENDORS SHOW

Mississippi

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DECEMBER 13TH - 14TH - 15TH

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A Chickasha Holiday



This charming city is brimming with holiday magic. It transforming into a winter wonderland drawing visitors from across the country for its iconic Festival of Light. Alongside other delightful experiences, Chickasha is an ideal destination for a holiday getaway.

A Twinkling Spectacle

The Festival of Light at Shannon Springs Park is Chickasha's crown jewel during the holidays. Voted as one of the nation's top ten light displays, this dazzling event runs nightly from the day after Thanksgiving through New Year's Eve. Visitors are greeted by more than 3.5 million lights illuminating the 43-acre park, creating a breathtaking atmosphere.

Highlights include:

The Iconic Light Bridge: Stroll beneath a canopy of sparkling lights reflecting on the park's shimmering lake.

Animated Displays: Marvel at scenes brought to life with synchronized music and lights, captivating audiences of all ages.

Drive-Through Option: Cruise through the park from the warmth of your car for an equally magical experience.

Santa's Workshop: Meet Santa Claus, sip hot cocoa, and let the kids create holiday crafts.

Rides and Activities: Take a ride on the festival train or horse-drawn carriage to enjoy the lights from unique perspectives. Admission is free, though donations are welcome to support this beloved community event. Onsite vendors offer holiday treats, souvenirs, and keepsakes to round out your visit.

Other Attractions

Brown's Farm and Garden: For seasonal offerings, visit this cozy farm for Christmas trees and festive decorations.

Grady County Museum: Explore exhibits that showcase Chickasha's history and heritage, perfect for a winter afternoon.

Downtown Chickasha: Admire six large murals that add a touch of artistry to the city, with special holiday-themed decorations enhancing the charm.

Muscle Car Ranch: Even during the holidays, this quirky venue shines with its open-air displays of vintage cars, neon signs, and eclectic folk art.

Stay Awhile

For accommodations, consider the Hampton Inn Chickasha for comfortable lodging and modern amenities. Local dining gems include J&W Grill, famous for its old-fashioned onion burgers, and Crazy 8 Café, offering a warm and inviting holiday menu. Pack your bags and head to Chickasha for a holiday like no other.

[More on Oklahoma >HERE](#)



San Antonio Christmas W



SAN ANTONIO — The Holiday season officially kicks off when the River Walk is lit up during the annual Ford Holiday River Walk Parade. Seasonal fun then continues with markets, luminaria-lined river banks, caroling and more.

Over 100,000 multi-colored lights transforms the River Walk into an enchanting wonderland at the conclusion of the parade and visitors can enjoy them now through Jan. 5, 2025. Two additional holiday traditions returning to the River Walk in December are the Ford Fiesta de las Lumi-

narias (December 6-22, Fridays to Sundays from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.), where the Mexican tradition of small, sand-filled bags with candles line the banks, and Ford Holiday Boat Caroling (December 5-23, 2024, nightly from 6:00 p.m.) fills the air with festive holidays songs.

The second year of the popular San Antonio Holidays on Houston Street will feature a festive, multi-day holiday market along Houston Street. December 3 is the official Houston Street Lighting and Community Dinner. The Holiday Market runs December 13-

15. A special Holiday Fun Run and 5K is planned for December 17. The Alamo will charm with Homemade Christmas on December 7, where visitors can experience the holiday season through the eyes of early settlers as they lived on the Texas frontier in the mid-1800s.

At Historic Market Square, the holidays will also be in full force. The annual La Gran Tamalada will continue to honor the tradition of making tamales. Additionally, live music, pictures with Santa and food booths will be available December 14 and 15, from

Is All Lit Up For Weekend Getaways

10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

The holiday celebrations are truly a citywide tradition with these can't-miss experiences beyond downtown;

SeaWorld Christmas Celebration (November 14 – January 5): Texas' Biggest Christmas Celebration returns with millions of lights, specialty-themed areas and plenty of holiday cheer with a lanyard to taste holiday bites and sips around the park. The live action performance, O Wondrous Night, will feature singing, dancing and puppetry. Images

San Antonio Zoo Lights Through Dec. 31: Families can delight in the Zoo Lights, a spectacular display of holiday lights and festive decorations. The event includes interactive experiences, live entertainment and opportunities to meet Santa.

Six Flags Holiday in the Park Through – Jan. 7, weekends and select weekdays): A million glittering lights, festive

décor, seasonal foods, holiday entertainment and thrilling rides create a winter wonderland at Six Flags. The all-new KID FLASH™ Cosmic Coaster is Texas' only racing roller coaster.



Classic Christmas Through Dec. 29: This immersive holiday celebration at Toyota Field promises to create unforgettable moments of togetherness.

Hill Country Christmas at the JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort and Spa (November 23 – January 5): The ICE! exhibit will feature 20,000 square feet of more than 10 immersive walk-through scenes made of ice, thrilling two-story ice slides, and awe-inspiring passageways carved from

two million pounds of ice, all depicting scenes and characters of Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas. Visitors are invited to enjoy exclusive guest privileges during their overnight stay, or simply spend the day at the resort reveling in dazzling displays, delicious treats and festive activities. Images

Illuminate Through Jan. 12: The San Antonio Botanical Garden celebrates with Illuminate, breathtaking displays that blend art,

nature and culture, in a mesmerizing celebration of light.

Christmas at the Caverns (December 7, 8, 14, 15, 20-23) includes Caroling in the Caverns, the Trail of Lights, Santa & Mrs. Claus visit, Reindeer Roundup Maze and more. Caroling in the Caverns is limited, so advance ticket purchases are recommended.

For more information go to [VisitSanAntonio.com/Holidays/](https://www.VisitSanAntonio.com/Holidays/)

[More on Texas >HERE](#)

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Mid-Eastern States





Louisville's

Lights Under Louisville

Nov. 8-Jan. 4 /LOUISVILLE MEGA CAVERN - This one-of-a-kind underground holiday light show will take you on a 30-minute drive through a portion of Louisville Mega Cavern's 17 miles of underground passageways. The event features over 900 lit displays, six and a half million points of light, a laser light show, and holiday music.

A Wonderful Life,

Thru Dec. 31/DERBY DINNE PLAYHOUSE - Frank Capra's classic film is brought to life in a vibrant holiday musical. Follow the extraordinary lives of ordinary people and celebrate the innate goodness in us all this holiday season.

Also playing at Derby Dinner Playhouse (through Dec. 21) is A Fairy Tale Christmas. Experience the holidays through the eyes of your favorite fairy tale characters as everyone in the land of Happily Ever After is preparing for the Crystal Christmas Ball.

Fête De Noël

Through Jan. 5/PARISTOWN - Paristown's Fête De Noël ("Festival of Christmas") is a 6-week, winter holiday festival featuring Louisville's only authentic outdoor ice skating rink. Shop, eat,



and drink your way through the Winter Holiday Village. Enjoy special holiday movie nights, karaoke, a Drag Queens on Ice special performance, and ornament decorating at historic Stoneware & Co.

Christmas at the Kingdom,

Through Jan. 4/KENTUCKY KINGDOM - Kentucky's largest amusement park is now open through the holidays with the addition of Christmas at the Kingdom. Taking place for the first time in 2024, the \$8 million investment will immerse guests into a joyful winter wonderland with more than one and a half million glowing lights, 300 Christmas trees, Santa's Village, and a Snow Zone, featuring a four-story, 175-foot-long snow tubing hill constructed in the drained wave pool.

Yuletide at Yew Dell

Dec. 6,7,13,14,20,21/DELL BOTANICAL GARDENS - Head outdoors to Yew Dell Botanical Gardens for their annual Yuletide at Yew Dell event. This year, they have an enhanced light display with photo ops on the festively lit path, holiday shopping opportunities, a take-home craft for kids, and of course, Santa.

Light Up Louisville

Dec. 7 - This annual event has been ringing in the holiday season in downtown Louisville for over 40 years. A parade through the streets of downtown will lead up to the arrival of Santa Claus on Jefferson Street, aka Santa Claus Lane. The celebration concludes with a countdown to the illumination of the holiday tree and fireworks lighting up the night sky.

Christmas Lights

Bardstown Road Aglow

Dec. 7 - Taking place from noon to 10 p.m. in the Highlands neighborhood, this annual event offers special discounts on food, drinks, and merchandise at participating restaurants and shops along Bardstown Road, Baxter & Barret Avenues, and Douglass Loop. Thanks to the Louisville Federation of Musicians, live music will take place at several pop-up locations along Bardstown Road, as well as free Trolley rides before the annual lighting of the holiday tree.

Gardens Aglimmer,

Dec. 5-8, 11-23, & 26-30/
WATERFRONT BOTANICAL GARDENS
- Wander the new Beargrass Creek Pathway under icicle arches and a waterfall stream aglow at Butchertown's Waterfront Botanical Gardens. This self-guided walking experience will take you through an illuminated outdoor wonderland of swans, snowflakes, deer, Moravian stars, oversized flowers, and a multicolor

tunnel of lights. Visit Santa and his sleigh in the Graeser Family Education Center and Mrs Claus' Cottage in the new Ellen T. Leslie Botanical Classrooms.

Pentatonix: Hallelujah!

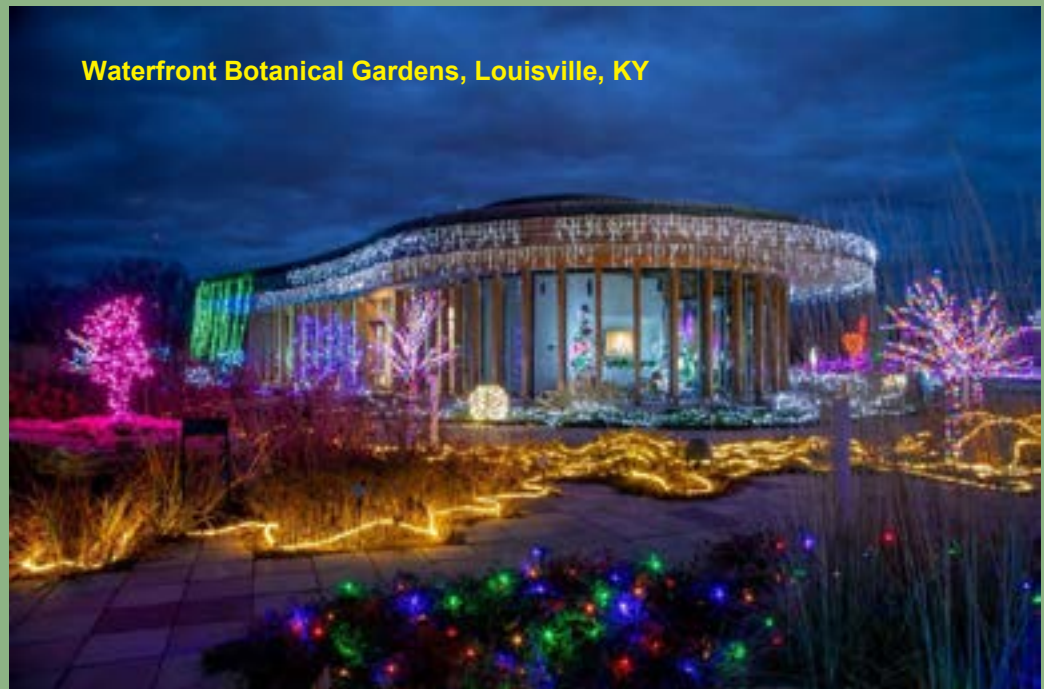
Dec. 10/KFC YUM CENTER - Pentatonix's cherished holiday tradition returns with their most grandiose Christmas tour to date – Pentatonix: Hallelujah! It's A Christmas Tour. Following two years of captivating arenas filled with fans, the three-time GRAMMY® Award-winning and Daytime EMMY® Award-nominated quintet is set to enchant audiences once again with their beloved yuletide classics.

Candlelight Christmas Tour

Dec. 20-22/CONRAD - CALDWELL HOUSE MUSEUM
- Every room in this historic mansion is filled with holiday decor and music that are sure to put you in a festive holiday mood as you enjoy a self-guided tour throughout Louisville's grandest Victorian Home. Discover festive cocktails and holiday cheer at these holiday pop-up bars around Bourbon City!

To find all events happening in and around the city be sure to check out our event calendar and subscribe to our email newsletters for the latest updates on news and events.

[More on Kentucky >HERE](#)



Waterfront Botanical Gardens, Louisville, KY



The Jolliest Ho



*By Robin O'Neal Smith
Associate Editor*



A charming city in the heart of the Carolinas, Greenville comes alive during the holiday season with dazzling lights, festive events, and a warm community spirit that captures the essence of Southern hospitality. Whether you're a resident, a family seeking seasonal fun, or a holiday enthusiast eager to enjoy the festive atmosphere, Greenville offers an enchanting experience.

Winter Wonderland

Stroll through the illuminated paths of Falls Park on the Reedy, where nature meets magic in a dazzling light display. The tree-lined park transforms into a winter wonderland, providing a serene backdrop for evening walks. Warm up with a cup of "Falls Park Peppermint Hot Chocolate" while soaking in the season's beauty.

and the jolly presence of Santa Claus himself. It's a lively event that brings the whole community together. Treat yourself to 'North Pole Pizza' and 'Main Street Maple Pecans' as you enjoy the festivities.

I visited Greenville last December and fell in love with the town and all it had to offer. If you aren't in the holiday spirit upon arrival, you will surely be merry after your extended weekend getaway. Here are some festive attractions you won't want to miss

Christmas Parade

Experience the joy and excitement of the Christmas parade along Main Street on the first Saturday of December. The parade features colorful floats, energetic marching bands,

Santa's Motorized Sleigh

Witness the iconic motorized sleigh, a converted 1993 Ford Aerostar, gliding down Main Street with Santa waving to delighted onlookers. It evokes nostalgia and wonder.

Ice on Main

Imagine gliding gracefully on ice in the heart of downtown Greenville. "Ice on Main" offers a quintessential outdoor skating experience, surrounded by the hustle and bustle of the city and the festive decor that adorns charming storefronts. This mini replica of Rockefeller Center is a must-visit for families and those looking to create cherished holiday memories.



Holiday Of The South

Gingerbread Exhibit

Marvel at the intricate and creative gingerbread designs crafted by local chefs and home cooks. This festive exhibit invites you to vote on your favorite masterpiece while enjoying the sweet aroma of gingerbread.

Home Alone Experience at the Westin Poinsett

Stay at the Westin Poinsett Hotel and relive the magic of the beloved Home Alone holiday classic. Scenes from the movie are recreated, offering themed experiences for guests.

Holiday Shopping

Dive into a shopper's paradise in the small boutique stores and the Greenville Christmas Market. Wander through the beautifully decorated Grand Bohemian Lodge and enjoy shopping with local vendors for unique holiday gifts and crafts.

Some of my favorite stores to shop in were Kilwin's (I loved the chocolates), Oils & Vinegar, and Greenville Soy Candle Company.

Rooftop Revelry

Experience rooftop magic at "Elf'd Up" at Up on the Roof and dine in the Juniper Igloos. Both have cozy settings offering stunning



The gigantic Christmas Tree in the Westin Poinsett.
All Photos by Robin O'Neal Smith

city views.

Festive Drinks

Indulge in the festive 'Miracles Pop-Up Bar' at Southenside Brewery. Themed cocktails, over-the-top holiday decor, and animated creatures create a merry atmosphere. There are many photo op-

portunities, so plan to stay a while and take it all in. The festive drinks will make you feel merry and indulgent, adding to the overall holiday spirit.

Themed Restaurants

Indulge in thematic culinary journeys at Table 301's restaurants, each offering unique menu items inspired by holiday classics. From Tavola's "Elf"-inspired maple syrup spaghetti, just like Buddy made, to CAMP's "The Griswold" cocktail, with decorations reminiscent of Christmas Vacation, there's something for every festive palate. This year, rumor has



it, an old station wagon may be parked in front of CAMP's with a Christmas tree strapped to the roof.

Wouldn't that be the perfect photo op?

Visit A Holiday Escape Room

Escape Artist Greenville has five different themed escape rooms running at any given time. They have a Christmas escape Room with a Christmas theme, festive decorations, and hidden clues during the holidays. It is an excellent family activity or fun for a group of friends. Escape Artist Greenville is known for its multi-sensory experiences and innovative, tech-savvy puzzles.

Taste Some Wine

City Scape Winery offers wine tastings for the adults in your group. It is the largest and oldest winery in Greenville County and has indoor and outdoor seating. They provide delicious wines and yummy charcuterie boards. Check their website to learn what events might be happening during your visit. They often host live music and bingo.

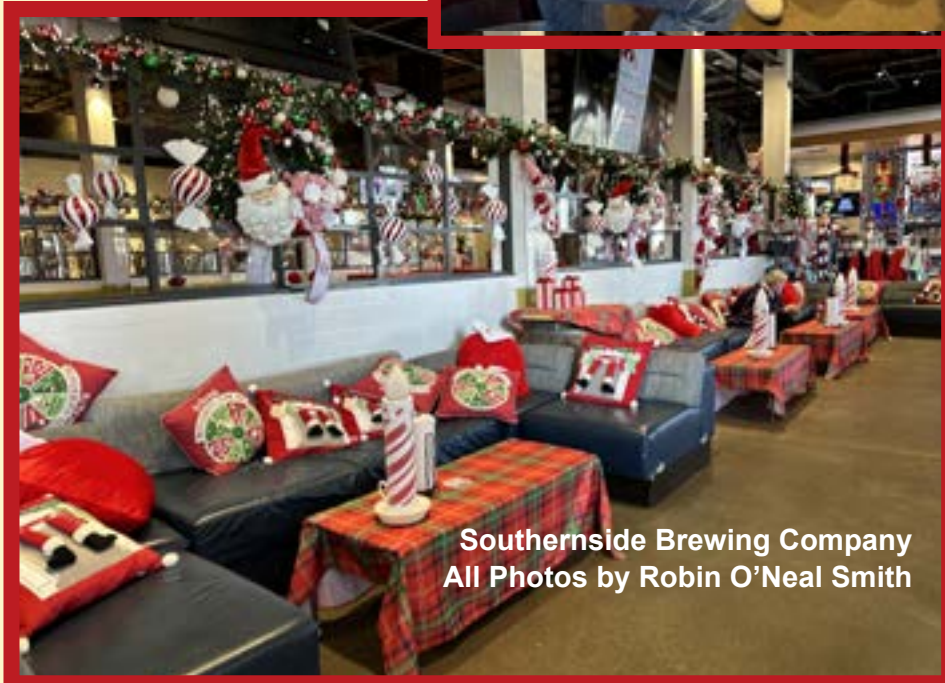
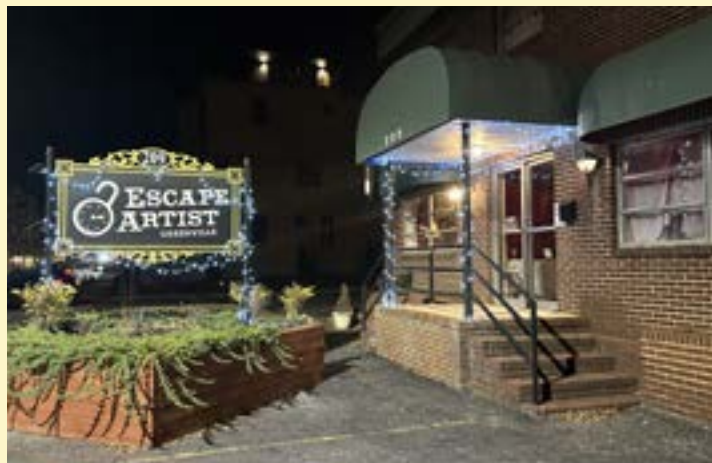
Where to Stay

Stay at downtown Greenville's historic Westin Poinsett Hotel for a classic and convenient extended weekend getaway. It is the perfect location on Main Street, which is the central hub of activity with dozens of locally owned restaurants and boutiques.

Almost everything is within walking distance. The hotel is decorated with an abundance of poinsettias and the most giant Christmas Tree you can imagine. The rooms are spacious, and while the hotel has an old-world feel, it also has many modern amenities.

In Greenville, SC, the holiday spirit is palpable and contagious. This Southern town shines brightly during the festive season with enchanting experiences, from outdoor adventures to cozy culinary delights. Plan your visit and create unforgettable holiday memories in the heart of the South.

[More on S. Carolina >HERE](#)



Southernside Brewing Company
All Photos by Robin O'Neal Smith



CLARKSVILLE SPEEDWAY'S

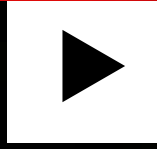
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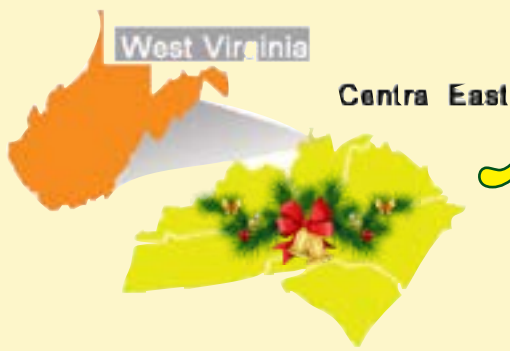
ClarksvilleSpeedway.com



5:30 - 9 p.m. Sun. - Thur.
(10 p.m. Fri, Sat, and holidays.
After Christmas, 5:30 - 8 p.m.

\$30 per Carload

[More on Tennessee >HERE](#)



A Holiday Tre

West Virginia transforms into a winter wonderland during the holiday season, offering a mix of natural beauty, charming towns, and festive activities. If you are planning a different destination this year, here are three options that capture the spirit of Christmas, complete with cozy accommodations, delicious dining, and unforgettable holiday attractions.

Snowshoe Mountain Resort

Snowshoe Mountain Resort is a haven for snow lovers, featuring world-class skiing, snowboarding, and plenty of family-friendly activities. The kids can get into the action, as well, with FREE lift tickets for them from Dec. 7-13.

During the holidays, the resort is beautifully decorated, hosting festive events like tree lightings and visits from Santa. Snowshoe has a lodging option for everyone in every season. There are quaint chalets, large homes, slope side condos, and everything in between. To make reservations, visit <https://www.snowshoemtn.com/plan-your-trip/lodging>

Indulge in fine dining at Appalachia Kitchen, known for its upscale Appalachian-inspired menu, or enjoy comfort food classics at The Junction Ale



Skiing at Snowshoe Mountain

House, perfect after a day on the slopes.

Holiday Activities

- Christmas at the Village: Enjoy live music, holiday crafts, and festive performances.
- Night Skiing & Tubing: Expe-

rience the thrill of the slopes under holiday lights.

- Snowcat Rides: Embark on a magical tour of the resort's snowy landscapes

Harpers Ferry

For the history buffs in your



Town's Inn at Harpers Ferry W.Va.

Transformation

family, this historic town turns into a postcard-perfect Christmas village, complete with cobblestone streets, colonial architecture, and plenty of holiday cheer.

Stay at the charming Town's Inn, a historic property offering cozy, antique-filled rooms and stunning views of the Potomac River.

Dine at The Anvil Restaurant, celebrated for its hearty seasonal dishes and warm atmosphere. For something casual, visit Guide House Grill for regional favorites and craft cocktails.

Holiday Activities

• Wander through candlelit streets, enjoy carolers, and shop

for unique gifts at the Christmas market.

• Historic Walking Tours: Learn about Harpers Ferry's rich history with a festive twist.

• Christmas Train Rides: Take a scenic journey along the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers aboard a holiday-themed train.

The Greenbrier

Known as "America's Resort," The Greenbrier exudes holiday luxury with grand decorations, lavish dining, and exclusive Christmas events for all ages.

Stay on-site at The Greenbrier, where opulent rooms and first-class service make for a memorable holiday retreat.

Enjoy a gourmet holiday feast at The Main Dining Room,

By Norman Reed
Managing Editor



or opt for the cozy charm of Draper's Café, known for its Southern-inspired comfort food.

Holiday Activities

• Winter Wonderland Activities: From ice skating to carriage rides, there's something for everyone.

• Tree Lighting Ceremony: Witness the grandeur of the resort's Christmas tree lighting.

Holiday Workshops: Participate in gingerbread house decorating and wreath-making.

These destinations promise a magical blend of relaxation, adventure, and Christmas cheer, making them perfect for your next holiday getaway.

[More on West Virginia >HERE](#)



The Greenbrier decorated for Christmas

Western States



Schnepf Farms



QUEEN CREEK - Back for its sixth year, the outdoor holiday family experience is gearing up to be bigger and better than ever. With the gates now open, guests will have the run of more than 30 acres of the east valley farm to enjoy nearly 50 holiday-themed attractions. This year's offerings include a Christmas carousel, hayride to feed the reindeer, a petting zoo, ice skating, a giant obstacle course, and snow-globe mini golf.

Children are not to be overlooked as they can experience the magic of Christmas with a personal visit with Santa Claus himself. The farm's interactive Santa's workshop invites little ones to step into a world of wonder and enchantment. They can tour the workshop, peek into Kris Kringle's secret toy-making process, and even write letters to the North Pole.

For the whole family, be sure to hop aboard the all-new Illumination Express train ride, which features an exciting light show extravaganza, synchronized to beloved holiday music. When finished, you should soak up the warmth of one of Schnepf Farms' Christmas campfires, complete with the option of added-on hotdog or s'mores kits. In addition to a variety of food vendors and food trucks, adults can enjoy a large beer and wine garden while the children explore the park. This year, single-serve wine bottles, holiday craft cocktails, and a coffee and hot chocolate bar have been added to aid in the merriment.



"The valley has great holiday event options, but Christmas at Schnepf Farms is the one destination that has something for everyone," said one of the farm's organizers, Callie Graham. "Kids, mom, dad, grandma, and everyone in between will find multiple attractions to choose from and enjoy, so it's definitely money well spent."

It is recommended that guests purchase tickets in advance at www.schnepfchristmas.com, as sold-out nights are common. Ticket prices begin at \$19.95 online for the twilight ticket, which starts at 7:30 PM. Those who wish to arrive early at 5:00 PM can purchase a general admission ticket for \$24.95 online. Children 2 years of age and under are free of charge.

Christmas at Schnepf Farms runs Thursday through Sunday, until Dec. 24, daily the final week leading up to Christmas Eve. For more information, visit <https://schnepfchristmas.com>.

More on Arizona > Here



Alaska

An Alaskan Christmas



Chena Hot Springs Resort in Fairbanks, Alaska

Alaska’s winter wonderland transforms into a magical destination during Christmas, offering visitors unique and unforgettable experiences. Whether you’re dreaming of shimmering northern lights, cozy holiday festivities, or thrilling outdoor adventures, Alaska delivers the ultimate Christmas escape. Here are our top three choices for destinations to consider this holiday season, complete with recommendations for where to stay and dine.

Fairbanks:
The Aurora Borealis Capital
Fairbanks is a top choice for

Christmas in Alaska, known for its spectacular northern lights and rich holiday traditions. Chena Hot Springs Resort – Just outside the city, this resort offers cozy accommodations, geothermal hot springs, and a chance to view the aurora directly from the outdoor pools. Their Ice Museum is an enchanting bonus, featuring intricate ice sculptures year-round.

The Pump House Restaurant & Saloon is an historic riverside restaurant serves hearty Alaskan dishes such as king crab legs and reindeer sausage, com-

plemented by a festive atmosphere perfect for the season.

Join a northern lights viewing tour or try dog sledding for an unforgettable Alaskan adventure.

Anchorage:
Winter City Wonderland

Anchorage combines urban holiday charm with the beauty of surrounding snowy landscapes.

Hotel Captain Cook – This luxurious hotel in downtown Anchorage is the perfect holiday retreat, offering elegantly

decorated rooms, exceptional service, and proximity to Christmas events like tree-lighting ceremonies and holiday markets.

Crow's Nest – Located on the top floor of Hotel Captain Cook, this fine-dining restaurant offers gourmet cuisine and breathtaking views of the snow-covered Chugach Mountains. Enjoy dishes like Alaskan halibut or wild game in an intimate, festive setting.

Visit the Alaska Zoo for its Zoo Lights display or take a scenic train ride on the Alaska Railroad's Holiday Train.

Seward: A Coastal Holiday Getaway

This charming coastal town offers a serene Christmas experience with a touch of adventure.

Seward Windsong Lodge – Nestled along the Resurrection River, this lodge provides a rustic yet comfortable holiday escape. Enjoy its cozy atmosphere, complete with roaring fireplaces and snow-covered views.

Ray's Waterfront – Known for its fresh seafood, this local favorite offers Alaskan specialties like wild salmon and crab, paired with stunning harbor views that are particularly magical during winter.



Alaska Zoo in Anchorage, Alaska

Take a winter cruise in Resurrection Bay to marvel at frosty glaciers and spot wildlife, or hike the snowy trails of Kenai Fjords National Park.

Why Alaska for Christmas?

Alaska's breathtaking landscapes and unique holiday traditions make it a bucket-list destination for Christmas. From dazzling lights to serene

lodges, each destination offers a unique way to celebrate the season. Whether you're seeking adventure or relaxation, these top three Alaskan towns will leave you with cherished memories of a winter wonderland holiday.

Pack your warmest clothes and embark on a Christmas getaway like no other!

More on Alaska >[HERE](#)



Windsong Lodge in Seward



Winter Wonders

Idaho is a treasure trove of winter activities and scenic beauty, offering visitors an array of ways to embrace the season. From snowy mountain escapes to charming holiday festivities, Idaho is the perfect destination for a December extended weekend getaway.

Skiing & Snowboarding



SUN VALLEY RESORT -

A winter trip to Idaho wouldn't be complete without a visit to Sun Valley, the birthplace of destination skiing in the United States. Sun Valley Resort boasts world-class slopes, miles of groomed trails, and après-ski dining options that add a touch of luxury to your adventure. Don't miss the holiday torchlight parade, a local tradition that lights up Bald Mountain on Christmas Eve.

McCall's Winter Wonderland

McCall transforms into a snowy paradise each December, with plenty to offer for families and adventure seekers alike. Visit



Ponderosa State Park for snowshoeing and Nordic skiing amidst breathtaking views of Payette Lake. Stop by McCall's charming downtown to shop for unique holiday gifts and indulge in a warm drink at one of the local coffee houses.



Ice Skating in Downtown Boise Idaho's capital city gets into the holiday spirit with the Indian Creek Plaza ice skating rink in nearby Caldwell. Glide under the festive holiday lights with the Boise foothills in the distance. For a classic Boise experience, explore the city's



for Holiday Adventure

Christmas tree displays and enjoy a hot cider at one of its cozy cafes.

Hot Springs Retreats

Warm up from the winter chill with a visit to one of Idaho's natural hot springs. The Kirkham Hot Springs, nestled along the South Fork of the Payette River, offers a serene escape amid snowy landscapes. Other options include The Springs in Idaho City, which features private pools and a luxurious spa atmosphere.

Coeur d'Alene Resort Holiday Light Show

The Coeur d'Alene Resort offers a magical holiday experience with its renowned Holiday Light Show. This dazzling event includes over a million lights, a "Journey to the North Pole" boat ride, and the chance to visit Santa's workshop. Bundle up for this family-friendly adventure and create memories that will last a lifetime.

Snowmobiling in Island Park

For a more adrenaline-filled activity, head to Island Park, home to some of the best snowmobiling trails in the country. With over 500 miles of groomed trails winding through pristine for-

ests, this destination is a must for outdoor enthusiasts.

Holiday Events and Markets

Throughout Idaho, local towns celebrate the season with unique holiday markets and events. In Ketchum, the Sun Valley Christmas Market showcases handmade gifts, festive decorations, and delicious seasonal treats. Meanwhile, Sandpoint hosts its annual Winter Carnival, featuring parades, fireworks, and live music.

Dining and Lodging Tips

Dining: Savor hearty, local sourced meals at restaurants like The Kneadery in Ketchum or Fork in Boise, both known

for their warm ambiance and seasonal menus.

Lodging

Cozy accommodations range from rustic mountain lodges like Tamarack Resort to luxurious stays at The Coeur d'Alene Resort.

Idaho in December is a winter wonderland waiting to be discovered. Whether you're hitting the slopes, enjoying festive lights, or relaxing in a hot spring, this state offers something magical for everyone. Bundle up and get ready for an unforgettable holiday season in Idaho!

More on Idaho >[HERE](#)





A Very Barry Christmas

LAS VEGAS – Get ready to once again experience the magic of the holidays like never before as Barry Manilow brings his beloved holiday show, A Very Barry Christmas, back to the legendary International Theater at Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino. The two special weekends of performances are set for December 5-7 and December 12-14, promising a festive celebration filled with holiday cheer, classic hits, and unforgettable moments.

The celebrated holiday production, A Very Barry Christmas, has entertained audiences nationwide and is quickly becoming a cherished Las Vegas tradition. With heartwarming holiday tunes, dazzling visuals, and Manilow's signature style, the show is perfect for families, friends, and anyone looking to get into the festive spirit.

Having sold more than 85 million albums worldwide, Barry Manilow is one of the best-selling music artists of all time. With an astonishing 50 Top 40 singles, including 12 #1s and 27 Top 10 hits, his music has shaped the soundtrack of countless lives. Recognized as the #1 Adult Contemporary Artist of all time by Billboard, Manilow's influence on pop music is undeniable.

In addition to creating the holiday magic, Barry Manilow,



the GRAMMY®, TONY®, and EMMY® Award-winning legend, continues to thrill audiences with his hit residency show, MANILOW: LAS VEGAS – The Hits Come Home! Since its debut in May 2018, the show has captivated countless fans with a mesmerizing blend of timeless classics and stunning production elements, earning Manilow accolades such as "Best Resident Performer" by the Las Vegas Review-Journal.

Following this year's holiday performances, Barry Manilow has his 2025 show dates at Westgate Las Vegas set ensuring fans will have opportunities to enjoy his music throughout the year. They are:

February 13-15
February 20-22
March 27-29
April 3-5
May 8-10
May 15-17
June 12-14
June 19-21
September 11-13
September 18-20
October 9-11
October 16-18
November 6-8
November 13-15
December 4-6
December 11-13

Tickets for MANILOW:

LAS VEGAS – The Hits Come Home! and A Very Barry Christmas are available, with prices starting at \$54.75. Secure your spot at Ticketmaster.com, the Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino WOW Rewards Center at (702) 252-6000 ext. 5050, or online at barrymanilow.com and westgatelasvegas.com.

Holiday Cheer with Toys for Tots

Continuing a cherished tradition, A Very Barry Christmas will once again support the Las Vegas Toys for Tots campaign. Guests are encouraged to bring a toy donation, which will be collected by local Marines in the International Theater, bringing joy to children in need this holiday season.

[More on Nevada >HERE](#)



join us for a
JOLLY GOOD TIME

Christmas

TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY

+ Light Parade


SAT | DEC 7TH | 3-6 PM
CITY HALL | 210 LAUREL AVE

Join us for the 22nd Annual **Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony + Light Parade**, a cherished holiday tradition featuring live entertainment, a festive light parade, food and drinks, and photos with Santa.

This event is free and open to the public, made possible by generous sponsors from the community. Don't miss your chance to be a part of the holiday magic—*one lucky raffle winner will light the Christmas tree!*

Bring your family, friends, and holiday spirit for a magical evening of community celebration!

www.tillamookor.gov | publicworks@tillamookor.gov

City of Tillamook 



Heber Valley For Christmas



Kathy Barnett
Editor - In - Chief

Situated in the Wasatch Mountains, Heber Valley offers a perfect Christmas getaway, blending winter sports, festive attractions, and serene relaxation. This picturesque destination invites visitors to enjoy holiday cheer in a setting straight out of a snow globe.

Holiday Highlights

- A visit to Heber Valley during Christmas isn't complete without experiencing the famous Ice Castles in Midway. These ethereal, hand-carved structures feature frozen tunnels, slides, and illuminated sculptures. Evening visits are particularly magical, as the ice glows with vibrant LED lights.
- Take a nostalgic ride on the North Pole Express. This holiday-themed train journey includes Christmas carols, visits from Santa, and delicious hot cocoa served in collectible mugs. Families love this festive adventure that captures the spirit of the season.
- Warm up at the Homestead Crater, a natural geothermal hot spring located inside a 55-foot-tall limestone dome. Guests can soak, snorkel, or even scuba dive in its warm, mineral-rich waters—a unique way to unwind during your holiday retreat.

Outdoor Adventures

The valley's snowy landscapes are perfect for winter sports. Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are popular at Soldier Hollow Nordic



Ice Castle in Midway at Heber Valley, UT

Center, a venue used during the 2002 Winter Olympics. Snowmobiling tours are another thrilling way to explore the pristine backcountry. For downhill skiing enthusiasts, the nearby Deer Valley Resort and Sundance Mountain Resort provide top-tier slopes and breathtaking views.

Accommodations

Modeled after a Swiss village, Zermatt Utah Resort offers cozy, alpine-inspired accommodations. Indulge in luxurious spa treatments or relax by the fire after a day of winter activities. The European-style Blue Boar Inn offers gourmet dining and a welcoming ambiance, perfect for couples seeking a romantic holiday escape. For the family, savor locally-inspired dishes at Back 40 Ranch House Grill, which features fresh, farm-to-table ingredients. For a sweet treat, try the Bakery at Zermatt, renowned for its artisan pastries and chocolates.

Whether you're looking for outdoor adventures, festive events, or a peaceful winter retreat, Heber Valley delivers a holiday experience that feels both cozy and luxurious. Its charming blend of small-town warmth and alpine beauty makes it a hidden gem for holiday travelers.

New England States





Hidden Holiday

Embrace the spirit of the season with a passport that brings Delaware's hidden holiday magic to life. Journey through cozy, twinkling towns, scenic winter landscapes, and locally-loved spots for holiday shopping, festive cheer, and unique winter experiences.

Check-in at all 3 locations in each county to win up to 3 different prizes! Delaware has three counties: New Castle, Kent, and Sussex. Points will be deposited in your rewards center after you check-in at the 3rd location in a specific county. The prizes will be chosen at random and shipped within 4-6 weeks. Here is a sneak peek to what you will experience:

Zoo Lights & Christmas Nights at 3 Palms Zoo

This year's holiday lights at 3 Palms are brighter than ever! Stroll through festive displays like "The Goose & the Golden Egg," "Candy Land," "A Sneaky Grinch," and more. Evenings are the best time to see the nocturnal animals—Sienna the Screech Owl, Rosie the Raccoon, Stanley the Skunk, and lively foxes—awake and active in their



Zoo Lights & Christmas Nights at 3 Palms Zoo

habitats. Enjoy marshmallow roasting, hot chocolate, holiday tunes, and a chance to share your Christmas wishes with Santa!

For more information on hours, admission prices, and upcoming events, see <https://3palmszoo.org/>

Gift of Lights at Dover Motor Speedway

Gift of Lights offers a one-of-a-kind holiday experience that brings beloved seasonal stories to life. Featuring light tunnels, giant sparkling displays, and an enchanting drive-thru show,

it's crafted to delight all ages. Gift of Lights invites visitors to relax, enjoy festive music, and take in every twinkling moment of the holiday wonderland, where dreams come to life in lights—all from the comfort of their cars. For more information, see <https://www.dovermotorspeedway.com/>



Gems Trail

Holidays at Hagley Museum

Holidays at Hagley returns and will feature Holiday Home and Garden Tours, the seventh-annual Gingerbread House Contest, Santa Day, Holiday Nights Tours, and more. <https://www.hagley.org/>

Holiday Magic Riverbright at Wilmington Riverfront

Holiday Magic returns, Friday, November 29th! The Christina Riverwalk will transform into a captivating walk-through holiday light display with lights draping on trees and archways, creating a whimsical atmosphere all long. Open 7 days a week, lights turn on at Dusk. Free parking is available at 601 S. Madison St. For more information, visit <https://riverfrontwilm.com/holiday-magic/>

Lewes Lights

This free, community-driven holiday light tour brings the magic of the season to life as

homes and businesses across Lewes, Delaware, sparkle with Christmas spirit and holiday cheer. For more information, see <https://www.leweslights.org/>

Noël at Nemours Estate

Tour the festive displays in the 77-room Mansion, Chauffeur's Garage and gardens. Live music performances throughout the season. For more information visit <https://www.nemoursestate.org/>

Santa's House on the Boardwalk

Santa's House is back on the Rehoboth Boardwalk, bringing festive cheer to the beach! Located at the end of Rehoboth Avenue, this holiday tradition is ready for your visit, with Santa himself announcing his special holiday hours. Stop by to share your Christmas wishes and snap a memorable photo with Santa! Don't forget your camera—it's the perfect way to capture the



Hagley Museum

magic of the season. More on <https://www.beach-fun.com/events/santa-s-house-on-the-boardwalk.html>

Schellville Village

Visitors can hop on train rides, explore snow zones, experience magical snowfall every hour, and meet Santa and Mrs. Claus. Wander through the village, where even more festive houses await, along with Artisan Alley, showcasing the creations of local crafters—a holiday treasure trove for families and friends alike! <https://schellbrothers.com/promotions/schellville/>

Ice Skating Tre Sorelle Dolce

Bundle up in your coziest scarf and gloves to experience the magic of winter at Tre Sorelle Dolce's Synthetic Ice Rink. Whether you're a seasoned skater or just looking for a bit of fun, lace up, step onto the ice, and let the gliding begin! Tre Sorelle Dolce is the perfect spot to make cherished memories with family and friends! <https://www.tresorelledolcedelaware.com/>



Santa's House on the Boardwalk

More on Delaware >HERE



JOIN IN CAMDEN BALLET THEATRE'S NUTCRACKER HUNT

Beginning Nov. 1, a nutcracker will be hidden each Friday in a Camden store. A picture of the hidden nutcracker with a clue will post on Camden Ballet Theatre's Instagram and Facebook pages. Tag @camdenballettheatre and @christmasbythesea_maine with a picture when you find it. Keep the nutcracker and win two tickets to see The Nutcracker at Strom Auditorium Dec. 7 or 8.



CHRISTMAS BY THE SEA COMMEMORATIVE ORNAMENT (LIMITED QUANTITY)

One-of-a-kind CBTS ornament on sale for \$5 beginning Dec. 6 at the Chamber of Commerce and Camden Public Library. Proceeds to benefit Restorative Justice.

COMMUNITY HAT AND MITTEN TREE

Decorate with your donated new or like-new hats, mittens, gloves and scarves Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m. -6 p.m., through Dec. 14. Sponsored by First National Bank, the tree is inside Camden Public Library. Items will go to the First Congregational Church SOS Room.



GINGERBREAD HOUSE SPECTACULAR

View and vote for your favorite, then bid to win a house to take home. Proceeds benefit United Midcoast Charities. Friday-Saturday, Dec. 6-7, noon-8 p.m., at 16 Bay View Hotel in Camden.

Northeast



CHRISTMAS
BY THE SEA

DECEMBER 6-8, 2024

CAMDEN-LINGOLNVILLE-ROCKPORT

Come celebrate the holidays in our sparkling towns by the sea!

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Holiday Cheer



Old Sturbridge Village
Photo courtesy of Heart of MA

Discover the “Heart of Massachusetts” this year with seasonal events, historic charm, and winter activities to create the perfect holiday getaway.

The Heart of Massachusetts transforms into a festive wonderland during the holidays. With small towns and events, and easy access from major cities like Boston, Hartford, and New York, the region invites visitors to create lasting memories this Christmas. Here are just a few for you to explore:

- **Night Lights at New England Botanic Garden (Boylston):** Marvel at thousands of twinkling lights, cozy up by fire pits, and enjoy the new ice-skating rink. Now through Jan. 5

- **Winter Wonderland at Southwick’s Zoo (Mendon):** A dazzling display of over 4 million lights featuring Santa’s

Barn, live performances, and festive treats. Now through – Dec. 29

- **Christmas by Candlelight at Old Sturbridge Village (Sturbridge):** Step back in time with costumed historians, Christmas Tree Trails, and live music. Select dates: Now through Dec. 30

- **Red Apple Farm Winter Lights (Phillipston):** Explore an enchanting orchard illuminated with over 200,000 lights, complemented by bonfires, wood-fired pizza, and local brews from the Brew Barn. Nov. 29–Dec. 31

- **Polar Express Holiday Celebration at Wachusett Mountain (Princeton):** Delight in a festive holiday experience featuring a hot chocolate and waffle bar, a Polar Express screening, and photo opportunities with Santa and Saint Bernard dogs. Dec. 14



Additional Seasonal Favorites:

- Downtown strolls and tree lightings in towns like Worcester, Hudson, and Ashland
- Sleigh rides at Cornerstone Ranch and Oakholm Farm & Brewery
- Holiday performances at the Hanover Theatre (Worcester) and other local stages

Outdoor Adventures for All Ages:

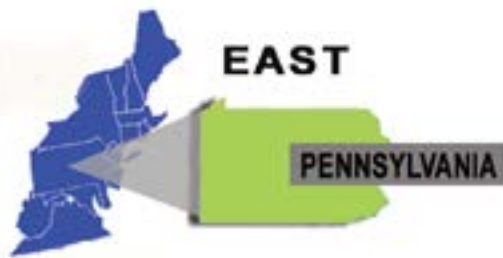
Enjoy winter recreation like skiing and tubing at Wachusett Mountain and Ski Ward, cross-country trails, winter hikes, or ice fishing at scenic spots such as Hopkinton State Park and Chauncy Lake.

Why Choose the Heart of Massachusetts?

With its central location and rich traditions, the Heart of Massachusetts is a perfect blend of small-town charm and big holiday spirit—offering convenient day trips or unforgettable weekend escapes.

[More on Massachusetts HERE](#)





Winter Wonderland The Very Best



*By Robin O'Neal Smith
Associate Editor*

Are you ready for a family adventure along Route 6 in Pennsylvania during the winter months? Stretching across the state through nine counties along the New York state border, this highway is the east-west scenic route in the state's northern tier. It's a gateway to an enchanting tapestry of history, beauty, and family fun. Whether you're a road trip enthusiast eager to discover new horizons, a history buff fascinated by the past, or a family looking for the perfect extended weekend getaway, Route 6 promises an inspiring and delightful winter adventure. In this article, we are focusing on the Potter/Tioga County area <https://www.visitpottertioga.com/> along the route.

Wellsboro's Gaslight Era Charm

The quaint town of Wellsboro beckons with its gas-lit streets and historic architecture, a unique charm that is sure to captivate you. It's the perfect winter extended weekend getaway destination, especially for those who appreciate a touch of Dickensian magic. The town transforms into a Hallmark-style wonderland in winter, promising a delightful and enchanting experience.

For indoor fun, stop at Pop's Culture Shoppe, www.popscultureshoppe.com, located on Main Street and Route 6, to find every game imaginable, plus things made in Pennsylvania. Pop's Culture Shoppe recently won Route 6's "Artisan of the Year." www.popscultureshoppe.com Stop at the Wynken, Blinken & Nod Fountain on the Green. This charming fountain, inspired by the popular children's poem, is a delightful



spot for a family photo. It is adorable any time of year.

The sweetest thing you can do when visiting Wellsboro is visit the Highland Chocolate

Decorations Are Unveiling the Spirit of Route 6



Decorated Trees and Gas Lamps with Wreaths in Wellsboro

All photos submitted by Robin O'Neal Smith



Handmade Tree Stump candy at Highland Chocolate Shop

Shop. Their handmade candy is delicious and created by extraordinary employees. I highly recommend their Almond Bark and Tree Stumps. Tree Stumps are decadent treats with creamy peanut butter and caramel sandwiched between

two Pennsylvania-made mini pretzels and coated in premium Milk Chocolate. Highland Chocolates also offers public tours. Check their website at <https://highlandchocolates.org/> to see their tour schedule.

Kids and adults will enjoy learning how to cook. Rookie Cooks Academy has fun events throughout the year and specializes in teaching all ages how to cook and hosts kids' cooking classes. Check out one of the fun activities: <https://www.visitpottertioga.com/event/kids-cooking-polar-express-christmas-cookies-hot-cocoa>.

Step into the past at the Pennsylvania Lumber Museum, <https://lumbermuseum.org/>, where the story of the state's rich lumbering history unfolds. Interactive exhibits and historical reenactments offer a glimpse into a bygone era, making it an educational and enlightening stop for all ages. You'll leave with a deeper understanding of Pennsylvania's history and the role of logging and agriculture in our state's growth.

History buffs will enjoy stepping back 100 years to an era when lumberjacks with giant handheld saws cut the white pine and hemlock every day. Pennsylvania's lumber history is chronicled by interpretive exhibits and interactive displays at this state museum. The on-site lumber camp, sawmill, and Shay Locomotive displays offer a chance to spend time on the grounds.

I was very impressed with the museum. I learned much about the state's history and how logging and agriculture were essential to our growing state.

Wellsboro hosts two holiday festivals. It's a "Dickens's of a Christmas" the first weekend in

December and “Christmas on Main” the second weekend in December.

Get Outdoors

For stargazers, no visit to Route 6 is complete without a stop at Cherry Springs State Park <https://cherryspringsstatepark.com>. Recognized as one of the darkest spots on the East Coast and the Travel Channel labeled it the best place on earth for stargazing, this park offers a magical celestial show. You will see thousands of stars. Bundle up, take a blanket, and prepare to be awed by the glittering winter sky.

TIP: Get there and find a spot before dark. It is darker than you can imagine, and you cannot use flashlights.

Often referred to as the “Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania,” Pine Creek Gorge offers awe-inspiring views. Blanketed in snow, the canyon’s rugged beauty is magnified, making it a must-visit for nature lovers and photographers.

A mile wide from rim to rim, the Pine Creek Gorge runs approximately 50 miles and plunges 800 feet along most of the gorge. The southern end plunges even deeper to almost 1600 feet.

We viewed it at the Leonard Harrison State Park on the canyon’s eastern boundary. It has accessible viewing platforms less than a hundred yards from the parking lot.

You can also view from the opposite side at Colton State Park.

A new recreation area along Route 6, directly across from the PA Lumber Museum, is Denton Go <https://www.dentongo.com/>. They have camping sites and cabins coming soon with hiking, biking trails, and ATV/UTV rentals. They plan to revitalize Denton Hill and enhance recreational experiences for all visitors. Denton Hill offers breathtaking vistas that seem to stretch on forever.

In winter, the snow-laden trees and distant

mountains create a scene from a painting. Stop here to take a deep breath of crisp mountain air and capture stunning photos. The area also offers opportunities for wildlife viewing and birdwatching, making it a perfect spot for nature enthusiasts.

If your family is into skiing or tubing, the Ski Sawmill Family Resort <https://www.skisawmill.com> in Tioga County, just south of Wellsboro, is the perfect place to spend the day.

Other Route 6 Destinations

Other Route 6 places you won’t want to miss if taking a longer road trip include:

- McCleery Discovery Center, Kane, PA
- Zippo Museum and Marilyn Horne Museum, Bradford, PA
- Nearby Corning Museum of Glass in Corning, NY
- Little League Museum, Williamsport, PA
- French Azilum/Marie Antoinette Lookout in Wyalusing, Pennsylvania
- Ricketts Glen State Park
- Tunkhannock Viaduct, Tunkhannock, PA
- Electric City Trolley Museum, Scranton, PA
- Steamtown National Historic Site, Scranton, PA

Tips for Planning Your Route 6 Adventure

Route 6 in Pennsylvania is more than just a road; it’s a passage through time and nature, a canvas painted with the colors of history, beauty, and family fun. To make the most of your winter adventure, consider these tips:



- Check weather conditions and plan for possible road closures.
- Book accommodations in advance, especially in popular towns and near attractions.
- Layer up! Pennsylvania winters can be chilly, and warmth is vital to enjoying your travels.

• Don't rush. Savor each stop, as the charm of Route 6 lies in its leisurely exploration. Happy travels along Route 6, and may your journey be as memorable as the destinations themselves!

[More on Pennsylvania >HERE](#)

40th Annual **DICKENS OF A CHRISTMAS**

**WELLSBORO
PENNSYLVANIA**

2024





*Downtown
Christmas Trees
Compliments of*

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Christmas on Main Street – 2nd Weekend in DECEMBER

Wellsboro Winter Celebration – 2nd Weekend in FEBRUARY

Pennsylvania State Laurel Festival – 3rd Weekend in JUNE

Wellsboro Comic Con – Second Saturday in AUGUST

*Gallery featuring local
artists with free admission*

Gmeiner Art & Cultural Center
134 Main Street, Wellsboro PA
Open 12-6pm, Tuesday through Sunday



Regional Juried Exhibit opens
Saturday, December 7th at noon
Artists' Reception and Awards on
Sunday, December 8th from 2-4pm



Friday, DEC 6 - 7:30PM
St. Peter's Catholic Church
Sponsored by Pam & Rob Kathcart



Saturday, DEC 7
6 Performances throughout the day!

Sunday, DEC 8 - 2:30PM
Sponsored by Wellsboro Electric Co. &
In Memory of Lloyd and Myrna Smith



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Treasures Of D.C.'s C

“City of Magnificent Intentions”

Charles Dickens



By Renée Gordon
History Travel Writer

In 1790, while Philadelphia functioned as the Capitol, Congress granted George Washington the power, under the Residence Act, to find a location for and establish a permanent federal city. The following year Pierre L'Enfant was hired to create plans for the 10-sq-mile diamond-shaped Territory of Columbia. In 1792 Washington fired L'Enfant.

Thomas recommended a free African American architect, astronomer and mathematician, to Washington that same year. At a rate of \$2 daily he was designated assistant surveyor. His job included fixing the boundaries for and creating maps of the new city. More than 400 slaves worked on Jenkin's Hill clearing trees and stumps. Their owners received



\$5 a month but had to supply the enslaved with a blanket.

The Territory of Columbia was the earliest city designed for a

distinctive function. Jenkin's Hill was selected, as the high point at the end of The Mall for the construction of the Capitol. The Capitol was to be the cen-

Capitol Hill



ter of the city, not the White House. The idea was that the focus should always be on the law. The city has four quadrants. The north-south streets are numbered and the east-west streets are lettered with the exception of a missing “J” Street.

On August 24, 1814 British soldiers burned the building. After restorations the Capitol needed a new dome. The Statue of Freedom atop the building is 19-feet 6-inches, rises 288-ft and weighs 14,985 pounds. Philip Reid, an enslaved worker, assisted in casting the bronze sections.

The 4-sq.-mile Capitol Hill District is one of the United States’ largest historic districts. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. It is within walking distance of Union Station, the Metro, museums and the major federal buildings in the city.

The 2023 Royal Sonesta Capitol Hill offers 273 luxurious accommodations, deluxe amenities, a 10-story atrium, VIP pet packages and a number of the largest guestrooms in the city. They provide all the luxe amenities, WIFI, designer linens and enhanced cleaning standards. Public spaces

feature curated artworks and an outstanding rooftop view. www.sonesta.com/royal-sonesta/dc/washington Fine dining is part of the royal experience in Bistro Du Jour. The bar serves a menu of specialty cocktails and the restaurant presents French inspired cuisine with an American influence. Bistro Du Jour is open for all three meals and brunch.

The Knight of Capitol Hill is the hotel’s ambassador. A beaver was chosen because of his early presence in the city and his engineering abilities. Legend has it that he was often

seen swimming aside John Q. Adams.

Union Station was restored in the 1980s at a cost of \$160-million. The Beaux-Arts building was constructed of granite. The Main Hall has a 96-ft. barrel-vaulted ceiling. The 3-level Concourse is filled with shops and eateries.

The 1800 Sewall-Beumont became the National Women's Headquarters in 1929 after a series of relocations. The mansion was rebuilt after the fire in 1814 making it one of the Capitol Hill's oldest mansions. In 1997 it was declared a museum and the archives of the National Woman's Party headquarters. Suffragettes were persecuted by the public and the police for attempting to gain the vote. Many were imprisoned and abused. On the exterior of the building are the original steps of the Occoquan Prison.

The Supreme Court is located on the site of the Old Brick Capitol and the Old Capitol Prison. The prison held the enslaved, POWs, spies, John Mosby, Belle Boyd and the Lincoln conspirators including Mary Surratt. Today the Supreme Court stands as a monument to justice and the law and the classical exterior, harkening back to the Parthenon, is awe-inspiring.

The building, facing the Cap-



itol, is 385-feet long, 304-feet wide and is entered by 6.5-ton bronze doors. A 252-ft. wide oval terrace showcases two seated statues, a female, the Contemplation of Justice and a male sculpture representing the Guardian or Authority of Law. The façade is comprised of Vermont marble with white Georgia marble used for the four inner courtyards. The main pediment displays robed figures and the architect, Cass Gilbert, placed himself among them. The building's cornerstone was laid on October 13, 1932.

President Adams authorized \$5000 for books for Congressional use in 1800. This was the genesis of the Library of Congress, the world's largest library. The collection is in the millions as well as the U.S. Copyright Office. After the library was burned in 1814, during the War of 1812, former President Thomas Jefferson sold Congress his 6,487-volume personal library for

\$23,950.

The Library of Congress is actually three buildings, the 1897 Thomas Jefferson Building the 1938 John Adams Building and the 1981 James Madison Memorial Building was completed in 1981. A highlight of a visit to the Library of Congress is the impressive Thomas Jefferson Building. It is modeled after the Paris Opera House. The mosaics, murals and statuary reinforce the themes

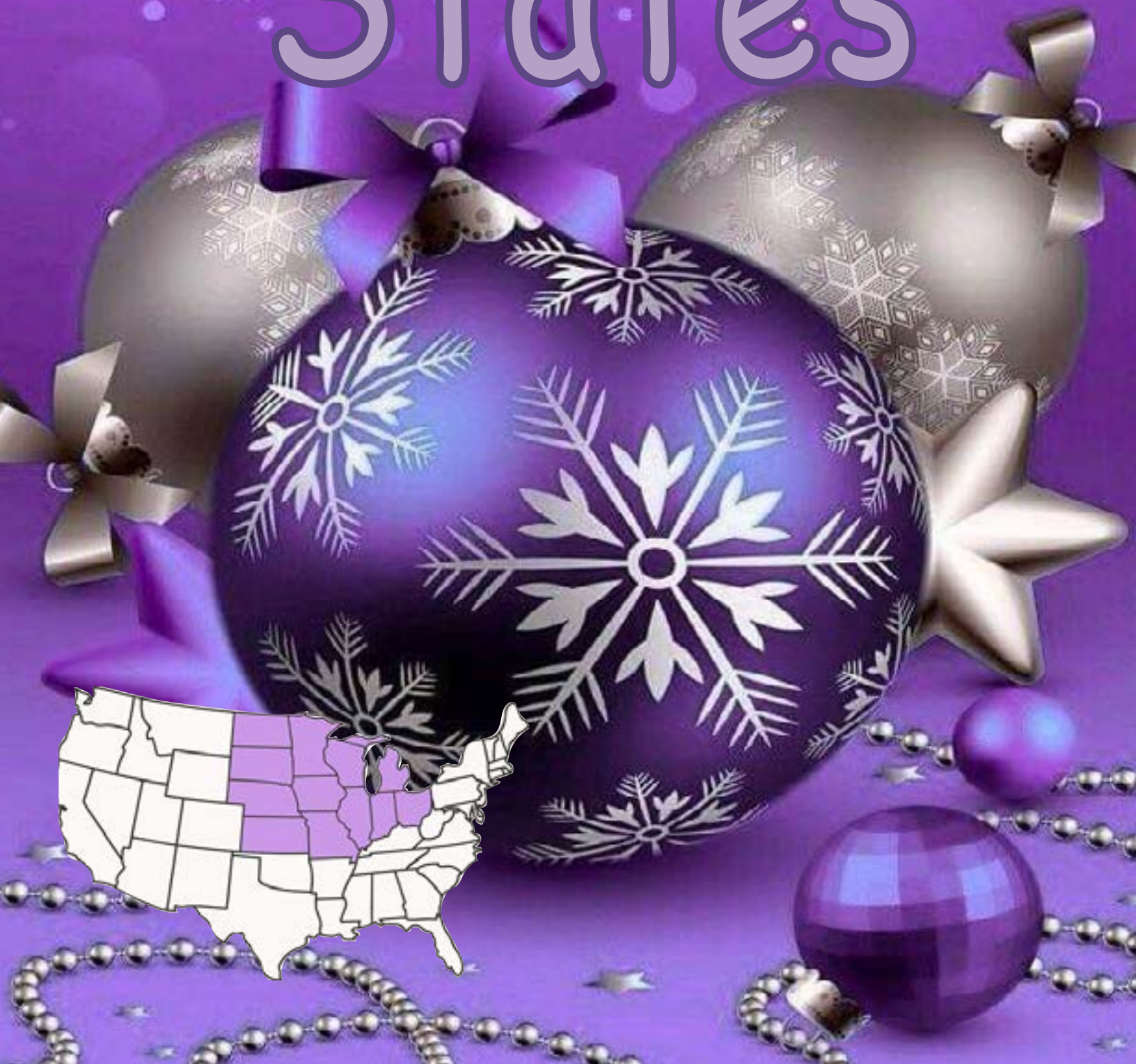
of knowledge and education. Treasures include a Gutenberg Bible printed with moveable type and the contents of Lincoln's pockets when he was assassinated. Tours are free.

Located below the East Front Plaza of the Capitol is the Capitol Visitor Center, the main entrance to the U.S. Capitol. Statues are on view around the site including a true to size model of the Statue of Freedom. Nearby is a small display on African American contributions to the construction of the Capitol.

Any season is perfect for a visit to Capitol Hill but the December Holiday season is particularly exciting. Many of the streets are decorated and the National Christmas Tree, The National Menorah and the US Capitol Christmas Tree are dressed in holiday lights.

Experience comfort and joy in the Capitol Hill District. #destinationdc #visitdc

Midwest States





Winterland Is Back

CHICAGO – Celebrate the holidays by taking part in the many seasonal events and activities occurring Dec. 6-22 at Gallagher Way. The fun begins with a Winterland tree light ceremony at 6 p.m., then continues with Santa's Workshop, wreath making classes, holiday Movie Nights, bumper cars, special programming at Hotel Zachary and surrounding Gallagher Way eateries.

New to this year's transformation includes a winter market and a winter carnival where guests can enjoy festive carnival rides during the last two weekends of Winterland. Programming dates, times and additional details are:

- Thur. and Fri.: 4 - 9 p.m.
- Sat.: 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.
- Sun.: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Dates and hours are subject to change.



SANTA'S WORKSHOP

Guests can take photos with Santa on Thurs. - Sun. in his workshop located in a chalet at Gallagher Way! Santa's workshop is open to all family members, including pets. Santa's Workshop schedule is Thur. and Fri.: 4 - 9 p.m., Sat. and Sun.: 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. Pets are only allowed Sun.

WINTER MARKET

New this year to Winterland at Gallagher Way is the Winter Market. During the first weekend of Winterland, stop by the

Winter Market to shop from a wide variety of vendors offering everything from home decor to clothing, food, jewelry, gifts, and more! The Winter Market is the perfect place for date night, meeting up with friends, or post-work drinks. This free event is open to the public.

WREATH-MAKING WORKSHOPS

In partnership with Indigo & Violet Studio, Gallagher Way brings a festive wreath-making workshop to Winterland! Guests

will learn how to make a fragrant, one-of-a-kind holiday decoration for all to enjoy. Tickets are \$55 per person, which includes both the wreath and décor material. Workshops will take place Saturday, December 7, and Sunday, December 8, at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Spots fill up quickly – for more details and to reserve a spot, visit <http://www.gallagherway.com/events>.

MOVIE NIGHTS

On select Thursdays, Gallagher

Back At Gallagher Way



Hotel Zachary's Globes, available for private bookings November 16 through January 26, 2025 (with closures on December 24 and 25). The heated Globes provide an intimate setting for holiday fun, perfect for friends, families, or couples looking to embrace the spirit of the season. Each reservation includes a drink and dessert package, featuring signature holiday cocktails or kid-friendly options like hot chocolate, eggnog, or sparkling cider. Within each globe, groups can enjoy holiday music on the record player provided, cards and board games, and a Polaroid camera to capture picture-perfect moments with friends and family. Additionally, a live DJ will perform Thursday through Saturday evenings, spinning holiday music throughout November and December. The Globes are available to book via Alma's Open Table page for two to six guests from Sunday through Thursday for \$50 per person and Friday through Saturday for \$75 per person.



Way will host holiday-themed Movie Nights at Winterland. Movies will be played on the Gallagher Way video board. Gates will open at 6 p.m., with movies beginning at 7 p.m. The schedule is as follows:

- December 12: Elf
- December 19: Home Alone

ALMA AT HOTEL ZACHARY

Globes on the Terrace
Cozy up on the terrace this winter inside Alma at Ho-

Teddy Bear Tea

Create warm winter memories with afternoon tea for little ones with Teddy Bear Tea at Alma. On Saturday and Sunday afternoons, December 1 through January 26, 2025, families are invited to share the timeless tradition of afternoon tea with a holiday twist. Children can sip hot chocolate with their favorite stuffed animals, while adults enjoy the finest teas from Rare Tea Cellars.

To make the experience even more special, children will receive an Alma-branded teddy bear. For the first time this year, Alma is enhancing Sundays at Teddy Bear Tea with creative activities in collaboration with Kidcreate Studios, a local children's art studio known for its hands-on art classes. Tea service is available for \$60 per adult and \$30 for children ages 4-12 years of age. Kidcreate Studios add-on experiences are available every Sunday in December for an additional \$25 per person. Reservations are required for Teddy Bear Tea and can be made via Alma's OpenTable page.

Breakfast with Santa

An Alma holiday tradition, Breakfast with Santa returns this winter season. On Saturdays and Sundays December 1 through December 21, from 7 to 11 a.m., families are invited to enjoy a special holiday-in-



spired breakfast buffet and a visit with Jolly Old Saint Nick, plus ample photo opportunities with cheerful décor and music. Breakfast with Santa is \$60 for adults and \$25 for children ages 4-12. Pricing also includes the choice of hot chocolate, coffee, tea, or juice, and a Polaroid photo with Santa. Reservations are required for Breakfast with Santa and can be made via Alma's OpenTable page.

Children's Storytime with Chris Fascione

Nationally renowned story-performer Chris Fascione is making his return to Alma to delight audiences with his fun-filled performance, "Juggling Funny Stories." Chris will be at performing at Alma on December 1, 21, and 22, with two engaging half-hour story time sessions available at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. Families attending can enjoy complimentary hot chocolate for the kids, while adults can treat themselves to a selection of specialty drinks.

MORDECAI Mistletoe Holiday Pop-Up Bar

Back again for the holiday season, Mordecai's annual holiday pop-up bar boasts festive, over-the-top decorations that seamlessly blend nostalgia with the modern day. Expert mixologists curated an exclusive holiday-inspired drink menu featuring contemporary

and vintage cocktails. Mistletoe is a limited engagement, opening November 15 through January 4, 2025. Reservations are available for groups of up to five people on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays via Mordecai's Tock page. For larger groups, please call the restaurant directly at (773) 269-5410.

LUCKY DORR Lucky Lodge

Celebrate the holidays at Lucky Lodge, Lucky Dorr's annual holiday pop-up bar, featuring seasonal beers and signature hot cider. Guests can grab a holiday crowler to go or cozy up amongst the festive decorations. Lucky Lodge encourages their friends to bring in a copy of their holiday card to add to the display and fill the bar with photos of holiday cheer! Lucky Lodge will be open Thursday through Sunday, until Jan. 5. For more information, please visit <https://www.luckydorr.com/> Stay updated on all the events and attractions at <https://www.gallagherway.com/> [More on Illinois >HERE](#)

22ND ANNUAL COULTERVILLE Holiday Light Display

Free Event



Downtown Coulterville
102 West Grant Street

December 7th-27th

NIGHTLY Dusk - 9PM

FEATURING

18 Block Drive-Thru Display
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2 MILLION LIGHTS & 600 FIGURINES

DRIVE-THRU STARTS AT CITY PARK &
TRAVELS 18 BLOCKS ON 7TH, KING STREET & PALM STREETS

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EVERY SATURDAY · 5PM-8PM

EVENT NIGHTS EVERY
FRIDAY- SUNDAY FROM
5PM- 8PM IN DECEMBER

SANTA & HIS MAGICAL FRIENDS VISIT THE PARK

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FREE KID'S GOODIE BAGS & CRAFTS
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FOR INFORMATION OR TO MAKE DONATIONS

Coulterville Light Display | P.O. Box 273, Coulterville, IL 62237
Contact: Light Director-Scott Rust 618-525-9182 or scottirust@yahoo.com



IT'S CHRISTMAS TIME IN KOKOMO

KOKOMO - There isn't a more elegant place to celebrate the season than Christmas at the Seiberling at the Seiberling Mansion in Kokomo, Indiana. Its holiday celebration begins on Saturday, Nov. 30 and will continue through Dec. 29, 2024. This year's theme is "Holiday Memories."

The elegance and grandeur of the Seiberling Mansion is a perfect setting for its beautifully decorated trees, wreaths and garlands, and thousands of Christmas lights. Inside, take in all the holiday beauty and marvel at the dozens of trees in 20 rooms on all three floors of the mansion. Vote for your favorite decorated room with donations to support the Howard County Historical Society and help select the People's Choice.

Christmas at the Seiberling regular hours are Tuesday-Sunday from 1-4 p.m. through Dec. 29, 2024. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children. In addition, Christmas at the Seiberling will be open on select evenings sponsored by generous local community sponsors from 4-8 p.m. on Dec. 5, 6, 12, 13, 19 & 20, 2024.

The Seiberling Mansion is located in the 1200 block of West Sycamore Street in Kokomo. The mansion is home to the Howard County Museum with local history exhibits throughout. Parking lots are accessible via Walnut Street, behind the mansion.

While in Kokomo, celebrate the season with other fun holiday events. Kokomo Municipal Stadium will be transformed into The Frozen Sandlot and Wintertyme Village for the hol-

idays with outdoor ice skating, holiday vendors, light displays and much more open on select days. Drive or walk through Christmas light displays at Highland Park, Howard County Fairgrounds, and Grissom Air Museum.

In addition, the Kokomo Christmas Parade will be held on Dec. 7, 2024 with marching bands, lighted floats and Santa & Mrs. Claus while holiday performances in the Kokomo area include the Charles Dickens' classic A Christmas Carol, Jingle Bell Symphony: A Magical Holiday Journey, and A Christmas Story – the Musical. You'll find plenty of Christmas spirit in Kokomo! Learn more and plan your visit at www.VisitKokomo.org/ChristmasinKokomo. [More on Indiana >HERE](#)

WELCOME TO KOKOMO!



<https://visitkokomo.org>

Photo Credit: Paula Goff

It's A Grand Rapids



*By Norman Reed
Managing Editor*

GRAND RAPIDS - It's a festive and charming destination for an extended weekend getaway, especially during the holiday season. From twinkling lights to festive markets and winter activities, this vibrant city combines winter beauty with a lively holiday spirit. If you're looking to escape into a magical winter wonderland, here's your guide to some of the best experiences Grand Rapids has to offer during the holidays.

Meijer Gardens: Enlighten Holiday Lights Display

One of the most enchanting stops in Grand Rapids during the holiday season is Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, a 158-acre botanical garden and outdoor sculpture park. During the winter months, it transforms into a glowing winter landscape, featuring the Enlighten display. This annual event illuminates the gardens with over 300,000 twinkling lights, creating a truly magical atmosphere.

Wander through paths surrounded by glowing sculptures, towering holiday trees, and beautifully illuminated botanical gardens. The event also features a unique indoor display, with the conservatory showcasing a tropical escape in the midst of winter. With hot cocoa in hand and twinkling lights around you, it's the perfect way to get into the holiday spirit. The Enlighten experience runs through the holiday season, so it's a must-see for any visitor in town.

Christkindl Markt: A European-Inspired Holiday Market

For a taste of European holiday traditions, head to Christkindl Markt, Grand Rapids' very own holiday market. This open-air market takes place each December and is inspired by the traditional



Christmas markets of Germany and other European countries. Located in the heart of downtown, Christkindl Markt offers a delightful mix of artisan goods, handmade gifts, local food vendors, and traditional holiday fare.

Roam the market stalls, where you'll find everything from beautifully crafted ornaments and woodwork to delicious treats like bratwurst, pretzels, and mulled wine. The festive atmosphere is complete with live music, carolers, and even a visit from Santa Claus. It's the perfect spot to pick up unique gifts while enjoying the cheerful holiday ambiance.

Rosa Parks Circle Let's Go Ice Skating

When the snow begins to fall, Grand Rapids transforms into a winter playground. One of the most popular winter activities is ice skating at Rosa Parks Circle, located right in the heart of downtown. The rink, which is open daily throughout the winter season, offers a perfect spot for skaters of all levels. Skate rentals are available, and the rink is surrounded by stunning city views, with the surrounding buildings lit up in holiday cheer.

Whether you're a seasoned skater or just looking to glide around for fun, Rosa Parks Circle offers a festive atmosphere complete with music and

Wonderland



lights. Afterward, stop by one of the nearby coffee shops or restaurants for a warm drink or bite to eat—many of the area’s eateries embrace the holiday season with cozy and comforting menus.

The Santa Parade: A Downtown Tradition

No holiday visit to Grand Rapids would be complete without attending the city’s beloved Santa Parade, a family-friendly event that marks the official start of the holiday season in the city. This festive parade, which winds through downtown Grand Rapids, features floats, marching bands, colorful costumes, and of course, the grand arrival of Santa Claus.

Children and families gather along the route to cheer, wave, and take in the dazzling displays. The parade is typically held on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, making it a perfect kickoff event for your weekend getaway. It’s a great way to experience the community spirit and celebrate the start of the holidays with locals and visitors alike.

Accommodations: Stay in the Heart of Downtown

To make the most of your extended weekend, stay at one of Grand Rapids’ charming downtown hotels. Whether you’re looking for a luxurious experience or something more casual, there are plenty of options that place you in the center of the holiday action. The Amway Grand Plaza offers upscale accommodations with a historic flair, while The Courtyard by Marriott and CityFlatsHotel offer modern and comfortable rooms with easy access to all the winter festivities.

Holiday Feasts and Cozy Meals

After a day of exploring the city’s winter wonderland, Grand Rapids boasts an excellent array of dining options to satisfy every craving. For a special holiday meal, head to The Chop House for a classic steakhouse experience, or check out

The Kitchen by Wolfgang Puck for a cozy yet sophisticated atmosphere. If you’re in the mood for something more casual, Founders Brewing Co. offers a laid-back vibe and locally crafted beer, while The Cascade Roadhouse provides a warm, inviting spot to refuel after a long day of holiday adventures. For a sweet treat, don’t miss The Sweetie-licious Bakery Café, which features delicious pies and pastries that are perfect for a holiday indulgence.

With its magical light displays, festive holiday markets, and fun winter activities, Grand Rapids is an ideal destination for an extended weekend getaway. So pack your bags, bundle up, and get ready to make lasting holiday memories in Grand Rapids.

[More on Michigan >HERE](#)





A Hallmark Christmas Experience



No one does Christmas like Hallmark, and the holiday event of the year is happening in the heart of Crown Center in Kansas City, right outside of Hallmark's headquarters. This magical celebration brings the enchantment of Hallmark's beloved holiday movies to life with a one-of-a-kind experience for the entire family.

Step into the Crown Center Square to immerse yourself in a world of festive joy. Open to the public, free of charge, and requiring no tickets, this outdoor wonderland offers a range of activities and entertainment for all ages. Stroll among the twinkling lights, enjoy themed displays, and let the magic of the season surround you. The event runs Fridays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., making it easy to plan

your visit.

Complete your holiday adventure with a stay at the Westin Kansas City Hotel, the official hotel of the Hallmark Christmas Experience. Perfectly situated, the hotel offers seamless access to Crown Center's many shops and restaurants. Indulge in a shopping spree for unique gifts, savor seasonal treats, and take in the spectacular holiday decorations that transform the center into a winter wonderland.

With different Hallmark stars on stage every weekend in December, now is the time to make your reservations before they are sold out. From Dec. 6-8, the stars from the movie, *Three Wise Men*, will be on hand to share more about the making of this popular movie and its sequel. Another special

session will include discussion on the favorite destinations where movies were filmed. Tickets are \$75.

From Dec. 13-15, see the stars from "When Calls the Heart." This is your chance to hear the details of your favorite series. Two dates are available, both starting at 2 p.m. Again, tickets are \$75.

editor's note: Union Station is close to both the Hallmark Christmas Experience and The Westin Kansas City at Crown Center and has an Amtrak station for visitors traveling by train.

Make it a weekend to remember in Kansas City! See <https://experiencehallmarkchristmas.com/> for more information and to reserve those tickets. [More on Missouri >HERE](#)



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A “Zoo”lightful Holiday Getaway



*By Tim Trudell
Freelance Writer*

Omaha’s Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium consistently ranks as one of the best - if not the best - zoos in the country. It doesn’t skip a beat when it comes to the holidays, transforming into a winter wonderland at night with Zoolightful. The holiday light festival runs through Dec. 30.

With thousands of colorful lights illuminating dozens of designs, Zoolightful features unique designs, each related to the holiday, such as reindeer, elves, and even Santa Claus himself. Zoolightful has also offered displays including candy canes, gingerbread characters and gum drops.

With lighted displays leading you through Holiday Way, Zoolightful is laid out on a one-way path that takes visitors through the exhibits near the zoo’s entrance. This year’s display includes some of people’s favorite zoo animals as decorated characters.

As you make your way along the route with teddy bears and gift boxes, there are a few attractions to help you enjoy the festivities. Taking time away from his busy schedule checking and re-checking lists, Santa Claus will visit Santa’s North Pole, meeting with children about their wish lists and to ensure they’re being good little boys and



girls. Likely the most popular stop at Zoolightful, children can also create their wish lists and drop them in a mail box while waiting to visit with Santa Claus. Visitors can also get a complimentary photo with the jolly old elf.



Holiday artists can put their talents to work creating impressive gingerbread houses and decorating other sweet treats at Gingerbread Village, hosted at Durham Treetop Restaurant. While there, consider enjoying dinner featuring holiday-themed food.

Forget trying to trick someone into sticking their tongue on a frozen flag pole. Instead, hit them where it counts – with a snowball. Just kidding. But, Polar Plaza is home to the Snowball Toss, a fun game for the entire family. For \$10, you can buy a bucket of “snowballs” and toss them at targets. While at Polar Plaza, pick up a hot chocolate

or other holiday treat to warm up the arm and enjoy the cool weather.

You won't need a hill to experience a sleigh ride at the Merry Magic Theater. Located at the Lozier Giant Screen Theater, you can grab a ride aboard the virtual reality Merry Magic Sleigh Ride. The virtual reality experience runs about five minutes long. While at the theater, visit with holiday characters. Who knows, maybe you'll meet Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer or the Grinch.



Family activities continue with rides on a carousel for young children at the Reindeer Game Zone. Grab a hot chocolate during the visit. Seasonal igloos can also be rented at the game zone, located near Lied Jungle.

While a lot of the attractions are children-focused, Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium didn't forget about adults. Consider renting an igloo, which seats up to six people, and enjoy adult beverages with bar service available at Peppermint Pines, located near Lied Jungle. Igloos need to be reserved in advance at omahazoo.com.

While most zoo attractions are closed at night, three of them are open during Zoolightful. The Suzanne and Walter Scott Aquarium, considered one of the best aquariums in the country, features a large penguin attraction. Stand in front of the floor-to-ceiling viewing glass and marvel at the swimming birds from Antarctica as they dive into the cold water, bringing smiles as they zip by human admirers. The 70-foot-long shark tunnel brings you up-close to sharks, sting rays and large fish.

Located beneath the world's largest indoor desert dome, view creatures found around the world, from Africa to the world's largest indoor swamp. You'll see wallabies from Australia, snakes and bats. Walk on a wood dock at the world's largest indoor swamp, watching alligators and other noctur-



nal animals from the southern United States.

View small mammals, exotic spiders, fish and reptiles at Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom Pavilion. Children can also play on the safari Jeep display.

The Treetop Restaurant and other concession centers will be open for food and drinks during Zoolightful. The experience is open nightly except for Dec. 24-25, when the zoo is closed for Christmas.

While spending a couple hours at Zoolightful is enjoyable, consider combining the experience with a visit to the zoo during the day. Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium offers more than 15 exhibits to explore. The African Grasslands and Asian Highlands bring you up-close to animals such as elephants, lions, cheetahs, sloth bear and tufted deer.

Zoolightful admission tickets are \$20 for people 12 and older and \$16 for children 3-11 and can be purchased online at omahazoo.com.

[More on Nebraska >HERE](#)





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Historic Holiday Getaway



COSHOCTON - Historic Roscoe Village will offer you loads of memories to cherish for years to come when you visit. Find out what Christmas was like in the 1800s. Witness an old-fashioned candlelighting ceremony. Enjoy a choir concert featuring more than 100 musicians.. Find unique gifts in the charming shops of Historic Roscoe Village.

Visit Historic Roscoe Village for a Hallmark holiday experience as the 54th Annual Historic Roscoe Village Christmas Candlelighting Days takes place on Dec. 7th and 14th. Walk the brick-lined sidewalks with a cup of cider or cocoa and see the village decked with greenery, twinkling lights and live trees. Arrive early for visits with Santa, roasted chestnuts, shopping, and dining.

Top off the day by attending the evening Candlelighting Ceremony, starting at 6 p.m. Gather together in the center of the village to pass a flame between candles, and watch as the 30-foot Christmas tree is lit. Listen to stories and carols and sing Silent Night, a beautiful demonstration of peace and community between friends.

Hear the voices of more than 100 singers as they present the 52nd Annual Coshocton Community Choir Christmas Concert on Sunday, Dec. 8th at 3 p.m. at River View High School. Each year, the concert tells the Christmas story through narration and song and includes The Roscoe Brass, soloists, and instrumentalists. This year's theme is "A Light Shining." Admission is free.

For the second year, the Coshocton County Courthouse light display will delight the entire family. Park your car and use its radio to hear holiday music synched to the illumination. The show repeats on the half hour starting at 5:30 p.m. daily through New Year's Eve.

Historic Roscoe Village's charming shops are housed in historic buildings filled with locally-made items, including handcrafted leather, art, jewelry, home decor, artisan soaps, candles, and gourmet pet treats. Others include old-fashioned candy, clothing, fine jewelry and Ohio wines. The village also has four restaurants and a coffee shop. Visit <https://roscoevillageshops.com/> for information on shopping and dining in Roscoe Village.

The Downtown Historic District is home to the Coshocton Antique Mall and several boutiques, as well as a pop-in pottery painting studio and old-fashioned ice cream shop. Make a day of it and make holiday memories with loved ones in the Downtown Historic District. [Visit https://www.visitcoshocton.com/shopping/](https://www.visitcoshocton.com/shopping/) for a full list of retail options in Coshocton County.

Coshocton is easily accessible from I-77 and OH-36, and less than a two-hour drive from Columbus, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh. Make it an overnight getaway by checking into one of Coshocton's many affordable lodging options.

[More on Ohio >HERE](#)

Ghostly Manor Thrill Center Presents Our 2nd Annual

MEET THE GRINCH AND FRIENDS



Dec. 6th & Dec. 20th
Photo Opt: 5pm-6:30pm
Games on Skate Floor: 6:30pm-8pm
\$7.00 ~ Includes Roller Skating

3319 Milan Rd. | 419-626-4467 | Ghostlymanor.com

Ghostly Manor Thrill Center ~ Parking Lot

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS LIGHT SHOW



6pm - 12am | Every 30 Minutes Tune into
Thanksgiving Through Christmas 99.7fm



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Christmas In



Rebecca Embry
Staff Journalist

The Black Hills of South Dakota transform into a magical winter wonderland during the holiday season, offering families an enchanting escape filled with snow-draped forests, cozy lodges, and festive attractions. Whether you're seeking outdoor adventure, historical landmarks, or heartwarming holiday activities, this region provides the perfect setting for a memorable Christmas extended weekend getaway.

Stay at Sylvan Lake Lodge

Located within the Custer State Park, Sylvan Lake Lodge is a quintessential holiday retreat. Known for its rustic charm and scenic surroundings, the lodge offers a range of accommodations perfect for families, from spacious lodge rooms to private cabins. Each space is designed to provide a balance of modern comfort and historic character, complete with rustic wood furnishings and warm interiors.

During winter, the lodge becomes a serene hideaway surrounded by snow-covered pines and the icy beauty of Sylvan Lake. Families can enjoy crackling fires in the communal fireplace, sip hot cocoa, or engage in lodge-hosted holiday activities like ornament decorating and storytelling sessions. For those looking to explore, the park's trails and scenic drives are magical under a blanket of snow, offering opportunities for snowshoeing and wildlife viewing.



This year, you can step into a world of lights at Sylvan Lake Winter Village. This holiday light show kicks things up a notch with over 300,000 twinkling lights on the Sylvan Lake Pier. Take a walk around the trail at the pier, lined with glittering archways and holiday displays.

Then don't miss the Festival of Trees at the Custer State Park Visitor Center throughout December. Each tree will have the chance to be voted "Favorite Tree" of the event. So be sure to vote for your favorite.

Custer State Park Winter Safari Tours: Guided wildlife tours showcase the region's famous bison herd and other native animals, often against a dramatic winter backdrop.



Deadwood's Holiday Festivities: Visit the historic town of Deadwood for its Christmas parade, festive events, and even a chance to try holiday-themed gaming at the local casinos.

Time to Eat

Dine at Black Hills Burger and Bun Co. Located in Custer, the Black Hills Burger and

The Black Hills

Bun Co. is a must-visit for families craving comfort food with a local twist. This family-owned eatery is celebrated for its handcrafted burgers, made fresh with locally sourced beef, and gluten-free bun options for diners with dietary preferences.

For the holiday season, the menu often includes specials like cranberry barbecue sliders, sweet potato fries, and festive desserts such as peppermint milkshakes and spiced apple crumble. The inviting atmosphere, adorned with holiday lights and cheerful music, makes it an ideal spot for a post-adventure meal. Parents and kids alike will feel at home here, bonding over delicious, hearty plates that embody the season's spirit.

Mount Rushmore and Holiday Light Displays

No trip to the Black Hills is complete without a visit to Mount Rushmore, and winter lends the monument an unparalleled tranquility. Without the summer crowds, families can take their time marveling at the majestic carvings, framed by the crisp, snow-covered landscape. Educational programs at the visitor center provide interactive fun for kids, helping them learn about the monument's history in an engaging way.

Afterward, dive into the holiday spirit with dazzling light displays across the region. Rapid City's Main Street Square transforms into a great Christmas Village featuring an ice-skating rink, holiday market, and towering lighted tree. Spearfish adds to the festive charm with its Winter Wonderland display, where twinkling lights illuminate pathways and create magical photo opportunities. Both locations offer unique



seasonal treats and activities for all ages.

Then on to Storybook Island where you can experience the enchanting Storybook Island Christmas Nights of Light. This beloved family attraction in Rapid City transforms into a magical winter wonderland each December, featuring over 20 acres adorned with

thousands of twinkling lights. Familiar storybook characters come alive through dazzling displays, creating an immersive atmosphere that delights visitors of all ages. From whimsical gingerbread houses to glowing fairytale castles, every corner of Storybook Island radiates holiday cheer.

Guests can stroll through the illuminated park, enjoy live holiday music, and sip on warm cocoa from the concession stands. The event also includes festive train rides for children, offering a unique way to experience the lights while seated comfortably in a decorated locomotive. With its joyful ambiance and creative decorations, Storybook Island captures the spirit of the season and provides a memorable outing for families visiting the Black Hills. Don't forget to bring your camera to capture the magic!

Bonus Fun: For a journey back in time, hop aboard the 1880 Train Holiday Express, departing from Hill City. This family-friendly train ride offers a nostalgic holiday adventure featuring beautifully decorated train cars, live storytelling, and cheerful carols. Kids can enjoy hot cocoa and cookies as Santa Claus stops by to greet passengers and hand out small gifts. The scenic ride through the snow-dusted Black Hills is sure to become a cherished holiday memory.

[More on South Dakota >HERE](#)

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