

THANKSGIVING TO NEW YEAR'S · 2026

the 2026

Hendersonville *Holiday Guide*

Every parade, tree lighting, Santa and string of lights worth your weekend. Sumner County first.

SUMNER COUNTY · NASHVILLE · DAY TRIPS · NEW YEAR'S

Kindred Roots
at The Frame Group
615-852-6689

✦ A NOTE BEFORE THE SEASON STARTS

Six weekends. A lot of *tinsel.* Here's the plan.

One Christmas Day we had the kids up on a rooftop downtown in t-shirts. Other years it's been 30 degrees and my whole family is freezing. December in Tennessee keeps you guessing.

What I can tell you is when everything happens. We moved our four kids here from Illinois during covid. Then my cousin moved down. Then my sister. Then my brother-in-law. If you're new, the holidays here are a lot to sort out....four towns hold their parades on the same Saturday. So I wrote it all down in one place.

My Book-Early guide covered the tickets that sell out. This is everything else. Every parade, tree lighting, Santa, market and string of lights from Thanksgiving to New Year's. Sumner County first, because that's home. Then Nashville. Then the day trips worth the gas.

✦ HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE

FREE
No ticket needed. Bring a chair and a thermos.

TICKETED
Buy ahead online. Some of these sell out.

WATCH FOR DATES
2026 date not posted yet. I tell you where to look.

70+	12	45	1
EVENTS IN ONE PLACE	CHRISTMAS PARADES	FREE TO GO	PARADE ON THE LAKE

Every date was checked on November 12, 2026 against the organizer's own website, or local news where the organizer hadn't posted yet. Drive times are from downtown Hendersonville. Plans change, so take a quick look at the event's site before you load up the car.

Carissa

CARISSA TRENT, REALTOR® · MOM OF FOUR

✦ THE SEASON AT A GLANCE

Six weekends, *one* for everything

If you only remember one page, make it this one. Each weekend has a headliner. Build the rest around it.

Nov 21 – 29 · Thanksgiving week

Kickoffs and a Thanksgiving run

Turkey Trails at Veterans Park, Portland lights its tree on Tuesday, the Indian Lake Loop on Thanksgiving morning, then Merry Monthaven and the Nashville Yards tree lighting on Saturday.

Dec 4 – 6 · The big one

Parade weekend

Goodlettsville lights up Friday. Saturday has four parades, Yulefest and a boat parade on the lake. Sunday is the Hendersonville Christmas Parade. Clear the calendar.

Dec 12 – 13

Gallatin's turn

The Gallatin Christmas Parade at noon, Mt. Juliet's in the morning, Dickens of a Christmas in Franklin and Santa visits everywhere you look.

Dec 14 – 20

Lights and the big shows

The Ryman, the Nutcracker and the Symphony. Weeknights are the calm nights for Cheekwood and Glow Wild. Last Saturday in Bell Buckle.

Dec 21 – 27 · Christmas week

Last call for Santa

Santa's last nights at Glow Wild and Opry Mills are December 24. Several places close Christmas Day. I list which on page 23.

Dec 28 – Jan 3 · New Year's

Ring it in, any age

Nashville's free Big Bash on New Year's Eve, a noon countdown for the little ones and a First Day Hike on January 1.

✦ ALL SEASON LONG

- **Glow Wild** Nashville Zoo · Nov 13 – Jan 3
- **Holiday LIGHTS** Cheekwood · Nov 20 – Jan 3
- **ICE! & A Country Christmas** Gaylord Opryland · Nov 6 – Jan 2
- **FrankTown Festival of Lights** Franklin · Nov 20 – Dec 31
- **The Dancing Lights of Christmas** Lebanon · Nov 7 – Jan 3
- **Rink Under Broad** Nashville Yards · from Nov 21
- **Candy Cane Village** Goodlettsville · from Dec 4
- **Christmas at Belmont Mansion** Nashville · Nov 27 – Dec 29
- **Christmas at The Hideaway** Gallatin · Fri – Sun to Dec 20
- **Christkindlmarkt** Nolensville · Fri – Sun, Nov 27 – Dec 20
- **Santa Land** Streets of Indian Lake · select days to Dec 23

Opening weekend *to parade weekend*

DATE	EVENT	TIME	COST
Opening *weekend* *Nov 13 – 20*			
Nov 13 – 15	**Christmas Village** · 250+ merchants, The Fairgrounds Nashville	See site	TICKETED
Nov 13 – 15	**Tinsel & Treasures + Depot Christmas Market** · Downtown Gallatin	Fri – Sat	FREE
Nov 13 – 14	**A Very Merry Market in the Park** · Triple Creek Park, Gallatin · Santa Sat	Fri 4–8	FREE
Nov 13 – 14	**Holiday on the Hill Market** · Northfield Church, Gallatin · free Santa photos	Fri 4–8	$5
Fri, Nov 20	**Sparkle Night** · Santa arrives, tree lighting · Streets of Indian Lake	4:30 – 6	FREE
Thanksgiving *week* *Nov 21 – 29*			
Sat, Nov 21	**Turkey Trails Nashville** · Veterans Park, Hendersonville	8 AM	TICKETED
Sat, Nov 21	**Christmas at Big Sky Farm opens** · Portland · Big Sky at Night 4–7	9 – 7	FREE
Sat, Nov 21	**Christmas at the Inn + Jingle & Mingle** · White House	9 – 4	FREE
Sat, Nov 21	**Christmas Harvest Craft Show** · Gallatin Civic Center	9 – 4	FREE
Sat, Nov 21	**Holiday Kickoff Parade with Santa** · Opry Mills	12 – 2	FREE
Nov 21 – 22	**Winter House Concerts** · Historic Rock Castle	See site	$75
Tue, Nov 24	**Portland Christmas Tree Lighting** · Main Street, Portland	5 – 6	FREE
Thu, Nov 26	**Indian Lake Loop 5K & 5-mile** · Streets of Indian Lake	8 AM	REGISTER
Fri, Nov 27	**Shop Local in Portland begins** · Black Friday to Dec 5	All day	FREE
Nov 27 – 28	**Boutique Bazaar: A Classic Christmas** · The Chapel at Three Oaks, Gallatin	Fri 3–7	$10 PARKING
Sat, Nov 28	**Merry Monthaven Christmas** · Tree lighting and caroling, Hendersonville	12 – 7	FREE
Sat, Nov 28	**Nashville Yards Tree Lighting** · Merry Market Nov 28 – 29	5 PM	FREE
Into *December* *Nov 30 – Dec 4*			
Tue, Dec 1	**TubaChristmas** · Northfield Church, Gallatin	7 PM	FREE
Dec 3 – 13	**Nashvillage Holiday Market** · Walk of Fame Park, Nashville	Thu – Sun	FREE
Fri, Dec 4	**Tree Lighting + Santa's Holiday Party** · Goodlettsville	6 PM	FREE

The *parade* weekends

DATE	EVENT	TIME	COST
Parade *weekend* *Dec 5 – 6*			
Sat, Dec 5	**Shop Local Holiday Market + free Santa photos** · Nashville Farmers' Market	10 – 2	FREE
Sat, Dec 5	**Breakfast with Santa, three ways** · Hendersonville Parks, Sumner CASA, Miracle Park (p. 18)	8:30 – 11	BOOK
Sat, Dec 5	**A Merry Little Christmas Market** · Gallatin square, Santa 10 – 11	10 – 2	FREE
Sat, Dec 5	**Old Fashioned Christmas** · Bell Buckle, sleigh rides with Santa	11 – 4	FREE
Sat, Dec 5	**Franklin Christmas Parade** · Downtown Franklin	1 PM	FREE
Sat, Dec 5	**White House Christmas Parade** · Ends at Municipal Park	3 PM	FREE
Sat, Dec 5	**Goodlettsville Christmas Parade** · "Dolly's All-American Christmas!"	4 PM	FREE
Sat, Dec 5	**Yulefest** · Historic Mansker's Station, Goodlettsville	5 – 8	FREE
Sat, Dec 5	**Portland Christmas Festival & Parade** · Hwy 109, Portland	5:30	FREE
Sat, Dec 5	**Deck the Hulls Boat Parade** · Old Hickory Lake, Hendersonville	5:30	FREE
Sat, Dec 5	**Columbia Christmas Parade & Tree Lighting** · Columbia, TN	6 PM	FREE
Sat, Dec 5	**Nashville Nights Under Lights** · Drone show, Riverfront Park	8 PM	FREE
Dec 5 – 20	**Santa Claus Express** · Kentucky Railway Museum, weekends	Varies	$28–33
Sun, Dec 6	**Hendersonville Christmas Parade + Tree Lighting** · Main St to Memorial Park	2 PM	FREE
Sun, Dec 6	**Dogwood Park Tree Lighting** · Cookeville, light shows nightly after	6 PM	FREE
Sun, Dec 6	**Caring Santa (sensory-friendly visits)** · Opry Mills	Book ahead	PHOTOS
Gallatin's *turn* *Dec 12 – 13*			
Sat, Dec 12	**Christmas on the Square** · Lebanon Public Square	10 – 4	FREE
Sat, Dec 12	**Mt. Juliet Christmas Parade** · "A Holly Dolly Christmas"	11 AM	FREE
Sat, Dec 12	**Cookies with Santa** · Big Sky Farm, Portland · ages 2–10	11:30	TICKETED
Sat, Dec 12	**Gallatin Christmas Parade** · Downtown Gallatin	12 – 2	FREE
Sat, Dec 12	**Visit with Santa** · Portland Parks · time to be posted	TBA	WATCH
Sat, Dec 12	**Old Fashioned Christmas** · Bell Buckle	11 – 4	FREE
Sat, Dec 12	**Nashville Nights Under Lights** · Drone show, Riverfront Park	8 PM	FREE
Dec 12 – 13	**Dickens of a Christmas** · Downtown Franklin	All day	FREE
Dec 12 – 24	**Daytime Santa at Cheekwood** · Historic Stable	Daytime	TICKETED

Christmas week *to* *New Year's Day*

DATE	EVENT	TIME	COST
The big *shows* *Dec 14 – 20*			
Dec 14 – 23	**Amy Grant & Vince Gill: Christmas at the Ryman**	7:30 PM	TICKETED
Dec 18 – 20	**Handel's Messiah** · Nashville Symphony	Evening	TICKETED
Sat, Dec 19	**Old Fashioned Christmas, last Saturday** · Bell Buckle	11 – 4	FREE
Dec 19 – 20	**"An American Christmas"** · Belmont Mansion	Sat 7 · Sun 2:30	TICKETED
Christmas *week* *Dec 21 – 27*			
Wed, Dec 23	**Last North Pole Limited** · Chattanooga · and Rock City's last Santa night	Evening	TICKETED
Thu, Dec 24	**Santa's last night at Glow Wild** · and his last day at Opry Mills and Cheekwood	5 – 9	TICKETED
Fri, Dec 25	**Christmas Day** · Cheekwood closed · call ahead anywhere else	—	
Sun, Dec 27	**Last Nutcracker** · and last day of Holidays Under the Peaks, TN Aquarium	—	TICKETED
New *Year's* *Dec 28 – Jan 3*			
Thu, Dec 31	**Library noon countdowns** · Nashville & Murfreesboro branches	Late morning	WATCH
Thu, Dec 31	**New Year's Eve Live: Nashville's Big Bash** · Bicentennial Mall	Gates 5:30	FREE
Fri, Jan 1	**First Day Hikes** · Tennessee State Parks, incl. Bledsoe Creek	Morning	WATCH
Sat, Jan 2	**Last night of ICE!** · Gaylord Opryland	—	TICKETED
Sun, Jan 3	**Last night of Cheekwood LIGHTS & Glow Wild**	—	TICKETED

✦ STILL TO BE ANNOUNCED · WATCH THESE

Christmas by Candlelight at Cragfont and Wynnewood (last year: Dec 6 & 13 and Dec 19) · **Hendersonville Festival of Lights** home-tour map (last year: Dec 5 – 31) · **Sumner County Tree Lighting with Santa** in Gallatin (last year: Dec 4) · **Westmoreland Christmas Parade** (last year: Dec 6) · **Christmas on the Cumberland** in Clarksville (last year: opened Nov 22) · **The Reindeer Farm** in Bowling Green. I'll post updates in my stories as they land.

✦ *Put any of these on your phone, one at a time or all at once, at carissamovesnashville.com/holiday. Subscribe there and new events show up on their own.*



HOT CHOCOLATE AT BIG SKY FARM, PORTLAND

PART ONE · CLOSE TO HOME

Sumner *County*

Parades down Main Street, a boat parade on the lake and a candlelit house from 1802. The hometown traditions, town by town.

HENDERSONVILLE · PARADE WEEKEND · GALLATIN · GOODLETTSVILLE · PORTLAND · WHITE HOUSE

✦ HENDERSONVILLE

Main Street, the lake and *a storybook* parade

HolidayFest Christmas Parade & Tree Lighting

FREE

SUNDAY, DEC 6 · 2 PM · MAIN STREET TO MEMORIAL PARK, 151 E. MAIN ST.

This year's theme is **"A Storybook Christmas."** More than 80 entries roll down Main Street, Santa rides at the very end, and the city tree is lit at Memorial Park right after. It's a Sunday afternoon parade, so it works for little ones who can't do a 5:30 start.

✦ *Don't pack up when Santa passes. The tree lighting is the finale.*

INFO holidayfesttn.org · hvilletn.org

Deck the Hulls Christmas Boat Parade

FREE

SATURDAY, DEC 5 · 5:30 – 8 PM · OLD HICKORY LAKE · DRAKES CREEK TO SANDERS FERRY PARK

Lit-up boats cruise Old Hickory Lake at dusk, with the judges at Mallard Park. This is the one you won't find anywhere else around Nashville. Sanders Ferry Park is the easy place to watch from shore.

✦ *It's colder by the water than in town. Blankets, gloves and something hot in a thermos.*

CONFIRM holidayfesttn.org

Merry Monthaven Christmas

FREE

SATURDAY, NOV 28 · NOON – 7 PM · MONTHAVEN ARTS & CULTURAL CENTER

The annual tree lighting and caroling on the grounds of Monthaven, the historic home off Gallatin Pike. While you're there, the **David Wright: An American Master** exhibit runs through January 10.

INFO monthavenarts.org/events

Hendersonville Festival of Lights

WATCH FOR DATES

LAST YEAR: DEC 5 – 31 · 5 – 10 PM · SELF-GUIDED, CITYWIDE

A free map of the best-lit homes in town that you can drive or walk at your own pace. The 2026 map hadn't posted when we checked. Look for it at holidayfesttn.org around the first of December.

✦ THE PARADE-DAY BAG

Folding chairs, a blanket, hand warmers, cocoa in a thermos and a trash bag to sit on if the curb is wet. Little ones love a bag for candy. Park a few blocks away and walk in. Getting out is the slow part.

✦ HENDERSONVILLE · THANKSGIVING WEEK

Before the *pie*

Sparkle Night

FREE

FRIDAY, NOV 20 · 4:30 – 6 PM · CENTER STAGE PLAZA, STREETS OF INDIAN LAKE

Santa arrives, the tree lights up, and there are fairy tale characters, Christmas music and warm drinks. Rain date is Saturday.

Santa Land at The Streets

BOOK A TIME

SELECT DAYS, NOV 21 – DEC 23 · STREETS OF INDIAN LAKE

Santa photos and kids' games. Walk-ins get the next open slot, or book a set time. The Holly Jolly Artisan Market joins Nov 21 and Dec 12, 10 – 3.

BOOK visitsantaland.com

Indian Lake Loop

REGISTER

THANKSGIVING DAY · 8 AM · STREETS OF INDIAN LAKE · 5K & 5-MILE

The 20th year of Hendersonville's Thanksgiving morning race, starting in front of the Regal. Strollers are welcome at the back of the pack and leashed dogs can come too. Roads close at 7:30, and there's **no race-day sign-up**, so register ahead.

REGISTER indianlakeloop.com

Turkey Trails Nashville

REGISTER

SATURDAY, NOV 21 · 8 AM · VETERANS PARK · KIDS DASH TO HALF MARATHON

A Kids Dash for 10 and under, then a 1-mile, 5K, 10K and half. There's pie at the finish.

REGISTER runsignup.com



It starts before Thanksgiving · November 2025

✦ DRIVING AROUND TO LOOK AT LIGHTS

Some of the best displays in town are on private homes. Last year's favorites included **Lights on Luna** and **xLightsTN**, both with light shows set to music. Check each one's Facebook page for 2026 nights before you go, and be a good neighbor: stay in the car, dim your headlights and keep the street clear.

✦ DEC 4 – 6 · THE BIG ONE

How to do *parade weekend*

Eight free events in three days, all in Sumner County. You can't do them all. Here's how they fit together.

Friday, *Dec 4* *Goodlettsville warms up*

6:00 PM — **Tree Lighting & Candy Cane Village** — FREE
Goodlettsville City Hall, 105 S. Main St. The walk-through candy canes stay up all month.

6:30 PM — **Santa's Holiday Party** — FREE
Delmas Long Community Center. Santa, a craft, cookies and cocoa.

Saturday, *Dec 5* *Pick two*

3:00 PM — **White House Christmas Parade** — FREE
Ends at White House Municipal Park. About 20 minutes from Hendersonville.

4:00 PM — **Goodlettsville Christmas Parade** — FREE
"Dolly's All-American Christmas!" From the Delmas Long Community Center down Main Street.

5 – 8 PM — **Yulefest at Historic Mansker's Station** — FREE
35-plus years running. Olde World Santa, music, storytelling and carriage rides. No reservations.

5:30 PM — **Portland Christmas Festival & Parade** — FREE
Down Hwy 109. Downtown activities start in the afternoon.

5:30 PM — **Deck the Hulls Boat Parade** — FREE
Old Hickory Lake. Watch from Sanders Ferry Park.

Sunday, *Dec 6* *Hendersonville's day*

2:00 PM — **HolidayFest Christmas Parade & Tree Lighting** — FREE
Main Street to Memorial Park. "A Storybook Christmas."

✦ THE COMBOS THAT WORK

Little kids: White House at 3, home for dinner, Hendersonville parade Sunday afternoon. **Big kids:** Goodlettsville at 4, then Yulefest at Moss-Wright Park, then the Sunday parade. **No kids:** the boat parade, then dinner by the lake.

✦ GALLATIN & CASTALIAN SPRINGS

The square *and* the candlelight

Gallatin Christmas Parade

FREE

SATURDAY, DEC 12 · NOON – 2 PM · DOWNTOWN GALLATIN

A week after everyone else, so you can catch this one too. Lunch on the square after.

INFO gallatintn.org

Christmas Harvest Craft Show

FREE

SATURDAY, NOV 21 · 9 AM – 4 PM · GALLATIN CIVIC CENTER, 210 ALBERT GALLATIN AVE.

The City of Gallatin's handmade holiday market. Teacher gifts, sorted.

TubaChristmas

FREE

TUESDAY, DEC 1 · 7 PM · NORTHFIELD CHURCH

A room full of tubas playing Christmas carols. Exactly as wonderful as it sounds.

Gallatin's holiday markets

MOSTLY FREE

Nov 13 – 15	**Tinsel & Treasures** · the 50-year shop-local weekend, plus the new Depot Christmas Market
Nov 13 – 14	**A Very Merry Market in the Park** · Triple Creek Park · Santa on Saturday
Nov 13 – 14	**Holiday on the Hill** · Northfield Church · $5, free Santa photos
Nov 27 – 28	**Boutique Bazaar** · The Chapel at Three Oaks · $10 parking
Sat, Dec 5	**A Merry Little Christmas Market** · the square, 10 – 2 · Santa 10 – 11

Christmas by Candlelight at Cragfont & Wynnewood

WATCH FOR DATES

LAST YEAR: DEC 6 & 13 (CRAGFONT) · DEC 19 (WYNNEWOOD) · CASTALIAN SPRINGS · 20 MIN

Two of the oldest homes in Middle Tennessee, lit only by candles. Tickets are **extremely limited** and go fast once posted.

WATCH tn.gov/historicalcommission · Eventbrite

Christmas at South Water Manor

FREE TO VISIT

MID-NOVEMBER THROUGH CHRISTMAS · 562 S. WATER AVE., GALLATIN

The 1869 mansion goes full *It's a Wonderful Life*: kids' activities, pop-ups, holiday coffee, line dancing, cards for soldiers and a citywide scavenger hunt.

SCHEDULE southwatermanor.com

✦ AROUND THE COUNTY

Small towns that *go big*

Goodlettsville Hometown Holidays

DEC 4 – 5 · CITY HALL & MOSS-WRIGHT PARK

Friday's tree lighting reveals the **Candy Cane Village**, then Santa's Holiday Party. Saturday: the parade at 4 and **Yulefest** at Mansker's Station, 5 – 8, with an Olde World Santa.

INFO goodlettsville.gov

White House Christmas Parade

SATURDAY, DEC 5 · 3 PM · TO MUNICIPAL PARK

The earliest parade of the big Saturday, which makes it the easy one for nap schedules.

INFO whitehousetn.gov

Christmas at the Inn

SATURDAY, NOV 21 · 9 AM – NOON · WHITE HOUSE INN MUSEUM

A pioneer Christmas with storytellers, carolers, crafts and Santa at the stagecoach. Then **Jingle & Mingle Around Town**, 10 – 4: grab a passport and shop 20+ local stores.

Christmas at Big Sky Farm

NOV 21 – DEC 13 · SELECT DAYS · PORTLAND · FREE ENTRY

Cut your own tree, fire pits and s'mores, a kids' village, wagon rides and Santa. **Big Sky at Night** (Sat, Nov 21, 28 & Dec 5, 4–7) and **Cookies with Santa** (Dec 12) are ticketed.

HOURS bigskyfarmtn.com

Portland Tree Lighting

TUESDAY, NOV 24 · 5 – 6 PM · MAIN STREET

New this year: Portland lights its tree on its own night, Thanksgiving week, with live music.

Portland Christmas Festival & Parade

SATURDAY, DEC 5 · 5:30 PM · HWY 109

Downtown festivities in the afternoon, then a nighttime parade from Freedom Drive down Hwy 109.

INFO portlandcofc.com

Visit with Santa

SATURDAY, DEC 12 · PORTLAND PARKS

Time and place still to be posted on the city's event schedule.

Christmas at The Hideaway

FRI – SUN, NOV 13 – DEC 20 · 4 – 9 PM · HIEBER FARMS, GALLATIN · $40 A CAR

New this year. One car pass covers everyone in the car: Santa's Barnyard with live animals, storytime with Mrs. Claus, letters to Santa, a bounce house and a Christmas market, plus a tree lot. Passes are limited each night, so book ahead.

BOOK thehideawaynashville.com

✦ NEW TO THE AREA?

A town's Christmas parade tells you a lot about it. If you're deciding between Hendersonville, Gallatin and the towns around them, go to a couple on December 5 and 6 and see which one feels like yours.

✦ SUMNER COUNTY AT A GLANCE

Where it's *all happening*





ICE! AT GAYLORD OPRYLAND · THANKSGIVING WEEK 2019

PART TWO · 25 MINUTES SOUTH

Nashville *& around*

The big lights, the free stuff downtown, every Santa we could find and the neighbor towns' parades.

LIGHTS · FREE IN THE CITY · SANTA FINDER · NEIGHBOR TOWNS

✦ NASHVILLE · THE LIGHTS

The *big* light shows

Holiday LIGHTS at Cheekwood

TIMED TICKETS

NOV 20 – JAN 3 · 4:30 – 10 PM · 35 MIN · ADULTS $26–29 · AGES 3–17 $20–23 · 2 AND UNDER FREE

The gardens and mansion lit after dark. Entry is timed and sold-out times aren't sold at the door. **Military Mondays** are half off (Nov 23 & 30, Dec 7 & 28), and there's a cheaper late entry at 8:30 on most Monday – Thursday nights. Closed Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. Parking is $5.

BOOK cheekwood.org

Glow Wild at the Nashville Zoo

BUY AHEAD

NOV 13 – JAN 3 · NIGHTLY 5 – 9 PM · 30 MIN · $27 · UNLIMITED PASS $39

The zoo after dark, glowing. **Santa is there every night Nov 27 – Dec 24**, included with your ticket. Kids under 2 are free but still need a ticket.

BOOK nashvillezoo.org

ICE! & A Country Christmas at Gaylord Opryland

TICKETED

NOV 6 – JAN 2 · 20 MIN · PRICES VARY BY DATE

This year's ICE! is themed to *Home Alone*. On the busiest dates (Fridays and Saturdays from Nov 20, Thanksgiving week and Dec 18 – 31) the resort is open after 3 PM only to hotel guests and ticket holders, so buy before you go.

BOOK christmasatgaylordopryland.com

The Dancing Lights of Christmas

PER CAR

NOV 7 – JAN 3 · SUN–THU 5–10 · FRI–SAT 5–11 · WILSON COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS, LEBANON · 40 MIN · $35 A CAR

Tennessee's largest drive-thru light and music show, and it's open every night including Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's. Santa's Village, a visit with Santa and the petting zoo are included. Saturdays after Thanksgiving have long lines, so go on a weeknight.

FrankTown Festival of Lights

PER CAR

NOV 20 – DEC 31 · 5 – 9 PM · WILLIAMSON COUNTY AG EXPO, FRANKLIN · 45 MIN · ABOUT $35 A CAR LAST YEAR

A drive-through show you can do in pajamas. A few Wednesdays are walk-through nights.

✦ NASHVILLE · NO TICKET NEEDED

Free in *the city*

Nashville's downtown Christmas parade has been on hiatus since 2019. Nashville Yards has quietly become the place to go instead.

Holiday Central at Nashville Yards

MOSTLY FREE

FROM NOV 21 · ASCENSION SAINT THOMAS LANDING, DOWNTOWN

Tree Lighting Saturday, Nov 28 at 5 PM (free, RSVP on Partiful). **Merry Market** Nov 28, 4 – 7 and Nov 29, noon – 3. **Free Santa photos** from Nov 28. **Movie Nights** Fridays and Saturdays at 7 from Dec 4. And **Rink Under Broad**, the skating rink under Broadway, opens Nov 21 (passes on sale Nov 12; last year $10 – 15 with skates). Parking is $15 for three hours.

INFO nashvilleyards.com/holidaycentral

Nashvillage Holiday Market

FREE

DEC 3 – 13 · WALK OF FAME PARK · THU 4 – 9 · FRI & SAT 11 – 9 · SUN 11 – 5

An outdoor holiday market across from the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Shop Local Holiday Market with Santa

FREE

SATURDAY, DEC 5 · 10 AM – 2 PM · NASHVILLE FARMERS' MARKET

Local vendors, free Santa photos and free parking. The rarest thing downtown.

Holiday Kickoff Parade featuring Santa

FREE

SATURDAY, NOV 21 · NOON – 2 PM · OPRY MILLS, INDOORS

An indoor parade that brings Santa to his chair for the season. Rain-proof and 20 minutes from home.

Christmas at Belmont Mansion

TICKETED

DECORATED NOV 14 – JAN 3 · VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS TOURS NOV 27 – DEC 29

The 1850s mansion dressed for a Victorian Christmas. "An American Christmas" performances Dec 19 at 7 and Dec 20 at 2:30.

BOOK belmontmansion.com

Public skate at Ford Ice Center

ABOUT $11 – 14

YEAR-ROUND · HOLIDAY SCHEDULE ONLINE · ANTIOCH & BELLEVUE

Public skate with rentals included, if the rink under Broadway is booked. Register online at nhl.com/predators/fordicecenter.

Where to find *him*

Free *Santa* *no tickets, just a line*

WHEN	WHERE		COST
Nov 13 – 14	**Holiday on the Hill Market** · free photos, $5 entry	Gallatin	FREE PHOTOS
Sat, Nov 14	**A Very Merry Market in the Park** · Triple Creek Park	Gallatin	FREE
Fri, Nov 20	**Sparkle Night** · Santa arrives, 4:30	Hendersonville	FREE
Sat, Nov 21	**Christmas at the Inn** · Santa at the stagecoach, 9 – 12	White House	FREE
Sat, Nov 21	**Opry Mills Kickoff Parade** · Santa arrives, noon	Nashville	FREE
From Nov 28	**Nashville Yards photos** · schedule to be posted	Nashville	FREE
Fri, Dec 4	**Santa's Holiday Party** · Delmas Long Community Center	Goodlettsville	FREE
Sat, Dec 5	**Olde World Santa at Yulefest** · Mansker's Station, 5 – 8	Goodlettsville	FREE
Sat, Dec 5	**Farmers' Market Santa photos** · 10 – 2	Nashville	FREE
Dec 5, 12, 19	**Sleigh rides with Santa** · Old Fashioned Christmas, 11 – 4	Bell Buckle	FREE
Sun, Dec 6	**End of the Christmas Parade** · He's the last float	Hendersonville	FREE
Sat, Dec 12	**Visit with Santa** · Portland Parks, time TBA	Portland	WATCH

Santa *with a ticket* *book ahead*

Nov 6 – Dec 24	**Santa Photo Experience** · Caring Santa Dec 6 · pets Dec 13	Opry Mills	PHOTO PKG
Nov 27 – Dec 24	**Glow Wild, nightly** · included with zoo ticket	Nashville Zoo	$27
Nov 21 – Dec 23	**Santa Land** · book a time or walk in	Hendersonville	BOOK AHEAD
Fri – Sun to Dec 20	**Christmas at The Hideaway** · $40 car pass	Gallatin	CAR PASS
To Dec 23	**Enchanted Garden of Lights, nightly**	Rock City	TIMED
Dec 12 – 24	**Daytime Santa, Historic Stable**	Cheekwood	TICKETED
Nov 14 – Dec 23	**Breakfast with Santa** · eleven of them, all on the next page	Everywhere	SEE P. 18

Santa *on a train* *these sell out first*

Nov 28 – Dec 19	**Santa Express** · four Saturdays	Nashville	TCRY.ORG
Nov 13 – Dec 23	**Three more Santa trains** · Chattanooga, Huntsville and Kentucky	Day trips	PP. 21 – 22

Pancakes *with Santa*

Every breakfast with Santa we could find, close to home first. Seats are limited at every one of them, so book early.

Close to home

Sat, Nov 14	**Good Shepherd UMC** · 9 – 11 · crafts, printed and digital photos	Hendersonville	$80 FAMILY
Sat, Dec 5	**Hendersonville Parks** · Whitten Elementary · register by Dec 4	Hendersonville	FREE
Sat, Dec 5	**Sumner CASA** · 8:30 or 11 · Buddy the Elf and Jovie too	Gallatin	$10 – 25
Sat, Dec 5	**Friends of Gallatin Miracle Park** · 9 – 11 · The Station, W. Main St.	Gallatin	$50 FAMILY
Sat, Dec 12	**GodWhy Church** · 9 – 11:30 · pancakes and a Secret Santa Shop	Hendersonville	$5

Nashville *and a little farther*

Dec 5, 13, 19	**Aquarium Restaurant** · 9 AM seating · buffet and a craft	Opry Mills	$21 – 30
Dec 6, 12, 20	**Rainforest Cafe** · 9 AM seating · letters to Santa	Opry Mills	$22 – 29
Weekends	**Santa Brunch, 1799 Kitchen** · Nov 28 – Dec 20 · 10 – 2	Franklin	RESERVE
Dec 12 – 13	**Columbia Breakfast with Santa**	Columbia	TICKETED
Sun, Dec 13	**The Lodge at Montgomery Bell** · 10 – 2 · reserve by Dec 10	Burns	$15 – 25
Wed, Dec 23	**The Hermitage Hotel** · a North Pole breakfast and a gift	Nashville	RESY

✦ *Dec 5 is parade day too. Every breakfast that morning wraps by 11:30, and the first parade starts at 3.*

✦ NEW THIS YEAR · NORTH POLE MAIL

Have your kids write to Santa, and **Santa writes back** with a real letter mailed to your home. Free for every family. Send it by **Sunday, Dec 13** at carissamovesnashville.com/santa

✦ NEIGHBOR TOWNS, THE STAGE & THE LIBRARY

Worth the *short* drive

Franklin Christmas Parade

SAT, DEC 5 · 1 PM · DOWNTOWN FRANKLIN · 45 MIN

An early-afternoon parade, so you can still make it back for a Sumner County parade that evening.

Dickens of a Christmas

DEC 12 – 13 · DOWNTOWN FRANKLIN

Main Street goes Victorian for a weekend, with costumed characters, carolers and vendors. Free.

Mt. Juliet Christmas Parade

SAT, DEC 12 · 11 AM · RAIN DATE SUN, DEC 13 AT 1

"A Holly Dolly Christmas," from West Wilson Middle to East Division.

Christmas on the Square

SAT, DEC 12 · 10 – 4 · LEBANON PUBLIC SQUARE

Vendors, kids' activities and a tree-decorating contest.

Free puppets for little ones

SAT, DEC 5 · 10 & 11:30 AM · COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME, FORD THEATER

Wishing Chair Productions performs "String City," free and walk-up. Its holiday show, "A Child's Calendar," tours Nashville Public Library branches in November and December. Check library.nashville.gov for dates.

On stage this season

BOOK AHEAD · DETAILS IN MY BOOK-EARLY GUIDE

Christmas at the Ryman with Amy Grant & Vince Gill, Dec 14 – 23 · **Nashville's Nutcracker** at TPAC, Nov 27 – Dec 27 · **Opry Country Christmas**, Nov 30 – Dec 22 · **Nashville Symphony**: *Elf* Dec 2, *Home Alone* Dec 4 – 6, *Messiah* Dec 18 – 20 · **'Twas the Night Before Christmas** at Nashville Children's Theatre, Nov 21 – Dec 27 · **It's a Wonderful Life** radio play from Studio Tenn, Dec 3 – 20.

Christkindlmarkt at Annabel Farms

FRI – SUN, NOV 27 – DEC 20 · 10 – 9 · NOLENSVILLE · 45 MIN · $15

New this year: a European-style Christmas market on a tree farm, with a kids' lights trail, a sleigh hayride, Santa and live reindeer Dec 18 – 20.

Belle Meade Wreath Workshop

SUN, DEC 6 · 10 – 3 · FROM $95

Make your own wreath at Belle Meade. It sold out last year.

More parades to watch for

2026 DATES NOT POSTED YET

Last year **Springfield** held a night parade on the first Saturday in December at 5:30, **Smyrna** and **Lebanon** paraded the first Sunday, and **Murfreesboro** went in mid-December.

✦ WANT THE TICKET LIST TOO?

My **2026 Book-Early Holiday Guide** covers the shows, trains and candlelight tours that sell out, sorted by how fast they go. It's free at **carissamovesnashville.com/holiday/book-early**.

Worth the *gas*

Hendersonville sits close to the Kentucky line, which puts a small town Christmas in every direction. Most of these are under an hour and a half.



✦ DAY TRIPS · UNDER 90 MINUTES

Small-town *Christmas*, every direction

Bell Buckle Old Fashioned Christmas

FREE

SATURDAYS, DEC 5, 12 & 19 · 11 AM – 4 PM · BELL BUCKLE · 1 HR 15 MIN

A tiny railroad town with **free sleigh rides with Santa**, s'mores and carolers. The Pet Parade is December 5 at noon (free, register ahead).

INFO bellbucklechamber.com

Bowling Green, Kentucky

MOSTLY FREE

ABOUT 1 HR · LOST RIVER CAVE · DOWNTOWN · THE REINDEER FARM

Lost River Cave lights its water wheel at its Merry & Bright night, Wednesday, Dec 2, 3 – 7 PM. Downtown's **Light Up BGKY** lights stay on through New Year's. **The Reindeer Farm** sells timed tickets and its weekends and Santa breakfasts sell out every year. Its 2026 dates weren't posted when we checked.

INFO lostrivercave.org · visitbgky.com · thereindeerfarm.com

Cookeville's Dogwood Park

FREE

TREE LIGHTING SUNDAY, DEC 6 · 6 PM · 1 HR 20 MIN

After the lighting, there's a 15-minute light show every hour from 5 to 9 every night of the season.

Columbia, TN

MOSTLY FREE

PARADE & TREE LIGHTING SAT, DEC 5 · 6 PM · 1 HR 10 MIN

A night parade around one of the prettiest squares in Middle Tennessee, plus Breakfast with Santa Dec 12 – 13.

INFO visitcolumbiatn.com

Christmas on the Cumberland

WATCH FOR DATES

LAST YEAR: NOV 22 – JAN 2 · MCGREGOR PARK, CLARKSVILLE · 55 MIN

About a million lights along the riverwalk, free to stroll every night. Look for the 2026 opening night from Clarksville Parks & Rec.

Christmas at the Cave

WATCH FOR DATES

LAST YEAR: THU – SUN, NOV 20 – DEC 28 · MAMMOTH CAVE HORSE CAMP, KY · 1 HR 20 MIN

New last year: a mile-long trail of more than a million lights and a wagon ride behind Belgian horses, $25 a person. Check its Facebook page to see if it's back.

✦ DAY TRIPS · ABOUT TWO HOURS

The *big* day trips

A Chattanooga day

TICKETED

ABOUT 2 HR 15 MIN · CHATTANOOGA IS ON EASTERN TIME, SO YOUR TICKET TIMES ARE AN HOUR AHEAD

Tennessee Aquarium, "Holidays Under the Peaks" Nov 27 – Dec 27, with SCUBA Claus diving at 2 PM Eastern on Dec 5, 6, 12, 13, 19 and 20 (and Nov 28 – 29). **Rock City's Enchanted Garden of Lights**, nightly Nov 13 – Dec 31, closed Dec 24, timed tickets online only, adults $35 – 52, ages 3 – 12 $25 – 42. **The North Pole Limited** train, Nov 13 – Dec 23, from $38. It sells out every year.

✦ *Aquarium in the afternoon, Rock City after dark. Book both before you leave the house.*

Huntsville, Alabama

TICKETED

ABOUT 2 HR · CENTRAL TIME, SAME AS HOME

Galaxy of Lights at the Huntsville Botanical Garden, Nov 13 – Dec 31, with walking nights and a handful of drive-through nights in December. Check the garden's site for this year's driving dates and price. The **North Alabama Railroad Museum** runs a pajama-friendly **North Star Limited** Dec 4, 5, 11 & 12 (5:45 and 7:45) and a daytime **Santa Train** Dec 5 & 12.

BOOK hsvbg.org · narm.info

Santa Claus Express

$28 – 33

DEC 5, 6, 12, 13, 19 & 20 · KENTUCKY RAILWAY MUSEUM, NEW HAVEN, KY · ABOUT 2 HR

A 90-minute vintage train ride through the Kentucky hills with Santa on board.

BOOK kyrail.org

Ruby Falls Christmas

WATCH FOR DATES

LAST YEAR: NOV 28 – DEC 24 · LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN, CHATTANOOGA

The cave entrance decked out for Christmas, with Santa on select days. Pairs well with Rock City the same evening. Tickets online only, a few days ahead.

✦ MAKE IT A WEEKEND

The Smokies are about four hours, so plan an overnight. **Dollywood's Smoky Mountain Christmas** runs Nov 6 – Jan 3, and **Winterfest** lights up Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg from Nov 6. Louisville is about 2 hours 45 minutes north: **Light Up Louisville** and its parade are Saturday, Dec 5, and **Lights Under Louisville** runs underground at the Mega Cavern Nov 15 – Jan 3.

Christmas Eve *to* *New Year's Day*



Under the big tree at Gaylord Opryland

Dec 24

Christmas Eve

Santa's last night at **Glow Wild** and last day at **Opry Mills** and **Cheekwood**. Rock City is closed. We didn't find a big public event that night, which makes it a good one for driving the neighborhood lights.

Dec 25

Christmas Day

Cheekwood is closed and many places keep holiday hours, so call ahead. Check the forecast. It could be t-shirts. It could be 30 degrees.

Dec 26 – 30

The in-between days

The lights run through New Year's at Cheekwood, Glow Wild, Gaylord and Rock City, and weeknight crowds thin out after Christmas.

New Year's Eve Live: Nashville's Big Bash

FREE

THURSDAY, DEC 31 · GATES 5:30 PM · BICENTENNIAL CAPITOL MALL STATE PARK

Little Big Town, HARDY and The Red Clay Strays are announced so far, with the Music Note Drop at midnight. Last year there were sensory bags for kids and WeGo shuttles. Confirm the final lineup at visitmusiccity.com.

Noon countdowns for little ones

WATCH FOR DATES

LAST YEAR: DEC 31, LATE MORNING

Nashville Public Library's Edmondson Pike branch, Murfreesboro's Linebaugh Library ("Blast Off to Noon," with a balloon drop) and the Smyrna Outdoor Adventure Center all counted down to noon last year. Watch for 2026 dates in mid-December.

First Day Hikes

WATCH FOR DATES

FRIDAY, JAN 1 · TENNESSEE STATE PARKS · FREE

Guided New Year's Day walks at state parks across Tennessee, including **Bledsoe Creek** in Gallatin. The 2027 list usually posts mid to late December at tnstateparks.com.

✦ FOUR PLANS, MADE FOR YOU

Plans from a *mom of four*

A free Saturday in Nashville

Saturday, November 28 · total cost: parking

4 PM	**Merry Market** under Broadway at Nashville Yards.
5 PM	**Nashville Yards Tree Lighting**. RSVP on Partiful ahead of time.
AFTER	Free Santa photos, or a spin on **Rink Under Broad** if the kids still have energy.

The Hendersonville Sunday

Sunday, December 6 · total cost: hot chocolate

NOON	Lunch near Main Street, then claim a curb early.
2 PM	**HolidayFest Christmas Parade**, "A Storybook Christmas." Santa is the last float.
AFTER	**Tree lighting at Memorial Park**. Then, once it's dark, drive the Festival of Lights map.

A small-town Saturday

Saturday, December 12 or 19

MORNING	Drive down to **Bell Buckle**, about an hour and fifteen minutes.
11 – 4	**Old Fashioned Christmas**. Free sleigh rides with Santa, s'mores and carolers.
EVENING	Home in time for **Glow Wild** or Cheekwood on the way back through Nashville.

Mom & Dad night out

Any December night · total cost: the sitter, mostly

7 PM	Stay close: **The Rudder** on Old Hickory Lake is doing a holiday pop-up. Or **Snow on the Beach** at Pearl Diver, East Nashville.
AFTER	**Santa's Boondock** at Ernie's Boondock, walk-in, 21+.
OR	Downtown: **Santa Baby**, **Whiskey Wonderland** or a **Fogg Street** rooftop cabin. All 26 are on the website.

✦ PRINT THIS PAGE · PUT IT ON THE FRIDGE

Our 2026 holiday *bucket list*

Let the kids pick. Check them off as you go.

- [ ] Watch a Christmas parade from the curb
  Six in Sumner County alone
- [ ] Be there when a town tree lights up
  Portland, Monthaven, Goodlettsville, Hendersonville
- [ ] Ride in a carriage
  Yulefest · Dec 5
- [ ] Visit Santa somewhere free
  Page 17 lists them
- [ ] Ice skate under Broadway
  Rink Under Broad
- [ ] Run (or walk) on Thanksgiving morning
  Indian Lake Loop
- [ ] See a historic house by candlelight
  Cragfont or Wynnewood
- [ ] Shop a holiday market for teacher gifts
  Gallatin, Nashville or Lebanon
- [ ] Count down to noon on New Year's Eve
  For the early-bedtime crowd
- [ ] See boats covered in lights on the lake
  Deck the Hulls · Dec 5
- [ ] Walk through a candy cane village
  Goodlettsville City Hall
- [ ] Ride a sleigh with Santa
  Bell Buckle · Dec 5, 12, 19
- [ ] Ride a Santa train
  Book early
- [ ] Hear a room full of tubas play carols
  TubaChristmas · Dec 1
- [ ] Drive the neighborhood lights in pajamas
  Bring cocoa
- [ ] Find your favorite light show
  Cheekwood, Glow Wild, ICE! or FrankTown
- [ ] Take a day trip to a small-town Christmas
  Pages 21 – 22
- [ ] Take a First Day Hike on January 1
  Bledsoe Creek State Park

From our family *to yours*

We moved our four kids from Illinois to Middle Tennessee, and the rest of the family wasn't far behind. Now I help other families make the same move, whether you're coming from out of state or moving across town. If you're wondering which town fits, what it really costs, or how to time it around the school year, I'd love to help.

And if you just want to know which parade has the best curb, I can help with that too.

Carissa

CALL OR TEXT
615-412-9755

EMAIL
kindredrootsrealtygroup@gmail.com

INSTAGRAM
@carissamovesnashville

WEBSITE
carissamovesnashville.com

JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP
Transplant Families of Middle Tennessee

SHARE THE GUIDE

Know someone moving here this year? Send them to carissamovesnashville.com/holiday, or have them comment MERRY on my latest post.

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Event details were compiled from organizer websites and local news on November 12, 2026 and may change. Please confirm with each organizer before you go.