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Carolina Christmas



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Photo by Christopher F. Esposito



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Day Trips

CAROLINATRAVELER

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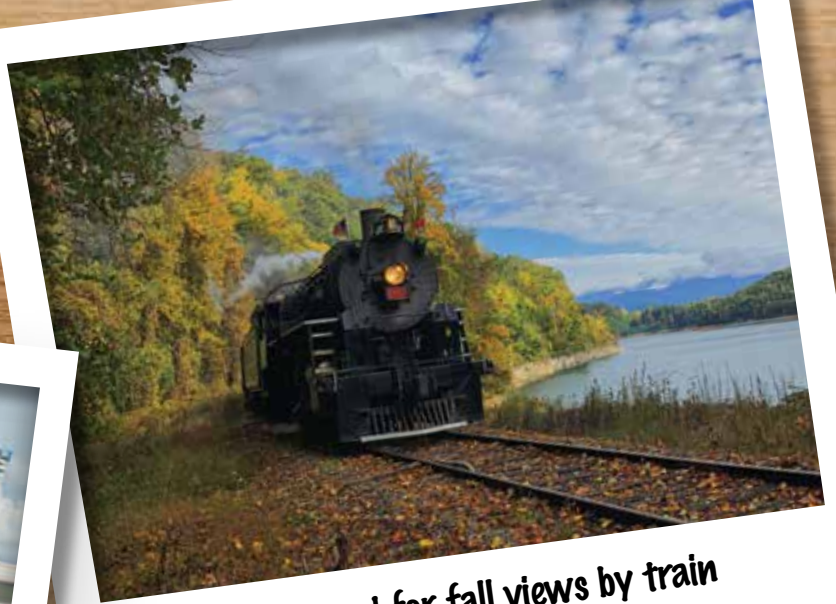
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CAROLINATRAVELER

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**Adventure takes off at Patriots Point
Naval & Maritime Museum
Charleston, SC**



**All aboard for fall views by train
Bryson City, NC**

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**Kids ham it up at Darnell Farms
Bryson City, NC**



**Plow Day & Harvest Festival fun
Lexington, SC**

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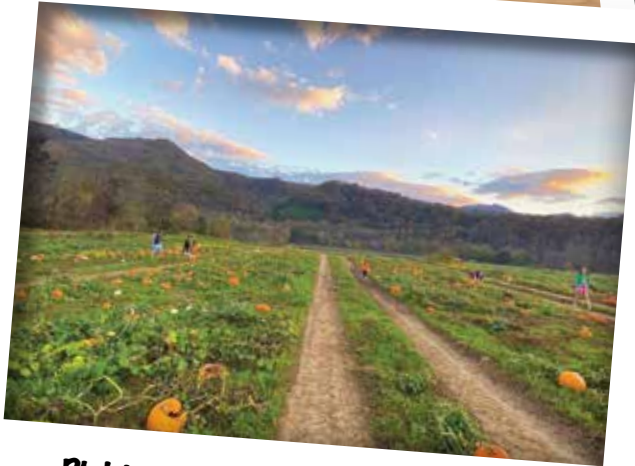


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Picking pumpkins in western NC



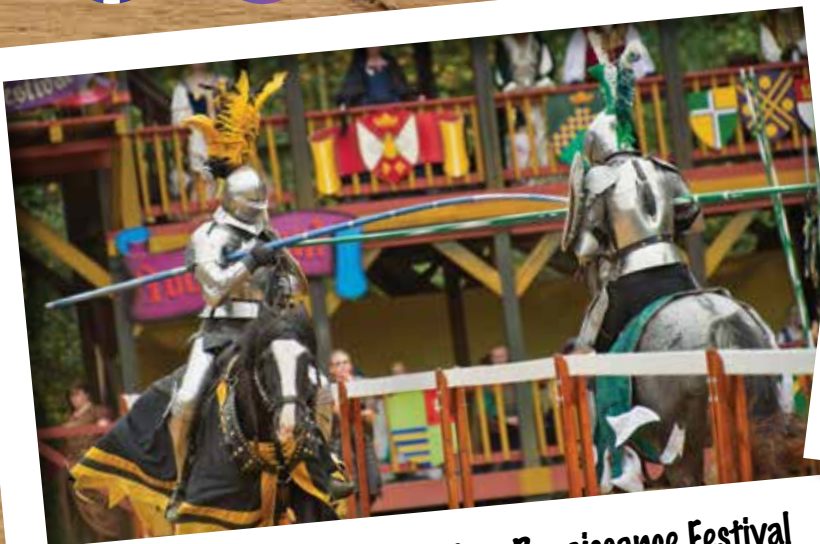
Enjoying the Scotland County Highland Games
Laurinburg, NC

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Dogs take the beach
Bald Head Island, NC



Get medieval at the Carolina Renaissance Festival
Charlotte, NC

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Believe
in the Magic of the Season
December 4, 5, 11, & 12

North Carolina **ZOO** www.zoo.org
ASHEBORO



Charlie Brown Trees to Towering Firs

Carolina Christmas Tree Farms

Selecting a Christmas tree is a memorable tradition for many families and children. Examining every bough for perfection in the crisp winter air while sipping a cup of hot chocolate is an experience every child should have.

Boyd Mountain Tree Farm, NC

A Few Tips for Your Christmas Tree Hunt

Before sawing down the first tree that catches your eye, you'll want to take a couple things into consideration. Measure the ceiling height in the room you plan to display your Christmas tree, so you can be sure to select one that fits. Bring a blanket or tarp to cover the top of your car to prevent scratches during transportation. Pack a few pairs of gloves for yourself and children to prevent tree sap from sticking to your hands. Lastly, don't forget to examine all sides of the tree to be sure there are no surprise bare spots.

Boyd Mountain Christmas Tree Farm

Waynesville, NC The Boyd Mountain Farm has been in the Boyd family for over 100 years. That means they've got quality down to a science. If you're looking for the most picturesque Christmas tree for this year's cards, you'll find it here. Make a weekend out of it by staying at one of Boyd Mountain's seven hand-hewn log cabins. With 150 acres of mountain trails and Christmas trees, you'll make your children's holiday season memorable. (828) 926-8888, boydmountainchristmastreefarm.com

Mehaffey Tree Farm

Waynesville, NC Mehaffey Tree Farm is nearing its 40th anniversary as a staple Christmas tree farm in the state. Their inventory of strictly Fraser fir varieties is popular with community members, and it's not unusual for the farm to sell out before the end of the season. Dates are limited, so get your tree while you can. Depending on the number of sales earlier in the season, the farm may be open for additional dates in December. (828) 476-8505, mehaffeytreefarm.com

Noble's Christmas Tree Farm

Kinston, NC Noble's Christmas Tree Farm grows some of the finest choose-and-cut Christmas trees in eastern NC. Open at the end of November, trees run out quickly at Noble's. Fill your holiday with the refreshing and nostalgic scent of white pine, blue cedar, or Leyland cypress Christmas trees and wreaths. (252) 569-5671, facebook.com/noblefamilyfarm

Justice Farms

Jacksonville, NC A 10-acre family farm, Justice Farms offers choose-and-cut red cedar, Leyland cedars, and white pines. If you must have a classic Fraser fir, you can grab a pre-cut North Carolina grown tree at Justice, too. Visit Santa's shop for all your decorating needs, as you'll have an abundance of live greenery to choose from. (910) 346-6783, justicefarms.com

Know Before You Go

Many of our long-time favorite tree farms and Christmas-themed farm destinations will close early this season because of low inventory. Sadly, some popular destinations did not even open this year. If you have your heart set on a fresh-cut Fraser fir, call the tree farms before making the drive.



Not everyone wants a big tree

Boyd Mountain Tree Farm, NC

The dog days of winter

Mehaffey Tree Farm, NC



Bring your own helpers

Merry Christmas Tree Farm, SC



Family fun for all ages

Penland Tree Farm, SC



Merry Christmas Tree Farm

Central, SC Merry Christmas Tree Farm also offers a wide assortment of tree varieties. For visitors that want to purchase a large tree for their home, you're in luck, as they sell up to nine-foot-tall trees. Children will be happy to know they can take home a "Charlie Brown" tree as well as a cup of steaming hot chocolate, both for free. Adults will equally enjoy the coffee available to visitors! (864) 650-5470, merrychristmastree.com

Mystic Farm

Greenville, SC Over the past few decades, Mystic Farm has built a reputation for their expansive Christmas tree lot. With 30 acres of land to the farm's name, this site is ideal for classic Christmas tree farm photos for the whole family. Besides bringing home a beautiful blue ice tree, Leyland cypress, or one of the other many Christmas tree varieties grown here, you can also buy handmade garlands or wreaths. (864) 380-7636, mystictreefarm.com

Penland Christmas Tree Farm

York, SC At Penland Christmas Tree Farm, there's plenty to do besides finding that perfect Christmas tree for your home. In addition to the complimentary hayrides and free hot chocolate Penland Farm provides, you and your loved ones will stay busy finding even more goodies to take home and activities to participate in. Pets are also welcome, so feel free to bring your pup! (803) 366-7605, penlandtreefarm.com

Lebanon Christmas Tree Farm

Ridgeville, SC For over 30 years, Lebanon Christmas Tree Farm has supplied the community with fresh Fraser fir and balsam fir Christmas trees. Their tallest trees reach up to 40 feet tall! A visit to the farm is also a convenient way for little ones to enjoy winter fun. Several package options are available for purchase, making it easy to choose the combination of activities that best suits your family, including train rides, craft-making, and a scavenger hunt. (843) 688-5088, lebanonchristmastree.com

Pre-cut trees are also available

Mystic Tree Farm, SC



Carolina Christmas Lights Shows

Twinkling Family Fun

With colder weather on the way, now's the time to start creating your Christmas bucket list! A great place to start is by including some must-see Christmas lights in the Carolinas this holiday season.

We've compiled a list of some of the most creative, dazzling light displays you can count on seeing in December. From snow-capped mountains in the west to floating Christmas parades by the beach, you'll find plenty of holiday distractions in the Carolinas. This list will keep the kids entertained and help you create wonderful holiday memories. So bundle up in your warmest clothes and bring out the camera to add a little extra Christmas charm to 2021!

Chinese Lantern Festival

For a different Christmas experience, Koka Booth Amphitheatre hosts an absolutely dazzling display of creative paper lanterns. The Chinese Lantern Festival features colorfully crafted butterfly lanterns, dragons, and plants. Tickets are \$25, kids under two are free. This event is a self-guided walking tour on paved walkways and is wheelchair accessible. *8003 Regency Parkway, Cary, NC 27518*



Next stop, family fun

Great Christmas Light Show



Biltmore Candlelight Christmas

Dec - Jan 9 Christmas at the Biltmore is more than an annual celebration of the season. Stroll around the house and grounds ooh-ing and aah-ing at expertly dressed, live Fraser firs, wreaths, and boughs. Enter the estate for a peek into the past of how “America’s Largest Home” would have been decorated. Tickets start at \$106.
One Lodge St., Asheville, NC 28803

Lights Before Christmas at Riverbanks Zoo

December (select dates) If your family includes animal lovers, the annual Lights Before Christmas at the Riverbanks Zoo is a winter family activity that’s guaranteed to please everyone! Last year’s display featured more than a million lights, a bonfire with multiple s’more-making areas, and a towering Christmas tree that reached over 30 stories high.
Riverbanks Zoo & Garden, 500 Wildlife Parkway, Columbia, SC 29210



These lights were made for walking

Chinese Lantern Festival

Nights of a Thousand Candles

Dec- Jan 2 (select nights) Most Christmas lights displays in South Carolina (and elsewhere) are electric, but not during Nights of a Thousand Candles. This Brookgreen Gardens event is special because the lights are hand-lit candles, numbering nearly 3,000. Children are sure to want a cup of hot chocolate while the adults may take the opportunity to sip a glass of wine during their stroll. Adult tickets are \$30 each and children ages 4-12 get in for \$15.
Brookgreen Gardens, 1931 Brookgreen Dr., Murrells Inlet, SC 29576

Charleston’s Holiday Festival of Lights

The Holiday Festival of Lights in Charleston is one of the most popular light displays in the state. For over 30 years, these carefully arranged James Island lights are a Christmas tradition for many families. Children will love taking a ride on an antique-style carousel, while the entire family can take a leisurely stroll along the walking trail. With over 750 light displays, you won’t be disappointed by the assortment of lights.
James Island County Park, 871 Riverland Dr., Charleston, SC 29412

Know Before You Go Before you jump in the car, make sure you and your family are prepared for your evening of fun. Fill 'er up and pack snacks and drinks for those drive-thru displays.

Pro Tips The lines at drive-thru displays can be long and slow, so dress the kids in pajamas and toss some sleeping bags in the back. Prepare fun trivia questions or a Christmas storybook (or two). If you want to walk the light shows, wear comfortable shoes and dress in layers. Finally, don't forget to visit CarolinaTraveler.com for a complete list of all our favorite holiday light shows in the Carolinas!



**It really is a
winter wonderland**

Holiday Festival of Lights



**Prepare
to be amazed**

Nights of a Thousand Candles

Photo credit: Austin Bond Photography

The Great Christmas Light Show

Built to amaze, light structures at The Great Christmas Light Show boast heights of up to 55 feet. The setup is around two miles long, and at certain times of the week, little ones will have the chance to see Santa Claus at the Santa Village. You can even have pictures taken for free. The location is also host to a petting zoo, a train ride, an elf hunt, and more. Bring extra cash for treats like hot chocolate. *NMB Park & Sports Complex, 150 Citizens Circle, Little River, SC 29566*

McAdenville's Christmas Town USA

Dec 1-26 (5:30-10 pm) Affectionately known as Christmas Town USA, McAdenville, NC, has been making Christmas bright since 1956. Located between Charlotte and Gastonia, McAdenville's lights were heralded as the #2 Christmas lights display in the nation, according to a national survey by USA Today. Best of all, you can park and walk, or drive through this Christmas light show for free! *McAdenville, NC 28101*

Tanglewood Festival of Lights

Enjoy the Tanglewood Festival of Lights – an amazing Christmas lights display – from the comfort of your own vehicle. Alternatively, book a horse-drawn carriage or tractor-pulled hayride to view the splendor of these lights. Your kids will not only love the light show, but they'll get a chance to meet Mr. and Mrs. Claus and their helpers. Perhaps most exciting of all – kids can visit S'moresville next to the gift shop for a marshmallow roasting experience worthy of the North Pole. *4061 Clemmons Rd., Clemmons, NC 27012*

Slide Into Winter Fun

Snow Tubing in North Carolina's Mountains

Snow tubing is such a wonderfully easy sport to master that even your youngest family members can experience the thrill of sliding down a snow-covered hill. And with magic carpet rides back to the top, you won't hear complaints about too much walking!

Whether your legs are a little too small to handle skis or you'd simply prefer to relax on your trip down the hill, there are plenty of thrilling tubing parks scattered across western NC. If you're ready to slip-slide your weekend away, check out our recommended locales below.

Tips for Snow Tubing in NC

No matter which tubing park you opt to visit, there are a few tips to keep in mind when planning your snowy adventure:

- No one wants wet, cold feet. Wear waterproof shoes and warm socks.
- Dress in layers. Weather can be unpredictable, so it's best to prepare to peel off a few layers throughout the day or add on as needed.
- Wear waterproof gloves to keep your hands toasty and dry all day long.
- Check the website of your ideal tubing park before visiting. Hours may vary and often large parties require a reservation.
- Most body heat is lost through the head, so be sure to cover that noggin' with a warm hat.
- Bring sunscreen and sunglasses to protect your skin and eyes from the reflection off the snow.

Which of these locations do you think has the best snow tubing in NC? Let us know and tag @carolinatravelr in your tubing adventures on Instagram so that we can share in the fun!



Moonshine Mountain



Hawksnest Snow Tubing

With over 20 runs, Hawksnest Snow Tubing is a bustling winter wonderland and the largest snow tubing park on the East Coast. The lanes range from 400 to 1,000 feet in length, meaning no matter your family's comfort level with tubing, you're sure to find a lane to love. When it's time for a break, the 1,500-foot viewing deck has tasty beverages to warm you up such as hot chocolate and coffee. The enormous adventure park also offers ziplining year-round with 20 courses and is located conveniently between many popular mountain towns. hawksnesttubing.com
2058 Skyland Dr., Seven Devils, NC 28604

Moonshine Mountain Snow Tubing Park

With the steepest snow tubing in western NC, Moonshine Mountain Snow Tubing Park is supreme for the adventurous. This Hendersonville winter attraction has over 500 feet of slope and a snowless day won't stop the fun — Moonshine Mountain makes their own flakes.

Unlike many of the other incredible locales for snow tubing in NC, Moonshine Mountain does not take reservations. Also unlike others, they do allow the tying together of tubes to create trains down the slopes with your family and friends. Hungry tubers can enjoy a bite to eat from a local food truck once they're worn out from slippin' away the day. moonshinemountain.com, 5865 Willow Rd., Hendersonville, NC 28739

Sugar Mountain Snow Tubing

When you're in need of a break from the skip slopes, snow tubing at Sugar Mountain Resort is the perfect adventure. The tubing park can be found on the Sugar Mountain golf course where the lanes are regularly groomed and equipped for snow-making. A slide down one of the tubing lanes in Sugar Mountain Resort is sure to bring a thrill! These slippery lanes are a whopping 700 feet in length. Plus, the fun can last well into the night with lights set up for tubing until 10pm. skisugar.com, 1009 Sugar Mountain Dr., Sugar Mountain, NC 28604

Wolf Ridge Tubing

While flocks of skiers and snowboarders get pumped to "ride the wolf" at Wolf Ridge in Mars Hill, NC each season, there's a more hidden gem located just outside of the resort. Wolf Ridge Tubing offers one big slope without lanes. This means that snow tubers can link up and ride down with their friends or family. After riding up the magic carpet, you'll enjoy 350 feet of snowy fun. With snacks, drinks, and lighting for nighttime rides, the fun never stops at Wolf Ridge! skiwolfridgenc.com 3461 Puncheon Fork Rd., Mars Hill, NC 28754



Defy Gravity Christmas Break Day Trip



Mystery Hill

One of North Carolina's most unique attractions, Mystery Hill is a blend of indoor and outdoor adventure. It's an easy drive from Charlotte. 129 Mystery Hill Ln., Blowing Rock, NC 28605, Open 9-6 daily, mysteryhill.com



Gem mining



Crazy Christmas activities

Nothing Is As It Seems

Explore our mysterious Natural Gravitational Anomaly and watch a ball roll upwards and water flow uphill!

Throw A Tomahawk

Challenge your friends and family to a game of tomahawk throwing. It's a combination of strength and precision. It's tougher than it looks!

Celebrate Crazy Christmas

This holiday season you can hunt for elves scattered around the Hill. Get crafty with Christmas-themed projects at Lillie's Craft Cabin. On the weekends after 3 pm lookout for the yeti. And kids better be good – Santa will be there!

Gem Mining

Mine for a Crazy Christmas prize at Prospector Hill. Find letters in your gems to spell a Crazy Christmas prize-winning word!

Front Porch Eats

Grab a bite to eat and reward your crew with an Over the Top Mason Jar Milkshake from Front Porch Eats. Enjoy your treat without leaving Mystery Hill!



Throw
a tomahawk

Ride the bull reindeer



Over the top
mason jar
milkshake

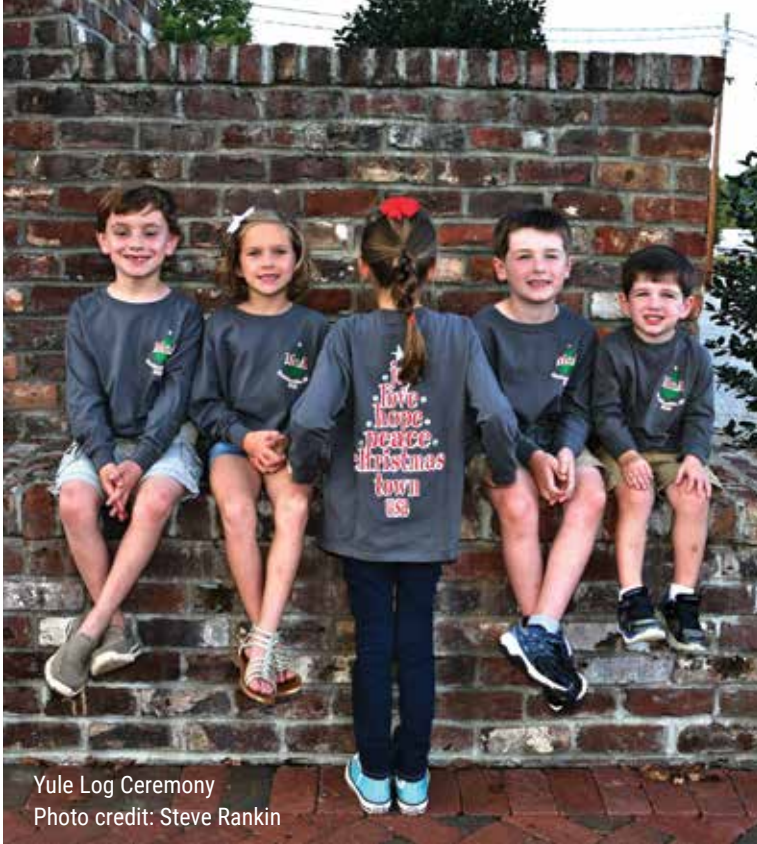
Treat Your Out-of-Town Visitors to **Carolina Holiday Traditions**



Biltmore Estate

You've cleaned your home, decorated your Christmas tree, and planned your meals in preparation for your out-of-town visitors this holiday season. But what have you forgotten? That list of Christmas things to do with your visitors!

Don't panic about finding ways to entertain your friends and family when they arrive. We've compiled this convenient list of ways you can celebrate a Carolina Christmas with your guests. This Christmas to-do list will ensure you're the perfect host by sharing these fun Southern traditions with your guests.



Yule Log Ceremony
Photo credit: Steve Rankin

Winter with the Western Company

Statesville, December 11 While people have been celebrating Christmas in the Carolinas for hundreds of years, the way they honor the season has changed significantly. Each year at Fort Dobbs in Statesville visitors get the chance to see what holiday preparation was like during the 1700s. Winter with the Western Company is an annual living history event which explains how soldiers at the fort prepared for winter and the Christmas holidays. Children and adults alike will enjoy watching traditional open fire cooking displays as well as the actors' woodworking skills. Military history buffs will appreciate the firearm demonstrations, including cannons and musket firings. *Fort Dobbs, 438 Fort Dobbs Rd., Statesville, NC 28625*

Christmas Village Christkindlmarkt

Charlotte, December This newer holiday tradition combines the magic of a German-style Christmas market with the modern vibe of Charlotte. Visitors can shop for Christmas gifts while tasting traditional German cider called "Gluhwein," served in commemorative mugs. Although this market tradition only started a few years ago, it's quickly grown into an elaborate event. You can peruse the market's extensive collection of Scandinavian ornaments, Ukrainian glass ornaments, and Ecuadorian crafts, all a reminder of the city's diverse culture. *Truist Field, 324 S. Mint St., Charlotte, NC 28202*



Christmas Village Christkindlmarkt

Visit ChristmasVille

Rock Hill, December 2-24 Many towns have a tradition of decorating for the holidays, but the town of Rockhill goes all out. If you really want to show your visitors a taste of the Southern holiday spirit, visit Rockhill (or ChristmasVille, as it's also known) during their annual multiple-day Christmas event. The town celebrates the season with more than 70 events and lots of art on display. Where did the inspiration for this celebration come from? Vernon Grant, the artist behind the famous Kellogg's Rice Crispies elves, called Rock Hill home for much of his life. His work encouraged many of the town residents to follow suit in terms of creativity, and the rest is history! *Rock Hill, SC 29730*

Yule Log Ceremony

McAdenville, December 16 Frequently people who aren't from the area have heard of McAdenville. This town is famously also referred to as "Christmastown USA." Each year since the 1950s, they've held a popular Yule Log Ceremony. Your children can help pull the log down the streets on a sled while the townspeople follow, ultimately placing the log in McAdenville's outdoor fire pit. The log is then ceremoniously lit. Afterwards, you'll want to stick around for live Christmas music. *McAdenville, NC 28101*

Know Before You Go

If you're bringing friends or family from out of town to join you in any of these activities, be sure to fill them in on what to expect in terms of weather. Besides warm clothing, take photos to remember this memorable time. Afterwards, go out for a traditional Southern meal.

All Aboard!

Carolina Christmas Train Rides

**Wear your jammies,
and bring a coat**

With a chill in the air, a buzz of activity, the sounds of bells and whistles, the striking visual of a mighty engine and the coal-fired cologne of a steam train, there's nothing quite like the sensory smorgasboard that is an old-fashioned Christmas train ride. Whether your children want to take the Polar Express train ride in the majestic North Carolina mountains in honor of their favorite book, or if you've always wanted to ride one of the scenic trains in South Carolina, the whole family will be eager for a ticket aboard a Christmas train!

Great Smoky Mountain Railroad Polar Express Train Ride

Bryson City, NC If you're looking for the quintessential holiday train experience, take the Polar Express through the Great Smoky Mountains. This Bryson City train ride is a must for families with little ones. At just over an hour long, this ride is the perfect length to enjoy a night of holiday fun without staying up past the kids' bedtimes. You'll get to hear a special reading of the famous Polar Express story while sipping on delicious hot cocoa and a tasty snack. Make time to visit with Santa, as our favorite Christmas figure will make an appearance. *(800) 872-4681, gsmr.com*

Polar Express Train Ride

Spencer, NC Another Polar Express-themed train ride, this one is hosted by the NC Transportation Museum. Dress in your warmest, most festive holiday pajamas and catch a ride on the museum's interpretation of the Polar Express. Buy your tickets early since the two trains on-site operate only on select dates in December. Prices range from \$32-\$360, depending on the type of ticket. This event does require proof of a COVID vaccination for adults and children 12 and older. (704) 636-2889, nctransportationmuseum.org

Tweetsie Christmas

Blowing Rock, NC Looking for a North Carolina scenic railroad to give you those cozy Christmas vibes this year? Experience a Tweetsie Christmas, a popular event in western North Carolina that involves a 20-minute train ride through the picturesque Blue Ridge Mountains. The train departs every half-hour, with the first one of the day leaving at 5:30 pm. Besides the open-air train car ride (you'll want to bundle up), visitors can enjoy amusement park rides, stop by the Gingerbread House to visit with Santa, and make s'mores around the campfire. (828) 264-9061, tweetsie.com

Santa Train

Winnsboro, SC Each December, the South Carolina Railroad Museum offers rides on their Santa Train. Santa rides the train the whole way and makes a point to stop and visit with each family during their journey. You'll get to take plenty of pictures along the way. If your family is looking for an enchanting evening train ride, consider their similar Twilight Santa Train ride. This train departs later in the day, and passengers are treated to snacks like hot chocolate and cookies. Visitors swap places between the dining car and coach so that everyone gets a chance to visit with Santa. (803) 635-9893, scrm.org

Country Christmas Train

Denton, NC Denton's Country Christmas Train experience has a little bit of everything for visitors to enjoy. There's a candy cane-adorned path to welcome visitors, a gingerbread house that sells baked goods, a live nativity scene, and even a petting zoo. Partners can sign up for a romantic horse-drawn carriage ride, while craft-inclined visitors will want to stop by the candle-making exhibit for demonstrations of this artform. Some camping on-site is even permitted if you wish to wake up to the Christmas magic the next morning. (336) 859-2755, dentonfarmpark.com

Get the Most Out of Your Train Ride

No matter which train you board, make sure you come prepared. Many of the trains are unheated, which means you'll want to wear very warm clothing. In addition to a thick jacket, be sure to bring hats, mittens, and scarves as even daytime temperatures can be quite chilly in the Carolinas during the winter months. Several of the trains offer snacks, but most of them do not offer full meal options, so plan on eating your lunch or dinner ahead of time. Also, give your family plenty of time to arrive. Trains run on tight schedules, and you don't want to risk the disappointment of missing your ride!



Best Christmas ever!

Tweetsie Railroad

**Not an elf,
but still
a toymaker**

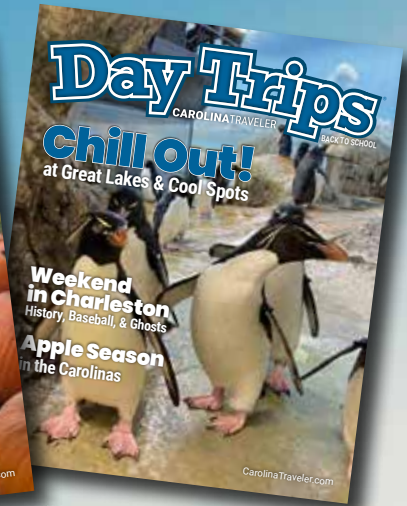
Polar Express, Bryson City



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