BRAND USA

NEWS RELEASE

Brand USA Unwraps America's Must-Experience Holiday Events & Destinations This Season

August 26, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. (August 26, 2025) — It's the most wonderful time of the year across America—and from coast to coast, countless cities are shining bright with yuletide joy to celebrate an unforgettable holiday season. From the legendary Rockettes' milestone 100th anniversary show in New York City, to Fairbanks, Alaska ringing in a return to "light" for the upcoming season with a sparkling fireworks show, and countless Christmas Markets and Menorah Lightings—'tis the season to be merry.

"The holiday season in the United States is celebrated in countless ways, shaped by the traditions of communities across the country," said Fred Dixon, president and CEO of Brand USA. "From cold, snowy celebrations in the north to festive gatherings on warm southern shores, the range of experiences available—often just a short journey apart—is something few destinations can offer. We invite visitors to experience it for themselves and discover how the holidays come to life in meaningful and unexpected ways, wherever they choose to explore."

East Coast Holiday Happenings

In Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, see one (or both) of the two menorah lightings taking place to celebrate Hanukkah. The Menorah Lighting at Station Plaza (Suburban Square) invites the community to gather for the traditional menorah lighting on the Lawn, along with hot apple cider, dreidel making, crafts, and more. The Lansdale Menorah Lighting at Railroad Plaza takes place on December?26 as a joyful kickoff to the last night of Hanukkah with festive music, crafts, doughnuts, and hot chocolate for all ages.

Hanukkah in Washington, DC kicks off with a lighting ceremony of the world's largest menorah on the White House Ellipse. Enjoy latkes, doughnuts, menorah kits and dreidels, as a new candle is illuminated on each of the eight days of Hanukkah.

Alexandria, Virginia's beloved 54th Annual Alexandria Scottish Christmas Walk Parade takes place the first Saturday of December—a cherished tradition that honors the city's Scottish roots with tartan-clad marchers and bagpipes echoing through Old Town. The celebration continues with the 25th Annual Alexandria Holiday Boat Parade of Lights, where illuminated vessels light up the Potomac in a breathtaking riverfront spectacle.

In Massachusetts, the nostalgic Christmas Stroll on Nantucket takes place December 5-7, transforming the historic downtown into a winter wonderland of elaborately designed storefronts on quaint cobblestone streets, outfitted with twinkling lights and hundreds of seven-foot lit trees decorated by locals.

America's most beloved holiday show, the Christmas Spectacular Starring the Radio City Rockettes® in New York City, will return to the Great Stage at Radio City Music Hall® from November 6, 2025, through January 4, 2026. Tickets for the 2025 Christmas Spectacular, taking place during the Rockettes' milestone 100th anniversary, are on sale now.

From Nov 23—Dec 28, Perelman Performing Arts Center (PAC NYC) will host a magic, intimate showing of the holiday classic, A Christmas Carol.

The 2025 National Gingerbread House Competition at The Omni Grove Park Inn & Spa in Asheville, North Carolina, is back beginning November 17, when gingerbread artists

extra special, marking a heartwarming return after the challenges of Hurricane Helene—transforming The Omni Grove Park Inn & Spa into a whimsical wonderland where creatives from professional pastry chefs to cookie-loving hobbyists are invited to let their creativity shine in a showcase of sugary creations, on display starting November 18 through January 4.

On Saturday, December 6, Elves, Jack Frost and a Snowball Fight await in Frostburg, Maryland, in Allegany County, the Mountain Side of Maryland—home to the nationally recognized annual Storybook Holiday event. This event is complete with the ever-popular Elf Olympics, kids' activities, a Christmas market, shops, a featured children's author and a parade led by none other than Jack Frost himself. Fitting for a town named "Frost"-burg, Mr. Frost also closes out the day's activities with a townwide snowball fight.

Midwestern Magic

The charming town of Frankenmuth, Michigan, which is affectionately known as "Michigan's Little Bavaria" (and home to Bronner's Christmas Wonderland—the world's largest Christmas store, open year-round), transforms each holiday season into a living snow globe of nostalgic cheer, festive activities, and immersive cultural experiences. From magical light displays to Santa sightings, and more—Christmas cheer is always around the corner.

Santa's gone wild in Wisconsin during the annual Santa Cycle Rampage—a fun event for participants and spectators where cyclists dressed in festive attire tour the streets of Milwaukee and Madison for a joyous holiday ride, spreading cheer as they go.

Colcord Hotel in Oklahoma City invites guests to uncover a hidden gem in the heart of downtown OKC this holiday season: Dasher's Den, a storage room transformed into a festive pop-up speakeasy tucked away on the hotel's third floor. Guests check in at the front desk, receive a keychain, and are guided upstairs to this magical retreat, where seasonal cocktails, sweet treats, and cozy ambiance await.

Kansas City, Missouri, is the only place where that movie magic will come to life with the second annual Hallmark Christmas Experience, taking place from November 28 to December 21, 2025. Designed by Hallmark's creative team, the event will bring to life the charm of a Hallmark movie town square, complete with a magical Christmas market, festive foods, an idyllic ice-skating rink, nightly lightings of the Mayor's 100-foot Christmas trees, card sending and gift-wrapping stations, interactive light walks, photo ops and much more—with movie marathons across each weekend, as well as the premiere of the all-new movies, and appearances by some of Hallmark's biggest stars.

Southeastern Holiday Season Sparkles (With or Without Snow)

Established in 2013, Deck the Chairs at Seawalk Pavilion in Jacksonville Beach, Florida, is a holiday tradition that incorporates the influence of the coast along with traditional holiday decor. This family-friendly, free yearly event features more than 40 American Red Cross lifeguard chairs, uniquely decorated in traditional holiday décor, such as Christmas trees, red bows, Santa and Mrs. Claus, lights and presents, by community members and local sponsoring organizations and the Jacksonville community.

Who says Christkindlmarkts need to be in Europe? South Carolina's Pendleton Christkindlmarkt in historic Pendleton is a hidden holiday gem modeled after traditional German markets dating back to the 13th century. Feel a sense of festive European flair on the charming Village Green every Friday and Saturday evening from late November through the second weekend of December, free and welcoming for all ages.

Sarasota, Florida's annual New Year's Eve Pineapple Drop welcomes in the New Year by dropping a bright, decorative pineapple at midnight backed by a colorful firework display. The celebration also includes amusement rides, multiple live music stages, beer, and food vendors within walking distance of Main Street.

Celebrate New Year's Eve in Nashville with fireworks and the signature Music Note Drop at Jack Daniel's New Year's Eve Live: Nashville's Big Bash. Taking place at Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park in Tennessee, this vibrant celebration draws hundreds of thousands of locals and visitors alike for a festive night filled with unforgettable entertainment and citywide holiday spirit.

The Reindeer Farm in Bowling Green, Kentucky, transforms the holidays into a truly magical experience. Visitors can meet and feed real reindeer, sip hot cocoa, write letters to Santa and explore festive activities that feel straight out of the North Pole. Those who are lucky may even catch a glimpse of Santa and Mrs. Claus. This family-owned farm has become a beloved seasonal tradition for many, offering hands-on holiday fun with a touch of that Southern charm that so many know and love.

Pacific Northwest Holiday Cheer

In Seattle, Washington, the 48th annual Julefest: A Nordic Christmas Celebration in Ballard (a traditionally Nordic neighborhood) brings the area alive as a Nordic marketplace, bustling with artisanal goods, Scandinavian apparel, and traditional cuisine. There's also the Seattle Christmas Market, a five-week celebration that transforms Seattle Center into a festive village marketplace from November 20 - December 24 under the iconic Seattle landmark, the Space Needle.

In Portland, Oregon, watching The Portland Christmas Ships, a holiday tradition since 1954, sailing on both the Columbia River and Willamette River for 15 nights each December, is an annual favorite activity for families, couples, and friends. It's free to do—and regardless of the weather forecast, thousands of local residents and visitors line the banks of both rivers to watch the festive parade of illuminated ships.

Southwest Celebrations and Spirit

For millions of people around the world, watching the legendary Tournament of Roses Parade on January 1 in Pasadena, California, is an iconic New Year's Day tradition. The Rose Parade travels 5.5 miles along Colorado Blvd., featuring an array of colorful, handmade floats. The parade is immediately followed by one of America's biggest and most popular college football bowl games, the Rose Bowl.

In Chandler, Arizona, the Tumbleweed Tree Lighting Ceremony and festival, a longstanding tradition since 1957, takes place on December 6. This one-of-a-kind "holiday tree" is adorned with more than 1,200 LED Christmas lights, created using a Christmas tree-shaped wire frame that is 35 feet tall and 20 feet wide, made of nearly 1,200 tumbleweeds, 25 gallons of paint, 20 gallons of fire retardant and 65 pounds of glitter.

The Las Cruces New Year's Eve Chile Drop, which takes place on New Year's Eve in southern New Mexico, means a countdown to the new year with a spicy twist: as the clock strikes midnight, a 19-foot glowing chile pepper descends above downtown Las Cruces. Before midnight, locals and visitors alike are invited to vote on whether the chile will glow red or green, a playful nod to New Mexico's state question: "red or green?" referring to the type of chili you want with your meal. It's more than just an event - it's an experiential showcase of New Mexican culinary tradition.

In Breckendridge, Colorado, a Legendary Winter Celebration called Ullr Fest calls on folks to don their Viking helmets and raise a toast to the snow gods in its 62nd year from December 18–20, 2025! This quirky, beloved tradition honors Ullr, the Norse god of snow, and brings locals and visitors together for a Viking-clad parade and the world's longest unofficial Shotski® (a tradition as bold as the mountain town itself), among other snow-celebrating festivities to usher in a great ski season.

Great Tidings of Joy, Off The Mainland

In Puerto Rico, "La Navidad" isn't just Christmas Day—the holiday season is a celebration that lasts around 45 days, from November into mid-January. Nochebuena kicks off the season with a family feast on Christmas Eve, followed by the lively celebration of Nochevieja on New Year's Eve, and Three Kings Day, or Día de Reyes, on January 6—a cherished holiday, especially for children. The season extends through Octavitas, a two-week period of continued celebrations after the official end of Christmas, making the holiday season in Puerto Rico one of the longest and most joyful celebrations in the world.

And just because it's a tropical island doesn't mean Santa doesn't still pay a visit. This jolly old fellow is known in Hawaii as Kanakaloka, and while he's on island time, he trades his heavy red suit for a Hawaiian shirt, red swim trunks, and slippers (or even goes barefoot). Island Santa is traditionally known to tr

“Mele Kalikimaka” at local resort property, Grand Wailea on Maui, at 9 a.m. on Christmas Day.

In Fairbanks, Alaska, don’t miss the holiday Winter Solstice Celebration on the week of December 21, when Downtown Fairbanks comes alive to commemorate the day that signifies a return of the light. Watch fireworks that can’t be seen in the summertime (both Mother Nature's, in the form of Northern Lights, and manmade sparklers) with music, artistic events and shopping for handmade Alaskan items.

To learn more and start planning your trip, visit AmericaTheBeautiful.com.

###

About Brand USA
Brand USA is the nation’s destination marketing organization, dedicated to attracting legitimate international inbound travel to strengthen the U.S. economy, increase exports, create quality jobs, and promote community prosperity. By running data-driven campaigns and unifying messaging across industry and government, Brand USA positions the United States as a top global destination while providing current visa and entry information.

Over the past 13 years Brand USA has driven 11.3 million additional international visitors who spent $38.1 billion in the United States, leading to $82.9 billion in total economic impact and sustaining an average of more than 40,000 jobs each year. These efforts have generated nearly $11 billion in attributable tax receipts at the federal, state, and local levels.

Media Contacts

Chris Heywood
Senior Vice President, Public Relations & Chief Communications Officer

Jennifer Tong
Senior Director, International Public Relations

Andrew Felts
Senior Manager, Media Relations & Communications