

Gary Knowles' - Getaway Sampler

A selection of events loaded with Real Wisconsin Fun!

December 2015 to New Years Eve!

by Gary Knowles ©

Gary Knowles is a freelance travel writer who is the author of the "Gary's Getaways" feature for the *Journal & Topics Newspapers* serving 16 Chicago suburbs, a consultant to travel businesses, and the author of *The Great Wisconsin Touring Book- 30 Spectacular Auto Tours*. **FOLLOW GARY'S TIPS ON TWITTER:** @TravelWisconsin

BEFORE YOU GO: Avoid disappointment. Always check for schedule changes before heading to events. For more events- four good sources: www.WisTravel.com, www.Wisconline.com, www.TravelWisconsin.com or <http://hwy23events.wordpress.com>

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WISCONSIN & NEARBY!

Get the Official 2015 Santa Postmark – Santa Claus, INDIANA

It's time to get the official "Santa Postmark" from the Indiana town named for the jolly old elf! Each year a new postal cancellation design is selected and kids of all ages love to see it on their mail. The Santa Claus Post Office is the only post office with the special "Santa Claus" mark which was designed by a local high school student (Olivia Hitz, 2015.) If you can get there in person, drop in at the post office to get the famous postmark this Christmas season. Or mail a self-addressed, stamped letter in an envelope and it will be returned by US Mail. The tradition is the legacy of a very kind man, James Martin, who in 1914 as the town's postmaster, ensured that letters addressed to "Santa Claus" were properly answered. The US Postal Service thought this might be an annoyance, so they suggested the town consider a name change. "No way!" said Martin. As a result, even today Santa's Elves Inc., and volunteers at Santa Claus Museum, see to it that 400,000 letters get handled properly! So, don't delay, write legibly, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: **Santa Claus, Santa Claus Post Office, 45 North Kringle Place, Santa Claus, IN 47579**. Elves will do the rest. PH: 812-937-4469 or www.SantaClausInd.org

Live the "American Dream" Holiday - Minneapolis, MN

Shopping becomes America's #1 competitive sport during winter holidays, and we've found a hotel-shopping package-deal in Minneapolis that has everything! Just steps from The Mall of America (MOA) is the newly spiffed and ultra-comfy flagship hotel of Carlson's Country Inn & Suites portfolio. It's ideal headquarters for a family expedition. A two-night stay for four in an amenity-rich double-queen room with homey "Be Our Guest" services includes plenty of MOA excitement: 4 Nickelodeon Universe all-day-ride wristbands (\$120 value) , 4 Flying Dutchman Ghostly Gangplank tickets (\$44 value), 4 Moose Mountain Golf tickets (\$32 value) a MOA Coupon Book (\$9.95 value), a MOA Reusable Shopping Bag (priceless), 4 Dreamsicles or Ice cream treats (\$8 value) and 4 Bottles of Water. And after play-time- let the wild shopping rumpus begin! This package starts at about \$246 per night (2 nights, 4 guests) and includes complimentary hot breakfast served on classic dining ware. Details at <http://www.countryinns.com/bloomington-hotel-mn-55425/mnbloomi/offers> or PH:952-854-5555.

WISCONSIN – *Holiday Feast!*

5-20 Say, Wassail! And let the feast begin! Rittenhouse Inn- Bayfield, WI

Wassail! In Olde' English it was a greeting offered on festive occasions, the holidays and Christmas Eve. The toast was a wish of good health and prosperity for a friend or neighbor. In the far North, in Bayfield and Wisconsin's Apostle Islands Country, it's used at the Rittenhouse Inn during Dinner Concert Weekends. The feasts are planned for December 5, 6, 12, 13, 19 and 20. It's a time to experience the finest of Victorian holiday tastes and celebrate musical traditions. The Inn is fully decorated for the season: pillars wrapped in ribbons, evergreen boughs and twinkling lights all around. A massive Christmas tree greets visitors in the front hall. Singers perform in the dining rooms, hallways and even accompany dinner. Wassail is a holiday feast like no other! Reservations are recommended. PH: 888-611-4667; www.rittenhouseinn.com

10- Kohler- Five Star Dine Around

A world of distinctive dining. Five unique locales. One exquisite evening. A world of distinctive dining. Experience an evening of amazing cuisine at The American Club resort. Enjoy five incredible courses, each served in a different Kitchens of Kohler restaurant, accompanied by a wine pairing and chef presentation. The event begins with a toast at The five-star, five-diamond American Club. Resort shuttles will then transport groups of 10 to 12 people to four different Kohler restaurants to explore a variety of specialties and ambiances. The culinary tour will include Blackwolf Run Restaurant, Cucina, The Immigrant Restaurant and The Wisconsin Room, featuring customized menus exclusive to the Five-Star Dine Around. Finally, complete the evening with a private dessert gathering at Craverie Chocolatier Café, the home of KOHLER Original Recipe Chocolates. 6:30PM PH:866-887-8455
<http://www.americanclubresort.com/calendar/2015/12/five-star-dine-around>

WISCONSIN – *What the Heck? What is this Stuff?!*

4-5, 9-10, 12 Visit the Wisconsin Governor's Residence – Holiday Open House

Everyone's welcome you to visit and tour the beautifully decorated Wisconsin Executive Residence during holiday open house tours! Tours are free. Parties of 20 or more are asked to call (608) 246-5501 to make a reservation. Street parking is available just outside the residence gates. Handicapped parking available upon request at the time of arrival. Cameras may be used during your tour. Non-perishable food items will be collected in support of Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin and warm winter items collected in support of Tourism's Big Bundle Up Campaign. Please visit the 'Driving Directions' page for a map and additional information. The Executive Residence is handicapped accessible. Times: Thur & Fri Noon-2pm, Sat 9am-Noon. 608-246-5501 <http://wisconsinexecutiveresidence.com/>

5 – Breakfast with Reindeer! – Delafield

An annual event sponsored by Delafield businesses for the community every first Saturday of December. Families have made this event a family tradition. Arrive between 9-11am - remember Santa has to leave promptly at noon! We will have live reindeer, elves, a giant red sleigh for your family photos to cherish for a lifetime. Enjoy complimentary brewed hot cocoa, ice cold milk, donuts and candy canes. Enjoy shopping in this beautiful downtown district full of specialty retailers, one of a kind restaurants, and more. Visit and Shop Delafield this holiday season. A free event for the community. 262-646-8100 <http://www.visitdelafield.org/>

5- Santa Cycle Rampage! – Wauwautosa

700 Santas will ride slowly on a 6 mile group ride down North Avenue to Lakefront Brewery. Registration for the Santa Cycle Rampage Ride includes your choice of a t-shirt or hat Bike Fed members: \$20. Non-members: \$35 (price includes a one year membership and hat or shirt). Register and you can buy an extra shirt or hat for just \$10. Visit our online store to order hats and shirts for delivery. <http://wisconsinbikefed.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/scr15-homepage-hero.png> Saturday, Dec. 5th at 9:30am from Cranky Al's Bakery at 69th and North Avenue –

5 – The Polar Express Ride –

Step onto the train and into the pages of the children's classic story. Each child will receive the first gift of Christmas! Wisconsin & Southern Polar Express Ride Depot, 8420 Market St Middleton, WI 53562 855-487-1430 <https://www.wsorpolarexpressride.com/>

5 - The Santa Parade Train, sponsored by the East Troy Electric Railroad and East Troy and Mukwonago Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, will transport Santa and his entourage into East Troy by rail on his mission to light the Christmas Tree on East Troy's Village Square. The beautifully lit three-car train will travel down the century-old interurban trolley line between Mukwonago and East Troy. Nearly the entire route is visible from Highway ES. Limited tickets are available for \$10 each to ride along with Santa and Mrs. Claus. In anticipation of Santa's arrival, festivities begin on the Village Square at 6pm with Holiday entertainment and photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus inside Ivan's Backstage. PH: 262-642-3770 <https://easttroy.org/>

5 Finish Independence Day - Brantwood

Enjoy a celebration dinner hosted by the Knox Creek Heritage Center including Mojakka [stew] that is cooked outdoors in an iron kettle over a wood fire, homemade multi-grain bread, and creamy rice with fruit sauce is served family style. The homemade bread and cardamom braid is also available for sale. Enjoy a program at 6:30pm following the meal which consists of a brief explanation of the importance of the event in Finnish history and the lighting of candles to commemorate Finland's independence from Russia in 1917, plus entertainment to follow. Sponsored by the Knox Creek Heritage Center, an affiliate of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. 2pm dinner; 4pm program 715-564-2520 <https://sites.google.com/site/knoxheritagecenter/home>

5-31 – Madison – Olbrich Gardens Railway “Holiday Express”

Members of the Wisconsin Garden Railway Society come from all over the state to show off their large-scale model trains during Olbrich's Holiday Express. You'll see different trains, depending on the day. Admission for Olbrich Botanical Society members is free; general public \$3 for adults, \$2 for children ages 3 to 12; children 2 and under are free. Admission to the tropical Bolz Conservatory is included. 10am-4pm; close at 2pm Dec 24, closed Dec 25. Olbrich Botanical Gardens & Bolz Conservatory, 3330 Atwood Ave., Madison, WI 53704 PH:608-246-4550 <http://www.olbrich.org/events/holidayexpress.cfm>

7 King – Pearl Harbor Day

The Wisconsin Veterans Home will host a 7:30am ceremony to commemorate the observance of Pearl Harbor Day in the Marden Memorial Center. The program will feature a keynote speaker and Waupaca High School Band. The Military Funeral Honors Team & the Wisconsin Veterans Home Military Funeral Honors Team will post the colors and fire volleys. 715-258-7409 <http://www.travelwisconsin.com/events/history-heritage/pearl-harbor-day-program-40985>

10 – Doktor KA-BOOM – The Science of Santa!

If science and magic are the same thing, then Santa must be the world's greatest scientist! Doktor Kaboom wants to figure out how Santa Claus makes reindeer fly, decides who is naughty and nice, and manages to get down the chimney. In hopes of one-upping Santa, Kaboom experiments with a hovercraft, creates an exothermic reaction, and explores the chemical composition of snow. Schauer Arts & Activities Center, 147 N Rural St., Hartford, WI 53027 PH:262-670-0560 ext 3 <http://schauercenter.org/>

12 - 13 West Allis - Rummage N Rarities. Rummage N Rarities Milwaukee's Premier all Indoor Fall and Winter Flea Market. Come shop over 150 booths of antiques, collectibles, housewares, jewelry, art, records, books, CDs, DVDs, sporting goods, memorabilia, clothing, toys, home decor, video games, glassware and other unique and fancy junk. 640 South 84th St. For more information call (262) 366-1314.

WISCONSIN – GOT ART? Music? Ethnic? & Junque. Sure!

NOW – 2016 “The Nose has it!” at special WWII Warbird Art Exhibit – Oshkosh

With the smoke barely cleared at Pearl Harbor, brave, young US servicemen took to the air to take the war to the enemy. Many of the aircraft carried artist painted images and messages on their noses. Now one of the finest collections of authentic, preserved, WWII “nose art” is on display for the first time outside their Commemorative Air Force home museum in Dallas, Texas. The collection honors the people and aircraft of World War II. The artifacts have been designated by the National Trust for Historical Preservation as an official project of Save America's Treasures, which seeks to preserve historic structures, art and published works throughout the nation. It will be on display at EAA throughout 2016. “This collection is simply incredible; there's no other way to put it,” said Bob Campbell, director of the EAA AirVenture Museum. “It tells a unique story of the common soldier and airman during World War II, how this artwork was created, what it meant to these young men mostly between 18 and 25 years old, and the individual tales of these aircraft that returned along with those that didn't.” As was the custom during World War II, some of the nose art depicts slogans or places, but many of them included drawings of young women in poses from chaste to extremely provocative. EAA will host several events throughout the coming year that will feature the nose art collection and tell more of the background behind each piece. The EAA AirVenture Museum is located just off Interstate 41 at the Highway 44 exit in Oshkosh. It is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call the EAA AirVenture Museum at (920) 426-6108 or visit www.eaa.org/museum.

Now – December 27 – Fort Atkinson - It's a Wonderful Life - The Musical

Frank Capra's story of George Bailey and his life in Bedford Falls has brought hope and inspiration to millions. The Fireside continues its long tradition of bringing you the finest in Christmas entertainment with a stunning, live stage version of this beloved film. Written by Pulitzer and Tony Award winning lyricist Sheldon Harnick and Grammy and Emmy Award winner Joe Raposo, A Wonderful Life captures all the magic of the film with the true spirit of Christmas. Seven shows weekly Wed - Sun. Dinner Theatre Packages \$79.07 including tax. Youth packages \$52.70 for ages 14 and under. Fireside Dinner Theatre, 1131 Janesville Ave, Fort Atkinson, Jefferson County. Call 800-477-9505

4 – Stoughton – Harmonious Wail Concert

Madison's Harmonious Wail will be ringing in the holiday season gypsy-style! Though richly influenced by European gypsy musicians, the Wail bursts through the normal boundaries of the genre with its intoxicating vocals, enticing arrangements, and sheer joy. Smoldering vocals are laced with jazzy mandolin and guitar for an infectious blend of continental jazz, swing, gypsy music, and melodic vocals. Harmonious Wail has won multiple Madison Area Music Association (MAMA) awards including Best Jazz CD, Best Ensemble Vocalists of the Year, Best World Artist, Best World Song, Best Instrumentalist, and Favorite Jazz Band. And now they have just the right swingin' recipe for Christmas spirit. PH:608-877-4400 <http://www.stoughtonoperahouse.com/>

4 & 5 DePere – Always, Patsy Cline

Always...Patsy Cline tells the true story of the friendship that developed between Patsy Cline and Louise Seger, her most devoted fan. Louise narrates the story of the day in 1961 when she met Patsy at Houston's Esquire Ballroom. Afterward, Patsy kept in touch with her number one fan by writing her long hand-written letters until the day she died tragically in a plane crash. She signed the letters "(Love) Always, Patsy Cline." PH: 920-403-3950 <http://www.playbyplaytheatre.org/>

4 – Hudson – A Holiday Stroll

A holiday delight with carriage rides through streets aglow with luminary candles. Festively decorated shops and bistros, in-shop special events, and restaurants showcasing the best of holiday dining. Carriage rides down Old Toll Bridge Road and the streets are aglow with luminary candles to set the mood for this holiday event. Festively decorated shops and bistros will greet you with the sights and sounds of the season. PH:715-386-8411 <http://www.hudsonwi.org/events/candlelight-stroll>

5 Boogie and the Yo-Yo'z Christmas Concert – Waupun

Boogie & The Yo-Yo'z bring their Christmas Extravaganza "Christmas With You" to beautiful, historic Waupun City Hall Auditorium! The show features rockin' Christmas songs, costumes, Santa, and plenty of holiday cheer! As a special added attraction, there will be guest appearances by local school choirs. Reserved seating \$20 balcony, \$25 main floor. Tickets available at Waupun AmericInn, Waupun City Hall or online. PH: 920-324-7900 <http://www.waupunfestivals.com/>

5 - Slow Shopping, Lit by Luminaries! Gallery Night – Mineral Point, WI

If you don't enjoy holiday blitz-shopping of the big city, you may want to head for quiet, artsy, and Dicken's-like Celtic charm of Mineral Point, in southwest Wisconsin. On December 5th evening streets will be lit with luminaries as art galleries, specialty shops, cafes, antique dealers and artists open their doors for a night of friendly holiday cheer. Warm greetings, smiles, cookies, mulled cider, wine and holiday treats are abundant. You might think you've stepped onto the set for "It's a Wonderful Life!" This peaceable community has a distinct Retro and Old World ambiance.

Shopping is fun! Meet potters, woodworkers, painters, weavers and glass artists. Shop a great little candy store, an old book shop, a fiber store or antique emporium. Dine at the micro-brewery, the deli or an authentic Japanese noodle café. It's the alternative to frenzy!

www.MineralPoint.com PH: 888-764-6894

5- Holliday Spirit Gallery Tour- Bayfield

See the work of Bayfield's artists on display for the holidays. Beautiful paintings, pottery, metal sculptures, wood carvings, fiber arts and more. Some open houses include refreshments and demonstrations. Maps will be available at the Bayfield Chamber & Visitor Bureau on the corner of Manypenny Ave and Broad Street. 10AM – 5PM 715-779-3335 <http://bayfield.org/>

5 Oconomowoc - Cherish The Ladies: A Celtic Christmas. Taking their name from a traditional Irish jig, the group initially began in 1985 with a series of concerts held in New York City celebrating the rise of female musicians in a once male-dominated scene. With their spectacular blend of virtuosi instrumental talents, beautiful vocals, captivating arrangements and stunning step dancing, this powerhouse group combines all the facets of Irish traditional culture and puts it forth in an immensely humorous and entertaining package. Cedarburg Performing Arts Center, 641 East Forest Street. PH:(262)560-2130.

4-6 Cedarburg Artists Guild Holiday Art Fair

Fine art offered by more than 50 local artists includes jewelry, beaded glass, mixed media, monoprints and murder mysteries, paintings, birdhouses, photography, pottery, fiber and wearable art, punch needle and weaving, handcrafted furniture, copper yard art and much, much more. This popular annual show is sponsored by the Cedarburg Artists Guild. Community Center - Dec 4, 2015 - Dec 6, 2015 Fri 10am-8pm, Sat 10am-5pm; Sunday 11am- PH: 262-377-9620 4pm <http://www.cedarburgartistsguild.com/>

4-6, 11-13 Victorian Home for the Holidays – Prairie du Chien

These late afternoon and evening tours will get you into the holiday spirit. Tours include a visit to the Dousman parlor for a Christmas recital on the restored 1879 Steinway Centennial D piano. The tours end in the kitchen where the Dousman cook has been busy perfecting her holiday menu. Enjoy sweet treats and hot cider by the warmth of the wood stove. 11AM-7PM <http://villalouis.wisconsinhistory.org/> 608-326-2721

4-6, 11-13 Wade House Christmas – Greenbush

Experience the magic of a mid-19th-century Christmas celebration at the Wade House stagecoach hotel. Yankee and German holiday traditions, will make for a memorable experience. A variety of holiday-themed, family fun activities will be offered throughout the new Wade House Visitor Center and Wesley W. Jung Carriage Museum, with holiday refreshments available in the Butternut Café. 10-4PM daily <http://wadehouse.wisconsinhistory.org/>

4-13 Elkhart Lake – Old World Christmas Market

The Osthoff Resort's annual traditional European Christmas Market, reminiscent of the centuries-old German Christkindlesmarkt, features authentic gifts, toys, ornaments and food specialties from international and regional artisans in timber booths adorned in fresh greens and thousands of twinkling white lights. For ten consecutive days, guests stroll the aisles of a grand heated tent bedecked with fragrant boughs of fresh evergreens and the tantalizing scents of roasted almonds and Nürnberg bratwurst as they browse for unique and specialty items among international and regional artisans. Czech blown-glass ornaments, Russian nesting dolls, German hand-carved smokers and nutcrackers, fine apparel, handmade amber and silver jewelry, Turkish pashmina scarves and shawls, stained glass art, Russian hand-painted Santas, fresh green wreaths, kissing balls and centerpieces, alpaca products, Estonia woolens, fine chocolates, Plauen lace, fine woodwork, fur products and much more! 10AM- 5PM -.Admission is \$6 per adult, children 14 and under are complimentary with an adult ticketholder. PH: 920-876-5845 <http://www.christmasmarketatosthoff.com/>

6 Oconomowoc - Waukesha Creative Arts League Member Show. Members of the Waukesha Creative Arts League will be exhibiting and selling their artwork. The purpose of the Waukesha Creative Arts League is to educate, stimulate and advance artistic growth. Oconomowoc Arts Center, 641 East Forest Street. For more information call (262)560-2130.

9 – 29 Meet an Edgy Elf in Door County - Santaland Dairies – Sturgeon Bay, WI

If you've never met "Crumpet" the hilarious Santa's-helper elf, don't wait any longer. Head for Sturgeon Bay's Third Avenue Playhouse (www.thirdavenueplayhouse.com PH: 920-743-1760) to see one of 17 hilarious performances December 9 - 29. Dan Klarer plays "Crumpet," a Macy's Santaland helper whose tales are based on a classic adult holiday story by David Sedaris. The play is a funny, behind-the-scenes send-up as recalled by Sedaris who was a down-on-his-luck unemployed writer in the 1990s who took a desperation job as an elf at Macy's in New York City. This play takes a wry look at how the holiday season brings out the best – and the worst – in us all. To make this a holiday getaway to remember, book a cozy room just a short walk away at the "White Lace Inn." Decorated in classic, festive holiday trim, the inn is one of Wisconsin's finest bed and breakfast accommodations. Even a curmudgeonly Crumpet would love this Door County getaway! www.whitelaceinn.com or PH: 877-948-5223

10 – Oshkosh – The Celtic Tenors

"An evening to savor! A night with tenors who, despite their incredible success, don't take themselves too seriously!" The Celtic Tenors are the most successful, classical crossover artists ever to have come out of Ireland to provide you with a night to remember. Whether playing a neighborhood cathedral or major concert halls in international cities, such as New York, Amsterdam or Shanghai, you are sure to enjoy a professional, sparkling and most of all, good-humored performance. This group genuinely loves what they do and you experience it shining through in each rendition of beautiful Celtic songs like the haunting "Danny Boy" and exhilarating classics like "Nessun Dorma". 7:30PM PH: 920-424-2350 <http://www.grandoperahouse.org/>

11-12 Baraboo – The Ninth - A Very Merry Holiday Event

60 artisans, authors and purveyors of good things to eat. The Artisan's making the goods will tell you how each piece is created. Purchase a Mini Picasso painted by the Baraboo Boys & Girls Club of Sauk County. Wine Tasting – Baraboo Bluff Winery. Pop-Up Gallery by four Sauk County Photographers. Catch a FREE RIDE Saturday between 11 am and 2 pm with the non-profit Bar Buddy Bus as it loops continually from the Al. Ringling Theatre to the Baraboo Arts Building and back. Come to this Very Merry Event PH: 608-356-9048 <http://www.theverymerryholidayfair.com/>

11-13, 17-23, 26-27, Jan 2-3 2016 – Janesville - Holiday Lights- Rotary Botanical Gardens

Follow the illuminated garden pathways on an evening stroll through the 20 acre botanical gardens, where the wintery garden paths are brought to life with 370,000 lights, 100 beautifully decorated trees, over 2,500 luminaries, 500 dangling icicle lights hung from the tallest trees in the Garden and more. This year sees the addition of decorations through the Woodland Walk Garden and free shuttle service from Dawson Field on the busiest nights, December 17 - 23. Back by popular demand are the Selfie Stops & Photo Opps, with fun props and amazing backdrops. On December 19 - 23, Santa himself will stop by! PH: 608-752-3885 <http://rotarybotanicalgardens.org/>

12- Green Lake - The Alley Cats – Jingle Bell Rock

A Harmoniously Hysterical Holiday Hit - Songs for the holiday will include: Let it Snow, Jingle Bell Rock, White Christmas, Blue Christmas, O Come All Ye Faithful, Sleigh Ride, Feliz Navidad, Rudolph, and Silent Night. Formed at Fullerton College in 1987, The Alley Cats have made it to the forefront of a cappella music with their renditions of timeless Doo-Wop classics and their zany improvisational comedy. Tickets \$25. Doors open 2:45pm, show 3pm; doors open 6:45pm, show 7:30pm. Thrasher Opera House, 506 Mill St., Green Lake PH: 920-294-4279

12 – Spring Green – Winter Festival at Taliesin

Experience Taliesin in a whole new way this holiday season! For one day only the estate will be open for horse-drawn wagon rides and the newly restored Tan-y-Deri will be open for warm, wintry beverages by the fireside. Kids' activities will be offered in the Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center and the Riverview Spring Green Restaurant will be open for lunch. The Taliesin Bookstore, carrying unique merchandise from and about Wisconsin, will be open for all your holiday shopping needs! Wagon rides are approx. 45 minutes and begin at 2:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. Please dress for the weather and bring a cozy blanket. All activities begin at the Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center. Tickets: \$15 for adults, \$10 for children 5-18, Free for children under 5. Space is limited, please reserve online. Noon – 5:30PM PH: 608-588-7900 <http://www.taliesinpreservation.org/>

18 - 20 Oconomowoc - The Nutcracker Ballet. This holiday show is back for its fifth season! Performed by the students and professional troupe from MainStage Academy of Dance. This classic tale has been a favorite for the young and old. Get your tickets early - shows usually sell out. Oconomowoc Arts Center, 641 East Forest Street. For more information call (262)560-2130.

WISCONSIN – That's The Spirit!

12 – Marinette – Forgotten FireWinery's "Jingle and Mingle" Open House

Nothing says the holidays like an open house! You can build your own gift basket, shop for great wine-related gift items, enjoy the sounds of holiday music, sample some wine for yourself and enter for a chance to win some great prizes. Wine tasting is \$4 for seven samples and the glass is yours to keep. For additional details, visit our website. Forgotten Fire Winery, N2393 Schacht Road, Marinette, WI 54143 PH: 715-582-3473 <http://www.forgottenfirewinery.com/>

19-20: Marquette, IA - Home for the Holidays, Sample warmed mulled wines, free wine tasting, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Eagles Landing Winery is a small family business located in downtown Marquette Iowa along the Mississippi River on the Great River Road. We planted our first grapes in 1999 and have been producing our own "Marquette Maid" branded wines since 2003. Our wines can be found at over 100 locations in northeast Iowa and Southwest Wisconsin Eagles Landing Winery, Marquette, IA, 563-873-1905. www.eagleslandingwinery.com

WISCONSIN – Competition Capital!

4-6 Wausau – Badger State Winter Games

The tradition continues with Wisconsin's premier amateur sporting event! Competitors from around Wisconsin and several other Midwest states will compete in alpine skiing, nordic skiing, curling, figure skating, bowling, billiards, archery, youth snowmobiling, clay target-trap, and more! For more information and registration, visit online. Free admission for spectators. <http://www.badgerstategames.org/>

5 – Can't Depend on Snow Sled Dog Races – Fond du Lac

The team is made up of friends that love the sound of the dogs having fun. Enjoy this fun filled day with or without snow! Sled Dog Races and Weight Pulls, rides, Pet and Owner Pictures with Santa, Siberian Husky Toss (stuffed animals), Animal Massage Therapy, and Celebrity Human Sled Race. Starts at 10AM at Rolling Meadows Golf Course 920-924-0132 <http://tsamc.org/EventListsAndResults/2015-16/03-CantDependOnSnow/Event%20Post.htm>

5 Milwaukee - Santa Hustle 5k. See Milwaukee unlike ever before as thousands of Santas race along the streets and paths of the lakefront Veterans Park/1010 N. Lincoln Memorial Dr. For more information call (847)829-4536.

WISCONSIN – Holiday Time!

Dec 4 -Dec 14 Bayfield Holiday Hop Shop - Visit local businesses, win prizes! There are 22 local businesses participating in the Shop Hop. Pick up your Shop Hop Passport and take it to participating businesses and get it stamped at as many possible. There will be no purchase required, you just have to stop in and get a stamp. Return your stamped Passport to the Bayfield Chamber and Visitor Bureau by Monday, December 14. We will be drawing winners from the Passports turned in. PH: 715-779-3335 <http://business.bayfield.org/events/details/bayfield-holiday-shop-hop-16181>

Dec 5 – Christmas In the Air – Oshkosh

A full day of holiday cheer where guests are invited to travel through EAA AirVenture Museum's winter wonderland. This free community event for all ages will feature a festive holiday atmosphere, complete with performances by local musical, choral, and dance groups. Capping EAA's special event will be the arrival of Santa Claus by helicopter. Children can also write letters to Santa that will be sent with him when he flies back to the North Pole. Attendees will enjoy the various historical and educational attractions that the EAA AirVenture Museum offers year-round. 11 am to 4 pm. EAA AirVenture Museum, 3000 Poberezny Rd Oshkosh, WI 54902 PH: 920-426-6541 <https://www.eaa.org/en/eaamuseum/eaamuseum-events/eaachristmasintheair>

Dec 4-6 – Cambridge Classic Christmas

Immerse yourself in the sights and sounds of Cambridge Classic Christmas which transform this Victorian village into a holiday hot spot. There's fabulous shopping plus: free horse-drawn hayrides, visits and photos with Santa, Elf Shelf Kids activities and shopping, Fat Tire Bike Ride, build a gingerbread house and make a Victorian ornament, caroling, cookies & Strolling Madrigal Singers, beer tasting, The Music of Christmas Concert, Magical Holiday Lights Display at Lake Ripley Park. Traditional tree lighting ceremony with Santa's arrival to town. Ugly Sweater Contest & Pizza Party following the tree lighting. CAP's Breakfast with Santa, Pet Portraits with Santa. A Yuletide Festival at the Cambridge Historic Gym Theater. This annual event is one of the keystone events for Cambridge, Wisconsin. Come celebrate the holidays in our quaint, welcoming village. The event runs from Friday evening through Sunday the first weekend in December. It's three festive days of holiday fun. 608-423-3780 <http://www.cambridgewi.com/>

Dec. 5-6, 12-13 East Troy Electric Train - Christmas Express Train

The East Troy Electric Railroad's 2015 Christmas Train will take you on a magical ride from our East Troy depot to Santa's Workshop, located at The Elegant Farmer in Mukwonago. Children can visit Santa, enjoy cookies and hot chocolate, plus take home a creative craft project. The railroad cars are heated and bathrooms are available at the East Troy depot. Advance Reservations Are Required. Tickets can be purchased online or in our depot at 2002 Church St, East Troy, on Saturdays and Sundays. PH: 262-642-3263 <http://www.easttroyrr.org/>

Through Dec 8 – Festival of Trees – Sturgeon Bay

Joyously celebrate the holidays by enjoying dozens of beautifully decorated Christmas trees scattered throughout the museum's galleries. Lovingly decorated by local businesses and organizations, each of these extraordinary trees is adorned with beautiful ornaments and special surprises. Best of all, every tree will go home with a lucky winner in our Merry-Time Festival of Trees raffle! Enjoy a live auction, a themed gift basket silent auction, the tree raffle drawing and a score of heavy hors d'oeuvres at the event's final gala, "Jingle, Jingle, Mix & Mingle". Create a new holiday tradition for your family and friends by joining in this wonderful festive event. Museum admission includes a daily festival rate of \$10 for adults (includes a free \$5 Merry-Time Festival of Trees raffle ticket) and children are free with a nominal Cana Island restoration donation (with matching funds from Glen & Grace Rossman of Thrivent Financial). 920-743-5958

8 – Rhinelander – “That Tree” with Mark Hirsch

Using only his iPhone, photographer Mark Hirsch spent a year capturing the hidden world of an ancient bur oak tree and sharing a daily photo on Facebook. Through the changing seasons, Hirsch's images became a viral sensation uncovering a complex web of life, color, and beauty. His enchanting photographs have since been published in a highly regarded photo book called That Tree. Experience the transformative and therapeutic adventure of self-discovery, inspiration, and enlightenment as Hirsch shares his journey with That Tree. Free admission. 7:30PM Nicolet College Theater - <http://www.nicoletcollege.edu/about/creative-arts-series/nicolet-live/index.html/>

12 – Madeline Island to Bayfield – Santa Arrives by Ferry!

Watch Santa and Mrs. Claus as they make their way to Bayfield on the ferry boat from Madeline Island. After the famous couple disembarks, children will have the opportunity to meet Santa, share their wish-list and get their photo taken. Treats and warm drinks will be provided, compliments of the Bayfield Chamber of Commerce. Greet them at the Lakeside Pavilion in Bayfield. 11:30 – 1PM 715-779-3335 <http://bayfield.org/bayfield-activities/hometown-holiday-season/>

WISCONSIN – Here Comes a NEW YEAR!!

Dec 31 – Prairie du Chien – Dropping of the Carp

A unique countdown to the New Year. Festivities begin at 9pm. Bonfire, music, food, and the special "Lowering of the Carp" countdown at 11:59pm. Kiss the Carp for Good Luck. St. Feriolo Island, Blackhawk Ave, Prairie du Chien, 608-326-8602.

Dec 31 – Manitowoc – New Year's Eve Bash

We are going with a luau theme!! This is Wisconsin, so December 31st is destined to be COLD! Come to the museum for a bit of fun in the sun! Escape for the night into a tropical paradise Music, dancing, appetizers & desserts, cash bars, fireworks, raffles, jewelry giveaways, photo station & more! \$35 per person. Group discounts available. No dress code. 7PM-1AM **This party is geared for those 21 and older.** Wisconsin Maritime Museum, 75 Maritime Dr, Manitowoc, WI 54220 PH:866-724-2356 ext 117
Registration: 920-684-0218 ext 115 <http://www.wisconsinmaritime.org/>

Dec 31 – Woodruff – Red Hot Fun New Year's Eve

New Year's Eve Chili Feed and Fireworks in Woodruff! Free admission! Ring in the New Year by enjoying an evening with the family. Live music, hot chili, hot dogs, hot chocolate and hot cider along with indoor activities for kids and adults. Enjoy the out-of-door activities too: horse-drawn wagon rides, skating, sledding and a bonfire followed by a spectacular fireworks show...come by snowmobile or car, you won't want to miss it! Woodruff Town Hall, 1418 1st Ave, Woodruff, WI 54568 PH: 715-356-5266 <http://www.minocqua.org/>

Dec 31 – Fort Atkinson – Fireside Theatre Rings in the New Year – with Music!

A talented cast of Fireside favorites will perform songs from some of America's greatest artists and recreate moments from some of The Fireside's most popular Broadway musicals. Created especially for New Year's Eve at The Fireside and performed only on Thursday, December 31st, 2015. Join us for our spectacular New Year's Eve show RING IN THE NEW! Every year we put together a collection of both new and classic music and comedy to usher in the New Year with sound, color, and great, great fun. Hosted by The Fireside's well known director/actor Ed Flesch, and performed by a cast of multi-talented singers and dancers, RING IN THE NEW brings back great moments from our past band shows like SIZZLIN' 60s and VIVA LAS VEGAS, memories from some of our great Broadway musicals, and some new surprises to keep it fresh for a New Year. There are laughs galore in this fast moving, festive celebration of all the hope and promise of a new year! This special show is paired with an elegant and sumptuous menu in either a matinee (12:30pm-4:45) or an evening performance (6:00PM – 11PM) Stay for the party after the evening show in the lounge. Usher in the New Year at midnight with hats, horns, noisemakers, and lots and lots of Fireside fun! PH:920-563-9505 <http://www.firesidetheatre.com/>

Dec 31 – LaCrosse – SkyRockers Fireworks Spectacular

Midnight fireworks on Grandad Bluff light up the Mississippi Valley. Folks watch from the bluff, downtown, while ice fishing on the river, cross-country skiing or sledding. Enjoy an early show for kids at 6pm and Another at Midnight! PH:608-782-2366 <http://skyrockers.org/>

Dec 31 – Plymouth – Dropping of the Sartori "Big Cheese"!

Ring in the New Year with the Nationally Acclaimed "Big Cheese Drop"! Join us for an evening of family fun at the Plymouth Arts Center. The first 250 families will receive a free Sartori cheese bag! Visitors may bring an appetizer, dessert, or non-alcoholic beverage to share. Complimentary hors d'oeuvres available at the Sartori cheese table. A cash bar will also be available for guests over the age of 21. Free admission! Live music inside the Art Center by The Jamies & Friends. Enjoy complimentary s'mores bar from 9-10pm. The "Big Cheese Drop" will countdown at 10pm. 920-892-8409 <http://www.plymoutharts.org/>

JANUARY 2016

Jan 1 – Phillips, Jacksonport and Sheboygan - Polar Bear Plunge & Swims –

Start the New Year all fresh and clean! Three good options!

1 PM - Harbor View Pub & Eatery, 1094 N Lake Ave Phillips, WI 54555 PH: 715-339-2626;

NOON: Lakeside Park, Jacksonport, WI 54235 PH 920-823-2288

1 PM : Deland Park, Sheboygan, WI 53081 PH:920-467-8436

Jan 1 Egg Harbor – New Year's Day Parade

Celebrate New Year's Egg Harbor style. You never know what you'll see in our annual New Year's Day Parade. 1PM PH:920-868-3717 <http://www.eggharbordoorcounty.org/>

Jan 1 – Elkhart Lake – New Year’s Day Party at Victorian Village

Bring in the New Year at Back Porch Bistro and Barefoot Tiki Bar at Kenny's Annual New Year's Day Bash. Live Polka band, Bloody Mary's and bratwurst! Visit the Outdoor Tiki Bar for an "eye opener" for 2016. PH 920-876-3323 Starts at 11AM

Jan 2 – St.Germain - Tundra Plunge Benefit-

Fibber's 2nd "Tundra Plunge" on behalf of the Vince Lombardi Cancer Foundation starts at high noon on Big St. Germain Lake. John Gillespie will be the MC and along with lots of door prizes. All monies raised go Vince Lombardi Cancer Foundation. St. Germain Lodge & Resort, 8690 Big St Germain Drive PH: 715-542-3810 <http://www.stgermainlodge.com/fibbers-restaurant-bar/>

Jan 2 – Feb 21 Greenbush – Sleigh Rides at the Wade House

Outdoor winter fun will be featured at Wade House this winter. The excitement will begin with Wade House's sleigh ride weekends, which are scheduled for the weekends in January and February, excluding February 27-28. On Wade House sleigh ride weekends, guests will be invited to climb aboard a horse-drawn sleigh for a ride through Kettle Moraine. These rides will be FREE with regular admission to the museum. Guests will also be able to see Wesley W. Jung's wonderful collection of sleighs, bob sleds, cutters and coasting bobs in the carriage museum. 11-3:30PM PH: 920-526-3271 <http://wadehouse.wisconsinhistory.org/>

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FREE TRAVEL GUIDES:

WISCONSIN DEPT. OF TOURISM- Free: 800-432-8747 (TRIP) <http://www.travelwisconsin.com>

FREE GUIDES: "Activity Guide" Campground Directory, Lodging Directory, Highway Map, Golf, Birding, Attractions

OTHERS IN WISCONSIN: (all free)

- Calumet County Guide – 920-849-1442 www.travelcalumet.com
- Chippewa County Travel Guide – 866-723-0331 www.ChippewaCounty.com
- Door County Visitors Guide – 800-527-3529 <http://www.doorcounty.com/web/contact.asp>
- Fox Cities Area Guide – 800-223-6667 www.foxcities.org
- Grant County Travel Guide – 608-348-8888 www.Platteville.com
- Green Bay Visitor’s Guide – 888-867-3342 www.GreenBay.com
- Green County Travel Guide – 888-222-9111 www.GreenCounty.com
- Kenosha Area Visitors Guide – 800-654-7309 www.KenoshaCVB.com
- Kewaunee County Guide – 800-290-4299 www.VisitKewauneeCounty.com
- Madison Area Visitor Guide – 800-373-6376 <http://www.visitmadison.com>
- Mineral Point Travel Guide – 888-764-6894 www.MineralPoint.com
- Minocqua Area Destination Guide – 800-44-NORTH www.minocqua.org
- Racine – Real Racine Guide - 800-272-2463 www.realracine.com
- Sauk Prairie Visitors Packet – 800- 683-2453 <http://www.saukprairie.com/visitorspacket.html>
- St. Croix Valley & Polk County Guides (ask Sue for both) 800-222-7655 www.VisitSCF.com
- Superior & Douglas Country Travel Guide - 800-942-5313 www.VisitSuperior.com

OTHERS – NEIGHBORING STATES, REGIONAL, ETC

- Chicago Office of Tourism: Free Guide & App - <http://www.choosechicago.com>
- Illinois Travel – <http://www.enjoyillinois.com/brochures/>
- Iowa Tourism – <http://www.traveliowa.com/> 888.472.6035 or 515.725.3084
- Lake Michigan Circle Tour and Lighthouse Map – 1-800-442-2084 or at www.WMTA.org
- Lanesboro, Minnesota Visitor Guide 800-657-4972
- Michigan – <http://www.michigan.org/>
- Minnesota Tourism Travel Counselors at explore@state.mn.us, or 1-888-TOURISM (1-888-868-7476).
- Minnesota – Mississippi Valley Bluff Country (on-line) <http://www.ExploreMississippiBluffs.com>
- Mississippi Valley Partners (WI-MN) www.mississippi-river.org 1-888-999-2619
- Red Wing, Minnesota www.redwing.org 1-651-385-5934 800-498-3444
- Wabasha-Kellogg, Minnesota – www.wabashamn.org 1-800-565-4158
- West Michigan Travel Guide - 616-245-2217 www.wmta.org/publications-24/
- Winona, Minnesota Visitor Guide – (800) 657-4972 www.VisitWinona.com

BEFORE YOU GO: Avoid disappointment. Always check for schedule changes before heading to events. [For more events-](#) four good sources: www.WisTravel.com, www.Wisconline.com, www.TravelWisconsin.com **XXXXX**