

Lexington's Top 12

December brings lots of fun activities to this part of The Bluegrass State.

Forget about partridges in pear trees and turtledoves—not to mention calling birds and French hens. The area around Lexington, Kentucky, has 12 ways to celebrate Christmas that rival most any place (or song). You're liable to find lords a'leaping, along with loads of fun. So hop aboard your metaphorical sleigh, and take a quick glance at this lovely city during the holidays.

1. Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill

You don't want to miss this restored village. Christmas season offerings include musical performances, shopping at two crafts shops, overnight accommodations at the inn, and fabulous food in the Trustees' Office Dining Room. Lunch is served from 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. (\$8-\$11), and dinner takes place 5:30-8:30 p.m. (\$13-\$22). The breads, pies, and regional favorites, such as corn pudding, start any holiday off right. www.shaker-villageky.org or 1-800-734-5611.

2. Southern Lights

Tens of thousands of lights line a 3-mile drive through Kentucky Horse Park, and you'll love the animated scenes of racing steeds, Santa and his reindeer, and sprightly elves. Other activities offered through December 23 include cuddling a critter at the petting zoo, shopping for arts and crafts, and listening to local choirs. *Hours: 5:30-10 p.m. through December 31. Admission: \$15 per car.* www.kyhorsepark.com or (859) 255-5727.

3. Musical Delight

Check out Ashland, the Henry Clay estate, where you'll take in the Ashland Neighborhood Christmas, when different areas of the estate will be decorated by several local garden clubs.



Revel in the seasonal music during the candlelight tours December 10 and 17. *Admission: \$10.* www.henryclay.org or (859) 266-8581.

4. Antebellum Decor

Immerse yourself in another time at Waveland Museum State Historic Site, where the holidays are all done up in 19th-century style. Decorations, music, and costumed staff present candlelight tours. *Dates: December 9-10. Hours: 6-9 p.m. Admission: \$7.* www.parks.ky.gov or (859) 272-3611.

One More Great Place

Before you pony up for generic gift certificates, head over to Keeneland Race Course, where their gift shop promises to fill you with horsey cheer and inspiration. Pick up seasonal items (a specially made Keeneland ornament by Waterford costs about \$50) or something special for a hard-to-buy-for fellow on your list. He'll appreciate a classy silk tie (\$35) or a cozy sweatshirt (\$44); www.keenelandshop.com or (859) 288-4236.



Bask in the glow of tens of thousands of lights at the Kentucky Horse Park.

left: Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill dishes up special holiday meals each year. Don't miss the regional favorites, which may include corn pudding and chess pie.

5. Sing Out

Head over to Rupp Arena, where the Kentucky Christmas Chorus makes a joyful noise with their annual caroling. Add your voice to the Lexington Philharmonic, the Lexington Singers, and many area choirs. *Date: December 12. Hours: Doors open at 6 p.m. Admission: free.* www.rupparena.com or (859) 258-3123.

6. Ride the Rails

Take the Santa Train excursion at the Bluegrass Railroad Museum in Versailles. Check out the museum while you're there. *Dates: December 9-10, 16-17. Fare: \$11 adults, \$10 seniors, \$9 ages 2-12.* www.bgrm.org or (859) 873-2476.

7. Country Christmas

Make the 53-mile journey south to Renfro Valley, where you'll enjoy their popular show called *Christmas in the Valley*. *Dates: through December 16.*



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Hours: 7 p.m. Friday-Saturday.
Tickets: \$23-\$26. www.renfrovalley.com or 1-800-765-7464.

8, 9, 10. More Music, Drama, and Dance

Soak up the sounds of Handel's *Messiah*, performed at the UK Singletary Center for the Arts on December 15. Tickets: \$25-\$42; (859) 233-4226. Check out Transylvania University's version of the beloved Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol* on December 7 at 7:30 p.m. Donations accepted; (859) 233-8141. Enjoy the twirling of ballerinas in *The Nutcracker* performed by the Lexington Ballet on December 8-10 and 15-17 at the Lexington Opera House. www.lexingtonballet.org or (859) 233-3925.

11, 12. And Then There's The Shopping

Whether it's the downtown farmers market, the shops surrounding Rupp Arena (such as Artique), or the area of Victorian Square (don't miss Savane Silver), you'll find plenty of great gift ideas in downtown Lexington, even if you insist on that partridge in a pear tree. www.visitlex.com or (859) 845-3959.

—WANDA MCKINNEY