experience an authentic Cajun Christmas beginning in November through the entire month of December. This holiday season, celebrate the magic with parades, fireworks, shopping, carriage rides, candles, crafts, tasty treats and pictures with the big man himself, Santa!

Kiwani's Christmas Arts & Crafts Show Nov. 2 – 4, Lake Charles Civic Center. The first weekend in November marks the time for hundreds of artisans and crafters to display and sell their unique products. Featured artist is Diana Christopher with the Picassou Art Studio. Fri. 6 – 11 p.m.; Sat. 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.; and Sun. 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Admission is $10 Fri. and $5 Sat. (337) 523-8349.

Santa's Arrival Nov. 5, Prien Lake Mall, Lake Charles. Story reading, Christmas music, cookies and milk – 7 p.m., Sears Court. (337) 477-7487.

Thanksgiving Community Dinner Nov. 25, 3rd Annual Rummage and Craft Show, Acadiana Center, Sulphur. Maplewood/ Hollywood Lions Club's 19th Annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner. Church at 9:30 a.m.; Dinner at 10 a.m.; and Bingo at noon. (337) 625-8508.

Christmas at the Imperial Calcasieu Museum Nov. 23 – Dec. 31, Imperial Calcasieu Museum, Lake Charles. Showcasing an extensive and whimsical Snow Village in the Gibson-Bartholomew Hall. (337) 439-3707.

Holiday Music Concerts Nov. 20 – 23, Prien Lake Mall, Lake Charles. Take a break from the hustle and bustle of the shopping season to enjoy the musical performances of local churches, school bands and choirs. Located in the Food Court. (337) 477-7487.


Taste of the Holiday & Tour of Homes Dec. 1, Historic DeQuincy. The DeQuincy Community Club will celebrate the holidays with a tour of several beautifully decorated homes beginning at 4:30 p.m. followed by the catering at the JCE Center at 6 p.m. Tickets are $12. (337) 274-3727.

Kiwani’s Christmas Balloons on Parade Dec. 1, Cypress St., Sulphur. The colorful, giant balloon parade begins at 3 p.m. (337) 527-0537.

Light up the Lake Christmas Celebration Dec. 1, Downtown Lake Charles/Lake Charles Civic Center. The Cinderella Merry-Go-Round through downtown Lake Charles. Bring the entire family to the Lake Charles Civic Center for a variety of free activities such as Santa's Workshop from 3 – 5:30 p.m.; Community Band Concert from 4 – 5:15 p.m.; Lighting Ceremony from the front entrance from 5 – 5:30 p.m.; Street Dance on Bord du Lac Drive 6 – 6:30 p.m.; followed by a spectacular Light Up Parade at the seawall at 6:30 p.m.; topped off by the Light Up The Lake fireworks extravaganza at 8 p.m. (337) 491-1111; www.ikwalakecharles.org

Annual Gingerbread House Contest Dec. 1 – 23, Lake Charles/Southwestern Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau, Lake Charles. Come and see homemade decorated gingerbread houses on display and vote for your favorite! (337) 436-9588; 800-656-VSTA; www.visitlakecharles.org

Starkes Christmas Parade Dec. 1, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches. Christmas Parade begins at 2 p.m. followed by a Christmas Gumbo hosted by the Ladies Auxiliary at 3:30 p.m., Post 4797. (337) 743-6449.

Breakfast with Santa Dec. 1, Prien Lake Mall, Lake Charles. Have breakfast with Santa in the food court at 9 a.m and enjoy crafts and story time. (337) 477-7487.

Cinderella’s Holiday Dining Nov. 29 – Dec. 23, Lounge at the Lake, Lake Charles. Enjoy an elegant three-course dinner, complete with a candlelit cocktail hour. $55 per person, reservations required. (337) 493-3232; www.charleston.com


Jennings Christmas Festival & Gumbo Cookoff Dec. 1 – 2, Jennings Festival Grounds, Jennings. Sample some of the best chicken & sausage gumbo in the area with judging at 4:30 p.m. The parade is at 5:30 p.m. down Main Street, followed by live entertainment, a fireworks display at 9 p.m. at the Louisiana Oil & Gas Park. I-10 Est. 64. Free admission. (337) 821-5533; www.cityofjennings.com

Lake Charles Symphony Fundraising Gala Dec. 1, McNeese Shearman Fine Arts Building, Lake Charles. Enjoy this black-tie optional affair with a social hour beginning at 6 p.m. followed by a holiday concert given by the Lake Charles Symphony Orchestra at 7:30 p.m. In collaboration with the McNeese State University Art Department, professors and students will have artwork on display for purchase as well as taking orders, for commissioned works of art. Tickets are $100, and proceeds benefit the Lake Charles Symphony. (337) 433-1611, www.lcsymphony.org

"Open Art Splurgery" Dec. 1 – 22, Gallery by the Lake, Lake Charles. Members have opened their hearts to allow shoppers to come and enjoy art for Christmas gifts of good culture. As part of the Charleston Cultural District, the art is free to see. Tues. – Fri. Noon – 5 p.m.; Sat. 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. (337) 436-1008.

Christmas Card Workshop Dec. 1 – 23, 1911 Historic City Hall, Lake Charles. All ages are welcome to use their creative skills on handmade Christmas cards to be distributed to area nursing home residents through the Calcasieu Council on Aging. A writing session is provided for lessons to Santa, which will be sent directly to the North Pole. Mon. – Fri. 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Sat. 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. (337) 491-9147.


Caring Santa Dec. 2, Prien Lake Mall, Lake Charles. Children with special needs will receive a free photo with Santa without the distractions of mall traffic. 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (337) 477-7487.

Lake Charles Missiah Chorus Presents Hallelujah Dec. 2, Baller Auditorium, McNeese State University, Lake Charles. The 22-dudalization will be a beautifull reminder of the true meaning of Christmas. The chorus will perform at 3 p.m. with a chamber orchestra and four McNeese soloists. For info, call Patricia B. Baller at (337) 477-0662, Barbara Bevers at (337) 493-3232; reservations required at (337) 493-1188.

Lake Area Christmas Celebration Dec. 8, 8, Trinity Baptist Church, Lake Charles. The Christmas musical events are held in the Main Auditorium, Dec. 2, 6 p.m. features "The One and Only Original Christmas Flick." Experience the "Lake Area Christmas Celebration" Dec. 8, 7 p.m.; Dec. 9, 9:15 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. Admission is free. (337) 480-1555; www.tbc.org
WESTLAKE CHRISTMAS PARADE
Dec. 6, Downtown Westlake. Festival begins at noon with a gumbo cook-off, an ornament contest, bake sale, and arts and crafts booths. Parade begins at 4 p.m. followed by a tree lighting ceremony at City Hall. Visit Santa and enjoy hot chocolate. (337) 433-0691.

IOWA CHRISTMAS PARADE
Dec. 8, Downtown Iowa. Parade begins at 2 p.m. followed by Christmas in the Park at Lawrence Troup Memorial Park. Festival at 6 p.m. with gumbo, cookies, chow and Santa. (318) 582-3535. www.iowal.a.org

MOSS BLUFF CHRISTMAS PARADE
Dec. 8, Downtown Moss Bluff. Moss Bluff Christmas Parade begins at 2 p.m. (337) 855-7522.

LIVING CHRISTMAS 2012

HOLIDAY HOME TOUR
Dec. 9, Private Homes, Lake Charles. This annual fundraiser for the Lake Charles Symphony will feature four homes beautifully decorated for the holidays. Tickets are $25 and must be purchased in advance. (337) 435-1943, www.fbck.com.

CHRISTMAS CONCERT “PEACE, HOPE, JOY”
Dec. 15, Lake Charles Immaculate Conception Cathedral and Dec. 16, Immaculate Conception Church, Sulphur. Catch the Christmas spirit with harmonious and magical carols performed by the Louisiana Choral Foundation’s Masterworks Chorale. Thurs., 7:30 p.m. or Sun. 3 p.m. Tickets are $15 for adults or $5 for students and are available at Swiggard Music, (337) 691-9548.

CHILDREN’S MUSEUM HOLIDAY ART ACTIVITIES

CHILDREN’S MUSEUM MEET SANTA!
Dec. 22, The Children’s Museum, Lake Charles. Meet Santa Claus from 10:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. and make an ornament in ArtSpace throughout the day. (337) 435-9420, www.swlakids.org

*Events are subject to change. Log on to www.VisitLakeCharles.org/CajunChristmas or call 800-456-7952 for the latest information.

W HENEVER you experience our Cajun Christmas at the many festivals, events, concerts and parades held throughout the holiday season in Southwest Louisiana, be sure to enjoy stops along the Southwest Louisiana Boudin Trail or wildlife adventures found along the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road. Taste the delicious food from local restaurants, dance to a Cajun or Zydeco beat, or soak in gorgeous surroundings at area casinos. There is always something interesting for you to explore!

LAKE CHARLES SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA
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