



## Holiday Magic in the City of Angels

by Wendy O'Dea  
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While some folks may be dreaming of a white Christmas, many are perfectly content to spend December celebrating amidst the sun and sand of Los Angeles. There's certainly no lack of holiday spirit and the list of events is probably longer than Santa's naughty (or is it nice?) list.

The options are endless, from ice skating and [ice sculptures](#) to attending concerts, parades and tree or menorah lightings. Sing along to holiday favorites at the [Walt Disney Concert Hall](#) or join Lisa Loeb at the Skirball Center for their annual [Hanukkah celebration](#).

There's no shortage of wattage either. Lights are strung along Altadena's [Christmas Tree Lane](#) in spectacular fashion and, while the zoo goes quiet at night, it's not going dark thanks to [L.A. ZOO LIGHTS](#) (which replaced the DWP's Griffith Park light display). Additionally, Riverside's Mission Inn once again hosts their [Festival of Lights](#), which lights up an entire block and where you can take your sweetheart to smooch under the world's largest manmade mistletoe.

But nowhere else in the world can you ring in the New Year as we do in SoCal... at the [Tournament of Roses Parade](#) – the granddaddy of them all! If you're not up for camping or splurging for seats to watch it live, [view the floats](#) in the days prior while they're getting their finishing touches. Then, watch the parade on T.V. – in your jammies – like the rest of the world. Now that's what I call a happy holiday.



MISSION INN

The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa kicks off the holiday season on November 27 when it flips the switch for its popular Festival of Lights. Although it requires a commute inland to Riverside, it will be worth it when

you get a glimpse of the four million lights, one of the nation's largest holiday light collections of its kind. Now in its 23rd year, the Festival of Lights also includes more than 400 animated figures, the world's largest manmade mistletoe, horse-drawn carriage rides, elf tuck-ins and elaborately decorated Christmas trees throughout the hotel. As if that's not enough, there's also an outdoor ice-skating rink on the Main Street pedestrian mall. The lights go out on January 6.



#### THE GROVE

No two neighbors could be less alike yet get along so well. The Grove shopping center and The Original Farmers Market represent the new and old Los Angeles, respectively. These two popular destinations complement each other nicely, especially during the holidays when the masses descend to shop, dine, and celebrate. Dickensian carolers roam the serpentine walkways of the Farmers Market and the halls are full decked at The Grove with Santa's cottage (and Santa, naturally), a 100-ft. Christmas tree, a dancing fountain and nightly snowfalls. In mid November, The Grove also invites the public to attend a live taping of their Christmas special (this year hosted by Seth MacFarlane) when they light the tree for the first time and celebrate the beginning of the season with celebratory fireworks.



#### CHILL AT THE QUEEN MARY

The giant dome that sits alongside the historic Queen Mary - which was once home to the legendary Spruce Goose - will once again be frozen over and transformed into an Ice Kingdom. The 13,000 square foot exhibit features larger-than-life ice creations, some towering over two and a half stories and made of more than two million pounds of ice. The temperature is kept at a numbing 9-degrees but luckily parkas and gloves are provided. For an extra charge, visitors can also go ice skating, visit an all new Victorian Village, and take part in a number of activities. Entertainment and holiday carolers will further boost the mood and your ticket also includes entry onto the Queen Mary - the historic cruise ship that many believe may be haunted - which may give you a chill of a different kind! Open select days in November, December and January.



#### MARINA DEL REY HOLIDAY BOAT PARADE

Since 1963, Marina Del Rey has hosted a Holiday boat parade, inviting those who own boats - or choose to charter one - to decorate it and join the line up. The parade circles the main channel of the Marina del Rey Harbor and judges select winners from a variety of categories. The whole thing kicks off with a fireworks display on the Playa del Rey side of the channel. If you want to be in the thick of it all, head to Burton Chace Park where you'll find music and live commentary about each entry. For a more relaxed experience, book a space on one of Marina del Rey's Hornblower Cruises or get a room that overlooks the harbor at the luxurious Ritz Carlton Marina del Rey.



#### WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL COMPLEX

Each December the Los Angeles Philharmonic celebrates the sounds of the holidays with their annual Deck the Halls series of concerts. Their 2015 line up includes the rich harmonies of Chanticleer, a holiday organ spectacular, a family-friendly Holiday Sing-Along and much more. The Holiday Sing-Along features the Hall's magnificent pipe organ, a choir and a jazz combo who are joined by the audience to sing popular songs of the season. For a more adult Sing-Along, this year you can also attend the very first presentation of White Christmas, a newly-created sing-along version of the 1954 classic movie starring Bing Crosby, Rosemary Clooney and Danny Kaye, known as one of the classic holiday films.



#### EL PUEBLO HISTORICAL MONUMENT

El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, near the site of the early Los Angeles pueblo (town), is the location for this solemn ceremony and procession that commemorates Mary's and Joseph's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The Posada has been recreated since the 1930s yet gets no less powerful with each passing year. It is held nightly from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. December 16 to the 24th. El Pueblo itself, on L.A.'s popular Olvera Street, is a living museum that continues to fulfill its unique role as the historic and symbolic heart of the city, reflecting the Native American, African American, Spanish, Anglo, Mexican, Chinese, Italian and French cultures that contributed to its early history.



#### SKIRBALL CULTURAL CENTER

The eight-day celebration of Hanukkah kicks off at the Skirball Cultural Center on Sunday, December 13 with this year's theme, "Celebrate Our Light." Music, dance, art making, storytelling and a host of other family-friendly activities explore the theme. Design your own badge of courage and create a "flame" to illuminate a giant communal Hanukkah lamp. Singer/songwriter Lisa Loeb will perform songs of celebration, resilience and hope along with the iconic Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles. Enjoy the museum, exhibitions, talks, and films and don't forget to grab sufganiyot (jelly donut) at Zeidler's Café. You can also book a one-hour visit for the noteworthy Noah's Ark exhibit.



#### LOS ANGELES ZOO AND BOTANICAL GARDENS

The L.A. Zoo is a hotbed of holiday activity. Although you need separate tickets, the Reindeer Romp daytime event pairs perfectly with the evening ZOO Lights extravaganza. In only its second year, ZOO LIGHTS sets the Zoo's grounds aglow with thousands of LED lights, flurries of illuminated snowflakes, stunning 3-D animated projections and glittering light tunnels. The Reindeer Romp is the only place in L.A. where you can check out live reindeer, as they rest up for their Christmas eve flight. The Romp, which runs November 27 through January 3 (except Christmas Day) from 10 am to 4 pm, also includes ice carving demonstrations, holiday crafts, puppet shows and entertainment. Santa Claus makes an appearance every weekend through December 20 plus December 21, 22 and 23 from 11 am to 3 pm.



#### CHRISTMAS TREE LANE

Each fall scores of volunteers show up to help string thousands of holiday lights along Christmas Tree Lane (also known as Santa Rosa Avenue) so it's ready for its debut each December. A local businessman came up with an idea of lighting the picturesque cedar trees in 1920 and in the nearly 100 years since then, Christmas Tree Lane has become one of the oldest large-scale Christmas lighting events in the U.S. In fact, it's even included in the National Register of Historic Places and has been designated a California Historic Landmark. This year the lighting ceremony will take place at 6 p.m. on December 12 with an arts and crafts festival opening at 2 p.m.



#### TOURNAMENT OF ROSES – ROSE BOWL PARADE

What you see on television fails in comparison to viewing the Rose Parade floats up close. Adorned with only natural materials, from flowers (natch) to rice, the massive floats are majestically eye-popping. This year, for the first time, a free family festival, Live on Green, will honor the history of the parade and Pasadena itself. Held at the Pasadena Convention Center on Green Street, the festival also celebrates the centennial of the National Parks Service, the inspiration behind the parade's "Find Your Adventure" theme. There will also be a family fun zone, a bistro and culinary experience, and live entertainment. Live on Green is open Dec. 29-30, 2015 from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and on Dec. 31 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Seats can be purchased for the parade or you can stake out a spot with the masses along Colorado Boulevard starting at noon December 31st.