

Contact: Janna Jenkins, City of Natchitoches

Phone: (318) 352-2746

Email: jjenkins@natchitochesla.gov



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Celebrate the Holidays with the Natchitoches Christmas Festival of Lights

45 Nights of Lights, Festivities and Fun

NATCHITOCHEs – The City of Natchitoches invites you to celebrate the holidays at the Natchitoches Christmas Festival of Lights. Ranked as one of the top three holiday light displays by Yahoo! Travel.com, the Natchitoches Christmas Festival of Lights is a 45 night celebration of lights, fun and festivities set along the backdrop of downtown Historic Natchitoches and Cane River Lake illuminated by more than 300,000 twinkling lights and 100 lighted set pieces. Highlights of the Natchitoches Christmas season include the 91st Annual Natchitoches Christmas Festival, unveiling of the new Rue Beauport Riverfront, Holiday Tour of Homes, Natchitoches-NSU Christmas Gala, and spectacular fireworks displays over Cane River Lake.

Named the “Best Southern Small Town” by readers of USA Today, Natchitoches has a long tradition of Christmas spirit. Since 1926 Natchitoches has been home to one of the oldest community-based holiday celebrations in the country. The Annual Natchitoches Christmas Festival began as a one-day event and has now evolved into a six-week long festival season. This festival season will be like no other for the Historic City of Natchitoches, with the unveiling of the new Rue Beauport Riverfront, a \$4 million dollar restoration of the beloved downtown riverbank. Natchitoches will be unveiling and dedicating the Rue Beauport Riverfront with an official ceremony on Thursday, November, 16, 2017. Improvements to the Rue Beauport Riverfront include a new festival stage and amphitheatre seating, a new Santa Clause house designed for year around use, handicap ramps, new staircases leading down to the riverfront, new restrooms and a brick promenade that runs along the Cane River.

The Christmas season officially kicks off on November 18, 2017 with “Turn on the Holidays,” a Louisiana Main-to-Main event, and features live music entertainment, kids activities, food vendors, a Holiday Open House at downtown merchants, the official lighting celebration and the first fireworks show of the season. Admission for Turn on the Holidays is free and open to the public.

Step back in time at Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historical Site as they host Christmas on the Cane formal known as Fe’te de Hiver. Christmas on the Cane will take visitors back to the 18th century time period to experience traditional 18th century Christmas celebrations. The celebrations will feature historical talks about the time period, re-enactors, and period merchants. Christmas on the Cane will take place Saturday, December 2, 2017 from 10:00a.m. to 4:00p.m. and

Sunday, December 3, 2017 from 10:00a.m. to 1:00p.m. Admission to Christmas on the Cane is \$4 for persons over 12 & under 62.

On December 2, 2017, Santa Claus makes his first appearance in Natchitoches at the 91st Annual Natchitoches Christmas Festival. Taking place traditionally on the first Saturday of December, the Natchitoches Christmas Festival features the Festival of Lights parade with appearances by Miss Merry Christmas and her Belles, Mrs. Claus and Santa Claus, food vendors, live music entertainment, and the largest fireworks display of the year. Admission for the Natchitoches Christmas Festival is \$8 ages 12 and over if purchased in advance, and \$10 ages 12 and over if purchased festival day.

Natchitoches, the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase, is home to a National Historic Landmark District that includes numerous historical homes. Visitors to Natchitoches can tour these homes beginning December 7, 2017 as part of the Holiday Tour of Homes. Homes on the tour include the Steel Magnolias House, which was featured in the film *Steel Magnolias*; the Prudhomme Rouquier House, built circa 1790 and the only known two and one-half story bousillage structure on the North American continent; and the Steamboat House, which was reportedly constructed from materials taken from two dismantled steamboats. Tours are held on Thursday, Friday and Saturday from December 7 to December 16. Saturday tour ticket holders will receive complimentary admission to the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame and Northwest Louisiana History Museum.

Natchitoches is also home to Northwestern State University and for more than 25 years the university has produced a world-class Christmas extravaganza to highlight the talents of the students in the Creative and Performing Arts program. The Annual Christmas Gala delights audiences young and old with an evening of song, dance and performances including the ever popular marching toy soldiers, NSU Rockettes, NSU Percussion Ensemble, and the Natchitoches-Northwestern Symphony Orchestra. Santa Claus, his elves and a few other favorite Christmas characters have also been known to make an appearance or two. The Annual Christmas Gala will be held November 29 – December 1, 2017 at Northwestern State University's A.A. Fredericks Auditorium.

Whether you are looking for a festive atmosphere, historical home tour, or theatrical performances, the Natchitoches Christmas Festival Season has it all. In addition to the activities listed, visitors can enjoy area attractions such as the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame and Northwest Louisiana History Museum, Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historical Park, shopping along brick-paved Front Street, and a horse-drawn carriage ride through downtown Historic Natchitoches. Plan your trip today and see why the Natchitoches Christmas Festival of Lights is the premiere holiday light festival in the state. For more information and complete schedule of events, please visit www.NatchitochesChristmas.com.

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