

HENDERSONVILLE, N.C. — No matter where you call home, Hendersonville invites you to make this Blue Ridge Mountain town your home for the holidays this season.

The lineup of Home for the Holidays events begins in early November and continues through the New Year. Yuletide activities include evening carriage rides on Main Street, holiday skating downtown, trolley tours through illuminated gardens, Christmas shows at the Flat Rock Playhouse, strolling carolers and, of course, visits with Santa Claus.

The big kick off to the season takes place on Black Friday, Nov. 24, with the Downtown Holiday Street Lighting and Santa's Arrival. Festivities begin at the Historic Courthouse Plaza at 5:30 p.m. with local duo Carver & Carmody leading everyone in holiday tunes. Santa arrives at dusk and flips the switch to illuminate two large trees at the courthouse and the lights along Main Street.

"I always look forward to the street lighting and the feel of downtown that evening," says Lew Holloway, economic development director with Downtown Hendersonville. "The first day of the holiday season and the beginning of that wonderful time of year is always a lot of fun."

Flat Rock Playhouse, the state theater of North Carolina, spreads holiday cheer with special programming Nov. 25 to Dec. 22. The mainstage location presents "The Flat Rock Playhouse Christmas Spectacular," and "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" hits the stage downtown.

The iceless skating rink, which was a hit in its inaugural appearance last year, returns Dec. 19 and remains open until Jan. 1. The synthetic "ice" allows for skating in any weather and creates a smooth surface for beginners. The rink will be located in the Hendersonville Visitor Center parking lot. This year, the entire parking lot will transform into a winter wonderland. In addition to skating, visitors can roast s'mores, play corn hole, take photos in holiday cutouts and board carriage rides.

"Everything we did last year for Home for the Holidays was well received by visitors and locals alike, so it inspired us to enhance this year's festivities," says Beth Carden, executive director of the Henderson County TDA. "For two months there's something going on almost all the time."

Visitors and residents can enjoy discounts on lodging, shopping, dining and attractions via the Winter Getaway Card, which is valid through March 31 and available at the Visitor Center.

For a full schedule of Home for the Holidays events, go to www.VisitHendersonvilleNC.org/Home-for-the-Holidays or call **(800) 828-4244**.

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