



Home for the holidays: Yule love our pick of festive ideas and experiences.

Oh, the weather outside is—just right, actually, to enjoy special events and activities around the city, both in and outdoors. We've collected an array of experiences to choose from: Mountain-top sleigh rides, skating with Santa, a heritage Christmas experience, a colourful Nutcracker production, volunteer opportunities and much more—and mostly very affordable. Slide into the season's best fun, and stay sizzling warm. Let it snow... please!

Grouse Mountain Sleigh Ride

Your cozy sleigh ride through alpine trails is free, once you've bought your ticket to Grouse Mountain's "Peak of Vancouver" Festival, an enticing line-up of seasonal mountain-top treats such as Santa's Workshop and an old-fashioned ice skating pond. As if a stunning view isn't enough to get you up there! To Dec. 24. Call 604-984-0661, or go to <http://www.grousemountain.com/Winter/winter-activities/vancouver-bc-family-Christmas-celebrations.asp>



Heritage Christmas at Burnaby Village Museum

Treat your senses to a taste of vintage holiday magic, with dazzling decorations and lights, carolers' sweet harmonies, and special entertainments. Heritage Christmas is a storybook experience running the gamut from traditional craft making to costumed tableaux. Or just inhale the old-fashioned Christmas aromas, sights and sounds of these timeless traditions. Go to www.city.burnaby.ca and click on Heritage Christmas or phone 604-297-4565.

Vancouver Aquarium's Magic of The North

Highlights include a ride on the Polar Express, carol

sing-along, holiday crafts, the return of Scuba Claus, and the lighting of the Christmas tree with electric eels. Stanley Park. To Jan. 3, 2011. Visit www.visitvancouver.org or call 604-659-3474.

Winter Watershed Snowshoe Tour

Winter wonderland in our local mountains is only minutes away, and here's an intriguing new way to explore it and get a great workout too—an afternoon snowshoe tour through the snow-capped peaks of the Seymour Watershed. Absorb local ecology, winter wildlife lore, and learn about the link between snow and our water supply. The snow? It will definitely be glistenin'. Sat, Jan. 15, ages 18+. Call 604-451-6506 or email watershed.ed@metrovancover.org to register.



Christmas Lights

Here's a bright idea: Tuck a thermos of hot chocolate in your backpack and take in the best Christmas light and decoration displays around town, from public gardens and buildings to private homes. Here's a list of top picks—and some are handy to transit if you prefer to leave the car at home. www.greatervancouverhotels.com/events/christmas_lights.htm

The Highwayman's Christmas

Perfect for children 5 and up, this delightful puppetry musical adventure is about Max the husky who saves Santa Claus and the Lord Mayor of London from the amusing schemes of Mad Jack the Highwayman. At Bernie Legge Theatre, Queen's Park, New Westminster. Various times through the holidays. Go to www.elihuentertainment.com or call 604-521-0412.



Wrapping It Up

A mountain of gifts still to wrap? Let Volunteer Burnaby's Gift Wrap Centre at Brentwood Town Centre do it for you. The modest fees support their programs, and you'll leave with parcels all ready to go right under the tree. (And why not sign up for a volunteer wrapping shift yourself?) To Dec 24. For hours, go to www.volunteerburnaby.ca

New Westminster Library Winter Fun

No need to 'book' this free event for your little people—just show up with your 5 to 10 year olds and let them discover, through a morning of stories, poetry and crafts, how various global cultures celebrate the year's end. Dec. 29 10:30 am. 716 6th Ave. 604-527-4677

Mars Bar Rice Krispie Squares

Ingredients:

- 4 regular size Mars bars
- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 cups Rice Krispies
- 1 cup milk chocolate chips

Directions:

1. Melt butter & Mars bars over medium-low heat in large saucepan until smooth.
2. Remove from heat. Stir in Rice Krispies.
3. Press into greased 8" x 8" pan.
4. Top with chocolate chips and place under broiler for 30 seconds.
5. Remove from oven and spread chocolate evenly over square.
6. Put in fridge to set chocolate (1/2 hr. to 1 hr.) Cut and serve.

Peanut Butter Marshmallow Squares

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 (11 ounce) package butterscotch chips
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 1 cup flaked coconut
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 3 1/2 cups miniature marshmallows

Directions:

1. In the lower pot of a double boiler, add water halfway to top and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer. In the top of a double boiler, heat butter, butterscotch chips, and peanut butter until melted. Remove from heat.
2. Stir in coconut, walnuts, and marshmallows.
3. Pour mixture in buttered pan. Refrigerate and cut into squares. Store in the refrigerator.



Your community needs you! Put your goodwill to good use with this sampling of local charities that offer a range of volunteer opportunities over the holidays.

Burnaby Christmas Bureau Drivers Needed

Channel your inner Santa! Burnaby Community Connections needs volunteer drivers to pick up toys from donors and bring them to the Toy Room at the Burnaby Christmas Bureau at Metrotown. Toy pick-up runs through to Dec 23. Toy room helpers are also needed. For these and other volunteer gigs, call 604-299-5778, ext. 29.

Downtown Eastside Boxing Day Supper

Downtown Eastside Carnegie Centre needs help serving free dinners on Boxing Day, Dec. 26 and Jan 1. Corner of Main and Hastings. Volunteer servers required for 2 shifts on Boxing Day and one shift on New Year's Day. Call Carnegie's volunteer coordinator at 604-606-2708.



Christmas Bureaus

Christmas Bureaus are one of our oldest festive traditions—these non-denominational volunteer-run groups make sure lower income people in our communities receive seasonal gifts and food to share in the joy of the season.

To donate:

New Westminster Christmas Bureau 604-521-2421
 Burnaby Christmas Bureau 604 299-5778. Or donate online, or mail a cheque to 204-2101 Holdom Ave., Burnaby BC V5B 0A4

Seasonal Safety: Deck the halls, but check the lights!

Safe At Home

Fortunately, Christmas tree fires are pretty rare—because most people follow these safety tips:

- Turn Christmas lights off. Don't leave them on overnight.
- Keep flammable decorations well away from lights and candle flames.
- Put up tree and decorations away from curtains and other combustible materials.
- Avoid octopus lines to minimize overloading of electrical system.
- Never place appliance cords or extension cords under a carpet.
- Do not leave infants or children alone in places where they are in danger of falling or near electrical outlets or gadgets and candles.
- Ensure appliances like TVs, computers, heaters etc. are placed to avoid overheating.
- Make sure you repair any faulty functioning appliances, and use appliances at the specified voltage only.
- Unplug appliances by grasping the plug, not by yanking the cord.

Social Host Responsibility

As a social host, be concerned about your guests consuming too much alcohol then driving—taking the wheel is absolutely not an option if you think someone may be impaired. The Canada Safety Council recommends you monitor alcohol service and consumption, and plan appropriately.

<http://safety-council.org/news/archives/social-host-responsibility/>

- Either don't drink or limit your own consumption so you can be aware of how much your guests are drinking.
- Know your guests – it is much easier to track the changes in behaviour of those you know. Inviting strangers increases the risk.
- Monitor and supervise the serving of alcohol. Designate non-drinkers to do this.
- Keep the focus off alcohol. Serve lots of food that has protein and fat – salt encourages more drinking, and sugar does not mix well with alcohol. Have plenty of non-alcoholic choices.
- Greet all guests on arrival and departure, taking the opportunity to assess their condition.
- If a guest appears to be impaired, encourage him or her to give you their car keys. Buddy up with a friend to persuade the intoxicated person to take a cab, or stay the night.
- Keep the phone numbers of cab companies handy and tell the guest that a cab has been ordered. Don't give the option to refuse.
- If the guest appears to be impaired, keep that person with you until they are no longer impaired, or can be left in the care of a sober responsible person.
- Only time will sober the person, not more fluids or food. Offering a spare bed is a good recourse.
- If the person refuses to hand over the car keys or spend the night at your house, call the police. It may seem drastic, but it is far better than tragic consequences.