DeKalb County CVB

Embrace the Best Holiday Traditions

By Pat Szpekowski

Treasured traditions that reclaim the nostalgia of days-gone-by are celebrated throughout the holiday season in DeKalb County. Visit this largely pastoral destination to experience a scenic road trip, family-friendly activity, or shopping adventure to capture the vibrancy of the area and unexpected memories.

Enjoy holiday adventures that promise a little bit of something for every taste. The season comes alive for families to easily check off lists of new playful things to do from Thanksgiving right up to Christmas.

A popular, can’t-be-missed downtown DeKalb holiday tradition is the annual tour of the elegantly decorated 1879 Ellwood Mansion during a three-day Open House from Nov. 30 through Dec. 2. This grand event features live music as guests tour the historic three-story mansion of the late Isaac Ellwood, who played a central role in the development of the barbed wire industry.

Tour guides will be stationed on all three floors and the basement level to share the fascinating history of the home and the Ellwood family. A visit from Santa and refreshments in the visitors center provide the perfect atmosphere to warm up. The historic mansion is situated on 10 acres of parkland in the heart of DeKalb.

Sparkling holiday lights will beam throughout DeKalb County to help renew the spirit and connect with family and friends.

Santa kicks off holiday activities in downtown Genoa on the evening of Dec. 7 with a special jingle bell parade and tree lighting ceremony. Kids of all ages can partake in a variety of merry activities including free wagon rides, a live petting zoo, warming fires, Christmas caroling and holiday music. Enjoy free hot chocolate, cookies and coffee to enhance the holiday mood.

Delight family and friends with a free carriage ride in downtown DeKalb on Dec. 8.

There will be plenty of time to shop for unique gifts as friendly local business owners provide tasty treats and revel in the spirit of one-on-one, personalized customer service throughout the season. Grab your friends and make it a fun Saturday holiday treat.

Once the shopping is done and it’s time for a break, nothing can beat the vibrant dining culture of DeKalb County with a varied mix of American and international cuisine. The pub scene is alive with the sound of music, but DeKalb County also is home to wineries, local breweries, bottlers and distilling artisans who serve up craft beers and sodas, ales, porters, barley wines, IPA’s and more.

Whiskey Acres Distilling Co., the only estate distillery in Illinois, is located in DeKalb. A new visitors center opens in December with expanded retail space and educational exhibits. Visit and learn the fascinating story of three farm owners. Then, surprise someone on your holiday list with the gift of a handcrafted, distilled spirit from this true farm-to-bottle distillery.

Kids will squeal with delight when they see more than 300,000 lights and holiday figurines during a magical evening ride on Pete’s Train in the town of Waterman. Step right up and board the train for family fun from Nov. 24 through Dec. 23. The Holiday Lights Train rides past Santa and his reindeer, giant toy soldiers and candy canes, streetlights, angels, jumping reindeer, a snowfall and much more. Sip hot chocolate and savor popcorn in the shelter house while warming by the fire.

Don’t delay. Plan your holiday tour of DeKalb County now, and make the most of the season.

For more information, visit dekalbcvb.com.