

Family Travel Funbursts

**Want to get everyone into the holiday spirit?
Take a long weekend and delight the kids
with a visit to one of these sparkling spots!**

Christmas in the Crystal City

By Brette McWhorter Sember

Picture a storybook town, gentle snow, Santa, reindeer, a winter parade and shops decorated to the nines for the holidays. All of this and more can be found in **Corning**, nestled in south central New York State south of Watkins Glen, during *Crystal City Christmas* celebration, on the three weekends immediately following Thanksgiving.

The festival is sure to delight your children, get you into the holiday spirit and take it easy on your wallet. Each weekend, visitors are offered low rates (between \$90 and \$138 for two nights plus breakfast and a family night) at local hotels. This bargain also includes admission to area museums and attractions and a discount shopping pass; as well as each weekend's special free Christmas events, including a tree lighting, caroling, Parade of Lights (a spectacular parade in which everything is covered with lights), Sparkle of Christmas Festival, and the Beary Merry Christmas Celebration (with a teddy bear theme). Santa resides in a glass house in the center

of town and his reindeer make special appearances as well. Horse drawn carriages are available, as well as hay rides.

Take hands with the family and mosey on down the tree-lined pathway — all adorned with fine white lights — towards the park's entrance. (But keep your purse closed, because admission is FREE). The sounds of the season fill the air as brass bands and Yuletide carolers clad in top hats stroll about the lane. On first approach,



the small village shops, with their ornate trim, resemble something out of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Old-fashioned window displays with motorized scenes fill storefronts. There are a myriad of confectionaries, coffee houses, and boutiques stocked with unique holiday gifts and collectibles. Go in to get warm, but then keep on walking because there are more than 20 rides and attractions up ahead (just pay as you go), including Santa's workshop, complete with 9 live reindeer.

Warm up with some hot cocoa or grab a bite to eat at one of the hot food vendors before going back out into the chilly night air. Be prepared to stop and sing along with the variety of local musical groups who appear daily at the Candylane Choir Loft. Or duck inside the cozy, heated Music Box Theatre for a live singing and dancing show. Then hop aboard the Candylane Twilight Express for a steam-powered train trip through Santa's Magical Forest. After disembarking, head back down through Candylane. Stop off for a nostalgic ride on the old carousel, shake hands with a few of the Hershey product characters and, before departing, don't forget to eat some chocolate. After all, Hershey is the sweetest place on Earth.

Other nearby attractions:

- Hershey Park Arena is right next door to the park, with AHL hockey action most Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday nights October through April. For ticket information and a complete schedule, call (717) 534-3911 or visit www.HersheyBears.com.
- Hershey's Chocolate World, the official visitors' center of the Hershey Foods Corporation, also fringes on the park. Take the free chocolate-making tour ride that ends with a sweet sample and shop for holiday treats and special gifts. Open year round and always free.
- Christmas in Chocolate Town at the Great American Hall in the Hershey Lodge is a holiday dinner musical for the entire family. Savor a traditional American Christmas dinner with incredible chocolate desserts and enjoy a troupe of professional performers who entertain with songs and stories of the season. Tickets are \$36.95 ages 9 and up, \$8.95 ages 8 and under. For information and reservations, call (717) 520-5401.

Where to stay:

- The Hotel Hershey and The Hershey Lodge offer an array of affordable overnight packages with specially planned holiday events. Packages include deluxe accommodations, breakfast or lunch with Santa and complimentary admission to the Hershey Museum. For more information or reservations, call (800) HERSHEY or visit www.HersheyPA.com.
- Towne House Suites Hotel in the capital/business district of downtown Harrisburg, less than 20 minutes from Hersheypark, offers spacious one- and two-bedroom suites with separate living and sleeping areas. For package information and reservations, call toll-free (888) 532-1900 or visit www.townehousesuites.com.
- Harrisburg Marriott Hotel in Swatara, less than 10 minutes from Hershey, offers affordable overnight accommodations with Hershey package deals. For information and reservations, call (717) 564-5511.
- Conveniently located less than a half mile from Hersheypark, Holiday Inn Express in Hummelstown offers affordable family packages, as well as a continental breakfast. For information and reservations, call (717) 583-0500.
- Hampton Inn & Suites, just one mile from the park, also offers affordable family packages. For information and reservations, call (717) 533-8400.