

The Rockford Region is Filled with Awe and Wonder with a Merry & Bright Event Lineup

Community hosts family-friendly activities and events throughout the season

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rockford, IL – The Rockford region is filled with sites, attractions, eateries and organizations that have enhanced the holiday season this year with several “Merry & Bright” festivities happening from **November 25 to January 31**.

In addition to the region’s largest holiday celebration on November 25 in downtown Rockford, **Stroll on State presented by Illinois Bank & Trust**, the Rockford community can gather to shop, sip and snack during the region’s annual holiday shopping event aimed to support local businesses. **Shop on State** is a hometown holiday shopping experience happening **Saturday, December 9 from 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.** This event is a collaborative effort with the RACVB, River District Association and local businesses that will feature great shopping, delicious food and live music.

Wander around a winter wonderland outside among the lights, or stay warm in your car or the tropical conservatory to see them. **Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens** decorates for the holidays with their annual **All Aglow Exhibit** (November 25 - January 7) displaying sparkling holiday lights and beautiful floral displays inside the warm conservatory and on the outdoor grounds. Drive through **Sinnissippi Park** to experience the **Holiday Festival of Lights** (December 1 – 31) and see over 50 unique light displays installed by individuals and local organizations and businesses.

Rockford’s River Lights (sponsored by ComEd) is back for the third year in downtown Rockford. Located on the banks of the Rock River between State Street and Jefferson Street bridges. After Stroll on State, the lights will feature holiday shows of dancing lights synchronized to music on Friday and Saturday nights throughout the month of December. Show times are 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. with shows occurring every 15 minutes. Each River Lights performance is different, providing a new experience each time. On non-show nights, Rockford’s River Lights stay on and illuminate the riverbanks. Shows are free.

The River Lights experience is designed to be viewed both from afar as well as up close. Residents and visitors will be invited to walk along the Esplanade on the west bank of the river and the Millennium Fountain path on the east side, between the State and Jefferson Street bridges. For more information, go to www.rockfordriverlights.com

Fans fill the stands at the **BMO Harris Bank Center** and root for their **Rockford IceHogs**, the American Hockey League affiliate of the Chicago Blackhawks, all season long.

While building lasting traditions this season, families have great local options when finding that perfect,

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freshly grown Christmas tree. **Gensler Gardens** offers a large selection of wreaths and other festive decorations and custom arrangements. **Keith's Christmas Trees** is a family-owned tree farm where families can cut down their favorite scotch and white pine trees. A quick trip into Roscoe leads families to **Valley View Christmas Tree Farm**, located on a 100 year old farmland overlooking a beautiful valley of planted trees. **Williams Tree Farm** is adorned with a decorated lodge, hayrides, maze, gift shop and café.

Events that are part of the Merry & Bright Season include:

- **Holiday Tree Lighting & Open House** – Edgebrook (Nov. 17-18) – On Friday, mingle with Santa and anxiously await the countdown for the Edgebrook Tree to be lit! On Saturday, shop all of the unique stores at Edgebrook during the Holiday Open House.
- **Stroll on State** – Downtown Rockford (Nov. 25) – Stroll on State, presented by Illinois Bank & Trust, returns for a fifth year to get the community in the holiday spirit. Come see Santa, go ice skating and witness the magical tree lighting ceremony of the official City Christmas tree.
- **Tour de Frost** – Throughout Rockford (Dec. 2) – The Tour de Frost is a safe, fun, fully supported bike ride to local area businesses around the Rockford region.
- **Winnebago Buy Local – A Local Holiday Market** – Regents Hall at Rockford University (Dec. 2) – This annual shopping event is hosted by Winnebago Buy Local and they have gathered more than thirty local businesses into one place to let the folks in our community support their local businesses in a big way, in one single shopping day.
- **Rockton Christmas Walk** – Downtown Rockton (Dec. 1-3) – This holiday tradition offers unique events, shopping experiences and holiday festivities. Don't miss the Lighted Christmas Parade on Saturday night!
- **Broadway at the Coronado – Christmas Wonderland** – Coronado Performing Arts Center (Dec. 8) – This most loved Christmas show features glittering costumes, a dazzling cast and the highest kicking chorus girls this side of the North Pole.
- **Holiday Happenings** – Erlander Home Museum, Heritage Museum Park, Tinker Swiss Cottage (Dec. 10) – Enjoy an afternoon of holiday décor and spirit as you travel back in time to Victorian-era Rockford at three unique Rockford attractions.
- **Rockford Symphony Orchestra Holiday Pops** – Coronado Performing Arts Center (Dec. 16 – 17) – The nationally acclaimed vocal group Five by Design joins the Rockford Symphony Orchestra for a unique take on classic holiday favorites and brand new originals.
- **New Year Around the World** – Burpee Museum (Dec. 31) – Engage in crafts and activities that celebrate cultures from around the world and join parades around the museum each hour as a different country rings in the new year.
- **Illinois Snow Sculpting Competition** – Sinnissippi Park (Jan. 17-20) – Snow sculpting teams from around the state compete for the right to represent Illinois in the 2019 U.S. National Snow Sculpting Competition.

For more information to help you plan your itinerary or to download the complete schedule of our recommended Merry & Bright events and activities go online to <http://www.gorockford.com/merryandbright>.

RACVB exists to drive quality of life and economic growth for the citizens of Rockford and Winnebago County through tourism marketing and destination development. [gorockford.com](http://www.gorockford.com)

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