



Guide to Holidays Events in Downtown Norfolk

November 20, 2017 By Joshua Weinstein

Somewhere in downtown Norfolk, Santa is laughing and a child is probably crying. Model trains scurry down their little tracks, hauling tiny little pieces of coal. The smell of cinnamon and alcohol—and perhaps some snow—fill the chilling air.

As the temperature drops, your blood pressure rises; you track packages, to-do lists, paid time off, the kids, your in-laws... But amidst the chaos, there is a wonderland of fun out there; for the young ones, the older ones, and everyone in between. Below you'll find a nice selection of holiday shenanigans happening in downtown Norfolk this year.

We'll start with kid-friendly attractions for the whole family, because it ain't about you anymore, jack; it's all about the children this time of year!

So pack 'em up in the mini-van and check out [Dickens Christmas Towne](#) at [Nauticus](#). Every year, the naval museum on Norfolk's waterfront transforms into a kingdom of all things wintery and Christmas-y. There are free activities and crafts throughout the season, educational and interactive games, and even a 120-foot-long waterfront maze, where you'll finally be able to lose your family and get away with it. Dickens Christmas Towne runs through December 31, here's a [full schedule](#) with all the details.



image | Dickens Christmas Towne

Push Comedy Theater, Hampton Roads' lighthouse of laughter, offers up some quality time with Santa in their theater on Granby Street this year. **Stories with Santa: Family Fun with Santa Claus** runs December 16, 17, or 22 from noon until 2 p.m. and will include storytelling with Santa, light refreshments, a little bit of improv comedy, and even a goodie bag for the little ones. Be sure to bring your cell phone so you can snap an insta or Facechat a grambook of your kid being cute with Santa.

Also, there is limited seating at the theater, so advanced reservations are encouraged.

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You don't have to be a kid to enjoy [Hurrah for the Holidays](#), which is the Hurrah Players' holiday performance featuring a review of Christmas classics and contemporary serenades. Trust us when we say that there will be dancing. There will be heartwarming scenes and jolly good songs. There will also be a six-foot-tall dancing snowman. How often do you get to see a dancing snowman? Be grateful! Performances run December 8 through December 10 with differing times, so check out [the Hurrah Players' calendar](#) for ticket availability. Also, the Hurrah Players' [The Best Christmas Pageant Ever](#) is apparently the funniest thing ever, so check that out too.



image | holidaysinthecity.net

If you or your kid are into model trains—and we know you both are—then check out this [model train exhibit](#) at 150 W. Main Street in the Dominion Enterprises building, on display now through December 23rd. The exhibit is staffed by members of the Atlantic Coast “S” Gaugers, a nonprofit organization of railroad enthusiasts who are traveling around the region with their miniature choo-choos. The exhibit is accessible during certain dates and times, so check out the [Holidays in the City website](#) for further details. Let's face it, little Johnny is not going to shut it until you take him to see the trains, so get on it.

After all that excitement, the kids should be nice and tired. Time to drop them off at the babysitter and take in a show. The city's vibrant performance arts community will be on full display this winter.

If Christmas Towne wasn't enough Dickens-themed shenanigans, you could always see Dickens' classic play [A Christmas Carol](#) at the Wells Theater. This will be a new production by Virginia Stage Company and is running December 7 through December 24. The show tells the tale of Scrooge McDuck being stalked by the Ghosts of Christmas Then, Now, and Later... Or something like that. It's a

play open to patrons of all ages and is really the quintessential Christmas-time story. So come out and support Virginia Stage Company at the Wells Theater this season.



image | VSC | by Samuel Flint

If **A Christmas Carol** is the quintessential holiday play, then **The Nutcracker** is the perfect ballet for the season. Tchaikovsky's score returns to Norfolk for the fifth consecutive year in a collaboration between Virginia Symphony Orchestra and the State Ballet of Virginia. Running December 1 through December 3rd at Chrysler Hall, the performance apparently features a dragon, a bear, and a mouse. America's favorite animals! What more could you ask for? Oh, and once you see **The Nutcracker**, be sure to tell the author of this article what it's all about.



On Saturday, December 16th at the Harrison Opera House, you can also watch the magic of **Handel's Messiah**. Performed by Virginia Symphony Orchestra and their Chorus, this narrative presents the experience of the Messiah through musical prophecies of yore. What a fitting tribute to Jesus Christmas! Buy your tickets at the **Virginia Symphony website** today.

You can support the Virginia Symphony Orchestra by attending Handel's Messiah, or you can check out the VSO's **Holiday POPS!** series on December 9th at Chrysler Hall. The Symphony Chorus will participate in this performance as well, adding buoyancy and body to the familiar carols and holiday hums that you all know.



image | VSO

If you enjoy holiday events that channel yesteryear or want to impress your date with a unique experience, then visit the [Hunter House Victorian Museum](#) on December 16 for their event [A First Cup of Christmas Cheer](#). Running from 2 p.m. until 7 p.m., this event will feature classic holiday songs played live on a [hammered dulcimer](#). If you don't know what a hammered dulcimer is, here's your chance to find out. Food will also be served. Yay food! Due to limited space, registrations are required. Check out the link above for details and come experience how affluent Victorians celebrated the holiday season.



image | hunterhousemuseum.org

Another great way to spend a date night with your lovely someone is to check out the [NEON Holiday Market](#), which will be held at the Plot on December 9, noon to 5 p.m. There will be singing Santas, food trucks, and handmade gifts for sale by over 30 local vendors. This is the perfect opportunity to support local businesses and to also show that woman you're dating that you're not the lame corporate shrill that she thinks you are. A list of vendors will be posted soon on the link above.



If you're looking for a more fantasy-based shopping experience, check out the [Wizards Wonderland at the Selden Market](#) on December 9th from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Inspired by the Harry Potter books and movie series, the Selden Market will be transformed into a magical realm of butterbeer and commerce. Although not specifically "holiday themed," this event does revolve around buying stuff... during the holiday season... and is based on magical events, so it's still super relevant to Christmas. According to the Selden Market's Facebook event page, the first 100 attendees will receive a free "Hogwarts admission letter," so your dad will finally be proud of you! If the person you're dating is into Harry Potter, don't miss this opportunity to take them here, support an innovative local business incubator, and finally prove to him or her that you're not Slytherin. You're really not, you swear. Huzzah!



Finally, if you're the type that likes celebrating the holidays by turning the music down, then downtown Norfolk's [Unsilent Night](#) isn't for you pal. Unsilent Night, the city's 4th annual "boombox parade," is an alternative way to spread the holiday cheer. Here's how it works; download one of Phil Kline's tracks from the [Unsilent Night website](#) ahead of time; then gather at MacArthur Square at 5:30 on December 6 with a musical device like a smartphone or boombox. Participants will press "play" at the same time and then parade the streets of downtown Norfolk and Ghent as the music soars. The parade will end at the [Selden Market](#), which will be hosting a reception for all you pseudo-carollers. Come do something fun and a little obnoxious and super unique. No registration required, just show up with music loaded on your phone. Show your Tinder date that you know how to bebop.

Of course, there is much more happening in downtown this holiday season, including, the [Pagoda and Garden's LightFest](#), [MacArthur on Ice and Winter Carnival](#), and [the Ice Palace and Photos with Santa](#). If you're a kid, the world is yours for the taking. There's tons to do and you don't have to drive anywhere or pay for anything. You're a kid, you don't even have a job! Christmas is awesome for you.



image | David B. Hollingsworth for the Virginian-Pilot

For all you parents out there, it's true that Christmas can be stressful; but if you take a breath (and a sip of that brandy), you'll realize that there is a wonderland right in your own city. You don't have to travel far; so go forth and explore. Spread good vibes. Love your neighbor as you love your iPhone. Support the arts. Support your city. Support your drunken friend. Most of all, be nice for Christmas' sake.

Happy holidays!

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