

PRESS RELEASE

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MANISTEE COUNTY FEATURES HOLIDAY EVENTS LIKE VICTORIAN SLEIGHBELL PARADE, SPARKLE IN THE PARK AND NUTCRACKER BALLET PLUS WINTER ACTIVITIES

Manistee County Visitors Bureau Helps Visitors Plan Getaway with New Winter Adventures Guide

MANISTEE, Mich. – Dec. 1, 2021 – Manistee County is primed and ready for visitors this winter, offering holiday events like the [Victorian Sleighbell Parade & Old Christmas Weekend](#), [Sparkle in the Park](#) and the [Nutcracker Ballet](#) – along with unique winter activities, from guided raft floats to winter road trips. And the [Manistee County Visitors Bureau](#) (Visit Manistee County) can help visitors navigate a getaway with its new [Winter Adventures Guide](#).

“We are thrilled Manistee County will celebrate the holidays and winter in typical fashion again with returning favorites like the Victorian Sleighbell Parade and Nutcracker Ballet,” said Tim Riley, chair of the Visit Manistee County board. “We also have many unique attractions that make our region stand out as a prime winter destination. Visit Manistee County is ready to help you plan your next getaway.”

Winter Events/Attractions *(located in the city of Manistee unless otherwise noted)*

Manistee County features a variety of holiday-themed and winter [events](#) and activities catering to adults and families alike, listed below by date. *Consult websites and/or call attractions in advance to confirm details.*

Holiday Events

- [Manistee County Community Christmas](#), Nov. 26 through Jan. 1. Businesses, non-profits, residences, schools, churches and clubs are spreading holiday cheer by decorating their locations for this holiday display contest. Follow the event [Facebook page](#) for a map of locations and voting information.
- [Sparkle in the Park](#), Nov. 27 through Dec. 31, 5 - 10 p.m. nightly, Hopkins Park, Bear Lake. Sparkle in the Park features more than 100,000 lights in holiday displays in Hopkins Park and throughout the village of Bear Lake, including angels, Christmas trees, Santa and reindeer, a salute to troops, snowmen, animals and Christmas scenes. Free, though donations are accepted. [Facebook.com/sparkleinthepark](https://www.facebook.com/sparkleinthepark)
- [Victorian Sleighbell Parade & Old Christmas Weekend](#), Dec. 2 - 5, downtown Manistee. In its 32nd year, this annual holiday tradition is straight out of a Dickens novel – including the Victorian Sleighbell Parade Dec. 4 with draft horses pulling a 30-foot Christmas tree, fireworks, and caroling. Also enjoy festively decorated downtown shops, strolling carolers in Victorian attire, carriage rides, and chestnuts roasting. The Old Christmas Weekend features more than [40 events](#) organized by many organizations and businesses such as the Jingle Bell Jog 5K Run/Walk, free Classic Christmas Movies at the Vogue Theatre, and tours of the Ramsdell Theatre and Old Kirke Museum. New additions to the holiday weekend include:
 - **Downtown Sleigh Scavenger Hunt** sponsored by Snyder’s Shoes, Dec. 3, 4 - 6 p.m. (replaces soup cook-off). Participants can shop for treasures while looking for 1 of 10 hidden sleigh ornaments at participating merchants. Finders will not only have a commemorative ornament, but also will receive \$20 in Manistee County Ca\$h. Only one sleigh/prize per family.
 - **Sleighbell Holiday Food Truck Court**, Dec. 3, 12 - 7 p.m., and Dec. 4, 12 - 9 p.m. (closed 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. Dec. 4 for parade), Oak Street between River and Water

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- [Lakeside Club's Festival of Trees & Holiday Décor](#), Dec. 3, 1 - 8 p.m. and Dec. 4, 11 a.m. - 8 p.m., Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts Ballroom. Visitors can view and bid on creatively decorated Christmas trees, wreaths, gift baskets, and seasonal decor designed by local holiday enthusiasts, with "buy it now" options available. Bring canned goods to vote for a favorite entry for the "People's Choice" award, which will be donated to a local food pantry. Unwrapped toys also can be donated to Five CAPs, with a chance to enter for a prize drawing with each toy donated. Proceeds go to Manistee County Humane Society's Homeward Bound Animal Shelter and Armory Youth Project. Bidding closes Dec. 4 at 8 p.m. Admission: donation.
- [The Nutcracker Ballet](#), Dec 3 - 5 and Dec 10 - 12 at 8 p.m., matinees Dec. 5 and 12 at 2 p.m.; Ramsdell Theatre. Dancers from Manistee, Mason and Benzie counties present Tchaikovsky's holiday classic "The Nutcracker Ballet." The production is a collaborative holiday celebration directed by Ingrid Bond and involves more than 150 cast members and volunteers. With Tchaikovsky's score and the ballet premiering around the time the Ramsdell was built, this version is set in the Victorian era so the audience can see some of the unique features of the Ramsdell stage. Ticketed event. ramsdelltheatre.org
- [Ladies' Shopping Night](#), Dec. 8, 4 - 8 p.m. Ladies can enjoy an evening of downtown shopping and holiday fun when downtown Manistee merchants will have stores decked out for the season and feature specials, drawings and spirits.
- [Men's Night](#), Dec. 15, 5 - 8 p.m. Men can join this evening of downtown shopping, entertainment, and cheer when downtown Manistee merchants will have stores decked out for the season and feature specials, drawings and spirits.
- [Diamond Rio](#), Dec. 18, 8 - 10 p.m., Little River Casino Resort. This country music band has sold more than 10 million albums; won a Grammy Award, Dove Award and six Vocal Group of the Years; released two Greatest Hit albums; earned five multi-week no. 1 singles and 22 Top 10 singles; landed three platinum and five gold albums; and released an autobiography – all with no band member changes. Tickets range from \$40 to \$50 and can be [purchased here](#).

Winter Activities/Attractions

- [Moonlight Ski/Fat Bike Nights](#), Jan. 15 and Feb. 12, 7 - 9 p.m., Big M Cross Country Ski Area (Udell Hills Road), Wellston. Participants can ski or bike in the moonlight and enjoy desserts and hot chocolate in the heated shelter at Big M afterward. Skiers and bikers bring their own gear and can head out independently on the trails or hang out in the lodge or by the bonfire. The trails are not lighted, so a headlamp is advisable if it is cloudy. This event is free and open to the public (no reservations needed), though there is a \$5 vehicle day pass fee to the U.S. Forest Service. skibigm.org/fun-events
- **Guided Winter Raft Floats on the Pine River**, Wellston. [Pine River Paddlesports Center](#) is bringing back its guided winter rafting trips on the Pine River twice a day (10 a.m. and 1 p.m.) for 1 hour/15-minute floats (guide can be in your boat or paddling beside you). It includes the option of a 1.7-mile hike along the Silver Creek pathway back to your car, or the other side of the river at 2.4 miles – both with overlooks. The center also can outfit an individual paddling adventure along the Pine River. thepineriver.com
- **"The Stee" Social District**, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily, downtown. A new addition last summer, "The Stee" is downtown Manistee's social district where patrons 21 and older can purchase an alcoholic beverage in a specially marked glass from one of the licensed establishments and carry and consume it outdoors. The district follows River Street and the Riverwalk from Division to Pine and over to 5th Avenue. Participating businesses include Bluefish Kitchen + Bar, Taco 'Bout It, TJ's Pub and North Channel Brewing Company. Select shops in "The Stee" also welcome you to shop with your beverage – watch for signs.

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- **Winter Dining Experiences.** Various food and drink spots offer creative winter experiences:
 - [Base Camp Iron Fish](#), *Iron Fish Distillery, Thompsonville* – This outdoor “village” of heated, waterproof, breathable canvas tents with lights overhead is back by popular demand, giving guests a festive outdoor space to enjoy spirits, cocktails, wood-fired pizza and snacks. Tents accommodate groups of 2 to 8 people and can be [reserved](#) for 90 minutes. Iron Fish also offers outdoor seating by fire pits, with blankets on loan. A heated outdoor spirit tasting and merchandise area also is available. Live music is scheduled throughout the winter.
 - [Northern Natural Cider House & Winery – Outdoor Seating + Groomed Cross-Country/Snowshoe Trail](#), *Kaleva*. Northern Natural blends varieties of Manistee and Leelanau County certified organic heirloom apples, pressed by its state-of-the-art pressing plant, and brewed into premium hard cider and wine. Northern Natural offers outdoor seating with gas and wood fire pits. Visitors also can cross-country ski or snowshoe the groomed one-mile, pet-friendly trail on the premises.
 - [St. Ambrose Cellars – Heated Igloos](#), *Beulah*. This meadery in neighboring Benzie County has heated igloos for up to six people that can be reserved for one-hour sittings at \$10. In addition to offering locally made mead, cider, and beer, St. Ambrose sells snack picnic baskets and features food trucks on select dates.
 - [Stormcloud Brewing Company – Heated Domes and Curling](#), *Frankfort*. This Benzie County brewery offers heated geodesic domes on the heated patio by reservation for a 75-minute session. The \$10 rental fee is applied to the bill. For a unique winter activity, Stormcloud offers curling on its own curling sheet at its downtown Frankfort location from Jan. 2 to Feb. 20. (NOTE: Curling is weather dependent. Also, all ages are welcome, but those under 18 must have a parent or guardian present.) [stormcloudbrewing.com/private-curling](#). Options include:
 - “Learn to Curl” lessons Saturdays starting in early January at 1, 3 and 5 p.m. \$10 per person for a 1.5-hour session of up to eight people. Registration will be on the [website](#) soon.
 - *Private, 1.5-hour curling lessons* Monday through Friday, 12 - 4 p.m. and Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 5 - 9 p.m. Start time is weather-dependent. Fee is \$150 for a group of up to 8 people. Email Stormcloud’s Curling Instructor Aaron at aaron@stormcloudbrewing.com to reserve a spot.
 - “Drop-in” curling, Sundays from 12 – 1 p.m. \$10 per person, and no reservation required.

Winter Adventures Guide

Visit Manistee County created a free, 48-page [Winter Adventures Guide](#) with suggestions for planning a winter visit, including road trips, trail maps, dining and lodging directories, and more. In addition to the [online version](#), visitors also can [request a printed guide](#) through the website or by calling 877.626.4783. Additional winter vacation content can be found at [visitmanisteecounty.com/winter](#). Components of the guide include:

- **Five cool winter spots** to check out – from rafting the Pine River to watching a show at the Ramsdell
- **Trails to hit in the winter**, with five of the most popular mapped out with suggested activities
- **Snowmobiling information**, including a centerfold map showing 450+ miles of regional trails
- **Winter road trips**, including the Manistee Brew, Wine & Spirits Tour, M-22 Coastal Adventure, and Downtown Manistee Winter Shopping and Dining
- **Suggested lodging, dining, shopping and entertainment** options, including “The Stee” Social District

About the Manistee County Visitors Bureau

Incorporated in 1997, the Manistee County Visitors Bureau (known as Visit Manistee County) is the official destination marketing organization promoting Manistee County to grow the local travel economy. The visitors bureau is a member of the West Michigan Tourist Association, Michigan Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus, Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association, Tourism Industry Coalition of Michigan and the Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce. Information is available at [VisitManisteeCounty.com](#), [facebook.com/ManisteePureMichigan](#), [instagram.com/manisteepuremichigan](#) and [twitter.com/manisteePureMI](#).

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