

## Step into an 18th-century holiday at Colonial Williamsburg

Colonial Williamsburg during at Christmastime is a feast for the senses.

Watch and hear the Fifes and Drums as it marches down the majestic Duke of Gloucester Street. Taste a traditional treat from a variety of restaurants and food shops.

See and smell the holiday decorations – the natural beauty of boxwood, Frasier fir, and fruit combined with the scent of fresh pine and greenery. (Did you know that all decorations are made strictly of materials that were available back in the 18th century when Williamsburg was the capital of Virginia?)

The Historic Area, America's largest interactive living history museum, offers unique activities appealing to both parents and kids. And we know that a happy parent means a happy child, and a happy child means a happy parent!

Colonial Williamsburg's holiday season officially kicks off in high style on Dec. 5, from 5 to 7 p.m. with its legendary Grand Illumination and fireworks display. Before you shrug off the idea because crowds and small kids don't mix, note there are multiple stages designed to keep groups smaller. The fireworks are authentic to the 18th century and lower to the ground, which is less overwhelming for kids and easier for them to view.

This is only the beginning – there are four "Kid's Holiday Weekends" with special programming and many other festive illuminations throughout the Historic Area during December. In addition, there are opportunities for family caroling and musical programs galore at the Art Museums, including "Wassail!" and "Colonial Music for Children."

You could also take a photo of your child dressed up in a rented colonial costume or a family shot while enjoying a cozy carriage ride.

At the Visitors Center, be sure to shop-til-you-drop for truly unique gifts. Also be sure to seek out the "Family Fun" handout with a user-friendly map of kid-friendly activities. If your child visits three sites, he or she will receive a FREE PRIZE! (That's how I lured my son into the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts



Fireworks illuminate the Governor's Palace during Colonial Williamsburg's Grand Illumination. (Photo courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation)

Museum, where we had a ball making our own Christmas ornaments.) Please note that you do need an admission ticket for most of these sites.

Another invaluable resource is the "Colonial Williamsburg This Week" guide with a detailed listing of daily events and a more detailed map. "Hogsheads to Blockheads" is a fantastic background book for kids – and their parents. In matter-of-fact language, this guide explains the historical significance of just about everything in Colonial Williamsburg, running the gamut from buildings

and events to political leaders and why oysters shells line the streets.

Near the Capitol there are a number of charming taverns such as the King's Arms and Chowning's which offer traditional colonial fare as well as a children's menu with new-fangled chicken strips and heaping bowls of ice cream.

Back at Merchants Square you can find a Starbucks in Barnes & Noble, a dizzying array of wonderful treats and sweets at the Wythe Candy & Gourmet Shop, and a phenomenal toy store at the Toymaker

offering a truly unique assortment as well as free gift-wrapping. The Cheese Shop may not appeal to your kids' taste buds, but you can definitely pick up some eclectic cheeses, bread, and wine to bring home.

Just a block over on Prince George Street, Retro's Good Eats is a great find. This fast, affordable, and family-friendly diner serves up tasty burgers and dogs, fresh-cut fries, as well as shakes, malts, and floats galore. You can also find your fast-food favorites on Richmond Road, including those familiar Golden Arches.

If your young patriots are up for it, take a side trip to Yankee Candle Flagship at 2200 Richmond Road (Route 60 West) on your way home. Much more than its 400,000 candles, it snows in their indoor Holiday Park, Santa is a regular, and Mrs. Claus has her own bakery and cafe! Plus you'll get the chance to meet Hickory, Dickory, and Doc, the 4½-foot-tall animated mice with jazz, rock, and rap songs about Virginia.

Staying overnight would make it easy to experience "Christmas Town" at Busch Gardens the next day with its Polar Pathway, Mistletoe Marketplace, 50-foot Christmas tree, and spectacular Sesame Street Christmas. Another option is to knock out some Christmas shopping at the Williamsburg Premium Outlets. The Embassy Suites on Mooretown Road offers a fantastic value, including a complimentary cocktail reception with heavy appetizers and a feast of a breakfast. The Woodlands is another great place to stay, located right next to the Visitors Center with access to the shuttle bus system.

So step back into early America and start your Christmas season off by celebrating in colonial tradition without the trappings of modern-day life. Visit [www.ChristmasinWilliamsburg.com](http://www.ChristmasinWilliamsburg.com) for information on more than 100 area holiday events. Also check out [www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/kid/visitUs](http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/kid/visitUs). **RPM**

*Libby Carty McNamee, a local freelance writer and mother, is looking forward to going back to Colonial Williamsburg again this December to celebrate Christmas just as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Patrick Henry did.*

# Holiday Wishes

Richmond Parents Monthly asked children and adults what they are wishing for this holiday season. Here's what they said:



"A motorcycle!"  
Takyiah Minter, 6  
Farmville



"For everyone, including myself, to laugh even more and not take ourselves so seriously."  
Jonathan Austin, aka "Jonathan the Juggler"  
Richmond



"A camera and an umbrella."  
Grace Cosby, 4½  
Midlothian



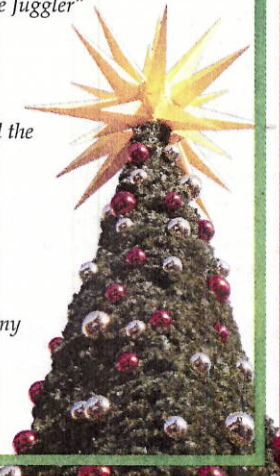
"Peace in my family, my work, and the world."  
Leneka Anderson  
Richmond



"A remote-controlled race car!"  
Declan Flood, 3½  
Midlothian



"A relaxing Christmas season for my family and friends."  
Anne Counoupas  
Midlothian



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