

THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY



By: Shelly Horan, Editor

LIGHTS THE WAY TO CHRISTMAS

RIDE MAP

* t's Christmas time and for most around the nation that means putting up the bikes and sheltering in place as the snow and sleet falls. Not in Texas... especially not in the Hill Country. With daytime temperatures well within riding range most of the season, we offer you the 12 Hill Country Destinations of Christmas. These communities participate in the annual Texas Hill Country Regional Christmas Lighting Trail. On our map we also include San Antonio and Austin. It's the holiday season, so more is better, right? We've provided the route in the order of a round trip, starting and ending in San Antonio. There are plenty of hotel, bed and breakfast and/or guest house options in the Hill Country. So take a few days and enjoy all of these wonderful places full of small town charm and hospitality.

San Antonio

If you haven't been to San Antonio during the holidays, you are truly missing out on a treat. The Riverwalk is ablaze with lights dripping from the trees over the waterway and luminaries lining the walks. While walking the river wonderland, experience more than 185 school, church, company, and civic groups ringing in the holidays with traditional Christmas carols on cruising boats.

Ford Holiday Boat Caroling: Nov 26-Dec 18, 9:30pm
 Ford Fiesta de las Luminaria: Dec 1-18, 7:00-10:00pm
VisitSanAntonio.com

Bandera

The Old Bandera County Courthouse is lit to the hilt. Through most of December take pleasure in many different holiday activities, such as the Holiday Parade; the Cowboy Capital Christmas; the Annual Shoppers Jubilee, that sets up in front of the courthouse with shopping, children caroling, and a Living Nativity scene; "Singing in the Saddle" - Christmas caroling cowboy-style, on horseback and in wagons; and "Cowboys on Main", offering strolling entertainers on Saturday afternoons.

Cowboy Capital Christmas & Shoppers Jubilee:
 Dec 4, 4:30pm-9:00pm
BanderaCowboyCapital.com

Boerne

Stroll through the quaint historic district of Boerne and enjoy turn of the century architecture adorned in shimmering lights. Partake of merriment at the Dickens on Main community event. Watch beautiful lighted floats proffered by community groups in the Wihnachts Fest Parade. And shop at the Boerne Market Days.

Dickens on Main: Dec 2-3, 5:00-10:00pm
DickensOnMain.com
 Weihnachts Fest Parade: Dec 3, 6:00-9:00pm
 Boerne Market Days: Dec 10-11, 10:00am-5:00pm
VisitBoerne.org

Kerrville

Along with the beautiful lighted displays that make this town part of the Texas Hill Country Regional Christmas Lighting Trail, enjoy "Christmas Like it Used to Be". The Bank of the Hills offers the sights and sounds of the season presented by local artisans, complete with a roaring fireplace, cider, eggnog and fresh-baked cookies. And shop in an old-fashioned market on the square with over 75 vendors, just in time for Christmas, at the Kerr County Market Days.

Kerr County Market Days: Dec 17, 9:00am-2:00pm
 Christmas Like it Used to Be: Dec 19-23, 12:00pm
 (830.895.2265)
KerrvilleTexasCVB.com

Fredericksburg

No trip to the Hill Country is complete without a visit to the "Heart of the Texas Hill Country", and they know how to do Christmas; full of events and decorations flavored by the German heritage of the area. During the Christmas season, the Marketplatz (the town square, located at the heart of Main Street) is adorned with a 26-foot tall wooden Christmas pyramid, handcrafted in Germany; a German-themed Christmas tree; and an outdoor ice skating rink. Keeping with years of tradition, the buildings along Main Street in the town's historic district are outlined in white lights. Fredericksburg is a Christmas shoppers' paradise offering the unique St. Nikolausmarkt, a traditional German Christmas market.

Christmas Parade: Dec 2
 St. Nikolausmarkt at the Marketplatz: December 2-3
 Christmas Home Tour: December 3
 42nd Annual LBJ Tree Lighting at
 Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) State Park: December 18
VisitFredericksburgTX.com

Llano

The Christmas Lighting Committee and the City of Llano host "Starry, Starry Nights" on the banks of the Llano River. Stroll the lighted Christmas Park (Badu Park). Enjoy the thousands of lights and multitude of animated displays. Santa and Mrs. Santa visit the park Fridays and Saturdays. Sit on the curbside of the Courthouse Square and enjoy the Lighted Christmas Parade full of decorated floats offered by the local community. Or simply take the "Evening Christmas Stroll", visiting the downtown churches.

Starry, Starry Nights: Through Jan 15, 6:00-10:00pm
 Lighted Christmas Parade: Dec 3, 6:00pm
 Evening Christmas Stroll: Dec 7
LlanoChamber.org

Burnet

The Burnet County Courthouse lights up with thousands of twinkling white lights, along with giant garland, wreathes, and bows... just like a big Christmas present. Enjoy their Annual Christmas on the Square, complete with shopping, music, entertainment, and an evening parade. The ancient city of Bethlehem comes alive. Stroll its Main Street and witness what life may have been like in the village at the time of Christ's birth. Authentically costumed townspeople bargain at the city market, draw water from the well, bake bread, and pay taxes to the tax collector. Travel to Fort Croghan and step back in time to the Fort's first Christmas of October 1849. Experience the "settlers" as they offer music, merriment, and hot apple cider while you roam the luminary-lined paths.

Annual Christmas on the Square: Dec, 10, 9:00am
 Christmas Parade: Dec 10, 5:30pm
 Main Street Bethlehem: First two weekends of December
FBCBurnet.org more...



"Catch the Spirit" at Ft. Crogham: Dec 10, 5:30-8:30pm
BurnetChamber.org

Marble Falls

Imagine over one million twinkling lights on 130 sculptures reflecting on the sparkling waters of Lake Marble Falls. Meander the shoreline and enjoy the spirit of this small-town community. This is the incredible Walkway of Lights, a self-guided winter wonderland tour. The lighting extravaganza is developed each year by hundreds of dedicated volunteers. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated. Then visit the local shops for more gift shopping!

Walkway of Lights: Through Jan 1, 6:00-10:00pm
MarbleFalls.org

Austin

The sight to see here is the Zilker Tree in Zilker Park. Started in 1967 by Mrs. Alden (Mabel) Davis, the tree was designed by City of Austin electricians. The tree stands 155 feet tall; is 380 feet in circumference at the base, with a diameter of 120 feet; has 39 streamers from the top, each holding 81 multi-colored, 25 watt bulbs and totaling 3,309 lights. At the top, a double star that measures 10 feet from point-to-point displays 150 frosted bulbs. A very impressive sight to behold.

A replica Moonlight Tower becomes the "trunk" of this popular holiday spectacle. Moonlight Towers are a product of Austin's first modern street lighting, one of the first American cities to do so. They get their name from the soft moonbeam effect. The tower lights were so effective, citizens claimed to be able to read their wrist watches from 1500 feet away! Today, 17 of the 31 original Moonlight Towers remain. They are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and have been designated Historic Landmarks by the State of Texas.

Along with the tree, Zilker Park is home to Austin's Trail of Lights, a one-mile walk through brilliant lighted displays. And you can't miss the offering of outrageous and quirky lighting displays on 37th Street; a walking wonderland!

Zilker Tree Lighting: Dec 4, 6:00pm
Holiday Sing-Along, Downtown Stroll & Capitol Tree Lighting: Dec 4, 6:00pm
ci.Austin.TX.US/Zilkerzhtree

Dripping Springs

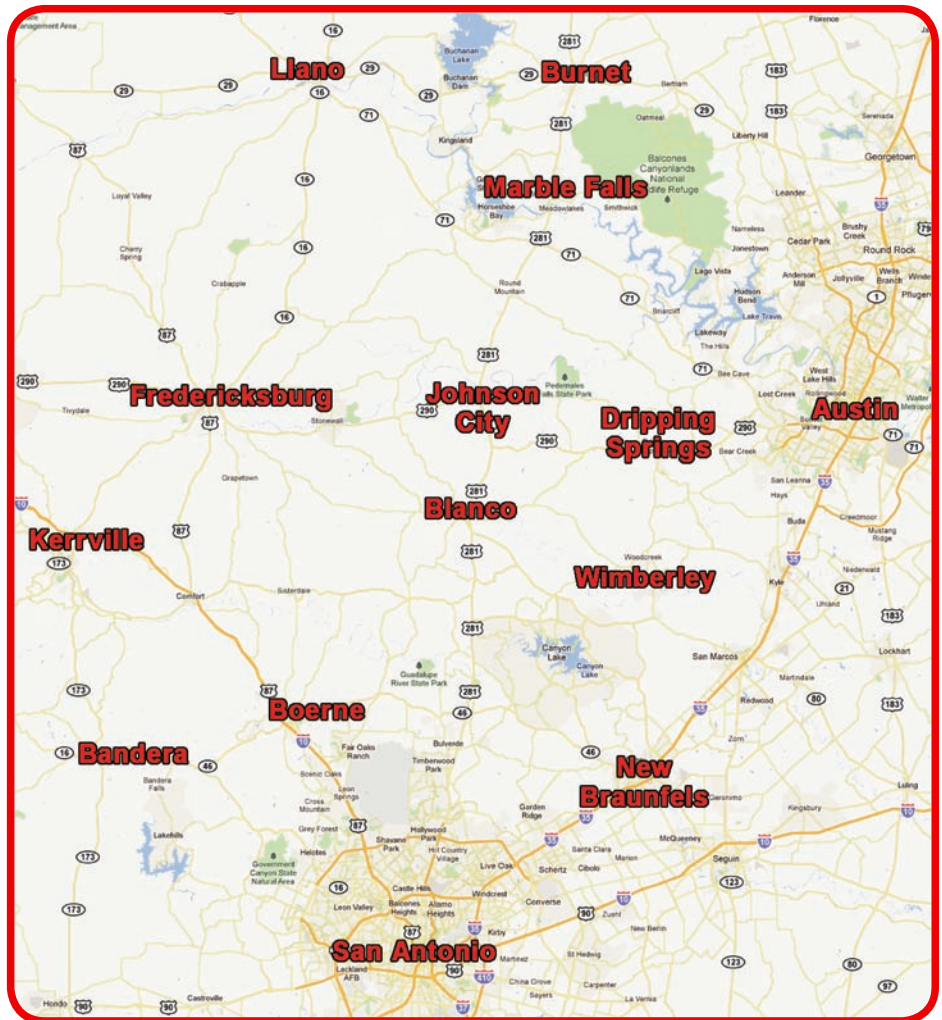
Best known for their Christmas Home Tour.... many of the residents in historic houses from the early years of Dripping Springs participate. They dress inside and outside for visitors' enjoyment. And what small town isn't complete without a Christmas shopping festival full of goodies and gifts? This year, they host their 7th Annual Christmas on Mercer Street.

7th Annual Christmas on Mercer Street:
Dec 3, 10:00am-5:00pm
Christmas Home Tour: Dec 10
(call 512.858.7825 for details)
CityOfDrippingSprings.com

Johnson City

This town offers the most light displays in the state, with millions of twinkles adorning local homes, businesses, and churches. Enjoy carriage rides through the illuminated streets of town and the Living Story of Christmas offered by the United Methodist Church. The current Blanco County Courthouse will be lit up with more than 100,000 lights and a short trip to the Pedernales Electric Co-op Headquarters with more than 1,000,000 bulbs.

Living Story of Christmas: Dec 2-3, 9-10;
every half hour 6:30-8:30pm
JohnsonCity-Texas.com



Blanco

Visit downtown and enjoy the lighting of the shops on the square and the Old Blanco County Courthouse. Local musicians offer Holiday Music on the Square. More shopping opportunity abounds at their Annual Christmas Market Day. Then the community gathers for the annual Christmas Parade and an Evening on the Square.

Holiday Music on the Square: Dec 3, 6:30pm
Annual Christmas Market Day around the Square:
Dec 10, 9:00am
Christmas Parade & Evening on the Square:
Dec 10, 6:30pm
BlancoChamber.com

Wimberley

Celebrate an old fashioned Christmas in Wimberley with decorated shops and galleries, along with the traditional Lighted Christmas Parade. Shop the Lion's Club Market Days and at the Winter's Eve that also includes music, food, and other entertainment. End the evening at EmilyAnn Theatre and Gardens for their Trail of Lights display. It's a magical place where nature and Christmas meet. Join others to warm up by the Yule Log while roasting marshmallows and singing carols.

Trail of Lights: Through Dec 31, 5:00-8:00pm
Lighted Christmas Parade: Dec 3, 6:00pm
Lion's Club Market Days: Dec 3
Winter's Eve: Dec 10, 5:00-10:00pm
VisitWimberley.com

New Braunfels

Enjoy another German-based community celebrating the holidays through their heritage. Like Wassail? Do you even know what Wassail is? It's a mulled spice cider drink, served hot. You can try a variety of samplings offered along with entertainment and food, while strolling through decorated downtown at the "Wassailfest". Nearby, more shopping at the Old Gruene Christmas Market Days Festival with the town lighting ceremony that includes shops, restaurant, entertainment, and craft vendors. Take kids to visit the "German" Santa at the Sophienburg Museum. Enjoy a Christmas Gospel Brunch with a Texas Twist at Gruene Hall. Or participate in the community get-together, Caroling on the Plaza.

Wassailfest: Dec 1
Old Gruene Christmas Market Days Festival:
Dec 3-4
Christmas Gospel Brunch with a Texas Twist:
Dec 11
Caroling on the Plaza: Dec 15
ci.New-Braunfels.TX.US

If you haven't noticed, aside from the Christmas display theme, there is also the theme of shopping! These destinations offer the last minute shopper the most nostalgic and magical way of completing family wish lists. So climb aboard your Steel Steed, decorated in Christmas-best; join in all the fun activities, sights and sounds, the Texas Hill Country Regional Lighting Trail has to offer.

PS - SEND PICTURES!!

