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## **Top 10 Reasons You Should Spend the Holidays in San Luis Obispo County on California's Central Coast**

SAN LUIS OBISPO, California (Nov 5, 2014) – The holidays are just around the corner and instead of thinking about hectic shopping, entertaining, or getting your work done with everyone in vacation mode, San Luis Obispo County invites you to sit back, relax and ponder over the alluring activities you can enjoy on the Central Coast.

Visit San Luis Obispo County – halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, on California's ruggedly beautiful Central Coast – offers these ten reasons why you should leave stress behind and celebrate the holidays in San Luis Obispo County (SLO County):

- 1. We'll Get You to SLOw Down:** It's no accident our acronym is SLO and why our communities often rank among the happiest in America; life here unfolds at a slower pace, and people truly live in the moment. We offer simple pleasures under the sun, from spectacular coastal and wine trails to surfing, horseback riding and agricultural experiences. Here, you can re-connect with your family – and yourself --off line and off the grid and return home truly transformed.  
[www.visitsanluisobispocounty.com](http://www.visitsanluisobispocounty.com)
- 2. One-of-a-Kind Experiences:** [Hearst Castle](#) is an amazing experience on any given day, but during the holidays the wonder becomes a miracle. From Dec. 1-31 (except Dec. 25), the Castle decks the halls lavishly, giving guests the feeling they've stepped back in time and are celebrating the holidays with Hearst's celebrity revelers. For 40 years locals have looked forward to [The Great American Melodrama Presents The Holiday Extravaganza](#), taking place this year Nov. 30- Dec. 31. The evening features a unique holiday performance, including a heartwarming one-act version of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, a hilarious fractured fairy tale opera and a renowned Holiday Vaudeville Revue. Music aficionados can enjoy the annual [Cal Poly Presents A Christmas Celebration](#) taking place Dec. 12. This year the classical musical spectacle will include the premiere of Cal Poly Professor Antonio G. Barata's new Spanish carol and an audience sing-a-long.

If New Year's is more your holiday of choice, [Robert Hall Winery](#) offers a festive, themed mega-party. This holiday guests can experience "New Year's Eve in New Orleans" with a wine reception in the cavern, and a traditional New Orleans Second Line procession to dinner – all paired with Robert Hall Wines, champagne and live music by the Hot Club of SLO. Want a one-of-a-kind holiday tree without all the work? Check out the [Cambria Festival of Trees & Holiday B&B Tour](#) on Dec. 6, which features stunningly decorated trees for charity auction, a delicious buffet with local wines and beers, B&B holiday tours and live jazz.

3. **Big Time Holiday Classics in a Small Town Setting:** Traditionalists yearning to see holiday classics in a more intimate, small town setting or vibe will love the various parades, Santa meet and greets, holiday lighting ceremonies and cultural performances in SLO County.

#### ***Performing Arts***

The "[Miracle on Monterey Street: A Holiday Celebration at the Apple Farm](#)" offers a free, traditional Holiday Open House on Nov. 8, including selfies with Santa, local wine and beer tasting, cookie decorating and crafts. The festivities continue into December with their 25 Days of Christmas including their famous Diva Night sale, holiday crafts, movie nights and live holiday music. For more than three decades locals and visitors have delighted in the [Civic Ballet's Annual Nutcracker performance](#), taking place Dec. 13-14 at the San Luis Obispo Performing Arts Center, featuring the Opera San Luis Obispo Orchestra conducted by Brian Asher Alhadeff. Enjoy SLO Little Theatre's "[A Christmas Story](#)", Dec. 5-21. Based on the 1983 motion picture, the play chronicles the story of 9-year-old Ralphie Parker in his quest to get the perfect gift under the tree for Christmas.

#### ***Parades***

[Paso Robles' 53rd Annual Christmas Light Parade](#) takes place Dec. 6, 2014, celebrating downtown's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary and marks the arrival of Santa Claus. Downtown [San Luis Obispo's 39th Annual Holiday Parade](#) on Dec. 5 invites revelers to have a "Hula Holiday" and enjoy nearly 100 decorative floats, jammin' musical acts, dancers and much more. Morro Bay hosts the free [Lighted Boat Parade](#) Dec. 6, where onlookers can gaze out into the bay at decorated Christmas skiffs, yachts, fishing boats, cutters, sailboats, and kayaks.

#### ***Tree Lighting Ceremonies and Santa Meetups***

[Paso Robles' 28th annual Holiday Lighting Ceremony](#) takes place Nov. 28 and kicks off with Mrs. Santa and other costumed characters throwing the giant light switch to illuminate the town all at once. After, locals are invited to take a candle and songbook and get into the holiday spirit with caroling. Every child who takes a photo with St. Nick at [Santa's House](#) in the historic Mission Plaza on Nov. 28 gets a free candy cane, toy and coloring book. All are invited to take in a traditional [Holiday Lighting Ceremony](#) in Atascadero on Dec 5, where families can sip on hot chocolate and listen to the tunes of live holiday music at the Sunken Gardens Park and City Hall steps. For those who prefer a more coastal Christmas, Pismo Beach is offering a "[Holiday Harmony & Tree Lighting Ceremony](#)" on Dec. 5, including fresh snow, photos with Santa, cookie decorating and bounce houses.

4. **Old-Fashioned Holiday Fun:** Paso Robles – named the [2013 Wine Region of the Year by Wine Enthusiast](#) – lets visitors step back in time with two old-fashioned holiday traditions. The Downtown Paso Robles' [24<sup>th</sup> Annual Teddy Bear Tea](#) on Dec. 20 invites children to bring their favorite teddy bear for tea, storytelling, gingerbread cookie decorating, crafts, and visits with the Snow Queen and

King, Mrs. Claus, Santa Claus, adorable elves and Victorian friends. The free [28<sup>th</sup> Annual Vine Street Victorian Christmas Showcase](#) on Dec. 13 lets guests visit the street's many Victorian homes beautifully decorated and lit for the holidays, featuring entertainment such as choirs, The Grinch, bands, Scrooge, the Snow King and Queen (who grant your wishes) and Santa's Elves. Enjoy a mountain of snow for sliding, visit to Santa Claus' House, carolers and street vendors. [Apple Farm's 13th Annual Holiday Open House](#) on Nov. 8 features refreshments, Santa, carriage rides, cookie decorating and live holiday music.

5. **Quirky Yule Events:** Here in SLO County, we don't take ourselves too seriously, and we'll make sure you don't either. The perfect way to stay fit and have fun is the [Reindeer Run 5K Run/Walk at Mitchell Park](#), a 5K route run/walk featuring humorous holiday costumes and pancakes with Santa. For an irreverent look at the holidays, check out David Sedaris' "[Santaland Diaries](#)," where he chronicles his true-life odd encounters with his fellow man while working as an "elf" in Macy's Santaland display, Dec. 12-21 at SLO Little Theatre.
6. **Ice Skate Under the Warm California Sun:** What could be better than enjoying holiday ice-skating without the frigid limbs and stalled cars? [Madonna Inn](#), an historic landmark hotel featuring wildly imaginative themed rooms, will offer its popular ice skating rink Dec. 19-Jan. 4. During the holidays, the inn also exhibits dazzling decorations and local holiday shopping. Enter a [Winter Wonderland](#) in Downtown Atascadero on Dec. 12, where not only can the family ice skate to their heart's delight, but can play in over 50 tons of fresh snow, spread over five blocks!

#### 7. **Terrific Holiday Packages and Rates:**

The cozy [Apple Farm Inn](#), known for its famous bakery and elaborate holiday décor, is offering a "That's a Wrap" shopping package. Starting at \$189, the package includes one night's stay in a deluxe or specialty room plus \$50 shopping credit for the massive Apple Farm Gift Shop, the largest retailer of gifts and house wares on the Central Coast. Also get a complimentary gift wrapping, champagne or sparkling cider upon arrival, a daily guest wine reception and a \$10 spa credit. Active travelers will enjoy the historic [Paso Robles Inn's "Zipline over Vineyards" package](#). Starting at \$317, the package includes overnight accommodations across the street from the downtown square, plus a 2.5 hour tour of the Santa Margarita Ranch's farm and vineyard, where you can soar over five unique zip lines spanning 4,500 feet nestled at the base of the Santa Lucia mountain range. Finish up the experience with a tasting at the Ancient Peaks Tasting Room.

8. **You Don't Have to Dress Up:** [Paso Roble's Elegant Evening Downtown](#) invites you to dress up if you want to, but as usual, no one will bat an eye if you don't. Taking place Nov. 8, the event invites holiday shoppers to buy from local merchants while enjoying fine hors d'oeuvres and refreshments, holiday décor, dancers and choirs. Shop windows will come to life as Class Act Dance Studio mannequins enact beloved holiday tales. Or check out historic [Arroyo Grande's Elegant Christmas in the Village](#) on Dec. 7, where the shopkeepers dress up in Victorian gear and you come as you are and dance to live music.
9. **Hand-Made Gifts from Local Artisans:** Looking for a local, artisan gift to give? Check out [Claiborne & Churchill Holiday Market & Open House](#) on Dec. 4, where shoppers can taste regional wines while browsing through handcrafted creations. The [Central Coast Craft Fair and Boutique](#) on Nov. 28- 29 in San Luis Obispo features the wares of contemporary and country crafters and artisans from the region and the United States, as well as free cider and cookies. The [Holiday in Mission Plaza](#) takes place Dec. 6-7 at the historic San Luis Obispo de Tolosa Mission Plaza, where for 35 years holiday shoppers have found unique gifts, a carousel, Santa's house, local street faire and live music.

10. **You Can Get Down to Earth:** If you feel like rebelling against the holiday hype and just celebrate in nature, San Luis Obispo County offers amazing outdoor adventures, such as [coastal treks and mountain biking in Montaña de Oro State Park](#), or biking the [Bob Jones Trail](#), a "City to the Sea" bike trail which winds through the forested valley alongside San Luis Obispo Creek towards Avila Beach. [Estero Bluffs](#) slopes from Highway 1 to the Pacific Ocean in Cayucos, while [El Moro Elfin Forest](#) offers a four-mile boardwalk loop through a beautiful and sensitive wildlife habitat in Los Osos. Or go kayaking or [whale watching in Morro Bay](#), where you can spot majestic grey whales and many other creatures such as dolphins, sea lions, sea otters and seabirds.

For more information on planning a trip to San Luis Obispo County, go to [www.VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com](http://www.VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com).

**About Visit San Luis Obispo County:**

Visit San Luis Obispo County is the destination marketing organization for San Luis Obispo County, promoting the area as a preferred tourism destination for regional, national and global visitors through advertising, marketing, public relations and group sales. Highlighted by its culinary, cultural and coastal aspects, San Luis Obispo County is internationally recognized as a premier wine, food and life-style destination on California's Central Coast. Visit San Luis Obispo County has a member base comprised of over 500 tourism industry-related businesses including lodging properties, restaurants, wineries, golf courses and retail stores. We invite you to visit the website at: [www.visitsanluisobispocounty.com](http://www.visitsanluisobispocounty.com) for story ideas or to request a county Visitor's Guide. Additionally, like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/VisitSanLuisObispoCounty](https://facebook.com/VisitSanLuisObispoCounty) and follow us @VisitSLOC on Twitter and Instagram. For more information, please contact us at 805.541.8000 or [kyleej@visitsanluisobispocounty.com](mailto:kyleej@visitsanluisobispocounty.com)