

# Old-fashioned holiday fun in the Gold Country

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November 27, 2019



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*“Chestnuts roasting on an open fire/ Jack Frost nipping at your nose/ Yuletide carols being sung by a choir/ And folks dressed up like Eskimos.”*

“The Christmas Song” could have been describing the foothill Gold Rush towns of Nevada City and Grass Valley as they celebrate their annual holiday events.

Just a two-hour drive from Napa, visitors can step back in time in both historic downtowns. The streets, closed to motorized traffic, are filled with holiday magic. Chestnuts do roast on an open fire, filling the air with their sweet, woody aroma.

You can sip hot cider or mulled wine as you stroll along the booths lining the streets. Hand-crafted jewelry, pottery, candles, candy and other treasures from regional artisans make holiday shopping easy.

Carolers and minstrels in Victorian costumes sing and play, there's a walking Christmas tree and even Father Christmas.

Enjoy a hot meal from a food vendor or relax in one of the many downtown restaurants.

In Nevada City's Victorian Christmas, the gas street lamps glow and white lights twinkle in the fresh, chilly night air as you look up the main street to the Methodist church steeple on the top of the hill.

Nevada City, called "The Queen of the Northern Mines," has the largest and best preserved historical downtown district in the California Gold Country; the entire downtown district has been designated as a national historic landmark.

This thriving and bustling small-town sparkles during its annual and much loved event, as locals dress up in Victorian costumes to sing carols and young musicians serenade in small ensembles of violins, flute and bass.

In addition to the special booths, the downtown offers interesting shops, restaurants and wine tasting, as merchants keep their doors open for the festivities.

**Dates:** Sundays, 1:30 to 6 p.m., Dec. 8, 15, 22 and Wednesdays, 5-9 p.m., Dec. 11 and 18, rain or shine.

The entire historical district of Nevada City is a smoke-free zone. For more information about places to stay and parking, go to [nevadacitychamber.com](http://nevadacitychamber.com).

### **Grass Valley's Cornish Christmas:**

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In the nearby city of Grass Valley, their 52nd annual Cornish Christmas celebrates the history of the Cornish miners who came during the gold rush and stayed on to work in the successful underground Empire and North Star mines.

The city has continued to thrive after the mines closed in the 1950s and has been recognized as one of California's 'certified Main Street' communities. Each Friday night during the holidays, it bustles with music, food, booths offering hand-made gifts, jugglers, magicians and lots of holiday fun.

You can sample a Cornish pastie, which the miners used to take down into the mines. The recipe has been handed down since the 1800s and the warm meat pie makes a tasty dinner on a chilly night.

The Cornish Carol Choir performs traditional carols at 6 and 7 p.m. each Friday. Some members trace their ancestry back to the original Cornish Miners.

### **Dates**

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Friday evenings, Nov. 29 and Dec. 6, 13 and 20, 5-9 p.m., rain or shine.

Cornish Carol Choir performs on the steps of the historic Union Building on Mill Street. The entire historical district of Grass Valley is a smoke-free zone.

For more information go to [www.downtowngrassvalley.com](http://www.downtowngrassvalley.com) or [www.grassvalleychamber.com](http://www.grassvalleychamber.com)

### **More fun options for your visit**

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In addition to the Cornish and Victorian Christmas festivities, visit the Empire Mine State Park in Grass Valley, which during its 106 years of operation, produced 5.8 million ounces of gold. Walk through the mine yard, peer down a mine shaft, stroll through the beautiful grounds and visit the mine owner's cottage, decorated with vintage decorations. [www.empiremine.org](http://www.empiremine.org).

Sugar Bowl is just 45 minutes away; Squaw Valley, an hour and 15 minutes.

Or taste wine from one of the many wine-tasting locations, sample some beer from five craft breweries or wander through ten historic museums. There are also many restaurants, antique shops, theater and music venues.

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