

City Sidewalks

Nine Cleveland-centric ways to entertain your guests (and get them out of the house) during all that holiday season downtime when you're not opening gifts, eating gut-busting meals or watching "A Christmas Story" for the 3,000th time.

by **Tori Woods**



Based upon his famous quip that "Guests, like fish, begin to smell after three days," we're guessing Ben Franklin did not enjoy visits from the in-laws. Perhaps the holidays weren't very happy for our bespectacled forefather. But this year, yours can be a little easier on the nerves. What to do with the guests when cabin fever hits its peak? Show off our city, while earning a reprieve from the grind of being a perfect host. If you're not feeling too Scrooged out at this point, you might even join in the festivities.

1. WinterShow

Whimsical gingerbread houses, decorations and floral pieces of art make Cleveland Botanical Garden's annual WinterShow a welcome sight during the snowy season. Wow your out-of-town guests at the country's oldest urban garden center, located in the heart of University Circle.

This year's WinterShow theme, "Gingerbread Dreams," will cover the classic senses and spices of the season. Parents can indulge a little nostalgia, while they

Cleveland Botanical Garden's WinterShow warms the Circle with gingerbread and holiday-themed activities.

make new memories with their kids.

A gingerbread house competition, featuring creative submissions from local chefs, restaurants

and bakers will be part of the festivities, and a larger-than-life gingerbread house will be constructed in the front lobby.

Holiday-themed activities, crafts and stories for children will complement the good old-fashioned bonanza of decorations. The café will offer hot chocolate and other winter treats, and the Garden Store will supplement its inventory of books, vases and jewelry with holiday ornaments, toys and other innovative gifts.

Should your guests desire a wintery wonderland stroll, the gardens will be open; the snow-covered architectural elements in many of the gardens, such as The Western Reserve Herb Society Garden, are enchanting. WinterShow runs Nov. 24 through Dec. 31. (216) 721-1600, www.cbgbgarden.org

2. Tobogganing

If your family has an adventurous spirit, send them zooming down the toboggan chutes at The Chalet in the Cleve-

[Holiday Home & Garden]

land Metroparks Mill Stream Run Reservation. Located off Valley Parkway between state Routes 42 and 82 in Strongsville, the two 1,000-foot refrigerated ice chutes open (even without snow on the ground) the day after Thanksgiving and close at the end of February. The adjacent lodge has two toasty fireplaces and tasty snacks, perfect for a reprieve from the cold. *Call for hours of operation; (440) 572-9990, www.clemetparks.com*

3. The Cleveland Orchestra

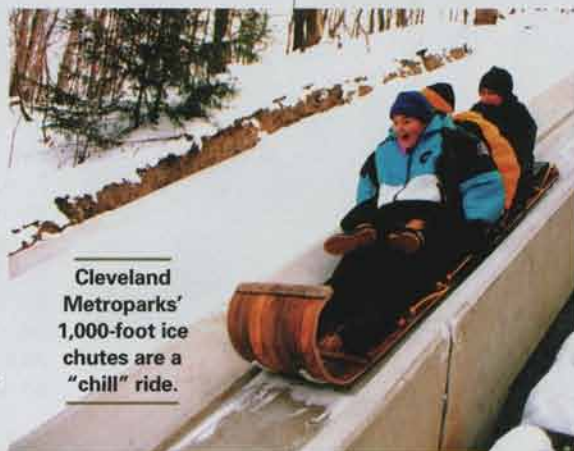
We never get tired of bragging about The Cleveland Orchestra, one of the best in the world. Taking out-of-town guests to see the orchestra at any time is a memorable experience, but seeing Severance Hall dressed up for the holiday while hearing favorite seasonal tunes is a double-shot of holiday spirit.

The UBS Holiday Festival at Severance Hall features several selections of seasonal music and classics, performed by local choruses and The Cleveland Orchestra. These shows are opportunities to see the Cleveland State University Chorale, the Cleveland Orchestra's Children's Chorale, the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus and other local groups. With nine weekend performances from Dec. 15 through 17 and Dec. 22 through 24, there are many chances to check out the concerts.

CASEY BATULE

On Dec. 19 and 20, the Cleveland Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra Chamber Chorus and soloists will present "A Baroque Christmas," including Bach's *Magnificat*, the Christmas portion of Handel's *Messiah*, and the rousing Hallelujah Chorus.

The Cleveland Orchestra also reaches out to the youngsters, offering programs sure to delight the little ones. The Musical Rainbow Series, which introduces kids to classical music with the aid of orchestra musicians, includes three holiday programs. "Music of Chanukah" will be presented Dec. 12 and 16, and "All About Kwanzaa" will be Dec. 13. "A Christmas Brass Quintet" is set for Dec. 14 and 16. (216) 231-1111, www.clevelandorchestra.com



Cleveland Metroparks' 1,000-foot ice chutes are a "chill" ride.

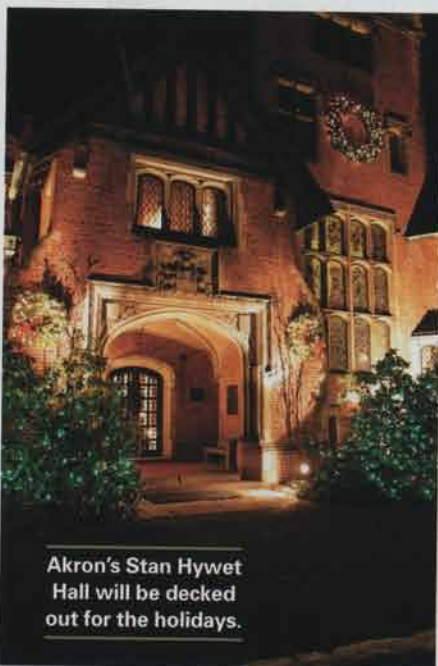
4. The "A Christmas Story" house

Though we'd suggest everyone watch "A Christmas Story" at least once every December, we have

an alternative to keeping the famous holiday flick on an endless loop: Visiting the house featured in the movie. At press time, Californian Brian Jones had big plans for the Tremont house at 3159 W. 11th St. that was featured in the famous holiday flick, working to restore it and fill it with movie memorabilia before a scheduled Nov. 25 grand opening. (216) 255-6651, www.achristmasstoryhouse.com.

5. Family Day at the Maltz

The Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage, a one-year-old addition to the local museum scene, offers year-round activities, special exhibits and a permanent collection that tells the story of the city's Jewish community through films, interactive displays, unique artifacts, oral histories and art. Your guests will love exploring the place Dec. 25, when the museum offers special programming from 1 to 4 p.m. Visitors can enjoy Chinese food favorites such as egg rolls and fortune cookies and check out short films celebrating Jewish culture, as well as take part in crafts, games, sing-alongs and stories sure to make family day fun for kids and grown-ups alike. (216) 593-0575, www.maltzjewishmuseum.org



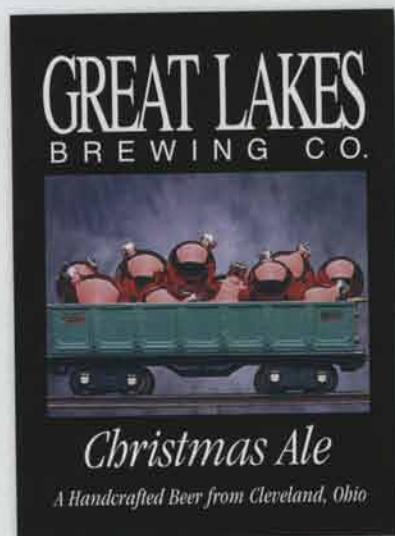
Akron's Stan Hywet Hall will be decked out for the holidays.

6. Deck the Hall

A wealth of holiday decorations will transform Akron's Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens, giving visitors a taste of what it was like to celebrate Christmas with industrialist F.A. Seiberling's family when they called the sprawling Tudor mansion home during the first half of the 20th century. The grounds will be strung with twinkling lights, the Carriage House Museum Store will be open for guests to purchase a souvenir (or a last-minute hostess gift) and hot chocolate, cookies and holiday treats will be served in the café. Stan Hywet's halls will be decked Nov. 4 through 26, Dec. 8 through 23 and Dec. 26 through 30. (330) 836-5533, www.stanhywet.org

7. "A Christmas Carol"

Charles Dickens' classic Christmas tale of Scrooge, Tiny Tim and the whole ghostly gang has delighted readers since its publication in 1843. The book became a play, a natural fit on the stage, and the Great Lakes Theater Festival has wonderfully brought it to life for the better part of the last two decades — rooting it firmly in the collective Cleveland Christmas tradition. The finale of the Great Lakes Theater Festival's season, the show is performed annually at the Ohio Theatre. This year, it runs Nov. 24 through Dec. 23, including matinees and evening performances, and all children older than 2 are welcome to attend. Even your most humbug guests might enjoy this Christmas present. (216) 241-5490, www.greatlaketheater.org



8. Great Lakes Brewing Co.

Locals know the holidays have arrived when Great Lakes Christmas Ale hits store shelves. The delicious, robust beer, made with seasonal spices, says Christmas to many Clevelanders in a way eggnog never could. Why not share the holiday beer, er, cheer, with your guests?

Great Lakes Brewing Co.'s meals are wonderfully hearty and the beer choices run deep. And for an extra exploration into the workings of a brewery, why not send your guests on a tour? Great Lakes Brewery offers public brewery tours, available on the hour Fridays between 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. and Saturdays between 1 p.m. and 9 p.m. These will be available throughout the year, but the holidays are an especially tasty time to sample because Christmas Ale will be on tap. After your guests have been shown around and learned about the history and the

beer, there will be ample time for toasting. (216) 771-4404, www.greatlakesbrewing.com

9. Children's New Year's "Eve"

Little visitors deserve some fun that's all their own. Although most kids can't stay awake until midnight to watch the ball drop, The Children's Museum of Cleveland has a replacement that's just as festive.

From 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Dec. 31, the whole family is welcome to count down to "midnight." (OK, it's really noon, but go with us on this one.) Loads of food and child-friendly activities will be on hand, and if the kids aren't too pooped after partying, take them around the museum and check out the great exhibits. Best of all, they'll probably be ready to go to sleep nice and early, so you can party with the big kids. (216) 791-7114, www.clevelandchildrensmuseum.org ■