City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

November 10, 2026

Contact:
Ryan J. Railsback
Acting Public Information Officer
RRailsback@RiversideCA.gov
(951) 231-5820

The Festival of Lights Returns November 21st for its 34th Season

The annual switch-on ceremony features Santa, fireworks, Gavin DeGraw, and the perfect start to holiday experiences in downtown Riverside for all

Riverside, CA – The 34th annual Mission Inn Hotel & Spa Festival of Lights begins Saturday, November 21, 2026, bringing millions of holiday lights, family activities and seasonal entertainment to downtown Riverside's Arts and Culture District.



In partnership with the Mission Inn Hotel and Spa, Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce, and Riverside Arts Council, the switch-on ceremony begins at 5 p.m. at Orange Street and Mission Inn Avenue. Visitors are encouraged to arrive early for a celebration featuring Santa Clause, fireworks, and live entertainment from recording artist and singer-songwriter, Gavin DeGraw. Downtown festivities continue through December 31st with closures on Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.

"The Mission Inn and Festival of Lights are central to Riverside's identity, bringing history to life, supporting downtown businesses, and creating lasting family memories," said Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson. "We welcome the Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation as the Inn's new owners and look forward to preserving its legacy while continuing the traditions and hospitality that make Riverside so special, even more so during the holiday season."

Inside the Mission Inn will feature Lights and Delights Tours, Holiday Market, Festival of Lights Store, Build-A-Bear Workshop, VIP Santa Photo, Christmas Carolers, and much more. Families can enjoy "Breakfast with Santa" on Saturday and Sunday mornings starting November 22nd through December 20th, and can also visit Santa Claus and take a photo on Main Street between Mission Inn and University avenues Thursday through Sundays after 5 p.m.

"The Festival of Lights is about bringing people together, spending time with family and loved ones, and creating memories that endure across generations. As stewards of The Mission Inn, Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation is so excited and is very honored to join with the City of

Riverside in welcoming the community and celebrating this cherished holiday tradition," said Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation Chairwoman Lynn Valbuena.

Main Street will welcome visitors with illuminated tree canopies and daily food vendors, creating a festive setting for an evening stroll. Beginning November 27th, special programming Thursday through Sunday will include community performances at the Benjamin Franklin Stage at Main and Ninth streets, along with artists selling unique holiday gifts along Main Street.

"The Festival of Lights is one of Riverside's most cherished traditions and a powerful driver of community pride, tourism, and economic activity throughout our region," stated Nicholas Adcock, President and CEO of the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce. "The Chamber is proud to partner in this annual celebration that brings families, visitors, and businesses together while showcasing the very best of Riverside and the spirit of our community."

Daily food vendors include The Gingerbread Shop, Robertson's Roasted Nuts, Bubba's Jerky, Kettle Tyme, Barrett's Tamales, and JC Concessions, offering a variety of crowd favorites such as baked goods, sweet treats, specialty nuts, jerky, funnel cakes, kettle corn, hot chocolate, and churros.

New this year, "Holiday Magic at Candy Lane" brings a candy-themed, ticketed Festival of Lights experience to Albert S. White Park, located at 3936 Chestnut Street. The attraction runs Thursday through Sunday, November 27th through December 27th excluding Christmas Day, with additional daily programming December 21–24. Visitors can also explore an immersive Holiday Light Maze, an illuminated Holiday Photo Trail and a Holiday Games Village featuring oversized lawn games and holiday activities. The Snowball Arena offers snow-free winter fun with soft snowballs and interactive challenges, while the Snowfall Lounge provides a festive place to relax and enjoy seasonal refreshments.

The Holiday Art Trail will showcase original illuminated installations commissioned by local artists. An Artisan Marketplace will feature handcrafted goods from local artists and makers, while food and beverage vendors will offer food, wine, hot chocolate, hot apple cider and other seasonal treats.

"Merry Arts Walk" returns and will bring additional holiday creativity downtown on December 3rd and December 17th with art vendors, entertainment, and arts and cultural activities throughout the Festival of Lights event footprint.

For event schedules, attraction details, ticket pricing, and updates, visit www.RiversideCA.gov/FOL.