

Wonderland of Lights

THE FRESHLY-RESTORED ¹¹_{SEP} **HARRISON COUNTY COURTHOUSE** pulsates nightly with 100,000 lights synched to sounds of the holidays during Marshall's annual **Wonderland of Lights Festival**, which lasts November 21 through December 31 (closed Dec. 24). The light-and-sound shows run on the hour and half-hour (6 to 9:30 p.m.) with the 7 p.m. performance segueing into a 45-minute live show called "Holiday Traditions."

During the 40-day festival the courthouse square boasts an outdoor ice skating rink, Texas-sized snow globe, and an 11-foot-high rideable rocking horse. New this year is the family-friendly Wonderland Village. It features kids activities and animated elves in the North Pole Play Land, as well as a trackless train ride, inflatable mountain, and obstacle course called the Polar Challenge. The annual lighted Christmas Parade on December 1 brings 100 entries downtown, ranging from lighted marching bands to lighted antique tractors. The festival also includes a 5-K run, local celebrity cooking demonstrations, and food vendors.

Thousands of more lights blanket business facades along North Washington Avenue, which leads to the square. Musicians perform along the street, and the Main Street Program hosts a free Santa's workshop, where kids build wooden trains, decorate cookies, and chat with Santa.

Enjoy Wonderland of Lights goings-on from atop a British double-decker bus or via a clippity-clop ride in a horse-drawn carriage. Or view the action from the comfort of your car as part of a four-mile driving tour through downtown and nearby neighborhoods where residents decorate homes and lawns with lighted holiday displays. The downtown festival concludes on

New Year's Eve with a countdown to midnight and ball drop, plus more live musical performances.

For updated schedules, fees, and driving tour maps, contact the Marshall Convention and Visitors Bureau, 301 N. Washington Ave.; 903/702-7777 (www.visitmarshalltexas.org).

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RESOURCE:

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