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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MAKE WISCONSIN YOUR HOME-AWAY-FROM-HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS**

**MADISON, Wis. (Nov. 21, 2012)** – Looking to shake up your normal holiday routine? Escape the hectic stress of the season? Are you searching for fun things to do with visiting family and friends? Then look no further than Wisconsin. Whether it's a spa getaway to melt away the stress or a family vacation to celebrate the season, Wisconsin has everything you'll need to start new traditions and keep everyone happy and busy this holiday. Check out the following locations to find the true meaning of "jolly."

**SPA LA LA LA LA... A RESORT HOLIDAY AWAY**

Nothing says "happy holidays" like relaxing pool-side, spa-side or in the comfort of your own private suite. Christmas and New Year's Eve at a Wisconsin resort still come with food, family time and winter activities, but the greatest gift of all is that someone else is planning it for you.

For a true holiday experience, head to the [Grand Geneva Resort & Spa](#) for [Christmas in the Country](#). At this six-week holiday event spectacular, activities include a Christmas musical, a festival of trees, breakfast with Santa and trolley tours that chauffeur you around the resort to admire the twinkling lights. And there's literally something going on every day, so pick and choose your ideal amount of holiday cheer. Come Christmas Day, start a new tradition with brunch at the resort. Grand Geneva's award winning [Geneva Chophouse](#) restaurant will serve up all your Christmas favorites, right down to the cranberry sauce.



*Christmas in the Country  
Photo courtesy of the Grand Geneva Resort & Spa*

After you're pleasantly stuffed, get outside for some fresh air. The [Mountain Top Ski Resort](#) at Grand Geneva has 18 downhill slopes, snowboarding and winding cross-country ski trails. Not an expert? No problem. Lessons are available for all skill levels.

We get it, that's a lot of family time – which means you need some alone time at the spa. Grand Geneva's [Well Spa](#) offers something for both women and men, like massage treatments,

facials, and an indoor climbing wall and tennis. And the Well Spa even offers in-room massages. Now that's what we call a "Merry Christmas."

The Grand Geneva isn't the only Wisconsin resort offering holiday fun. [The Abbey Resort](#) in Fontana, [Heidel House and Spa](#) in Green Lake, [Lake Lawn Resort](#) in Delavan, [The Osthoff Resort](#) in Elkhart Lake and [The American Club Resort](#) in Kohler all offer seasonal activities, spas, fabulous dining and relaxing accommodations.

### **O LITTLE TOWN OF WATERPARKS**

Spending time with family is an important part of what the holiday season is all about – we know that. But no one ever said quality family time couldn't be spent torpedoing down a waterslide in the [Wisconsin Dells](#). Head to one of the area's many waterparks for a merry and splashtastic getaway.

Stay at an indoor waterpark resort like the [Wilderness](#) or [Kalahari](#) for a mixture of extreme fun and Christmas activities. The Wilderness Resort offers visits from Santa and the elves, horse drawn wagon rides and other fun holiday activities. Elves will even deliver presents to your room.

All that swimming will work up quite an appetite, so enjoy a tremendous [Christmas buffet](#) at the Kalahari with all your favorites, not to mention some elaborate decorations. Yes, that's what a stress-free Christmas tastes like, and it's delicious.

Venture outdoors for a day in the Dells and visit a Christmas tree farm. [Smokey Hollow Farm](#) in Poynette, only about 30-miles from the Wisconsin Dells, sells Christmas trees and offers free horse-drawn wagon rides. But the real draw here is the World's Tallest Living Horse, Big Jake. At 6' 10" this 11-year-old Belgian Draft Horse was named the World's Tallest Living Horse in 2010 and appears in the 2011 Guinness Book of World Records. Take a tour of the barn to look at Big Jake, or should we say, look up.

The Dells also offers more winter fun outdoors, like skiing or snowboarding at nearby [Cascade Mountain](#), [Christmas Mountain](#) and [Devils' Head Resort](#). Use an inner tube for something other than floating on a lazy river and give snow tubing a try. And we can't forget ice skating at the [Lake Delton](#) ice arena.

### **AS THE SHOPPERS RUSH HOME WITH THEIR TREASURES**

After you check off the final name from your shopping list, it's time to do some shopping for someone else just as important – yourself! Take a trip to the [Fox Cities](#) area, known as "Wisconsin's Shopping Place." Make it a girl's weekend and check out the locally owned boutiques, vibrant downtown and amazing restaurants.

Start off buying local. Hit up College Avenue in [downtown Appleton](#) where your shopping options range from boutique clothing stores to music stores and everything in between. Visit the downtowns of Neenah and Menasha for unique galleries and locally owned shops. Insider tip – check out the gift shop from the [Bergstrom-Mahler Museum](#) of glass for a truly unforgettable gift. And of course, you can't miss the [Fox River Mall](#).

Charming stores with lights and sounds of the holidays make the Fox Cities alive with cheer. End your evening at [The Hearthstone Historic House Museum](#) in Appleton. Their Victorian Christmas Around the World event is held every Friday evening through December and features dozens of trees decorated with the holiday traditions of different countries. Now say Feliz

Navidad (Spanish), Frohe Weihnachten (German), Buon Natale (Italian), and God Jul (Swedish) three times fast.

Shopping is exhausting! Wind down at the [Copper Leaf Boutique Hotel and Spa](#). Their girl's night out package includes champagne and spa services. Or, check in at the [Holiday Inn](#) in Appleton. The holiday shopper package provides transportation to and from the Fox River Mall plus a complimentary, fully stocked gift-wrapping room. Happy holidays to you.

### **WHERE THE TREETOPS GLISTEN**

The holidays offer you the chance to escape from reality, if only for a little bit. Rent a cabin in Wisconsin's Northwoods and celebrate sans-cell phones, relaxing around a crackling fire with hot cocoa inside a snuggie.

For a "home away from home," check out [Lakewoods Resort](#) in Cable. Sitting on Lake Namekagon, you have your pick of lodge rooms, condos and lake homes. And let's face it, you came to Northern Wisconsin for a reason: that fresh, white, powdery snow. Voted the No. 1 Snowmobile Resort in the Nation by *SnowGoer Magazine*, Lakewoods has trails for miles (try more than 600 of them). The resort offers a full-service snowmobile shop and rentals too, so forget about mechanical issues and focus your time persuading grandma to "give it a try."

If you prefer silent sports, take a trip to Minocqua's [Winter Park](#). It's the ultimate winter playground with cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, tubing and ice skating. A cross-country ski school and ski rentals make it family-friendly. But 45 miles of trails make it challenging for true skiers. And we can't forget the best part of all – the tea house in the woods. This little Northwoods cabin, which offers coffee, tea and hot chocolate, was added last winter and is the true definition of oasis. It's warm and unexpected, so when you find it you feel like you just stumbled on a secret – some say it's like walking into a fairy tale.



*Tea house in the woods at Winter Park  
Photo courtesy of Winter Park*

### **CITY SIDEWALKS DRESSED IN HOLIDAY STYLE**

Wisconsin's largest city, [Milwaukee](#), offers romantic holiday experiences. Twinkling lights and falling snowflakes have you feeling like the star of your own Christmas romance movie.

Get dressed in your holiday best for Milwaukee's fine performing arts. Christmas favorites run through December, like the [Milwaukee Ballet's](#) "Nutcracker," [The Rep's](#) "A Christmas Carol" and the [Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra's](#) "Doc the Halls." Or take a trip back to the 1950's with [Next Act Theatre's](#) charming radio play performance of "It's a Wonderful Life."

After a show, head to Red Arrow Park for some ice skating. Lace up and glide hand in hand on the ice, enjoying the lights, music and city views. If you're not one for skating, a horse drawn carriage ride is just as romantic. And if you see any mistletoe, embrace it.

For accommodations, check out the brand new [Hilton Garden Inn](#) downtown. It's located in the completely restored 1886 Loyalty Building, a National Historic Landmark. You'll be sold the moment you walk into the five-story grand atrium and in heaven when you walk into your room with 14-foot-tall ceilings. Romance packages include champagne and breakfast for two.

Milwaukee's deeply rooted German past comes alive during the holiday season. Walk down the cobblestone street of Old World Third Street to [Mader's Restaurant](#) for traditional German faire and you'll be transformed to 1800s Germany. Both Mader's and [Karl Ratzsch's](#) downtown offer Christmas Day brunch with all your favorites from roasted turkey to chicken schnitzel. Das good.



*Interior atrium of the new Hilton Garden Inn in Milwaukee  
Photo courtesy of the Hilton Garden Inn*

### **SHOULD OLD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT**

Why sit at home and watch the ball drop on New Year's Eve when you can watch a giant carp or cheese ring in the New Year? When the holiday season comes to a close in Wisconsin, we like to usher in the New Year in our own free-spirited and down-to-earth style.

First off, we like to drop things. Like at the annual [Droppin' of the Carp](#) in Prairie du Chien. At the stroke of midnight on December 31, spectators watch as a 30-pound frozen carp, "Lucky," takes a plunge from 100 feet in the air to welcome in the New Year. Beforehand, Lucky sits atop a throne where visitors can kiss the carp (yes, you read that right, they kiss it) for good luck. This festival also includes food, music, a bon fire and a carp piñata.

If fish isn't your taste, try cheese, we're the Dairy State after all. Head to the Plymouth Arts Center on New Year's Eve for the [Droppin' of the Cheese](#). Count down to midnight in true Wisconsin-style as a giant 80-pound decorated cheese wedge drops from the sky.

Come New Year's Day, the celebration continues in [Sheboygan](#) with the Polar Bear Swim. More than 400 fearless (and possibly insane) swimmers charge the icy waters of Lake Michigan to celebrate the New Year. Take the frozen plunge or stay warm and watch the hilarity from the shore. Music, a brat fry and refreshments keep this festival going through the afternoon.

Travelers looking for year-round Wisconsin getaway ideas, travel planning, events and free guides can discover their own fun at [TravelWisconsin.com](#). Choose to "Like" us at [Facebook.com/TravelWisconsin](#) or follow along on Twitter at [Twitter.com/TravelWI](#). And check the Travel Wisconsin Snow Conditions Report to get the latest info on conditions for trails and ski areas.

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