

Light displays make Christmas holidays merry and bright

TALES FROM THE ROAD



ARLENE & ROBIN KARPAN

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly affected many of our plans this Christmas. One bright spot is drive-through

light displays where we can safely experience the magic of the holiday season from our vehicles.

Here are a few options from across the Prairies, keeping in mind that anything could be altered or cancelled on short notice due to changing restrictions.

In Saskatoon, the BHP Enchanted Forest Holiday Light Tour draws more than 75,000 visitors each year. Outstanding animated exhibits stretch along a driving route through Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park. Now in its 22nd year, the event is an important fundraiser

for the Saskatoon Zoo Foundation and the City Hospital Foundation. More information can be found at www.enchanted-forest.org/.

More than one million lights illuminate the popular themes, with Noah's Ark being the largest. New this year is the Tunnel of Lights that honours essential service providers. The show runs nightly until Jan. 8.

This is the fourth year for Light Up the Village at the Heritage Village at the Western Development Museum in North Battleford. Until Jan. 9, visitors can drive through the village to enjoy buildings, trees, and sculptures decked out in holiday style. The \$10 per vehicle admission helps raise funds to maintain the Heritage Village.

Hosted by Weyburn Tourism, River Park Sparkles is open for drive-through until Jan. 2. The campground and park beside the Souris River are transformed with twinkling lights and myriad holiday exhibits.

Woodlawn Park on the southern end of Estevan is hosting its annual Festival of Lights again this year. Some 30 displays are lit up around the park, which will be open until Jan. 8.

For noteworthy spots in many Saskatchewan communities, head to www.sparkletour.ca. The crowd-sourced interactive map shows you locations so you can plan your route to drive by those you want to see.

In Alberta, Sylvan Lake is having its self-guided Twinkle Tour around the community until Jan. 1. Consult the town's website for addresses of residences and local businesses that feature Christmas lights and displays at www.sylvan-lake.ca.

Winter Wonder Forest in Edmonton's Rainbow Valley Campground runs until Jan. 3. Dancing lights and spectacular decorations along with ice sculptures and carved wood sculptures are nestled throughout the forest. Admission is by advanced online tickets at www.winterwonderforest.ca. Proceeds support True Start Foundations and other agencies.

Candy Cane Lane features elaborate holiday decorations in Edmonton's Crestwood community. It's free to drive along 148th Street NW between 99 and 92 Avenue until Jan. 1.



The BHP Enchanted Forest Holiday Light Tour draws more than 75,000 visitors a year in Saskatoon. | ROBIN AND ARLENE KARPAN PHOTOS

Magic of Lights is a drive-through experience using more than a million LED bulbs at the Castrol Raceway in Alberta's Leduc County. Until Jan. 2, a two-kilometre route winds through sparkling displays and digital animations depicting holiday themes. It will be closed certain nights for private functions. More information can be found at www.castrolraceway.com.

In Calgary, the Lions Festival of Lights bills itself as the largest free drive-by Christmas lights show in the city. It's held until Jan. 8 on 14th Street NW, north of 24 Avenue, and is decked out with 650,000 bulbs on 25,000 strings and almost four kilometres of power cords.

Christmas Lights at Spruce Meadows is running this year as a

drive-through only event. There are no admission charges to drive along the two-km route featuring decorated buildings, sparkling trees, and other exhibits throughout the community and equestrian centre. It is open Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays until Jan. 3 with some black-out days. More information can be found at www.sprucemeadows.com.

In Manitoba, many public Christmas events have been cancelled or put on hold pending government approval. One that is operating is Canad Inns Winter Wonderland at Winnipeg's Red River Exhibition Park, open until Jan. 2. This is Manitoba's largest drive-through light show with more than one million bulbs used in 26 displays along

the 2.5-km driving route. Strict COVID protocols are in place. More information can be found at www.redriverex.com/canad-inns-winter-wonderland/.

Another option is to put together your own driving tour. Winnipeg's Global News has created a crowd-sourced map of the best decorated places in the city, which can be found at bit.ly/3p1312c. The old downtown of Selkirk is illuminated

with 130,000 strings of lights on 40 buildings.

A famous landmark complete with an impressive light and sound show in Brandon is Crosslights Christmas Display. More information can be found at www.crosslights.ca.

Arlene and Robin Karpan are well-travelled writers based in Saskatoon. Contact: travel@producer.com.



This is the fourth year for the Western Development Museum's Light Up the Village display in North Battleford, Sask. | WDM PHOTO

Concerns about COVID vaccine

HEALTH CLINIC



CLARE ROWSON, MD



GETTY IMAGES

Q. Some of my friends and I are a little nervous about taking the COVID vaccination. Can you reassure us that it is safe?

A. It seems you are having a case of vaccine hesitancy. This is simply being somewhat wary of the COVID vaccine because it is new and you are worried about its safety.

Another group of people have total vaccine refusal. There is little we can do to convince them to take this vaccine. They are mostly the same people who never want the annual flu shot or to get their babies immunized.

A recent Pew Research poll of Americans found 39 percent of the respondents would definitely or probably not get the jab, though about half of this group were willing to reconsider. Twenty-one percent declared they did not intend to get vaccinated and were pretty certain that more information wouldn't change their mind.

Here are some of the main concerns:

The vaccine research has been rushed and it hasn't been properly tested.

Vaccine research on similar vaccines, which are RNA-based, has been going on for at least seven years. All the approved vaccines have undergone Phase 1, 2 and 3 trials. Phase 3 trials last about three months and involve between 30,000 and 40,000 people.

The COVID vaccine will alter my DNA and so might have long-term side effects.

RNA is not the same as DNA and there is no possible way it can alter your genetic code. Humans are DNA based. Most side effects of any vaccines occur between a few minutes and a few weeks.

Could I get an allergic reaction?

Yes, but it is very rare. Any vaccine can lead to allergies, which is why you have to stay around for 15

minutes after getting the shot. Check the list of ingredients to see if you have a known allergy to any of the components. You probably should not get vaccinated if you have such severe allergies that you need to carry an EpiPen with you at all times.

What are the other side effects?
The most common are soreness, swelling and redness at the injection site. Some people will get a slight headache and low fever for up to two days. You may also get some mild nausea and muscle and joint aches. Many people have no ill effects.

Who else should not take the vaccine?

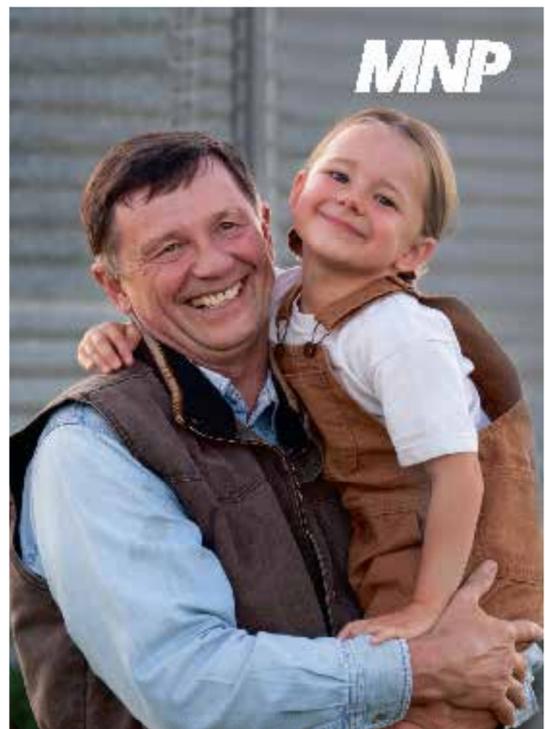
The vaccines so far have not been tested for safety in children under the age of 16. Pregnant women or women who are breastfeeding should also be excluded.

Can I choose which vaccine to take?

You will probably not have a choice. It will depend on which vaccine is being distributed to your area at the time you are called on.

The bottom line is, the vaccines are far safer than getting COVID-19 and you will not only protect yourself, but you will help other people and allow us all to get back to a normal life as soon as possible.

Clare Rowson is a retired medical doctor in Belleville, Ont. Contact: health@producer.com.



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