🎄 The ABQ Mom December Bucket List

Every can't-miss holiday night in Albuquerque & Rio Rancho — 2026

🚨 Book These First — They Sell Out

- **Fri, Nov 27 · 8:00am sharp** — **Luminaria Tour tickets drop.** The Christmas Eve bus tour through Old Town is **free** (just a $1.50 processing fee), only 1,000 tickets, online only — they're usually gone within the hour. Set an alarm!
- **River of Lights** — timed-entry tickets; the popular December nights sell out. Budget move: the **Value Nights ($15 adults / $10 kids)** cluster in the first week — Nov 29 & Dec 1–4.
- **Trolley of Lights** (Dec 13–23) and the **Polar Express in Durango** — book both ahead.

✨ The Big Nights, In Order

- **Sat, Nov 28 – Jan 3** — **River of Lights**, ABQ BioPark Botanic Garden, 5–10pm nightly (last entry 8pm). $21 adults / $12 kids 3–12 / 2 & under free. Closed Dec

24, 25, 31 & Jan 1. Free Park & Ride from the Zoo!

- **Nov 27 – Dec 24** — **Winter Wonderland** at EXPO New Mexico — walk-through lights on 12 select nights.
- **Mon, Nov 30** — **Low Sensory Night** at River of Lights (quieter, more inclusive 💛) — plus **Under the Sea with Santa** at the Aquarium (also Dec 1–2 & 7–9).
- **Thu, Dec 3 · 5–9pm** — **Nob Hill Shop & Stroll** — Central Ave shops, lights, and treats.
- **Fri, Dec 4 · 5–9pm** — **Old Town Holiday Stroll** — free! Tree lighting at 6pm in Plaza Don Luis.
- **Sat, Dec 5 · 5:15pm** — **Twinkle Light Parade**, Nob Hill — free. Central closes at 3pm, so arrive early or take the free Park & Ride from Lomas & University. *Same night, Rio Rancho:* **Winterfest & Parade**, Campus Park, 6pm — pick your parade!
- **Sun, Dec 13** — **Corrales Starlight Parade** (start time TBA — check before you go).
- **Dec 13–23 · 6 & 8pm** — **Trolley of Lights**, ABQ Trolley Co. from Hotel Albuquerque — Old Town, Rio Grande Blvd & Los Ranchos, ~75–90 minutes.
- **Thu, Dec 24 · Christmas Eve** — **Luminaria night.** Walk Old Town Plaza and the Country Club / Huning Castle streets for free, ride the **ABQ RIDE Luminaria Tour** (buses 5:30–6:15pm from the Convention Center — ticket from Nov 27!), or join the **Lights & Luminaria Bike Tour** (5:30, 6:45 & 8pm).

🚗 Worth the Drive

- **Thu, Dec 17** — **Pablo's Holiday Express**, Sky Railway, Lamy Depot — our family rides this day! Holiday trains run select dates all December.
- **Thu, Dec 24 · sundown** — **Canyon Road Farolito Walk**, Santa Fe — free and pure magic. Dress warm, park downtown, walk in.
- **December** — **The Polar Express**, Durango — our family's trip is Sun, Dec 6. Pajamas encouraged. 🚂

💡 Mom Tips

- River of Lights lines are shortest about 20 minutes *after* each entry hour — don't join the top-of-the-hour rush.
    - Twinkle Light Parade with littles: the Park & Ride beats the parking hunt every time.
    - Christmas Eve luminarias: go early, drive slowly, and dim your headlights where neighbors ask.
    - One more time for the people in the back: **Luminaria Tour tickets, Fri Nov 27, 8:00am, online only.** ⏰

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Dates & prices checked Nov 22, 2026 — events can change, so confirm before you go.