

Cape May is a Victorian delight during the Christmas season

In 1976, Cape May was designated a National Historic Landmark City and for good reason. It's the best preserved Victorian resort in the nation, with some 600 historic homes, many converted to charming Bed & Breakfast accommodations.

Though once considered exclusively a summer resort, it is now a popular destination year-round. And one of the best times to visit is during the Christmas season, from the end of November to January 3. The historic district, hotels and homes are lavishly decorated for the season and at night the city is a fairyland of lights.

The ideal way to view the downtown and beachfront areas is by shank's mare, namely, walking. Much can

be seen within a few short blocks. Though a daytrip from Rossmoor is certainly feasible (Cape May is a two-and-one-half to three-hour drive) at least a one-night stay can add immeasurably to the fun. Hotels and B&Bs can be expensive but cheaper accommodations are available in towns north of the city.

The city offers many house tours and other events during the season. Here are a few of them:

• **Christmas Tour**—Visitors tour the town in a trolley, then visit the Emlen Physick Estate, an authentically decorated Victorian Mansion, for a guided tour. This is followed by a tour of the Cape May Designer Show House. Cost is \$25, children \$20. Offered Monday through Thursday to the end of December.

• **Holiday Lights Trolley Rides**. Guides talk about Victorian Christmas traditions, lead sing-alongs and play Christmas music. Tour is \$8 and lasts about one half hour. Nightly except on Dec. 5, 10, 12, 19, 24 and 25.

• **Breakfast with Santa**—A breakfast buffet at the Inn of Cape May, a century old Victorian landmark. Children visit with Santa and hear a Christmas story. Treats are

given to the kids. Cost is \$15 for adults and \$10 for children three to twelve. Saturdays, Dec. 5 and 12 at 10 a.m.

• **Christmas Candlelight House Tours**. These are self-guided tours of seasonally-decorated homes, hotels and churches (at least 15) plus Christmas caroling, strolling musicians, hospitality centers with warm beverages and home-baked goodies, admission to the Emlen Physick Estate and to "An Old-fashioned Christmas: Holiday Traditions through the Years" exhibit. There is continuous shuttle service on heated trolleys. Cost is \$25, \$20 for children 3 to 12. Saturday, Dec. 5, 12 and 19 from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Reserve early. Call **800-275-4278** or order on line at www.capemaymac.org

These are only a few of the many activities at Cape May during the season. For more information, check the website at www.capemaymac.org or call **609-884-5404**.

To reach Cape May from Rossmoor, take Applegarth Road to Route 33 East. Follow Route 33 East to the Garden State Parkway South to Cape May. It's about 140 miles.

—Gene Horan



The Queen Victoria Inn on Ocean Avenue.



Colorful Christmas lights welcome guests to the Queen Victoria.



The Chafront, which opened in 1876, is Cape May's oldest hotel.



The windows in shops on the mall reflect the joy of the season.



A view from the "strand," the preferred Victorian term for the beach.



The Henry Sawyer Inn at the corner of Columbia Ave. and Franklin St.