



Christmas on the Pecos among top NM events

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CARLSBAD — The annual Christmas on the Pecos has once again helped put New Mexico on the map as a must attend landmark event.

According to the American Bus Association, the Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce Christmas on the Pecos event - shared with private homeowners living along the Pecos River - was among three top New Mexico annual events. The other two were the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta and Fiestas de Santa Fe. All three events joined the ranks of the Top 100 Events in North America for 2010.

"We've gotten this award for the last seven years," said Lisa Boeke, tourism director and convention sales. "Many actually thought the event would only last a couple of years and here it is, our 18th season."

"You have to have the cooperation of the private homeowners to make this a success. The event benefits everyone - the whole community," she added.

Christmas on the Pecos was voted the outstanding event for the State of New Mexico in 2007 and voted by the Tourism Association of New Mexico as Outstanding 2009 Event of the Year. According to the bus association, groups love the truly unique holiday evening as patrons take a ride down the Pecos River through a wonderland of Christmas lights and themes.

Each year, the chamber tries to add something new and interesting in hopes of enticing locals who might feel once they've gone, there's no need to go again. The past two years the chamber had the Flying J Wranglers, who performed a Christmas concert with a barbecue dinner.

"This year we are having Sail with Santa," Boeke said, adding the event will take place on only two Sundays during the season.

Santa Tom Myers will depart with boat riders on the Noelle. Personal cameras will be allowed on these trips for photos with Santa, however, there will be a professional photo shoot with Santa available at the Pecos River Village.

The bus association Top 100 Events in North America is an annual compendium of the best events for group travel in the United States and Canada. Each spring, a committee of member motor coach and tour operators selects the Top 100 Events for the subsequent year.

The list is unveiled in September and winners are chosen from hundreds of celebrations, festivals, fairs and commemorative events. Many of the events are nominated by state tourism offices and local and regional convention and visitor bureaus.

Now in its 28th year, the Top 100 Events receive worldwide attention via the media - television, radio and print - such as USA Today and CNN. The bus association distributes some 10,000 copies of the Top 100 Events in North America magazine, featuring the winners, to all of its members and to thousands of travelers worldwide.

"The real news here is that New Mexico is being recognized as a potential magnet for tourism dollars, at a time when re-energizing domestic tourism is so important to our spirit and our

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economy," said Michael Cerletti, secretary of the New Mexico Tourism Department, in a press release. "This is an important boost in visibility among professional tour planners."

Reservations for Christmas on the Pecos begin Thursday, Oct. 15. The boat rides begin Thanksgiving night and run through New Year's Eve, every night except Christmas Eve. Boat departures begin at 5:30 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and at 5:15 p.m. on Friday and Saturday nights.

Ticket pricing has changed this year, Boeke explained. Sunday through Thursday prices are \$12.50 per person. Friday and Saturday prices are \$17.50 per person. Children under age 2 ride free. Children ages 2-11 are \$12.50 per person Friday and Saturday and \$7.50 per person Sunday through Thursday.

The George Washington operates on Friday and Saturday and takes riders on a half trip to the island and back. Ticket prices are \$7 for the George Washington for both adults and children.

Those wishing to book boat rides can call the ticket office at (575) 628-0952 or book online at www.christmasonthepecos.com. Individual reservations can be taken by phone starting Nov. 1. Advance reservations are highly recommended, especially for weekend departures.

Sundays and Mondays are Eddy County resident days and prices are \$7.50 per person. Residents must come into the chamber office, at the corner of Greene and Canal streets, to book reservations and show proof of residency.

All tickets are non-refundable and there are no discounts given.

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