



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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Award-Winning Riverside Festival of Lights to Celebrate 25th Anniversary

Festive holiday celebration kicks off Nov. 24, continues through Jan. 6 in historic downtown Riverside

RiversideFestivalofLights.com

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The world-renowned Riverside Festival of Lights, celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, kicks off Friday, Nov. 24 with a spectacular fireworks display, military flyovers and a special concert hosted by Duane and Kelly Roberts, Keepers of The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa.

The switch-on ceremony, produced by The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa, the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce and the City of Riverside, starts at 4:30 p.m. Friday, with fireworks following roughly an hour later. The event draws people from all over Southern California to the corner of Orange Street and Mission Inn Avenue, in the shadow of the historic hotel.

“The Festival of Lights is an honored tradition for generations of Riversiders,” Mayor Rusty Bailey said. “With its focus on family and the importance of spending the holidays with the people you care about, the Festival of Lights is a much-loved event in Riverside, and deservedly so.”

More than 500,000 people visit Riverside during the iconic six-week festival to gaze upon the historic Mission Inn swathed in more than 5 million holiday lights, filled with 400 animatronic figures and cheered with holiday music. More than 75,000 people attend the annual switch-on ceremony, held each year on the Friday evening after Thanksgiving.

After a welcome and brief remarks from local dignitaries, the Roberts family leads a countdown to the switch-on, typically at about 5:30 p.m. The millions of holiday lights spread out around the Mission Inn and the surrounding area are switched on, and the downtown sky erupts in a massive fireworks show.

In recognition of the 25th anniversary of the Festival of Lights, the Riverside community is honoring Duane and Kelly Roberts by entering a float in the 2018 Rose Parade. The theme of this year’s parade is “Making a Difference,” and the float is designed to thank the Roberts family for the difference they have made in Riverside by creating the Festival of Lights and growing it over the years.

“Kelly and Duane Roberts have invested an immense amount of their own time, financial resources and personal attention to making the Festival of Lights such a beacon for people around the world,” Mayor Pro Tem Jim Perry said. “The amount of goodwill and holiday cheer they have brought to Riverside during the past quarter-century cannot be overstated.”

Visitors to the Festival of Lights will be able to play a role in decorating the float by visiting a booth on the Main Street Mall. For a suggested donation, visitors can dedicate a flower holder to someone who has made a difference. That flower holder, and the flowers that are added to it during the float decorations in late December, will be part of the float as it cruises down Colorado Boulevard on January 1, 2018. The booth will be located at Main Street and Mission Inn Avenue the day of the switch-on ceremony, and afterwards at City Hall, 10th and Main streets, through Dec. 17.

The Festival of Lights now attracts people of all ages from across the country after being honored as America's Best Holiday Festival (2015) and America's Best Public Lights Display (2014) by the readers of USA TODAY.

The Festival includes several blocks of holiday cheer, including rides, live entertainment, holiday food and shopping. Attractions include Timeless Train Rides along a unique route down the Main Street mall; a Century Wheel, featuring 15 gondolas and more than 100,000 lights; a 36-animal carousel; a Magical Moments with Santa Claus booth at 9th and Main streets; and more.

For information about the price and location of parking, [click here](#).

To locate attractions and their hours of operation, check out our [Interactive Map](#).

To find out what's happening on any given day, click on our [Calendar of Events](#).

Reporters and editors, [click here](#) for photos and video of past Festival of Lights.