



MISSION SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO TO HOST FIRST-EVER CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING
KICKING OFF NEW DECEMBER HOLIDAY PROGRAMMING

*Orange County's Only Mission Announces New Tree Lighting Experience "Capistrano Lights 2018"
December 1 through January 6, 2019.*

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, Calif. (September 18, 2018) - Mission San Juan Capistrano will celebrate this holiday season by holding its first-ever Christmas Tree Lighting program as part its long-standing annual Christmas at the Mission event. The December 1st event will usher in more than 37 days of tree lighting and holiday experiences for the public, ending January 6, 2019.

The Mission's annual holiday program held every year on the first Saturday of December is a tradition which began years ago as a community open-house. Up until this year, Mission San Juan Capistrano never had its own official Christmas Tree lighting program. In 2018 as a result of an estate gift, the Mission San Juan Capistrano was able to revamp its program and purchase its own 30-foot high (faux) fir Christmas tree which will be installed in the Ruins of the Great Stone Church (circa 1812).

About the December 1st Event:

The December 1st event begins at 5:30 pm and requires a separate ticket purchased in advance by November 30th. Upon arrival to the event, ticketed guests will be given their own (faux) candle to place at the base of the Ruins of the Great Stone Church which is also the site of the new Christmas tree.

The new Tree Lighting Program begins with a 7 pm special reading of "*The First Christmas*" by Mission Pastor, Monsignor. J. Michael McKiernan. The Program includes holiday carols, music and a light program at 7:15 pm and again at 7:45 pm.

As part of the annual tradition, the Mission event features live performances in its Central Courtyard that include Dickens-era carolers, a local orchestra, and mariachis playing "Merry-achi music of the season." On the food front, there will be savory tamales offered by San Juan Capistrano's Las Golondrinas restaurant as well as hot cocoa and sweet treats provided by 3:16 Bakery Shop, both SJC local businesses offering snacks for a nominal price.

Children can enjoy the chance to decorate a holiday cookie with Mrs. Claus and take selfies with Father Christmas in the historic Sala. Guests have the option to write holiday messages on a Mission postcard to be mailed to service men and women who are away from their families during the holiday season.

Mechelle Lawrence Adams, Executive Director of the Mission says, "The spirit of the holidays in San Juan Capistrano always begins with the City's official tree lighting at the Historic Town Center Park. The new Mission experience will build upon that tradition and serve to remind the world that Christmas in Orange County, California began right here. Our event is a means of bringing the community and history together for a wonderful shared experience. Our Foundation leaders embrace the chance to offer 37 days of programming at the Mission for people of all faith traditions to enjoy."

How to Get a Ticket to the December 1st Christmas at the Mission Event:

The Mission will host up to 2,500 attendees at this event due to safety and capacity limits. Therefore, advance tickets are required and encouraged as the event is anticipated to be sold out.

Tickets for the Saturday “Christmas at the Mission” will be exclusively sold online at www.missionsjc.com from November 1 through November 30 only.

Members of the Mission must also secure a “free” ticket during this time as there are a limited number of free member tickets as well. Membership Guest passes and other coupons are not applicable to this event. Even members in the Mission Preservation Society must secure their free member ticket online as capacity will be limited.

Capistrano Lights 2018 – 36 More Days of Holiday Programming:

For those wanting to visit the Mission during the holidays yet not able to attend the December 1st event, the Mission will also host Capistrano Lights 2018: a free nightly tree lighting at 5 pm. Guests who are already on the Mission grounds prior to 5 pm may enjoy the tree’s 15 minute nightly music and light program at 5 pm sharp, free as part of their visit that day; no additional tickets are required. The Mission’s new nightly lighting and music program will be held from December 2 - January 6, 2019. Guests must be on the grounds before closing at 5 pm. After the Mission closes, guests can take their complementary Downtown San Juan Capistrano map and discover the historic downtown heritage tourism district with plenty of holiday shopping, dining, and wine tasting all season long.

Throughout December weekends, families will also have the chance to meet and take “selfies with Santa and/or Mrs. Claus” in the historic Sala building on December 8, 9, 15, 16, and 22 - free with their admission or membership.

To purchase tickets for the December 1st Christmas at the Mission event, or to find out more about Capistrano Lights and all of the Mission’s December programming visit www.missionsjc.com/events/2018-12/.

ABOUT MISSION SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO

Located in San Juan Capistrano’s Historic Downtown just four miles from the stunning coastal cliffs of Dana Point in Orange County, Mission San Juan Capistrano is an 18th century world-renown California mission known for its swallows, gardens, and historic Serra Chapel. The Mission’s impressive grounds and remarkable architecture are a compelling setting in which visitors can learn about the region’s cultural roots, take inspiration from its spiritual significance, engage with local traditions, or explore both permanent and traveling exhibits of original artifacts that bring its history into the present.

Founded on November 1, 1776 by Saint Junípero Serra, who was canonized as a saint in 2015, Mission San Juan Capistrano is known as the “Jewel of the Missions” because of its Great Stone Church ruins. The seventh of nine missions founded by Serra (of a total 21 California missions established by Spain), it is Orange County’s only mission and is considered the birthplace of the region.

To learn more about Mission San Juan Capistrano visit <https://www.missionsjc.com>.

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