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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
December 1, 2025

## **Holiday Traditions of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries are Alive at *A Colonial Christmas* at Colonial Michilimackinac**

MACKINAW CITY, MICH. — The sun sets on the Straits of Mackinac. Fires crackle in stone hearths. The smell of treats and warm beverages fill the crisp winter air. Laughter, conversation, and more can be heard emanating from inside the palisaded walls. It's A Colonial Christmas Saturday, December 13, at Colonial Michilimackinac in Mackinaw City.

From 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. (last admission at 6:30 p.m.) the holiday traditions of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries are alive for all to explore. As visitors enter through the Colonial Michilimackinac Visitor's Center under the Mackinac Bridge, lanterns will light the path to the palisaded walls, as the historic residents of Michilimackinac invite you into their homes to celebrate.

"A Colonial Christmas is a chance to dig deeper into the lives of the historic residents of Michilimackinac and explore even more of this history of the Straits of Mackinac," said Mackinac State Historic Parks director Steve Brisson. "We hope our visitors find it to be an enriching and fun event that will help us all appreciate the history of holiday traditions."

Upon entering the Visitor's Center, travelers will be welcomed by holiday music, Christmas tree, and a vast selection of holiday goods. Upon exiting the Visitor's Center, lanterns will light the path to the fort. Upon entering the fort, the smell of treats and the fires burning in the fireplaces indicate the buildings to enter. You are now on your own to explore at your own pace.

At the Merchant's House you'll find coriander cookies and seats around the fire, where you'll learn about Réveillon, the French tradition of eating a night-time meal after Midnight Mass, including many desserts. In the Northwest Rowhouse the French celebration of New Year will also be observed, as it played a major part of the holiday festivities. Here you can sample the King's Cake, but be on the lookout for the 'bean' that will make you king for the day.

In the Barracks you'll learn of British and German military traditions, as the soldiers may have celebrated the holidays with feasting, storytelling, and games. Enjoy a treat and learn about the tradition of the Christmas pie. British holiday traditions will continue in the British Trader's House, as 18<sup>th</sup> century stories will be told while guests sample comfit. Ghost stories will be told in the Soldier's House, which was a popular holiday tradition.

Over at the Commanding Officer's House, Anishnaabek winter traditions will be told, as guests will learn that winter was a time of storytelling, and the traditions of feasting and charity at winter solstice will be explored. Some winter activities may also be explored, such as trapping, beadwork, and other art.

Wassailing will take place in the Priest's House, where hot wassail will be available as you make your way into Ste. Anne's Church, which will be dressed for Christmas Mass and you'll learn about the first Christmas at Mackinac.

The celebration continues throughout other areas of the fort, as popcorn will be available on the porch of the Guardhouse. Over in the Southwest Rowhouse you're encouraged to join in card and dice games and the general merriment of games at the holidays.

Finally, down in the *Treasures from the Sand* exhibit, you'll learn how the soldiers and fur traders decorated their houses for the holidays and have a chance to make your very own decoration to help decorate your own house.

Admission to A Colonial Christmas is \$15 per adult, \$10 children ages 5-12, and free for children 4 and under and Mackinac Associates members. Tickets are [available now by clicking here](#). Tickets will also be available upon arrival. Last admission is at 6:30 p.m. Call 231-436-4100 for more information.

Visitors are encouraged to dress warmly, as the buildings at Colonial Michilimackinac are not insulated for the cold weather. Restrooms will be available in the South Southwest Rowhouse.

Much of Colonial Michilimackinac has been reconstructed based on archaeological excavations, including its 13 buildings and structures, many of which will be open featuring special activities during A Colonial Christmas. The fort and fur trading village was founded by the French in 1715 and is depicted today as it was in the 1770s when occupied by the British. Colonial Michilimackinac will open for the 2024 season on May 8.

A downloadable version of this release can be found [here](#). More information can be found at [mackinacparks.com](http://mackinacparks.com). Additional pictures are available upon request.

*Mackinac State Historic Parks, a family of living history museums and parks in northern Michigan's Straits of Mackinac, is an agency within the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Its sites—which are accredited by the American Alliance of Museums—include Fort Mackinac, the Biddle House, The Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum, Historic Downtown Mackinac, and Mackinac Island State Park on Mackinac Island, and Colonial Michilimackinac, Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse, Historic Mill Creek Discovery Park and Michilimackinac State Park in Mackinaw City. Mackinac State Historic Parks is governed by the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, established in 1895 to protect, preserve and present the parks' rich historic and natural resources for the education and recreation of future generations. Visitor information is available at (231) 436-4100 or online at [www.mackinacparks.com](http://www.mackinacparks.com).*

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