

There's No Place like Burlington for the Holidays! History comes alive!

Family and tradition are two of the most important elements of our holiday celebrations, and Burlington is rich in both family fun and local heritage. **Bronte Creek Provincial Park** and **Ireland House** are just two attractions that combine history and family-centred activities all year long, but the message is somehow more poignant during Christmas.

Bronte Creek

There are winter activities every day at Bronte Creek over the holidays, with the exception of Christmas day when the park is closed.

Homestead Christmas

How was Christmas celebrated in Victorian times? Was it very different from our modern traditions? Visitors can discover what a Victorian Christmas was like by a visit to Spruce Farm. It's surprising to discover that, while décor and the home comforts of the Victorians may have been different, the basics were the same – they played games, shared good food and music and enjoyed the closeness of family, just as we do. A visit here is a visit to another time and guests get the chance to dress in Victorian costumes and children can sit on the knee of a Victorian Santa, without the commercial bustle of a visit to the Santa in the Mall. There are crafts and stories too, and light refreshments. Homestead Christmas activities are offered this Saturday and Sunday, plus December 20-23rd from

10am -3pm. Call 905-827-6911 ext. 228 to make a reservation.

Howl in the New Year

If you are looking for a way to usher in the 2011 in a unique way, Bronte Creek has just what you want. **Howl n'Hikes**, on Dec. 31st gives families an opportunity to share the wonders of the park at this momentous time of the year, and to gather around a blazing bonfire for an early countdown. Guides will take you on an evening hike and teach you how to howl like a coyote. Chances are pretty good that one of the park's coyotes will howl back. Then at 8:30, there's a New Year's countdown around the bonfire. There's no fee for this alcohol-free event.

The Skating Rink

The weather has been perfect for ice formation, and the rink at Bronte Creek is just begging to be skated upon. The rink will offer extended hours on New Years Eve, 9:30am - 12:30am and the Park Store will serve up hot food and non-alcoholic beverages. The store also offers skate rentals for both children and adults.

The Play Barn and Farm Animals

Calves and piglets, ducks and chickens – they're settled down indoors in their stalls for the winter, but visitors can still watch them through the viewing windows. The play barn is open daily, with slides and climbing activities for children ten and under. The hardier grown-up cows are out in the pen, sporting a thick coat and enjoying the fresh air.

It's good natural fun for the holidays – not a TV screen in sight.

Enjoy the Park in Winter – Skiing, Geo-caching, Hiking

The park is still well populated with animals in the winter – including white-tailed deer, red fox, coyote and raccoon.

Birds you may see in the park include the blue jay, blackbird, red-tailed hawk and several kinds of sparrows, as well as the occasional pileated and red-headed woodpecker, scarlet tanager, turkey vulture and both snowy and short-eared owls. There's a tobogganing hill, and the trails are perfect for cross country skiing. The Park has a heated change area and sheltered picnic areas. So pull on your parka, get out your heavy mittens and head out to the park for a real life adventure this season. For more information visit the [website](#).

Ireland House

One family left their imprint on Burlington over many years and you can witness the family story of the Irelands with a visit to their well preserved Georgian home just off Guelph Line.

Santa

On Sunday, Dec 19, enjoy a visit to Santa's Cabin to see Mr. and Mrs. Claus, have a tour of the Ireland House and visit the Candy Shop. There will be crafts to do, baking and treats in the traditional kitchen and lots of history to digest. If you've seen enough of Santa, the house itself is a

joy to see, with each room decorated for a Christmas holiday and the table set with the best china.

Christmas Camp Party

On Dec 22, Ireland House hosts a day camp for kids from 5 to 10 years of age, from 10 am to 3 pm. It's a bargain - \$15 for one child, and \$10 each for siblings. Children will bake in the open hearth oven and decorate Christmas cookies, make a historic toy, and enjoy holiday themed activities along with the interpreters and Santa.

Gift Shop

In the gift shop in the Interpretive Centre at Ireland House, you'll find some really different Christmas items, - books, Victorian style ornaments and toys.

Become a Member

Membership brings you free admission, discounts on programs and events and a personal investment in this heritage project. By becoming a member, you become part of this important initiative to preserve the story of the Ireland family and of early Burlington history. Visit their [website](#) for more information.

There's so many ways to keep warm in Burlington this holiday season, both indoors and outdoors. Take the family out for a bit of fresh air and exercise, and get to know your home town in the process.

For the holidays, you can't beat home, sweet home.

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