

Holiday season in the South means ice skating at the NASCAR Hall of Fame.



KIDS

Spare the Gifts, Spoil the Child

For a holiday treat that requires no wrapping, park your family in uptown

TREASURE EXPERIENCES, NOT THINGS—an adage that's not so easy to instill in a 6-year-old with a three-page wish list for Santa. But for those of us vowing to try something different while our children are out of school for the holidays, this uptown itinerary should help. Take a break from the shopping and soirees, and revel in family togetherness. It's a gift you won't want to return.

Fuel up with a proper grilled cheese from Orrman's Cheese Shop at the **7th Street Public Market**, then walk four blocks to **Founder's Hall** for a free holiday show that's been thrilling

kids—and annoying adjacent shopkeepers—since 1999. Every hour on the hour, animatronic conductor Leonard Bearstein and his 17-piece orchestra of robotic bears unleash a roster of Yuletide tunes. With Christmas classics on repeat in your head, make your way to the **NASCAR Hall of Fame Plaza** for some spins around the outdoor ice-skating rink. (Tip: It's cash only at the rink; avoid the line by buying tickets online.)

You and your brood will undoubtedly have a few wipeout-induced boo-boos by now—best to heal them with hot chocolate. Not surprisingly, the stuff at **Bar Cocoa** in the

OVER IT ←

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KHAKIS

The "uptown uniform" for men has run its course.



EXAMS IN JANUARY

It's time the state let CMS students take finals before winter break.



GOOGLE FIBER CONSTRUCTION

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SECOND RESTAURANTS

Some of our favorite chefs are thinking about expanding—hurry up!



CENTER CITY RETAIL

Especially a place a gal can buy—well, anything. (But seriously, how about a cosmetics store?)

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A stack of giant ornaments welcome passersby in Wells Fargo Plaza uptown.



lobby of the Ritz-Carlton is some of the best in the city. When you're sufficiently sugared, wander through the hotel's lobby and eye the dazzling decorations, which range from a 10-foot-tall gingerbread house to three giant trees made entirely of French macarons.

From here, don your mittens and scarves and carol your way to the first *Christkindlmarkt* in **Romare Bearden Park**, a pop-up village of wooden shops draped in twinkling garland. Dinner's at **Rooster's Wood-Fired Kitchen**, where the kids can feast on mac-and-peas and duck confit while you savor fire-roasted beets and hanger steak. From here, beaucoup options exist for evening entertainment. At the McColl Family Theatre, Children's Theatre of Charlotte puts on nightly performances of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: The Musical* (through Dec. 23), a musical adaptation of the beloved children's book. Also consider: *Nutcracker* ballet at the Belk Theater (Dec. 3-23), *The Hot Sardines: Holiday Stomp* (Dec. 5) at the McGlohon Theater, and the **Trans-Siberian Orchestra** at Time Warner Cable Arena (Dec. 8). But there's only one holiday spectacle that's been warming the hearts of Charlotteans young and old for 62 years and counting: the Knight Theater's *Singing Christmas Tree* (Dec. 10-11). Because nothing screams "Joy to the World!" quite like a chorus of nearly 90 members stacked on the risers of a 32-foot-high wooden tree. —Alison Miller