

local holiday events

Christmas festivals: There may not be one in your town, but if not, it stands to reason there's probably one nearby. In November and December, small and mid-size towns across the country host downtown Christmas festivals, with local stores and organizations participating to encourage folks to shop and spend some time outside the big box stores.

Look for deals

Most shops offer deals or coupons as part of a Christmas festival event, and it's a great time to get some shopping done while taking advantage of the sales. With so much foot traffic hitting the area at one time, shops are usually fighting it out for attention — which is good news for shoppers. Also check with the local Chamber of Commerce to see if there might be a local coupon book for an event.

Make memories

Along with getting some shopping done, these festivals often also feature caroling, Christmas tree decorating contests, and sometimes even horse-drawn carriage rides. If the weather cooperates, it can be a great way to get into the Christmas spirit and have a fun and affordable night out. Be sure to see if there's a schedule available for live music and events, so you can plan accordingly.

Don't forget dinner

With shops trying to lure in customers around holiday events, local restaurants often get in on the festivities, as well. Some will have special meals and promotions around the holiday season, so you might even be able to change things up with a Christmas-themed dinner to go along with all the shopping.

Remember to explore

Having everyone out around downtown means local shops are often putting their best foot forward, so it's a great opportunity to try out some stores or restaurants you've never visited — or perhaps even noticed — before. Make it a point to visit at least one place you've never been, just to see what you might be missing.



spread the word

KNOW A GREAT LOCAL BUSINESS? DON'T BE SILENT ABOUT IT. SMALL BUSINESSES NEED YOUR HELP, SO OPEN UP AND HELP SPREAD THE WORD ANY TIME YOU'RE IMPRESSED BY A LOCALLY OWNED SHOP.

In many ways, it's the small things that make the best local shops stand out. They might greet their frequent customers by name, stock products that no other stores offer, donate time and money to local causes and provide a more unique shopping experience that chain stores can't match.

Look for these things when you're out shopping, and let your friends know when you find them. You'll be helping your friends out and doing your part to keep your favorite businesses

open and thriving.

Social Media

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest have opened new doors for spreading the word about your favorite businesses. In fact, online is where a lot of word-of-mouth marketing happens these days as friends share and photograph their everyday shopping trips — for better or worse.

If you run across a local business that's doing a great job, snap a picture or write a post about it. A few good words on social media can have a positive impact for the "shop local" movement in your community.

It Matters

Studies have shown that buyers trust recommendations from their friends and family far more than they

do messages from strangers. Your opinion carries a lot of weight with the people you know, so you can play a big role in helping people avoid the bad shops and flock to the good ones.

So this Christmas, don't do your shopping in a communications vacuum. Look for the best products and experiences in your community this holiday season and share them with the people around you.

Friends and business owners will thank you.