

## How Visits With Santa Are Changing Amid Covid-19



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This Christmas season seems like it really must be extra merrier in the wake of a tough 2020, as traditions such as a visit to Santa will be different this year. Yet, on a little joyous note, organizers are applying technology, public health and safety mandates, and creativity to put on festivities that aim to still provide some tides of joy and cheer.

A rise in virtual Santa visits is flying, as AirBnb has introduced a “partnership” with the jolly fellow through Internet interactions through its [Online Experiences](#). Companies, too, have been going into the holiday business of bringing Santa to screens in homes.



Yet in Rhode Island, Santa will be venturing by riverboat instead of rail. Through December, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council will pivot its Blackstone Valley Polar Express to a riverboat excursion, with a 20-minute-long loop along Central Falls Landing.

Known as “Search for Santa,” the cruise will operate at a third of its capacity (15 people max) but still will offer some socially-distanced time with the man in question. “Several elements fans of The Polar Express are familiar with are a part of this new event,” said James Toomey, the council’s marketing director. “We just like to joke that the mode of transportation to the North Pole changed.”

While having passengers stay socially distanced while waiting to board, the council has partnered with Rhode Island’s health department to provide hand sanitizers and masks. The boat gets cleaned and sanitized between each trip. Onboard activities will encompass a storytime and a scavenger hunt, and Santa will be giving the passenger a warm greeting from the riverbank.

