

## Planetarium Show Will Explore Holiday Traditions

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With the holidays approaching, many of us will begin draping our homes with strings of twinkling lights. But have you ever wondered where this tradition came from?

The University of Arizona's Flandrau Science Center will answer that question at its annual "'Tis the Season" holiday planetarium show, opening this Friday.

The special program explores the origin of winter traditions from different cultures around the world including significant lighting practices, such as hanging Christmas lights, lighting luminarias or menorahs, and burning the Yule log.

"Lots of cultures look to lights this time of year to remind them better times are to come and to light up the dark," said Michael Magee, planetarium and observatory director at Flandrau, which has produced its holiday show for about 15 years. "We look at a number of different cultures and how they celebrate this time of year."

The show focuses on the time period from Thanksgiving through the winter solstice and into January and looks at ways a variety of cultures – including Christian, Jewish, Pagan, Nordic, Roman, Egyptian and Hopi – celebrate the season, Magee said.

The program also includes a discussion of possible scientific explanations for the biblical story about the appearance of a star over Bethlehem, including theories that the star may have been a comet, supernova or planet conjunction.

Following the presentation of slides, video and special effects, there will be a live discussion about winter constellations and their significance.

During what can be a stressful season, the planetarium show offers a chance to stop and stargaze, Magee said.

"People are out Christmas shopping or are out and about going to dinners and they're looking for other activities," he said. "This reminds them of what's going on in the sky and the significance of the holiday season."

Admission to the planetarium is \$1 for CatCard holders. Prices for the general public are \$7.50 for adults and \$5 for children ages 4 to 9. Children under 4 are free.

The schedule for the 'Tis the Season show is:

Nov. 28-Jan. 4

Fridays at 6:30 p.m.

Saturdays at 2:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Sundays at 2:30 p.m.

Additional special holiday showings will take place:

Nov. 28 at 2:30 p.m.

Dec. 26 at 2:30 p.m.

Dec. 29-31 at 2:30 p.m.

Jan. 2 at 2:30 p.m.

Flandrau is closed on Christmas and New Year's Day.

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