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30 ways to celebrate a merry month

The holiday season begins in late November and runs through New Year's Day. It is marked by various gatherings of friends and family, decadent foods, cocktails, traveling, and gift exchanges. The National Retail Federation says consumers will spend an average of $967 during the holiday season. However, the joy of the holidays also is about all of the memorable experiences that tend to make the season so beloved.

With that in mind, here are 30 ways to make the holiday season that much more merry.

1. Visit with an elderly or housebound neighbor and share conversation.

2. Donate gently used toys to a children's hospital.

3. Research the history of the holiday and share it with people you care about.

4. Make handmade Christmas tree ornaments.

5. Donate money to a charity or other good cause.

6. Encourage ?pay it forward? movements in your community. Start by doing something simple like buying a coffee for a complete stranger.

7. Feed birds facing the cold, winter weather.

8. Take a ride or walk around the neighborhood to look at decorated houses.

9. Make a fire in a fire pit in the yard and toast marshmallows while sipping hot chocolate.

10. Binge watch holiday movies.

11. Attend the concert of a children's choir.

12. Help a friend decorate his or her home.

13. Host a tree-trimming party.

14. Schedule a day for baking cookies.

15. Sing Christmas carols at a nursing home.

16. Put together care packages of items and send them to troops overseas.

17. Share the holidays with a military family whose spouse is in service and can't make it home.

18. Offer to shop for someone who is homebound due to age, a chronic illness or injury.

19. Visit a large city to look at Christmas window displays.

20. Surprise a distant relative with an impromptu visit.

21. Make a new friend and invite him or her to a holiday party for the first time.

22. Babysit a newborn so his or her parents can get errands done or just catch up on rest.

23. Volunteer at a soup kitchen.

24. Share the religious traditions of your holiday with someone of a different faith.

25. If weather permits, go sledding, build a snowman or have a snowball fight.

26. Share favorite memories at family holiday dinners.

27. Remember a deceased loved one with a special tribute.

28. Construct a gingerbread house.

29. Teach someone how to make a cherished family recipe.

30. Shop local!