

Upfront

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas. Which makes sense since the day is three hence from this Skinnie's release. And it's feeling like Christmas, too, with temperatures predicted to dip into the teens, bad news for the olive trees at my farm.

Cold and Christmas are kin in much of the country, but not normally around here. Since 1871, the National Weather Service has diligently tracked climactic conditions throughout the land, and its historical records paint a clear (and comfortable) picture for the Hostess City. Savannah's Christmas Day average high temperature is 61 over the sesqui-century, while the typical low has registered a not-too-bad 42. The highest high was 82, in 2015, and the lowest low, 10, in 1983. The lowest high was 27, also in 1983, which, in addition to being (evidently) a cold winter, included the U.S. invasion of Grenada (seems like a mismatch in retrospect) and the introduction of the Mario Brothers video game (an inflection point in the inculcation of obsessive digital engagement among American youth).

Forget history. Sunday in Savannah – Christmas Day – will be blustery. The anticipated high is 43, with an overnight low of 23, well below freezing. It will be mostly sunny, not a white Christmas, just a chilly one.

There are places where I've lived or travel to often (usually to ski) that I expect to be frosty. You can't say "Burlington" (Vermont), home to my parents for most of the '90s, without "Brrr!" True to form, the home of the UVM Catamounts will see a high of 25 and a low of 15 this year, with the same mostly sunny conditions we'll have here. Sure, 15 is frigid, but it's not distinguishably worse than our 23. But our 23 is exactly the same as Jackson Hole's 23, the likely low in the one-time cowboy town turned wealth sanctuary, where they'll enjoy a mix of snow and clouds to complete the seasonal mood.

One might argue that New York is America's Christmas City, with the Rockettes and the Rockefeller Center tree and department store windows that draw crowds. The Miracle on 34th Street happened right in the middle of Manhattan's Herald Square. This year, there will be little to separate Gotham from Gullah country, weather-wise. It'll dip to 20 there, only 3 degrees cold than in the canyons of Bull Street.

What did Irving Berlin, through the velvety voice of Bing Crosby, say? "The sun is shining, the grass is green; the orange and palm trees sway. There's never been such a day, in Beverly Hills, LA...I'm dreaming of a..." (You know it from here.) Beverly Hills is remaining true to form. It'll be 76 and sunny this year.

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Berlin's lyrics include the line, "I'm longing to be up North," a geographical condition we associate with cold. What's the northernmost city in the U.S.? you ask. Utqiagvik, Alaska, of course! Which reminds us that someone always has it worse than we do. On Christmas Day, it will be dark there, part of a string of 65 straight days without natural light. And it'll be cold, very cold, with a high of minus-10. But that's Alaska...what about the lower-48? Anglet Inlet, Minnesota, is the town with the highest latitude in the contiguous, continental collection. Sorry, Maine. Expect sun in A.I. on the 25th, where it'll reach a balmy 3 by afternoon.

Though we might consider New York as America's Christmas city, doing so is an insult to the true believers. Santa Claus, Indiana...an audacious name-claim for characteristically humble Midwesterners...is to be aptly nippy: 19 at the warmest moment and clinging to its second digit – a bitter 10 – when the sun fades. There are three actual North Poles – New York (18H/9L, partly cloudy), Alaska (-24H/-25L, mostly sunny... it's a dry cold, I'm told) and Colorado (45H/30L, partly sunny...take that, Southeast).

We revere a sacred city in Pennsylvania – Bethlehem – not only because it shares its name with Jesus' birthplace – the "reason for the season," as we say; it's also home to my alma mater (and that of my father), Lehigh University. While not the OG West Bank, whether you're on the north or south side of the Lehigh River, it'll be 25 and sunny, falling to the mid-teens under the guiding stars.

Christmas Cove, Maine. It's a quaint, waterfront town, where the weather is moderated by sea breezes. Expect a high of 29 and low of 19 under Christmas Day sun. Christmas Valley, Oregon, will be warmer than we are – 43 and 30, with the intermittent rain that would make life in the Pacific Northwest as depressing as a pile of discarded needles on a downtown Portland street. Christmas, Florida – would you believe it's an unincorporated area of Orlando? Of course, you would. If you're heading there, bring your fur-lined mouse ears; it's going down to 34.

Garland, Texas. The municipality is named for a hero of the Reconstructionist South, not a lengthy, decorative, evergreen creation. It's near Dallas. And it'll be a few degrees warmer than our city, topping out at 45 and hovering near the freezing point at the coldest point of the day.

Enjoy the holiday and the unseasonably-but-spiritually-appropriate weather. Both will be over in a virtual blink. According to Accuweather, we'll approach 70 by New Year's Eve. Your visiting relatives from Michigan will, for sure, bust out their shorts.

Merry Christmas.



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