

Plans for viewing holiday lights still up in the air? Well . . .

Liz Carey – Correspondent – CHESAPEAKE

If you're decorating for the holidays this year, make sure to string up your Christmas lights with care – somebody may be watching ... from above.

Horizon Flight Center is offering tours to view holiday light displays from the air through Dec. 31 aboard a modern day sleigh – namely a Cessna 172 four-seat aircraft.

"Here is a real opportunity to do something you just don't do every day," said Shane Davis, a pilot with Horizon.

The Holiday Lights Tour begins at Chesapeake Regional Airport and passes over the grand illuminations of Olde Towne Portsmouth and downtown Norfolk, then follows the Elizabeth River for a fly-by of Norfolk Naval Station's ship lights. The tour continues by Norfolk's Botanical Garden, around Cape Henry, with a final turn along the Virginia Beach boardwalk.

"The pilot takes passengers 500 feet over the beach, so they feel like they're touching the lights," said flight school manager Amy Wiegand. "People love the tours – it's a great way to initiate the holidays with your family and to see the lights."

Twinkling lights are beautiful from the ground, and even more magical from Santa's vantage point, Wiegand said.

"You can see the lights from the air, which is a whole different thing to experience," she said.

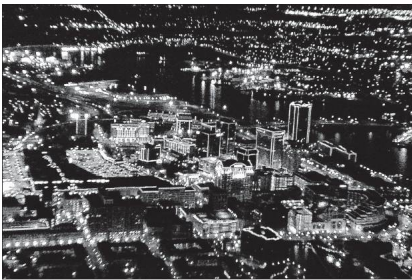
"And not only that, you can see all of Hampton Roads' lights in an hour, whereas driving in a car to see the lights would take much longer, depending on the traffic in the area. You get to see all the special occasion light attractions in the area."

The cost for a flight is \$249 for up to three passengers (pending weight and balance approval) which Wiegand believes is a deal when you take into account the cost of individual tickets to local light displays and shows, not to mention traffic and gas prices. To add to the festive atmosphere, hot chocolate is served upon landing, and a photo is snapped for sharing on social media.

"The cost of having a holiday memory is pretty inexpensive," Wiegand said.

Horizon Flight Center has offered the festive holiday tour annually since the center opened 21 years ago, Wiegand said, and many special memories have been made aboard the flights – including a few marriage proposals.

"It's a cozy, romantic flight," she said, "lit only by the reflection of the city lights and surrounding water



COURTESY PHOTO

Through Dec. 31, Horizon Flight Center in Chesapeake will offer flights to view Hampton Roads area holiday light displays from the air aboard a Cessna 172/G1000.

want to fly?

What: Horizon Holiday Lights Tour

When: Through Dec. 31, tours begin daily at 5 p.m.; must be scheduled in advance

Where: Horizon Flight Center, 2801 Airport Drive

Cost: \$249 per tour, includes up to three passengers

Info: Call 421-9000 or visit www.horizonflightcenter.com/links/holiday-lights-tour/