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The First Night at Old Westbury Gardens includes a tree lighting and tour to see the decorated rooms on Dec. 6, 2014. (Credit: Vince Kish)

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# 5 historic houses where you can celebrate the holidays

By MARJORIE COHEN. Special to amNewYork December 8, 2014

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This holiday season, history comes alive. Step back into time with these five historic houses, built between the 1600s and 1900s, which offer seasonal tours, concerts, craft workshops, scavenger hunts and more, all within an hour and a half from Manhattan.

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## PHILIPSE MANOR HALL

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**House history:** This historic state site is just 15 miles from the city and a block from the Metro-North station. The original building was built around 1682 by Frederick Philipse. In 1776, it was put up for public auction when his grandson, Frederick III, a King of England loyalist, fled the colonies. Over the years it's served as the Yonkers Village Hall and City Hall. Today the historic house museum is open to the public for guided tours year-round.

**Holiday highlights:** Tour the manor, which is currently decorated in 18th-century holiday style (\$5 adults, \$3 students and seniors, free for children under 12; Dec. 9, 11, 13 and 17 from noon to 3 p.m., Dec. 19, 20 and 23 at 7 p.m.)

**Address:** 29 Warburton Ave., Yonkers, New York, 914-965-4027, [parks.ny.gov/historic-sites](http://parks.ny.gov/historic-sites)

*(Credit: Philipse Manor Hall)*

## LYNDHURST



**House history:** Originally built in 1838, this Gothic Revival mansion's best-known inhabitant was Anna Gould, daughter of industrialist Jay Gould, who became the Duchess of Talleyrand-Perigord through her second marriage. She lived at Lyndhurst only three weeks a year but left her unmistakable stamp on the property. "We have all her hats, her clothes, her lingerie -- all by the most famous designers of the time," Lyndhurst Executive Director Howard Zar says.

**Holiday highlights:** Guided tours of the historic house feature an upside-down Christmas tree decorated with 30 of the duchess's designer hats and a display of evening gowns worn by various Gould women in the reception hall (\$18; weekends in December, Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Sundays from 10 a.m.-3 p.m.). Other festivities include "Mr. Dickens Tells a Christmas Carol," a theatrical reading of the classic tale performed throughout the mansion (\$35; Fridays and Saturdays in December at 3 and 7 p.m.) and high tea in the Carriage House tearoom (\$25; Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in December).

**Address:** 635 South Broadway, Tarrytown, New York, 914-631-4481, [lyndhurst.org](http://lyndhurst.org)

*(Credit: Lyndhurst)*

## LOCUST GROVE



House history: Built on a bluff high above the Hudson River in 1850, this Italianate-style home was the summer retreat of painter and inventor Samuel F.B. Morse. When the house became just too expensive to maintain, Morse rented it to the Young family, who eventually bought it and bequeathed it to the state. "Everything is frozen in time with a 15,000-piece collection from the early 1900s," Locust Grove Executive Director Kenneth Snodgrass says.

Holiday highlights: Tour each of the mansion's 25 rooms, which are decorated to reflect a well-known Christmas carol. For example, the front hall is "Deck the Halls," while the billiards room is "Winter Wonderland," complete with reindeer mannequins borrowed from a local department store (\$11 adults, \$6 children, free under 4; weekends in December and also Dec. 26-31, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.). Other festivities include a Holiday House Hunt for Kids, an animal-themed scavenger hunt (\$10 adults, \$8 children, free for children under 4; Dec. 14 and 21 from noon-4 p.m.) and Holiday Sunset Sensations, a

wine and food pairing series (\$32 in advance/\$35 day of; Dec. 11 and 18, 5:30-7:30 p.m.).

Address: 2683 South Rd., Poughkeepsie, New York, 845-454-4500, [lgny.org](http://lgny.org)

*(Credit: Locust Grove)*

## OLD WESTBURYGARDENS



House history: The 70-room mansion built in 1906 for the Phipps family with 100 acres of gardens is the kind of property that inspired Gatsby's Gold Coast. Designed to emulate the great houses of 17th-century England, it has been a film location for "The Age of Innocence," "Love Story" and more. The mansion's holiday decorations are made from natural materials -- greens, pine cones and berries -- all found in the gardens of the estate.

Holiday highlights: This is a popular holiday destination and many events are sold out, but the following are still available: a card-making workshop for kids (free with admission; Dec. 14, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.), and Tis the Season Stargazers, during which telescopes will be set up to scan the winter sky (free with admission; Dec.

19 at 8 p.m.). Admission is \$10 adults, \$4 children 7-17, free children and under.

Address: 71 Old Westbury Rd., Old Westbury, New York, 516-333-0048, [oldwestburygardens.org](http://oldwestburygardens.org)

*(Credit: Old Westbury Gardens)*

## RINGWOOD MANOR



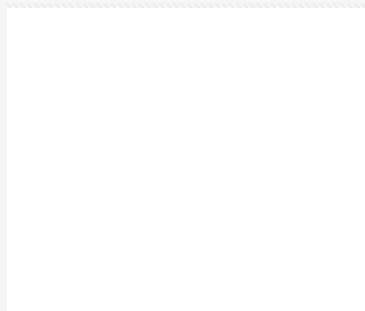
**House history:** Located in Ringwood State Park, an area that was once a hub of the iron industry in the United States, this manor house was built in stages over the course of a century. What began as a 10-room Federal-style home grew to 51-rooms of Gilded Age splendor, reflecting the taste of the Cooper and Hewitt families who bought the property in 1853. Known as the "Little White House" because of its important visitors, the home has been recently and lovingly restored following a furnace accident and offers year-round guided tours.

**Holiday highlights:** For the 39th year, Victorian-style decorations, many made by members of the Woman's Club of West Milford, set the holiday mood at the house as part of its Victorian Christmas tradition (\$8 adults, \$6 seniors, \$3 children ages 6-12, free for children under 6; Dec. 14 and 14 from 11 a.m.-5 p.m.). Tours are self-guided, but docents are nearby to answer questions. Leave plenty of time to enjoy the conservatory room and shop handmade offerings from crafters.

Address: 1304 Sloatsburg Rd., Ringwood, New Jersey, 973-962-2241, [ringwoodmanor.org](http://ringwoodmanor.org)

*(Credit: Ringwood Manor)*

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