

- 1 Clark Explores the Unexpected Joys of Holiday Caroling
- 2 The Power of Planning Something to Look Forward To  
Stay Safe Amid Surge in Holiday DUIs  
Sudoku
- 3 Stuffed Pepper Soup  
Experience the Holiday Season's Best in El Paso
- 4 Vacation in Tropical Panama

3	2	9	6	7	5	8	4	1
7	1	4	8	9	2	6	3	5
5	6	8	3	4	1	7	2	9
9	5	3	7	2	6	1	8	4
4	7	2	1	8	9	5	6	3
6	8	1	4	5	3	2	9	7
2	3	7	5	6	4	9	1	8
8	4	6	9	1	7	3	5	2
1	9	5	2	3	8	4	7	6

Solution



# Discover Panama

## An Unforgettable Tropical Paradise

The Central American country of Panama, home to the titular Panama Canal that allows easy passage of maritime traffic between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, is more than a hub for international trade: It's a scenic tropical paradise. Just 30,000 square miles in size — smaller than South Carolina — Panama packs a lot of incredible sites into one compact package. The country uses the American dollar, so you don't need to exchange currency to make a worthwhile trip there. Here are three locations you can look forward to on your vacation to Panama!

### PANAMA CITY

Founded in 1519, Panama's capital is a metropolis amidst lush tropical rainforests. Around 40% of the country's population resides in the city, which is full of amazing historical and entertainment districts that attract tourists worldwide. The Casco Viejo historical district, comprised of Spanish colonial architecture, was named a World Heritage site in 1997.

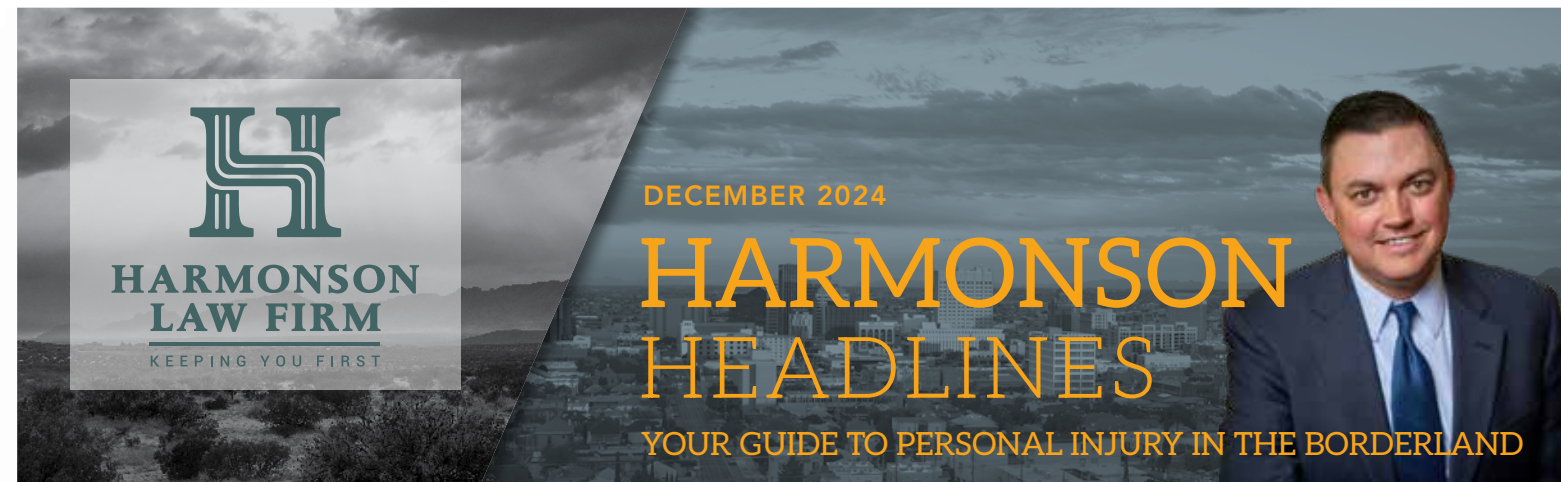


### ISLA BASTIMENTOS NATIONAL MARINE PARK

This amazing national park, established in 1988, covers over 50 square miles and over 130 islands of the Bocas del Toro Archipelago, including the popular coral reefs of the Cayos Zapatillas. If you are interested in rubbing shoulders with monkeys, sloths, crocodiles, and countless marine species, this is the spot for you!

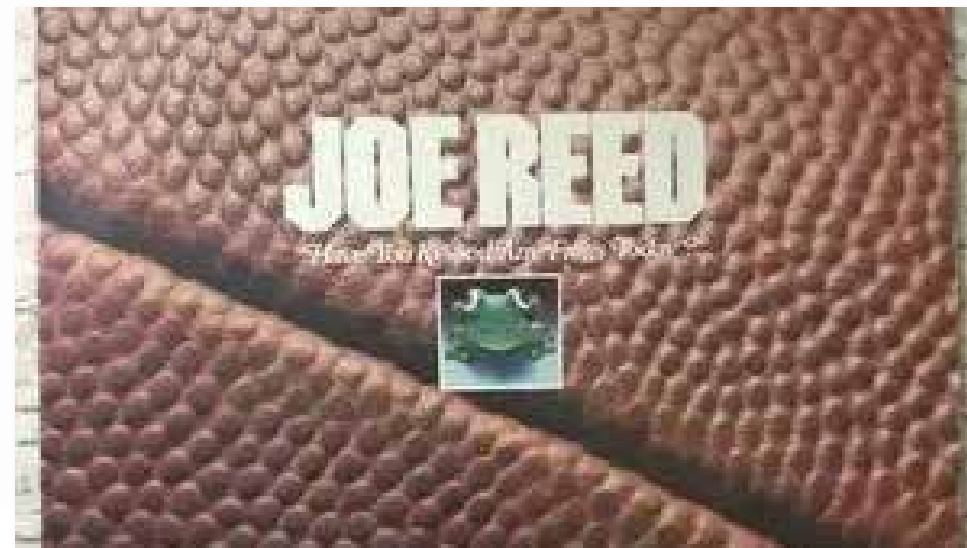
### PANAMA CANAL

No list would be complete without mentioning one of the greatest engineering feats in human history: the Panama Canal. The canal, which runs for roughly 40 miles through the Isthmus of Panama, was completed in August 1914, just a month after the outbreak of World War I. The canal works via a system of locks, filled and emptied of water to raise and lower boats. Ships up to 950 feet long transport over 200 million tons of cargo annually through the canal. If you visit Panama, you have to see the canal for yourself!



# Christmas Caroling Chronicles

## HOW I FOUND A SILVER LINING IN MY MANDATORY CAROLING



When I learned that Dec. 20 is National Go Caroling Day, I will admit I was filled with a few memories of a not-so-merry 12-year-old Clark. The festive tradition certainly stirred memories from my childhood when I wanted to do anything but Christmas caroling. But now, I can see that those days were actually more meaningful than I could've imagined.

The mandatory caroling was masterminded by our enthusiastic parents rather than born from our own holiday spirit. I remember how our family friends, the Reeds, with their children — Chip, Chad, Castle, and Chanee — and our clan, Cole, Clark, and Celeste, would gather under the subtle coercion of our moms to spread holiday cheer through song.

The Reeds were quite the musical family, thanks in part to their dad, Joe Reed. Joe, a professional NFL player and Christian music artist, was somewhat famous for his song

"Have You Kissed Any Frogs Today?" (*which you should certainly look up*). Despite his jovial demeanor and the festive spirit, we kids were less than thrilled about these outings. Joe's celebrity status and ties to teams like the Detroit Lions and San Francisco 49ers were likely the only reason we kids agreed to caroling.

We would venture out into the cold, sometimes underwhelmingly received, other times bringing genuine smiles to neighbors' faces. As a parent now, I see the value in these traditions more clearly, especially through the activities organized by our church's pastor. Every year, he gathers the congregation's children to sing for community members who are shut-ins or ailing, emphasizing caroling as an act of service rather than just a seasonal obligation.

One particularly touching moment came when the kids sang to a man suffering from a terminal illness. It was one of the last joys he

experienced before his condition worsened, a poignant reminder of the impact such small gestures can have. It's these moments that transform a seemingly mundane activity into a profound service to those around us.

Now, overseeing these caroling efforts has become part of my holiday routine. While I make sure to organize a festive gathering at our home post-caroling, I admit, I strategically position myself as the host to excuse myself from the actual singing. My days of door-to-door caroling are fond memories, but I would rather facilitate these experiences for the next generation.

It's clear that holiday traditions like caroling aren't just about singing songs; they're about building and nurturing our community. They're about giving back in small but significant ways and creating moments that those around us will cherish, perhaps when they need it most. While you might not look forward to the actual act of caroling, like my childhood self or my own kids now, it can bring a little light into someone's life and truly make a difference.

As we gear up for another round of caroling this year, I'm reminded of the broader message of the holidays: connection, generosity, and goodwill. Whether you're a seasoned caroler or someone who prefers to contribute from behind the scenes, like me, there's a role for everyone in this festive tradition. So, while the kids may grumble as they don their coats and rehearse their tunes, the joy they bring to others is a beautiful sight, and who knows, they might just look back on these memories fondly, much like I do now.

—Clark Harmonson



WHY SMALL PLANS CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

When life feels overwhelming, or you just aren't feeling your best, it can be difficult to find hope or joy. Sometimes, the best medicine is a little self-care in the form of simple activities and treats you enjoy most. One of the best ways to boost your mood is by planning something to look forward to. Whether it's a favorite movie, a new painting class, or a tasty latte, prioritizing things that bring us happiness can empower us with hope. It's like adding a bright spot in the future, making the tough days more manageable.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE?

Your plan doesn't have to be grand or complicated. Start by identifying activities that make you happy or that interest you. Do you love comedy movies or enjoy going to concerts? You might sign up for an improv class or buy tickets to see a play. It can be anything that brings a smile to your face.

PLAN IT.

Once you know the activity, start planning. Our busy lives sometimes lack time for the little things that make us feel good. Treat your happiness like a necessary appointment and get it on your calendar. Spending time with your loved ones and friends also has a wealth of benefits for your mental health, so decide whether you want someone to join you.

By planning to do things that bring you joy, you'll feel more hopeful, balanced, and better equipped to handle whatever life throws your way.



THE RISE IN FATAL HOLIDAY DUIS  
HOW TO KEEP YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY SAFE THIS SEASON

The holidays bring joy and celebration, but they also see a concerning increase in DUI accidents, with New Year's Day ranking as the most dangerous. As we embrace the festive spirit, it's crucial to be aware of the risks and take proactive steps to ensure safety for yourself and your loved ones.



THE STARTLING STATISTICS

Statistics show that the risk of encountering a drunk driver surges during the holiday season. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), **on New Year's Day, the likelihood of fatal drunk driving accidents is 89% higher than an average day.** From 2018 to 2022, Texas reported the highest number of holiday-related fatal car accidents in the country.

LOCAL TRENDS IN EL PASO

In El Paso County, the trend is similarly alarming. December has seen a steady rise in DUI arrests over the years. For instance, in December 2020

alone, **there were 179 DUI arrests**, with significant spikes on Christmas and New Year's Eve. This local data shows that our community must take extra precautions this holiday season to keep one another safe.

TIPS FOR A SAFE HOLIDAY

To combat the rise in DUI incidents, consider these proactive steps:

- **Plan Ahead:** Always arrange for transportation before participating in any festive activities that involve alcohol. Download and set up rideshare apps like Uber or Lyft on your phone to ensure you always have a safe ride option at your fingertips.
- **Watch Out for Pedestrians:** Increased pedestrian activity during the holidays requires extra vigilance from drivers. If you're walking, stay alert and stick to sidewalks and crosswalks. Be especially careful when kids are present, as they can move unexpectedly.
- **Host Responsibly:** If you're hosting a holiday party, ensure all guests have a safe way to get home. Consider organizing shared rides or designating drivers who refrain from drinking.
- **Monitor Friends and Family:** Keep an eye on friends and family who might insist on driving after consuming alcohol. Taking the keys away and arranging a safe ride home could save lives.

Embracing responsibility this holiday season not only ensures your safety but also contributes to a safer community. Remember, making smart choices during celebrations can prevent irreversible consequences.

CHERISH WINTER'S CHARM

Celebrate With Lights, Music, and Cozy Nights!

The holiday season in El Paso and its surrounding areas is a carousel of twinkling lights, enchanting melodies, and joyful gatherings that capture the heart of winter's magic. Whether it's wrapping up in a cozy blanket with a hot drink in hand or strolling through vibrant streets lined with festive decor, there's an undeniable charm in the air. So, as the days tick down to the grand celebrations, why not revel in the delight of the season?



SANTA FE'S FAROLITO WALK

Tuesday, Dec. 24  
FarolitoWalk.com

Just a five-hour drive from El Paso, this festive journey is worth every mile. Experience the enchanting Canyon Road Farolito Walk in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a cherished Christmas Eve tradition that transforms the historic streets into a glowing path of song. As dusk falls, the route comes alive with small paper bags, known locally as farolitos (or as we Texans call them, luminarias), lighting up the adobe walls with the gentle flicker of votive candles. Join the crowd of carolers and revelers, enjoying the crisp air filled with the scents of piñon wood, hot chocolate, and freshly baked biscochitos.

CANDLELIGHT HOLIDAY JAZZ SPECIAL

Thursday, Dec. 19  
FeverUp.com/en/el-paso/candlelight

Immerse yourself in the soft glow of candlelight at the enchanting Candlelight Holiday Jazz Special at St. Rogers Depot in El Paso. This unique musical experience features the sounds of The Jazz Exchange performing a special Christmas program. Revel in festive classics like "Let It Snow," "Feliz Navidad," and more, all set against a backdrop of soft candlelight. Perfect for a cozy, memorable evening, the concert promises a multisensory experience that captures the essence of the holiday season. Secure your tickets early and enjoy a night of timeless Christmas tunes.

NUTCRACKER! MAGICAL CHRISTMAS BALLET

Dec. 23-24  
ElPasoLive.com/events

Treat your loved ones to a spectacular performance of the NUTCRACKER! Magical Christmas Ballet at The Plaza Theater. Experience a dazzling production featuring an international all-star cast, world-class ballet, whimsical puppets, lavish costumes, and breathtaking acrobatics. Set to Tchaikovsky's timeless score, this cherished Christmas tradition promises to enchant audiences of all ages.

SUDOKU

		9			5	8		
				9	2		3	
						7	2	9
					6	1	8	
	7							6
	8	1	4					
2	3	7						
	4		9	1				
		5	2			4		

SOLUTION ON PG. 4

STUFFED PEPPER SOUP

Stuffed bell peppers are a common meal in many households. And as temperatures begin to drop, there's no better way to warm up than by turning this classic recipe into a hearty — and healthy — soup!



INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs ground beef
- 6 cups water
- 1 28-oz can tomato sauce
- 1 28-oz can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 2 cups chopped green peppers
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp beef bouillon granules
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 2 cups cooked long-grain rice
- Chopped fresh parsley (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. In a Dutch oven over medium heat, cook beef until no longer pink, breaking it into crumbles; drain. Add beef back to the pot and stir in all ingredients except the cooked rice. Bring to a boil.
2. Reduce heat. Simmer uncovered until peppers are tender, about 30 minutes.
3. Add cooked rice and simmer, uncovered, for about 10 minutes. If desired, sprinkle with chopped fresh parsley.

Inspired by TasteOfHome.com