

Riverside's Festival of Lights Begins

The event is entering its 19th year

By Ashley Gordon | Friday, Nov 25, 2011 | Updated 8:54 PM PST

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Annette Arreola

Riverside's Festival of Lights is one of the most anticipated events of the year. For the next five weeks more than 3.6 million lights will be on display. Annette Arreola takes a look at the annual event.

Riverside's Festival of Lights, an event that draws thousands, began its 44-day run Friday.

Now entering its 19th year, the holiday spectacle will once again illuminate the historic Mission Inn Hotel & Spa with \$3.5 million light bulbs.

The event started its five-week run at 5:15 p.m. with the "Switch-On Ceremony."

In addition to lights, Festival goers can enjoy over 400 characters including Santa Claus through December 24.

For some Inland Empire resident's the festival is a family tradition.

"It is beautiful and exciting," said Robin Benic of Riverside. "We've been coming here since my daughter was in a stroller and she's 17 now.

The festival has expanded over the years. Sixteen years ago the city began collaborating with the Mission Inn Hotel to build upon the event.

Since its beginning, the festival has added an ice skating rink, musical performances, and new visitors to the dazzling lights.

"I can't wait," said Riverside resident Charva Ingram. "I'm looking forward to it, big time. It should be so fun."

The festival also hosts dozens of vendors who welcome the business.

Consistent work for 44 days is the best part, said Mamas Mini Doughnuts owner Donna MacNeil.