

Follow Santa Claus, courtesy Google and NORAD

December 24 2009



A view of the NoradSanta.org website frontpage where the North American Aerospace Defense Command, which monitors the North American airspace show the current location and upcoming stops of Santa and his storied reindeer and NORAD is tracking him as he drops off presents around the world.

Santa Claus is coming to your town -- and NORAD is tracking him as he drops off presents around the world. The North American Aerospace Defense Command, which monitors the North American airspace, on Thursday set up an official "Santa Tracker" on its website (www.noradsanta.org) in seven languages to find the current location and upcoming stops of Santa and his storied reindeer.

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Internet giant Google, which recently began powering the mapping initiative, allowed Santa enthusiasts to locate the sleigh using its geographic information program [Google](#) Earth and provided 3-D video of Kris Kringle flying over major city hubs like Sydney.

At 14:35 GMT, the fat man in the red outfit was in Pyongyang, capital of the North Korean hermit state, according to NORAD's radars.

After leaving the North Pole, he also had early stops in Russia, China and Japan before heading at mind-boggling speed south toward the Philippines, Guam, Australia and then heading east toward Asia and Europe before his Thursday night stops in North America.

NORAD's Santa tracking tradition dates back to 1955, when a Colorado newspaper advertisement printed a phone number to connect children with the cheerful Christmas icon that mistakenly directed them to NORAD's hotline.

To avoid disappointing the little ones, NORAD's director of operations at the time, Colonel Harry Shoup, ordered his staff to check the radar to see where Santa might be and update the children on his location.

The bi-national US and Canadian agency's official position is that jolly old Saint Nick is real.

"Based on historical data and more than 50 years of NORAD tracking information, we believe that Santa Claus is alive and well in the hearts of children throughout the world," it said on its website.

NORAD pulls out all the stops to locate Saint Nick, stopping at no less

than four high-tech systems: radar, satellites, "Santa Cams" and, yes, fighter jets.

There is reason to do so, with NORAD noting Santa's sleigh can travel "faster than starlight."

According to NORAD information, Santa "probably stands about 5 feet 7 inches (1.7 meters) tall and weighs approximately 260 pounds (118 kilograms)" before cookies," it said.

"Based on fighter-aircraft photos, we know he has a generous girth (belly), rosy cheeks from sleigh riding in cold weather and a flowing white beard."

By 1600 GMT, Santa had already gobbled down over 32,500 cookies. When he took off from the North Pole, he was carrying no less than 60,000 tons (54,431 tonnes) of gifts, also according to NORAD.

NORAD's F-16, F-15 and CF-18 fighter jets have intercepted Santa "many, many times," tipping their wings in a mid-flight greeting.

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