

## Cost of 'Twelve Days of Christmas' rises

by Orlando-Sentinel

PITTSBURGH -- The cost of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" is on the rise -- again.

Buying each item in the song just once -- from a partridge in a pear tree to a dozen drummers drumming -- will cost you \$18,920, or 3.1 percent more than last year, according to PNC Financial Services Group.

The total cost of items gifted by a True Love who repeats all of the song's verses costs more than ever before -- \$75,122 -- for all 364 items, up from \$72,608 in 2005, a 3.5 percent increase.

"After years of stagnation, wages for skilled workers, including the song's dancers and musicians, have increased as the labor market has tightened," said Jeff Kleintop, chief investment strategist for PNC Wealth Management. "Also, a decline in the housing market has dampened demand for luxury goods, such as gold rings."

While prices for the partridge, two turtle doves, three French hens, six geese and seven swans remained the same as last year, higher wages made the lords a-leaping, ladies dancing and pipers piping costlier.

The nine ladies dancing earned \$4,759, 4 percent more, according to Philadanco, the Philadelphia Dance Co. The lords a-leaping got a 3-percent pay raise, while the drummers drumming and pipers piping earned 3.4 percent more.

The maids a-milking, however, weren't as lucky. They make the federal minimum wage, which has been \$5.15 per hour since 1997.

Each year, the Pittsburgh-based bank does a tongue-in-cheek tally of how much the swans, geese and drummers would cost if you purchased them at today's prices. PNC has been calculating the cost of Christmas since 1984.

For the price of buying all 364 items, you could get a brand new, fully-loaded special edition Hummer 2 sport utility vehicle, fully-loaded Cadillac XLR two-door roadster, a cruise around the world, a 5-carat diamond ring or top-of-the-line Cartier or Piaget watch.

Trying to find cheaper deals online won't help, either. The 364 items online would cost \$125,767, including shipping costs, compared to \$123,846 last year. You would spend \$30,330 online for each item just once this year.

The nine ladies dancing are the costliest items on the list again, at \$4,759. The seven swans a-singing cost \$4,200. And a pear tree saw the biggest jump, going from \$89.99 in 2005 to \$129.99 this year.

The cheapest? As always, the partridge, still \$15.

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