



# Fall Festivals

Load up the car and hit the road to enjoy one of these four eclectic festivals throughout the state

Life is a celebration and Louisiana is constantly hosting the party. The people of this state find any and all reason to hold a festival representing the community and its people. In the north, the people of Zwolle celebrate Hispanic and Indian heritage with tamales galore. And the south rocks the music scene at Voodoo Festival during Halloween weekend in New Orleans. It's not just the larger cities, like New Orleans and Lafayette, that know how to fest. The Madisonville Wooden Boat Festival offers fun for everyone. From the top to the bottom of the Louisiana boot, there are more festivals than calendar days in the year. A vacation to any one of these festivals in the Pelican State will leave you with memories to last a lifetime.

*By Kelly Massicot*

Each Halloween weekend in New Orleans' City Park, music lovers, artists and all those in between gather to "worship the music" and experience three days of the Voodoo Music & Art Experience. The festival is Oct. 28 to 30. Though New Orleans is currently home to more than 130 festivals, what sets Voodoo apart is the overall atmosphere and feel of the weekend. Attendees of all stripes don costumes and concert T-shirts connecting with other fest goers to the tune of artists such as Snoop Dogg, Black Sabbath and the Red Hot Chili Peppers — to name a few.

Food, music and art greet all visitors to Voodoo Fest. You're even met with an art display immediately as you walk through the festival gates. Because the main goal of the organizers is to create a

complete interactive experience, they put extra detail into making sure the music is not the only interesting part of the fest. Each year, the art has a different theme and is interpreted in each immersive large-scale installation. There are also mixed media art vendors selling their creations around the festival. In addition to the art, the food is meant to complete the three main aspects of Voodoo. Loads of local restaurants gather to bring festivalgoers delectable New Orleans dishes, such as shrimp poor boys.

The main event includes four stages and more than 65 artists performing over the three day festival. This year, Tool, Arcade Fire and The Weekend top the musical lineup that also includes Cage the Elephant,

G-Eazy and Kevin Gates. The stages are always packed to the brim with fans. A local Voodoo veteran suggests breaking out that costume and matching or creating a group flag, allowing you to spot your friends among the crowd.

This eclectic group of musical acts and festival fans meshes perfectly with the funky host city. New Orleans gives visitors a chance to experience food, people and festivities unlike anywhere else. If you attend all three days or just one day, there's a way to make this festival the perfect vacation weekend. The festival grounds are a streetcar ride away from downtown and the French Quarter where award winning

hotels and restaurants are waiting. Make your way to Bourbon Street for a full tourist experience and spend a night at the AAA Four-Diamond rated Royal Sonesta New Orleans, with a dinner at Restaurant R'evolution and a little jazz and nightcap at Irvin Mayfield's Jazz Playhouse — all under the same roof. Or take the party to the historic St. Charles Avenue with the newly renovated Pontchartrain Hotel. The Bayou Bar is where the New Orleans Saints football franchise was christened and the hotel's restaurants were brought back to life by famed chef John Besh. The festival has secured rates from multiple hotels

around city including the Ace Hotel in the Central Business District and the Moxy Hotel New Orleans.

No matter what you choose, you'll discover that Voodoo truly is a distinctive festival experience.

**THINGS TO REMEMBER:** The festival gates open each day at noon. School sized backpacks are allowed and could come in handy when needing a blanket, towel, place to stash your phone or wallet and other small personal items. Festival coordinators suggest using New Orleans public transportation including streetcars and the RTA bus line. Parking on the street is extremely limited, sleeping or camping on festival grounds is prohibited, as well as parking on the neutral ground.

# Voodoo Fest

NEW ORLEANS • OCTOBER 28 - 30



PHOTO COURTESY VOODOO FESTIVAL



PHOTO BY RON BERRARD

## Festival Acadiens et Créoles

LAFAYETTE • OCTOBER 13 - 16

Like all things in Acadiana, the Festival Acadiens et Créoles is a blend of multiple events rolled into one jam-packed weekend. Based on the idea of celebrating a culture and people, this festival brings food, fun and the music of the Cajun culture to the city of Lafayette. The first Festival Acadiens was held in 1977 after a long awaited need to celebrate and revel in the Cajun culture. Essentially, three festivals combined into one to create the Festival Acadiens that we know today. It began with a craft festival held in 1972 at the Lafayette History Museum. Two years later, in 1974 at the Blackham Coliseum, the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana decided a tribute to Cajun music and the continued education of the culture were in order and long overdue. It was in 1977 that both festival coordinators decided to combine the two, add in a little food with the Bayou Food Festival and the Festival Acadiens et Créoles was born.

The three main focuses of the event reflect the missions of its three founding festivals. The Bayou Food Fest aspect of the weekend provides visitors with an authentic Cajun food experience. Snack on Cajun favorites like barbecue boudin, catfish court

bouillon and wild game jambalaya. The feast starts off Friday night with the official cutting of the boudin alongside musical entertainment from Fais Do Do featuring a tribute to Acadien/Acadian music.

Once you have your nosh, peruse the Louisiana Craft Fair presented by the Louisiana Crafts Guild. The fair features handmade jewelry, mixed media art, paintings and more from Louisiana artists all over the state.

If you're in it for the music, you're in luck. Five stages around the festival grounds feature music from all over the state of Louisiana. For the little ones, La Place des Petits is where you want to be. Presented by the Children's Museum of Acadiana, this area has crafts, games and more.

Because the festival area is so close to the downtown center of Lafayette, the hotel and eatery options are plentiful — though festival organizer Pat Mould suggests after you get through what the chefs are cooking up for the festival, chances are you won't have any more room for food. The Wyndham Hotel in Lafayette is the official hotel of Festival Acadiens et Créoles.

**THINGS TO KNOW:** There is a Capital One ATM area on the festival grounds for those needing a little extra to spending on those tasty bites or festival merchandise. Not only is there a parking garage, as well as a few parking lots on-site, but also a bike corral for those wanting an easier commute into the festival.



# Zwolle Tamale Fiesta

ZWOLLE • OCTOBER 6 - 8

PHOTO BY RON BERRARD

In a little rural area in the westernmost section of Louisiana sits Zwolle, Louisiana. Established in the late 1800s, Zwolle, originally an Indian village, is known for its outdoor activities and rich Spanish and Indian heritage. The community's pride and joy is their ability to make arguably the best tamales in the state. They are so sure they have the best hot tamales, each year they hold the Zwolle Tamale Fiesta to celebrate their heritage and the food that brings them all together. Since 1975, the Zwolle Tamale Fiesta has been celebrating and focusing largely on the

social and political influences of the Spanish culture onto their Louisiana history.

The three-day festival Oct. 6 to 8, is full of fun and exciting events. At 4 p.m. Thursday evening, the gates open to crafts, treasure hunts and tamales. That evening, the king and queen of the festival are presented. The presentation is followed by traditional singing and dancing. On Friday, visitors can enjoy a variety of rides and attractions, as well as carnival-like concessions. From 7 p.m. till 11 p.m. enjoy music from the Justin Merritt Band, After Hours Band and

Pine Knotz & Friends on two different stages. Saturday amps up the fun with a one mile and 5K run on the festival grounds followed by the festival parade. A plethora of events pack the morning following the parade and starts off with the Toledo Cruisers Car Club Car Show. Participants get to show their flair for the Spanish culture with a Spanish Costume Contest. The tamale theme continues with a tamale eating contest, as well as a tamale judging.

The Zwolle area, around Toledo Bend Lake Country, is full of accommodations of all kinds. Green Acres Bed &

Breakfast can give you the feeling of being at home, while the 28 different parks and camp sites gives visitors the option to bring their homes with them to celebrate. Park your RV at one of the camps close to the city and you're all set. While in the area, take a drive to the Adai Indian Nation Cultural Center and complete the Spanish and Indian heritage experience. Chances are you'll be stuffed full of tamales and other fantastic foods while you're at the festival, but if you're thinking about staying in the area consider a sampling of local eats like Frazier's BBQ.

This small city packs a powerful punch. From culture to tamales you can't go wrong attending the Zwolle Tamale Fiesta this October.

**THINGS TO REMEMBER:** For those wanting to bring home the tamale experience, the festival offers a **Tamale Fiesta Cookbook available at the event, along with hot sauces and seasonings to kick up your tamale game. Forms for the 5K race, mud bog and trail ride are available for attendees on the Tamale Fiesta website [zwolletamalefiesta.com](http://zwolletamalefiesta.com)**



## Wooden Boat Festival

MADISONVILLE • OCTOBER 8 - 9

Nestled between the cities of Covington and Mandeville is a quaint, river town on the banks of the Tchefuncte. Each fall, Madisonville families, friends, visitors and boat enthusiasts alike gather to celebrate their nautical pastime and the city they love.

"This festival is very much a celebration of the city of Madisonville and their people," Louise Saenz, festival coordinator, says about the Madisonville Wooden Boat Festival. The fall festival, on Oct. 8 and 9, lasts each day from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Throughout the day, festival goers can enjoy the work of local artists, food vendors and boat building competitions.

The festival coordinators have made it a point to provide something everyone can enjoy throughout the two-day event. Because the focus is the wooden boats, the main event of the whole weekend is the "Quick 'n' Dirty" boat building competition. This event is an up-close-and-personal view of the start to finish construction of a working boat. Each team is provided materials and 14 hours to create a working boat, able to carry up to two crew members, approximately 100 yards.

While the builders are hard at work, onlookers can view and tour boats docked along the river or take in a football game and pint of ale at the Rouse's Beer Garden. The Hornbeck Offshore Boat Exhibit includes over 100 classic and wooden boats from around the area on display at the festival. Participants can tour some of

the privately owned boats on the dock and at the end of the festival awards are given in several categories.

This year's Rouses' Beer Garden features six draft and three aluminum-bottled imported and domestic beers available to of-age attendees. Those enjoying the festival will be able to take a seat in the shade, sip a cold one and enjoy the football games being shown on one of the big screen TVs around the area.

**THINGS TO REMEMBER:** **Though an outside event, no pets or outside food or drinks are allowed at the festival. The festival website features an interactive mobile feature allowing guests to access festival maps, schedule and real-time information and announcements. [woodenboatfest.org/interactive](http://woodenboatfest.org/interactive)**

Are you bringing the kids and looking for age-appropriate activities? The Wooden Boat Festival has that, too. Families can enjoy the children's village, which has music, crafts, science experiments and other kid-centric activities and entertainment. Once you've taken a jaunt through the children's village, bring the entire family to the carnival. Located in a separate area from the festival, the Cap'n

Jack's Carnival Cove is available to any and everyone wanting a traditional carnival experience.

Once the festival day's activities are over, the party continues at the stage near the main festival area. Take in the sounds of local bands each night until 9 p.m.

When it comes to fun for the whole family, the Madisonville Wooden Boat Festival will not steer you wrong. Sit the sports lovers down at the beer garden, bring the kids to the children's village and gather as a group to watch the boat race. The options are endless in Madisonville.