

Fantastic Festivals from Now



Welcome to the second half of 2013. We've picked out our favourite festivals to round off the year. Isn't it time you celebrated?





The Carnival of Santiago de Cuba, Havana, Cuba

The Carnival of Santiago de Cuba is a large public celebration stretching as far back as the 17th century. The main activities in this festival are music, dancing and the consumption of large quantities of alcoholic beverages, along with parades and street performances. The Cuban carnival, somewhat akin to Carnivale in Brazil, is distinguished by its accompanying music, the scenography and the choreographed dance steps that are performed.

Just as Cuban salsa has its own style and flair, so too does this carnival. Throughout the carnival revelry reigns, and much preparation goes into the parade floats, planned, constructed and decorated in the months leading up to the festival. The characters on the floats perform elaborate dances combining salsa, mambo, cha cha and other rhythms, requiring much

practice to ensure precision choreography.

Havana comes alive during the carnival, the streets lined with kiosks and block after block decorated and beautified. The rustic kiosks serve food and drinks and temporary stages house musicians and performers that buoy the crowds.

Dates: In 2013 the Carnival of Santiago de Cuba will be celebrated from July 18-27.

La Tomatina, Bunol, Spain

La Tomatina is fundamentally a food fight festival - thousands upon thousands of people make their way to the town of Bunol to participate in the 'World's Biggest Food Fight' where more than one hundred

metric tonnes of over-ripe tomatoes are thrown. The festival actually runs for a week, with music, parades, dancing, and fireworks. On the night before the big tomato fight, participants of the festival compete in a paella cooking contest.

Around 50,000 people come to the tomato fight, significantly expanding Bunol's population of 9,000. In preparation for the chaotic splatter-fest that ensues, shopkeepers cover their storefronts in plastic. At 11am the Tomatina begins. Trucks haul the mounds of tomatoes into the centre of the town, Plaza del Pueblo. The water cannons fire and the chaos begins.

The tomatoes must be squished before being thrown for safety reasons during the hour-long melee. After exactly one hour, the fighting



ends with a second round of water cannon fire. The cleaning process involves fire trucks spraying down the streets, with water provided from a Roman aqueduct. The ground is left surprisingly clean as the acidity of the tomatoes proves to be an effective stain remover.

Dates: This year the tomato sacrifice will be held on August 28. No doubt every washing machine in Bunol will be hard at work on August 29.

Whale Festival, Hermanus, South Africa

Whales are without a doubt one of the most incredible creatures in the ocean and many people travel extreme distances just to catch a glimpse of one of these gentle creatures. While there are many coastal towns where whales can be spotted, there are few that boast their own "Whale Crier." In fact, there is only one in the world, in Hermanus, South Africa. The Whale Crier is tasked with wandering the cliff paths and calling out the locations of the whales throughout the day to everyone walking by. There are hundreds of whales to

be seen in Hermanus, situated on the stunning South Coast of the Western Cape and Hermanus considers itself the official home of the Southern Right Whale. Every year the town hosts a Whale Festival, which attracts over 130,000 people, right around the time the Southern Right Whales arrive in large numbers to breed, give birth and playfully frolic in the sea.

The Whale Festival celebrates the arrival of the Southern Right Whales with all manner of arts and crafts markets, large stages for bands and DJs, a children's arena, eco-marquees showcasing the diverse marine creatures from the region, cuisine stalls, stage show performances and more. It is classified as the only Eco-Arts Festival in South Africa.

Dates: Hermanus Whale Festival runs from September 20-24 and the whale season runs from June to December in Hermanus.

Oktoberfest, Munich, Germany

One of the most famous events in Germany that has spread globally, Oktoberfest is a 16-day festival



celebrating beer. Its origins are in Munich, where every year more than six million people make their way into the city to raise a stein or two to the malted beverage. Oktoberfest is a long-standing Bavarian tradition, its history stretching back as far as 1810.

The festival is held in an area named the Theresienwiese; the field of Therese, located near Munich's center. Large quantities of the amber fluid are consumed – more than seven million litres at last count. It's not all about beer though. There's food too. Traditional hearty German fare such as *schweinebraten* [roast pork], *schweinschaxe* [grilled ham hock], *wurst* [sausages] and *brezeln* [pretzels] regularly feature, along with staples such as *käsespätzle* [cheese noodles] and *sauerkraut* [cabbage]. Only certain beers are designated Oktoberfest Beer, all of which are brewed within the city limits of Munich.

Since 1950 the traditional festival opening has been a twelve gun salute and the tapping of the first keg of Oktoberfest beer at midday by the incumbent Mayor of Munich. The cry of "Ozapft is" [It's tapped"]





officially opens Oktoberfest. The Mayor then hands the first beer to the Minister-President of the State of Bavaria and the festivities begin.

Dates : This year marks the 180th Munich Oktoberfest, with festivities running from September 21 to October 6.

Day of the Dead, Mexico

El Día de los Muertos, the day of the dead, is a Mexican celebration of dead ancestors which occurs on November 1 and November 2, coinciding with the Roman Catholic celebrations of All Saints Day and All Souls Day. Despite the morbid subject matter, the holiday is a joyful celebration; the mood is light with an emphasis on celebration and honouring the lives of the deceased.

The origins of the celebration can be traced back to the indigenous peoples of Latin America, with rituals celebrating the lives of dead ancestors performed for at least 3,000 years. The souls of children are believed to return first, with adult spirits following the day after. Plans for the festival are made throughout the year, including

gathering the goods to be offered to the dead.

Offerings are made at family graves including wreaths of marigold, to attract the souls of the dead, and toys for dead children. A common symbol is the skull, which celebrants represent in masks. Sugar skulls, inscribed with the names of the deceased, are often eaten by a relative or friend.

Dates: The Day of the Dead is in fact the days of the dead, covering November 1 and 2 for the souls of children then adults.

Mevlâna Festival, Turkey

Prepare to be mesmerised, as the Mevlana Festival is all about the dance of the whirling dervishes. In the Islamic world the 13th-century Sufi Poet Celaleddin Rumi, otherwise known as Mevlâna is considered in high regard. A great mystic philosopher, his writings are highly respected, the man revered. Mevlana believed that union with God was possible through dance.

After his death, his followers formed a brotherhood called the Mevlevi, known as the whirling dervishes. Dancing is one of the ceremonies of worship. The chance to witness this flowing dance draws over one million people to the

Anatolian city of Konya each year for the Whirling Dervishes Festival commemorating Mevlâna's death in 1273.

The dervishes dance their famous whirl throughout the festival, but it's the final night that is the peak. The dance is smooth and pure, elegant and refined. The dervishes dress in flowing white robes with full skirts representing shrouds. The voluminous black cloaks symbolise tombs and the conical felt hats are their tombstones.

The ceremony begins with the intonation of a prayer for Mevlâna and a verse from the Quran. A kettledrum booms out, and the plaintive sound of the reed flute filters through the air. The master leads the dervishes in three circuits around the hall and then the cloaks are abandoned.

One by one, the dervishes spin out onto the floor, arms folded into their chests. Their right arms are held aloft to receive the blessings of heaven, communicated to earth by left arms turned down. As they whirl, they form a constellation of revolving bodies, which also rotates, drawing admiration from every spectator.

The festival runs from December 10-17 at the Sports stadium in Konya, Turkey.

