



2023 Smithsonian Folklife Festival Sensory Guide

Welcome! This document will provide sensory information in advance of your visit to the Smithsonian Folklife Festival.

The Folklife Festival is an outdoor event. As is the case with most outdoor spaces and events, it can sometimes be difficult to predict the sensory environment because of weather, natural smells, and the volume of visitors on any given day. This guide will provide an overview of sensory information for program areas/built structures located on the Festival site.

Please visit our website, festival.si.edu/visit, for general information about visiting the Festival. Detailed accessibility information can be found at festival.si.edu/accessibility.

The Festival

The Folklife Festival is an open-air, vibrant, and well-attended event. D.C. can be very hot and humid in the summer. It can be helpful to bring a water bottle (there are refill stations throughout the site), comfortable shoes for walking, and clothes appropriate for the weather conditions. The Festival tends to be more crowded in the mid-late afternoon and on the weekends. As our Festival site is on the National Mall, July Fourth will also bring large crowds to the area. Just after 9 p.m. on July Fourth, visitors can expect the sights and sounds of the fireworks display.

The Festival is divided into program areas, which each take up a different space at the Festival and on the Mall. This year, the Festival contains two main program areas: [*Creative Encounters: Living Religions in the U.S.*](#) and [*The Ozarks: Faces and Facets of a Region*](#). Many of our Festival participants (people who come to share their cultures and experiences with us) will be excited to meet and talk to you about their homes, art, and ideas. You can find out more about these programs on the schedule, festival.si.edu/schedule.

Concessions are available for purchase and feature cuisine that ties into the Festival themes. Additionally, there are beverage and dessert stands. Please consult the allergen menu (located on our website and at the concession stands) to learn more about the ingredients. Remember that the Smithsonian Folklife Festival cannot guarantee that all concessions items

will be allergen-free or will be entirely free of cross-contamination. Please read ingredient lists carefully and eat at your own risk.

Creative Encounters: Living Religions in the U.S.

Sensory Information (separated by sensory considerations)

SOUND:

- Performance and presentation venues (**Crossroads Stage, Encounter Stage**) with amplified sound may be loud at times throughout the day. Check the schedule to find out when events and concerts are happening on various stages.
- The **Celestial Stories Soundscape** will include environmental sounds, instrumentals, and recorded voices playing throughout the day. The soundscape will be in the Garden.
- The **Rhythms** and **Festivals** stages will host many musical demonstrations such as drumming, chanting, gospel singing, and dancing.
- Additional artist tents and demonstration areas may have ambient sound or music.
- The **Remembrance Space** is designed to be a quieter, calmer area.

SMELL:

- **Concessions and dining areas** will have food smells throughout the day.
- The **Kitchen Theology** presentation space will host cooking demonstrations and workshops, so there may be food and cooking smells.
- In the **Garden** space, there may be smells from soil, flowers, and pollen.
- At some spaces, like the **Sacred Images** and **Rhythms** areas, there may be incense-burning scents.

SIGHT:

- **Kitchen Theology** will host several cooking workshops where pre-registered participants can participate with chefs to prepare different meals.
- Certain dance and movement performances may include eye-catching elements like regalia, costumes, props, and dancing. Most of these performances take place on the **Crossroads Stage**.
- The **Pergola** may have visual elements like bright colors of paint, various materials like flowers or sawdust, and different architectural designs.
- The **Sacred Images, Sacred Arts, and Buddhist Mandala** areas will have displays featuring geographic mandala designs and other eye-catching arts and crafts.
- The **Sukkah** may have dim or low lighting. The hut might be decorated with harvest vegetables, palm fronds, myrtle or willow branches, and textiles.
- The **Nowruz** area will have vibrant colors and items meant to celebrate springtime. These items may include (but are not limited to) flowers, mirrors, candles, fruits, and decorated eggs.

TOUCH:

- At the **Remembrance Space**, visitors can create paper flowers or decorate picture frames to add to an *ofrenda* that will honor visitors' loved ones who have passed away. However, visitors are asked to *not touch altars that are already arranged*.
- At the **Sacred Images, Sacred Arts**, and **Buddhist Mandala** areas, visitors may be able to touch or practice making certain arts or crafts with the artists' permission. Be sure to ask a staff or volunteer before you touch!
- At the **Pergola**, artists may invite visitors to use stencils to create designs out of sawdust.
- At **Kitchen Theology**, visitors who have pre-registered can participate in interactive workshops where they will make and try different foods.
- In the **Garden**, visitors can work directly in the soil as they learn how to plant flowers and herbs.

The Ozarks: Faces and Facets of a Region

Sensory Information (separated by sensory considerations)

SOUND:

- Performance and presentation venues (**Pickin' Parlor, The Front Porch, Festival Foodways**) with amplified sound may be loud at times throughout the day. Check the schedule to find out when events, concerts, and narrative sessions are happening on various stages.
- **Trail Building** bike demonstrations may feature impact noises from the mountain bikers doing jumps on their bikes or the wheels of their bikes landing on the wooden ramp. These demonstrations will occur periodically throughout each Festival day.
- **The Pickin' Parlor** may feature moderately loud music from old-time and Bluegrass jam sessions. This music may include guitars, mandolins, harmonicas, fiddles, banjos, and other instruments.

SMELL:

- **Concessions and dining areas** will have food smells throughout the day.
- In the **Teaching Garden, Hmong Farming**, and **Community Agriculture** areas, there may be smells from soil, flowers, and pollen.
- **Herbalism** workshops may invite visitors to sniff and identify different herbs.
- **Festival Foodways** will host several cooking demos where participants can watch chefs prepare different meals. On July 8 and 9, **Festival Foodways** will host an event in which a whole hog will be butchered and roasted. The area may smell strongly of cooking meats, and there may be some smoky or charcoal smells.

- You may see smoke rising in the area around the BBQ smoker in the **Outdoor Cooking** area.
- At the **Distilling** tent, moonshiners will demonstrate traditional distilling techniques. This area may include fermentation smells such as alcohol, ripe fruit or corn, metallic smells from the stills, etc.
- The **Muralism** area may smell of spray paint.
- At the **Gig-making** area, there may be metallic smells from welding or shaping hot metal.
- At the **Curanderismo** area, there may be incense-burning scents.

SIGHT:

- Muralism activities at the **Mural Trailer** will allow visitors to watch artists paint.
- **Festival Foodways** will host several cooking demos where participants can watch chefs prepare different meals.
- On July 8 and 9, **Festival Foodways** will host an event in which a whole hog will be butchered and roasted. People who want to avoid smoky environments and/or seeing animal remains may opt to avoid this event and area.
- The **Marshallese Crafts** stage will host visually engaging events such as models of Marshallese boats and weaving demonstrations.
- At the **Guitar Workshop** stage, guests can watch craftspeople build guitars and other instruments.
- At the **Quilting Corner, White Oak Basketry, Cherokee Crafts, Stories in Fabric, Marshallese Crafts, and Gig-making** areas, guests can watch craftspeople create different items such as quilts or baskets.
- At the **Trail Building** stage, expert mountain bikers will ride down a wooden ramp on their bikes.

TOUCH:

- In the **Teaching Garden and Plant Knowledge Area**, guests can touch soil, plants, and seeds.
- In the **Quilting Corner, White Oak Basketry, Cherokee Crafts, Stories in Fabric, Marshallese Crafts, and Gig-making** areas, there might be items that visitors can gently touch with the permission of the artists. For example, the Marshallese Crafts team may invite you to touch woven ropes.
- The **Community Square Dances** on July 1 (8–9:30 PM) and July 8 (8:30–10 PM) will provide opportunities to move your body and dance with a group of people. Before the Community Square Dances, guests can learn and practice square dance steps in workshops. These workshops are scheduled:
 - July 1, 4–4:45 PM at the Ralph Rinzler Main Stage and the Pickin’ Parlor
 - July 2, 5–5:30 PM at the Pickin’ Parlor
 - July 3 4–4:45 PM at the Pickin’ Parlor
 - Master Class: July 8, 4–4:45 PM at the Pickin’ Parlor






Additional Festival Information

- Water refill stations will be located around the Festival site.
- Surrounding Smithsonian museums are free to enter and can provide a break from the heat, as well as indoor restrooms.
- The **Ralph Rinzler Main Stage** will have evening concerts that may be louder and more crowded. During performances and sound checking, you might find less crowded and quieter areas if you go outside of the tent.
- Assisted listening devices, wheelchairs, and cane-chairs are available upon request at the **Accessibility tent**. *You will need to provide a photo ID when borrow one of these accessibility items.*
- The **Accessibility tent** will be located just north of the Smithsonian Metro stop (National Mall entrance/exit). This tent provides information, resources, and support services.
- The Festival site will have areas with high stimulation. If you need a quieter or calmer place, consider these tips:
 - You will most likely encounter fewer crowds and less noise if you move away from the Festival activities, in the direction of the U.S. Capitol (east of the Festival site) or the Washington Monument (west of the Festival site). Outside of the Festival areas, you may find shady trees or benches on the National Mall.
 - Behind the Smithsonian Castle is the Smithsonian's Haupt Garden, which has several benches where you can rest in a relaxing garden atmosphere.
 - The National Museum of Asian Art and National Museum of African Art also tend to be quieter museum spaces. Both buildings are air-conditioned and have restrooms.

(See next page for sensory map information)

Sensory Map

This sensory information is noted on the attached Festival Map using the following icons:

Icon	Icon's Sensory Meaning	Icon Visual Description
	Noisy areas	A white box with a red star.
	Touch-friendly areas	A white box with a black silhouette of a hand.
	Calmer, more restful areas with a little less stimulation	A white box with a blue circle.
	Areas with lots of visual stimulation	A white box with an orange triangle.
	Areas with prominent scents	A white box with a purple square.

We hope that this information is useful to you as you prepare to visit the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. Should you need any further information, please call us at 202-633-7488 or email folklife@si.edu.

We are excited to welcome you the Festival!

