



## 2025 Smithsonian Folklife Festival

### **Sensory Guide**

Welcome! This document will provide sensory information before 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 grounds.

Please visit our website, [festival.si.edu/visit](https://festival.si.edu/visit), for general information about visiting the Festival.

### **The Festival**

The Folklife Festival is an open-air, vibrant, and well-attended event. Washington, 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 grounds) and wear comfortable shoes for walking and clothes appropriate for the weather conditions. The Festival tends to be **more crowded in the mid-late afternoon, on the weekends, and on the Fourth of July**.

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 learn more about them at our Festival website, [festival.si.edu](https://festival.si.edu). You can also find out more about these programs from our Festival schedule, [festival.si.edu/schedule](https://festival.si.edu/schedule).

Concessions are available for purchase and feature a variety of food to choose from. Please consult the allergen menu (located on our website) to learn more about the contents of concession items. Remember that the Folklife Festival cannot guarantee that all concession items will be allergen-free or will be entirely free of cross-contamination. Please read ingredient lists carefully.

## Sensory Considerations

### **SOUND:**

- **Performance and presentation stages** with amplified sound may be loud at times throughout the day as they host music, dancing, and storytelling. Check the schedule to find out when events and concerts are happening on various stages.
- The **Music Apprenticeship** area features many different types of live music performances and instrument demonstrations throughout the day.
- The **Festival Main Stage** will host evening concerts that may be louder.
- Additional **artist tents and demonstration areas** may have ambient sound or music.
- Several artisans in the **Learning Together** and **Building Trades** areas (the middle of the grassy Festival grounds) will be using loud tools, such as compressor tools, stone-carving tools, power tools, and more.
- The **Streetwise** area will have a DJ playing energetic music that may be fast or loud. There will be impact noises from skateboarders doing jumps on their skateboards and the wheels rolling on the wooden floor and ramp. This will happen throughout the day.
- Also in Streetwise, participants will be using tools and power sanders on the **lowrider bikes** throughout the day.
- **Cafe areas** and **concessions** will likely be more crowded and, as a result, louder.
- The **Foodways** area will have a sensory station with various ingredients to see, touch, smell, and hear.

### **SMELL:**

- **Concessions and dining areas** will have food smells throughout the day.
- The **Foodways** presentation space will host cooking demonstrations, so there may be food and cooking smells from both the main Foodways tent and the outdoor cooking space nearby.
- In **Gifts from the Land**, there may be smells from soil, flowers, and pollen.
- Several artisans in the **Learning Together** and **Building Trades** areas (the middle of the grassy Festival grounds) will be using materials that may have a scent.
- The **Graffiti and Street Art** areas in the **Streetwise** tent and throughout the Festival grounds will use spray paint which may have a smell.
- There will be welding in the **Streetwise** tent. Welding has a strong scent.
- The **Foodways** area will have a sensory station with various ingredients to see, touch, smell, and hear.

**SIGHT:**

- The **Foodways** presentation space will host cooking demonstrations and workshops, so there will be things to watch and see there.
- Certain **dance and movement performances** may include eye-catching elements like regalia, props, and dancing.
- **Graffiti and Street Art** areas will allow visitors to watch artists paint in large scale.
- The **Center Grass** will sometimes host sports demonstrations and workshops.
- The **Skating and Skate Art** demonstrations and workshops in **Streetwise** will include fast moving skateboarders on ramps performing tricks and jumps.
- At the **artist demonstration tents**, visitors can watch artists create different items of varying levels of visual stimulation.
- The **Foodways** area will have a sensory station with various ingredients to see, touch, smell, and hear.

**TOUCH:**

- In **Gifts from the Land**, visitors may be able to touch the soil and some plants with permission from Festival staff.
- In the **demonstration tents**, there might be items that visitors can gently touch with the permission of the artists.
- In the **Family Activities tent**, visitors can try some hands-on activities , including some to take home.
- At the **Center Grass and Streetwise skating areas**, there are opportunities for visitors to participate in games and try aspects of the sports.
- The **Foodways** area will have a sensory station with various ingredients to see, touch, smell, and hear.

### **Options for Quieter or Calmer Places:**

- You will most likely encounter fewer crowds and less noise if you move **away from the Festival venues**, in the direction of the U.S. Capitol (east of the Festival) or the Washington Monument (west of the Festival). Outside of the Festival areas, you may find shady trees or benches on the National Mall.
- South of the National Mall is the Smithsonian Castle. Behind this building is the Enid Haupt Garden which has many seating areas where you can rest among a more natural and quiet setting.
- From the Haupt Garden, you can access the entrances to both the **National Museum of Asian Art** and **National Museum of African Art** which tend to be quieter museum spaces. Both of these buildings are air-conditioned and have restrooms.

Note that there is a Family Care Suite on the lower level of the **National Air and Space Museum** (located southeast of the Festival). This area includes companion-care spaces (with adult changing tables), nursing rooms, and a quiet room. To access this space, ask to speak to a ticketing staff supervisor upon arrival at the museum.

- *Please note that the north entrance of the Air and Space Museum, facing the National Mall, is currently closed for construction. Please access the museum via the Independence Avenue entrance.*



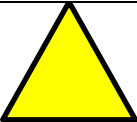

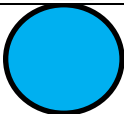
### **Additional Festival Information:**

- **Water refill stations** will be located throughout the Festival grounds.
- Surrounding **museums** are free to enter and can provide a break from the heat, as well as indoor restrooms.
  - Please note that the **Arts and Industries Building** is part of the Festival grounds and provides air conditioning and indoor restrooms.
- Earplugs, assistive listening devices, and wheelchairs are available upon request at the **Accessibility tent**. *You will need to provide a photo ID to check out a wheelchair or assistive listening device.*
- The **Accessibility tent** is located near the center of the National Mall on the Festival grounds, approximately 330 feet directly north of the Smithsonian Metro's National Mall exit. This tent provides information, resources, and support services.

Additional accessibility information can be found at [festival.si.edu/accessibility](https://festival.si.edu/accessibility).

## **Sensory Map**

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

Icon	Sensory Meaning	Visual Description of Icon
	Louder Area	A red five-pointed star
	Prominent Scents	A purple square
	High Visual Stimulation	A yellow triangle
	Touch-Friendly	A silhouette of an open hand
	Calmer Area	A blue circle

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](mailto:folklife@si.edu).

**We are excited to welcome you to the Festival!**

