

WELCOME TO THE 2005 FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL

DIANA PARKER, DIRECTOR, SMITHSONIAN FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL

This summer marks the 39th time we have had the honor of bringing together people from communities across the United States and around the world. The Festival has been called a magical event, because when we bring together so many exemplary practitioners of cultural and occupational traditions, amazing things can happen. In order to make your experience a memorable one, let me suggest some things we have learned over the years.

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Talk to the participants. The Festival is quite different from other Smithsonian exhibitions in that the artists are here for you to meet. Whether they are Omani embroiderers, *bomba* and *plena* musicians, smokejumpers or chefs, they are all accomplished artists. And you will probably not get a chance to learn from their like, face to face, ever again. They are the best in the world at what they do, and they have agreed to come to share their knowledge with you. Don't let this opportunity pass you by.

Read the signs and the program book. They can provide insights into the cultures you are experiencing and the people you are meeting and help you ask questions. You will also find schedules and site maps that can help you plan your visit. Finally, the program book lists related activities, books, and recordings that can expand your experience and knowledge.

Pick up a family activities guide to help younger visitors participate in the Festival. Each program has activities to help kids gain more from their Festival visit. A fun reward is available in each area to encourage young ones and help them take the experience home, where the learning can continue.

Take your time. Listen and ask questions at the narrative stages. Join in a dance or a game. Take note of a recipe from a cuisine that is new to you.

Be aware of Festival visitors around you. Spaces near the front of music stages and food demonstration areas have been reserved for the use of visitors in wheelchairs, and those reading sign-language interpreters. Please help us keep the spaces open for these visitors.

Visit the Marketplace. The Festival is free, and the Marketplace helps support it as well as the work of traditional artists. Having traditional artists' work in your home can extend part of the Festival experience year round. And be sure to visit the Smithsonian Global Sound tent too.

Wear sunscreen and drink plenty of water. Washington summers can be brutal. Don't get so engrossed in the experience that you forget to take care of yourself. And if an electrical storm arrives, leave the Mall immediately. Before 5:30 p.m., go into an adjacent museum; after that time, go down into the Metro entrance. The Mall is a dangerous place in a lightning storm.

Eat at Festival concessions. The food reflects the cultures presented at the Festival, and can expand your culinary horizons. You may discover something you really love.

Visit us in the off season. Go to our Web site, www.folklife.si.edu. Photographs, recipes, and activities from this year's Festival will be available. And please let us know what you think of the Festival. We are constantly striving to improve it, and your opinion matters to us. *Thank you for coming, and enjoy your visit.*