



Roundup: The South's Best Fall Events

(August 22, 2024) When our team pops into your inbox with news about autumn, it's often because we're sharing the incredible leaf-peeping opportunities that our more northerly client destinations offer. We have that info handy if you're looking for it, but today we're shining a light on some Southern clients that celebrate fall in their own "cool" ways. You'll find changing leaves in many of these places, but autumn is also when these destinations host incredible festivals and events that bring together people and cultures (and lots and lots of pumpkins). Read on to learn about what happens around the South during MBPR's favorite season:

[Dollywood's Harvest Festival](#) in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee

September 9 through October 28

As the leaves change to their autumnal glory in the Great Smoky Mountains, Dollywood transforms its theme park into a celebration of fall during its [Harvest Festival](#) presented by Humana. At this time of year, Dollywood features colossal pumpkins that weigh 800 to 1,500 pounds; Dolly-inspired sights like a larger-than-life guitar (made of pumpkins!) that plays "Tennessee Mountain Home" and a tree where Dolly's voice narrates the changing of the seasons in the Smokies; live musical performances including Southern gospel, bluegrass and country tunes; more than 50 world-class rides and attractions; and delicious fall-themed treats featuring pumpkin and apple flavors. At night the park transforms into "Great Pumpkin LumiNights," presented by Covenant Health, and guests can view more than 12,000 illuminated pumpkins that have been carved into whimsical creatures. Stay at one of Dollywood's two [resorts](#) for even more fall fun, including crafts, music and fireside treats.



Dollywood transforms its theme park into a celebration of all things fall during its Harvest Festival.
Photo Credit: Dollywood

[Harvest Festival at Silver Dollar City in Branson, Missouri](#)

September 13 through October 26

Well known as an entertainment destination, Branson offers plenty of adventure and family fun when it comes to seasonal experiences ... and fall is no exception. Tucked in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri, it's no surprise that Silver Dollar City – a theme park created by a family – is designed with families in mind. [Harvest Festival at Silver Dollar City](#) is a larger-than-life “no-scare” seasonal highlight that offers days filled with fun and nights filled with ... Pumpkins in the City! At this time of year, the park features thousands of illuminated pumpkins, towering carved masterpieces, all-ages dance parties in Pumpkin Plaza, visiting craftsmen from across the nation, a Cowboy Emporium, special entertainment, rides operating into the night, and incredible food.



Pumpkins in the City features thousands of illuminated pumpkins throughout Silver Dollar City.
Photo Credit: Silver Dollar City

[Tater Fest in Shenandoah County, Virginia](#)

September 28

Nestled in the heart of the picturesque Shenandoah Valley, the town of Mount Jackson is promising an unforgettable experience at its inaugural [Tater Fest](#) this year. Forget coming for the region's famous foliage and instead come for a free culinary event centered around the humble potato. (September is National Potato Month.) From French fry eating and tater salad making contests to a couch potato 5k and the Miss Sweet Potato/Mr. Spud Muffin pageants, Tater Fest promises something fun for people of every age and potato palate. [Route 11 Potato Chips](#), which is headquartered here (along Route 11, natch), will have a special booth at the festival and special Tater Fest-branded chip bags just for the event. Though Route 11, which is found on store shelves and in picnic baskets throughout the Mid-Atlantic and South, usually only makes chips during the week, visitors can still visit on this particular Saturday to peek in through the viewing windows, ask questions, sample a variety of flavors and stock up on bags of every size.

[International Festival in Bowling Green, Kentucky](#)

September 28

Bowling Green is Kentucky's third-largest city, and it's considered a diversity epicenter in large part because it's home to the state's refugee resettlement center. Because of this, a wide range of cultures is represented in the city, especially within the small business community. Those cultures come together every fall for the [International Festival](#), a cultural extravaganza that draws attendees from near and far. Festival-goers wander through bustling streets adorned with colorful flags and vibrant stalls offering authentic dishes from all around the world. More than 40 food vendors specializing in international cuisine serve their specialties, presenting international menus that incorporate locally-sourced ingredients. Attendees can grab a bite to eat while enjoying dynamic performances showcasing music, dance, and artistic expressions from a variety of cultures.

[Wooden Boat Festival in Madisonville, Louisiana](#)

October 19 and 20

The waterfront town of Madisonville, known for its rich maritime history, will host the 33rd [Wooden Boat Festival](#) featuring more than 100 classic boats. During the family-friendly, two-day event, festival-goers can view beautifully crafted wooden boats, cruisers, luggers, sailboats, skiffs and trawlers along the banks of the Tchefuncte River. Beyond marveling at vintage vessels, more than 30,000 attendees enjoy arts and crafts booths, live entertainment, delicious food, games, an obstacle course, remotely operated vehicle demonstrations, and maritime science experiments. The highlight of the festival is the Quick 'n Dirty Boat Building Contest, in which participants build and pilot their own boat that competes in a 100-yard course to see which stays afloat. Event tickets include free access to the [Maritime Museum Louisiana](#).

[40th Annual Frank Brown International Songwriters' Festival on Alabama's Beaches](#)

November 7 through 17

The [Frank Brown International Songwriters Festival](#) brings together nearly 200 of the unsung heroes of the music business from all over the world for a 10-day festival. Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, the event takes place at venues along the Alabama-Florida state line. Attendees can enjoy close-up and personal concert experiences (most of which are free!) while learning the stories behind many award-winning songs. The festival is named for Frank Brown, the former night watchman at the famed [Flora-Bama](#) Lounge and Oyster Bar, a great American roadhouse that straddles the state line. Songwriters play at the Flora-Bama, where it all began, and in approximately two dozen other locations across the beach communities of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Alabama, and Perdido Key and Pensacola, Florida.

[Big Boy's Main Street Cook Off and Thibodauxville Fall Festival in Louisiana's Cajun Bayou](#)

November 8 and 9

Two of the biggest fall events in Louisiana's Cajun Bayou occur on the same weekend, which means that visitors get double the fall, double the fun, and double the food! Here in Louisiana, where there aren't as many colorful fall leaves, they lean into their vibrant flavors instead. Indulge in mouthwatering Cajun cuisine prepared by more than two dozen chef-led teams that work to showcase the area's culinary heritage at the [Big Boy's Main Street Cook Off](#). From savory gumbo ("sweater weather" in other parts of the country constitutes "gumbo weather" here on the bayou) to spicy jambalaya, there's something to satisfy every sampler. Just as stomachs start to growl again, a new day brings the [Thibodauxville Fall Festival](#). Averaging more than 15,000 visitors each year, this free and award-winning event has been held annually since 1992. People come from far and wide to enjoy good Cajun food, art vendors, a car show and ... ducks? Yep ... the festival is best known for its duck race! Hundreds of rubber duckies bob their way down Bayou Lafourche, and the owner of the winning quacker gets a monetary prize.

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