Greg Boucher, REALTOR® · The Move Forward Team of Compass
Direct: (443) 623-5587 · Office: (410) 220-5745 · Email: Greg.Boucher@Compass.com



Rehoboth Beach Jazz Festival 2026

An insider's guide to Friday, Saturday & Sunday morning - Oct 16-18, 2026

The big picture. The 37th annual Rehoboth Beach Jazz Festival (RBJF) runs **Thursday Oct 15 - Sunday Oct 18, 2026**. It isn't one big stage: it's 20+ ticketed shows spread across six venues in Rehoboth, Lewes and Dewey Beach, leaning smooth jazz, R&B and funk. It's produced by the nonprofit Delaware Celebration of Jazz, and proceeds support Beebe Healthcare's Tunnell Cancer Center.

The secret second festival. The same weekend, the **14th annual True Blue Jazz Festival** brings straight-ahead / mainstream jazz downtown (ticketed headliners at the Boardwalk Plaza Hotel) *plus* its "Local & Live" series - regional jazz combos playing in area restaurants and bars, traditionally **free with no cover**. Locals know: this is where the budget-friendly music is.

Bottom line for this weekend:

- **Best free show:** Reggie Harris at the Historic Lewes Farmers Market, Saturday 10:00 AM.
- **Best $10 ticket:** Rusty Rudder Deck in Dewey, Saturday 1:00-4:00 PM - Club Phred with the Blues Brothers Horns, then Deanna Bogart. Pay at the door; no advance sales.
- **Best daytime splurge under $40:** True Blue's Smokin' Hot Firehouse Big Band Jazz Marathon, Sat 12-6 PM, $35, Rehoboth Fire House on The Avenue.
- **Free music early Saturday evening:** True Blue "Local & Live" restaurant sets (Budsea Bros. 4:30-8:30, Dale Melton Trio 6-9, Christy Taylor's Soul Jazz Show 7-10).

Insider tip: Make the **Cambria Hotel (17222 Hood Rd, Rehoboth)** your first stop. It's festival "Jazz Central" - ticket help, venue directions, info - and it hosts the 5 PM Friday show, the 10 PM late-night sessions, and free-standing bar music in the Cambria Bar.

Before you go - things locals know

- **Tickets are final sale** (no refunds or exchanges); online and box-office purchases carry a $5-$8 per-ticket fee. Day-of tickets are sold at venues if any remain - many shows sell out.
- **Parking:** Cape Henlopen PAC, Epworth UMC and the Cambria have ample free lots. Downtown spaces near the Convention Center go fast, and the Rusty Rudder lot charges a fee - see venue-by-venue tips on the next page.
- **All festival shows are indoors.** Suggested dress is business casual or better; no formal code.
- **No recording** and no cameras or video equipment inside festival venues. No age limit, but some shows are loud for young kids.
- **Do not call the venues** with ticket questions - the festival asks you to contact it directly (info@rehobothjazz.com or (800) 595-4849 for phone sales).
- **Two different musical flavors:** RBJF = smooth jazz / R&B (Boney James, Brian Culbertson, Najee). True Blue = classic straight-ahead (Monty Alexander, Pat Bianchi). Pick the vibe you like.
- Delaware has **no sales tax** - the outlets on Route 1 make a good rainy-afternoon filler.

Schedule caution: the official schedule (dated Dec 2025) and some secondary listings disagree on a few details - e.g. Boney James at 8:00 vs 9:00 PM, and Gerald Albright and the All-Stars listed at the Convention Center in some places vs Cape Henlopen PAC in others. Treat times/venues below as current best information and confirm on rehobothjazz.com before you leave.

What You Need to Know When You Go

Official venue rules and arrival tips from the festival. Everything else in this guide still applies.

All stages

- **Box office tickets are credit card only.** Extra or new tickets bought at any on-site box office: no cash accepted.
- **No cameras or video equipment** of any kind.
- **No smoking** in any festival venue.
- **No firearms or weapons** of any type.
- **No large purses or bags.** Bring a small bag or none at all.
- **Expect a security wand scan** at the door, so allow a few extra minutes.

Rehoboth Beach Convention Center (RBCC)

- **Parking is free this time of year**, but spaces downtown go fast. Come early, park, and enjoy the shops and restaurants on The Avenue.
- **Enter from Rehoboth Avenue.** You can't get in through the outside doors of the auditorium foyer.
- **On-site bar** with alcohol and soft drinks; cash and cards accepted. Tips (cash or card) pay the bartenders.
- **Doors open 1 hour** before the show.

Cape Henlopen Performing Arts Theatre (CHPAT)

- **It's at Cape Henlopen High School**, and parking is plentiful and free.
- **Enter through the rotunda** at the front of the school.
- **No alcohol.**
- **Doors open 1 hour** before the show, and the large indoor waiting area has **free live music**, so come early.

Epworth United Methodist Church (EUMC)

- **Parking is plentiful and free.**
- **Enter on the FRONT side** of the church.
- **No alcohol.**
- **Doors open 1 hour** before the show.

Cambria Hotel (CAM)

- **Parking is plentiful and free.**
- **Use the FRONT DOOR ONLY** to reach the ballroom.
- **Hotel restaurant and bar**, with **free live music in the bar late Friday and Saturday evenings**.
- **Walk-up bar** in the performance area.
- **Doors open 1 hour** before the show.

Rusty Rudder (RR)

- **Important: your ticket is for a seat at a table.** You're guaranteed the table you chose, but not the seat. Seats at each table are first come, first served, so arrive early to sit where you want.
- **Parking:** the Rudder's lot charges a fee; free parking is on the surrounding streets.
- **Enter through the front door.**
- **Friday and Saturday shows:** the Rudder's restaurant is open for lunch and dinner.
- **Sunday Buffet Dinner show:** your meal is included in the ticket and served in the Rudder's restaurant, with the buffet opening at 5:00 PM. **Food is not allowed in the theater**, so eat in the restaurant before the show.
- **Theater bar** serves alcohol and soft drinks (cash or card).
- **Theater doors open 1 hour** before the show.

Rusty Rudder Deck (Saturday afternoon only) (RRD)

- **Parking:** the Rudder's lot charges a fee; free parking is on the surrounding streets.
- **Enter on the LEFT side of the Rudder building**, not the front door.
- **The Rudder's outside bar and inside restaurant** are open for food and drinks.

Friday, October 16 - Afternoon & Evening

Official RBJF shows (ticketed)

Time	Show	Venue	Price*
5:00 PM	Brian Simpson, Jessy J & Jackiem Joyner	Cambria Hotel, Rehoboth	~$89
7:30 PM	Walter Beasley	Epworth United Methodist Church, 19285 Holland Glade Rd	~$79
8:00 PM	Reggie Harris	Cambria **Bar**	Bar set - check cover
8:00 PM	Marion Meadows & Alex Bugnon	Rusty Rudder, 113 Dickinson St, Dewey	~$89-$129
8:00 PM**	**Boney James** (Friday headliner)	Rehoboth Beach Convention Center, 229 Rehoboth Ave	~$149-$179
10:00 PM	Friday Night at the Cambria - Nicholas Cole, Jackiem Joyner, Jeff Kashiwa & Art Sherrod Jr.	Cambria Hotel	~$79

* Prices from published listings; verify at purchase. ** Some listings show 9:00 PM.

True Blue Jazz (straight-ahead) - ticketed

Time	Show	Venue	Price
7:00 PM	Monty Alexander "Jamaica to Jazz"	Boardwalk Plaza Hotel, 2 Olive Ave (oceanfront)	$60
9:00 PM	Monty Alexander "Jamaica to Jazz" (2nd show)	Boardwalk Plaza Hotel	$60

Insider tip: Monty Alexander - a living jazz-piano legend - in a small hotel room for $60 is arguably the best value of the whole weekend. The 9 PM show pairs nicely with an early dinner downtown.

Free / low-cost live music at local clubs & restaurants - Friday

Time	Act	Where to look	Cost
12:00-3:00 PM	Jay Brown Trio (True Blue Local & Live)	Downtown Rehoboth restaurant - venue TBA*	Free (typ.)
4:30-8:30 PM	Dale Melton Trio (True Blue Local & Live)	Downtown Rehoboth - venue TBA*	Free (typ.)
6:00-9:00 PM	Jeff Knoettner Combo (True Blue Local & Live)	Downtown Rehoboth - venue TBA*	Free (typ.)
7:00-10:00 PM	Christy Taylor Plus - "Ladies Night" featuring female musicians & vocalists	Usually Lefty's Alley & Eats, 36450 Plaza Dr, Lewes*	Free (typ.)
8:00 PM	Reggie Harris (official RBJF bar set)	Cambria Bar, 17222 Hood Rd	Bar - check
~9:00-11:00 PM	Rotating bands (weekly Fri & Sat live music)	Dogfish Head Brewings & Eats, 320 Rehoboth Ave	Usually no cover
Evening	Restaurants hiring their own jazz players for the weekend	Rehoboth Ave & Baltimore Ave dining strip	Free w/ dinner

* True Blue had posted acts and times but not 2026 venues at press time. In recent years these sets ran at **Aqua Bar & Grill** (57 Baltimore Ave), **The Blue Hen at the Avenue Inn** (33 Wilmington Ave), **Blackwall Hitch** (52 Rehoboth Ave), **The Pines** (56 Baltimore Ave), **Ocean Glass Inn** and **Lefty's Alley & Eats** in Lewes. Check truebluejazz.org ("Local & Live") or the Cape Gazette festival insert the week of the show.

Insider tip: Organizers say plainly that if you're eating downtown during festival weekend "you might be sitting next to a quartet." A 5:30 dinner reservation on Baltimore or Wilmington Ave is the cheapest front-row seat in town.

Saturday, October 17 - Daytime

Free & low-cost picks (the insider list)

Time	What	Where	Cost
10:00 AM	**Reggie Harris** - RBJF's free gift to the market	Historic Lewes Farmers Market, George H.P. Smith Park (Johnson & Dupont Aves), Lewes	**FREE**
12:00-3:00 PM	JAZZMEN (True Blue Local & Live)	Downtown venue TBA	Free (typ.)
12:00-6:00 PM	Jeff Knoettner Combo (True Blue Local & Live)	Downtown venue TBA	Free (typ.)
1:00-4:00 PM	**Club Phred w/ the Blues Brothers Horns + Deanna Bogart** (one combined event)	Rusty Rudder **Deck**, 113 Dickinson St, Dewey	**$10** at door
1:00-4:00 PM	Christy Taylor Plus - Jazz Kids (18 & under)	Venue TBA (often Lefty's, Lewes)	Free (typ.)
12:00-6:00 PM	True Blue Smokin' Hot Firehouse **Big Band Jazz Marathon** (benefits Rehoboth VFC)	Rehoboth Beach Fire House, 219 Rehoboth Ave	$35

Insider tip: Rusty Rudder Deck rules: the $10 charge covers BOTH acts and is collected at the entrance, on the LEFT side of the Rudder building; no advance sales; first come, first served; entry opens one hour before (so ~noon). Club Phred is the festival's perennial party band - get there by 12:15 for a decent spot on the bay.

Insider tip: Market-to-Dewey run: catch Reggie Harris at 10, browse the market, early lunch in Lewes (Striper Bites or Lewes Oyster House), then drive 15 minutes south to the Rudder Deck by 12:30.

Official RBJF ticketed daytime shows

Time	Show	Venue	Note
12:30 PM	Gerald Albright w/ Keiko Matsui & the Eboni Strings	Cape Henlopen PAC, 1250 Kings Hwy, Lewes (some listings: Convention Center)	Confirm venue
1:00 PM	Brian Culbertson - A Solo Experience (intimate piano)	Epworth UMC	Small room - sells fast
4:00 PM	Najee w/ Alex Bugnon & Regina Belle	Cape Henlopen PAC	Ticketed
4:00 PM	Michael Lington & Paul Taylor	Rusty Rudder (inside)	Ticketed
5:00 PM	Stanley Jordan & Diego Figueiredo (guitar virtuosos)	Cambria Hotel	Ticketed

Other Jazz-Fest-related things to do Friday afternoon / Saturday day

- **Stop by Jazz Central at the Cambria** - pick up schedules, ask about last-minute ticket availability and any added bar sets.
- **Grab the official program** - it's inserted in the Cape Gazette the week of the festival, and a free PDF is usually posted online.
- **Day-of ticket hunting:** leftover seats are sold at the venue the day of the show; the Epworth and Cambria rooms are small, so ask early.
- **Walk The Avenue & Baltimore Ave** on Saturday afternoon - restaurants put musicians in windows and on patios all weekend.
- **Boardwalk Plaza Hotel** (2 Olive Ave) is True Blue's home base; grab a drink in the lobby bar and check for added sets.
- **Tax-free shopping** at the Route 1 outlets between shows.

Saturday Early Evening - Free or $10-and-Under

Time	Act	Where	Cost
4:30-8:30 PM	Budsea Bros. (True Blue Local & Live)	Downtown venue TBA (historically Aqua / Blue Hen / Blackwall Hitch)	Free (typ.)
6:00-9:00 PM	Dale Melton Trio (True Blue Local & Live)	Downtown venue TBA	Free (typ.)
7:00-10:00 PM	Christy Taylor Plus - **Soul Jazz Show**	Venue TBA (often Lefty's Alley & Eats, Lewes)	Free (typ.)
8:00 PM	Cambria Bar set (artist TBD on official schedule)	Cambria Hotel bar	Bar - check
Evening	Restaurant-booked jazz players (not on any official list)	Downtown Rehoboth dining strip	Free w/ dinner
~9:00-11:00 PM	Weekend live band	Dogfish Head Brewings & Eats	Usually no cover

Insider tip: Best cheap Saturday night: early dinner downtown at 5, wander to whichever restaurant has the Dale Melton Trio (a festival favorite) by 6, and finish with a nightcap. If you want one ticketed show, Pat Bianchi's Organ Trio ($50, Boardwalk Plaza, 7 or 9 PM) is the straight-ahead highlight.

Saturday evening ticketed shows (for planning)

Time	Show	Venue	Price
7:00 / 9:00 PM	Pat Bianchi Organ Trio (True Blue)	Boardwalk Plaza Hotel	$50
7:30 PM	2026 RBJF All-Stars - Brian Simpson (MD), Regina Belle, Alex Harris, Jessy J, Keiko Matsui, Marion Meadows, Paul Taylor	Cape Henlopen PAC (some listings: Convention Center)	~$149-$179
7:30 PM	Acoustic Alchemy	Epworth UMC	Ticketed
9:00 PM	Brian Culbertson (full band)	Cape Henlopen PAC	Ticketed
9:00 PM	Four 80 East & Art Sherrod Jr.	Rusty Rudder	Ticketed
9:30 PM	Saturday Night at the Cambria - Marcus Anderson, Nicholas Cole, Ragan Whiteside	Cambria Hotel	Ticketed

Sunday (if you're staying): True Blue's "Two Gals Swingin'" with Peggy Raley & Jackie Johnson, 1 PM at the Boardwalk Plaza ($85); Budsea Bros. free Local & Live set 12-4 PM; RBJF Grand Jam 3:30 PM at the Convention Center; Closing Party & Buffet at the Rusty Rudder (dinner 5 PM, music 6:30).

Where to Eat - Best-Rated Moderate to High-End

Ratings shown are from TripAdvisor (TA), Yelp (Y) or OpenTable (OT) as of 2026. $$ = moderate, $$$ = upscale, $$$$ = fine dining. **Reserve everything you can this week.**

Friday Lunch

Restaurant	Area	$	Rating	Why go / insider note
Henlopen City Oyster House	Wilmington Ave, downtown	$$-$$$	4.6 TA / 4.5 Y	Raw bar standout, often called the best at the beaches. No reservations - go right at noon opening.
Bluecoast Seafood Grill & Raw Bar	30115 Veterans Way (Rt 1)	$$$	4.4 Y	Polished seafood, easy parking; convenient to the Cambria for the 5 PM show.
Striper Bites	Lewes	$$	4.6 OT	Classic seafood bistro with patio; good if you're based in Lewes.

Friday Dinner

Restaurant	Area	$	Rating	Why go / insider note
La Fable	26 Baltimore Ave	$$$$	4.7 TA / 4.7 Y	Parisian brasserie (boeuf bourguignon, steak frites). Top-rated in town - a natural before the 9 PM Monty Alexander show.
The Federal Rehoboth	62A Rehoboth Ave	$$$$	4.7 TA	Small, chef-driven, reviewers call it a unique experience. Walkable to the Convention Center for Boney James.
Shorebreak Lodge	10 Wilmington Ave	$$$	4.6 TA / 4.5 Y	Lodge-cozy, inventive seafood, strong cocktails; consistently a diners' top pick on OpenTable.
Salt Air	Wilmington Ave, downtown	$$$	4.1 Y	Farm-to-table coastal; quieter off-season, good early seating.
Heirloom	Lewes	$$$$	Top-ranked Lewes	Tasting-room feel; dinner Tue-Sat from 5 PM, 30-day booking window, $25 pp no-show fee. Ideal before a Cape Henlopen PAC show.

Saturday Breakfast / Brunch

Restaurant	Area	$	Rating	Why go / insider note
Victoria's Restaurant	Boardwalk Plaza Hotel, 2 Olive Ave	$$$	4.5 OT	Oceanfront Victorian dining room - breakfast with a view, inside True Blue's home base.
Cafe Azafran	Ocean block, downtown	$$	4.4 TA	Long-time breakfast favorite; try the famous baked oatmeal.
Back Porch Cafe	59 Rehoboth Ave	$$$	4.6	Saturday lunch from 11 AM on its legendary decks. Seasonal - confirm it's still open mid-October (historically open into Oct/Nov).

Saturday Lunch

Restaurant	Area	$	Rating	Why go / insider note
Lewes Oyster House / Striper Bites	Lewes	$$-$$$	Top-ranked Lewes	Right after the free 10 AM farmers-market show.
Blackwall Hitch	52 Rehoboth Ave	$$	3.9 OT	Ocean block, a block from the Fire House big-band marathon; has hosted True Blue sets.
Henlopen City Oyster House	Downtown	$$-$$$	4.6 TA	If you missed it Friday. Expect a wait.

Saturday Dinner (pre-show)

Restaurant	Area	$	Rating	Why go / insider note
Blue Moon	35 Baltimore Ave	$$$-$$$$	4.5 TA	Rehoboth landmark; reviewers rave about the duck and scallops. Lively, with entertainment in the atrium.
Bramble & Brine at The Buttery	Lewes	$$$	Top-ranked Lewes	Fine dining in a Victorian house; 10 minutes from Cape Henlopen PAC for the All-Stars or Culbertson.
Heirloom	Lewes	$$$$	Top-ranked Lewes	Best splurge near Cape Henlopen PAC - book now.
1776 Steakhouse	Rt 1, Rehoboth	$$$$	OT pick	Classic steakhouse; plenty of parking, 10 minutes to the Convention Center or Lewes.
Shorebreak Lodge / La Fable	Downtown	$$$-$$$$	4.6-4.7	Whichever you didn't do Friday.

Sunday Morning

Restaurant	Area	$	Rating	Why go / insider note
Blue Moon Sunday Brunch	35 Baltimore Ave	$$$	4.5 TA	The downtown brunch institution - small, inventive menu and pastries.
Back Porch Cafe Sunday Brunch	59 Rehoboth Ave	$$$	4.6	Brunch from 11 AM on the porch (if still open for the season).
Victoria's Restaurant	Boardwalk Plaza Hotel	$$$	4.5 OT	Oceanfront; stay on for True Blue's 1 PM "Two Gals Swingin'" show in the same hotel.
Bodhi Kitchen	Rehoboth	$$	OT brunch pick	Reviewers single out the 3-course brunch special and dim sum brunch.

Insider tip: Restaurants book up for festival weekend and many shift to shorter off-season hours in October. Reserve on OpenTable or by phone this week, and call to confirm Saturday-lunch and Sunday-brunch service - especially for seasonal spots like the Back Porch.

A Sample Insider Weekend (budget-smart)

When	Plan
Fri 12:00 PM	Lunch at Henlopen City Oyster House (arrive at opening).
Fri 3:30 PM	Stop at Jazz Central (Cambria) for programs / day-of tickets.
Fri 4:30-6 PM	Free True Blue set downtown (Dale Melton Trio) with a drink.
Fri 7:00 PM	Dinner at La Fable or The Federal, then Monty Alexander 9 PM ($60) - or Boney James at the Convention Center.
Sat 8:30 AM	Breakfast at Victoria's or Cafe Azafran.
Sat 10:00 AM	FREE Reggie Harris at the Lewes Farmers Market.
Sat 11:30 AM	Quick lunch in Lewes, then to Dewey.
Sat 1-4 PM	Rusty Rudder Deck - Club Phred + Blues Brothers Horns + Deanna Bogart ($10).
Sat 4:30-6 PM	Free Budsea Bros. / Dale Melton set downtown.
Sat 6:00 PM	Dinner at Blue Moon (or Bramble & Brine / Heirloom if heading to Lewes).
Sat 7:30+ PM	Free Christy Taylor Soul Jazz Show (7-10), or splurge on the All-Stars / Brian Culbertson.
Sun 10:30 AM	Blue Moon or Back Porch brunch; optional 1 PM True Blue show or 3:30 PM Grand Jam.

Key contacts

- RBJF schedule & tickets: rehobothjazz.com - info@rehobothjazz.com - phone sales (800) 595-4849
- True Blue Jazz (headliners + free Local & Live): truebluejazz.org
- Weekly local listings: Cape Gazette (capegazette.com) - official festival program insert the week of the show

Sources

- Official 2026 RBJF show schedule PDF - rehobothjazz.com/images/documents/2026ShowSchedule.pdf (dated 12/21/2025)
- RBJF Schedule/Tickets page - rehobothjazz.com/index.php/schedule-tickets
- Delaware Beaches Online, "Rehoboth Beach Jazz Festival 2026" (Oct 1, 2026) - Rudder Deck policy, fees, parking, venue rules
- Visit Rehoboth, 2026 RBJF schedule - visitrehoboth.com
- City of Rehoboth Beach event listing (Oct 15-18, 2026)
- True Blue Jazz 2026 festival calendar and "Local & Live" performance list - truebluejazz.org
- Cape Gazette festival listings and True Blue coverage (2022-2024) - historical Local & Live venues
- WMDT coverage of the 2025 festival (restaurants hosting musicians)
- FestivalsInAmerica / BlackTravelNow 2026 listings (price ranges)
- Dogfish Head Brewings & Eats event pages (Fri/Sat live music)
- TripAdvisor, Yelp and OpenTable Rehoboth Beach & Lewes restaurant rankings (2026); Cape Gazette dining columns