GREG'S INSIDER GUIDES · VOL.2

to Live Music Near You

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Richmond Folk Festival 2026

An insider's guide to a free, three-day festival on the James River: the full stage schedule, how to get in, and where to eat.

The big picture

The Richmond Folk Festival is a **free**, three-day celebration of traditional music, dance and culture on downtown Richmond's historic riverfront: Brown's Island, Tredegar and the banks of the James. It draws about **200,000 people**, with 30+ performing groups on six stages. It grew out of the National Folk Festival, which Richmond hosted from 2005 to 2007, and 2026 is its 22nd year.

Hours: Friday, Oct 9, 6:30-10 PM - Saturday, Oct 10, noon-9:30 PM - Sunday, Oct 11, noon-6 PM. Rain or shine.

CAN'T MISS **The Chuck Brown Band** DC go-go legends - Sat 4 PM Altria Stage, then a dance party Sat 8:15 PM	BEST RICHMOND MOMENT **Soul of the City** Richmond Celebrates D'Angelo - Sat 5-6:30 PM, Allianz Amphitheater
BEST DANCE FLOOR **Dance Pavilion** Cajun lesson Fri 7:15, Puerto Rican bomba Fri 9 PM, Lil' Ed closes Sun 5 PM	BEST FOR KIDS **Family Stage** Tampa Taiko, Punch & Judy, Junior Ranger swearing-in (Sat & Sun 2:30)

Insider tip: Free means donations keep it alive. Volunteers carry **orange buckets** and suggest **$10 per person per day**. It's what keeps a festival this size free.

Things locals know

- **Not allowed:** pets (service animals OK), coolers, outside alcohol, glass, large backpacks, bikes, skateboards, drones, kites and Frisbees.
- **Beer and merchandise are card-only.** Food vendors take cash and cards.
- **Five of the stages are tented,** so rain doesn't end the day.
- **The ground is grassy, rocky and sloped.** Wear real shoes. Bring a lightweight folding chair if you plan to camp at one stage.
- **Three info booths** are on site. Some performances are sign-language interpreted (marked in the pocket guide and online schedule).
- **Lost person?** Grab any volunteer - they're radio-linked to staff.

Schedule from richmondfolkfestival.org as of Oct 7, 2026. Parking details came from the festival's directions page, which still showed last year's dates. Confirm before you leave.

Friday, October 9 - 6:30 to 10 PM

Friday is short, so plan it. Arrive by 6:15 so you can hear the first notes of New Orleans jazz.

Time	Act	Stage
6:30-7:30	Dr. Michael White Quartet - traditional New Orleans jazz	Altria
7:15-7:45	Cajun dance lesson with Richard Day	Dance Pavilion
7:15-8:15	Wyatt Ellis - bluegrass prodigy	CarMax

Time	Act	Stage
7:30-8:30	Susana Behar - Sephardic song	CoStar Group
7:45-8:45	Reverie Road - Irish	Altria
7:45-8:45	Seth Spell & Cajun Strong - Cajun	Dance Pavilion
8:30-9:30	**Lil' Ed & the Blues Imperials** - Chicago blues	CarMax
8:45-9:45	El Khat - Yemeni Jewish "junkyard" band	CoStar Group
9:00-10:00	Mamadou Diabate & Percussion Mania - balafon	Altria
9:00-10:00	**El Laberinto del Coco** - Puerto Rican bomba	Dance Pavilion

Insider tip: A perfect Friday: Dr. Michael White at 6:30 - Cajun dance lesson at 7:15, then dance to Cajun Strong - Lil' Ed's Chicago blues at 8:30 - finish at the Dance Pavilion with Puerto Rican bomba at 9.

Saturday, October 10 - noon to 9:30 PM

Saturday is the big day and the biggest crowd. Highlighted rows are my picks.

Time	Act	Stage
12:00	New York Tibetan Ensemble	Altria
12:00	Tradition-ILL - Indigenous hip hop & powwow dance	CoStar Group
12:00	Susana Behar	CarMax
12:00	Laura Ann Singh - boleros, jazz, bossa nova	Family Stage
12:00	Thapasya School of Dance (Bharatanatyam)	Va. Folklife Workshop
12:30	Seth Spell & Cajun Strong	Dance Pavilion
12:45	Swanky Kitchen Band - Caymanian kitchen dance music	Cultural Vibrancy (Allianz Amph.)
1:00	Wyatt Ellis	Altria
1:00	"Songs of Heartbreak, Heaven & Home" - Sons of Promise, Mariachi Mariposas, Reverie Road	CoStar Group
1:00	Dr. Michael White Quartet	CarMax
1:00	Horn's Punch & Judy	Family Stage
1:00	The Mustard Cutters - Appalachian flatfooting	Va. Folklife Workshop
1:45	Insun Park & Generals - Korean mask dance & rock	Dance Pavilion
1:45	Tampa Taiko - Japanese drumming	Family Stage
2:00	Agalisiga "Chuj" Mackey - country sung in Cherokee	Altria
2:00	New York Tibetan Ensemble	CoStar Group
2:00	Danny Knicely & the Melichenko Family - Appalachian/Ukrainian	Cultural Vibrancy (Allianz Amph.)
2:00	Positive Force Line Steppaz	Va. Folklife Workshop
2:15	"Celebrating America at 250: Singular Soundscapes" - Dr. Michael White, El Laberinto del Coco & more	CarMax
2:30	Junior Ranger Swearing-In, then Punch & Judy (2:45)	Family Stage
3:00	El Khat	Altria
3:00	Susana Behar	CoStar Group
3:00	Swanky Kitchen Band	Dance Pavilion
3:00	Red Crook-ed Sky - American Indian dance	Va. Folklife Workshop
3:15	Alexander Mack - hip hop & R&B	Cultural Vibrancy (Allianz Amph.)
3:30	Brinae Ali Quartet - tap dance	CarMax
3:30	Tradition-ILL	Tredegar Plaza (street)
3:30	New York Tibetan Ensemble	Family Stage
4:00-5:00	**The Chuck Brown Band - DC go-go**	Altria

Time	Act	Stage
4:00	Dr. Michael White Quartet	CoStar Group
4:00	Free dance with Dance Revolution partners	Va. Folklife Workshop
4:15	El Laberinto del Coco	Dance Pavilion
4:15	Positive Force Line Steppaz - soul line dancing on the patio	Cultural Vibrancy (Allianz Amph.)
4:30	Mamadou Diabate & Percussion Mania	CarMax
4:30	Horn's Punch & Judy	Family Stage
5:00	"Taking a Break(down): Strings & Steel" - Wyatt Ellis & friends	CoStar Group
5:00-6:30	**Soul of the City: Richmond Celebrates D'Angelo**	Cultural Vibrancy (Allianz Amph.)
5:00	Semilla Cultural - bomba & plena	Va. Folklife Workshop
6:00	Mariachi Mariposas	Altria
6:00	Cakewalk	Va. Folklife Workshop
6:15	Agalisiga "Chuj" Mackey	CarMax
6:30	Mamadou Diabate & Percussion Mania	Dance Pavilion
6:45	"Celebrating America at 250" with Wyatt Ellis	CoStar Group
7:15	**Lil' Ed & the Blues Imperials**	Altria
7:30	Sons of Promise - gospel	CarMax
7:45	Brinae Ali Quartet	CoStar Group
8:15-9:30	**The Chuck Brown Band - go-go dance party**	Dance Pavilion
8:30	El Laberinto del Coco	Altria
8:30	Insun Park & Generals	CarMax
8:45	Reverie Road	CoStar Group

Insider tip: The Chuck Brown Band plays twice. Hear them at the Altria Stage at 4, then go back at 8:15 for the Dance Pavilion set - go-go is meant for dancing. In between, catch the D'Angelo tribute at 5 at Allianz Amphitheater.

Sunday, October 11 - noon to 6 PM

Sunday is the locals' favorite: smaller crowds and the best workshops - the joint sessions where artists from different traditions share a stage.

Time	Act	Stage
12:00	Sons of Promise	Altria
12:00	Mariachi Mariposas	CoStar Group
12:00	Brinae Ali Quartet	CarMax
12:00	Agalisiga "Chuj" Mackey	Dance Pavilion
12:00	Desiree Roots - jazz, R&B, blues	Family Stage
12:00	Square Dancing, Richmond Style	Va. Folklife Workshop
12:30	"Dance Revolution" showcase	Cultural Vibrancy (Allianz Amph.)
1:00	Susana Behar	Altria
1:00	**"Take a Bow: World Fiddle Traditions"** - fiddlers from four bands	CoStar Group
1:00	"Breaking the Mold: New Directions in Traditional Dance"	CarMax
1:00	Horn's Punch & Judy	Family Stage
1:15	Seth Spell & Cajun Strong	Dance Pavilion
1:45	Central Virginia Bluegrass Destroyers	Cultural Vibrancy (Allianz Amph.)
1:45	New York Tibetan Ensemble	Family Stage
2:00	Lil' Ed & the Blues Imperials	Altria
2:00	Lua Project - "Mexilachian" music & dance	Va. Folklife Workshop

Time	Act	Stage
2:15	El Khat	CoStar Group
2:15	Tradition-ILL	CarMax
2:30	Swanky Kitchen Band	Dance Pavilion
2:45	Erin Lunsford - folk, Americana	Family Stage
2:45	Horn's Punch & Judy	Tredegar Plaza (street)
3:00	Reverie Road	Altria
3:00	Joe Troop's Whirlwind - visionary folk	Cultural Vibrancy (Allianz Amph.)
3:00	Semilla Cultural	Va. Folklife Workshop
3:15	Insun Park & Generals	CoStar Group
3:15	Seth Spell & Cajun Strong	CarMax
3:45	Mamadou Diabate & Percussion Mania	Dance Pavilion
3:45	Tradition-ILL	Family Stage
4:00	Mariachi Mariposas	Altria
4:00	The Mustard Cutters - square dance on the patio	Cultural Vibrancy (Allianz Amph.)
4:00	Free dance with Dance Revolution partners	Va. Folklife Workshop
4:15	"Speaking the Same Language: Music & Cultural Preservation"	CoStar Group
4:15	Sons of Promise	CarMax
4:45	Horn's Punch & Judy	Family Stage
5:00-6:00	Swanky Kitchen Band	Altria
5:00-6:00	**Lil' Ed & the Blues Imperials** - closing dance party	Dance Pavilion
5:00-6:00	**Legendary Ingramettes** - Richmond gospel royalty	Cultural Vibrancy (Allianz Amph.)
5:00	Thapasya School of Dance - folk dances of India	Va. Folklife Workshop
5:15	Reverie Road	CoStar Group
5:15	El Khat	CarMax

Insider tip: Don't miss **"Take a Bow: World Fiddle Traditions"** at 1 PM, with Yemeni, mariachi, Irish and Caymanian fiddlers trading tunes. End with the Legendary Ingramettes, Richmond's gospel royalty, or Lil' Ed's closing dance party at 5.

Getting there - all free or cheap

Option	Where	Cost / hours
Free festival lot	CoStar Group lot, 901 Semmes Ave (Manchester, across the river)	FREE - Fri 5:30-11 PM, Sat 10 AM-10:30 PM, Sun 10 AM-7 PM
Satellite shuttle (Sat & Sun)	Dogwood Dell, off Park Dr - drops at Byrd & 2nd St, inside the festival	$5 per adult round trip, card only - about every 30 min
Downtown lots & decks	Cary St, Canal St and Main St garages, 3rd-9th Streets	Pay-to-park; many open 24/7
Street parking	Downtown meters	Pay via Passport, ParkMobile or PayByPhone
Ride-share	7th & Canal Streets	Easiest drop-off and pickup
Bike	Racks at 5th & Byrd (Federal Reserve deck frontage)	Free, unstaffed - bring a lock
Accessible parking	Federal Reserve deck, 5th & Byrd + ADA shuttle to 5th & Tredegar	Show placard to the traffic officer

Insider tip: No vehicles get within two blocks of the site - streets close at Canal Street. If you're coming from Maryland on I-95, the free CoStar lot in Manchester avoids downtown traffic entirely.

Where to eat - best-rated moderate to high-end

Ratings from TripAdvisor (TA) and OpenTable (OT) as of Oct 2026. $$ moderate - $$$$ fine dining. Reserve now; festival weekend fills downtown rooms. Confirm brunch hours.

Friday dinner (before the 6:30 start)

Restaurant	Area	$	Rating	Why go
The Tobacco Company Restaurant	Shockoe Slip	$$-$$$	4.6 OT (4,500+)	A Richmond classic in a restored tobacco warehouse - a short walk to the riverfront.
Bookbinder's Seafood & Steakhouse	Shockoe Slip	$$$$	4.7 OT (6,400+)	Steaks and seafood; the best-reviewed big room near the festival.
The Hard Shell	Downtown	$$$	4.7 OT	Raw bar and seafood, close to the site.
Stella's	Richmond	$$-$$$	4.8 OT / 4.6 TA	Greek and Mediterranean, consistently top-rated.

Saturday breakfast, brunch or lunch (gates open at noon)

Restaurant	Area	$	Rating	Why go
Perly's Restaurant & Delicatessen	Downtown (Grace St)	$$	4.5 TA	Jewish deli brunch that locals line up for.
Millie's Diner	Shockoe/Church Hill	$$	4.4 TA	Legendary Richmond brunch with a funky diner feel.
Mama J's Kitchen	Jackson Ward	$$	4.6 TA (900+)	Soul food - fried chicken, catfish, mac and cheese. Expect a line.
Lunch Supper	Scott's Addition	$$	4.6 TA	Southern comfort food, a 10-minute drive.

Saturday dinner (or late dinner after 9:30)

Restaurant	Area	$	Rating	Why go
L'Opossum	Oregon Hill	$$$$	4.9 OT / 4.7 TA	Richmond's most fun fine-dining room - quirky, inventive. Book now.
Lemaire at The Jefferson	Downtown	$$$$	4.8 OT / 4.6 TA	Grand-hotel elegance in Richmond's landmark hotel.
Julep's New Southern Cuisine	Shockoe	$$$	4.5 TA	Upscale Southern, walkable from the riverfront.
Lillie Pearl	Shockoe	$$$	4.5 TA	Modern Southern with African influences.

Sunday morning

Restaurant	Area	$	Rating	Why go
The Roosevelt	Church Hill	$$-$$$	4.4 TA	A Church Hill favorite for Sunday brunch; walk it off at Libby Hill Park's river view.
Can Can Brasserie	Carytown	$$-$$$	4.2 TA (1,100+)	Parisian brasserie brunch - a Carytown institution.
Millie's Diner	Shockoe/Church Hill	$$	4.4 TA	If you missed it Saturday.

Insider tip: Festival food is part of the experience - local vendors cooking global dishes. Plan at least one meal on site, and bring cash for faster lines (beer stands are card-only).

A sample insider weekend

When	Plan
Fri 5:00 PM	Early dinner at The Tobacco Company, then walk down to the riverfront.
Fri 6:30-10 PM	Dr. Michael White - Cajun lesson and Cajun Strong - Lil' Ed - bomba dance party.
Sat 10:30 AM	Brunch at Perly's or Millie's.
Sat 12-3 PM	Free CoStar lot - Tibetan Ensemble, Wyatt Ellis, Cherokee-language country.
Sat 4:00 PM	**The Chuck Brown Band** at the Altria Stage.
Sat 5:00 PM	**Soul of the City: Richmond Celebrates D'Angelo** at Allianz Amphitheater.
Sat 6:30 PM	Festival food on site, then **Chuck Brown dance party** at 8:15.
Sun 10:30 AM	Brunch at The Roosevelt, plus the view from Libby Hill Park.
Sun 1-6 PM	World Fiddle workshop at 1 - Joe Troop at 3 - Legendary Ingramettes or Lil' Ed at 5.

Key contacts

- Festival: richmondfolkfestival.org - schedule, site map, pocket guide
- Produced by Venture Richmond: venturerichmond.com
- Weather updates: the festival's Instagram and Facebook

Sources

- Richmond Folk Festival 2026 schedule - https://richmondfolkfestival.org/schedule/
- Richmond Folk Festival performers - https://richmondfolkfestival.org/performers/
- Richmond Folk Festival directions & parking - https://richmondfolkfestival.org/directions
- Richmond Folk Festival general info - https://richmondfolkfestival.org/generalinfo
- Venture Richmond festival overview - https://venturerichmond.com/our-events/richmond-folk-festival/
- TripAdvisor Richmond restaurant rankings - https://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurants-g60893-Richmond_Virginia.html
- OpenTable restaurants near Shockoe Slip - https://www.opentable.com/landmark/restaurants-near-shockhoe-slip-historic-district