

## Festivals Elevate the NC Mountain Experience

From music and culture to harvest-time favorites, festivals move mountain lovers to rediscover the unforgettable across Western North Carolina. Lively events from now through fall build on tradition and celebrate the spirit of resilience that has fueled the post-Hurricane Helene recovery.

“The twang of banjos, the taste of fresh apples, the hope of winning a woolly worm race - all count among the pleasures of our mountain festivals,” said Wit Tuttell, executive director of Visit NC. “They go straight to the heart of our ‘Rediscover the Unforgettable’ campaign and its goal of encouraging travelers to return to destinations that were impacted by the storm. Communities will benefit from the economic boost, and festival-goers will be rewarded with lifelong memories.”

With dozens of events on the calendar, trip planners can follow the leads below and also find more info at [VisitNC.com](https://www.VisitNC.com).

**\*\*Go to [VisitNC.com](https://www.VisitNC.com) for details about all of these events!**

**Start with the arts** Burnsville showcases its claim to artistic fame with the Mount Mitchell Crafts Fair (Aug. 1-2). The juried show fills streets around the downtown square with more than 200 vendors covering the spectrum from fine art to contemporary design and mountain folk crafts.

In Lenoir, the annual Sculpture Celebration (Sept. 6) attracts prominent East Coast artists to a showcase that pairs with a visit to the nearby WNC Sculpture Park. At the Brevard Plein Air Festival (Sept. 8-13), painters compete in an event that leads into the Wet Paint Art Show & Sale. Arts lovers have multiple opportunities to check out Blowing Rock’s Art in the Park series (Aug. 16, Sept. 6 and Oct. 4) and Maggie Valley Arts & Crafts Shows (Aug. 30-31 and Oct. 18-19).

Rounding out the fall arts season: Art on Main in Hendersonville (Sept. 27-28), Colorfest! in Dillsboro (Oct. 4), Craft Fair of the Southern Highlands in Asheville (Oct. 16-19), Lake Lure Arts & Crafts Festival (Oct. 18-19), Maggie Valley Fall Arts & Crafts Show (Oct. 18-19), the WNC Pottery Festival in Sylva (Nov. 8), and the Marshall Handmade Market (Nov. 22-23).

**Music to the ear** The Earl Scruggs Music Festival at Tryon International Equestrian Resort in Mill Spring (Aug. 29-31) taps into the banjo master’s legacy and adds a special dimension in its Aug. 30 program: “Healing the Hollers” with Laura Boosinger and other NC artists reflecting on Helene’s impact and honoring resiliency. In Lansing, the inaugural Fly Around Fest (Aug. 1-2) celebrates Appalachian music heritage while raising funds for the town’s ongoing recovery.

Other places to tune in: the NC State Bluegrass Festival in Cherokee (Aug. 14-16), the Steep Canyon Rangers-hosted Mountain Song Festival in Brevard (Sept. 5-6), the LEAF Global Arts Festival in Black Mountain (Oct. 16-19), and the Smoky Mountain Bluegrass Festival in Waynesville with local heroes Balsam Mountain Range (Oct. 25). **Cue the harvest** Honeycrisps, Jonagolds, Romes and other deliciousness account for the 250,000 attendance at the NC Apple Festival in Hendersonville (Aug. 29-Sept. 1). With a street fair full of freshly picked fruit, music, activities and the King Apple Parade, the festival makes a fitting celebration for one of the country’s top apple producers. Other orchard-rich destinations extend the pleasure with the Brushy Mountain Apple Festival in North Wilkesboro (Oct. 4), the Taylorsville Apple Festival (Oct. 18) and the Apple Harvest Festival in Waynesville (Oct. 18).

The Black Mountain Sourwood Festival (Aug. 9-10) toasts the honey gathered from the Southern Appalachian region’s native sourwood tree. The Yadkin Valley Grape Festival in Yadkinville (Oct. 18) appeals to those who love wine from Windsor Run Cellars, Shadow Springs Vineyard and other regional wineries. The Stecoah Harvest Festival in Robbinsville (Oct. 17-18) kicks off with an old-fashioned campfire roast and includes antique farming demonstrations.

Pumpkins round out the harvest picture. In Elkin, the Yadkin Valley Pumpkin Festival (Sept. 27) includes a Great Pumpkin Weigh-Off. The Punkin Chunkin Festival in Brasstown (Oct. 17-19) aims for distance with the orange orbs tossed with catapults, air cannons, trebuchets and other machines. Franklin’s Pumpkinfest! (Oct. 18) features the World Famous Pumpkin Roll.

**Fair play** The NC Mountain State Fair (Sept. 5-14) embraces the full agricultural tradition. Livestock shows and shop-taste-explore experiences combine with thrill rides, mountain music, heritage arts and other classics at the Western NC Agricultural Center in Weaverville.

The Swain County Agricultural Fair (Aug. 22-23) takes over the Great Smoky Mountains Event Park in Bryson City with a program that also covers a broad scope. Near Boone, the Valle Country Fair (Oct. 18) connects historic Valle Crucis’ idyllic past and present.

Native American heritage and traditions come into play at the Cherokee Indian Fair (Oct. 7-11). Dance performances, arts and crafts, cultural demonstrations and Cherokee cuisine add dimension to the experience.

**Landmarks and milestones** John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, which embraces a world of possibilities with weeklong and weekend classes, celebrates its centennial at the annual fall festival (Oct. 4-5). Festival activities offer a glimpse of a curriculum that covers arts and crafts, music and dance, gardening, cooking, photography, nature studies and writing.

In its 50th edition, the Waldensian Festival in Valdese (Aug. 8-9) commemorates the journey of the people who founded the quaint town in 1893. The story of tragedy and triumph traces back to King Louis XIV.

In Highlands, a luxury destination loved for its spas and shopping, chefs and winemakers serve their finest at the 10th annual Highlands Food & Wine Festival (Nov. 13-16). Given the sales pace, better to buy tickets than to merely save the date.

**Creature features** People who love salamanders happily snorkel to glimpse the eastern hellbender, an oversize species found in WNC streams. Spruce Pine celebrates this North Toe River inhabitant, an indicator of the water’s health, with the inaugural Hellbender Festival (Aug. 30). Science and nature meet music, crafts and more at an event that signals the city’s recovery post-Helene.

Sasquatch returns to Marion for the WNC Bigfoot Festival (Aug. 23), where believers will make the case for the creature’s existence. The event promises everything from education panels to Bigfoot-inspired food and a Bigfoot-calling contest. In Banner Elk, racing Isabella tiger moths up 42-inch strings is the featured event at the Woolly Worm Festival (Oct. 18-19). Folklore holds that the colors of the fastest moth will forecast the severity of the coming winter.

**Local signatures** Sixty-five years after “The Andy Griffith Show” debuted, fans flock to Mount Airy for a flashback with Mayberry Days (Sept. 22-28). Having inspired the setting for the hit series, Griffith’s hometown delivers a festival with checkers playing, porkchop sandwich eating and special guests with ties to the show.

Shelby celebrates a local delicacy with the NC Liver Mush Festival: Mush, Music & Mutts (Oct. 18). The event includes its own pet festival plus a liver mush-eating contest and a liver-mush legacy program at the Earl Scruggs Center.

**History and heritage** Appalachian traditions play a leading role in mountain celebrations. Expect music, dance and handmade arts and crafts at the Blue Ridge Mountain Heritage Festival in Sparta (Sept. 20). At Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, Mountain Heritage Days (Sept. 22-27) features mule and tractor rides along with faculty-led discussions and hands-on demonstrations.

In Asheville, the annual Goombay Festival (Sept. 5-7) celebrates the African diaspora and Asheville’s African American community. Boone’s Hickory Ridge History Museum, site of the “Horn in the West” Revolutionary War drama, reflects on the past at the Appalachian Autumn Market & Fall Festival (Sept. 27). Demonstrations include apple butter making, weaving, spinning and blacksmithing.

**Color to the max** Beech Mountain gets ahead of the fall foliage spectacle with its Mile High Kite Festival (Aug. 30), which earns its name from the town’s 5,560-foot elevation, making it the most elevated town east of the Mississippi River. Kids 12 and younger will receive free kites to decorate while kite-minded attendees can take part in kite clinics and learn to build their own.

Attendance at the Autumn Leaves Festival in Mount Airy (Oct. 10-12) rivals that of Hendersonville’s apple celebration with Southern fare, traditional music, family activities and small-town atmosphere. Also tapping into the spirit of fall beauty: Cashiers Valley Leaf Festival (Oct. 10-12) and Marion’s Mountain Glory Festival (Oct. 11).

And what autumn be without Oktoberfest? North Carolina celebrations include Asheville Oktoberfest (Oct. 4) and Sugar Mountain Resort’s Oktoberfest (Oct. 11-12).

“These vibrant events can help travelers and local residents alike move beyond the grief of last year’s storm,” Tuttell said. “The natural beauty and indomitable spirit that have flourished in the mountains for generations is where our hearts live.”

**About Visit North Carolina** The mission of Visit NC is to unify and lead the state in positioning North Carolina as a preferred destination for leisure travel, group tours, meetings and conventions, sports events and film production to maximize economic vitality statewide. Each year, North Carolina welcomes about 40 million visitors who spend nearly \$37 billion during their visit. The tourism industry employs more than 230,000 people and generates nearly \$2.7 billion in state and local tax revenues. For more information, travel ideas and inspiration, go to [VisitNC.com](https://www.VisitNC.com).

## Anson County’s June Unemployment Rate

Anson County’s unemployment rate for June was 4.6%. In May it was 4.2%.

Anson’s total labor force in June was 9,132, with 8,712 employed and 420 unemployed. In May the total labor force was 8,966, with 8,590 employed and 376 unemployed.

Unemployment rates (not seasonally adjusted) increased in 92 counties in June 2025, decreased in four, and remained unchanged in four. Edgecombe County had the highest unemployment rate at 5.8 percent while Currituck County had the lowest at 3.1 percent.

All fifteen of the state’s metro areas experienced rate increases. Among the metro areas, Rocky Mount had the highest rate at 5.3 percent while Raleigh had the lowest at 3.4 percent. The not seasonally adjusted statewide rate was 4.0 percent.

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