



1. ART AND CULTURE

You might not think it looking at me – happiest in shorts and a T-shirt that wouldn't go amiss at a rock gig – but I'm a culture nut. Give me a symphony orchestra, a wind quintet, a brand-new opera or some great Shakespeare, and I'm happy. Let me go to it all again, and I'm even happier. It's something to do with the possibility of rising above the mundane daily drudge and allaying the horrors viewed on news bulletins. Sacrificing myself regularly to a performance rejuvenates me and can turn a stressful day into a relaxing night. Diving into a festival has the same effect magnified several times over.

And I love the fact that art and culture are as old as humanity itself. Every dance, every custom, every artefact has cultural connotations, and I'm fascinated by links to the past that remind us of the fragility of our existence and the balance we need to keep with the land on which we live. Here, indigenous Australian, Papua New Guinean and Canadian Indian celebrations are as inspirational as the great arts festivals in Edinburgh or Melbourne.

For every festival I've included, there are many that have an equal right to the space. Melbourne stands for all those great multi-discipline Antipodean festivals, including the four-yearly Festival of Pacific Arts. Four dance-a-thons trip the light fantastic for those other dance festivals that fell from the selection. And instead of high-profile

Cannes, Berlin or Sundance film festivals, I've gone for the make-your-own Shoot Out festival and for screenings in the land of the midnight sun. The Venice Biennale spearheads visual art, while my four outdoor art festivals prove that indoor galleries don't have all the fun. Canada, Colombia and Denmark join theatrical hands, while Hay-on-Wye and Medellín confirm the power of the written word.

Now, where's that flight schedule?

Nick Breckenfield



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Santiago a Mil, Santiago de Chile, Chile

Theatrical Throng

Join the whole of Santiago as temperatures rise in the heart of the Chilean capital and people spill into the streets to gather in large squares for street shows and theatre. Santiago a Mil – literally 'Santiago for 1,000', a reference to the days when tickets cost no more than 1,000 pesos – started as Teatro a Mil in 1994, and has become such a summer cultural icon for the whole of the country that it now spills out to nearby coastal Valparaíso, as well as, further afield, Concepción (400km/250 miles south) and Antofagasta (970km/600 miles north).

Each year, local Chilean companies are joined by around 20 visiting companies from across Latin America and overseas in a packed programme of some 40 productions. They range from reinterpretations of the classics – whether Greek classics, Shakespeare, European drama or Russian satire – to an assault on the city's streets. In 2007, the French Royal de Luxe company brought a 15m-high marionette that, for three days, walked the streets, lay down and slept along with a massive, caged rhinoceros, causing quite a buzz among the 700,000 spectators. Musicals and dance also feature.

While some shows now exceed the budget-busting 1,000 pesos (some cost up to 10 times as much), there's still free street entertainment throughout the city.

When: Three weeks from early January. Daytime and evenings.

Strange but true: Santiago's Metro has five lines, but curiously, if not confusingly, they are called L1, L2, L4, L4A and L5.

Insider tips: Find your way through the performances with the free and informative Cultural Passport. Be quick off the mark – a sudden buzz about a show and it will sell out pronto.

What else?: In 2010 Santiago a Mil will also inaugurate the celebrations for Chile's bicentennial year, with three major international co-productions and street theatre not only in Santiago but throughout the country.

Get there: By bus, taxi or TransVip from Santiago International Airport. Within the town, favour the metro system – modern, clean and efficient – over the rather haphazard buses for getting round.

Price: Free/Inexpensive.

Tickets and information: Book tickets for each show at its venue (telephone numbers are given on the Spanish-only website). There is a subscription available for four or six shows. Information: +56 2 378 6222 www.stgoamil.cl/stgo/

Bor Sang Umbrella Festival, Bor Sang village, near Chiang Mai, Thailand

Picture-perfect Parasols

Come and see the tiny lanes of Bor Sang village bloom into a riot of colour each January, when umbrellas decorated in every conceivable style hang from the eaves of the pretty wooden houses. Vivid paintings of Thai flowers and birds on white silk fight for attention against bright-coloured paper parasols, attracting people from miles around to help choose the year's best designs. Browse stall after stall of local handicrafts for intricate wood-carvings and silverware, and make sure you're still in town for the beauty parade that ends the festival each year.

When: Three days in mid-January. All day, but it's best to come in the evenings when the houses are lit by lanterns.

Get there: There are flights to Chiang Mai from Bangkok and Singapore. Bor Sang village is a 20-minute (6km/4-mile) taxi ride from central Chiang Mai.

Price: Free.

Information: Chiang Mai Tourist Office: +66 53 248 604 / www.tourismthailand.org



Hong Kong Arts Festival, Hong Kong, China

Melting Pot

Excitingly, the Hong Kong Arts Festival brings together international companies with the best in Eastern performances of music, theatre and dance, reflecting the city's status as gateway to the Far East as well as one of the world's most exotic and vibrant metropolises. Come for all or part of its month-long shindig and experience American and European orchestras and opera companies playing side by side with Chinese opera in a unique festival fusion.

When: Four to five weeks from February to March. Daytime and evenings.

Get there: Venues are scattered across Hong Kong, so make use of the MTR, extensive bus network and Star Ferry.

Price: Free/Expensive.

Tickets: Book tickets online or by calling URBIX (+852 2111 5999) from first Saturday in December. From mid-October: +852 2824 2430 www.hk.artsfestival.org

Shaw Festival, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada

When: April to October.
Shows at 8pm (matinees 2pm).

Get there: The town is 9.5km (6 miles) north of Niagara Falls, on the shore of Lake Ontario. Buffalo (Stateside) is the nearest domestic airport (a 50-minute drive); Toronto Pearson, the nearest international airport, is about a 2-hour drive.

Price: Moderate.

Tickets: +1 905 468 2172 (members' priority November and December; general booking January). Information: +1 905 468 2153. www.shawfest.com

To Be Shaw

Head for Ontario's idyllic Niagara-on-the-Lake (down the road from Stratford with its Shakespeare Festival), for the celebration of another dramatic genius, George Bernard Shaw, held here since 1962. Amid historic clapboard houses, the Shaw Festival has expanded its unique focus on Shaw's plays and comedies, and you can also expect to see works by his contemporaries and modern Canadian playwrights on four stages in the town.



Hay Festival, Hay-on-Wye, Powys, Wales, UK

Books on the Border

You won't find a festival much more... well, bookish, than this. The little market town of Hay has 39 bookshops (one for about every 34 inhabitants), and every summer it welcomes up to 50,000 visitors to celebrate books, authors and ideas in more than 400 events in a tented festival city. First held in 1988, it now has huge media sponsorship that ensures big-name guests, from Bill Clinton to Martin Amis. There's even an offshoot in Cartagena, Spain.

When: 11 days in late May and June.
Daytime and evenings.

Price: Free/Moderate.

Tickets: 0870 9901299 (from UK only); +44 1497 822629 (from overseas)
Information: 0870 787 2848 (from UK only); +44 1497 822 620 (from overseas)
www.hayfestival.com/

Get there: The nearest train station is Hereford 32km (20 miles) east, with special bus services to and from the festival.

Sand Sculpture Festival, Rochelongue Beach, Cap d'Agde, Hérault, France

Kings of the Castle

Professional sculptors come from all over France to compete in the making of the most beautiful sand sculptures, with ferocious lions and mythical sea creatures rearing their heads from the glorious white sands of Rochelongue Beach. But don't come just to watch – there's a prize for the best amateur creation too, and the final Sunday sees the beach rock to the sounds at the free costume party.

When: Last weekend in May.
10am–6.30pm daily.

Price: Free.

Information: Cap d'Agde Tourist Office:
+33 4 6701 0404
www.en.capdagde.com

Get there: It's 16km (10 miles) from Béziers Cap d'Agde Airport to Rochelongue Beach (1 hour by bus).

Stars of the White Nights Festival, Mariinsky Theatre & Concert Hall, St Petersburg, Russia

Mariinsky Magic

The magic and splendour of Russia's imperial city is not just found in Peter the Great and his successors' magnificent buildings astride the Neva River; just as evocative as St Petersburg's Winter Palace (now the Hermitage) is the excellence of the city's performing companies – the Maly Theatre and, particularly, the Mariinsky Opera and Ballet companies. And there's no better time to see them than during the Stars of the White Nights Festival.

First held in 1993, the brain-child of the Mariinsky's indefatigable and charismatic music director Valery Gergiev, the festival recaptures the glitz and glamour of the theatre's 225-year history, from Tsarist glitz and glamour to Soviet realism.

As the lights dim in either the blue-and-gold adorned Mariinsky Theatre or the new wood-lined Mariinsky Concert Hall just three blocks away, Gergiev raises his arms and the audience falls silent for the Russian classics for which he is fabled – Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Shostakovich and Prokofiev. But the opera and ballet reach is wider, with Wagner and Delibes also on the bill.

The festival includes a lavish fund-raising gala, with a champagne reception, a dinner, a special ballet and opera performance, a ball and fireworks.

When: Three months from May to July. Daytime and evenings.

Don't miss: The fabulous, faithful recreation of classic productions from opera and ballet's history, particularly the operas by Rimsky-Korsakov.

Strange but true: The 2008 festival introduced the Mariinsky's first opera by a living composer for a number of years: Alexander Smelkov's *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Insider tips: There's no need to dress up, except for the gala.

What else?: The new Mariinsky Concert Hall's glass-and-copper façade enshrines glass busts of St Petersburg's composers who, Gergiev explains, 'are the owners of the Hall'.

Get there: The nearest metro stations are Sadovaya/Sennaya Ploshad, from which you take minibus K-1.

Price: Inexpensive/Expensive.

Tickets: +7 812 326 4141 or tickets@mariinsky.ru or apply online www.mariinsky.ru/en/

Midnight Sun Film Festival, Sodankylä, Finland

Sun Screen

Film fans buzz excitedly around the village of Sodankylä for one week in summer, when three venues screen cult classics and new indie faves while live musicians provide the soundtrack to silent films. In the past the likes of Francis Ford Coppola and Wim Wenders have jetted in to explain their inspiration and soak up some 24-hour daylight. It's not all movies, though: winter sports and snow-swept Arctic landscapes mean that most attendees turn this into an annual holiday.

When: Five days in mid-June. 10am–6am (24 hours over the weekend).

Get there: It's 2 hours by bus or taxi from Rovaniemi Airport to the festival site.

Price: Moderate.

Tickets: +358 40724 9506 www.msfilmmfestival.fi

American Dance Festival, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, USA

When: Six weeks across June and July.
Shows usually 8pm (matinees 2pm).

Strange but true: Always true to its
getaway, non-urban origins, the festival
arrived in Durham after residences in the
small towns of Bennington, Vermont
(1934–46) and New London, Connecticut
(1948–77).

Insider tip: If you want to join one of the
dance programmes, auditions take place
across the USA between January and April.

What else?: Durham is not just known for
dance – jazz saxophonist Branford Marsalis
lives there, and named his album *Bragtown*
after an area in the city.

Get there: Duke University is accessed via
the intersection of Interstates 40 and 85.
The nearest airport is Raleigh-Durham
International, 16km (10 miles) southeast of
Durham, from which there is a
SuperShuttle service.

Price: Inexpensive/Moderate.

Tickets: +1 919 684 4444 or
www.tickets.duke.edu
Information: +1 919 684 6402
www.americandancefestival.org

Dancing in Durham

A melting pot of dance from around the
world.

Immerse yourself in movement, either as a
student or a spectator, and look out for
dance's next big thing at the American
Dance Festival in its surprising, and
relaxing, location – the campus of Duke
University on the Atlantic Seaboard. With
two courses – the six-week school and a
four-week school for 12-to-16 year olds –
as well as professional workshops, you'll
find lots of budding dancers among the
audience for the festival events.

With its fantastic pedigree – back in 1934 its
original quartet of choreographers and
teachers were Martha Graham, Hanya Holm,
Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman – the
American Dance Festival has commissioned
and mounted more than 600 premières and
welcomes participants from all parts of the
globe. Home-grown choreographers who
have become regular visitors include Mark
Morris, Alvin Ailey, Bill T. Jones, Merce
Cunningham and Twyla Tharp, and each year
a US\$50,000 Scripps ADF Award is
presented for lifetime achievement in modern
dance. Few festivals celebrate modern dance
in such practical terms.



Venice Biennale, Venice, Veneto, Italy

An Arts Olympics

Modern masterpieces amid cobbled streets and Renaissance palaces.

It's like the moment before the curtain goes up in a theatre: there's a palpable sense of anticipation as little gaggles of art fans stroll the leafy paths that meander through Venice's public gardens, the Giardini. The greatest art show on Earth is about to begin.

The gardens are dotted with grand pavilions, from the austere former tea-house that hosts the British exhibition to Brazil's sleek modernist box. Each pavilion houses a nation's collection – the very best art that's been produced in the past two years. Visitors trawl through an international art battle that takes over huge swathes of the city.

The Biennale has spread its tentacles all through this most picturesque of cities, and you'll need two or three days to see everything. Take a water-taxi to the crumbling Palazzo Papadopoli to catch the ultra-modern Ukrainian entry, or wander the grounds of the cavernous Renaissance dockyard, Arsenale, which is home to many of the smaller nations' shows.



When: Mid-June to mid-November in odd-numbered years. Daytime, but many shows also have evening viewings.

About the crowd: Serious artists dressed all in black, dealers in suits and ties, glammed-up party people following the celeb-studded parties...

Insider tips: Come on the festival's opening weekend in June to find the city abuzz with artists. Exhibitors, writers, dealers and hangers-on descend on Venice in their thousands, and bars and restaurants are alive with high-art talk and insider gossip. Or come in September to catch the glamour of the Venice Film Festival at the same time.

What else?: Don't despair if you come to Venice in an even-numbered year – then it's the turn of the world's biggest Architecture Festival, running mid-September to mid-November.

Get there: The Biennale's two main sites, Giardini and Arsenale, are 10 minutes' walk apart, so you can see the bulk of the pavilions on foot.

Price: Inexpensive.

Tickets: +39 041 521 8828 or via the website. La Biennale's Art and Architecture section: +39 041 521 8711
www.labiennale.org/en

Vienna ImpulsTanz (Vienna International Dance Festival), Vienna, Austria

More Than a Viennese Waltz

It's not just a dance festival for the 30,000-strong audience to enjoy 40 performances in 10 venues... Vienna's ImPulsTanz invites some 80 teachers to run 200 workshops for 3,000 dance students, from beginners upwards. Over four weeks, Austria's capital becomes the dance capital of the world, as befits the home of the Strauss waltz dynasty, although nowadays it's not as simple as 'one, two, three'!

When: From second Thursday in July for one month. Daytime and evenings.

Getting there: Venues are all over Vienna: use the city's excellent underground, tram and bus routes.

Price: Free/Moderate.

Tickets: +43 1 205 15 65
Information: +43 1 523 55 58 or info@impulstanz.com
www.impulstanz.com



Manchester International Festival, Manchester, UK

When: First three weeks of July in odd-numbered years. Daytime and evenings.

Get there: Venues are mainly within walkable distance in the city centre (there is also a tram system).

Price: Inexpensive/Moderate.

Tickets: Book online. Full details are available from the March preceding each festival. Information: +44 161 238 7300 www.mif.co.uk

Forever New

Indoor and outdoor, taking over both established venues and non-traditional spaces (including, in the inaugural 2007 event, a semi-detached suburban house), the Manchester International Festival brings a groundbreaking mix of music, visual arts, theatre, dance, food and family events to one of the UK's most exciting and rapidly evolving cities. Expect the unexpected, and be prepared for surprising cross-fertilisations between genres. The festival's unique selling point is that every event is new and specially commissioned: think operatic firsts by rock and pop giants Damon Albarn and Rufus Wainwright, innovations in cuisine by celebrity chef, Heston Blumenthal, and collaborations between architect Zaha Hadid and musicians performing works by Bach.

Lincoln Center Festival, New York City, USA

Big Apple, Big Festival

When one of the world's greatest performance-art centres mounts its annual festival, you know you're in for a month of eye-opening shows. Filling its many venues – both at the Center and just down Broadway in the Time Warner building – with cutting-edge drama, dance and music productions, the Lincoln Center Festival is where Laurie Anderson rubs shoulders with Samuel Beckett, and where new opera and ballet alternates with Meredith Monk or Brazilian psychedelic rockers Os Mutantes.

When: July. Afternoons and evenings.

Price: Moderate/Expensive.

Get there: For Lincoln Center, take the Subway (Line 1) at 66th St/Lincoln Center Station; for Time Warner building take Lines A, B, C, D and 1 to 59th St/Columbus Circle.

Tickets: +1 212 721 6500 (CenterCharge)
Information: +1 212 875 5766
www.lincolncenter.org



Medellín International Poetry Festival, Medellín, Colombia

Poetry in the Streets

Awarded the 2006 Right Livelihood Award (known as the Alternative Nobel Prize), this festival's ambition and energy is typified by packed days of poetry readings and discussions, indoors and out, across Colombia's second city. The power of the word in a variety of different languages floods through the streets like blood through veins, while there's an annual poetry school held in the preceding weeks for 300 budding poets.

Exemplifying how art can stand up against life's hardships (and win), the festival started in 1991 as a reaction to a local climate of violence and has since welcomed nearly 800 poets from 131 countries.

When: Eight or nine days in July. 10am–8pm.

Get there: Hourly flights to Medellín from Bogotá Airport take 50 minutes, or buses take 10 hours. Medellín is walkable, with an easy-to-follow grid system: *carreras* run roughly north–south; *calles* run east–west.

Price: Free.

Information: +57 4 412 9080 or poetryfestivalmedellin@yahoo.es
www.festivaldepoesiademedellin.org



Salzburg Festival, Salzburg, Austria

Festival of Festivals

Rub shoulders with the world's artistic elite, with the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonic Orchestras headlining the concerts and six operas on offer here, as well as an eclectic drama programme. Perhaps the most lavish arts spectacular in the world, the Salzburg Festival has invited the very best to play in Mozart's birthplace since 1920, when it was founded by Richard Strauss, Max Reinhardt and Hugo Hofmannsthal. Performances filling the Alpine beauty spot include Hofmannsthal's *Jedermann*, performed al fresco on the Domplatz in front of the Salzburger Dom (cathedral).

When: From the fourth Saturday in July for 37 days. Daytime and evenings.

Price: Moderate/Expensive.

Get there: The Festival Quarter includes the three principal opera and concert venues, with the cathedral 200m away. Other venues include the old saltworks, Perner-Insel, in Hallein about 10km (6 miles) south of Salzburg.

Tickets: Apply by post by the second Friday of January; direct sales from the first Friday of April online or by calling +43 662 8045 500
info@salzburgfestival.at
www.salzburgerfestspiele.at

Edinburgh Festivals, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK



When: Jazz Festival: last Friday in July for 10 days.
Tattoo: first Friday in August for 23 days.
Fringe: first Friday in August for 25 days.
International Festival: second Friday in August for 24 days.
Book Festival: second Saturday in August for 17 days.

Don't miss: Escape the crowds and walk Holyrood Park and Arthur's Seat, the spectacular volcanic plug that towers inland of the city (although Fringe Sunday sees the Fringe invade Holyrood Park).

About the crowd: As eclectic as it gets, nothing is out of place on Edinburgh's streets during Festival time, although audiences to International Festival events can be quite dressy.

Strange but true: Nothing should surprise you in Edinburgh – there have been shows for an audience of one, and even a mobile show in a car driving round the streets.

Insider tips: Pick up the free daily guides, organised by hour of the day, to negotiate the artistic maze. Well-reviewed or award-winning shows can sell out quickly, so keep your nose to the ground. The Fringe Office on High Street sells tickets for all shows, but each venue has its own box office. Wrap-up warm for the Tattoo, as the Castle Esplanade seats are exposed to the elements, and temperatures quickly drop in the evenings.

Get there: Edinburgh is well served by bus, but the city centre is best navigated on foot (in comfortable shoes) – you can walk from the New Town to the Royal Mile easily within 30 minutes.

Price: Free/Expensive.

Tickets and information: All Edinburgh's festivals can be booked on their websites or by phone, with the Tattoo opening for business first from the previous December. International Festival tickets are available from April, and Fringe tickets from June. Edinburgh Book Festival: 0845 373 5888 (UK only) www.edbookfest.co.uk

Edinburgh Fringe:
+44 131 226 0000
www.edfringe.com

Edinburgh International Festival:
+44 131 473 2000
www.eif.co.uk

Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival:
+44 131 473 2000.
www.edinburghjazzfestival.co.uk

Edinburgh Military Tattoo:
08707 555 1188 (UK only)
www.edintattoo.co.uk



Art Immersion

As I head down the Royal Mile, from the Castle to Holyrood Palace, or turn north across Princes Gardens and over to the resplendent Georgian New Town, I'm regaled on all sides by street theatre or leafleteers advertising shows and gigs.

It's August in Edinburgh, and festival fever starts with the Jazz Festival and the Tattoo, followed by the Fringe, then the International Festival and the Edinburgh Book Festival, when top authors arrive to discuss their new books and the issues of the day.

My bag is the International Festival – a rich mix of great classical, dance, drama and opera productions at some of my favourite venues, including the circular Usher Hall and the resplendent glass-fronted Edinburgh Festival Theatre. Having booked months in advance, I enjoy filling in the gaps by hunting down what's good at the Fringe, which is just as international in flavour, although commercialisation also encourages big-name comedians to kick off major tours and A-list Hollywood stars to do a pre-West End run here.

Mix thrills with chills (do wrap up warm) on the Castle Esplanade for the sheer spectacle of the massed pipes and bands, military displays and poignant lone piper at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo, 60 years old in 2009.

It all started in 1947, as an antidote to post-war gloom, with the invitation of the world's greatest artists to perform in Scotland's capital. This was the Edinburgh International Festival, and that very first year there was a completely organic reaction to it: the Edinburgh Fringe, which allows absolutely anyone to take part. But it's the International Festival that rounds things off with a bang – a massive fireworks display from the castle lights the autumn sky above the crowds in Princes Street Gardens, accompanied by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

Garma Festival, Gulkula, Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia

When: Second week of August. Bunggul 4pm–sunset daily.

Don't miss: The annual Gapan Gallery, in a grove of stringy bark trees by the Garma Festival ground, which features limited-edition prints by leading Yolngu artists.

Fit in: Carry your Garma Festival Registration documentation at all times: it includes your permit to be on Aboriginal land.

Strange but true: Gulkula is where the ancestor Ganbulabula brought the *yidaki* (didjeridu) into being among the Gumatj people.

Insider tips: There are hotels in Nhulunbuy but visitors are encouraged to camp at the festival grounds. All meals are provided, as is a tent, air mattress and sleeping bag, but bring a towel and a mosquito net. If you want to take photographs while at the festival, in respect to the Yolngu people, you are required to fill in a special form.

Get there: The nearest airport – Gove (Nhulunbuy) 15km (9 miles) north of the festival site – is served by Qantas flights from Darwin and Cairns. Official festival visitors can make use of an onward car service to the festival grounds.

Price: Expensive.

Tickets: Apply by expression of interest via the festival website. The Cultural Programme is limited to 100, and tickets are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, so early application is essential. Information: +61 8 8941 2900 www.garma.telstra.com

Original Australian Art

Where legends and landscape become one.

Make your way to one of the world's most remote festivals to watch white-painted dark bodies sway and dance at the nightly *bunggul* (dance ceremony), connecting thousands of years of history. In the stringbark forests of north-eastern Arnhem Land, the Garma Ground overlooks the Bay of Carpentaria. As the Australian winter gives way to spring, clans of the Yolngu peoples – the indigenous inhabitants of Arnhem Land – come together at the behest of well-known indigenous band Yothu Yindi to celebrate and preserve their traditional arts and culture.

Non-indigenous visitors are welcomed but strictly via invitation, for which you can register at the Garma Festival website. First held in 1999, this is renowned as the foremost festival bringing the two cultures together. The cultural tourism programme allows festival visitors to sample the various traditions, with separate women's workshops (bush food, healing, weaving) and men's workshops (spear making, hunting, business). Interpretative walks through the landscape, art and photography exhibitions, film and music programmes fill the five days, as well as the major Forum that alternates four important indigenous subjects – Education (2010), Health (2011), Knowledge (2012) and Creative Industries (2013).



Buenos Aires Tango Festival, Buenos Aires, Argentina

When: Ten days in August. Most concerts and dances take place between 6pm and 11pm, but there are tango films and exhibitions during the day.

Get there: Trains and buses are plentiful in Buenos Aires, but the best way to cover the festival is by foot – the city centre is pedestrian-friendly.

Price: Free/Moderate.

Tickets: Buy tickets from the venues or via the website.

Information: (1–8pm local time) +54 800 333 7848 or info@mundialdetango.gov.ar
www.festivaldetango.gov.ar

Streets Alive

The streets are your dance floor in Buenos Aires – whose lifeblood is tango – especially for 10 days in August, when it beats louder than ever. From organised championship events to spontaneous street-corner dances, every part of the city is alive with local bands, cheek-to-cheek couples and the infectious beat of the tango.



Waves Festival, Vordingborg, Denmark

Art in the Streets

If you want to know how far theatre can go, look no further than the biennial Danish Waves festival, which tears up the script (quite literally) and allows the visual imagination of the performers to run riot. This is truly an international celebration, with visiting companies creating work especially for the festival – whether dance, circus, comedy, interactive or installation. Part of the point is to use the urban landscape, and some have performed aerially above the rooftops, while others bring intimate dance pieces to traditional theatre spaces.

When: Late August in odd-numbered years.

Get there: Vordingborg is 62 miles south of Copenhagen, or an 80-minute train journey.

Price: Free/Inexpensive.

Tickets and Information: Tickets (where needed) are on sale as soon as the programme is announced – check the website between February and July.

Information: +45 55 340 119
www.cantabile2.dk/waves/



Reykjavík Culture Night, Reykjavík, Iceland

Show City

For one day only Reykjavík turns into a huge theatre. As you stroll through the city, locals pop up playing traditional tunes on street corners, doors open into galleries and artists' studios, and the runners of the Reykjavík Marathon snake their way across your route. Join the throng for the evening's celebrations at 11pm when 100,000 faces turn to the skies as a huge firework display lights the heavens.

When: 22nd August. 11am–midnight.

Get there: Reykjavík is a compact, walkable capital with an international airport.

Price: Free.

Information: Visit Reykjavik: +354 590 1550, www.visitreykjavik.is



Goroka Festival, Goroka National Sports Institute, Eastern Highlands District, Papua New Guinea

Tribal Traditions

While there's no longer the danger of cannibalism, a visit to the Goroka Show *singsing* – the best-known tribal show in Papua New Guinea – is still awe-inspiring. Thousands of decorated tribesmen, from the legendary mud-men of Asaro adorned in clay, to those with bright skin pigments and iridescent birds-of-paradise feathers, perform tribal dances that have signified war, peace and rites of passage for generations. The show was first held in 1957 and regularly attracts 100 tribes.

When: Weekend closest to Independence Day (16th September). 8.30am–dusk.

Get there: There are two daily flights to Goroka from Papua New Guinea's capital, Port Moseby, taking 70 minutes.

Price: Inexpensive.

Tickets and information: Purchase tickets in advance from outlets in Goroka; tickets may not be available on the gate. www.gorokashow.com

Shoot Out, Boulder, Colorado, USA

When: One weekend in late September or early October. Brief handed out Friday at 5.55pm, Sunday screening 1pm.

Don't miss: The final showdown – the Sunday screening of the top 10 films.

About the crowd: With more than 50 teams competing, almost everyone you meet will have a camera.

Strange but true: It all started about as far away from Hollywood as you can get, in the New South Wales town of Newcastle, in 1999.

Insider tips: One of the five specified items must be seen (or heard) in the first 30 seconds of your film. All entries must be submitted on MiniDV, Hi8 or VHS, so even if you film direct on to the hard drive of your camera, you need to leave time to copy onto the numbered MiniDV tape provided by the Shoot Out organisers.

What else?: Boulder, with its five iconic 'Flatirons' on Green Mountain, is home to the main campus of the University of Colorado, so expect plenty of student teams.

Get there: Boulder is 56km (35 miles) northwest of Denver, in the foothills of the Rockies, and is well served by Denver's extensive bus service.

Price: Moderate to compete/Inexpensive to watch the screening.

Information: Register your film-making team or availability as a volunteer actor online up to the week preceding Shoot Out. +1 303 449 1515 www.theshootoutboulder.com

Fast Forward

Hollywood may take years to create a film, but Shoot Out throws down the gauntlet with a challenge to make your own movie in 24 hours.

The Steven Spielbergs of the world might faint at the folly of it all, but note that the films are only seven minutes long, and that there is no post-production editing (apart from music) or cutting – you have to film your magnum opus in sequence. The organisers claim that all you need are friends and a camera, providing post-filming facilities such as a copyright-free music library and a dubbing suite to enhance what you have in the can.

Participating teams are given a brief, which stipulates the use of at least five items from a list of 11 props, locations and phrases that must appear in each film.

Even if you're not in a film-making team, you could offer yourself as an actor, so there's no excuse not to get involved. There's even a Shooting Star challenge – to appear in as many films as possible.

After the 24 hours are up and the films are submitted, volunteer teams watch through the night to whittle the field down to the final 10. These are then shown to the public on the Sunday lunchtime at the Boulder Theater. The festival ends with the giving of awards, cash prizes and the guarantee of showings at other film festivals.



Montana World of WearableArt™ Awards, Wellington Convention Centre, Wellington, North Island, New Zealand

When: From the fourth Thursday in September for 11 days (excluding Monday and Tuesday). Shows start at 8pm.

Don't miss: The challenging new sections each year, which have included 'Float, Fly and Flow', where UV light takes costumes to a new level.

About the crowd: Absolutely anything goes – you simply can't be as outrageous and inventive as what's on stage.

Strange but true: The Montana World of WearableArt™ (WoW™) Awards has been described as 'Mardi Gras meets Haute Couture at a Peter Gabriel concert directed by Salvador Dali'.

Insider tips: If you can't make the festival, you can see some of the best costumes year-round at the WearableArt™ Museum, back where the event started, in Nelson, South Island.

Get there: The TSB Bank Arena at Wellington Convention Centre is on Queens Wharf beyond Jervois Quay, a 10-minute walk from Wellington train station; city circular buses serve it every 10 minutes.

Price: Inexpensive/Moderate.

Tickets: tickets@worldofwearableart.com or via the website. General sales start in mid-March (priority booking from 1st February for an extra fee).

Information: +64 3 548 9299
www.worldofwearableart.com

Beyond the Catwalk

Wearing your art on your sleeve.

German composer Wagner may have thought he'd created the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (his idea of a unified work of art), but he could not have imagined the unique combination of art and performance that has been perfected 'down under' by enterprising New Zealanders.

It's blindingly simple – why can't you wear art? That's the thought that struck Suzie Moncrieff who, for a project in 1987 to promote a South Island art gallery in Nelson, came up with the idea of living art, moving on stage. Her whole concept of WearableArt™ was so massive that in 2005 it moved across Cook Strait to Wellington Convention Centre, where it packs in 35,000 people each spring.

From 300 designers or wannabe designers each year, 35 – including a third from overseas – are chosen to create some 150 costumes, which come together on the 40m² stage of the TSB Bank Arena in Wellington's Convention Centre. It's a cross between eye-popping catwalk creations and Broadway razzamatazz, staged and choreographed in a bewitching sequence of different themes.

Designers' imaginations run riot: the 400 models, dancers and performers have been clothed as galleons, insects and the like, using whatever materials designers come across. One winner used 20,664 plastic shirt-stiffeners to create a shadowy 'man-in-the-moon' effect; others have fashioned a walking pincushion or teabag for the show. One of the most popular categories is the Bizarre Bra, an obvious invitation to designers to go for bust – one entitled 'Busted' had a gun sticking out on the right and a sheriff's badge on the left breast.

Curve Lake Powwow, Lance Woods Park, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada

Canadian Get-together

As old as the tribal nations themselves, powwows mark a reuniting of Indian tribes with their land and history; the autumn powwow at the Lance Woods Park Whetung Ojibwa Indian Reserve welcomes non-tribal visitors to watch. Powwows are based around a circle, where everyone is equal. Everyone stands as the Eagle Staff is carried into the circle for the powwow to start, calling together the buck-skinned dancers of the Ojibwa Indians, with their feathered headdresses, for dancing and singing, all to the epoch-leaping sound of the drum.

When: Third weekend in September. 12–4pm.

Get there: The site is 20 minutes' north of Peterborough, which is in turn about 90 minutes by road from Toronto.

Price: Inexpensive.

Tickets: Tickets are sold at the gate.
Information: +1 705 657 8045
www.curvelakefn.com/powwow.htm

Melbourne International Arts Festival, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Arts Mash-up

This may be Australia's top arts event, but it has a refreshingly laidback Antipodean air to it, with offerings ranging from string quartets to hip hop over the course of 17 days. Activities radiate out of Federation Square into venues big and small, with some events held outdoors under the city's spring skies. Past performers have included Patti Smith and Philip Glass.

When: Two weeks in mid-October. Daytime and evenings.

Get there: Federation Square, opposite Flinders Street train station.

Price: Free/Moderate.

Tickets: 1300 136 166 (within Australia) or +61 3 9694 4566
Information: +61 3 9662 4242 or
contact.us@melbournefestival.com.au
www.melbournefestival.com.au

Festival Internacional Cervantino, Guanajuato, Mexico

Art for the Masses

With *Don Quixote* voted the best novel of all time in a 2002 poll of authors organised by the Norwegian Book Clubs, Spanish author Miguel de Cervantes is definitely worthy of this namesake festival. The city of Guanajuato was inspired to host it after student performances of Cervante's *entremeses* (farces) in the city's shady plazas.

A young crowd throngs the streets in this university city, creating a festive atmosphere. You oscillate between performances at the century-old Juarez Theatre, the Principal Theatre, the Cervantes Theatre, the Mining School Theatre, the State Auditorium and outdoor shows with spectacular backdrops (in the 18th-century Granaditas Granary and the San Gabriel de Barrera Hacienda). Meanwhile, such is the city's rich cultural history that exhibitions fill the University of Guanajuato and the many museums devoted to the likes of Diego Rivera, Olga Costa, Jose Chavez Morado and Quixote himself.

This event is now a major force on the festival circuit, with amazing local support and international reach, reflected in two annual themes – one a city or region from abroad, the other focusing on a Mexican state. Eclectic in its scope, it covers theatre, music, dance, cinema and visual arts – all coming together in an international melange of artistic endeavour.

When: 19 days in mid-October.
Daytime and evenings.

Don't miss: Follow the Quixote trail by visiting Guanajuato's Quixote Iconographic Museum, with its life-size bronze statue of Cervantes outside, and the statues of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza in El Ropero, standing vigil in a quiet square near Campanero's stone pedestrian bridge.

What else?: Cervantes' tombstone is dated 23rd April 1616, the exact day that Shakespeare died – although Cervantes probably died the previous day. In 1995, in honour of these two literary giants, UNESCO established 23rd April as the International Day of the Book. Take a trip 10km (6 miles) west to Cerro del Cubilete, the 2,700m-high 'tumbler' hill, with its church on top complete with a 23m statue of Christ surveying the surrounding land.

Strange but true: Cervantes never visited Mexico, but he was captured by pirates and held in Algiers for four years.

Get there: The nearest airport is Leon/Bajio Airport, 35 minutes from the city by taxi. Guanajuato is almost exactly in the centre of the country, roughly halfway between Mexico City and Guadalajara, with regular bus services from both (choose *directo* services, which don't stop). Journey times from each are up to 5 hours.

Price: Inexpensive.

Tickets: Tickets available late May/June from www.ticketmaster.com.mx
Information: +52 56 159 443
www.festivalcervantino.gob.mx



Sedona Plein Air Festival, Sedona, Arizona, USA

Art Alfresco

As the exquisite autumn light burnishes Sedona's fabulous high sandstone formations and dapples its beautiful Oak Creek, 30 invited artists spend a week capturing the scenes on canvas. Meanwhile, you can watch the artists at work in situ and take a painting home from the closing public art sale; or stay longer to learn art techniques in post-festival workshops led by selected artists.

When: One week in October.
Throughout the day.

Get there: It's 2 hours' drive north of Phoenix – with its international airport – off the I-17.

Price: Free/Expensive.

Tickets and information: Order tickets online only.
Sedona Arts Center: +1 928 282 3809
www.sedonapleinairfestival.com

Sculpture by the Sea, between Bondi Beach and Tamarama Beach, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

A Walk of Art

Seaside strolling, sculpture-spying. Let the sea breezes blow any stuffy notion of what art is meant to be out of your mind when Bondi Beach reveals its artistic side to 500,000 visitors each spring – that's when 100 sculptures populate the 2km (1.25-mile) coastal path between Bondi and Tamarama Beach.

It's the visual art equivalent of such massive Sydney community events as Opera in the Park and Symphony under the Stars, where the rugged beauty of the coastline frees artists' imaginations, to fill the natural gallery with abstract, representative or sheer comic work (an outsize fried egg just plonked there in the sand, for instance) that engages and entertains.

The catalogue – available from marquees set up along the coastal walk – includes a route map and details of each exhibit. There's also a children's guide (5 to 11 years) listing fun activities (beyond playing in and on the sculptures).



When: 18 days in late October or early November. 24 hours.

Don't miss: The festival BBQs and champagne bar.

Strange but true: There's a Czech connection to Sculpture by the Sea: while staying in Prague, director David Handley visited the outdoor sculpture park set among 13th-century ruins near the town of Klatovy in northern Bohemia, and was smitten by the power of public statues.

Insider tips: You don't have to do the alfresco exhibition in one go – there are hotels en route where you can book in for an extended stay, which allows you to see the statues in different lights, as evening falls or – spectacularly – as the sun rises. Go against the flow by taking bus no. 361 from Bondi Junction to Tamarama and walk back through the exhibits to Bondi.

Get there: It's about 20 minutes southeast of Sydney Central: take the train to Bondi Junction then any bus to Bondi Beach.

What else?: Sculpture by the Sea now has an annual west coast version, at Cottesloe Beach, Perth (in March), plus, from 2009, a Danish version at Aarhus (in June).

Price: Free.

Information: +61 2 8399 0233
www.sculpturebythesea.com



Luci d'Artista, Throughout Turin, Piedmont, Italy

City of Lights

When even the cranes are ablaze with blue neon, you know that you're seeing a city transformed. This event sees a host of international artists bedeck Turin's Renaissance buildings in light installations, stringing rivers of tiny bulbs across bustling streets and turning the city centre into a kind of futuristic fairyland.

When: Mid-November–mid-January. 24 hours.

Get there: Most of the works cluster around the Giardino Reale and are best seen by foot.

Price: Free.

Information: +39 011 535181
www.comune.torino.it/artecultura/luciartista



Chennai Dance and Music Festival, Around Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

City of Song

More than just the world's biggest celebration of Indian classical music, dance and drama, this festival transforms auditoriums, temples and bungalows in and around bustling Chennai (formerly Madras) into a living stage. During the sacred Tamil month of Marhazhi, 1,200 dance and music performances by 600 performers make up five weeks of shows in temples and auditoriums all over the city.

When: Mid-December–mid-January. Daytime and evenings.

Get there: Chennai has an international airport. Public transport is efficient but crowded, so a rickshaw is a good way to get to the more far-flung venues.

Price: Inexpensive.

Tickets and information: Buy tickets directly from the venues. Chennai Tourism Office: +91 44 8278884/8274216
www.tamilnadu-tourism.com