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Jackson, Mississippi, to Host the National Folk Festival, 2025 Through 2027

The nation's longest-running traditional arts event is coming to downtown Jackson.

Jackson, MS — Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba is excited to announce that Jackson has been named the official 2025-2027 National Folk Festival Host City. Jackson was among 42 cities nationwide that competed for the honor of hosting the nation's preeminent traveling celebration of traditional arts and culture for a three-year stay in 2025, 2026, and 2027. The announcement was made today at a press conference by the City of Jackson and the National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA). First Lady of Jackson Dr. Ebony Lumumba and First Lady of Mississippi Elee Reeves also gave remarks. The festival will begin its three-year stay in Jackson in November of 2025.

The prestigious National Folk Festival is the nation's longest-running traditional arts event, a free, three-day, outdoor multicultural celebration of music, dance, and traditional arts. During its three-year residency, the National Folk Festival will draw over 330,000 visitors to downtown Jackson, generate over \$60 million in long-term economic impacts for the city and the region, and lay the groundwork for a locally produced festival to continue after the National moves on to its next site.

Produced by the non-profit the National Council for the Traditional Arts, the National Folk Festival has been presented in nearly 30 cities across the country since its inception in 1934, from Richmond, VA, and Butte, MT, to Lowell, MA, and St. Louis, MO. The NCTA partners with communities across the nation to present the National Folk Festival, free to the public, for three years with the understanding that the local host community intends to continue its own festival once the National's residency ends.

“On behalf of the City of Jackson, I want to express how excited and honored we are to host the National Folk Festival,” said Jackson Mayor Chokwe Lumumba. “We like to say that Mississippi is the birthplace of America’s music, and we’re bringing the festival home.”

Jackson was chosen in a nationwide competitive process that began last spring. A proposal was submitted by the City of Jackson’s Planning and Development Department. NCTA representatives visited Jackson last November to tour the city to evaluate its suitability for the multiple-stage event. The Mayor’s Office, Visit Jackson, Downtown Jackson Partners, the Greater Jackson Chamber Partnership, the Community Foundation for Mississippi, the Mississippi Arts Commission, the Mississippi Humanities Council, and Visit Mississippi came together and were instrumental in making the case for Jackson to be named host city.

“Jackson has been impressive throughout this process, and the NCTA together with its board of directors is inspired and energized to begin this partnership in such a culturally rich community,” said NCTA Executive Director Blaine Waide. “Mississippi is blessed with an exemplary legacy of arts and culture, and we could not be more excited to launch this festival in Jackson’s historic downtown while showcasing our nation’s finest traditional artists alongside celebrations of the state’s vibrant cultural traditions.”

“This marks the first time the National will be presented in Mississippi. City, regional, and state support has been integral to making it possible.”

The festival will bring as many as six stages of continuous music, including a dance pavilion, as well as traditional crafts, regional and culturally diverse foods, storytelling, parades, and folklife demonstrations to downtown Jackson. It is committed to representing the artistic traditions of all Americans, from those generations old to more contemporary forms of expression. With many thousands in attendance each year, the National Folk Festival will become a major new signature arts event for the city.

The second year of the National’s residency in Jackson in 2026 will coincide with the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The festival will be an official event for Mississippi’s statewide efforts to commemorate the semiquincentennial, known as America250.

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About the National Folk Festival: Since it was first presented in St. Louis in 1934, the National Folk Festival, the NCTA’s flagship event, has celebrated the roots, richness, and variety of American culture. Championed in its early years by Eleanor Roosevelt, it was the first event of national stature to present the artistic traditions of all Americans on equal footing. It was also the first to present to the public musical forms such as the blues, Cajun music, polka, Tex-Mex conjunto, Peking Opera, and many others. Today, the National is an exuberant traveling festival, produced by the NCTA in partnership with communities

around the country, from Maine, Maryland, and Massachusetts, to Michigan, Montana, Ohio, and Virginia, that embraces the diverse cultural expressions that define us as a people in the 21st century. www.nationalfolkfestival.com/

About the National Council for the Traditional Arts: A leading non-profit in the field, the National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA) is dedicated to the presentation and documentation of folk and traditional arts in the U.S. Stressing excellence and traditionality, the NCTA strives to expand awareness of the richness of America's multicultural, living heritage through exciting, thoughtfully curated live programs that create dynamic cultural encounters between the nation's finest artists and the public. It works in partnership with communities across America to establish new, sustainable traditional arts events that deliver lasting social, cultural, and economic benefits. Over 7,000 hours of the NCTA's archival audio recordings dating from the 1930s are permanently housed at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. The NCTA also champions the interests of folk and traditional artists and organizations in the arena of public policy. ncta-usa.org

About the City of Jackson, MS: Jackson is the capital of the State of Mississippi. Known as the City with Soul, Jackson has a population of 153,701. The city, founded in 1821, sits on the Pearl River and is the anchor for the Jackson metro area. Jackson is home to a number of cultural gems including the Two Mississippi Museums, the Mississippi Museum of Art, and other historic treasures. The city is proudly regarded as the "Blackest city" in America. For more information visit www.jacksonms.gov.