

9 Cool International Festivals You've Never Heard Of

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Around the world, both new and ancient festivals are held frequently to honor and celebrate music, religion, traditions, harvests, historical battles, and even successful conservation efforts. Each celebration draws crowds from near and far. Here are nine lesser-known festivals that are noteworthy for their originality and cultural significance.

Tunarama Festival, Australia



The [Tunarama Festival](#), which is about to celebrate its 60th anniversary, takes place every January in Port Lincoln, South Australia, a place that's well known for its fishing boats and tuna hauls. At the event, you can enjoy arts and crafts displays, market stalls, and an abundance of fresh, local seafood — but the festival is perhaps best known for its Tuna Toss competition, in which the giant fish are hurled down the beach.

Songkran, Thailand



Thailand's Songkran festival is an epic, days-long, nationwide water fight intended to cleanse people in honor of the New Year, which is celebrated each April. Behind the mass water gun fights, bucket dumping, and crowd hosing is the firm national belief that water is spiritually purifying since it washes away bad luck and grievances and brings fortune and happiness. The festival originated long ago in Buddhist temples, but as with many historical celebrations, the focus has shifted from purely spiritual and religious traditions to include more general entertainment.

Battle of the Oranges, Italy



Originating in the early 1800s, the [Battle of the Oranges](#), held in the Italian Piedmont town of Ivrea, is one of the country's oldest and most beloved historical events. Among the many traditional re-enactments, parades, and activities that take place during the three-day festival at the height of the citrus harvest each February, perhaps the most noteworthy event is the battle itself, a wildly popular display in which locals in full costume revisit their standoff with royal Napoleonic troops in the 12th century. The battle features garrisons of *aranceri* (orange throwers) on foot and others in horse-drawn carts intended to represent Napoleon's army.

Cosquín Folk Festival, Argentina



Argentina's fascinating [Cosquín Folk Festival](#) was originally launched in the 1960s to attract tourists to the lesser-known town, but thanks to the impressive lineup of performing folk musicians, the movement instead led to a strong revival in popularity of the beloved tunes of the Argentine countryside among young listeners. Today, this ever-popular music festival has grown into the largest annual folk event in the country.

Cheung Chau Bun Festival, China



One of Hong Kong's most spectacular celebrations is the [Cheung Chau Bun Festival](#), which marks the end of spring. Thousands ferry over to the small island to take in the *piu sik* parade of local children dressed up as deities and performing lion dances. The main event, however, is the exciting bun scrambling competition. The contest entails building 60-foot towers of edible buns, then racing to climb up and gather as many as possible. Everything is created locally, making this cultural and quirky festival a uniquely Hong Kong event.

Spargelfest and Zwiebelmarkt, Germany



Germans love festivals (Oktoberfest, anyone?), and several are dedicated to some of the country's most flavorful staple crops. Intended to draw crowds from around the world to eat, drink, and be merry during peak harvest time, all of the festivals are exciting in their own way, but two in particular reign supreme: Zwiebelmarkt (Onion Market) in Weimar and Spargelfest (Asparagusfest) in Schwetzingen. Both are tradition-filled events where the freshest picks of the season are on full display in countless delicious dishes available for tasting, as well as incorporated into costumes, sculptures, and lively parade floats. At Zwiebelmarkt, onions are braided into hair and strung into garlands like jewels, while at Spargelfest, asparagus are fashioned into giant replicas of buildings. Live music, dancing, and crafts make these food-focused celebrations even more fun and memorable for locals and tourists alike.

Fête du Vodoun, Benin



Benin's Fête du Vodoun (Vodoun Festival, also known as Traditional Religions Day) is a [national holiday](#) celebrating the history of West Africa's Voodoo religion. Held annually in January around Benin, but most notably in the city of [Ouidah](#), the festival includes traditional dances, trances, and even sacrifices — starting with the [slaughter of a goat](#) in honor of the spirits. Filled with music, movement, and liquor (notably [gin](#)), the event draws thousands of devotees and curious spectators.

Kwita Izina, Rwanda



The central African nation of Rwanda is home to nearly half of the global mountain gorilla population. Early each September, the nation honors these beloved animals during the local Kwita Izina ceremony, which celebrates each gorilla born in the past year by bestowing a name. While the gentle giants are busy enjoying their natural habitat and not in attendance for the event, Rwanda's president and 30,000 visitors from around the world congregate to celebrate the conservation efforts and successes that have brought these young primates to life. This inspiring and fairly new cultural celebration first launched in the early 2000s with spectacular traditional *intore* (warrior) dancing, music, and singing.

Conch Festival, Turks and Caicos



Although the Caribbean might be famous for its colorful, explosive Carnival celebrations, the annual [Turks and Caicos Conch Festival](#) has a unique appeal all its own. The shellfish that grow in abundance along the pristine, white-sand shores of the many islands that create Turks and Caicos are featured in local and regional cuisine — adding a delectable, unique twist to stews, soups, and salads that locals and tourists alike can't seem to get enough of. The festivities held each November kick off with a calypso event and offer visitors a range of tasty gourmet dishes celebrating the local delicacy, as well as a delightful dose of local culture.