

New Mexico State Fair 2026: Dates, Tickets & Travel Guide



The **New Mexico State Fair 2026** returns to Albuquerque from **September 10 through September 20, 2026**, for 11 days of food, rides, rodeo action, concerts, agriculture, art, competitions, and family entertainment.

Held at **EXPO New Mexico**, the fair is one of the biggest annual events in the state and draws visitors from across New Mexico and beyond. The 2026 edition is especially significant because it celebrates **100 years of Historic Route 66**, adding a distinctive New Mexico and Albuquerque theme to the traditional state fair experience.

From the aroma of roasting green chili to livestock competitions, carnival rides, Native American cultural programming, major concerts, and PRCA rodeo events, the New Mexico State Fair offers an experience that feels distinctly different from many other state fairs in the United States.

What Is the New Mexico State Fair?

The New Mexico State Fair is an annual celebration of the state's **agriculture, culture, food, art, traditions, and communities**.

Its history dates back to the late 19th century, beginning as a Territorial Fair before New Mexico officially became a state. Agriculture and livestock remain an important part of the event today, but the fair has expanded into a major cultural celebration with entertainment, competitions, food, rides, shopping, and activities for visitors of all ages.

One of the things that makes this fair unique is its strong New Mexico identity.

Visitors can experience Native American and Hispanic cultural traditions alongside agricultural exhibits, local art, regional food, rodeo events, and classic carnival attractions. Areas such as **Indian Village, Villa Hispana, the African American Pavilion, and the agricultural exhibits** help showcase the diversity of New Mexico.

New Mexico State Fair 2026: Key Details

Here are the essential details for planning your visit.

- **Dates:** September 10-20, 2026
- **Venue:** EXPO New Mexico
- **Location:** Albuquerque, New Mexico
- **Tickets:** Check Tickets

The 2026 fair runs for **11 days**, including two full weekends. This gives visitors plenty of flexibility when planning around concerts, rodeos, special events, food experiences, and family activities.

EXPO New Mexico is located at **300 San Pedro Drive NE in Albuquerque**, approximately five miles east of downtown.

What to Expect at the New Mexico State Fair 2026

The fairgrounds are large, and there is enough to see and do for a full day or multiple visits.

Route 66 Centennial Celebration

The 2026 New Mexico State Fair celebrates **100 Years of Historic Route 66**. Route 66 has a strong connection to Albuquerque and New Mexico, and the anniversary adds an extra layer of character to this year's fair.

Special Route 66-themed programming includes a **Route 66 Parade Day on September 12**, along with classic and vintage vehicle displays. Visitors can expect Route 66 culture to be reflected in special events, food experiences, automobiles, and other activities around the fairgrounds.

For travelers interested in American road-trip history, this makes the 2026 fair particularly memorable.

Agriculture and Livestock

Agriculture remains one of the foundations of the New Mexico State Fair. Visitors can explore livestock exhibits and competitions featuring cattle, sheep, swine, horses, and other animals. The fair also highlights the work of **4-H and FFA participants**, giving young people from across the state an opportunity to showcase their agricultural projects.

Other competitions and exhibits focus on agriculture, floriculture, home arts, creative arts, food, and rural traditions.

These areas provide a quieter and more educational side of the fair, making them a good choice for families and visitors who want to experience more than the midway.

Carnival Midway

The carnival midway brings the classic state fair experience to Albuquerque. Visitors can enjoy rides, games, lights, and attractions ranging from family-friendly options to more thrilling experiences.

The midway is especially popular in the evening when the fairgrounds take on a lively atmosphere.

If rides are one of your main priorities, consider planning your visit around a day when you have enough time to enjoy the midway without rushing through the rest of the fair.

PRCA Rodeo and Xtreme Bulls

The New Mexico State Fair is home to one of the state's biggest rodeo experiences.

The 2026 program includes **PRCA Rodeo events and PRCA Xtreme Bulls**, bringing professional competitors and high-energy Western sports to Tingley Coliseum.

Rodeo is a major part of New Mexico's culture, and these events are among the biggest entertainment highlights of the fair.

The 2026 schedule includes rodeo events on several dates, including special performances connected with the concert series.

Major Concerts at Tingley Coliseum

Live music is one of the biggest reasons many visitors attend the New Mexico State Fair.

The 2026 concert lineup includes several well-known performers across country and rock music.

Highlights include:

- **Turnpike Troubadours** on September 11
- **Ian Munsick** on September 12
- **Everclear** on September 17
- **Tanya Tucker** on September 18
- **The Warning** on September 19

Several concert events are paired with PRCA Rodeo or Xtreme Bulls performances, creating a full evening of entertainment.

If you want to attend a specific artist, plan your visit around the official schedule and check current ticket availability before traveling.

Main Street Days and Theme Days

The New Mexico State Fair also features themed programming throughout its 11-day run.

The 2026 Main Street Days include events and recognition programs connected to law enforcement, firefighters, seniors, veterans, education, New Mexico communities, science, technology, and the environment.

Other themed days focus on classic cars and custom vehicles.

Some notable 2026 highlights include:

- **Law Enforcement Appreciation Day:** September 10
- **Fire Fighters and Smokey Bear Day:** September 11
- **Route 66 Parade Day:** September 12
- **Classic Car Shows:** September 13
- **Senior and Healthy Living programming:** September 14
- **Military and Veterans Day:** September 15
- **Pathways to College and Careers Day:** September 16
- **NM True Day and Gathering of the Counties:** September 17
- **Science and Technology and Environment Appreciation Day:** September 18
- **Hot Rods and Custom Cars Show:** September 19
- **Classic Car programming:** September 20

Each day can offer a different experience, so check the schedule before deciding when to visit.

Indian Village and Cultural Experiences

The New Mexico State Fair provides opportunities to experience Native American culture through **Indian Village** programming.

Visitors can find cultural performances, music, dance, food, art, and other activities during the fair.

The area is one of the features that gives the New Mexico State Fair its distinctive identity.

Take time to explore the cultural areas rather than spending your entire visit on rides and major entertainment. They provide a better understanding of the traditions and communities that make New Mexico unique.

Villa Hispana and Local Culture

Villa Hispana is another important cultural area at the fairgrounds.

New Mexico's Hispanic heritage is reflected through music, performances, food, community activities, and cultural programming.

Together with Indian Village and other cultural spaces, Villa Hispana helps make the fair a broader celebration of New Mexico rather than simply an agricultural event or carnival.

Art, Creative Competitions, and Exhibits

The New Mexico State Fair hosts competitions and exhibits across many categories.

Visitors can explore creative arts, home arts, floriculture, school arts, photography and other displays, depending on the current year's programming.

These exhibits showcase the work of artists, makers, students, gardeners, and community members from around the state.

They are also a good place to take a break from the outdoor heat during the afternoon.

New Mexico State Fair Food 2026

Food is one of the biggest attractions at the New Mexico State Fair.

You will find traditional state fair favorites, but New Mexico's regional flavors make the food experience especially memorable.

Green Chile Favorites

New Mexico is known for its chili, and fair food reflects that local tradition.

Visitors can find dishes featuring green chili in creative and unexpected ways, including green chili corn dogs, cheeseburgers, cheese curds, and other specialties.

The **Green Chile Cheeseburger Challenge** is one of the fair's most distinctive food competitions and celebrates one of New Mexico's most famous dishes.

Native American Food

Visitors can also enjoy New Mexico and Native American favorites such as:

- Navajo tacos
- Fry bread
- Regional New Mexican dishes

The food offerings provide a great opportunity to try something more local than standard carnival fare.

Classic Fair Food

Traditional favorites are also easy to find.

Look for foods such as:

- Funnel cakes
- Mini donuts
- Kettle corn
- Ribbon fries
- Elote
- Corn dogs
- Fried foods
- Ice cream
- Shaved ice
- Lemonade and other drinks

With hundreds of vendors and concessions, it is worth walking around before deciding what to eat.

Graze Days

Food lovers should also keep an eye on **Graze Days**, a special fair food experience held on Thursdays.

Participating vendors offer selected food items and deals during the event, giving visitors an opportunity to sample more of the fair's food scene.

If your main goal is trying different foods, Thursday can be an excellent day to visit.

New Mexico State Fair 2026 Hours

The fair generally operates during the day and into the evening.

Current published hours are:

- **Sunday through Thursday:** 10 AM to 9 PM
- **Friday and Saturday:** 10 AM to 10 PM

Individual attractions, rides, exhibits, concerts, and rodeo events may follow their own schedules.

Check the official daily program before arriving if you want to attend a particular performance or event.

Best Time to Visit the New Mexico State Fair

The best time depends on what you want to experience.

For Smaller Crowds

Weekday mornings are usually a good choice for visitors who want more time to explore the exhibits, livestock areas, and food vendors.

Earlier hours can also be more comfortable before the warmest part of the day.

For Families

Arriving early gives families time to explore agricultural exhibits, cultural areas, rides, and entertainment at a more relaxed pace.

Families with younger children may prefer daytime visits before the fairgrounds become busier in the evening.

For Food

If food is your priority, consider visiting on a Thursday for Graze Days or plan extra time to explore the different food areas across the fairgrounds.

For Concerts and Rodeo

Plan your visit around the official Tingley Coliseum schedule.

Popular concert and rodeo nights can bring larger crowds, but they also provide some of the most exciting entertainment of the fair.

For the Full Fair Atmosphere

Friday and Saturday evenings offer the busiest and most energetic atmosphere.

The rides are illuminated, entertainment is underway, and the fairgrounds feel especially lively after sunset.

Travel Tips for Attending the New Mexico State Fair

A little preparation can make your visit much easier.

- **Check the daily schedule:** Each day has different concerts, rodeos, theme days, and activities.
- **Wear comfortable shoes:** The EXPO New Mexico grounds are large, and you will do plenty of walking.
- **Arrive early:** This is especially helpful on weekends and major concert nights.

- **Bring sun protection:** September days in Albuquerque can still be sunny and warm.
- **Stay hydrated:** Walking around the fairgrounds can be tiring, especially during the afternoon.
- **Bring a light layer:** Temperatures can become cooler after sunset.
- **Plan around the attractions you most want to see:** Concerts and rodeo events may determine the best day for your visit.
- **Explore beyond the midway:** The cultural villages, agricultural exhibits, art displays, and competitions are an important part of the experience.
- **Check the fair map:** It will help you locate stages, food areas, barns, cultural exhibits, and major attractions.
- **Download the official fair app:** It can help you keep up with schedules and real-time updates.

Getting to the New Mexico State Fair

The New Mexico State Fair takes place at **EXPO New Mexico in Albuquerque**.

Visitors driving to the fair can use Interstate 25 and follow directions toward the San Mateo or Louisiana exits.

The fairgrounds have multiple entrances, and traffic patterns can vary depending on the day and event schedule.

If you are attending on a busy weekend, concert night, or major rodeo evening, allow additional time for traffic and parking.

Parking and Transportation

Parking is available at designated gates around EXPO New Mexico.

The official fair also provides transportation alternatives for some visitors, including weekend **Park and Ride service**, rideshare drop-off options, and a bike valet.

Park and Ride service is scheduled for selected weekends, making it a useful option for visitors who want to avoid busy parking areas.

If you have accessibility needs, review the official parking and mobility information before traveling. Scooter, wheelchair, stroller, and other rentals may also be available at the fairgrounds.

Things to Do Near the New Mexico State Fair

The fair's Albuquerque location makes it easy to turn your visit into a longer New Mexico trip.

Explore Old Town Albuquerque

Old Town is one of the most popular places to visit in Albuquerque.

Visitors can explore historic adobe buildings, local shops, galleries, museums, restaurants, and New Mexican culture.

It is a good choice for travelers visiting the fair for the first time.

Ride the Sandia Peak Tramway

The **Sandia Peak Tramway** is one of Albuquerque's most famous attractions.

The tram travels high above the city toward the Sandia Mountains and offers impressive views of Albuquerque and the surrounding landscape.

It is an excellent addition to a longer trip, especially for visitors who want a break from the busy fairgrounds.

Explore Historic Route 66

The 2026 Route 66 Centennial theme provides a perfect reason to explore Albuquerque's connection to the historic highway.

Drive along Central Avenue, where you can see historic motels, restaurants, signs, businesses, and other reminders of Route 66's history.

Visit Petroglyph National Monument

Outdoor travelers can explore **Petroglyph National Monument**, where volcanic landscapes and ancient rock carvings provide a very different experience from downtown Albuquerque.

The monument offers several hiking areas and is a good choice for visitors who want to experience the region's natural and cultural history.

Explore Albuquerque's Food Scene

Albuquerque is one of the best cities in the Southwest for travelers who enjoy food.

After trying fair favorites, explore local restaurants serving New Mexican dishes, green chile, enchiladas, burritos, sopillas, and other regional specialties.

Where to Stay for the New Mexico State Fair

Albuquerque offers a wide range of accommodation options.

For the most convenient access to the fairgrounds, consider hotels in the **Uptown, Midtown, Nob Hill, or East Central areas**.

Downtown Albuquerque can also be a good choice for visitors who want to combine the fair with restaurants, museums, and nightlife.

Travelers attending major concert or rodeo events should book early, particularly for weekends.

Is the New Mexico State Fair Worth Visiting?

The **New Mexico State Fair 2026** is worth visiting for travelers looking for a state fair experience with strong local character.

The event combines classic attractions such as carnival rides, livestock, concerts, rodeo, and fair food with experiences that are uniquely connected to New Mexico's culture.

Indian Village, Villa Hispana, green chile food, local art, Route 66 programming, agricultural traditions, and Western rodeo events all help set this fair apart.

The 2026 Route 66 Centennial celebration also gives visitors an additional reason to attend this year's event.

For families, food lovers, music fans, rodeo enthusiasts, and travelers exploring Albuquerque, the New Mexico State Fair can easily become one of the highlights of a September trip.

Conclusion

The **New Mexico State Fair 2026** takes place from **September 10 through September 20, 2026**, at EXPO New Mexico in Albuquerque.

From carnival rides and livestock competitions to major concerts, PRCA rodeo action, green chile food, cultural programming, art, and Route 66 celebrations, this 11-day event offers one of the most distinctive state fair experiences in the United States.

Before traveling, check the official New Mexico State Fair website for the latest **tickets, schedules, attractions, concerts, rodeo events, parking information, and visitor updates.**

Frequently Asked Questions

When is the New Mexico State Fair 2026?

The **New Mexico State Fair 2026** takes place from **September 10 through September 20, 2026**, in Albuquerque.

Where is the New Mexico State Fair held?

The fair is held at **EXPO New Mexico in Albuquerque, New Mexico.**

How long does the New Mexico State Fair last?

The 2026 New Mexico State Fair runs for **11 days**, including two full weekends.

What is the New Mexico State Fair known for?

The fair is known for New Mexico culture, agriculture, livestock, carnival rides, PRCA rodeo, major concerts, green chile food, Native American cultural programming, art, competitions, and family activities.

What is special about the New Mexico State Fair 2026?

The 2026 fair celebrates **100 Years of Historic Route 66**, with Route 66-themed programming, classic car events, special displays, and activities connected to Albuquerque's road-trip history.

Is the New Mexico State Fair family-friendly?

Yes. Families can enjoy carnival rides, livestock exhibits, agricultural displays, cultural activities, food vendors, competitions, entertainment, and attractions for visitors of different ages.