

# Europe's Never-Ending Summer Festivals

By Maria Lisella

Most American travelers do not plan their trips around events, but the serendipity of finding a wonderful street parade or an off-beat celebration can turn a day of touring into a cherished memory worth telling and retelling. Here are a few of the most popular summer festivals taking place this summer along with a short guide on getting to them. For details and links to individual tourist offices, visit the **European Travel Commission's** Guide to Europe at [www.visit-europe.com](http://www.visit-europe.com)

## Croatia

The most celebrated and largest cultural event in Croatia is undoubtedly the 62nd Dubrovnik Summer Festival that takes place July 11-August 25th. An all-star line-up of international performers and an ever-increasing number of visitors arrive to enjoy performances in the most unique indoor and outdoor venues in this fabulous walled city and UNESCO Heritage Site. Zagreb joins Dubrovnik and Split in becoming Croatia's third city to offer visitors a card giving unlimited travel on public transport, discounts at most of the city's museums and at many restaurants, shops, and service providers. The card is valid for 24 or 72 hours and can be bought online, at any Zagreb Tourist Information Centre and at most hotels.

## Czech Republic

If you arrive in Prague during the first week of June, your visit will coincide with the final performances of the 66th edition of the Prague Spring International Music Festival. Hot on its heels is the colorful Straznice International Folklore Festival from June 24th-July 27th when dozens of folklore ensembles



Germany: Cologne Street Carnival

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and groups gather in Prague to show off their songs, dances and traditions and spectators get to admire their costumes and customs, not to mention tasting their specialties.

Film buffs should not miss the International Karlovy Vary Film Festival (July 1st-9th) set in the famous spa town.

One of the oldest Czech events is the Palava Vine Harvest and Wine Festival that takes place in the Southern Moravian town of Mikulov this year from September 9th-11th. Strings of Autumn is a classical music festival that runs annually from October to November; its particular forte is illustrating links between classical music and jazz.

To get there, the only nonstop service from the U.S. to Prague is on **Delta**; same as Croatia, all major European carriers operate routes through their hubs into Prague. Finland: **Finnair** continues to operate flights into Helsinki and recently added a direct flight between Chicago and Helsinki on May 1 in cooperation with **American Airlines**; **SAS** also operates seamless and frequent service.

## Finland

The Midnight Sun is no fairytale or myth especially in Lapland where its magical surroundings are filled with seemingly endless sunshine. The 26th edition of the Midnight Sun Film Festival Sodankyla (June 15-19th) is a joyride for filmmakers and film aficionados. This year the festival limo brings us Atom Egoyan from Canada, Michael Chapman from the United States and Souleymane Cissé from Africa. Denis Côté, also from Canada, represents the younger generation this year. The Baltic Jazz Festival (July 8-10th) headlines internationally

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## EUROPE

distinguished Nordic jazz artists and is fast becoming popular with the yachting set that anchors inside this endless coastal archipelago in Southwest Finland to hear and see top class classic melody jazz in a historic seaside iron-works milieu. Some say the landscapes of Lake Tuusula form the cornerstone of the Finnish cultural world, and from July 24-31st, it provides the backdrop for a journey among the homes of Jean Sibelius and his contemporaries in an event dubbed Our Festival.

Make no mistake, there are other fascinating festivals going on south of the North Pole. From July 28-31, the Kotka Maritime Festival is the backdrop for concert programs ranging from rock to classical music, the Maritime Song Festival, Maritime Jazz, exhibitions, street theater and the Children's Maritime Festival.

### Germany

A high point of the 125th anniversary of the motorcar is the Summer of Cars. Bertha Benz Memorial Route commemorates this event and gives people the chance to relive a moment in history by following her route. Another must is the Mercedes-Benz Museum and the Porsche Museum in Stuttgart; the Meilenwerk in Sindelfingen (just outside Stuttgart), the Volkswagen's flagship Autostadt theme park in Wolfsburg, the Audi Forum in Ingolstadt (Bavaria), the BMW World and museum in Munich, the 'Transparent Factory' in Dresden, the August Horch Museum in Zwickau, and the Car & Technology Museum in Sinsheim.

The Dresden Philharmonic will honor composer Franz Liszt with several concerts in 2011, including the Dresden Music Festival on June 1 at the Semper Opera House. "Liszt under Water" will take place June 21-July 1st at the Toskana Thermal Baths in Bad Sulza, and "Sky over Liszt" from June 18-July 3rd at the Jena Zeilss Planetarium.

No surprise here but the 90th Mozartfest runs through the end of June and has been doing so since 1921 with a small interruption but was revived in 1951. The Leipzig Bach Festival, June 13-20th, is one of Germany's most important classical events, performed in St. Thomas' Church by acclaimed musicians including the St. Thomas Boys' Choir.

Germany will once again be hosting a FIFA World Cup in 2011, only this time it will be the sixth FIFA Women's World Cup from June 26 to July 17, 2011 with the official slogan: "The Beautiful Side of 20Eleven." The Sixteen teams will contest the FIFA Women's World Cup 2011.

Berlin's Bode-Museum presents "Faces of the Renaissance" from August 25-November 11, showcasing the history of portrait painting in Florence with works by Donatello and Botticelli, among other portrait painters at the Italian courts.

Lufthansa may be a global carrier but still offers a tremendous amount of flexibility when it comes to reaching corners of Germany; close second is **Air Berlin**, the second largest carrier in Germany and fifth in Europe; and don't forget the American carriers.

### Poland

From June 24-July 3rd, The Jewish Culture Festival takes place in Cracow. Since its inception in 1988, it has emerged as one of the most important and largest events of its kind in the



world. The First Festival focused on a conference on cultural encounters between Jewish and Polish scholars. The event takes place in one of the most fascinating corners of the city, the cobblestoned streets of the Kazimierz district, which has undergone its own renaissance since the days of Solidarity. A factory on the edge of the neighborhood was used as a setting for the film, *Schindler's List*.

The Galicia Jewish Museum recently opened with a moving and thought-provoking exhibit, *Traces of Memory*, by the late museum director and photographer Chris Schwarz, showcasing his documentation of ruined synagogues and cemeteries throughout the towns and countryside of this region of Poland.

Events take place in synagogue, cellars, theatres and cafes culminating with a huge open-air concert on the picturesque Szeroka Street. Among regular performers, hot names to look out for are Kroke, Brave Old World, The Cracow Klezmer Band and Ukrainian newcomers The Kharkov Klezmer Band.

Ever since **Delta** took over **PanAm's** routes, its Central and Eastern Europe routes have been richer for it. **LOT Polish Airlines** also operates frequent nonstop service to Poland from the U.S. and has just signed a codeshare with **Continental**, giving the carrier more feeder service from other U.S. gateways.

### Spain

The Celtic link to Spain's northwestern region, Galicia, is one of endless speculation and fascination and is the inspiration for the Celtic World Festival that takes place on the third weekend in July on the slopes of the Capelada, Coriscada and Faladoira Hills that lead to the sanctuary of San Andrés de Teixido. Not to be outdone by any other region, San Sebastian in Basque country is hosting the Festival de San Sebastian International Film Festival Sept. 16-24th. What makes this event particularly exciting is that each year, 20 new talents show up in San Sebastian with their first or second movies to compete for the Kutxa-New Directors Award (EUR 90,000) for the maker and importer to Spain of the winning film.

Would Spain be Spain without a fabulous wine harvest festival? Logrono is the setting for the Rioja Wine Harvest Festival dedicated to San Mateo. Be ready to participate in the traditional foot-crushing of grapes, the offering of the first wine to the Virgen de Valvanera, throw in a little bull-running, parades with floats, music, popular meals and ball games.

There is no shortage of airlift between the U.S.; this spring, **Iberia** inaugurated two new flights; one from Los Angeles to Madrid and the other, between Miami and Barcelona.