

Here's the answer to every question you have about the 2024 NC State Fair

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Welcome to North Carolina State Fair season. Learn the basics and get familiar with the new stuff before heading to the fairgrounds this year.

You can get additional info about the fair at ncagr.gov/divisions/nystatefair/2024.

WHEN IS THE NC STATE FAIR? WHAT ARE THE HOURS?

The fair begins Thursday, Oct. 17 and ends Sunday, Oct. 27.

Hours:

- Thursday, Oct. 17: noon-11 p.m.
- Friday, Oct. 18 - Saturday, Oct. 19: 9 a.m.-midnight
- Sunday, Oct. 20 - Thursday, Oct. 24: 9 a.m.-11 p.m.
- Friday, Oct. 25 - Saturday, Oct. 26: 9 a.m.-midnight
- Sunday, Oct. 27: 9 a.m.-11 p.m.

HOW MUCH DO NC STATE FAIR TICKETS COST?

Tickets can be purchased online at a discount until Thursday, Oct. 17, and there are walk-up locations available from until Oct. 17 to purchase tickets at this rate. Gate prices are a bit higher, beginning Friday, Oct. 18.

• Adult (ages 13 to 64): \$10 through Oct. 18, or \$13 at the gate beginning Oct. 18.

• Military adult (ages 13 to 64): \$8, but they can only be bought at the gate after Oct. 18.

• Youth (ages 6 to 12): \$5 through Oct. 18, \$7 at the gate after that.

• Child (ages 0 to 5): Free.

• Senior adult (ages 65+): \$5 anytime.

Groups can buy discounted tickets. Group adult tickets are \$8 each when bought in groups of 40 or more, while group youth tickets are \$4 each when bought in groups of 40 or more.

ARE THERE ANY NC STATE FAIR TICKET DISCOUNTS?

Adult or youth groups of 40 or more can get ticket discounts (see above).

These passes must be purchased online by Thursday, Oct. 17.

• Dizzy Pass: \$38 includes a FastTrack gate admission ticket and an unlimited ride wristband, only valid for one day during the 2024 State Fair.

• Kegs & Corks Pass: \$17 includes a gate admissions ticket and an NC Public House Beer + Wine ticket, which provides your choice of a 16 oz. craft beer or a 6 oz. wine.

• State Fair Flyer Package: \$17 includes one gate admission ticket and one round-trip State Fair flyer ticket, which is not valid for carnival rides.

• State Fair SkyGazer: \$14 includes one FastTrack gate admission ticket and a SkyGazer (Ferris wheel) ticket, which is not valid for carnival rides.

And there are a couple of days when some folks can get into the fair for free:

• Senior Citizens' Day (Tuesday, Oct. 22): Seniors aged 65+ get free admission.

Bojangles biscuits and coffee will be served at 9 a.m. on the Dorton Arena Patio near the Waterfall.

• Smithfield Foods Hunger Relief Day (Thursday, Oct. 24):

Bring six cans of food and get in free. Since Hunger Relief Day began at the State Fair in 1993, fairgoers have donated more than 6 million pounds of food to the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina.

ARE RIDES OR GAMES INCLUDED WITH MY NC STATE FAIR TICKET?

Rides and games require separate purchases.

Games are cash-only, and you purchase tickets for the rides.

You can also purchase wristbands for rides (except for the SkyGazer Ferris wheel and Flyer). Wristbands can be bought online for \$30 in advance or for \$40 during the fair (online or in person).

For ride tickets: Visit the ticket plazas (neon green tents with stars on top) near Gates 7, 8 and 9 or in front of Dorton Arena.

Ticket plazas are open daily 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. (minus Thursday Oct 17, when hours of operation differ slightly). Carnival ticket plazas, located in each Midway, will be open during Carnival operating hours.

HOW CAN I BUY RIDE TICKETS FOR THE NC STATE FAIR?

You can purchase these tickets online (and at a discount) before the fair, or you can buy them in person when you arrive for the fun.

Ride ticket cards, which rolled out last year, take the place of the ride ticket sheets the fair has used for years.

Tickets will be placed on a chipped card, which needs to be presented at each ride and automatically debited the ticket count for that ride. These cards will now carry over from year to year, letting you use last year's unused tickets and even save some for next year.

Ride ticket cards are \$10 for 18 ride tickets bought online through Thursday, Oct. 17, then they're \$1 per ticket at Ride Ticket Plazas (or \$18 for 18 bought online) during the fair.

When the fair begins, ride ticket cards will be available online and in person at Ride Ticket Plazas. (More on those below.)

Ride wristbands are \$30 per wristband when bought online by Oct. 17, then they're \$40 per wristband Oct. 18 and beyond, whether purchasing online or at carnival booths in person. Wristbands are valid only for one day during the Fair.

WHAT'S THE NC STATE FAIR LUNCH PASS?

Here's how the Weekday Lunch Pass Program will work in 2024:

Enter through Gate 9 off Trinity Road or Gate 1 off Hillsborough Street between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on a weekday.

Purchase a lunch card at the gate for \$20.

Lunch cards are cash only (and previously \$10).

Visit the food vendors for lunch (there are dozens of new offerings).

Return the lunch card by 1:30 p.m. to the same gate used for entry on the same day it was purchased.

Get a full \$20 refund for the lunch card.

Important reminders:

If you leave after 1:30 p.m., you forfeit your \$20.

No food is included in the program. The cost only covers admission to the fair.

WHICH NEW FOODS ARE COMING TO THE NC STATE FAIR THIS YEAR?

This year's list is studed with collisions from two great eating forces — fair food tradition and TikTok. You can thank those forces as you stroll through the fair sipping on pickle-flavored Dr. Pepper.

Other trends seem to include breaded bologna fries, pickles in just about every kind of situation and new plates of nachos. Somehow, this year's roster of fair foods even includes deep fried spaghetti.

For our run-down of new fair foods for 2024, visit newsobserver.com/living/food-drink.

CAN YOU PAY FOR FOOD AT THE NC STATE FAIR WITH A CARD, OR IS IT CASH ONLY?

Many vendors take credit cards, but some only take cash. There are ATMs on the fairgrounds.

If you only brought a card, or if you only brought cash, there would be plenty of food options.

A tip: Having some cash on hand is always smart, because when the fair gets busy, the wireless network tends to slow down. ATM lines can get long too.

CAN I PARK FOR FREE AT THE NC STATE FAIR?

Yes. There are a number of parking lots that let you park for free, and some have a shuttle that will take you to the fairgrounds, so you won't have to walk.

Here are the free parking lots:

Dogwood Lot

Cardinal Lot

Carter-Finley Stadium

Lenovo Center

Note: There may be exceptions if events are scheduled at Carter-Finley (no NC State home football games are on the schedule) or Lenovo Center (there are concerts scheduled for Oct. 18, 19, 25 and 26).

CAN I TAKE FREE SHUTTLES TO THE NC STATE FAIR?

Yes. The fair will offer several park-and-ride shuttle options from off-site parking lots to entry gates at the fair.

Shuttles will be offered to and from these lots, which will also have accessible shuttles available.

Dogwood Lot: The shuttle drops visitors off at Gate 8 of the fair.

The address is 4501 Reedy Creek Rd. in Raleigh.

Cardinal Lot: The shuttle drops visitors off at Gate 7 of the fair.

The address is 5766 Chapel Hill Road Rd. in Raleigh.

Both lots are from 9 a.m. until one hour after gates close each day. (Hours slightly differ on Thursday, Oct. 17.)

Shuttles will not be offered at Carter-Finley Stadium or the Lenovo Center. Remember, there may be exceptions to daily free parking at these lots if there are events scheduled at these two sporting arenas.

(Note: On the other side of the fairgrounds — on the Hillsborough Street behind Dorton Arena — the North Carolina Pottery Tent features pottery for sale made only by potters from the state.)

HOW CAN I SUPPORT WESTERN NC AFTER HELENE AT THE FAIR?

Donations can be contributed online for those buying tickets on the State Fair's website

with the option to give to the fundraiser link before you check out with the option to give \$5-\$25.

The donation drive isn't the only way to support those affected by the storm at the state fair this year.

Of the more than 75 artisans coming out for fairgoers to see them in action, many are from Western North Carolina, and the State Fair has confirmed that they will still be able to attend.

Here's a list of some of the member crafters you can support as the cleanup continues in their communities:

The Village of Yester-year will be open at the N.C. State Fair from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day. On opening day, Thursday Oct. 17, it'll be open at noon. You can find more information online at nstatefair.org.

CAN I TAKE A GORALEIGH BUS TO THE NC STATE FAIR?

Yes. GoRaleigh shuttles will carry passengers to the state fairgrounds from the Triangle Town Center Shopping Mall, 5959 Triangle Town Blvd. in Raleigh, near the Dillard's parking lot. The shuttles will run every 30 minutes daily from 8:30 a.m. until the fair closes.

Here are the prices for the shuttle:

Round trip \$5

One way: \$4

Seniors 65 and older and passengers with disabilities: \$2.50 round trip or \$2 one way

Children under 40 inches tall: Free

You can pay with cash or by using the UMO app. The GoPass is not valid on State Fair routes.

Advanced sale passes are available through the UMO App or in-person and can be purchased at the GoRaleigh operations facility, 4104 Poole Rd. in Raleigh, or at GoRaleigh Station in downtown Raleigh.

WHEN ARE THE FIREWORKS AT THE NC STATE FAIR?

Nightly. Attendees can enjoy a fireworks show every evening at 9:45 p.m. over the Heritage Circle Pond.

WHAT KINDS OF RIDES ARE AT THE NC STATE FAIR?

Yes. You can rent scooters, wheelchairs and strollers at the fair, but they cannot be reserved in advance.

The fair will have nearly 100 rides ranging from thrill rides for adults to slow, small rides for children.

There will be two new rides this year:

State Fair Slide: A 210-foot slide

Candyland Adventure: A 130-foot long funhouse

WHAT IS THE VILLAGE OF YESTERYEAR?

The Village of Yester-year is an area set aside for artisans who preserve skills and crafts from past generations. Their slogan: "Preserving art of the past for generations of the future."

Crafters include glass blowers, jewelers, painters, basket weavers, potters and sculptors, wood carvers and much more.

More than 75 artists and crafters are featured. This year, seven crafters will be celebrated who have been in the Village for 35 years or more.

The majority of the crafters in the Village of Yester-year are from North Carolina, and many are from the mountains. (See below on how you can support them after Hurricane Helene's devastation.)

The Village of Yester-year is located near the Heritage Church and Folk Festival, close to the Midway. It's most easily accessible by Gates 6, 7 or 8.

(Note: On the other side of the fairgrounds — on the Hillsborough Street behind Dorton Arena — the North Carolina Pottery Tent features pottery for sale made only by potters from the state.)

HOW ACCESSIBLE IS THE NC STATE FAIR?

Buildings: All modern buildings at the Fair grounds have been modified to standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act. There are some historical buildings in Heritage Circle that are not up to ADA standards.

Bathrooms: There are changing tables in all bathrooms.

Universal changing tables: are in the Scott Building and the Agri Supply Exposition Center.

Supply Exposition Center.

Family restrooms are in the Martin Building and Agri Supply Exposition Center.

Mother's rooms are in the Scott and Martin buildings and the Agri Supply Exposition Center.

Parking: Accessible parking is available near Gate 10.

Visitors with handicap permits should park in the paved parking lot at the corner of Blue Ridge Road and Trinity Road, near Gate 10 of the Fair-grounds. There are more than 100 parking spaces designated for use by visitors with disabilities in this lot, but a valid handicap permit is required.

Visitors can access the Fair through Gates 9 and 10.

AccessABILITY Day will be held on Sunday, Oct. 20.

From 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. this special event will include:

Rides and games will operate with no lights or music playing.

Vendors will operate with no lights or music at their booths.

Music stages will only play acoustic sets with light amplification.

The public address system will only be used for lost visitor announcements.

Throughout the whole day:

An indoor "Chill Out Zone" in the Graham Building will have tables and chairs, low lighting and soft music.