

2016 Spring Arts Preview: Streets come alive with outdoor events

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Sakura Illumination during the Cherry Blossom Festival. Photo by LOBO. *GASTON MARIN*

In Vancouver, the spring festival season is all about getting outside and celebrating the many cultures that come together to make up this vibrant city. With street closures for Car Free Day, Italian Day and Greek Day taking place just about every weekend in June, it's a busy schedule. Here are a few big events to help you plan ahead.

Pick of the Season:

Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival

March 24 to April 17 | Various venues

Tickets and info: ycbf.ca

Every year in Japan, crowds gather in parks to enjoy the gorgeous clouds of pink blossoms cascading into the streets. Here in Vancouver, we too can celebrate the return of the sunshine, as well as this city's Japanese heritage, with events across the city. A month of events kick off downtown with a free Cherry Jam concert at the Burrard SkyTrain Station and carry on with illuminations, cultural performances and guided tours of the best blossom viewing sights.

Festival Du Bois

Until March 6 | Mackin Park, Coquitlam

Tickets and info: festivaldubois.ca

Don your winter plaid for one last time (hopefully) and head to Coquitlam for a celebration of British Columbia's French Canadian music, art and food. Fill up on tourtière or bring your fiddle to the jam session in the sugar shack — the whole family is welcome.

Celtic Festival

March 10 to 17 | Various venues

Tickets and info: celticfestvancouver.com

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This weeklong celebration of Irish culture features appearances by Celtic fave The Irish Rovers, the rousing East Coast sounds of the Halifax Wharf Rats, whiskey tastings and the Standing Room Only Theatre production of Moll. The big St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 13 starts at Howe and Davie at 11 a.m. and runs north along Howe to Georgia, ending at Georgia and Granville.

European Festival

May 28-29 | Swangard Stadium, Burnaby

Tickets and info: europeanfestival.ca

Now in its 19th year, the European Festival welcomes representatives from more than 30 nations for its 2-day festival of food and culture. This year check out Celtic folk with The Paperboys, sword fighting demos from Blood and Iron, French pop from Chic Soirée, Swiss Alphorn players Hong Kim & Beat Heeb, and Balkan brass for the end of the world from Orkestar Slivovica.

Vancouver International Children's Festival

May 30 to June 5 | Granville Island

Tickets and info: childrensfestival.ca

For the first week in June, Granville Island transforms into a magical playland with enough circus performers, music, dance and puppetry to keep the kids dancing all summer. For an extra special treat, check out the Pyjama Night performances and find your creative spark at the activity village.

City of Bhangra Festival

June 11 to 18 | Various locations

Tickets and info: vibc.org

Now in its 12th year, City of Bhangra celebrates the roots of the dance that rose from the Punjab regions of India and Pakistan to become an international phenomenon. Starting with electrifying performances by local and international troupes at indoor and outdoor stages in parks, clubs and classrooms, the party culminates on June 17 and 18 with Downtown Bhangra, a two-day open-stage party at the VAG plaza.

Velopalooza

June 12 to 28 | Various locations

Tickets and info: velopalooza.ca

Celebrate our city's wild cycling culture with group rides focused of everything from beer to music, pedal powered art demos, maintenance workshops and BBQs at Kits Beach. And for the brave, there's the World Naked Bike Ride on June 13.

Dragon Boat Festival

June 17 to 19 | Creekside Park

Info: dragonboatbc.ca

Cheer along your favourite paddlers and celebrate North America's biggest dragon boat races with live music, a beer garden and loads of great food.

Khatsahlano Street Festival

July 9 | 4th Avenue between Burrard and MacDonald

Tickets and info: khatsahlano.com

Dance your way into summer with Vancouver's biggest free art and music festival. Every year, this party welcomes amazing acts performing for more than 150,000 people from all over the Lower Mainland, so stay tuned for announcements. And if you want to be involved, band applications are open until March 9.

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