About Ann Arbor

Culture

Ann Arbor has a vibrant cultural scene that pleases all tastes and inclinations. Current, the area’s leading art-related monthly, provides thorough calendar listings so you don’t miss a thing!

- Books & Literature
- Museums & Art Galleries
- Movies & Film
- Theater & Stage
- Festivals and Fairs
- Music & Nightlife

Books & Literature
Ann Arbor is a haven for book lovers. In addition to being a prime hunting ground for collectors – there are more than 25 stores in Ann Arbor proper – it is the birthplace of Borders Books and a common stop for authors on book tours. The city is also known nationally for its annual book festival that includes sidewalk sales, guest authors, workshops, exhibits and special presentations.

Museums & Art Galleries
The area is home to more than 40 museums and art galleries that explore everything from Ann Arbor’s role in aviation, to prehistoric dinosaurs, to early Michigan settlers, to art of the past, present and future. Here are a few highlights:

- Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum (pictured right): A museum that promotes science literacy through experimentation, exploration and education; children and adults can discover and enjoy the wonder of science, math and technology in an interactive environment
- Arts at Michigan: list of U-M art and cultural events
- Artrain USA: the nation’s only traveling art museum on a train!
- Culture Zone: youth-oriented cultural activities calendar
- U-M Museum of Art
- Exhibit Museum of Natural History at the U-M
- Kelsey Museum of Archaeology
- The Detroit Institute of Arts: Located in the heart of the Detroit’s cultural center, the DIA is home to old and new art from around the world, and features a variety of touring exhibitions.
- The Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village: This is the nation's largest indoor/outdoor history museum. Inside, check out relics and memorabilia from our country's past. Outside, immerse yourself in the sights, smells, sounds, and feel of pioneer life.
- University Record Event Calendar - current and upcoming art and cultural events at U-M

Back to Top

Movies & Film
Whether you seek the glamour of a Hollywood blockbuster or the spirit of an independent film, Ann Arbor can satisfy your cinematic cravings. A few of the area’s main theaters are:

- The Michigan Theater: This historic and fully restored 1,700 seat palace was built as a silent
movie house in the 1920s and survived through the decades to become one of America's premier film venues.

- **State Theater**: This high-style art deco cinema was built in 1942 and often shows indie films and documentaries.
- **The Village Theater** (second-run, discount movies)
- **Goodrich Quality 16 Theaters** (northwest Ann Arbor)
- **Showcase Cinemas** (southeast Ann Arbor)

**Theater & Stage**
Musicals, plays, stand-up comedy, and more abound in Ann Arbor and surrounding towns. Here are just a few of the major playhouses and venues:

- **Ann Arbor Civic Theater**
- **Ann Arbor Comedy Showcase**: The well-known venue on the national comedy touring circuit has been hailed as the best comedy cub between the coasts by Rolling Stone Magazine.
- **Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra**, The Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra was founded 1928 and has been a fully professional orchestra since 1986.
- **The Detroit Symphony Orchestra** was established in 1914 and is one of the most popular orchestras in the world. Performances take place in one of the nation's finest acoustic structures, Orchestra Hall.
- The Detroit Theater District features the famous **Fox Theater** and hosts a full schedule of touring shows from New York, Chicago, and Toronto. This opulently restored 1928 theater features Broadway productions, concerts, variety shows, family entertainment, comedy shows and classic films.
- **Hill Auditorium**: Located in the heart of U-M's central campus, the Hill has been showcasing performers since 1913. This 3,710-seat theater offers some of the nation’s finest acoustics.
- **Kerrytown Concert House**: This recital spot features theater, cabaret, and classical and jazz musical performances.
- Another Detroit musical tradition is the **Michigan Opera Theater**. The MOT has been bringing some of the best and most beautiful operas to life for more than 30 seasons in the state-of-the-art Detroit Opera House.
- **Performance Network**: Billed as Detroit's premier off-Broadway theater, this Ann Arbor-based venue features contemporary plays, dance performances, and more.
- **Power Center for the Performing Arts**: This theater features 1,368 seats, a combination proscenium arch and thrust stage, and is the U-M’s most technically sophisticated performance space.
- **Purple Rose Theatre**: This Chelsea playhouse is owned by actor Jeff Daniels and produces works mainly written by Midwesterners.
- **University Musical Society**: This organization has been around for 127 years and is one of the premier presenters of classical music in the country. It regularly offers programs that can only be experienced here, at Carnegie Hall and at a handful of other sites.

**Festivals & Fairs**
Although summer is high season for festivals in Ann Arbor, fairs and celebrations occur all year long. It is this festive spirit that attracts people from all over Michigan, as well as other states and countries, to come and explore the pride of southeast Michigan. Here’s a peek at a handful of our more popular annual events:

- Summer in Ann Arbor means one thing: **Art Fair**. Every July the city hosts four juried fairs over four days. Thousands of artists from all over the country flock to Ann Arbor to sell their wares at booths set-
up throughout the downtown area. The fair has become a full-blown festival in recent years, complete with mime shows, strolling sidewalk musicians, and street-side food courts.

- **Ann Arbor Summer Fest** is one of Ann Arbor's most beloved and anticipated seasonal events. This three-and-a-half-week celebration offers activities for all ages and something to do each and every night. One of the highlights is Top of the Park - a free, outdoor music series on top of the Fletcher street parking structure, featuring local bands and classic movies.

- **The Ann Arbor Film Festival**: Founded in 1963, this event is the oldest of its kind in the country and remains true to its original goal of promoting film as art and honoring the artists who make it all possible. For six days each spring, the Festival screens hundreds of experimental films, produced by independent artists in the U.S. and abroad.

- **Festival Latino**: Annual festival held in Ypsilanti each September that features Latin food, community services information, dancing, art, live entertainment, children's play activities and more.

- **Heritage Festival**: Located in Ypsilanti and features arts and crafts, historic architecture, music, autos and engines, a children's tent and food.

- **Michigan Elvisfest**: Think you need to go to Memphis to feel the spirit of the King? You don’t! Every year top Elvis Tribute Artists from throughout North America come to Ypsilanti to perform and pay tribute to American legend Elvis Presley.

- **Taste of Ann Arbor**: This grand summer "block party" has become a local tradition over the past 30 years. Stroll down closed-off streets while sampling some of the best culinary creations Ann Arbor has to offer.

### Music & Nightlife

Being so close to the birthplace of Motown, you’d expect nothing less than a wide array of music venues and other evening entertainment in Ann Arbor. Area highlights include:

- **Firefly Club** - Serves up jazz performed by local and national headliner musicians in a candle-lit and intimate atmosphere.

- **Blind Pig** - This is the premier venue for local and national rock and hip-hop bands that are emerging on the music scene. Established in the 70's, the Smashing Pumpkins, Pearl Jam and Nirvana have played here.

- **The Ark** - This non-profit establishment is one of the nation’s premier acoustic venues where locally, nationally and internationally-known performers offer music ranging from folk to blues and jazz to African gospel.

- **Rush Street** - A modern lounge that offers live music and an extensive wine and martini menu. Also serves Spanish-style small plates with Mediterranean and Pan-Asian influences.

- **Necto** - A New York style dance club with three levels and an outdoor patio. The venue hosts a wide range of theme parties, from college night to industrial music.

- **Brown Jug** - This is a perfect spot to sit down and watch a sports game. There’s outdoor seating and televisions in the summer, and a bar that offers an extensive menu of creative shot recipes.

- **Cavern Club** - Voted the best dance spot by Ann Arbor News readers, it actually combines four different bars, each one offering a different atmosphere and different music.

[Back to Top](#)