

**Shinnecock Powwow Recommended by USA TODAY as
One of America's 10 Great Powwows**



10 great places to be wowed by American Indian culture

American Indian culture is alive and well and on colorful display at powwows across the country. **Paul Gowder**, creator of powwows.com, which showcases these social and spiritual events, shares some favorites with **Gary McKechnie** for USA TODAY.

Gathering of Nations

Albuquerque

"This is *the* powwow," says Gowder of the April 28-30 event at the University of New Mexico basketball arena. Representatives in full regalia from up to 500 tribes participate in the Grand Entry, a procession of dancing and drumming. Multiple stages feature dance competitions and performances by American Indian musicians. It's also the venue for the Miss Indian World pageant. gatheringofnations.com

Morongo Thunder and Lightning Pow Wow

Cabazon, Calif.

The Morongo Band of Mission Indians' powwow (Sept. 23-25) is staged next to the tribe's 27-story casino near Palm Springs, Calif. Unique to the Morongo and other southern California tribes is "bird dancing," a long-form dance popular with energetic young tribal members, who start and stop on the seemingly random beat. "It's really pretty wild," Gowder says.

www.morongo.com

Red Earth Festival

Oklahoma City

The June 3-5 event kicks off with a downtown parade, followed by the Grand Entry featuring members of 200 tribes from across the nation. The powwow has drum and dance contests and a juried art show of Native American-inspired works by about 200 artists. But the colorful and energetic fancy feather dancing, Gowder says, "is a work of art in itself." redearth.org

Shinnecock Pow Wow

Southampton, N.Y.

The Shinnecock got federal recognition as the nation's 565th tribe just last year, but their powwow (Sept. 2-5) has been an annual event since 1946. The 1,300-member tribe hosts as many as 100 other tribes at the powwow. Besides traditional dance and drum performances, there's a focus on native arts and crafts. shinnecocknation.com

Lumbee Spring Pow Wow

Lumbee, N.C.

Celebrating the heritage of the Lumbee and other southeastern tribes, this powwow (May 6-8) also honors tribes from the American West, Canada and Central America. Songs and dances are prayers in motion, but don't miss the thrill of the contests, Gowder says, in which "excellent dancers compete to award-winning drum groups from across the U.S. and Canada."

lumbee tribe.com



Dance for Mother Earth

Ann Arbor, Mich.

This student-run powwow (March 17-18, 2012) features more than 1,000 artists, crafters, dancers and drummers. A daily Grand Entry precedes contests, exhibitions and intertribal dancing, which is a warm-up that encourages participation by all attendees. When the competition starts, though, clear the floor. "This is a very popular contest powwow," Gowder says. "These dancers are good." www.umich.edu/~powwow

Ponca Pow Wow

Ponca City, Okla.

A highlight of this north central Oklahoma powwow (Aug. 25-28) is dancers in full regalia competing for the title of Fancy War Dance champion. "Ponca drummers are known for their trick songs — they'll stop in an instant to see if the dancers really know these songs." With some dances lasting as long 10 songs, it's also an endurance contest. 580-762-8104

Haskell Spring Commencement Pow Wow

Lawrence, Kan.

Graduating seniors at Haskell Indian Nations University attend commencement (May 13) in full regalia, worn again the next day at the school's powwow. At this traditional event, the floor is opened to students and visiting family who introduce the music and dances of tribes from as far away as Alaska. haskell.edu

United Tribes Pow Wow

Bismarck, N.D.

About 1,500 dancers and 30 drum groups perform at United Tribes Technical College (Sept. 8-11) in 20 dancing and singing categories. The event features a tribal parade and the Miss Indian Nations pageant and draws more than 70 tribes from as far away as South America. "This is the year's last large outdoor powwow on the Great Plains circuit," says Gowder. unitedtribespowwow.com

Crow Fair

Crow Agency, Mont.

The Apsalooke Nation's powwow isn't far from where the Cheyenne, Arapaho and Lakota Sioux defeated Custer in 1876. A rodeo, dancing and drumming are draws as are hundreds of traditional teepees dubbed the Teepee Capital of the World. "The authenticity of the atmosphere is what attracts people," Gowder says. "People are camping and cooking and eating and visiting and renewing friendships, and dancing here is done in an outdoor arbor, so it all seems very traditional." crow-fair.com

www.usatoday.com

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