

# Faires, Feasting & Fun



## STEP BACK INTO THE 16TH CENTURY AT A RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL THIS FALL

BY JULIE BROWN PATTON

The king and queen gracefully ascend to their thrones on the stage, followed by their courtiers. Revelers applaud and admire their elaborate gowns and tunics. A gate opens, and two haughty armored knights, sporting their colors, gallop their warhorses into the arena, survey the revelers, and bow to their favored maidens in the audience.

A herald signals the beginning. The knights lower their long wooden lances, raise their shields, and urge their horses at full speed toward each other. Dust. Crash. Cheers. The rowdy spectators chant, “Fight, fight, fight!” at the top of their lungs as the knights charge their steeds again and again. Lances slam into shields, splinters fly into the air, and one knight, unhorsed, tumbles to the earth. From the stands, phones flash and record the spectacle.

Welcome to the storybook atmosphere of Renaissance fairs, where quests to find unicorns and mischievous bands of pirates are commonplace. Festivals in Kingdom City, St. Louis, and Kansas City form extraordinary escapes where you can see everything from jugglers to jousting, blacksmiths to royalty, strolling bards to teasing wenches. Avid fans make the journey to the trifecta of area festivals each year.

The historic Renaissance period spanned the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, following the Middle Ages. The cultural rebirth began in Florence, Italy, and spread throughout Europe. The period was characterized by major shifts in philosophy, art, religion, science, and education.

“When I discovered ‘ren faires’ in college, I fell in love,” says Arnold resident Trish Gibbar Aumann. “They aren’t true-to-time-period reenactments like you find with some other groups; however, the flavor of the historical period, mixed with pageantry and fun, is really special.” Trish has always been interested in history, especially after her parents involved her family in Civil War reenactments. Now, her favorite fair memories are witnessing her three children transform into fairies and pirates for the day and seeing them become captivated by performers.

Renaissance fairs create bursting communities of revelry. At the fairs in St. Louis and Kansas City, there’s a personal way to contribute to the surrounding areas of the twenty-first century variety. Attendees who donate five nonperishable food items to the fair’s on-site food bank drives receive a buy one/get one ticket for a regularly priced adult admission.

JULIE BROWN PATTON AND JOE HENLEY



## Central Missouri Renaissance Festival

At the Central Missouri Renaissance Festival near Kingdom City, patrons step into a 1550 Irish village. “We chose to reflect the real city of Carlingford, which is just north of Dublin, because it was a place of Irish, Brits, Scots, Germans—a little bit of everyone,” says Festival President Doug White. “It goes with our emphasis of family, food, and fun!” This twelfth annual mid-Missouri festival is operated by nonprofit board members. The proceeds from the three thousand yearly attendees help support three charities: the University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine’s student-run Raptor Rehabilitation program, a Fulton-based soup kitchen, and KOPN, a community-supported Columbia radio station.

Be sure to brush up on your festival vocabulary before you head out. “Patrons love the face-to-face time they can have with the vendors, actors, bands, and other attendees,” Doug says.

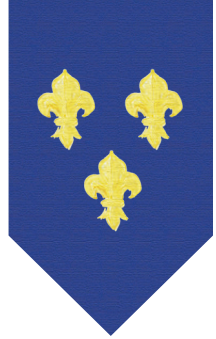
Five stages set up at Boster Castle Fairgrounds will host performers such as magician Dimitri the Mage, living history and live steel performance group Brotherhood of Steel, Na’ava Sands Oriental Dance, comedy escape artists Dr. Judas Lynch and Ms. Magnolia Strange, The Shamrock Irish Dancers, and reenactors Medieval Swordsman Guild of KC. Musicians will include nerd band Clearly Guilty, singing comics Pirates Inc., Celtic instrumentalist Cheeks & Phoenix, a cappella musical duo Faerie Fyre, and percussion and bagpipe band Pictus. Tinker MacLea, 3 Pints Gone, and Musical Blades are slated for repeat performances (see page 45).

Vendors sell crafts and offer various activities, such as pumpkin smashing and basket weaving. They also serve food inspired by the time period, such as Scotch eggs, drunken mushrooms, chicken on skewers, baked goods, pork rinds, and sticky toffee pudding.

“Some people drive insane distances—even from Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas—to come see our entertainers and take in our events,” Doug says. “Fans bring a lot of magic, and put a twinkle in the eyes of our performers. We really enjoy watching all the interactions.”

October 21–22 • 4274 County Road 220, Kingdom City  
[CentralMoRenFest.net](http://CentralMoRenFest.net)





## St. Louis Renaissance Faire

WENTZVILLE

**P**roclaim *bonjour* when entering the sixteenth-century La Ville de Petite Lyon for the St. Louis Renaissance Faire. You'll find friendly French villagers, King François I, friars, nuns, and elves, as well as a crew of Black Plague "spirits of the dead." The fair is built on a giant hill in a wooded setting at Rotary Park, which gives it authentic ambience.

The festival started in 1999 and attracts 40,000 visitors each year. Visitors can learn dances at the gypsy encampments, and check out weaponry and armor-making at a German encampment. New this season are a unicorn, an innovative puppet troupe, a Mermaid Cove, a free juggling school, Merlin's Magic Conquest, and an escape room.

Nine stages offer entertainment such as belly dancing, wild pirate games, and musicians. Jousting occurs three times each day. Special attractions include fairy-tale princess parties, fantasy mask competitions, the King's Happy Hour, and Maypole dancing.

Weekends September 16–October 15 • 2577 West Meyer Road, Wentzville  
STLRenFest.com • Sign language interpreters, Oct. 14-15



3 PINTS GONE



TINKER MacLEA

## Merry Musicians

**A CORE SET OF MUSICIANS** are familiar sights at Renaissance gatherings each year.

The group Musical Blades began as a concept in 2000, and started touring in 2001. Missouri serves as a gathering point for Blades members, given that band members hail from Higginsville and Independence in Missouri and four different towns in Kansas. As a fearless band of misfit rogues, the Musical Blades perform their unique blend of harmonies and hilarity at festivals and clubs in eleven other Midwestern states. But Blades guitarist and vocalist Michael "Saucy Jack Tar" Doss says they especially look forward to Missouri because its audiences truly enjoy the fairs and aren't afraid to get involved with the acts.

"Clapping, singing, laughing and supporting the acts are definitely something our Missouri fans know and practice," he says. "Some areas we've been to are more stoic and need to be coached about how to have fun! We've played to exuberant crowds, and we've played to what we refer to as 'oil painting crowds.' Missouri is right on the balance line between the two."

Another group on the Renaissance circuit, 3 Pints Gone, has played traditional Celtic folk songs and sea shanties at the St. Louis Renaissance Faire since it began eighteen years ago. They also performed at the Kansas City Renaissance Festival from

1993 to 2005. The trio's members—Bill Masino, Kathleen Masino, and Jesse Linder—gladly make the trek from their homes in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to the Show-Me State, eager for the cherished exchanges with fans.

"We enjoy the Missouri fairs because they are so personal and more intimate," says Kathleen. "They are more like revisiting a small village than a shopping mall."

"We call St. Louis our 'home fair,'" she says. "St. Louis only gets bigger and better every year with more vendors or variety. They even have a puppy rescue there, and we almost brought a beagle puppy home one year. The royalty were carrying the puppies around to meet everyone."

Brian "Tinker MacLea" Leo, an Illinois-based Irish/Scottish folk-singing bard, songwriter, and entertainer, performed at the Kansas City festival for many years; this season, he will be at the Kingdom City and St. Louis locations. Brian also relishes theater, having directed or acted in thirty-four productions. He's played twenty-plus Renaissance fairs in fifteen states. "It's a delightful challenge for actors, who must stay in character all day, and splendid fun for musicians," he says.

"Just seeing the audience gives me a great sense of letting them get away from their usual worlds and have fun in mine."



JULIE BROWN PATTON AND BRIAN LEO



	Central Missouri Renaissance Festival	St. Louis Renaissance Faire	Kansas City Renaissance Festival
LOCATION	4274 County Road 220, Kingdom City I-70, Missouri Exit 144 Route M/Hatton, South 3 miles to Boster Castle grounds	Rotary Park 2577 West Meyer Road, Wentzville	633 North 130th Street, Bonner Springs, Kansas
DATES/HOURS	June 3-4, June 10-11, Oct. 21-22, 10 AM to 6 PM	Weekends from Sept. 16 to Oct. 15, 10 AM to 6 PM	Weekends from Sept. 2 to Oct. 15 including Labor Day and Columbus Day, 10 AM to 7 PM Note: Columbus Day hours are 10 AM to 5 PM
ADMISSION	\$12, adults; \$6, children 5 to 12 years; free, children 5 and younger; \$8, with valid military, EMS, or Missouri employee ID  Free parking  <i>Note: Certain ticket discounts are available in the online store</i>	\$15.95, adult in advance; \$18.95, adult at gate; \$9.50, children 5 to 12 years in advance; \$11.95, children at gate; free, children 4 and younger; \$15.95, seniors; students receive \$5 off; \$79.90, adult season pass; \$49.95 child season pass  Free parking  <i>Note: Show military, police officer, firefighter, or EMS IDs at box office October 1-2 to receive buy one/get one free adult admission</i>	\$18.95, adult in advance; \$21.95, adult at gate; \$10.50, children 5 to 12 years in advance; \$12.95, children at gate; free, children 4 and younger; \$19.50, students; \$19.50, seniors; \$89.95, adult season pass; \$55, child season pass; \$40, two-day weekend pass; \$169.50-\$249.95, Royal Passes  Free parking  <i>Note: Daily Royal Events are extra. Select ticketed events for those 21 years or older do not allow accompanying children.</i>
RAIN OR SHINE?	Yes!	Definitely!	Of course!
ATMS	None on-site <i>Note: Ticket booth and most vendors accept electronic payments.</i>	Yes	Yes
DOG POLICY	Well-behaved dogs are allowed on five-foot leashes; however, it's better to leave dogs home, due to guide animals, performer animals, and some patrons being allergic or uncomfortable around dogs of any type.	A dog registration form with photo and \$10, cash only, per dog is required, as well as proof of rabies and other vaccinations. Dogs must be on a four-foot leash at all times. Only one dog per owner is allowed. Dogs must display festival tag at all times.	The festival is dog-friendly as long as a qualified form is submitted, rabies vaccination proof shown, and photo of dog provided to entry gate staff. Admission is \$10 per pet and \$15 if the staff must take the photo. Dogs must be on four-foot leash and display the festival tag. Only one dog per owner. No puppies younger than 6 months old. No other animals are allowed.

Details may be subject to change. Check individual websites for updates.



COURTESY KC RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL AND JULIE BROWN PATTON



## Kansas City Renaissance Festival

Enter the 1536 English village of Canterbury under the reign of King Henry VIII with Queen Catherine of Aragon, and perchance rub elbows with Robin Hood. More than a hundred artisan booths and twenty-plus entertainment venues await, and a boisterous parade takes place each day at 12:30 PM. Live, armored jousting on horseback commences three times each festival day in this seventeen-acre village. Food and drink “fit for a king” are available. Alert visitors may even glimpse mermaids or a unicorn.

This year, Kansas City Renaissance Festival organizers and aficionados celebrate the event's forty-first anniversary. “We offer fantasy and family-friendly activities for all ages,” says Roger Clements, director of sales and marketing for the Kansas City area operation, which averages 179,000 to 200,000 annual attendees during each of its sixteen-day seasons.

A handful of first-time offerings lies ahead for this year's festival visitors. A costume rental shop called The Wardrobe will be stationed outside the front entries by one of the event's vendors, who is hand-sewing the outfits.

Another new feature is a 16-by-18-foot dragon created by local blacksmiths. The dragon is designed to bellow. Nearby vendors will sell dragon tears and dragon eggs.

A new Scottish Highland Hill encampment will offer history lessons and interactive activities. Additionally, guided living history tours have been expanded, after the number of requests for them tripled last year. Experienced Renaissance historians will explain the trades and peoples of the times. Keep an ear out to learn about traveling gypsies, executioners, and seers.

This festival features seven theme weekends, such as Highland Gatherings, Ales & Tails (for visitors to bring their pets), Wine & Chocolate Delight, and Witches & Wizards. Hone your competitive instincts for contests in haggis eating, tattoos, fairy houses, costumes, kilts, longbow, murals, and photography.

Stage acts include a fire performance/comedy trio, a juggler, sword players Bawdily Harm, a hypnotist, fencing, dancers, the comedy troupe Washing Well Wenches, gypsy historians, acrobats, magicians, and musicians such as Irish-Scottish harpists. Special events offered this year are queen's teas, fairy time treats, Royal Pub Crawl, Royal Happy Hour, Royal Romance Package, and Plague Escape Room. Costume contests during special events might include free admissions as prizes.

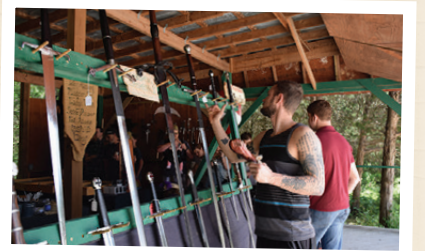
Weekends September 2–October 15 • 633 North 130th Street, Bonner Springs, Kansas • [KCRenFest.com](http://KCRenFest.com)

## Enchanting Details

Each festival will be jam-packed with booths, traveling vendors, and other activities for you and your time-traveling compatriots to enjoy. Here's a smattering of what to expect.

### GAMES & ACTIVITIES

Axe throwing, catapulting, caber (log) tossing, archery, knife throwing, dragon slaying, carousels, astrology readings, palm readings, costume contests, henna tattoos, face painting, obstacle courses, crafting challenges, and pony, elephant, and camel rides, plus designated children areas chock-full of interactive activities.



### MERCHANDISE

Clothing, jewelry, chain mail and armor, toys, cigars, pottery, traditional apothecary tinctures and potions, geodes and crystals, artwork, books, wings and wands, crowns, crafts, leatherwork, woodworking, pottery, weaving, and weapons such as knives, dirks, and swords.

### FOOD

Turkey legs, roasted corn, sausages, roasted nuts, kabobs, barbecue, nachos, pickles, funnel cakes, kettle corn, pretzels, ice cream, and libations including beer, mead, wine, and hard cider.

