

Crowds soak up outdoor temps at Folklife Festival



Photos By Kin Man Hui / San Antonio Express-News

A child strikes a pose in front of the neon Texas flag in the Institute of Texan Cultures during the Texas Folklife Festival.

SAN ANTONIO — The Texas Folklife Festival is many things: music, dance, food, crafts and cultural education.

One thing the festival mostly is not is air-conditioned.

Most of the thousands of people who attended the festival's first day at the Institute of Texan Cultures on Saturday seemed to avoid the only spot that was

air-conditioned, the institute building.

(The above is just an advisory for any out-of-town visitors in San Antonio this weekend who may prefer temperature-controlled environs.)

The 43rd annual edition of the weekend festival was mostly its old, familiar, tried-and-true self Saturday, a tapestry of cultures from around the world presented in arts and nutrition of various kinds.



Over here, Mexican folkloric dancers performed with audience participants. Over there, metal forgers with glowing-hot iron demonstrated how to make axes, nails and horseshoes. Across the way, kids had fun pulling a rope to ring the one-room schoolhouse's bell.

Some festivalgoers enjoyed posing for pictures in front of a Wild West saloon facade, behind bars at the next-door jail or even with a rope noose around their necks.

At one corner of the grounds, Isaac Cardenas of American Indians in Texas recited tales to a group of Boy Scouts sitting on the grass near a tepee. He managed to weave into his narrative the contributions of Native Americans to contemporary culture, including chilis, corn, potatoes, maple syrup, popcorn and a sport, lacrosse.

"I come from a whole long line of storytellers," said Cardenas, son of a Coahuiltecan father and an Apache mother.





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Calvin Osife of the Navajo Nation performs a ceremonial dance with the American Indians in Texas Dance Theater.

The food selection was countless, from Polish and Belgian sausages to Lebanese shish kebabs and Pakistani plates of samosas and pakoras.

The music was similarly varied. One stage Saturday featured rock licks by the Smokehouse Guitar Army band. Elsewhere, a ukulele group called Opening Act belted out “Has Anyone Seen My Gal?” with the help of kazoos.

Waves of glee came from an audience during a performance by the Fire on the Mountain Cloggers inside the institute's rotunda.

Jo Ann Andera, festival director since 1981, drove an electric cart around the grounds. “I think it's going very well,” Andera reported. “Everyone is enjoying the new food-court arrangements this year. We're getting lots of positive feedback.”

The festival attendance averages about 50,000 each year, said festival spokesman James Benavides. Street and highway construction on two sides of the HemisFair Park site didn't seem to be much of a barrier Saturday. But Benavides said the festival is urging people to use VIA Metropolitan Transit's bus service this weekend from the Crossroads and Randolph park-and-ride centers.

One longtime festivalgoer Saturday was Janet Rodriguez, retired from the Army, who has performed annually as a festival Hawaiian dancer since 2004.

“I like how all the cultures come together,” said Rodriguez, accompanied by her boyfriend, Robert Macias. “You don't have to travel abroad.”

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