

OKGazette

Grab your favorite wenches and best knaves as the annual Medieval Fair rides into town

By Luke Atkinson
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NORMAN – Knights, pirates and mythological creatures will transform Norman this weekend.

The 34th annual Norman Medieval Fair returns Friday to Reaves Park. The three-day festival will give a glimpse into life in the Middle Ages with art, crafts, performances, food and games. The fair is the third-largest event in the state, and the largest weekend event, drawing more visitors in a three-day period than any other. It was selected by Events Media Network as one of the top 100 events in the nation.



Coordinator Linda Linn said it is a unique experience for Oklahomans to step back into a different time, something that is not so easy in most instances.

“The Medieval Fair is a living-history fair,” Linn said. “It certainly has food, crafts and games, but to re-create a period of time and to transport the visitors back to that time, it is important to have these characters that provide an opportunity to feel like they’ve stepped back in time. It’s not just the people on the stage; it’s everyone who steps on the fairgrounds.”

Each day, costumed revelers will demonstrate life in medieval times. The Arthurian Order of Avalon will host a jousting tournament at 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. daily. At 1 and 5 p.m., attendees can participate in a human chess game based on King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

In between scheduled events, musicians and dancers will provide entertainment on six stages located around the park. Local bands Arabesque and The Norman Singers are among performers representing a wide variety of cultures and not-so-medieval social groups.

The Bilge Pumps are Dallas-based pirate singers making their 10th Medieval Fair appearance, bringing tales of the seven seas. Member Craig Lutke — aka Maroon — said although pirates don’t exactly fit into the time period of the Middle Ages, he tries to maintain some historical accuracy, as well as a sense of fun.

“When it comes down to it, a band that call themselves The Bilge Pumps, you know you can’t take them seriously,” Lutke said. “We represent the Golden Age and romanticized pirates, not representing robbing people and stealing stuff. We’re just having a good time.”

Among more than 15 other performers include Wolgemut, an international music ensemble; The Rogues, a rowdy Scottish band; Daniel, Duke of Danger, a comedic juggler and tightrope walker.

In addition, more than 200 artists and crafters will sell a variety of medieval-themed goods, like pottery, stained glass and wooden crafts. Fairgoers can watch the artisans re-create these ancient trades.

One of the more creative may be the blacksmiths, who will create cloak pins, cookware, knives and other forms of decorative ironwork. During the jousting events, they will repair the participants' armor.

One of these smiths is Steve Knisely. He's been crafting metal at the Medieval Fair for several years and has taken requests for custom-made crafts. Normally, requests range from flint strikers to nails, but one year, he received an unusual inquiry regarding his skills.

"Strangest thing I've made were branding irons for people," he said. "Someone asked me to make a set of branding irons so he and his girlfriend could brand each other."

But, he said, "We just have fun making things out of metal."

For the younger nobles, the fair will host games for all ages. Kids can ride camels, jump on a hand-cranked medieval swing carousel or take a spin around the king's carousel, driven by exotic animals. Other activities include making wax hands, sand art and face-painting.

Admission to the fair is free. Parking is available at the Lloyd Noble Center for \$5.