

TRENDING

The Literary Festivals to Hit This Year, From Brooklyn to Singapore

There is a rising interest around the world in events that connect authors with bibliophiles.

By **Charu Suri**

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When the [Brooklyn Book Festival](#), considered the East Coast's largest free literary event, started in 2006, "I saw only about 10 literary festivals in the United States," said Liz Koch, the co-producer. "Now, there are more than double that, with smaller regional ones that many don't even know about."

The best-selling author Sue Miller believes that the number of literary festivals has grown over the last 15 years thanks in part to readers' passionate interest.

"It's extraordinary to amble into the authors' room for a cup of coffee or a glass of wine at one of these events and glimpse the likes of Joyce Carol Oates, or Jennifer Egan or Edward P. Jones," she said, adding that appearing before readers is also helpful to any writer's career.

Here are a few festivals that show the diversity of the literary event landscape, each attracting very loyal — and growing — audiences:

United States

The [Miami Book Fair](#), the largest and oldest literary festival in the United States, started in 1984. It now attracts more than 250,000 people annually, and will be held Nov. 15 to 22 this year. The multilingual event, with more than 600 authors, highlights the area's Caribbean heritage with panels in English, French, Spanish and Haitian Creole. Almost every genre is represented, including children's literature and graphic novels (admission is \$10).

The [Brooklyn Book Festival](#), which attracted over 57,000 people last year, hosts "bookend" events including readings at cemeteries, music venues and even a canoe trip on the heavily polluted Gowanus Canal. The main panels with more than 300 speakers from more than 20 countries are on Oct. 3 to Oct. 4 (free to the public).

In Lenox, Mass., [The Mount](#), home to Edith Wharton and now a nonprofit, hosts 50 literary events each summer that draw around 50,000 attendees. This year marks the centennial of the publication of Wharton's Pulitzer Prize-winning "The Age of Innocence," and several lectures are devoted to this particular work, said the executive director Susan Wissler. Most are free.

On May 3, a partnership with the local nonprofit, [Word x Word](#), will result in the world's largest poem narrated by 100 performers. "You walk down the line to 'see' the poem," said Ms. Wissler. Anyone can sign up to be a part of it.

At the Nantucket Book Festival, from June 18 to 21, the environment and climate change are big themes. [David Wallace-Wells](#), author of "The Uninhabitable Earth," and [Crocker Snow](#), a local Pulitzer Prize nominee whose work focuses on the effects of climate change on Nantucket and its nearby islands, are on the docket this year.

In Charleston, S.C., YALLFest, a two-day celebration starting Nov. 13, is devoted to young adult books. Jonathan Sanchez, a co-founder, said that the event has grown from 3,000 attendees in 2011 to an expected 12,000 this year, as interest and the number of young adult and middle grade books has burgeoned. "When 'Twilight' first came out, it opened the floodgates."

Today, festival speakers like Jason Reynolds, who co-authored the acclaimed young adult novel, "All American Boys," about police brutality and race relations, attract a diverse group of young readers.

"Charleston is a place everyone wants to visit, so people make a weekend out of it," said Mr. Sanchez about why the free tickets get snapped up quickly.



The author Richard Russo talking to Kate Bolick at The Mount in Lenox, Mass. John Seakwood

Global

If you missed the festival in [Jaipur](#), India — considered the world’s largest literary event — last month, no worries. There are many quality events across the globe.

In Jamaica, the writers Colin Channer and Kwame Dawes collaborated with the producer Justine Henzell in 2001 to create the [Calabash](#) festival, named after the evergreen tropical tree that bears white-flowered gourds. Three hundred people showed up the first year; 3,000 visitors are expected when the event begins May 29.

Past speakers have included Michael Ondaatje, Salman Rushdie and the Nobel Prize-winning Nigerian playwright, Wole Soyinka. All events in the lineup, including poetry, memoir and fiction readings, are free to the public.

“Poets love Calabash as they feel like rock stars, so yes, poetry is a big deal, but the programming is always a mix of genres,” said Ms. Henzell.

In the city-state of Singapore (which has four official languages — Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English), the [Singapore Writers Festival](#) highlights those writing and reading in languages other than English.

“Our festival explores the idea of language as a means for identity in a multilingual city,” said the director Pooja Nansi.

The mostly-free festival, from Oct. 30 to Nov. 8, attracts more than 27,000 attendees annually; last year, programming focused on indigenous languages including Bengali and Tagalog.

At Sea

Beginning Dec. 1, Cunard’s Queen Mary 2 will host its second [Literature Festival at Sea](#) on its seven-night transatlantic crossing from Southampton, Britain to New York. There is no extra cost to attend for guests (the ship’s capacity is 2,600, and the crossing sold out last year because of the festival’s popularity). The Scottish crime writer Ian Rankin and the cookbook author Prue Leith, who has starred in the television show, “The Great British Bake Off,” are among the speakers.

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