



## Sarasota Medieval Fair: The Vikings are coming!

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### Guide to Sarasota's popular fair returning Nov. 3-4, 10-11 and 17-18

The popular Sarasota Medieval Fair returns for a three-weekend run with a refreshed lineup and a Vikings theme.

Last year, the fair drew 85,000 at Ringling Woods behind the Sarasota Fairgrounds.

The Vikings vs. Saxons theme in the year 878 AD predates most renaissance/medieval fairs, spokeswoman Shannon Bowden said.

"It's going to be very primitive as far as costumes go. A lot of ladies will be wearing things head to toe. It won't be your flashy, flashy typical Renaissance attire because we'll be 14 centuries earlier," Bowden said.

This year's living history lesson takes place in the town of Edinton in the Kingdom of Wessex, as the Saxons led by King Alfred prepare to fight off invading Norse Vikings under the rule of Guthrum.

The Sarasota Medieval Fair is in its 15th year, and is presented under the creative direction of Dean Bowden and producer and president Jeremy Croteau. A core group has been involved in the festival since the beginning and 80 to 90 volunteers pitch in to help them pull off the elaborate event. The festival grows in size and scope every year.

Shannon Bowden said guests are urged to immerse themselves in the festival and step back in time.

“We like to laugh. We like to see history,” she said. “If anybody walks away with anything of a memory, I feel like we’ve done our jobs.”

This year’s highlights include:

### **New Riders of the Golden Age**

This longtime Florida-based joust troupe makes its first appearance at the Sarasota festival. The New Riders joust in full armor while riding larger breeds like Belgian, Percheron, Shire and Clydesdale horses. The full-contact joust is always one of the fair’s most popular events. The New Riders perform all three weekends on the tournament field.

### **Human Combat Chess Match**

Live actors re-enact the Battle of Edinton on the Chess Field all three weekends. The battle is rated PG-13 because of the simulated violence. The chess matches are staged two times a day with two dramatically different shows, Bowden said. Local actors have been training since before Labor Day for their roles in the daily chess matches.

### **Living history encampments**

New this year, a troupe of re-enactors will be camped on site to demonstrate the way Vikings lived. “They will be demonstrating the clothing of the period, the combat of the period, the way they lived, the crafts they made,” Bowden said of the group that also demonstrates the games and pastimes of the Vikings.

### **Music and entertainment**

New entertainers this year include the theatrical Ronin Taiko drummers, the Landsknecht re-enactment troupe and the Syng Reys singing pirates. Cu Dubh will return with their bagpipe and tribal drum music. Irish dancers, Celtic music, jesters and the Harmless Danger Juggling Show will also perform (check the full entertainment schedule online at [sarasotamediievalfair.com](http://sarasotamediievalfair.com)). The popular Washing Well Wenches return with their raucous, PG-13 shows all three weekends. And the Wheel of Death will return for all three weekends. “The festival will be constantly moving. It’s going to be constant sound everywhere. It’ll be alive,” Bowden said.

## **Birds of prey show**

Knightwings Birds of Prey make their first appearance at the fair with shows on the chess field. The family-friendly presentation features raptors from all over the world. Master falconer Ash Carey and his apprentice oversee the educational show all three weekends, and explain how they train the birds.

## **Pub crawls**

The twice-daily pub crawls often sell out, so get your tickets early. Revelers are assailed with songs, jokes and entertainment as they explore the fair's three main pubs. Cost is \$35 per person and tickets can be purchased online. Huzzah and cheers!

## **Artisan marketplace**

Stop and shop at the many period-specific vendors on site, including leather makers, soap makers, jewelry artisans and more at the Artisan Marketplace. Vendors are carefully vetted and chosen to offer high-quality goods. "The quality is incredible. We really want the best of the best," Bowden said.

## **Food and drink**

Traditional comfort foods like turkey legs, Italian sausages and wood-fired pizza will be offered alongside more worldly fare specific to the time period, such as meat pies, Cornish pasties, shepherd's pie and fish and chips. Wash it down with soft drinks, cold beer, wine or mead. "Nobody goes wrong with ale and a turkey leg," Bowden said of the Medieval Fair's perennial bestsellers.

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