

YOUR SUMMER CHECKLIST

in the greater Champaign-Urbana area

July–September 2026



MUST-ATTEND EVENTS & ACTIVITIES



1

AMERICA 250 CELEBRATIONS

Plan your perfect summer holiday. America 250 events are happening throughout July, with festive parades, dazzling fireworks, live music, exhibits, and public readings of the Declaration of Independence across Champaign-Urbana and surrounding communities. Make a month of it!



2

TOAST TO TAYLOR STREET

July 18 / August 15 / September 19 / toasttotaylor.com

The smallest but most exuberant block party in downtown Champaign. Enjoy hours of live music and shopping with local artisans at this monthly summer favorite.

CHAMPAIGN-URBANA DAYS

August 7-9 / champaignparks.org

A longstanding community tradition celebrating shared heritage and culture! Experience live music, local cuisine, and a vibrant marketplace with local vendors, along with plenty of kids' activities.



3

ART FAIRS

August 2-3 / September 14 / 40north.org

The Crystal Lake Park Art Fair brings local and regional artists to one of Urbana's prettiest parks in early August, while West Side Arts returns in September with creative activities, food trucks, and plenty to browse (and buy!).



4



5

FIGHTING ILLINI FOOTBALL

September–November / fightingillini.com

Fighting Illini football returns September 3. You know what that means: orange & blue, tailgates, Marching Illini energy, and weekends at full volume. I-L-L!



6

PYGMALION

September 4-6 / thisispygmalion.com

Music, comedy, literature, tech, and creative culture collide at this signature festival mixing global performers and local artists. It's smart, weird, curious, and cool, just like our community.



Did you know?

- Champaign-Urbana's Mass Transit District is getting national attention, and it's easy to see why. *Travel + Leisure* magazine named Champaign-Urbana **one of nine US cities with the best public transportation beyond New York City**, calling MTD "an example of how small cities can offer high-quality transit." Easy to access, affordable, and forward-thinking, MTD reflects the community it serves. In fact, their "go green" initiatives have helped create a 100% low-to-zero emissions fleet.
- Krannert Art Museum has again earned accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), the **highest national recognition a museum can receive**. That's a big deal, because out of the nation's estimated 33,000 museums, only 3% are currently accredited! The museum has held this distinction since 1977, and its rich collection of fine arts from across the globe spans 6,000 years and includes more than 11,000 works of art. Best of all, admission is free.
- Champaign-Urbana has once again been named one of Livability.com's **Top 100 Best Places to Live**. Amanda Ellis, editor-in-chief says, "As Americans face consistently evolving work dynamics and a desire for the best quality of life possible amidst inflation and uncertainty, our list celebrates places where people can more realistically build families, launch businesses, and lead meaningful lives."
- Looking for your next career move? Check out the **Champaign-Urbana job board**! It connects you with opportunities across all industries in the area. Set up alerts and get job openings delivered straight to your inbox. Explore now: makeitcu.org/jobs.



Want more ideas for events & activities?
experiencecu.org

Learn more about the community + search for jobs:
makeitcu.com

TOP IDEAS FOR FOOD & DRINK

Watson's Shack & Rail

211 N. Neil St., Champaign | watsonschicken.com

Grab a patio seat and enjoy the sounds of Friday Night Live paired with a Watson's signature hot-dipped chicken sandwich. You'd do well to order a flight of their adult slushies, too.

Baldarotta's Porketta & Sicilian Sausage

208 W. Griggs St., Urbana | baldarottas.com

Made-from-scratch Sicilian sandwiches and sides using original family recipes. Sandwiches are big enough to have leftovers, but honestly, you probably won't.

Breaking Taco

608 E. Main St., Mahomet

breakingtaco.com

After a family hike at Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, drive 5 minutes into Mahomet and refuel at Breaking Taco. Dangerously good tacos, huaraches, quesadillas, tortas, bowls, and more. Great for vegetarians, great for kids, too.

Maple & Yolk

810 W. Killarney St., Urbana | maplenyolk.com

Lazy summer days call for long, lazy brunches, and Maple & Yolk delivers. Think Nutella Biscoff pancakes, banana bread French toast, plenty of savory options, fresh-squeezed juice, and lots of coffee, of course.

Mezza House Restaurant & Café

132 W. Church St., Champaign

A new downtown Champaign spot serving up hummus, baba ghanouj, kabobs, stuffed grape leaves, and other Mediterranean favorites. Save room for house-made baklava and Turkish coffee.

Panadería Saldivar

206 E. Main St., Arcola

If you're embarking on a summer day trip to Amish country, make this Mexican bakery in lovely downtown Arcola part of the plan. Fresh-baked breads, including bolillo, tortillas, churros, rolls, and donuts are perfect to snack on and stock up!

SangEat Indian Restaurant & Bar

1905 S. Neil St., Champaign | sangeat.com

Indian lunch buffet? Yes, please. Freshly made and perfectly spiced curries, biryani, tandoori, naan, and more comfort food await. Caution: you just might take the rest of the day off to nap.

Sidney Dairy Barn

311 W. Main St., Sidney

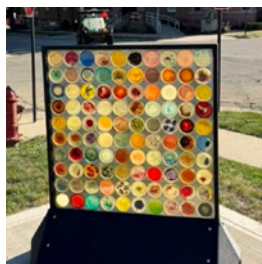
sidneydairybarn.square.site

Old-fashioned, hand-cranked ice cream. Keep it classic with a cone or cup, or go all in with a Tornado loaded with candy, nuts, fruit, or other toppings. Perfect for a post-game or post-pool outing.



Selfie Spots

Check out these spots and share on Instagram or Bluesky with #experiencecu!



Clockwise from top left

1. Heal Us by Nicole Beck, Boneyard Creek Crossing, Urbana
2. West Side Park, downtown Champaign
3. Connect More by Greg Stallmeyer, State & Livingston, Monticello
4. Parcadia mural, downtown Urbana

Stay Active & Involved

Recreational Activities

CU Triathlon | Sun., July 19, 8 am | bit.ly/cutriathlon

Swim, bike, and run your way to victory, whether you're a first-timer or seasoned athlete! Hosted by the Champaign Park District and the Stephens Family YMCA.

Homer Lake Forest Preserve | champaignforests.org

With approximately 10 miles of trails across grasslands, prairies, and woodlands, this preserve is a favorite for hikers. You can also rent a kayak! It's a fantastic opportunity to explore the lake and enjoy the area's natural beauty.

Sholem Aquatic Center | Open 7 days/week | champaignparks.org

Splash your summer away with slides, lap lanes, and a lazy river. Open Memorial Day through Labor Day, it's a great place to chill out, play hard, and make the most of sunny days.

Volunteer Opportunities

Area Rotary Clubs

Local Rotary Clubs offer a great way to build community, develop friendships, and serve others. See a full list at rotarydistrict6490.org.

United Way of Champaign County

United Way connects volunteers with local organizations that need a hand. Explore opportunities at uwayhelps.org/volunteer.

PLUG INTO

Job Board + Community Job Application + Chambana Welcome Crew + New to CU Mixers + Chambana Proud Podcast + Chambana Proud Shop
makeitcu.com