



## Celebrating Heritage

*Events galore in LatinoLA, September 15 through October 15*

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Los Angeles celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month -- Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 -- con mucho entusiasmo. Timed to coincide with several important events -- Mexican Independence Day (Sept. 16), Central American Independence Day in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua (all on Sept. 15), and Dia de la Raza (Oct. 12). Events are planned all over the city -- large and small, festive and somber.

Here in LA, with the largest Hispanic population outside of Latin America (4.6 million in LA County), the largest Mexican population outside of Mexico City, and equally strong populations of Central and South Americans, Los Angeles' Hispanic roots are exceptionally strong. Time Magazine's recent list of the "25 Most Influential Hispanics in America" was dominated by Angelenos. A third of those on this esteemed list lived in LA, including actress Salma Hayek, comedian George Lopez, and, of course, LA's first Latino mayor since 1872, Antonio Villaraigosa.

"Hispanic Heritage Month gives us a significant opportunity to celebrate the culture and contributions of Hispanics to the city of Los Angeles," said Villaraigosa. "I'm so proud to be a part of a city that thrives on its diversity and takes time out to recognize this strength in special ways like this."

While LA savors its Hispanic heritage year-round -- at restaurants and cafes, clubs, ethnic markets -- all that is revved up during Hispanic Heritage Month with terrific celebrations, parades, exhibitions, a film festival, and more.

"Visitors come to Los Angeles from all over the world because they know that they can find a corner of their home right here," said Mark Liberman, president and CEO of LA INC., The Convention and Visitors Bureau. "Cultural diversity is celebrated daily here, with Hispanic Heritage Month being just one example of that."

On Sept. 22, "Flor de Serena's Ladino Music in the Americas: Journeys from Spain to the New World" performs flamenco guitar and other music at one of LA's most revered monuments of the Spanish era, the San Fernando Mission in Mission Hills. This program is part of the World Festival of Sacred Music and is a rare chance to enjoy a concert at the mission. (<http://www.festivalofsacredmusic.org>)

Also on Oct. 8, the Guelaguetza, the largest traditional folk festival of the Mexican state of Oaxaca, will be brought to life with folkloric dancing by La Nueva Antiquera (a troupe from Oaxaca) at Placita Dolores. The evening event also features foods and music from the seven regions of Oaxaca state. (<http://www.mexicanculturalinstitute.org>)

The Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival (LALIFF) (<http://www.latinofilm.org>) has evolved into one of LA's major film fests. Held Oct. 21 to 30 at the historic Egyptian Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard, the festival shows documentaries, features, and shorts. Last year more than 15,000 people attended the events, including co-founder Edward James Olmos.

Just following Hispanic Heritage Month, on Oct. 23 and 24, the Los Angeles Latino Book & Family Festival (<http://www.lbff.us>) will take at the Pomona Fairplex. This is the original and largest Latino book fest in the country, and 20,000 visitors are expected to explore the book sellers, storytellers, artists, craftspeople, food vendors, and entertainers. Co-founder Edward James Olmos will be there to welcome the audience.

For more information about visiting LA and upcoming events, go to the LA INC., The Convention and Visitors Bureau Web site at <http://www.SeeMyLA.com>.

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