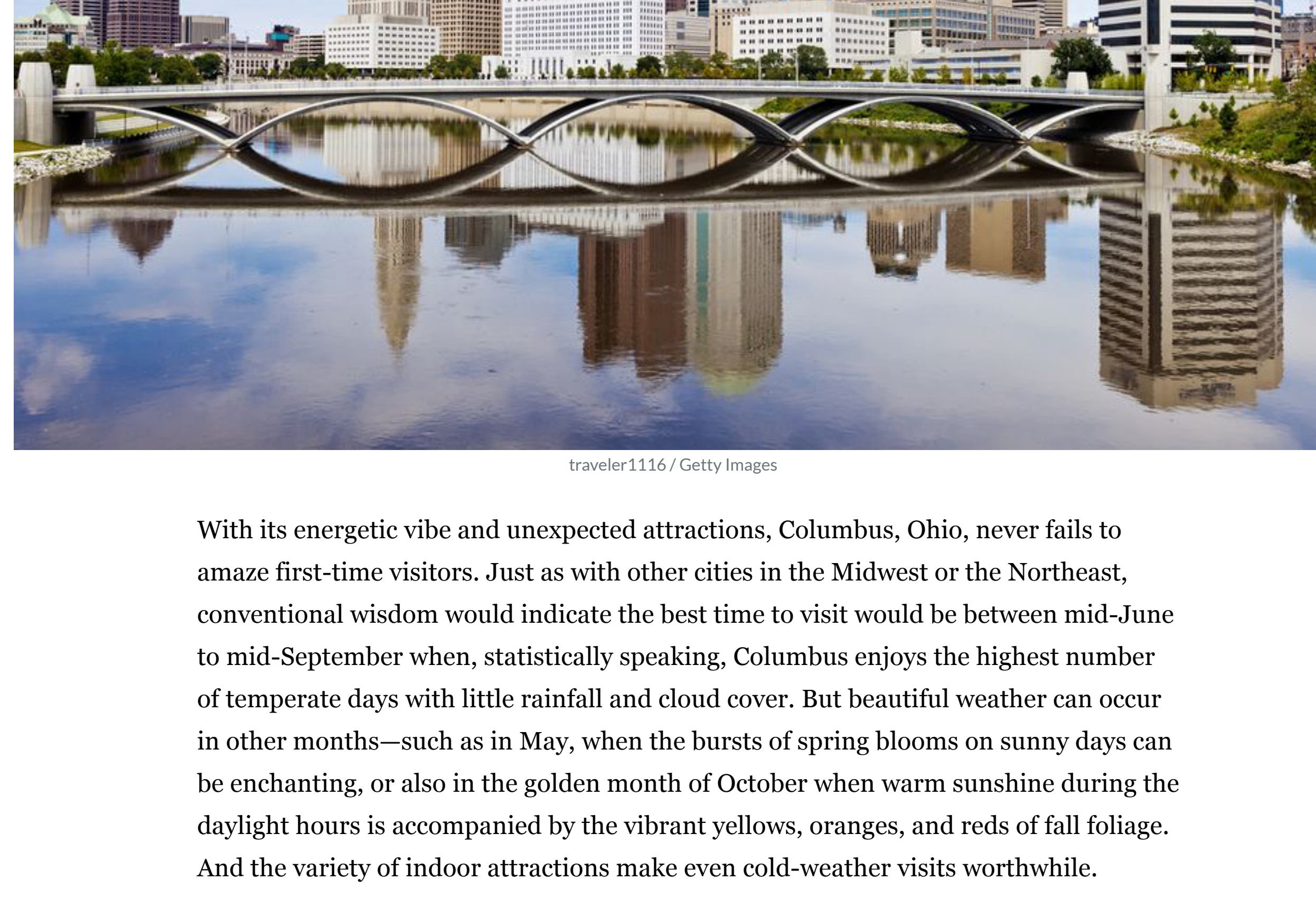


UNITED STATES > OHIO > COLUMBUS

The Best Time to Visit Columbus, Ohio

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With its energetic vibe and unexpected attractions, Columbus, Ohio, never fails to amaze first-time visitors. Just as with other cities in the Midwest or the Northeast, conventional wisdom would indicate the best time to visit would be between mid-June to mid-September when, statistically speaking, Columbus enjoys the highest number of temperate days with little rainfall and cloud cover. But beautiful weather can occur in other months—such as in May, when the bursts of spring blooms on sunny days can be enchanting, or also in the golden month of October when warm sunshine during the daylight hours is accompanied by the vibrant yellows, oranges, and reds of fall foliage. And the variety of indoor attractions make even cold-weather visits worthwhile.

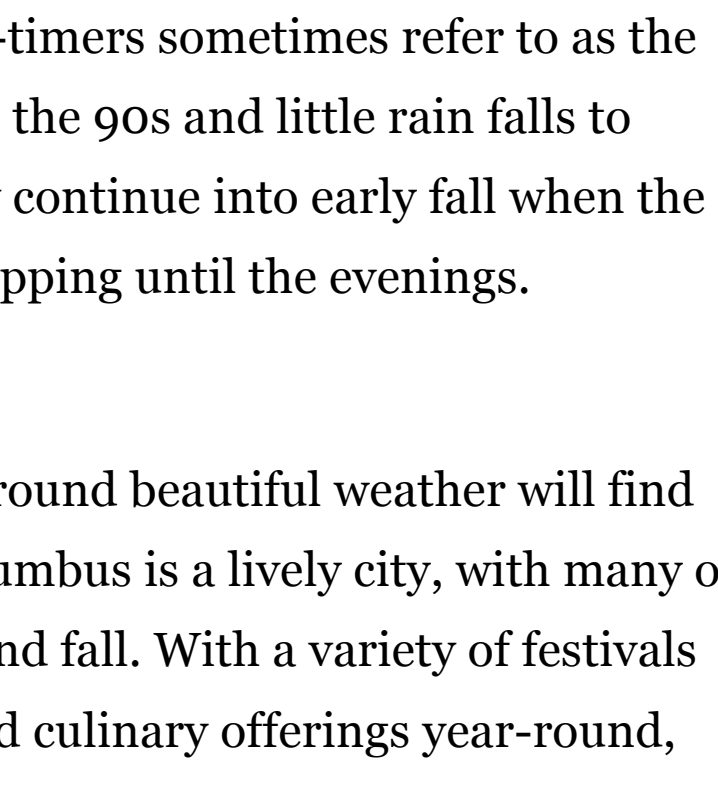
Weather in Columbus

Fortunately, Columbus seems to be spared the worst of the weather extremes found in many other Midwestern cities. Local meteorologists sometimes make mention of the “I-70 effect,” referring to the major east-west interstate highway passing across Ohio and bisecting Columbus. Major storms of any season frequently move to the north or to the south of that arbitrary dividing line, often bypassing Columbus altogether.

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Winters in Ohio’s capital are relatively short, with most of the severe weather usually occurring in January and February. Although an eight-inch snowfall is common in many Midwestern cities, it’s rare in Columbus and considered somewhat of a catastrophe by residents when it occurs. The arrival of spring is always keenly anticipated, but cold temperatures can persist into March and April in tandem with considerable rainfall.

The warm and very humid summers generally are not insufferable except for a two- to three-week period in about July or August that old-timers sometimes refer to as the “Dog Days” when temperatures seem to be stuck in the 90s and little rain falls to mitigate the heat. Outdoor activities can frequently continue into early fall when the days are often still sunny, with temperatures not dipping until the evenings.

Peak Season

People whose enjoyment of a destination centers around beautiful weather will find the warmer months the best time to visit. Still, Columbus is a lively city, with many of its prime activities also taking place in the spring and fall. With a variety of festivals scattered across the calendar and vibrant music and culinary offerings year-round, there’s always plenty going on for visitors to experience no matter the time of year. Pleasant weather may wax and wane according to the season, but with its diversity of diversions, Columbus has something to offer no matter the month.

January and February

Although significant snowfalls are rare and usually predicted well in advance, the first two months of the year in Columbus are almost always gray and dreary, with periods of temperatures dropping into the high teens and low 20s possible although not frequent.^[1] In general, this is an excellent time to visit Columbus’s museums, such as the Columbus Museum of Art, COSI (Center of Science and Industry), or the fantastic [Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum](#) on the Ohio State campus; it’s the most extensive collection of cartoon art in the world. The city’s theater troupes, like the bold and bawdy Shadowbox Live, offer exciting fare, as well as musical organizations like the Columbus Symphony Orchestra or the Columbus Jazz Orchestra. Those craving time in the great outdoors can head for the hills—the Hocking Hills—a region about an hour to the southeast of Columbus where the annual Winter Hike in January invariably draws thousands of visitors to enjoy its dramatic cliffs and gorges covered with ice.

March

A few tantalizing days with sunshine and relative warmth are interspersed with chilly, gloomy days. Snowstorms are still possible through much of March, and occasional Arctic blasts make it wise not to put the winter coat away just yet.

Events to check out:

- The Arnold Sports Festival:** “I’ll be back” is what Arnold Schwarzenegger told a local businessman who’d sponsored him in an early bodybuilding event. Since then, Arnold has been coming back to Columbus for more than 30 years, hosting what’s now the largest multi-sport festival in the nation with upwards of 22,000 athletes—more than the Olympics—from 80 countries competing in more than 70 sports.
- Blooms and Butterflies:** Hundreds of colorful butterflies flit through the bright tropical blooms in the Pacific Island Water Garden of the Franklin Park Conservatory, where more than 400 species of plants are grouped in biomes representing global climate zones.

April

April is frequently rainy, with the continued alternation of sunny and gloomy days. Temperatures are generally on the upswing, but with the potential for cold snaps to re-occur.

Events to check out:

- Equine Affaire:** Billing itself as “North America’s Premier Equestrian Exposition,” this is the largest horse-related trade show in the nation with a wealth of equine products on sale and events offering the opportunity to mingle with the foremost trainers, competitors, judges, and experts in the industry.
- Ohioana Book Festival:** More than a hundred writers from the Buckeye State gather for a day of panel discussions, readings, and a book fair. Genres represented include everything from historical fiction to true crime to local history.

May

When it’s not raining, May can be glorious with springtime blooms aplenty and temperatures continuing to rise. Outdoor events kick off in earnest during this merry month.

Events to check out:

- The Memorial Tournament:** The world’s best golfers compete in this weeklong tournament at the world-class Muirfield Village Golf Club, designed by Columbus native Jack Nicklaus, who has won the championship twice.
- Asian Festival:** More than 100,000 people gather over Memorial Day weekend to celebrate the culture and cuisine of all Asian nationalities. Events include everything from ping pong tournaments to martial arts demonstrations to Dragon Boat races.

June

By June, temperatures are reliably warm and pleasant, making it a joy to be outdoors. Columbus’ summertime calendar of events goes into full swing.

Events to check out:

- The Columbus Arts Festival:** Nearly 300 artists in every conceivable medium sell their wares in tents along the Scioto Mile, the city’s beautifully landscaped downtown riverfront. The three-day event also includes live music and entertainment at five outdoor venues.
- Columbus Pride Festival and Parade:** With one of the largest gay populations in the Midwest, it’s no surprise Columbus’s Pride events are among the most sizable in the nation, drawing visitors from all over the state and beyond. As many as half a million people gather to watch a joyous parade several miles long that easily can last two hours.

July

Donning shorts and T-shirts are your best bet in fighting the heat and humidity of summer’s warmest month. Enjoy the sunlight with a variety of outdoor activities, or cool down with the air conditioning found in indoor venues.

Events to check out:

- The Fourth of July:** Two amazing events make a visit to Columbus well worthwhile for this patriotic holiday. On July 3, [Red, White, and Boom](#) is one of the largest and longest fireworks displays in the nation, drawing a million viewers or more to downtown’s riverfront. On the holiday itself, the hilarious Moo Dah Parade pokes fun at traditional patriotic processions, spoofing both local and national events. Imagine a float from which Miss Italian Village 1964 throws uncooked pasta into the crowd. You’ve got the picture.
- Summer Movie series:** As the [longest-running vintage film festival in the nation](#), this several weeks-long series draws an eclectic crowd to the magnificent Ohio Theater to watch oldies like “Casablanca” or Hitchcock’s thrillers or classics of more recent vintage like “The Shawshank Redemption.” Before the show and during intermission, organists perform on the 1928 Mighty Morton.

August

Even with most school years commencing late in the month, there’s enough time for more summertime revelry.

Events to check out:

- Ohio State Fair:** Go nose to nose with a llama, savor a Fried Snickers Bar, or marvel at the 2,000 Pound Butter Cow. For nearly two weeks in late July and early August, Ohio’s state fair has all the agricultural and livestock exhibits you’d expect at a Midwestern fair but also midway rides, fair food, nationally known entertainers, and cornball attractions like camel rides.
- Dublin Irish Festival:** The largest three-day Irish festival on the planet gives visitors the chance to settle into the Jameson Whiskey Tasting Snug, enjoy more than 65 musical acts at seven different stages, watch Celtic Canine competing, or partake in cottage pie or Irish stew. This all takes place in Dublin, Ohio, by the way, not Dublin, Ireland.

September

To say Columbus goes mad for Ohio State football is an understatement, but other activities do take place during this first of the fall months.

Events to check out:

- OSU football game-day activities:** It would be a challenge to score an actual ticket to the game itself, but you can still sample activities on campus that give a flavor of what’s going on in the famed Horseshoe stadium. At the traditional “Skull Session” before the game, watch the OSU Marching Band rehearse its half-time routine. Or dress in scarlet and gray and crash one of the many tailgate parties taking place everywhere.
- Cartoon Crossroads Columbus:** With the most extensive collection of cartoon art in the world at the Billy Ireland Library and Museum on the Ohio State campus, it’s not surprising that the top cartoonists, graphic artists, and animators in the nation converge on Columbus each September for four days of panel discussions, lectures, exhibits, screenings, and workshops.

October

The golden month of October has enough warm weather for outdoor activities to continue, but other activities to take you inside when the evenings get chilly.

Events to check out:

- Columbus Marathon:** Columbus’s mostly flat terrain makes it an ideal place for 7,000 runners from across the country to participate in this marathon that’s so popular it typically sells out by August each year. The flat, fast course winding through the city makes it possible for a high percentage of runners to qualify for the Boston Marathon.
- HighBall Halloween:** Columbus’s strong fashion industry takes center stage during this two-day street fair with a focus on high couture costumes. A highlight is an evening event where local fashion designers compete with truly over-the-top themed creations worn by models strutting on an outdoor runway. Even for the public costume contest, a high bar is set, so put some creativity into your costumes!

November

Chills settle into the air, often accompanied by cold rains. It’s time to settle in for indoor diversions.

Events to check out:

- Veterans Day activities:** Since 2018, Columbus is a destination for veterans due to the opening of the architecturally stunning National Veterans Memorial and Museum, the country’s first space dedicated to honoring the sacrifices of veterans of all branches of military service and all conflicts. Take part in unique Veterans Day observations and don’t miss the fascinating museum space with interactive exhibits and compelling video testimonials.
- Wildlights:** This annual holiday favorite at the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium starts in November and lasts through January, featuring millions of LED lights, animated musical light shows, Santa, reindeer, and other holiday festivities.

December

Snow is always possible at this time of year but frequently doesn’t arrive in any significant amount until after the first of the year. December’s activities are understandably dominated by the approaching holidays.

Events to check out:

- Short North Holiday Hop:** With dozens of art galleries, eclectic shops, and restaurants, the Short North Arts District hosts a monthly “Gallery Hop” with exhibitions, special events, and street performers to entertain the thousands of visitors to this trendy event. December’s Holiday Hop is especially festive with its mix of holiday lights, food, and drink.
- Village Lights:** On the evening of December’s first Sunday, thousands of luminaria line the brick streets of Columbus’s charming German Village with its distinctive Old World vibe. Shops, businesses, and restaurants stay open late, offering special discounts and treats.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- When is the best time to visit Columbus?
- What is the coldest month in Columbus?
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