

Día de los Muertos FAQ

What is Día de los Muertos?

Rooted in Mexican tradition, Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) is a time to remember and honor loved ones who have died through joy, ritual, storytelling, food, art, and shared celebration. While often associated with Mexico, traditions honoring the dead exist across many cultures. The Des Moines Art Center is honored to help create space for this meaningful community tradition each year.

When and where is the event?

Sunday, November 1, 2026 | 11 am – 3 pm

Des Moines Art Center

4700 Grand Avenue

Des Moines, IA 50310

A full program schedule will be posted to the Art Center's website closer to the event.

Do I need tickets or to register?

No. Día de los Muertos is free and open to all. No tickets or advance registration are required.

How much does it cost?

Admission, performances, and hands-on activities are free to enjoy.

Food, gifts, artwork, and other vendor offerings will be available for purchase.

Is this event family-friendly?

Absolutely. Día de los Muertos is a multigenerational community celebration designed for visitors of all ages.

Do I need to arrive at a certain time?

No—guests are welcome to arrive anytime between 11 am and 3 pm. While you're welcome to drop in at any point, the event does include scheduled programming such as bilingual storytime, welcoming remarks, the community procession, documentary film, and live music and dance performances. Please visit our event webpage closer to the date for the most up-to-date schedule.

Some offerings, including complimentary hot cocoa, pan de muerto, and hands-on art activities, are available while supplies last.

Where should I park?

Parking is available in the Art Center parking lots and nearby street parking. A **free shuttle** will also run continuously from:

Merrill Middle School

5301 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50312

What happens if the weather is bad?

Día de los Muertos takes place rain or shine. In the event of inclement weather, some outdoor activities may be moved indoors, modified, or canceled, but the celebration will continue.

Is the program in Spanish?

Día de los Muertos strives to be a fully bilingual event, with signage, instructions, and presentations offered in both Spanish and English whenever possible.

Is the event accessible?

Yes. The Des Moines Art Center is wheelchair accessible and offers accessible parking, elevators, restrooms, and other visitor accommodations. A Quiet Space will also be available during the event for visitors who may need a calmer, lower-stimulation environment.

Guests with specific accessibility questions or needs are encouraged to contact the museum in advance.

Is this a crowded event?

Yes. Día de los Muertos is the Art Center's largest annual event and can be lively and busy throughout the day. Guests seeking a quieter museum experience may wish to visit earlier or later—the Art Center is open 10 am–5 pm, while event programming takes place from 11 am–3 pm only. The community ofrenda will remain on view for one week following the event for those who wish to experience that portion of the celebration at a quieter time.

Can I come in costume?

Yes! Guests of all ages are welcome and encouraged to dress festively for Día de los Muertos. Seeing Catrinas, Catrines, and [other celebratory attire](#) throughout the museum adds to the joy of the day.

We ask that all costumes be respectful and that **full face coverings or masks not be worn** for safety and museum security.

What kinds of activities will there be?

Visitors can enjoy live music and dance performances, hands-on art activities, food and art vendors, a community ofrenda, a short documentary tribute, festive photo opportunities, and more.

Free hot cocoa and pan de muerto will be available while supplies last.

A full event schedule will be shared closer to the event.

Can I contribute to the community ofrenda?

The community ofrenda is thoughtfully curated by the event planning committee as part of the

annual celebration. While guests are not able to add items directly to the ofrenda, you are warmly invited to bring a photo of a loved one (that you do not need returned) to add to the community memory wall.

What can I bring with me?

Día de los Muertos is a lively museum-wide celebration, and food and drink may be enjoyed in designated spaces.

As with regular museum visits, food, drinks, backpacks, and large bags are not permitted inside museum galleries.

For full museum visitor guidelines, [visit our website](#).

Will photography be taking place?

Yes. Photography and videography may take place during the event for promotional and documentary purposes.

If you have concerns, please speak with a staff member when you arrive.

Should I bring cash?

Vendor payment methods may vary, so bringing both cash and a card is recommended.

How long has the Art Center hosted Día de los Muertos?

The Des Moines Art Center has hosted Día de los Muertos since 2000. Created through collaboration between Art Center staff and dedicated community volunteers, it has remained one of the museum's largest and most beloved annual community celebrations for more than 25 years.

Who plans this event?

Día de los Muertos is shaped by a community planning committee that works throughout the year alongside Des Moines Art Center Staff to help imagine and create the celebration. The committee includes community members, many with personal and cultural connections to the traditions being honored.

I'd love to get involved. How can I help?

Interested in volunteering, becoming a vendor, or serving on the Day of the Dead planning committee?

Please contact:

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Where can I learn more about Día de los Muertos traditions?

For those interested in learning more about the history, customs, and meaning of Día de los Muertos, we recommend the [Smithsonian Latino Center's excellent Day of the Dead educational resources](#).