

DID YOU KNOW?

From 2007 to 2020, Boquete's Jazz & Blues Festival Drew World-Class Musicians to the Highlands

The **Boquete Jazz & Blues Festival** started in **2007** and grew fast: by 2012 it was already the second-largest event of its kind in Panama. It was run entirely by unpaid volunteers through a charitable, private nonprofit foundation dedicated to Boquete's cultural life—no paid staff, just a community that kept showing up to put it on.

From **2016** on, the festival was led by **John Wolff**, a retired Copa Airlines pilot. It ran every **February**, when Boquete's dry-season climate is at its mildest, with the main stage at the **800-seat** Valle Escondido Amphitheater on the slopes of Volcán Barú.

Its lineups drew performers from well beyond Panama's borders. Editions featured harmonica legend **Lee Oskar** of War, Grammy nominee **Joe Louis Walker**, and Latin jazz vocalist **Maria Rivas**, among others. The festival had become “so well-known worldwide,” one account from the period noted, “that there are more international musicians who want to perform in Boquete than there are slots in the schedule.” Every dollar it raised stayed local, funding music education in Boquete's schools, and Panama's national culture institute, INAC, recognized it as a National Cultural Event.

In **March 2020**, marking what was billed as its 14th anniversary, organizers relocated the festival to the **Buenaventura Golf & Beach Resort** in El Chirú, Coclé province—a beach venue with room to nearly triple the lineup—and rebranded it the “Beaches Jazz and Blues Festival.” What's happened since is murkier: one listing shows an edition back in Boquete at Hotel Panamonte in March 2023, while another shows the following year's edition at the beach resort again. Whether, or where, the festival is currently running in Boquete isn't confirmed from what's publicly documented today.

Sources:

- Relo Firm, “All That Jazz: Experience Boquete, Panama's Jazz and Blues Festival”
- Playa Community, “10th Anniversary of the Boquete Jazz & Blues Festival”
- Panama Living, “The Boquete Jazz & Blues Festival Arrives at the Beach”
- Jambase, “Boquete Jazz & Blues Festival” 2023 and 2024 lineup pages
- Boquete Jazz & Blues Festival, official site (“The Festival Venue”)