



## Sundance 2026: Guide for Utah Locals

### Description

You may have heard that I'm reviewing Sundance this year—the **final year the Festival will take place in Utah**. The 2026 Sundance Film Festival closes a more than forty-year chapter rooted in Park City and Salt Lake City before the Festival relocates to Boulder, Colorado in 2027, bringing a long and influential era in Utah's cultural history to a close. As part of my research, I've also decided to share a guide for locals, since I'll be trying to catch most of my screenings in downtown Salt Lake City.

### Salt Lake City Is the Most Accessible Entry Point

For Utah audiences, the 2026 Sundance Film Festival is no longer a Park City-only event. Salt Lake City screenings offer the easiest physical and logistical access for locals, making in-person attendance more realistic for a wider range of people. Compared to Park City, SLC venues generally mean flatter terrain, better public transit access, less weather disruption, and lower sensory overload.

Many competition titles, documentaries, and short film programs screen in Salt Lake City throughout the Festival's full run (**January 22–February 1**). For locals balancing work schedules, caregiving responsibilities, disability access, or budget constraints, SLC screenings are often the most accessible way to experience Sundance in person.

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## The At-Home Program Expands Access

From **January 29–February 1**, Sundance's **online program** opens nationwide—including to Utah audiences.

The at-home lineup includes:

- **All Competition films**
- **Select feature and episodic titles**
- **The Short Film Program**

*For many locals, the at-home program is the most accessible way to experience Sundance:*

- No travel or parking barriers
- Flexible viewing schedules
- Easier use of captions, volume control, and sensory breaks
- Greater access for disabled, immunocompromised, or time-limited viewers

This online window allows audiences to engage with Sundance without the physical and financial strain that has historically limited participation.

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## Short Films: A Local Best-Kept Secret

Short Film Programs are particularly well-suited to local audiences:

- Shorter runtimes
- Curated groupings
- Broad stylistic and global range
- High impact without an all-day commitment

Many shorts are available **both in Salt Lake City and online**, making them one of the Festival's most accessible offerings.

Beyond short films, Sundance offers a wide range of feature-length and serialized storytelling across multiple sections. These include **narrative features** in the [U.S. Dramatic](#) and [World Cinema Dramatic](#) Competitions, documentaries in both U.S. and international categories that explore social, political, and environmental issues, and **high-profile premieres** featuring established actors and directors. The Festival also showcases **experimental and formally innovative work** in the NEXT section, **genre-driven films**—including horror, thrillers, and dark comedies—in Midnight, and **episodic projects** designed for television or streaming platforms. Additional programs like Spotlight, Family Matinee, Special Screenings, and the Park City Legacy series round out the lineup, offering everything from acclaimed international films to archival and restoration screenings. We've linked each category above for readers who want to explore specific sections or plan their viewing in advance, making it easier to navigate the Festival's wide-ranging offerings.

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## Ticket Information

*Single tickets are currently the most reliable option for local audiences, as many passes and packages are already sold out.*

- **On sale:** January 14, 2026 at **10:00 a.m. MT**
- **Price:** \$35 per film (in person or online)
- Valid for Salt Lake City screenings and online screenings

• Popular premieres and high-buzz titles often sell out quickly. Logging in right at 10 a.m. significantly improves your chances.

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Buy tickets: <https://festival.sundance.org/tickets/>

A woman with long hair sitting in a dense, green forest, looking up thoughtfully among the leaves.  
***Yanuni* / Directed by Richard Ladkani. Photo courtesy of Sundance Institute.**

A group of seven people sitting on a couch in a living room, smiling and posing for a camera placed  
Wil Brill and Rob Lowe appear in *The Musical* by Giselle Bonilla, an official selection of the  
2026 Sundance Film Festival. Courtesy of Sundance Institute | photo by Tu Do.

## A Few Anticipated Films to Watch and What I'm Personally Tracking

For general audiences, Sundance 2026 brings no shortage of high-profile, conversation-ready films. Titles like ***The Gallerist*** (starring Natalie Portman and Jenna Ortega), ***The Invite*** (directed by Olivia Wilde), ***See You When I See You*** (from Jay Duplass), and ***Gail Daughtry and the Celebrity Sex Pass*** (a David Wain comedy with Zoey Deutch and Jon Hamm) are already drawing attention as crowd-friendly premieres likely to generate buzz beyond the Festival.

Two women peek around a corner, their expressions hinting at intrigue or surprise. The scene is illustrated by Natalie Portman and Jenna Ortega appear in *The Gallerist* by Cathy Yan, an official selection of the 2026 Sundance Film Festival. Courtesy of Sundance Institute | photo by MRC II Distribution Company L.P.

Alongside those, I'm especially drawn to films that engage questions of community, memory, land, and lived experience—works that feel in conversation with Sundance's legacy as a site for discovery rather than spectacle. Documentaries like ***American Doctor***, ***Hanging by a Wire***, and ***Tuktuit: Caribou*** stand out for their attention to care, ethics, and relational responsibility, while narrative titles such as ***Union County***, ***Rock Springs***, and several films in the **Short Film Program** reflect the kinds of intimate, place-based storytelling Sundance has long done best.



***The Lake*, directed by Utah filmmaker Abby Ellis, examines what is happening environmentally with the Great Salt Lake and potential future repercussions if action is not taken to save it. | Photo: Sundance Film Festival**

A group of doctors in surgical attire, including masks and caps, focused on a medical procedure in a  
A still from *American Doctor* by Poh Si Teng, an official selection of the 2026 Sundance Film Festival. Courtesy of Sundance Institute | photo by Ibrahim Al Othman

## **American Doctor**

Three American doctors — Palestinian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian — enter Gaza to provide medical relief and run up against the political realities shaping their work, in a documentary from director Poh Si Teng.

*Section: U.S. Documentary Competition (available online)*

In this final Utah year, the most compelling Sundance lineup may not be defined by celebrity alone but by the quieter films that remind us why Sundance mattered here in the first place.

A close-up scene featuring a man and a woman engaged in an intense conversation, with a colorful Cooper Hoffman and Olivia Wilde appear in *I Want Your Sex* by Gregg Araki, an official selection of the 2026 Sundance Film Festival. Courtesy of Sundance Institute | photo by Lacey Terrell



U.S. Dramatic Competition:

[View Films](#)

The U.S. Dramatic Competition offers Festivalgoers a first look at the world premieres of groundbreaking new voices in American independent film.



U.S. Documentary Competition:

[View Films](#)

The U.S. Documentary Competition offers Festivalgoers a first look at world premieres of nonfiction American films illuminating the ideas, people, and events that shape the present day.



World Cinema Dramatic Competition:  
[View Films](#)

These narrative feature films from emerging talent around the world offer fresh perspectives and inventive styles.



World Cinema Documentary Competition:  
[View Films](#)

These nonfiction feature films from emerging talent around the world showcase some of the most courageous and extraordinary filmmaking today.



NEXT:  
[View Films](#)

Pure, bold works distinguished by an innovative, forward-thinking approach to storytelling populate this program. Unfettered creativity promises that the films in this section will shape the greater next wave in global cinema.



Premieres:  
[View Films](#)

This showcase of world premieres presents highly anticipated films on a variety of subjects in both fiction and nonfiction.



Midnight:  
[View Films](#)

From horror flicks and wild comedies to chilling thrillers and works that defy any genre, these films will keep you wide-awake and on the edge of your seat.



Episodic:  
[View Films](#)

Our Episodic section was created specifically for bold stories told in multiple episodes, with an emphasis on independent perspectives and innovative storytelling.



Spotlight, Presented by Audible: [View Films](#)

The Spotlight program is a tribute to the cinema we love, presenting films that have played throughout the world.



Family Matinee:  
[View Films](#)

For over a decade, the Family Matinee section of the Festival (formerly known as KIDS) has been built for audiences of all ages, but especially for our youngest independent film fans.



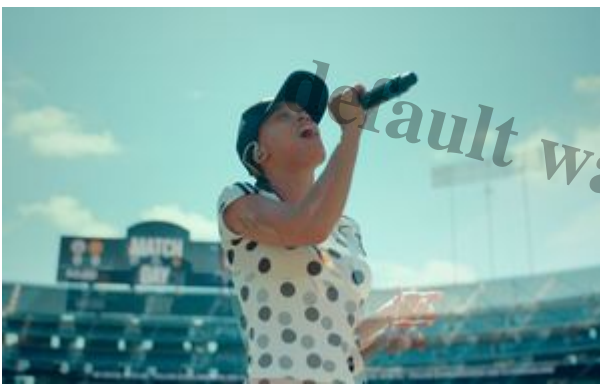
Park City Legacy:  
[View Films](#)

The Park City Legacy program celebrates the Festival's rich history and shared experiences in Utah through archival screenings of iconic films from previous editions that have shaped the heritage of both Sundance Institute and independent storytelling.



Special Screenings:  
[View Films](#)

One-of-a-kind moments highlight new independent works that add to the unique Festival experience.



Short Film Program, Presented by Ketel One Vodka:  
[View Films](#)

Driven by innovation and experimentation, the Short Film Program seeks out filmmaking's most original voices.



Best of Fest & Local Lens:  
[View Films](#)

Coming Soon



Award Winners:

[View Films](#)

Award-winning feature film screenings, in person or online, available to watch during Awards Weekend (January 31–February 1).

[Printable program here](#)

**Category**

1. Events

**Tags**

1. Rhetorical Review
2. Sundance

**Date**

2026/04/26

**Date Created**

2025/12/18

**Author**

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