# Cheltenham Festival kicks off with excitement and a record turnout



The Cheltenham Festival, a highlight of the horse racing calendar, commenced this week with tremendous enthusiasm as over 55,000 spectators gathered at the famed course for its 101st iteration. The event officially opened on Tuesday with an atmosphere electrified by fans eagerly anticipating a day of competitive racing. The festival kicked off with its renowned "Cheltenham roar," a tradition that underscores the excitement of the racegoers as they cheered for the favourite horse, Kopek Des Bordes, which clinched victory in its race.

Held at the Cheltenham Racecourse in Gloucestershire, the festival has not been without its challenges, particularly in recent years marked by the impact of COVID-19 which resulted in an empty racecourse. Attendance had seen a decline, reported to be seven per cent last year. However, this year’s full turnout indicates a resurgence in interest, bolstered by new management and a focus on enhancing the racegoer experience. Jamie Lavendar, a former British army officer and lifelong racing enthusiast, took over the operations of the racecourse in January, overseeing this year's event.

Ticket prices have remained consistent with the previous year, starting from £37, alongside introduced meal deals priced at £15, aimed at providing better value for attendees. While the cost of refreshments has seen an uptick—most notably, the price of Guinness reaching £7.80 and a bottle of Moet champagne priced at £110—the event remains popular among its visitors. It is estimated that over 350,000 pints of beer will be consumed throughout the duration of the festival.

Changes aimed at improving the visitor experience include the expansion of alcohol-drinking zones along the trackside, enabling attendees to enjoy beverages without rushing between races. Bookmaker Graham Thorpe commented on this shift, stating, "People want to stay and enjoy a drink outside, especially when the weather is good," when speaking to The Independent, highlighting the emphasis on responsible drinking at the festival.

Feedback from visitors about the relaxed drinking restrictions has generally been positive. Michael Muldoon from Greater Manchester, a regular attendee for 15 years, noted, “It’s a sensible change as the drinking here is responsible in large,” reinforcing the notion that the ability to drink outside reduces the hassle for attendees.

Racecourse facilities have seen improvements as well, boasting 2km of bar counters and an elongated 85-metre bar located in the Best Mate Enclosure, which has reportedly improved service at busy times. Tom Barnes from Portsmouth expressed acceptance of the pricing, stating, “Drink prices are fairly standard here compared to other sporting events” and affirming that the cost did not deter him from the overall experience.

The festival also draws a wide demographic of attendees, from families forging traditions year after year to individual racing fans. Gillian Dunwoody, at 93 years old, celebrated her long-standing tradition of attending, recalling, “It’s always a good first day. The first race always has the roar… It’s fantastic.” In contrast, the youngest attendee at the opening day of the festival was just 12 weeks old, with mother Sophie Lee sharing her family's love for the event.

Overall, the Cheltenham Festival continues to hold a significant place in the sporting calendar, attracting diverse crowds and adapting to modern demands while maintaining its rich traditions.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.racingpost.com/cheltenham-festival/> - This URL provides information about the Cheltenham Festival, including its duration, races, and attendance, which supports the article's details about the event's significance and structure.
2. <https://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2025-03-07/all-you-need-to-know-about-cheltenham-festival-2025> - This ITV News article offers insights into the Cheltenham Festival 2025, including its dates, attendance expectations, and economic impact, which corroborates the article's claims about the festival's popularity and economic influence.
3. <https://www.attheraces.com/news/2025/March/08/cheltenham-anticipating-drop-in-festival-attendance> - Although the article is not accessible, it typically would discuss attendance expectations for the Cheltenham Festival, which could support claims about attendance trends and management changes.
4. <https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/scv/rulesofcourt.pdf> - This URL does not directly relate to the Cheltenham Festival but is included as it was part of the search results. It pertains to legal procedures in Virginia and does not support any claims in the article.
5. <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/ap20-seminar-task-2-iwa-directions-and-stimulus-materials.pdf> - This URL is unrelated to the Cheltenham Festival, focusing on AP Seminar performance tasks and does not support any claims in the article.
6. <https://www.noahwire.com> - This URL is mentioned as the source of the article but does not provide additional corroborating information about the Cheltenham Festival beyond what is presented in the article itself.
7. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/cheltenham-festival-racing-opener-champions-cup-b2712902.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data