

Glastonbury Festival

Where: Worthy Farm, Pilton, Vale of Avalon, Somerset, Southwest England

When: Mid-June

What happens: World's largest outdoor music festival - a jamboree of famous bands, theatre, healing and performing arts

Where it's at

If you are going to an English music festival then without doubt it has to be Glastonbury - it's the oldest, it's the biggest, it's a world within a world and it is the one that everyone goes to.

Glastonbury is the largest outdoors festival of music and performing arts in the world which each year hosts some of the biggest and best artists in the world.

Located in the Southwestern county of Somerset on a giant 900-acre farm site in the Vale of Avalon, a place of ancient myths and Kind Arthur legends, festival goers here can expect enlightenment, rude awakenings, bizarre happenings, and moments which border on other-worldly.

The festival usually takes place on the second or third weekend in June, after the Summer Solstice. The site generally opens on the Wednesday of the festival with impromptu music happening each night until the festival starts proper on the Friday, running through until the Sunday.

Glastonbury culture

Some people say it's become too mainstream and crowded since the 1990s, with ticket prices soaring through the roof every year and old school acts like Rod Stewart and Paul McCartney headlining the main stages, but there's something for everyone at this massive event which turns a large dairy farm into a makeshift city composed of every sub-culture under the sun. Expect all sorts at the festival - dreadlocked hippies, ravers, celebrities in green wellies, new age travelers, musicians, thespians, and families soaking up the crazy atmosphere. Glastonbury gives you a once-in-a-lifetime chance to experience all the genres of music, people, styles, tastes and sounds that Europe has to offer - and you'll definitely have a wild time in the bargain. A dull moment at Glastonbury is unimaginable.

History of Glastonbury Festival

Glastonbury is one of the original music festivals. First held during the long hot summer of 1970, the day after Jimi Hendrix died, it was the perfect hippie retreat. It was all about great music, groovy dancing and having a good time, all the time. The original festival was by donation of a mere £1 (under \$2) which included free milk - as the festival is still held today on the site of Worthy Farm, a working dairy farm owned by Britain's hippest farmer, Michael Eavis. Despite the steep admission charges today, profits do go to good causes - in particular Greenpeace (who sponsor the main Pyramid Stage), Oxfam, Water Aid, and other humanitarian charities.

Main Stages

There are six main stages hosting mainly established artists - the largest of which is the Pyramid Stage, followed by the Other Stage, with the Dance Village, Jazz World, Acoustic Tent, New Band Stage (re-christened the John Peel Stage in 2005 after the death of the great alternative music DJ in 2004), and Fields of Avalon offering more low-key specialist alternatives.

Circus and Theatre

A wild space packed full of fire jugglers, big top acrobats, comedians, cabaret singers, and poets, with everything from family-friendly theatre in the day through to adults-only acts like the Jim Rose Circus late at night. Or the Lost Vagueness crew further out of the site near the Stone Circle has nuns and vicars conducting mock mass weddings, or you can don a mud-caked dinner jacket and head to the casino for gambling, burlesque cabaret, and swing bands. There is no avoiding theatre at Glastonbury

Green Fields

This large area is set aside for alternative medicine, healing, environmentally-friendly technology, crafts, and social debates. It's the perfect place to begin a shamanic journey, enjoy a sauna (there are few public showers on site!), chill out, or see really far-out bands - where the generators are often powered by pedal bike! There's also entertainment here for kids and the Tipi Field.

King's Meadow

At the top of the Green Fields is the King's Meadow with the Sacred Space which offers fantastic views across the whole festival site, a stone dragon, and a stone circle - built in 1990 AD! At night, fires and torch lights illuminate the circle and the sound of a thousand-and-one djembe drummers beating in (near) unison fills the air. It's the space for your spiritual encounter, or just a chance to get 'stoned with the stones, man!'

TRUE OR FALSE?

1. Glastonbury is second largest festival in the world.
2. The site of the festival is said to be magical place.
3. Activities on the site start on Friday
4. Glastonbury is a place where everyone will find something for themselves
5. Festival was a commercial affair from the very start
6. Profits from ticket sales support various charities
7. There is a variety of entertainment available on site, such as theatre, circus and casinos
8. Kids are not welcome in Glastonbury
9. There is an area devoted to alternative medicine and crafts
10. Glastonbury is becoming less popular every year.