

Punchestown Irish National Hunt Festival 2016

An overview of the Punchestown Festival including:

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The 2016 five day Punchestown Racing Festival takes place from Tuesday 26th to Saturday 30th April. The Festival is a unique combination of top class sporting action, brilliant live entertainment, stunning glamour, wonderful family fun activities, delicious food and all topped off with that inimitable carnival atmosphere. Punchestown is the home of Irish jump racing and is steeped in history and local support. The Festival is now firmly established as a social and sporting highlight in the Irish calendar with anticipated attendances of 110,000 and a contribution to the local economy reaching €64 million.

Racing

The Punchestown Festival is considered the grand finale of the jump season and subsequently attracts the best of Irish and British racing talent. Home grown champions Willie Mullins, Ruby Walsh, Bryan Cooper, Gordon Elliott and Jessica Harrington take on the might of the visitors Nicky Henderson, Colin Tizzard and Richard Johnson among many others. The overall prize fund will reach over €2,640,000 increasing by 32% since 2012.

With 12 grade 1 contests throughout the week the Festival boasts some of the best in running action and thrilling finishes each season. Reputations are confirmed and crushed at the Punchestown which also the home to Irish cross country racing which is a real favourite for spectators as the horses and jockeys meander through the 400 acre site tackling banks, bush fences and steeplechase obstacles. The races get underway each day at 3.40 apart from Saturday when the first goes to post at 2.35. Each day has what is referred to as a feature race and title sponsors are as follows:

Tuesday 26th April – BoyleSports Champion Chase Day

Wednesday 27th April – Bibby Financial Services Ireland Punchestown Gold Cup

Thursday 28th April – The Ladbrokes Champion Stayers Hurdle Day

Friday 29th April – The BETDAQ Punchestown Champion Hurdle Day

Saturday 30th April – The AES Festival Family Fun Day – **First Race 2.35**

Entertainment

Punchestown prides itself on the 'festival' aspect of the event and as a result the enclosures are filled with live music and street theatre before and after racing each day. Artastic, Leah Moran Stage School, street theatre, live performers will create a welcome atmosphere on arrival at the track.

There are 22 public bars with as many live music acts after racing not to mention the tipster panels, celebrity interviews, parades, presentations, unveilings and of course the Gold Fever Best Dressed Lady Competition

The Baldonnel Singers will perform the National Anthem on the opening day and the Tallaght Festival Band will provide entertainment on AES Family Day. Among the parades on offer Horse Sport Ireland will perform a showcase of all things equestrian before racing on Tuesday 28th April, the Racehorse to Riding Horse display on Wednesday will feature some former Punchestown champions and Saturdays Fancy Dress for Junior Jockeys is always a popular feature.

The Bollinger Best Dressed Lady Competition
Win a 'Money can't But' luxury trip to the Champagne region and Paris.

The lucky winner will enjoy the most decadent prize imaginable, one that truly encapsulates Bollinger's philosophy that "Life Can Be Perfect".

- The Bollinger Best Dressed Lady 2016 plus a guest will enjoy:
- Return business class flights to France
- Private chauffeur directly from the airport to the Champagne region
- Private tour of the Bollinger estate - a truly special experience as Bollinger is not normally open to the public.
- Champagne tasting and lunch with experts at Champagne Bollinger
- Overnight Stay & gourmet meal in the nearby historic city of Reims.
- Private chauffeur to Paris for weekend of Luxury accommodation and Michelin starred dining
- A year supply of Bollinger Special Cuvée (1 bottle per month)
- A limited edition 007 James Bond bottle of 2009 vintage.

JUDGES:

Tuesday – Holly Carpenter (Model), Cathy O'Connor (Stylist) and Helen Mullins
(Member of Mullins racing dynasty, mother of grand national winning jockey and wife of trainer Tom Mullins)

Wednesday – Lottie Ryan (2FM), Deanna O'Connor (Editor of Xpose Magazine) and
Rachel Carberry (wife of top jockey Paul Carberry)

Thursday – Blaithe Treacy (RTE), Ali Ryan (CEO & MD @ Goss.ie) and
Robyn Codd (wife of top jockey Jamie Codd)

Friday – Roz Purcell (Model & lifestyle blogger), Jennifer Stevens (Editor of Irish
Country Magazine) and Gillian Walsh (wife of champion jockey Ruby Walsh)

Party Packs at Punchestown from just €25pp

Aimed at groups of 10 or more the Party Pack is an all-inclusive bundle offering admission, racecard, €5 betting voucher and €5 beverage voucher. Basically this pack offers you and your friends the ideal starter kit for a brilliant day at the races. Ideal for work colleagues, groups of friends or hen and stag parties.

Family Fun at Punchestown with AES

Festival Saturday has become a real success story since it was introduced only a couple of years ago. Now the second largest day attendance wise (29,043 in 2014), it is firmly established as family day with a vast entertainment and activity programme for children, all of whom race for free of course. Title sponsors AES, part of the Bord Na Mona group, have played a huge role by involving local schools, residents and families. There are 18 primary schools, 7,000 students taking part in the Punchestown Art competition. During the festival a total of 5,000 art entries will be displayed at the racecourse.

In the AES Junior Jockey Fun Club there will be 60,000 square feet of bouncy castles, face painting, pony rides, fancy dress and a huge funfair making it a brilliant and most importantly budget friendly day out for all the family. A key feature of the AES Family day programme is the mascot race. Children from each of the schools taking part in the art competition will accompany the jockeys from the weigh-room to the parade ring where they will get the official photograph taken on the winner's podium. Punchestown was the first racecourse to introduce this initiative. All children under 14 race for free. This is all part of the Punchestown policy to encourage children racing.

Festival Shopping Village

Retail therapy is a key part of the Punchestown Festival experience. The Festival Shopping Village is home to around 50 stands that offer a wonderful mix of products and services. So from kids clothing to jewellery, fine art to garden furniture, home wares, underwear, outerwear and everything in between the Festival Shopping Village has it! Festival goers have ample time to wander through the village and make some purchases as gates open two hours before the first race.

Admission

- €25 General Admission – Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday.
- €35 Reserved Enclosure Admission – Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday.
- €35 general admission €47 Reserved Enclosure – Friday
- From €25pp Party Packs for groups of 10 or more includes Admission, racecard, Betting and Drink voucher
- From €17 Student and OAP Package
- From €14 Teenage Admission 15/16/17 year olds

GATES OPEN 12.30 EACH DAY except Saturday when they will open an hour earlier at 11.30 for family day.

Further Information & News Archive

For further information and a full archive of press releases please visit www.punchestown.com