

Get ready for Cheltenham in the spring



All eyes on Cheltenham

The annual Cheltenham Festival turns 155 next year, and already racegoers are looking forward to flocking to the course in Gloucestershire to witness one of the most prestigious events on the racing calendar.

Cheltenham Racecourse may be some 336 miles away from Edinburgh, but that doesn't stop Edinburgh racegoers from having an interest. Whether they're [checking in](#) with Coral to look at the latest odds or making the journey south, it's all worth it for Cheltenham.

While many people may immediately think of the Grand National at Aintree or Royal Ascot when they think of race days, the annual Cheltenham Festival has now cemented itself as one of the biggest racing events of the season. The festival had humble beginnings back in 1860 when it started out as the National Hunt Meeting (its official title) and has attracted a bigger following year on year ever since.

This year's festival kicks off at the racecourse on 10th March 2015 and promises four days of excitement, culminating in the unlucky-for-some Cheltenham Gold Cup Day on Friday 13th. The family-friendly day will provide six races including two Grade 1 events and three handicaps, in which jockeys will compete for the second biggest prize on the horse racing calendar, £550,000, in the famed Cheltenham Gold Cup race.

While previous events have seen the likes of Ruby Walsh winning top jockey eight times this century, the festival has had plenty of other standout moments over the years. Notably,

the festival has had its fair share of dramas: in 2001, it was cancelled due to an [outbreak of foot and mouth disease](#), while in 2008, day two was called off due to freak weather.

Later, in 2010, the festival engaged in one of its first charity races, which saw 12 amateur female jockeys taking to a one mile and five furlong course at the Ladies Charity Flat Race in aid of Cancer Research UK.

Such standout moments have only served to help the races grow in popularity over the years, and most notably, the events have extended from a two-day to a four-day festival. Whether spectators are experienced bettors or first time racegoers looking to have a cheeky punt, there will doubtless be millions of pounds exchanged as the races are carried out.

In 2014, £250 million was wagered at the festival, and with an anniversary year to celebrate, next year's Cheltenham Festival looks set to be bigger than ever.

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