

Boardmasters festival is by the beach in Cornwall



FESTIVALS FOR FIRST-TIMERS

Jenny Rowe *advises parents which gigs are best for beginners*

Festivals are now a highlight of the summer for many teenagers. Whether it's Reading and Leeds, Bestival or Houghton, post-exams and pre-results most teens are counting down the days until they can cut loose for a frenzied weekend of music and fun.

Festivals go in and out of fashion and schools tend to have their favourites; for Benenden, it's often Reading and St Mary's Calne girls swear by Boardmasters in Cornwall. Their school's-out celebration is an ingenious halfway-house for parents looking for a gentler, first time festival. The coastal location promises no mud and is a much less messy, although no less tiring, affair. As well as the usual live music line-up, there are various surfing and skateboarding competitions or, if they fancy a change in tempo, hot tubs in which to sip a glass of fizz on the beach as the summer sun sets.

An enticing option for school leavers is Houghton Hall in Norfolk. It's built up quite a reputation since opening in 2017 and is renowned for spontaneous back-to-back sets and its 24-hour licence; the music

never stops so be prepared for the sleep deprivation (pack ear plugs).

In fact, out of the household names, apart from Boardmasters, Glastonbury, Reading and Leeds, where the cut-off is 16, most other festivals require attendees to be over 18 (or accompanied by someone who is), and if your teen isn't old enough, they'll be pinching an ID from an older sibling or, failing that, sourcing one elsewhere. That is if you're not up for going along with them.

Can't face the all-nighter in store for you at Houghton? Try Boomtown in Hampshire. A giant playground for all generations, it's a city in its own right with four separate 'districts', including Kidztown, self-dubbed 'a melting pot of music and theatre, mischief and mayhem'. Each section is home to a set of whacky characters, offering the most immersive family festival experience out there.

Better known is Camp Bestival – Bestival's little sister – which won Best New Festival in 2008 at the UK Festival Awards and has since won Best Family Festival five times, most recently in 2017. Set in the grounds of Lulworth Castle in Dorset its line-up is as impressive as any other, in

the past starring Florence and the Machine, Ed Sheeran and Ellie Goulding. Plus, when everyone's tired of throwing shapes, there's an eclectic array of activities to choose from, whether it's science, Bollywood or an inflatable church that you're after.

Bigger isn't always better, though. Another serial award-winner for its relaxed and friendly vibe is Beautiful Days in Devon, with a capacity of just 17,500. For somewhere even greener, in both senses of the word, you'll have to travel to the other side of the country to The Eden Festival in Dumfries and Galloway. The organisers plant trees to offset its carbon footprint, which is calculated annually according to the number of vehicles that transport its guests up to Scotland.

While there, the whole family will be encouraged to roll up their sleeves and save the planet. It's not all about environmental education though – far from it. The kids' arena, circus tent, comedy and cabaret will provide enough entertainment to last a lifetime, never mind a day or two.

If your child is desperate to spread their wings and go solo, you might be tempted to stall 'until next year' – not easy with persistent teenagers. The fact that 'everyone else is going', is a persuasive but unrealistic argument. 'Everyone' may actually mean 'one special person' and parents do well to use their class reps to sound out the truth. Watch out for

the love-drunk teen who wants to go to Reading just because a particular group of boys from Eton are, or is keen on Glastonbury because the girl of his dreams has a spare ticket, as it may all end in tears (and a midnight rescue mission for the parents – it's not the time to book a spa retreat).

A day ticket is a good place to start. This avoids a lot of the worry on your part as well as the wildest parties, which often happen back at camp. I know I was glad to make it back to my quiet, comfortable bed instead of sleeping rough after my first taste of V Festival. This means most teens have turned 17 by the time you and your close circle of parental confidantes have agreed (read: resigned) to let them camp out. Ultimately, you know your child and will be the best judge of when they're responsible (enough) and ready for it. Plus, once they've fledged, you can go anyway but with friends who actually share your music taste.

The truth is, there is no one-size-fits-all festival, and a great way to ensure a sure-footed first foray is to try it out as a family when they're younger before letting them progress to a day ticket and only then, if they're still keen, the much-wished-for weekender. The novelties may be fewer by the time they're raving in their teens but as a result so will their mistakes, and their memories all the better for it.

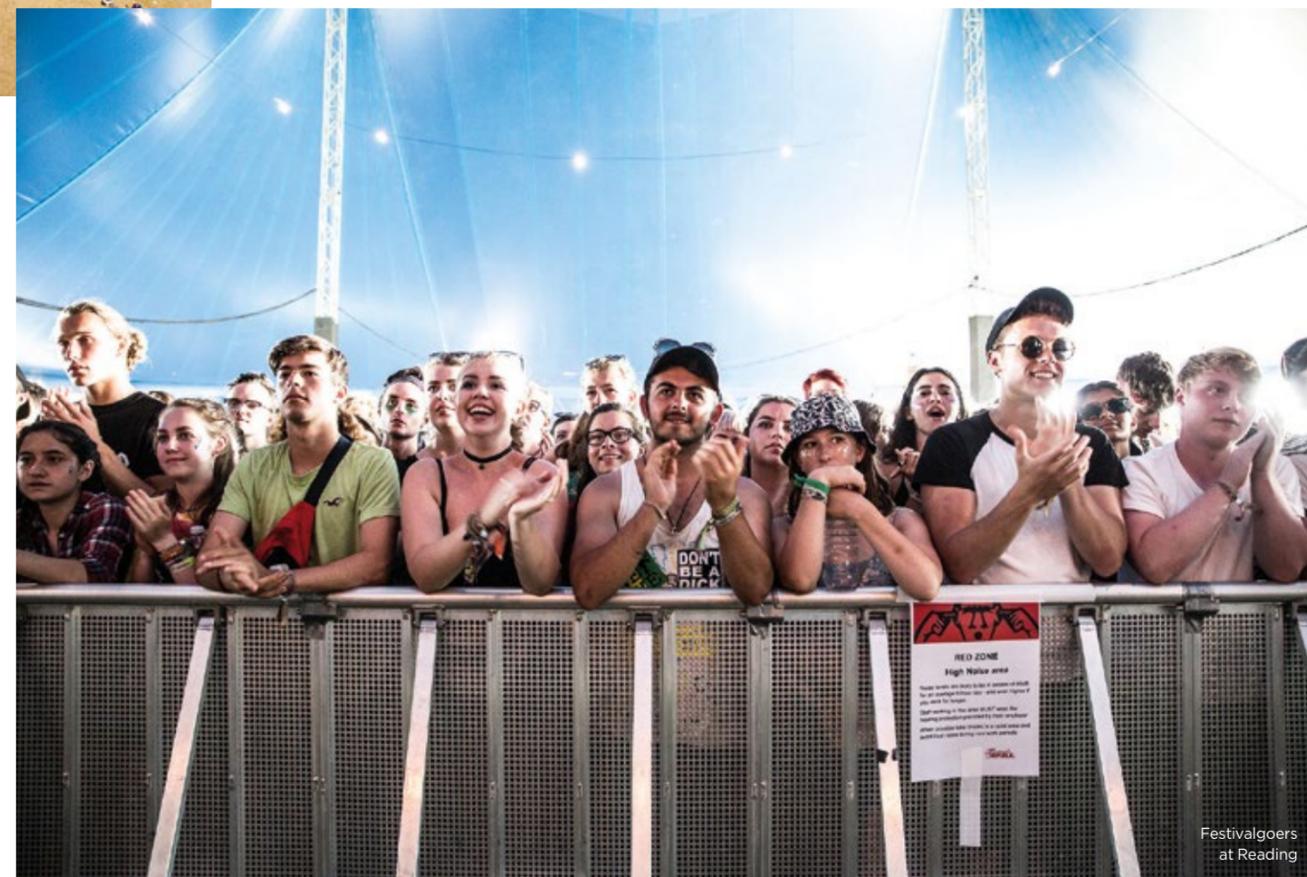


PHOTO: MICHELLE ROBERTS, ANDREW WHITTON & GETTY IMAGES

Festivalgoers at Reading



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Happy campers at Reading festival; yoga in Zennor Haven at Boardmasters festival; Glastonbury festival in Somerset



ROOKIE ERRORS

Tips for a good time

1 BE ON STANDBY

A designated emergency meeting point is standard protocol. Organise one and stick to it. Glastonbury, for example, has 200,000 daily visitors to its 900-acre site and getting lost is scary. Keep your mobile on standby for a distressed call when they fall out with their friends or the tent floods – it happens.



2 BACK-UP BATTERIES

Keeping in contact can be tricky. Have at least two of their friends' numbers for emergencies as smartphones run out of juice fast. Battery packs are a prerequisite but, even better, use your trusty Nokia. Lost or stolen? Not a problem, plus its battery will last far longer.

3 PITCH PERFECT

Get the right sized tent or size up. A one-man is too cosy for two. Mark it with something distinctive. 99 per cent of tents look exactly the same and tend to be blue or green; late night beer goggles



will confuse your search further. Go floral, fluorescent or erect a small flag. Don't expect your tent back and don't take accessories; no luxurious bedding or camp chairs as these will likely be stolen. A sleeping bag is sufficient. Do choose a spot far from the loos. Camping at the bottom of the hill is never a good idea and when the toilets are at the top and the men's urinals overflow? Enough said.

4 UPGRADE

If this sounds grim, most festivals – from Houghton to Camp Bestival – now offer a luxury camping option, which is more comfortable and less stressful. Try a teepee for two or a yurt for the whole family. Whoopi Wagons, gypsy wagons built on caravan chassis, are great fun and the way forward for nervous parents.

5 STAY SAFE

Under 18s should not be bringing alcohol in at all, and even those legally allowed have to find ways of avoiding glass containers – a standard safety measure now in practice. There are also limits on how much can be brought in from the

outside. At Gottwood the personal allowance is eight beers or ciders or two bottles of wine. Be warned: teens are good at subterfuge. Decanting your favourite single-malt whisky, craft gin or cask-aged rum into empty water or mouthwash bottles and topping them back up with water is a common tactic – like you wouldn't notice! Just remember that it's not all or nothing and banning drinking completely tends to have the opposite result.

6 REALITY CHECK

Teeth-cleaning with that whisky-filled mouthwash is unrealistic. Pack lots of gum. Showers are cold and gross, with ridiculous queues, so they won't wash either. Send them equipped with wet wipes, hand sanitiser and tell them to hover.

7 MORE IS MORE

Raincoats are far more effective than thin plastic ponchos bought on-site at the last minute and wellies are a must. Long socks aren't just a fashion accessory – the shin rub is real. Converse trainers will never be white again if fashion is prioritised



over function and the same goes for hot pants, as they can make a girl feel vulnerable. Embrace UV paint, floral garlands, Hawaiian shirts and sequins – it's your chance!

8 FUEL UP

For one weekend only, their diet will also take a hit; chips, chips and more chips. There's something about that hot, salty smell that hungover teens just cannot say no to. Sneak in some apples – they will be appreciated. Also, small cartons of fruit juice and a five litre water bottle, please.

9 GO WITH THE FLOW

Festivals and crowds go together like chips and ketchup. Clashfinder.com can help add some method to the madness, as it flags up acts that overlap, but it's best to be spontaneous – you might discover something special.



PHOTO: JEN O'NEILL, ANDREW ALLCOCK, DARINA & GETTY IMAGES

SUMMER LOVIN'

The ones to watch

THE EDEN FESTIVAL

Dumfries & Galloway

6-9 JUNE

An early summer extravaganza of colour, music, dance and community, based on ecologically sound and carbon-friendly principles. Thirteen varied stages including small indoor theatres, a drive-in cinema and a comfortable lounge complete with sofas to snuggle in makes this a more intimate experience. edenfestival.co.uk

2000TREES,

Gloucestershire

11-13 JULY

A small music festival for music buffs with green credentials. Even the ciders, ales and lagers are locally sourced. Their pricing scheme encourages families; under 13s go free. twothousandtreesfestival.co.uk

LARMER TREE, Wiltshire

18-21 JULY

Larmer Tree festival is a favourite, not least for winning the high accolade of Best Toilets at the UK Festival Awards. Book the ultimate five-star camping experience in one of their Airstreams, which come with a fully-equipped kitchen, their famous bathrooms, fluffy towels, heating, aircon, hi-fi with surround sound, iPod, USB and MP3 connectors. larmertreefestival.co.uk

CAMP FESTIVAL, Dorset

25-28 JULY

At a castle campsite by the sea, this is the festival where kids are king and activities are suited for all ages, from two to 200. campbestival.net

GLASTONBURY, Somerset

26-30 JUNE

A pilgrimage for any serious festivalgoer, Glastonbury promises its usual mix of massive acts this year, ranging from Stormzy on Friday night to Kylie on Sunday afternoon. Tickets are now sold out (they were all gone within hours) but the lucky ones must look out for the many unplanned secret gigs. glastonburyfestivals.co.uk

TARTAN HEART FESTIVAL,

Belladrum, Black Isle, Scotland

1-3 AUGUST

They have a loyal following for a reason, showcasing a variety of local and international artists. This year they've gone big with a stellar lineup including Jess Glynne, Chvrches and Tom Odell. Club Clan Bella, the VIP area, holds a treasure trove of extras worth your money. tartanheartfestival.co.uk

BOOMTOWN FAIR, Hampshire

7-12 AUGUST

This year's theme, A Radical City, will run alongside their annual respect campaign;

Boomtown prides itself on being inclusive and provides a safe space for freedom of expression. Reserve your accommodation during the booking process for a seamless set-up. boomtownfair.co.uk

BOARDMASTERS, Cornwall

7-11 AUGUST

Sporty beach babes and boys will find their summer paradise at Boardmasters. Something in the sea air lends this location a more laid-back vibe, so you might fancy a visit to Zennor Haven, a world of wellness complete with an extensive yoga offering and private bell tents offering massages, bodywork, reflexology and holistic facials. boardmasters.com

HOUGHTON, Norfolk

8-11 AUGUST

This is Houghton's third year on the circuit and its relative youth attracts a crowd. Located within a dense woodland beside a lake, it's atmospheric and always draws the cream of the crop of electronic music names – if that's your thing. houghtonfestival.co.uk

BEAUTIFUL DAYS, Devon

16-18 AUGUST

This festival is continually shortlisted as the Best Family Festival for its laid-back ambience. The children's area is coordinated by the Majical Youth Theatre and includes more than 30 different crafts activities to get to grips with, such as bushcraft. beautifuldays.org

RIZE FESTIVAL, Chelmsford

MID-AUGUST

New on the block and a rehash of V Festival, RIZE is starting small with two days of eclectic tunes, promising to channel all the energy of its predecessor, which had become a firm teen favourite. rizefestival.co.uk

SHAMBALA, Northamptonshire

22-25 AUGUST

A very family-friendly festival with an air of magic due to its secret country estate location. With lockers for valuables and a Lost Kids Team at hand 24 hours a day, it's also one of the safer options. shambalafestival.org

READING AND LEEDS

23-25 AUGUST

A young crowd will pack into dark tents and stay out late for top pop acts. Your child will one day expect to be allowed here, so prepare them well. Anyone under 16 is not advised to get a ticket but, on the bright side, this year they've teamed up with Charge Candy to keep phones charged up until Sunday night's headline act. readingandleedsfestival.com ■