

Stirling Highland Games 2025 Celebrates Record-Breaking Success with Thrilling Competitions, Cultural Showcases, and Festival Spirit

Tuesday 19 August, 2025

The **Stirling Highland Games 2025** has been hailed as the most successful in its modern history, drawing a record crowd of **7,866 visitors** to the historic city on Saturday. Against the dramatic backdrop of the cityscape and the Wallace Monument, athletes, dancers, musicians, traders, and food vendors came together to celebrate Scotland's culture and heritage in a day packed with spectacle, tradition, and community spirit.

As the 2025 Games Chieftain Lyndsay O'Donnell oversaw proceedings, from the cheers of the heavyweight arena to the swirl of Highland dancing kilts, and from the aromas of freshly grilled venison burgers to the stirring notes of the Chieftains piper, the event once again reaffirmed its reputation as one of Scotland's premier Highland Games.

Competition highlights were plentiful and included:

Highland Dancing

Over **200 dancers** took to the stage, showcasing discipline, grace, and athleticism across the traditional Highland repertoire. This year's **Premier Trophy winners** included:

- **Premier 10yrs and under** – Jess Whyte (Dallmellington, Ayrshire)
- **Premier 11yrs and under 13yrs** – Piper Lindsay (Australia)
- **Premier 13yrs and under 15yrs** – Libby Stewart (Dumbarton)
- **Premier 15yrs and under 17yrs** – Ellie Murgha (Australia)
- **Premier 17yrs and over** – Katjana Bruinsma (Canada)

The international flavour of the results highlights Stirling's global reach, drawing competitors from across the world.

Heavyweight Competitions

The crowds roared as the excitement grew and the Heavyweight athletes battled in the traditional tests of strength, skill, and stamina.

- **1st:** Aaron Castle (Växjö, Sweden)
- **2nd:** Kyle Randalls (Falkirk, Scotland)
- **3rd:** Craig Winslow (Gartcosh, Scotland)

The **Adaptive Heavyweights** category, a proudly inclusive feature of the Stirling Games, saw inspiring performances:

- **1st:** Jim Holborn (Para Standing Neuro/Muscular)
- **2nd:** Fraser Rowan (Para Standing Neuro/Muscular)
- **3rd (tie):** David Dent (Para Seated) & Neil Marshall (Para Standing Neuro/Muscular)

The **Junior Heavyweights** also demonstrated promise, with standout efforts from **Jack Devanny** (Crook of Devon, Scotland) and **Struan Anderson** (Callander, Scotland), signalling a bright future for the sport.

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Track & Field

The Games' athletic track was alive with sprinting, distance running, cycling, and jumps. Winners included:

- **Open 90m:** Nina Cessford (TLJT) – 9.67s
- **Open 200m:** Ben Bates (Tullibody) – 21.90s
- **Open 400m:**
Natasha Turnbull (Peebles) – 51.41s
- **Open 800m:** Dean Whiteford (Innerleithen) – 1:52.99
- **Open 1600m:** Ron Loewen (Canada) – 4:21.27

Youth categories highlighted future stars such as **Emanuel Banton (Clydesdale Harriers)**, who stormed to victory in both the 90m and 200m.

Cycling events were dominated by **Paul Anderson (Perth)** and **Dave Mathieson (Newburgh)**, while the jumps saw thrilling results with **Stuart Whiteford (Innerleithen)** leaping 18'3" to claim the long jump, and **Kieran Halliday (Denny)** soaring 39'2" in the triple jump.

The Stirling Stones

The legendary **Bruce Challenge** captivated crowds as usual, with athletes attempting to walk these 164.5kg Scottish stones as far as possible. Although Tim Meadows takes 1st place, his 2023 record still stands at 134.5m.

- **1st:** Tim Meadows (Carron, Scotland) – 87.32m
- **2nd:**
Bradley Mitchell (Alva, Scotland)
- **3rd:** Arron O'Connell (NSW, Australia)

This year's event demonstrated the perfect blend of tradition and inclusive competition to find the strongest athlete who define Highland Games.

Food & Drink Area – A Festival Within the Festival

One of the biggest talking points of 2025 was the expanded **Food and Drink area**, which created a vibrant festival atmosphere throughout the day. Featuring **25 local and national vendors**, visitors enjoyed everything from roast hog rolls and steak burgers to lobster baguettes, venison burgers, and Scottish-topped pizzas.

The area also showcased Scotland's thriving drinks industry, with Scottish gin, whisky, and rum alongside the official bar sponsor, **Innis & Gunn**. With families relaxing over craft street food, fans raising a toast to athletes, and music filling the air, the zone was described by many visitors as "a festival within the festival."

Traders' Village – Scotland's Craft Heritage on Display

The bustling **Traders' Village** featured **35 artisan stalls**, offering an array of handcrafted treasures including woodwork, fine jewellery, paintings, and tartan goods. The village was a hive of activity all day, with visitors meeting makers, discovering unique souvenirs, and learning more about Scotland's living traditions of craftsmanship.

Creative Arts Programme – Music, Talks & Living History

The **Creative Arts Schedule** added depth and colour to the day, with performances and talks running alongside the competitions. Highlights included:

- **Piper Michael Naismith**, who entertained across the grounds with stirring sets throughout the

day.

- **Stirling Gaelic Choir**, bringing traditional song to the Games Field and Discover Stirling Marquee.
- **Scotland Talks** series, with engaging presentations from **Gary Lawrie (Ancestry)**, **Dr Murray Cook (Fortifying Stirling)**, and **Michael Naismith (Bagpipes)**.
- **Live acoustic set by Jodie Differ**, providing a modern twist to the programme.
- **Historia Normannis re-enactment displays**, immersing visitors in medieval combat and heritage storytelling.

Children enjoyed **face painting and heritage tours**, while families gathered for interactive sessions celebrating Scotland's past and present.

A Record-Breaking Day for Stirling

The 2025 Games were notable for their **record attendance**, with **7,866 visitors** streaming through the gates. The roar of the crowds, the global representation of competitors, and the sheer variety of activities ensured an unforgettable experience.

Matt McGrandles praised the “amazing buzz” around the field:

“This year felt like a true festival of Scotland – a celebration of highland games, Scottish crafters and producers mixed in with some creative performances, including storytelling and battle demos. From the international athletes and dancers to the families enjoying food, drink, and music, it felt like Stirling was alive with pride and energy,” said the Highland Games President.

Looking to 2026

With its blend of **world-class competition, rich cultural showcases, and family-friendly attractions**, the Stirling Highland Games continues to grow in stature, welcoming participants and visitors from across Scotland and around the globe.

Plans are already underway to build on the 2025 success, ensuring that next year's Games are even bigger and better.

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