

Explore the future at the 2025 Cambridge Festival – a 17-day showcase of innovation and discovery

Want to know what life will be like in 2125? Or how about a chat with the latest humanoid robot? Would you tear up money as a form of artistic protest? Could business leaders with psychopathic tendencies jeopardise the global economy for personal financial gain? And what clues can whales offer to help us live longer?

These questions and more are explored during the Cambridge Festival when it returns on 19 March for a 17-day showcase featuring nearly 400 mostly free events themed around environment, health, society and discovery.

The full programme launches on 17 February with bookings also opening on the same day. Events are held in venues across the city.

One of the largest of its kind in the UK, the Festival offers an extensive series of talks, debates, demonstrations, exhibitions, tours, performances, workshops and interactive events organised by the University of Cambridge. A specially curated and exciting programme for children and families is also on offer.

Several events focus on our future. The live demo **Sensors for a smarter home (22 March)** displays how smart sensors will enhance our home safety, sustainability, and comfort using technologies such as: temperature and humidity sensors for comfort; light and occupancy sensors for energy efficiency; air quality sensors for healthier ventilation; smoke, noise, and water leak sensors for immediate alerts.

Another event, **Ideas that could change the world (21 March)**, asks questions such as will we be able to print our own organs in the digital age? What about using our fingerprints to access health advice? Or what about growing plants that can adapt to extreme climate changes? Cutting-edge Gates Cambridge researchers focus on engaging with the world's toughest challenges in this panel event.

Robots are set to become an essential part of our future, assisting us in our homes, workplaces and even hospitals. These robots are not only becoming more useful but also more relatable, as scientists design them with human-like features and responses. Visitors can **Meet Furhat, the conversational robot (22 March)**, a very advanced humanoid conversational robot with life-like expressions powered by the latest advancements in robotics and artificial intelligence.

Those that want to delve deeper into robotics can get hands-on during an interactive workshop, **Navigating the physical world: The essential role of robots (29 March)**, Dr Chapa Sirithunge, Narges Khadem Hosseini, Dr Yue Xie and Dr Arsen Abdulali introduce the exciting world of bio-inspired robots. The team also share their experiences as researchers, discussing the essential role of robots in the future and their potential.

Another event that is sure to garner interest is about psychopathic leadership. On 22 March, Dr Clive Boddy explores the role of corporate psychopaths in his talk, **Would corporate psychopaths bankrupt the world economy for a bonus?**

Several events look at what's next in health and healthcare. In **Tomorrow's health today: AI and data science explained (27 March)**, experts from the UK Health Security Agency and the

University of Cambridge share insights on how AI and data science are shaping the future of healthcare, through real-world applications in early disease screening, monitoring disease outbreaks and prevention. This talk reveals how these advancements could affect our health and the healthcare we receive.

A further talk, **Futuristic medicine (29 March)**, introduces techniques and methods that are already, or about to be, used in medicine. Many of them were science fiction not that long ago. What are we to expect during the next decade? What about the next 50 years? This talk will be given by Estherina Trachtenberg, a neuroscientist, social activist and nurse.

Why do some animals, such as whales, live exceptionally long lives free from many age-related diseases? The engaging talk, **The impossibility of whales: How studying the genomes of extraordinary species could help us stay healthier for longer (3 April)** which reveals new findings, explores how certain animals seem to have evolved superior mechanisms for DNA protection and repair. Discover how collaborations with zoos and conservation groups are enabling us to explore the DNA of species with extraordinary lifespans, uncovering evolutionary strategies that might one day unlock the secrets of healthy ageing in humans.

One event tipped to be a favourite with visitors is the art exhibition **Cambridge science in the year 2125 (22 March)**, which offers a one-of-a-kind experience to view modern science from tomorrow's perspective. It reimagines the future of science, technology and human progress a century from now through vibrant installations, interactive displays and visionary artwork. Through cutting-edge exhibits and conversations with real-life research innovators from the BioNano Engineering group, this event offers a fascinating glimpse into the scientific breakthroughs that continue to impact society and the planet in this imagined future.

Two topical events address the protection of health workers and journalists in armed conflict. In **Keeping the Storytellers Safe in War (28 March)**, Paul Conroy, a photographer and filmmaker with extensive experience as a journalist in combat zones, and Giles Duley, a photographer, writer, presenter, and CEO of the Legacy of War Foundation, share their motivations for covering armed conflict and recount their personal experiences of becoming part of the story due to injuries sustained. The discussion also examines methods for ensuring the safety of journalists while allowing for the collection of essential content. Mark Smith, the chair of the International Broadcasting Convention, emphasises the convergence of communications, technology, and media.

The WHO/World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH) 2024 report: *Line of Fire* highlights increasing attacks on healthcare in armed conflict. An interdisciplinary panel discuss the report's recommendations in **Protecting healthcare in armed conflict (27 March)**. Panellists include Ben De Pear, Executive Producer of Oscar-nominated *For Sama*; Jim Campbell, WHO Health Workforce Director; Sultana Adfal, CEO of WISH; Saleyha Ahsan, CRASSH Healthcare in Conflict lead; and Professor Francoise Hampson, international humanitarian law expert.

Several new books are also discussed at the festival. During **The Cambridge prehistory of partitions: A walking tour (21 & 22 March)** Cambridge academic Erin MB O'Halloran, the author of a new book, *East of Empire: Egypt, India, and the World between the Wars* (March 2025), traces the significant role Cambridge played in the drama of colonial struggles for self-determination – struggles which led, in 1947/8, to the epochal partitions of India–Pakistan and Israel–Palestine.

Research Fellow Dr Victoria Baena also talks about her new book project during **Love and friendship in the archive: Amélie Bosquet and Gustave Flaubert (22 March)** and recounts the friendship (and, eventually, dramatic rupture) in letters between Gustave Flaubert and Amélie Bosquet: a novelist, socialist and feminist activist, mostly known today, if at all, for having inspired his famous comment “Madame Bovary, c’est moi.” Drawing on original archival research, the presentation is structured around the fascinating, flirtatious – but by all accounts, platonic – friendship between Bosquet and Flaubert as it unfolds in their letters. Her talk also fleshes out the life and background of this unconventional woman, whose life story reveals a constant negotiation between literature, activism, the need to make a living, and various emotional desires and intimacies.

In **Living with Jane Austen (26 March)**, Janet Todd introduces her new book of the same name, which aims to show why Austen matters to us now and how our understanding of her work changes at different cultural moments.

The festival features many events that encourage creative thinking. One highlight is Tilda Swinton’s directorial debut, **The Hexagonal Hive and a Mouse in a Maze: A Cambridge Festival launch event (19 March)**. This film poses thought-provoking questions about intelligence, artificiality, and learning through movement, robots, games, crafts, stories, and cinema. It explores pedagogy, work, and play across four global sites, encouraging viewers to reflect on the mechanics of learning.

Can art create value from nothing? In the provocative workshop, **Tearing up money: Turning currency into collective art (22 March - 29 March, Fridays 3-5pm)**, participants tear up worthless Venezuelan banknotes to create art, addressing political and social issues. Led by Katherine Hasegawa, a Venezuelan ARTivist, the workshop also highlights stories of Venezuela’s economic struggles.

And finally, visitors can experience a volcano (almost!) during an art exhibition for all ages, **Magma Rising: A Journey to the Centre of Icelandic Volcanoes (Wed-Sun, 26 Feb - 22 April)**. Inspired by Jules Verne’s *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, this exhibit lets visitors explore an Icelandic volcano. On display are various artworks and heritage objects, including first-edition books, cipher typography, climbing tools, film props, video games, paintings, a wall mural, an inside-out volcano, music videos, volcanic ash art, ruined seismometers, and more.

Cambridge Festival Manager, David Cain said: “We’re excited to return with a programme that lets everyone engage with Cambridge’s world-class research. This year’s festival is larger than ever, reflecting our rapidly changing world and the need for urgent solutions. The festival showcases vital work being done here in Cambridge and globally, whether learning from the past or using creative methods for future solutions. I encourage everyone of all ages to explore the programme on 17 February, to gain new perspectives and try something different.”

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Press images: [here](#) | **Festival images:** [here](#)

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About the Cambridge Festival

The Cambridge Festival is a vibrant, multidisciplinary event that showcases the best of Cambridge's world-class research, innovation, and creativity. Spanning a diverse range of topics—from science, technology, health, arts, humanities and social sciences—the Festival invites participants of all ages to explore ideas, engage with experts, and ignite their curiosity whilst debating some of the world's biggest questions.

Through a packed programme of lectures, workshops, performances and interactive, hands-on activities, the Festival fosters meaningful conversations about the issues shaping our world today and into the future.

Organised by the University of Cambridge, the Festival is committed to making cutting-edge knowledge accessible to the public while celebrating the power of collaboration and community. The annual event attracts thousands of attendees from around the globe, offering an inclusive space for learning, dialogue, and inspiration.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.festival.cam.ac.uk/>

About the University of Cambridge

The University of Cambridge is one of the world's leading universities, with a rich history of radical thinking dating back to 1209. Its mission is to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

The University comprises 31 autonomous Colleges and over 100 departments, faculties and institutions. Its 24,000 students include around 9,000 international students from 147 countries. In 2023, 73% of its new undergraduate students were from state schools and more than 25% from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Cambridge research spans almost every discipline, from science, technology, engineering and medicine through to the arts, humanities and social sciences, with multi-disciplinary teams working to address major global challenges. In the *Times Higher Education's* rankings based on the UK Research Excellence Framework, the University was rated as the highest scoring institution covering all the major disciplines.

A [2023 report](#) found that the University contributes nearly £30 billion to the UK economy annually and supports more than 86,000 jobs across the UK, including 52,000 in the East of England. For every £1 the University spends, it creates £11.70 of economic impact, and for every £1 million of publicly-funded research income it receives, it generates £12.65 million in economic impact across the UK.

The University sits at the heart of the 'Cambridge cluster', in which more than 5,000 knowledge-intensive firms employ more than 71,000 people and generate £21 billion in turnover. Cambridge has the highest number of patent applications per 100,000 residents in the UK.

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