

30 Years of Wimbledon's Notorious Queuing Obsession

As the hallowed grounds of the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club prepare to host the 136th edition of the Wimbledon Championships, one tradition remains as steadfast as the iconic strawberries and cream: the obsessive queuing.



Standing in Line: A Memoir: 30 Years of Obsessive Queuing at Wimbledon by Chase Kosterlitz

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For three decades, Wimbledon's "The Queue" has become an integral part of the tournament's allure, a testament to the unwavering dedication and passion of tennis enthusiasts. Each year, thousands of spectators descend upon the leafy suburb of Wimbledon, SW19, willing to endure hours—sometimes even overnight—in a winding line that snakes through the streets surrounding the club.

The Origins of "The Queue"

The tradition of queuing at Wimbledon can be traced back to the 1990s, when the tournament's popularity skyrocketed. As demand for tickets outstripped supply, spectators began arriving earlier and earlier to secure their place in line. By the mid-1990s, overnight queuing had become a common sight outside the All England Club.

Initially, the club attempted to discourage queuing by closing the gates at night. However, the determined spectators simply moved their tents and sleeping bags to nearby streets, creating a makeshift campsite that became known as "The Queue."

The Allure of "The Queue"

Over the years, "The Queue" has evolved into a unique and celebrated aspect of the Wimbledon experience. For many spectators, it's not just about securing a ticket but also about being part of a shared tradition and community.

In "The Queue," strangers become friends, sharing stories, laughter, and the occasional cup of tea. The camaraderie and anticipation build an unmatched atmosphere, creating memories that last long after the tournament is over.

A Social Phenomenon

The Wimbledon Queue has become a social phenomenon, attracting not only tennis fans but also sociologists, journalists, and even celebrities. It has been the subject of documentaries, articles, and even a stage play.

The queue has also become a symbol of British tradition and resilience. Despite the often-uncomfortable conditions, spectators remain stoically in

line, displaying their unwavering support for Wimbledon.

The Changing Face of "The Queue"

While the essence of "The Queue" remains unchanged, it has undergone some notable transformations in recent years. In response to safety concerns, the All England Club has introduced a virtual queuing system that allows spectators to reserve their place in line online.

Additionally, the club has invested in improved amenities for those queuing, including designated waiting areas, toilets, and food and beverage vendors. These changes have made the experience more comfortable for spectators, while still preserving the tradition of queuing.

The Future of "The Queue"

As Wimbledon moves into its fourth decade, the future of "The Queue" remains uncertain. The virtual queuing system may become more prevalent, reducing the need for overnight camping.

However, it seems unlikely that the tradition will ever fully disappear. For many spectators, "The Queue" is an integral part of the Wimbledon experience, a symbol of their unwavering passion for the tournament and the sport of tennis.

Thirty years after its humble beginnings, Wimbledon's "The Queue" has become a global phenomenon, a testament to the enduring power of tradition and the passion of tennis fans. Whether you embrace the camaraderie or simply marvel at the dedication, there's no denying the unique and captivating allure of this British sporting institution.



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