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Munich’s Oktoberfest drew a record 7.4 million visitors in 16 days

The total beat the previous record of 7.2 million, helped by sunny weather and a push toward weekday visits.

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Munich’s Oktoberfest drew a record 7.4 million visitors over 16 days this year, city officials said Sunday, making the 2026 edition the largest in the festival’s history before the event had even fully closed for the night.

The attendance figure surpassed the previous record of 7.2 million set in 2023. Organizers noted that the 2023 festival lasted 18 days because of a holiday extension, while this year's event ran for 16 days. Officials and local media said long stretches of sunny, late-summer weather helped lift turnout. An effort to spread visits more evenly across weekdays also appears to have supported the higher numbers.

Dominik Krause, in his first Oktoberfest as Munich's mayor, described the festival as peaceful, relaxed and good-humored. The event grounds on the Theresienwiese were heavily used from the opening days. After the first week, attendance had already reached 3.8 million. On the family day in the second week, organizers said visitor numbers were 57% higher than a year earlier.

The "Oide Wiesn," the traditional section of the festival, also set a stronger pace. Organizers counted 447,000 visitors there, up from 360,000 last year. The largest share of guests again came from Munich and the surrounding region. Among international visitors, the biggest groups came from the United States, Italy and Austria.

Beer sales rose along with attendance. The Association of Munich Breweries said about 6.7 million liters of festival beer were served, up 2.7% from roughly 6.5 million liters in 2025. Food sales at the large festival tents rose by 2%-3%, according to operators, with roast chicken regaining popularity after weaker demand in recent years.

Sales of nonalcoholic drinks increased even faster, climbing 10%, according to the preliminary festival balance. Organizers and brewers also reported strong demand for "saures Radler," a mix of beer and water. An industry report citing festival data said nonalcoholic beer sales rose 10.7% from last year, while wheat beer sales increased 12.6%. That shift is being watched closely by brewers and drinks companies because Oktoberfest is one of the world's biggest showcases for beer consumption and hospitality spending, and the rising share of low- and no-alcohol drinks may signal broader changes in customer demand even at a traditional beer festival.

The record numbers also underline the scale of the event as a business platform for Germany's brewing and hospitality sectors. For breweries, beverage distributors and food vendors, the festival offers a rare large-volume test of pricing, product mix and consumer behavior in front of both local customers and international tourists. This

year’s mix of higher beer volumes and faster growth in nonalcoholic drinks may shape how producers plan future seasonal offerings and festival supply.

Despite the crowds, city officials said the event did not become dangerously overcrowded. The busiest periods were the weekends. On Saturday, organizers asked people to stay away from the Theresienwiese for a time because so many guests had arrived, and entrances were temporarily closed. A similar situation had occurred on the middle Saturday of the festival a week earlier.

Festival director Christian Scharpf said an updated security plan worked as intended. He pointed to a new security control center, stronger video surveillance and crowd-spotting measures that allowed officials to track flows more closely and respond earlier when groups became too dense. He also said newly installed cameras, artificial intelligence tools and faster communication among organizers, police, fire services, emergency medical teams and private security were important parts of the operation.

Two apparent workplace accidents cast a shadow over the festival. On Sept. 21, an employee working at the “Hangover” free-fall tower was struck by a gondola and later died. On Sunday, a worker on the Oide Wiesn was seriously injured after being hit by a swing boat. Munich police said the 47-year-old Romanian employee had been in an area where he was not supposed to be.

Police spokesperson Thomas Schelshorn said the overall mood at the festival was peaceful and mostly relaxed outside those accidents. At the same time, the larger crowds brought more police activity. Police said the total number of deployments rose to 1,851, and recorded crimes increased to 854 from 748 last year. Schelshorn said the rise reflected the higher visitor count and a larger number of drug offenses, especially involving cocaine, after police stepped up checks this year.

Police also said 80 sexual offenses were reported, eight more than in 2025. Of those, 52 involved allegations of sexual harassment. In five cases, investigators are looking into suspected rape, the same number as last year, according to police.

Medical teams also handled a record caseload. The Aicher Ambulance service said about 8,400 patients had been treated at the Oktoberfest medical station by Sunday noon, nearly 300 more than in the previous record year of 2023. The service linked the rise mainly to the larger crowds. Around 40% of patients needed help solely because of alcohol intoxication. The highest measured level was 3.8 per mille, although medics noted that the true high point may have been higher because some heavily intoxicated patients were unable to blow into the testing device.

As the festival moved into its final hours Sunday, the traditional closing ceremony began at midday with black-powder salutes fired from the steps below the Bavaria statue, accompanied by brass music. Celebrations continued in the beer tents until just before midnight, when servers handed out sparklers for the last songs of the year.