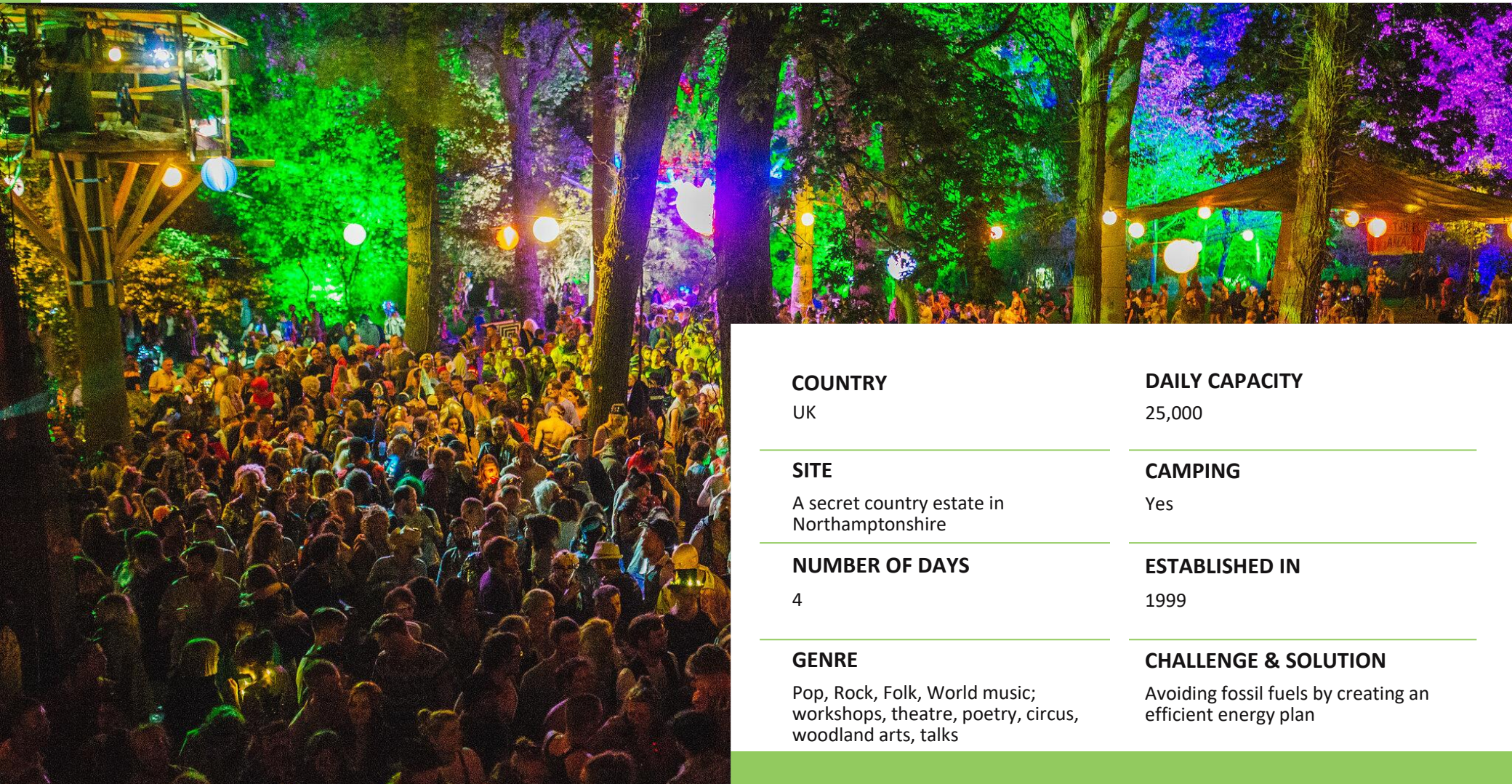


SHAMBALA

SHAMBALA FESTIVAL



COUNTRY

UK

DAILY CAPACITY

25,000

SITE

A secret country estate in Northamptonshire

CAMPING

Yes

NUMBER OF DAYS

4

ESTABLISHED IN

1999

GENRE

Pop, Rock, Folk, World music; workshops, theatre, poetry, circus, woodland arts, talks

CHALLENGE & SOLUTION

Avoiding fossil fuels by creating an efficient energy plan

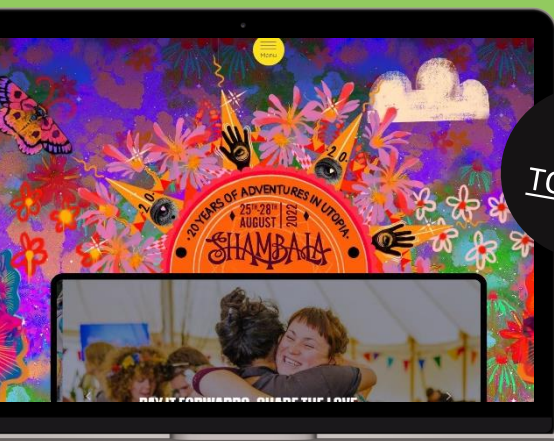
Photo by Louise Roberts

The spirit of Shambala is summed up well in its tagline ‘Adventures in Utopia’. Chris Johnson, co-founder, director and sustainability lead for the festival, describes Shambala as “a special place where you play, revitalise, make lots of new friends and return to the world fuelled-up on the beauty of being alive.” The festival program is so much more than the 200+ music performances; it includes cabaret, workshops, stand-up comedy, inspirational talks, circus and acrobatics, interactive theatre and poetry, all housed in beautifully decorated venues.

The Shambala team has implemented a wide array of sustainable measures, ranging from energy to food, waste and transport. “As well as being known as a

‘legendary party’, it is also a haven for cutting-edge theatrics and performance, a think-tank of ideas and for being an award-winning green event,” Johnson says. “We were the first ever festival to be awarded the Creative Industry Green five-star sustainability rating.”

Shambala is still run by the same group of friends who started it years ago and proudly remains 100% sponsorship-free and independent. In 2022, the festival celebrates its 20th edition. Its exact location, a country estate with lakes and woodland somewhere in Northamptonshire, is only revealed to visitors after they have bought a ticket.



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AN INTIMATE BLEND OF CREATIVITY, INNOVATION AND PARTICIPATION



THE CHALLENGE

REDUCING THE CARBON FOOTPRINT CAUSED BY ENERGY CONSUMPTION

An effective way to reduce the CO₂ emissions caused by events is to remove diesel-fuelled generators and in their place, using sustainable fuels or connecting to the local grid to receive renewable energy. This is a challenge that Shambala has already mastered, and now it wants to go even further by avoiding using fuel of any kind. “We have taken advantage of all the ‘easy wins’. Often the last options to make progress are more difficult or expensive,” Johnson explains.

In order to write an energy plan and calculate the energy demand for the coming years, festivals need to know what they are actually

going to be powering and what the usage is going to be. Collecting this information can be a challenge, particularly because it needs all suppliers involved in the festival to help. Johnson says that traders often don’t know exactly how much energy their equipment needs. Instead, they give the festival the size of their stall’s power connection, but this only determines the maximum amount of energy they are able to use, not the amount that is actually consumed.

“ We have taken advantage of all the ‘easy wins’. Often the last options to make progress are more difficult or expensive.

SAVING ENERGY & CREATING A MORE SUSTAINABLE ENERGY MIX

Shambala has switched to a more sustainable energy mix and has made efforts to reduce the amount of energy used. The festival stopped using diesel in 2009, Johnson reports, and since 2010, it has been completely powered by renewable sources: Shambala is connected to the electricity grid, uses solar energy, biofuels, batteries and bottled Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG). The biofuels used are called Hydrotreated Vegetable Oils (HVO), which come from renewable sources (they're made from waste products within the EU). All in all, using HVO doesn't cost more than using diesel, especially when combined with energy efficiency measures.

To reduce energy consumption, the festival has applied several measures; the most important was to install an on-site mains connection to the grid. By subscribing to a green tariff, the festival has access to electricity from renewable sources.

The festival team has also developed a 3-year strategy with their energy provider, which includes targets for fuel reduction. Energy meters are installed on all food stalls, so caterers pay for the exact number of kilowatt hours they consume, which should motivate them to use less energy. Shambala also works with lighting companies to bring more low-energy lighting to the festival. Kettles are banned, and the fuses are taken out of all heaters in the offices to stop them being used.

The festival promotes a 'switch-off' culture, communicating its mission to reduce energy use and lets everyone know how they can help.

To create an efficient energy plan, Shambala uses an online system to collect information from every energy user in advance, Johnson explains. The site is then arranged into power zones, according to which the energy system is designed. Onsite, their energy contractor uses a live system to monitor generators and provide a report after the event. 80+ energy monitors are installed on everything from food stalls to stages to give detailed information about the kilowatt hours used, which helps the festival understand how energy is being used. "Before the software was available, we sent volunteers to check generators and record information."

The success can clearly be measured: between 2010 and 2019, Shambala reduced the amount of onsite CO₂e emissions by 90%. According to Ecometrica, 'carbon dioxide equivalent' or 'CO₂e' is a term for describing different greenhouse gases in a common unit. For any quantity and type of greenhouse gas, CO₂e signifies the amount of CO₂ which would have the equivalent global warming impact. In 2019, that meant 15 tonnes of CO₂e for a 20,000-capacity festival. In addition, the number of generators could be reduced from 26 to 15 within 3 years, despite a growing audience. In fact, according to Johnson, Shambala is now many times carbon net positive by investing in wind power projects in India.

THE SOLUTION



KEEP GOING EVEN IF PARTNERS DISAGREE

Shambala's approach to sustainability is collaborative and includes everyone from the audience to suppliers, caterers and festival staff. Their 3-year plan with their energy provider, which contains clear targets for fuel reduction, is essential, Johnson says. The team also works with researchers and experts on specific topics or challenges. "Generally, with sustainability, we've learnt to try to take everyone with us, but to keep going if they don't come along."

From a financial perspective, being sustainable doesn't necessarily equal higher costs: "Overall, we do not spend more money on being sustainable. Some things cost more at first, and others make more revenue," Johnson tells us. Particularly in the field of energy, being sustainable pays off: after all, "saving fuel saves money!"

“ Saving
fuel
saves
money!



WHAT'S NEXT?

Shambala plans to install more and larger battery units and solar panels. Food is another important topic, particularly finding a solution for reusable serveware.