Bull Running Intrigue at Pamplona

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Bull running at Pamplona is one of the most exciting events that happen every July during the week long San Fermin festival. On the first day of the festival, there would be the official opening ceremony to kick start the celebration.

San Fermin festival

Although this is supposedly a religious festival that is held in honor of a local saint, Saint Fermin, bull running and bull fights are part and parcel of the traditions that take place every year during the fiesta. The opening ceremony on the first day or more commonly known as Chupinazo sees the city hall premise crowded with people in full fiesta mood as that in a rock concert. There would be jubilant celebration with champagne water fight and World Cup football matches. Everyone is in a jovial and celebrative mood.

Bull runs

On the second day of the festival, at 8am sharp, the deafening silence is broken with the rocket sound fired to the delight of the waiting crowds. Dozens of 12-ton bulls are released to run through the cityâ€™s narrow medieval streets in cordoned and protective routes. As many as 3500 runners can sign up at this event daily.

The encierros or daily bull runs are a steep tradition where herdsmen had to drive their bulls through the city streets to get into the town bullring. This tradition has been in existing for decades with townspeople today helping to drive the bulls until it evolved to participants running in front of the bulls.

Although bull running is a dangerous activity, it is also an exhilarating experience for those who are adventurous and want something challenging. There is some risk and danger involved although protective measures are undertaken. There are 2 sets of protective barricades along the designated route with police, ambulances and paramedics at their stations to assist the injured.

Bull running participants would be given a few minutes head start before the bulls are released. There is high tension and fear in the atmosphere as runners wait in excitement for the bell tower to strike. Mayhem follows as the bulls are released with cheers, yells and screams reaching the highest decibel.

Outcome

The runners put their best foot forward to stay ahead of the raging bulls which weight as much as 1200 pounds. The huge creatures can be very intimidating even with their heads and horns lowered. Runners need to stay alert to the bullsâ€™ presence and try their best to avoid them by moving to the sides instinctively or run faster than the creatures.

The runners have only a few minutes to determine their safety and survival; if they succeed, they would have imprinted one of the lasting memories in their lifetime.

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