

Edinburgh's Christmas

✘ The 2010 Edinburgh's Christmas programme got off to a flying start tonight with a dazzling 'Light Night' bringing the city centre to life.

Helping to kick off events was the French street theatre company, 'Transe Express', which provided a spectacular aerial performance to light the Norwegian Christmas Tree, prompting the switch-on of the thousands of lights throughout Princes Street Gardens and a burst of spectacular fireworks. The celebrations focused this year on the Norwegian Christmas Tree – now in its 25th year as an annual gift from the people of Hordaland.

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Sponsored by Essential Edinburgh, the popular 'Light Night' marks the beginning of the festive programme which has helped Edinburgh to be rated the best city in the UK to spend Christmas and Hogmanay. This year's Edinburgh's Christmas runs from Thursday 25 November to Tuesday 4 January and brings together some classic favourites such as the Traditional Christmas German Market and the Edinburgh Wheel, with some new attractions including a Nintendo marquee (25 Nov – 1 Dec) and the magical Cadbury Wishes Workshop (25 Nov – 28 Nov).

Also new to this year's Edinburgh's Christmas programme is a four day celebration of Scotland's patron saint, St Andrew, packed full of inspiring and fun events. The series of free, family-based activities will take place in St Andrew Square Garden from Saturday 27 November until Tuesday 30 November and include everything from storytelling performances to craft and dance workshops. To round off the event, there will be a foot stomping ceilidh finale on St Andrew's Day itself.

The great man himself, Santa, will be visiting East Princes Street Gardens from 4 December onwards to collect his post and

meet the children for some storytelling in the Cup Cake Caffe. The popular Great Scottish Santa Run (Sunday 12 December) will once again encourage everyone to get in shape for the holidays, while turning Princes Street Gardens into a sea of scarlet and white. The new Edinburgh's Ice Rink experience, set against the backdrop of Edinburgh Castle and the iconic Edinburgh Wheel, will be the perfect place to take to the ice with friends and family and enjoy stunning displays and stage shows.

Commenting on this year's Christmas programme, City of Edinburgh Council's Lord Provost, The Rt. Hon. George Grubb said: "Christmas is such a special time of year, and there aren't many cities that can match what Edinburgh has to offer over the festive period. Whether it's the atmosphere of the Christmas Markets, or the glistening of the stunning open air ice rink, the city comes to life and provides both residents and visitors with a memorable Edinburgh's Christmas experience."

Tom Campbell, Chief Executive of Essential Edinburgh said: "Edinburgh is an outstanding city all year round, but at Christmas Edinburgh city centre becomes magical. Essential Edinburgh is delighted to be able to support the Christmas campaign, on behalf of our businesses, and to aid our partners in demonstrating the festive wonders that Edinburgh city centre has to offer, whether it is to shop, eat, drink or just enjoy the atmosphere."

Edinburgh's Christmas, part of the Edinburgh Sparkles campaign, is sponsored by Forth One and the Edinburgh Evening News and continues over the Christmas and New Year period until 4 January 2010. Full details of all events, including timings and prices, can be found at www.edinburghschristmas.com