

It's going to be a great Christmas in Edinburgh



If the standard of the launch event is anything to go by then you are all in for a good time this Christmas.

This morning we were entertained by some of the acts who will entertain at the new Spiegel tent in St Andrew Square, given bacon butties to eat (always a highlight of any press event), and told about some of the events which lie ahead this December. The Ice Rink is being retained but moved up a level in Princes Street Gardens, and the Big Wheel is also set to make a welcome return. There will be a Christmas market as usual, but there are also some important changes.

George Street and St Andrew Square will be brought into the festivities, not only by siting a Spiegel tent in the square where the show Limbo will delight audiences with fire eating, sword swallowing as well as song and dance, but also by putting up stages along George Street where local choirs and pipe bands can entertain. All of this is the brainchild of Underbelly who are taking charge of the Christmas festivities this year under a new contract which the council negotiated with them. Ed Bartlam and Charlie Wood of Underbelly said:- "Underbelly started out in Edinburgh and we still very much regard it as our home. We're therefore exceedingly proud to be involved in producing the Christmas celebrations, both for the people of Edinburgh to enjoy and to encourage visitors to come to this great City."

The Christmas tree will go up on The Mound as usual. A gift from the people of Hordaland in Norway, the 20ft tree weighs more than three tonnes.

✘ Sir Chris Hoy will be along to turn on the Christmas lights on Light Night at the end of November, Hot Dub Machine will be staged at Summerhall following its hit run during the Fringe, and there should be something for absolutely everyone no matter what age you are.

Edinburgh's Christmas will run from 22 November 2013 to 5 January 2014.

Highlights of Edinburgh's Christmas include:

Light Night

Sunday 24 November 2013, 2.30pm to 5pm

Light Night – the Opening Ceremony of Edinburgh's Christmas – is free for all to enjoy and encapsulates the spirit of the festive season: the family and the community.

This is an event for the community, by the community, with an expected audience of 18,000 people.

Now taking place on a Sunday, Light Night will allow as many families as possible to enjoy the event.

The theme is the Twelve Days of Christmas. A number of stages will be erected along the length of George Street and 60 local school and other community groups – with an estimated total of 850 performers – will present performances, dances and recitals for each of the days of Christmas.

Light Night will be hosted by Arlene Stuart of Forth Radio.

Among the schools and community groups performing will be: 17 primary schools; 3 secondary schools; Dance Base: the Community Dance Project; Craigmount High School Pipe Band; the Hula Honeys; Pulse of the Place; Sing in the City; and the BIG Project Youth Choir.

The Christmas Tree on the Mound, a gift from the Hordaland County Council in Norway, will be lit as part of the Light Night switch-on and musicians from Hordaland in Norway will lead the Street in celebration and song, to be joined by the Edinburgh Rock Choir and the Edinburgh Gorgie Salvation Army

Band.

The event will culminate with Sir Chris Hoy, the eleven time-world champion cyclist, winner of seven Olympic gold medals and Edinburgh local, switching on the Christmas lights of central Edinburgh.

Light Night is held in aid of Radio Forth Cash for Kids: the charity which has been working for over 30 years to improve the lives of children in Edinburgh, the Lothians and Fife who are sick, disabled or disadvantaged through poverty.

St Andrew Square

22 November to 5 January 2014

For the first time, St Andrew Square becomes a major arena for the Christmas Event.

St Andrew Square will host the magnificent 635-seat Paradiso Spiegel tent, which will present LIMBO, the international circus sensation, direct from Australia and London's Southbank before it heads to the Sydney Festival and an international tour in 2014.

"BRAVO... blazes with skill, daring and devil-may-care. It puts a smile on your face and a spring in your step." (Daily Telegraph)

"Sensational... defies both expectations and genre pigeonholing." (Times)

"Exhilarating... will have you on the edge of your seat." (Evening Standard)

The Paradiso Spiegel tent will also host some of the most exciting family entertainment on offer in Edinburgh at Christmas: in the form of Les Petits Theatre Company's epic puppet adventure, Captain Flinn and the Pirate Dinosaurs (winner, Primary Times Children's Choice Award at the 2013 Edinburgh Festival Fringe); and a new interpretation of the children's classic Little Red Riding Hood, in a world premiere by local Edinburgh company, Nonsense Room Productions, the creative producers of the much loved stage production of Hairy Maclary.

The Scottish Café at Edinburgh's Christmas will be offering

audiences an exclusive and original experience: a delicious dinner cooked by their award winning chefs and served in a private booth in the Spiegeltent, prior to an electrifying performance of LIMBO.

Other highlights of St Andrew Square include:

The Scottish Market: shortly before 2014 – the year in which Scotland will build its international reputation as ‘A Land of Food and Drink’, the Scottish Market brings to Edinburgh’s Christmas some of the very finest local cuisine, including offerings from the Scottish Cafe at Edinburgh’s Christmas, Susie’s Diner, Spencerfield Spirit’s Edinburgh Gin, Chocmotif, the Eden Brewery and the Wild Game Company.

The Children’s Market: featuring a range of hand-crafted toys and other unique gifts in a fun, safe environment which gives kids an exciting, independent craft making and shopping experience, including Imagination Workshop’s Christmas craft workshop, a Gingerbread decorating workshop, Toys Galore of Edinburgh and personalised Santa gift sacks and Christmas stockings.

The Star Flyer: on the south side of St Andrew Square, the Star Flyer, a 60 metre free-standing ride, provides heart-stopping thrills for the adventurous and the not-so-adventurous alike. See Edinburgh as you have never seen it before... (maybe) with your eyes closed.

The Mound Precinct and East Princes Street Gardens

22 November to 5 January 2014

The Big Wheel: perhaps the most visible sign that the festive season’s arrived in Edinburgh, the Christmas Wheel returns to Princes Street Gardens: this time with cosy, covered pods. As high as eight buses and bejewelled with 20,000 lights, the Dutch-made Ferris wheel is a joyful and kaleidoscopic addition to Edinburgh’s famous festive skyline.

Ice Rink: that great Edinburgh Tradition, the Ice Rink, will literally be moving up a level, on to the Princes Street Gardens Terrace, to provide a boutique skating experience like

no other, overlooked by the magnificence of the Scott Monument.

The Christmas Tree Maze: Edinburgh's first ever Christmas Tree Maze; a sparkling, shining 300 tree-strong labyrinth at the heart of which, if you can find it... sits Santa's Workshop. Take your children and find your way through the Maze in a unique, magical Christmas experience.

The European Market: a revamped Christmas market returns to the Mound Precinct and extends into East Princes Street Gardens, with an eclectic and quality range of stalls from across northern Europe, selling artisan, hand-made arts and crafts and taste bud popping food and drink.

Advent Concert

1 December 2013, 5pm

In conjunction with St Andrews and St Georges West and Edinburgh Churches Together, a carol concert will be held on the first day of Advent around the Nativity Scene, generously donated to Edinburgh by Sir Tom Farmer, and located in St Andrew Square.

Summerhall

4 December to 21 December 2013

The sell-out hit of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2013, Hot Dub Time Machine: Best. Party. Ever, makes a triumphant return to Scotland for 10 exclusive nights. This prime time extravaganza in the iconic Summerhall will be a seismic, rollicking interactive voyage through the history of popular music as DJ Tom Loud take revellers from 1954 to 2013 in the world's first 'boogie-powered' time machine. From Rock Around the Clock to Daft Punk, it's your dancing that keeps the party 'powered-up' and moving through pop music history.

Decorate Edinburgh

This year will also see the introduction of Decorate Edinburgh, a new event for Edinburgh's Christmas, which allows businesses and artists to collaborate on unique Christmas tree installations. 100 businesses from Edinburgh will be part of

Edinburgh's Christmas, working with a local artist or their own team to decorate a Christmas tree which will form part of the Decorate Edinburgh tree trail. Decorate Edinburgh provides businesses with a seasonal way to promote their offering and to engage with the local community; it helps decorate Edinburgh at Christmas time; and it helps local charities, with profits from Decorate Edinburgh being donated to Cash for Kids, Sunflower Garden and Edinburgh Clothing Store. The trees are supplied by Bethany Christian Trust Caring Christmas Trees project.

St Andrew's Day 2013

On November 30th the world celebrates St Andrew's Day, Scotland's national day. There will be parties galore around the world and, produced by Unique Events, Edinburgh will be hosting a very special day of events in the Grassmarket to celebrate. Taking place between 2pm – 10pm on Saturday 30 November 2013, the programme will include headline performances from some of Scotland's very best contemporary folk musicians, storytelling, music workshops, a spectacular outdoor Ceilidh with a stellar line-up of artists.