

Edinburgh's Christmas off to a flying start



Three quarters of a million people have visited the Christmas attractions in the city centre since they opened only 10 days ago according to numbers released by the organisers of Edinburgh's Christmas.

- **751,000 visitors have enjoyed Edinburgh's Christmas in its first 10 days, across the Mound, East Princes Street Gardens and St Andrew Square.**
- **273,000 people alone visited Edinburgh's Christmas over the weekend of Saturday 30 November and Sunday 1 December.**
- **These visitor numbers include:**
 - 33,600 people who have enjoyed the panoramic views from the heated pods of the Big Wheel;
 - 25,400 dare-devils who have whirled around the now legendary Star Flyer;
 - 9,300 people who have taken to the boutique ice-rink on East Princes Street Gardens;
 - 12,300 people who have journeyed on the newly installed Santa Train in East Princes Street Gardens;
 - 6,600 people who have wound their way through the Christmas Tree Maze;
 - The 26,000 who took to George Street on 24 November for

Light Night; and

- Over 1,000 people who attended the Nativity Carol Concert in St Andrew Square on 1 December.
- **Essential Edinburgh reports a significant rise in footfall in the City Centre:**
 - In the fortnight commencing 18 November to 1 December, up 13.2% against the same period for last year;
 - And in the key City Centre shopping locations, on Princes Street near M&S, and at the corner of George Street and Frederick Street, 23.6% and 20.2% up respectively against the same period for last year.
- **Limbo, performing in the sensational Paradiso Speigeltent, opened to both critical and audience acclaim, as did the childrens' show Captain Flinn and the Pirate Dinosaur.**

Andy Neal, Chief Executive of Essential Edinburgh said: “The footfall figures for the last two weeks are very encouraging and are an endorsement of both the Christmas attractions and the great shops, bars and restaurants in the City Centre. Clearly it is only the start of the season but some of the trading results, particularly around the switch on Sunday have been very strong for retailers and the hospitality sector.”

On Sunday 24 November, 26,000 people gathered on George Street, in the very heart of Edinburgh for an afternoon of

free entertainment presented by over 60 community groups, spread across 10 stages, culminating with Sir Chris Hoy switching on the City's Christmas lights. From that moment on, the spirit of Christmas has enveloped the city. The people of Edinburgh, along with tourists have flocked to our new European and Scottish markets to soak up the atmosphere and enjoy the vast range of local and international products that are on offer.

When Underbelly was appointed as producer of Edinburgh's Christmas, they promised to deliver a Christmas for all of Edinburgh. Edinburgh's Christmas this year has more for the family with a childrens' market in St Andrew Square with bespoke craft stalls, a toy stall, a sweet shop and childrens' workshops, and shows for families in the Spiegel tent. In East Princes Street Gardens, there is a double-decker carousel, a Christmas tree maze found through a secret door in the Santa's Grotto. The Santa Train around the Christmas tree maze has been an enormous success. And for all the family, there are the Christmas favourites: ice-skating and the Big Wheel, this year with covered pods.

For the more adult audience, there have been the expanded German and Scottish markets, the Star Flyer in St Andrew Square and LIMBO in the Spiegel tent.

Steve Cardownie, Edinburgh's Festivals & Events Champion, said: "Underbelly promised that they would deliver something fresh and exciting for Edinburgh's Christmas, while remaining true to the successes of years gone by.

“I have been extremely impressed by what I have seen thus far and, judging by these figures, I am not alone. With footfall up by almost a quarter in some areas year-on-year, the benefits are being felt by many more businesses in and around the city centre.”

Charlie Wood and Ed Bartlam, directors of Underbelly, and producers of Edinburgh's Christmas said “We are amazed and humbled by the positive response from the people of Edinburgh to our new re-imagined vision of Christmas in Edinburgh. We're delighted that Edinburgh's Christmas is appearing to deliver its promise of bringing more people to the City Centre and we look forward to continuing the successful celebrations through Edinburgh's Hogmanay and through to 5 January.”