

Beltane Fire Festival Returns to Set Edinburgh Alight

Fire Festival returns to Calton Hill on 30th April



On Sunday 30th April, the Beltane Fire Festival will return to Edinburgh's Calton Hill to welcome the onset of Summer. With one week to go, Beltane Fire Society have released the map and proposed schedule of the procession that winds its way around Edinburgh's Calton Hill. Excitement is growing about the 30th celebration, and tickets are selling fast. It falls the day before a bank holiday and, after last year's sell out success, attendees are being advised to buy their tickets in advance to avoid disappointment on the night.

The festival is a modern re imagining of an ancient Celtic traditions which, every year mark the arrival of summer with a wild mix of fire, drums, acrobatics and immersive theatre. While the festival has roots that stretch back to the Celts in the first century AD, the revived tradition has its own heritage, reaching back to 1988. This year, to mark the 30th festival since the festival was reignited, everyone involved has been exploring the heritage of the celebration.

There will be wild characters who weave their way amongst the audience, set theatrical pieces and impromptu acrobatic performances. The festival is presented as interactive theatre; a spectacle unlike any other. There are few barriers between audience and performer, and performances take place all around the hill as well as amongst the crowd. This is a chance for performers and audiences alike to let go, break free, reconnect to nature and revel in the joys of summer. It is a true community event that belongs to the local community of Edinburgh.

Today, organisers have released details of the procession. This is the journey of the May Queen after she awakes. Together with her counterpart, the Green Man, they travel around the park, meeting new characters, and blessing the elements. Fire, Water, Earth and Air are all represented by groups of fire performers, pirates, foxes, and birds – that will all interact with the procession. There are also the Blues (the May Queen’s guides), the Whites (her companions), and the Reds (embodiments of chaos) that all play a part. The characters are driven by the beat of three very different drum groups, which all too find the place in the narrative. The story begins with the lighting of the Neid fire, and this fire is transported around the hill by torch-bearers, lighting the way, before it ends with the lighting of the Beltane bonfire.



Speaking about the event, Chair of Beltane Fire Society said:

“This year is the 30th Beltane Fire Festival to celebrate, we’ve asked our volunteers to think big and explore the roots of the festival – both back to ancient times and also across the past thirty years of the event’s history in Edinburgh. Beltane is an event that cannot be described, it has to be felt, and that’s what makes it so special. We really want to reach out and welcome in the wider community this year, so come and share the beginnings of Summer with us.”

Event Coordinator, Georgia Royes said:

“To mark the anniversary, our incredible team of volunteers have been pulling out all the stops. There are giant puppets, intricate costumes, new fire sculptures and fire performances. The fire arch that the procession passes through will be a huge spectacle, far bigger than anything we’ve had before. We’ve also got stunning willow sculptures and decorations that will really transform Calton Hill.”

On Saturday 29th April (the day before the main event), Beltane Fire Society will also hold a 'Beltane Community Open Day' on Calton Hill. This will be a day out for all the family. Bring a picnic and get involved with drumming workshops, story-telling, kids activities and walking tours of the hill. It will be on Calton Hill, 1pm – 4pm – attendance by donation.

Tickets to attend the event on Calton Hill on Sunday are [available here](#)

Image Credits – Martin McCarthy (top) and Dan Mosely