

Edinburgh Science Festival – some highlights to tempt you into the lab

Amanda Tyndall CEO Of Edinburgh Science usually resorts to a quote to introduce the festival theme. This year was no exception.

She quoted Carl Sagan who said: “If we lived on a planet where nothing ever changed, there would be little to do. There would be nothing to figure out. There would be no impetus for science. And if we lived in an unpredictable world, where things changed in random or very complex ways, we would not be able to figure things out.

“But we live in an in-between universe, where things change, but according to patterns, rules, or as we call them, laws of nature. If I throw a stick up in the air, it always falls down. If the sun sets in the west, it always rises again the next morning in the east. And so it becomes possible to figure things out. We can do science, and with it we can improve our lives.”

Ms Tyndall continued: “We are still in a period of transition and stabilisation as we emerge from the past few years, and the world does face some serious ongoing challenges, but we are beyond excited by the return to hands on experiences.

“Using the festival as a living laboratory we are experimenting with format and partnerships, providing new ways of audiences interacting with science. We will be doing more with our community partners. We just want people of all ages

to not just talk about but get really hands on with science of all sorts, and join us with all things experimental.”

The Cabinet Secretary for Education, Shirley-Anne Somerville said that science festivals “encourage and inspire audiences to engage in the world around them and to better understand the role that science plays in our everyday lives, and also how it might play a role in our future”.

She continued to explain that STEM is “integral to our future as an economic developing nation. Climate challenge is the most obvious but not the only challenge we have to face up to.”

The Cabinet Secretary said: “This year through Scottish Government funding we have provided more than £230,000 in total to the Edinburgh Science Festival. That is part of our drive to ensure that science, innovation remain as accessible as possible to as wide and diverse a range of people as possible.

“I remember the time when my family were smaller going to the Science Festival at the City Art Centre were playing and experimenting but learning at the same time. It was a real inspiration about what was possible to make lives better for everyone. I have no doubt that this year’s programme will help to reinforce both the festival’s and Scotland’s place as the world’s preeminent and world leading scientific nation.”

The programme for this April’s festival includes events at the City Art Centre, the National Museum of Scotland and Summerhall and all manner of places in between. It is embedded below.



Edinburgh Science Festival is the first and one of the most respected science festivals in the world, taking place over the Easter holidays, between 1 and 16 April. Known for producing world-class live events, this year's Festival invites everyone to get hands-on with science and embrace the concepts of experimentation, innovation, creativity, curiosity and invention that lie at the heart of its 2023 theme – Let's Experiment! The Festival's 2023 programme is revealed at 10.30am on Tuesday, 14 February: www.sciencefestival.co.uk The photo features Stephanie Maia with daughter Valentina (age 7) experimenting with dry ice at Summerhall, one of the Festival venues.

Here we set out just some of the highlights:

There will be two themed weekends – *FutureFest* and *EarthFest* – at the National Museum of Scotland which bookend the festival, a great deal of which is offered free.

A large scale photography exhibition will be staged on

Portobello Prom to make everyone think about the planet.

For anyone who needs to or wants to stay at home there will be some specially curated events from the Festival's archive on demand on the [website](#).

The Edinburgh Medal will be presented to Professor Marion Nestle for her work on nutrition and food politics. This award is supported by the US Embassy London.

First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon will talk with Ambassador Patricia Espinosa, former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2016–2022) on 6 April – when we imagine she will remain First Minister.

The Scottish Government's Festivals Expo Fund supports the screening of a film – 2007 Studio Ghibli's classic Ponyo on 16 April in the FloWave Ocean Energy Research facility at the University of Edinburgh. The 2.4 million litres of water in the tank will synchronise live with the action on screen.

Junior Reading Experiment (4-6 April) gives sci-curious young minds a chance to meet science authors while the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh presents, among many others trails and workshops, Frankenstein's Plants: The Revenge (14-16 April) where children design their own herbarium specimen to take home, and Spring in the Vegetable Garden (16 April) – all about growing your own food at home.

Experimental Life is an interactive family-friendly exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland and there will be an adult-only evening on 6 April. Dynamic Earth hosts a range of late night events: When Fish Begin to Crawl (15 April) is a dialogue between arts and science and a world premiere of a new work by composer Jim Sutherland in collaboration with BAFTA-winning filmmaker Morag McKinnon, a meditation on the climate crisis and humanity's relationship with nature recorded by the Evolution Orchestra.

A Night in the Stars (4 April), is a multi-art form celebration of the scientific achievement that is the James Webb Space Telescope, Biomimicry (5 April) explores the practice of learning to solve human and scientific conundrums through mimicking nature, with examples from the world of fashion, AI and digital art.

Over at Heriot-Watt University, audiences can meet Robots After Dark (15 April) in a unique event of hands-on exploration of the machines of the future, supported by The National Robotarium & CDT-RAS at Edinburgh Centre for Robotics.

A Festival staple, Summerhall's galleries house a fascinating series of exhibitions and events from visual artists exploring themes of earth, climate, sustainability, biodiversity, micro-life and humanity by experimenting with scientific processes and practices.

Presented by Summerhall and ASCUS Art and Science, *Interlinked* (1 April – 15 May) showcases *Darkroom Ecology* by environmental artist Scott Hunter which explores the co-existence of ecological and industrial materials.

Lost, a climate action exhibition featuring a collection of 18 #LitterCUBES stitched and woven together from thousands of pieces of beach litter plastic, collected by artist Julia Barton and volunteers in the coastal communities of Eyemouth, Dunbar, Arbroath, Ullapool and Shetland.

Named after the number of bacteria species detected in her body, *3607* by artist Kexin Liu examines microorganisms living in the human body and their impact on our sense of "self".

Relating the health and wellness of soil to our own existence, *Earth, Soil + Filth* by interdisciplinary artist Agatha Smith explores the soil as an indicator of the future and a record of our human struggle – when degraded, all life is threatened.

Edinburgh Science Festival 1-16 April 2023

www.sciencefestival.co.uk




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