

EMBARGOED UNTIL 11.30AM ON TUESDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER

EDINBURGH'S CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS REVEALED FOR 2014/2015

21ST NOVEMBER 2014 TO 04TH JANUARY 2015

Underbelly and Unique Events, on behalf of City of Edinburgh Council, today announce the programme of Edinburgh's Christmas 2014/2015.

Edinburgh's Christmas promises to be bigger, better and more affordable than ever – especially for families and Edinburgh residents.

Highlights include:

- **EH postcode holders receive a 20% discount on all shows, rides and events.**
- **Special family prices are available for most attractions. Edinburgh residents are able to take advantage of these prices and also use their 20% discount – so getting the best value for money.**
- **New attractions in East Princes Street Gardens for between £1 and £4.**

The desire to offer value has been achieved without any compromise on quality – with the Starflyer, Big Wheel and Paradiso Spiegeltent all returning along with an expanded Santa Land and, the community opening event, Light Night on George Street.

Other highlights include:

- **Light Night on George Street returning on 23rd November with 60 school and community groups confirmed to perform on a series of stages up and down George Street to the theme of 'Christmas Songs and Carols'. Last year, over 26,000 people took to the streets to enjoy this community event**
- **A truly unique ice rink in St Andrew Square around the Melville Monument**
- **The Paradiso Speigletent returns with a programme of world class entertainment including Scotch and Soda, the internationally acclaimed circus show direct from sell out runs at the Sydney and Brisbane Festivals, Stickman, comedy superstar Al Murray for 3 nights only and Edinburgh's favourite all male burlesque troupe, Briefs**
- **Santa Land in East Princes Street Gardens with the very successful Christmas Tree Maze, Santa Train and Santa's Grotto, all seen in 2013, joined by a series of affordable family attractions priced between £1 and £4**
- **Other attractions in East Princes Street Gardens include the Big Wheel, the Star Flyer, the Ice Rink on the East Princes Street Gardens terrace and the double decker Carousel**

In 2013 we promised to deliver a re-imagined Christmas for Edinburgh, a festival to rival the celebrations of other world cities and an event of which the capital city of Scotland would be proud of. This we achieved, with international broadcaster CNN voting Edinburgh's Christmas one of the top ten best cities for a winter vacation. Other highlights of the success of Edinburgh's Christmas 2013 include:

- 387,000 tickets sold for Edinburgh's Christmas
- A 7.6% increase in city centre footfall rates and a 16.8% increase in Princes Street footfall in December (massively outperforming a UK average of -2.9%)
- 73% of people from Edinburgh said that Edinburgh's Christmas was the sole or an important reason to come to Edinburgh that day. And over half of the visitors (51%) from outside of Edinburgh said that Edinburgh's Christmas was the sole or an important reason to come to Edinburgh's City Centre that day.

Charlie Wood and Ed Bartlam of Underbelly said: "We're delighted to be presenting Edinburgh's Christmas for the second year. Last year we re-imagined the event and brought record breaking numbers of people to Edinburgh. We're very excited about this year's innovations, including the new ice rink in St Andrew Square around the Melville Monument; the expanded Santa Land in Princes Street Gardens with more affordable attractions; and the new family prices and the 20% EH residents' discount across the board. We want this to be a Christmas for all of Edinburgh and we think there's something for everyone – from Scotch & Soda in the Spiegel tent to our Stained Glass project where 24 Edinburgh primary schools will show off their creations in Princes Street Gardens. Our ambition is to make Edinburgh the best place to spend Christmas, whether you're a resident or a visitor. It maybe early to say this, but we are wishing Edinburgh a "Happy Christmas".

Edinburgh's Festivals and Events Champion, Councillor Steve Cardownie, said: "Edinburgh is always a special city during winter and this year, the Capital is certainly the place to be to celebrate Christmas.

"Our festive programmes are the envy of the world. The line up this winter with Underbelly will be bring back some of the city's classic attractions such as Santa Land - which will be bigger than ever before - and the spectacular Light Night on George Street which returns for its second year. Not only will the East Princes Street Gardens ice rink make a return, after receiving well over 30,000 visitors last Christmas, but a new bespoke ice rink in St Andrew Square will be opened for the very first time.

"I am especially pleased that after feedback from Edinburgh residents and a concerted decision to tailor the programme to suit even more local people, this year's programme offers a big range of free events and a selection of great value attractions from as little as £1.

"Our Christmas events provide a great boost to the Edinburgh economy, and this year's offering is set draw residents and visitors of all ages into the city centre."

Highlights of Edinburgh's Christmas include:

Light Night

Sunday 23rd November 2014, 2pm to 5pm, Free

- Light Night - the Opening Ceremony of Edinburgh's Christmas is free for all to enjoy and encapsulates the true spirit of the festive season: family and the community.
- This is an event for the community, by the community, with an expected audience of over 25,000 watching approximately 600 local performers on George Street.
- The theme of this year event is Christmas Songs and Carols. A number of stages will be erected along George Street and 22 local schools and other community groups will present performances of their favourite Christmas songs.
- Light Night will be hosted by **Arlene Stuart of Forth One**.
- Among the schools and community groups performing will be 22 primary schools, 2 secondary schools and 25 community groups including Cramond School, Leith Academy, Wester Hailes Education Centre and Edinburgh and East Lothian Arts .
- The Christmas Tree on the Mound, a gift to the City of Edinburgh Council 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 George Street in celebration and song.

St Andrew Square

21st November to 04th January, Free to access

- A totally new and unique **Ice Rink** comes to Edinburgh and to St Andrew Square, circumnavigating the iconic Melville Monument and the circular bar at its foot.
- Following in the footsteps of last year's hit LIMBO, the magnificent 635 seat Spiegeltent returns to play host to **Scotch and Soda**, the critically acclaimed circus sensation that comes to Edinburgh from sell-out seasons at the Brisbane and Sydney Festivals.
- The Paradiso Spiegelent programme also includes **Al Murray** celebrating 20 years of Lager Tops and Edinburgh's favourite all male burlesque, **Briefs**, return with a truly unique festive party. Julia Donaldson's **Stickman** will entertain all the family tree along with **Baby Disco** and the return of the legend that is **Hot Dub Time Machine** for a limited run.
- **The Laughing Stock** 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 Spiegelent, prior to an electrifying performance of Scotch and Soda or Briefs.

Other highlights of St Andrews Square include:

- The Scottish Market: The market showcases some of the best of Scottish food, drink and crafts.
- A Carousel and a Helter Skelter

The Mound Precinct and East Princes Street Gardens

21st November to 04th January, Free to access

- **The Star Flyer:** Come see Edinburgh as you have never seen it before, and this year you might just open your eyes. Last year over 62,000 people took to the sky in the Star Flyer, which this year is re-located to East Princes Street Gardens.
- **Santa Land:** Santa Land is bigger and better this year. Joining the Santa Train and the Christmas Tree Maze are several affordable kids rides including the Swan ride, the Reindeer carousel, a mini roller-coaster, the Ride-a-rama, a North Pole Slide and, for slightly older children, the Ice Wall. Santa himself will be installed in a resplendent and enlarged grotto and around Santa Land will be a number of other stalls, including face-painting.
- **The Big Wheel:** Perhaps the most visible sign that the festive season has arrived in Edinburgh, the Christmas Wheel returns to Princes Street Gardens with its 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. In 2013, 120,000 people enjoyed the new Big Wheel (more than twice the number of previous years).
- **Ice Rink:** That great Edinburgh tradition returns, to provide a boutique skating experience like no other, overlooked by the magnificence of the Scott Monument. 33,000 people took to the ice at Edinburgh's Christmas 2013.
- **The European Christmas Market:** 106 stalls return to Princes Street Gardens and the Mound Precinct from across northern Europe with a selection of foods, drinks and crafts to form the magical Christmas Market.

Nativity Carol Concert

30th November, 5pm, Free

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.

St Andrew's Day, St Andrew Square

30th November, 10am to 10pm, Free

St Andrew's Day activities for all the family, fittingly in St Andrew's Square for the first time! As part of Scotland's Winter Festivals, music, storytelling and more will celebrate Scotland's national day and patron Saint.

Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop, said: "The Scottish Government is proud to support Edinburgh's St Andrew's Day celebrations, as part of Scotland's Winter Festivals. From ceilidh dancing and curling demonstrations, to live music and storytelling, these festivities in the heart of the capital, to mark Scotland's national day, are aimed at all the family.

"A warm welcome awaits both residents and visitors alike, as our rich culture and distinctive heritage take centre stage."

Decorate Edinburgh

Decorate Edinburgh is an inclusive charity project spread around Edinburgh. Working with the St Andrew's and St George's Christmas Tree festival, Decorate Edinburgh gives local businesses the opportunity to be a part of Edinburgh's Christmas by designing a tree which can be seen in and around Edinburgh. 30% of the proceeds are donated to local charity.

The Stained Glass Window Project

Free

24 primary schools in Edinburgh are taking part in a creative project during the Autumn term to design a festive themed, stained glass window. The best window design from each school will be displayed in a series in East Princes Street Gardens, to be seen by the millions of visitors to Edinburgh's Christmas. A great way for local school children to get involved in the festivities and show off their artistic talents to visitors and other residents.

24 Doors of Advent

Free

Working in conjunction with the Cockburn Association, from 1- 24 December, a different door – normally locked - will be opened in the City each day to members of the public. Like an advent calendar, you will have to wait to find out what's behind the doors.

Photographs of Edinburgh's Christmas are available for download at

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/127834072@N05/sets/72157647286721977/>

Follow us:

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Tickets for all ticketed events are available from:

www.edinburghschristmas.com

0844 545 8252

For further information on Edinburgh's Christmas, please contact:

Fraser Smith

Press for Underbelly

07801 55 22285

fraser@underbelly.co.uk

Notes to Editors:

1. About our funders and sponsors:

The City of Edinburgh Council funds Edinburgh's Christmas and it is also supported by Essential Edinburgh and Marketing Edinburgh.

Event Sponsors: Heineken UK, Diageo, Drambuie, Transport for Edinburgh, YPlan, Aggreko

Event Partners: Edinburgh Airport, Hotel Du Vin.

Event Media Partners: Edinburgh Evening News, Forth 1, Forth 2, and The List.

2. Event Producers

In 2013, Underbelly and Unique Events were confirmed as the collaborative producers of the Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay events programmes on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council. The partnership will create the largest winter season that Edinburgh has ever seen. At its heart will be the world famous Edinburgh's Hogmanay and the totally re-imagined programme of Edinburgh's Christmas events and attractions detailed in this release.

A report on Edinburgh's Christmas 2013 can be downloaded at:

<http://www.underbelly.co.uk/news/edinburghs-christmas-2013-event-report>

Edinburgh's Christmas 2013 has been nominated for the 'best large event' and 'best large festival' at the Scottish Event Awards.

3. Underbelly Limited

Underbelly is a UK based, live entertainment company. Their events and festivals division operates one of the largest operations at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe selling over 250,000 tickets in 2013. 2014 marks the sixth year of Underbelly Festival at Southbank Centre and the third year of London Wonderground at Southbank Centre. Elsewhere Underbelly also produces Edinburgh's Christmas; Comedy Hullabaloo with the RSC in Stratford-upon-Avon; West End Live in Trafalgar Square for Westminster City Council and the Society of London Theatre; and Pride in London. Through their Underbelly Productions arm they produce and promote live shows in London, throughout the UK and on tour internationally. In 2013 Underbelly sold over 750,000 tickets to their various events. www.underbelly.co.uk

4. Unique Events Limited

Unique Events is Scotland's leading independent event company specialising in creating festivals and producing large scale public events which in 2014 have included Bannockburn Live and the Forth Road Bridge 50th Anniversary celebrations. Unique Events have produced Edinburgh's Hogmanay on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council since its inception in 1993. Details of the 2014/2015 Edinburgh's Hogmanay celebrations will be announced in November. Described as the original and best New Year's Party, Edinburgh's Hogmanay annually attracts tens of thousands of residents and visitors from around the globe. Taking place from Tuesday 30 December 2014 till Thursday 1 January 2015 the celebrations feature a Torchlight Procession winding through the streets of the city, the world-famous Street Party and Concert in the Gardens, this year headlined by Lily Allen, featuring live stages and synchronized screens, the Midnight Fireworks display, singing and dancing all set against the magnificent backdrop of Edinburgh Castle. Edinburgh's Hogmanay really is *the* place to be to see in the New Year in true Scots style. For tickets and more information: www.edinburghshogmanay.com



