



**EMBARGOED UNTIL 11.30AM ON TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER**

## **EDINBURGH'S CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS REVEALED FOR 2015/2016**

**20 NOVEMBER 2015 TO 4 JANUARY 2016**

### **LIGHTING UP EDINBURGH**

**On behalf of City of Edinburgh Council,  
Underbelly today announce the programme for Edinburgh's Christmas 2015/2016.**

**Edinburgh's Christmas promises to deliver the biggest and brightest Christmas festival ever seen in Scotland and the rest of the UK.**

**Building on last year's enormous success, and in the lead up to Christmas Day, this year's Festival will also see an expansion into other parts of the city centre and more free events than ever before.**

**Highlights include:**

- **The Virgin Money Street of Light.** Launching on St Andrew's Day, up to 250,000 people will enjoy this new major free event for the Edinburgh's Christmas season with an architectural installation of 60,000+ lights stretching along the Royal Mile, from City Chambers to the Tron Kirk, set to music from Edinburgh choirs.
- **Susan Boyle to switch on Edinburgh's Christmas lights at Light Night, 22 November 2015.** Scotland's superstar and Britain's Got Talent finalist, Susan Boyle will do Edinburgh the honour of switching on the City's lights at Light Night, the free event on George Street, where 1,300 local performers will show off their talents to an audience of 20,000+ people.
- **A significant expansion of the Winter Windows programme.** Thanks to the generous support of Scottish Gas with national charity partner Shelter, Edinburgh's Christmas is extending the Winter Windows programme from 15 primary schools in 2014 to 25 primary and secondary schools from the Edinburgh area.
- **An exceptional programme of circus, comedy and cabaret in the Paradiso Spiegeltent** with performances from Circa, reviving *Beyond*, the hit show of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2014; the legendary **Camille O'Sullivan**; **Puddles**, the cabaret sensation of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2015; **Austentatious**; **Abandoman**; and **Frisky & Mannish**. And the return of **Stick Man**, the adaptation of Julia Donaldson's magical best-selling book.
- **A continuation of the EH discount offer, where holders of an EH postcode receive a 20% discount on all shows, rides and events.** In 2014, 97,512 tickets were sold with the 20% discount.

### Other highlights include:

- St Andrew's Day celebrations in St Andrew Square on 29 November, which will see free performances from **Scots Makar, Liz Lochhead, Dean Owens and The Whisky Hearts, The Banana Sessions and Blazin' Fiddles.**
- The return of the unique ellipse shaped ice rink around the Melville Monument in St Andrew Square, the Big Wheel, the Star Flyer, the expanded Santa Land with its series of affordable family attractions, and the double decker Carousel which moves this year to St Andrew Square.
- 24 Doors of Advent welcomes many new doors to explore this year to the advent calendar including the Forth Bridge which was inscribed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in July 2015, the Rock House, Leith's Custom House and the Biscuit Factory.

### Facts and Figures about Edinburgh's Christmas

- This is the third year of Underbelly creating and delivering Edinburgh's Christmas. Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay are produced by the consortium of Underbelly and Unique Events Ltd on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council.
- Highlights of the Edinburgh Christmas 2014 season include:
  - 880,000+ unique visitors (an increase of 44% from 2013). \*
  - 540,000+ tickets sold (an increase of 37% from 2013).
  - In 2014, 97,512 tickets were sold with the 20% discount.
  - A growing audience from the rest of the Scotland and the UK: 34% of visitors coming from the rest of Scotland (up from 24% in 2013), and 17% from the rest of the UK (up from 14% in 2013). \*
  - Edinburgh's Christmas is the draw for people to come to Edinburgh: 65% of visitors from the rest of Scotland and 39% from the rest of the UK said that Edinburgh's Christmas attractions were one of the main reasons or the only reason for their visit to Edinburgh that day. \*
  - Footfall figures in the Edinburgh City Centre were up in December 2014 on December 2013 by 5.7%, against a UK average of -2.1%, building on the increase in December 2013 of 7.6% from December 2012.\*\*
  - Hotel room occupancy increased in December to 78.7% in 2014 (from 71.1% in 2012 and from 74% in 2013). This is a relative increase of 6.4% from 2013 and 10.8% from 2012.
  - A direct economic impact to Edinburgh, excluding spend by Edinburgh residents, of £118.8m (£199.5m when advance multipliers are applied). \*

\* Culture Republic survey

\*\* Essential Edinburgh survey

\*\*\* Marketing Edinburgh/LJ Research

**Charlie Wood and Ed Bartlam of Underbelly said:** "This Christmas is all about lighting up Edinburgh. We're very excited to be bringing the Street of Light and extending the success of Edinburgh's Christmas into the Old Town and we're delighted that the Edinburgh Festival Chorus, the Edinburgh Royal Choral Union, the Edinburgh Gay Men's Chorus and the Edinburgh Police Choir will be providing the music. It's a free event for up to 5,000 people a show, 250,000 in all. We hope it will show one of Scotland's most famous streets in a whole new light and bring the whole community together to celebrate Christmas.

We're also honoured that Susan Boyle, who became a household name as a finalist in Britain's Got Talent and has since become a superstar, will turn on Edinburgh's lights at the end of Light Night, the event where 1,300 performers from across the City will show off their own talents to the rest of Edinburgh.

Elsewhere at Edinburgh's Christmas, we hope that local residents will use their 20% discount to enjoy what's on offer from the elliptic ice rink at St Andrew Square to the rides in Santa Land, to the performances of Circa's Beyond, Stick Man, Puddles and Camille in the Spiegel tent."

**Edinburgh's Festivals and Events Champion, Councillor Richard Lewis**, said: "Edinburgh at Christmas is an amazing experience. The attractions provide a huge draw to the city centre and this year's packed programme looks set to be just as popular. Residents will be cheered to see the return of our Edinburgh's Christmas 20% discount just for EH postcode holders. Close to 100,000 locals used the discount last year and I'm sure it will be another success this winter."

**Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop**, said: "Edinburgh's Christmas programme is a great blend of top international performers, community events and local talent. The Virgin Money Street of Light is an exciting new part of the programme and one we are proud to support through Scotland's Winter Festivals. The launch will be a great addition to our national St Andrew's Day celebrations."

**Andrew Nicholson, Head of Sponsorship Marketing at Virgin Money**, said: "The Virgin Money Street of Light is set to wow both residents and visitors to the city of Edinburgh. It will be free of charge following on in the tradition of the Fringe Street Events and we expect over a quarter of a million people to enjoy the show, which opens on St Andrew's Day and runs until Christmas Eve. We have a proud track record of bringing brilliant light and music shows to the city through our support of the annual Fireworks Concert to close the Edinburgh International Festival and we hope the new Virgin Money Street of Light will prove to be an equally popular event during Edinburgh's Christmas."

**Susan Boyle** said "I am thrilled to have been asked to switch on the Edinburgh Christmas lights this year. I travel to Edinburgh to see the lights every year so to be in charge of switching them on is a real honour and I'm very excited to be taking part."

### **More information on Edinburgh's Christmas**

#### **Virgin Money Street of Light**

30 November to 24 December 2015, 6.30pm and 8.15pm, free

- **Virgin Money Street of Light is a major new event for Edinburgh's Christmas, which will extend the capital's celebration of St Andrew's Day and see 16 arches of up to 19m high with over 60,000 lights stretching along the Royal Mile from City Chambers to the Tron Kirk.**
- The lights synchronise with music from choirs from across Edinburgh including the **Edinburgh Festival Chorus, the Edinburgh Gay Men's Chorus, the Edinburgh Police Choir and the Edinburgh Royal Choral Union.**
- **The event runs for 25 days** from 30 November to 24 December 2015. There are **two shows a day** at 6.30pm and 8.15pm, each lasting approximately 20 minutes.
- Tickets are free of charge, and 5,000 tickets will be issued for each show, giving a total capacity over the event of 250,000 people.
- **Tickets will be made available online from [virginmoneystreetoflight.com](http://virginmoneystreetoflight.com) from 21 October 2015.**
- Virgin Money Street of Light is made possible with the support of Virgin Money and Scotland's Winter Festivals.

#### **Light Night**

Sunday 22 November 2015, 2pm to 5pm, free

- **Light Night is an event free for all to enjoy**, which encapsulates the true spirit of the festive season: family and the community.
- Light Night allows schools and community groups from across Edinburgh to show off their talent to an expected audience of over 20,000 people, and will do so this year in front of **Susan Boyle**, Scotland's Britain's Got Talent finalist, who will do Edinburgh the honour of switching on the lights.
- **22 primary schools, 5 secondary schools and 25 community groups will be performing**, with an estimated 1,300+ performers, including Edinburgh Ballet, Stewart's Melville College, Ratho Primary, Edinburgh Bhangra Crew, New Generation Dance Group, Wester Hailes Education Centre and St Mary's Music School on a number of stages up and down the length of George Street.
- 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 the group Brass Trio Vibrazzo from Hordaland in Norway will lead George Street in celebration and song.

### St Andrew's Day

29 November 2015, 11am to 10pm, free to access

- **St Andrew Square** will again host Edinburgh's St Andrew's Day celebrations, with the best Scottish music, poetry and dance – all free - to celebrate Scotland's national day. The main stage will see the Scottish three piece, The Banana Sessions, play with their unique style of folk-pop and the multi-award winning Blazin' Fiddles headlining with music from their new album and across their career spanning nearly two decades.
- **The Spiegeltent** will feature readings from **Scotland's Makar, Liz Lochhead**. The Royal Scottish Dance Society will lead Ceilidh dances and workshops and the Spiegeltent programme will close with one of Scotland's most acclaimed singer songwriters and his five piece band, **Dean Owens and The Whisky Hearts**, playing his infectious brand of Celtic Americana, from Leith via Nashville.
- Extended programming to celebrate St Andrew's Day is made possible with the support of Scotland's Winter Festivals.

### The Mound Precinct and East Princes Street Gardens

20 November 2015 to 4 January 2016, free to access

- **The Star Flyer:** See Edinburgh as you have never seen it before, and this year you might just open your eyes! Located next to the Scott Monument in East Princes Street Gardens.
- **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.
- **Santa Land:** The rejuvenated and dazzling Santa Land is returning with the Santa Train, the Christmas Tree Maze and several affordable kids rides. Santa himself will be installed in his resplendent grotto.
- **Ice Rink:** That great Edinburgh tradition returns, to provide a boutique skating experience like no other, overlooked by the magnificence of the Scott Monument.
- **The European Christmas Market:** Over 100 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.

## St Andrew Square

20 November 2015 to 4 January 2016, free to access

- The unique **Ice Rink** circumnavigating the iconic Melville Monument and the circular bar at its foot returns to Edinburgh and to St Andrew Square.
- **Circa's Beyond**, following its smash-hit season in at 2014's Fringe festival, *Circa's Beyond* returns to Edinburgh, with their thrilling circus cabaret of utterly breath-taking physical feats undertaken by some of the best circus performers in the world. This show has played critically acclaimed seasons in London, Montreal as well as nine-months in Berlin. Circa are a world renowned Australian circus company that Edinburgh loves: their most recent show *Close Up* wowed audiences at the Fringe in 2015, and their show *Wunderkammer* was awarded a Herald Angel in 2013. Beyond returns following a hit season from 2014: it's contemporary, energetic, virtuosic and an awful lot of fun and it's coming to Edinburgh this Christmas.
- The Paradiso Spiegletent programme also features:

**Stickman** - Based on the beloved book by **Gruffalo creators Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler**, this brilliant stage adaptation of *Stick Man* returns to Edinburgh's Christmas following a hit season in 2014. **The show is adapted from the best-selling book that is also going to be appearing on TV this Christmas in an all-star screen adaptation for the BBC.** Touching, funny and utterly original this award-winning show has delighted audiences across the country. Packed with puppetry, songs live music and funky moves the show guarantees more fun than you can shake a stick at!

**Camille O'Sullivan: Changeling** - 'Queen of the Edinburgh Festival' (BBC) Camille O'Sullivan enjoys a formidable international reputation for her intensely dramatic interpretations of the songs of Brel, Cave, Waits, Bowie and more. The multi-award-winning singer has stunned audiences around the world with her five-star sell-out performances, including Sydney Opera House, Royal Festival Hall, La Clique, Later With Jools Holland (BBC) and her Herald Angel award winning RSC solo performance *The Rape of Lucrece* at the Edinburgh International Festival. Dark, sexy, fierce, amusing and mesmerizing!

**Puddles Pity Party** - The Cabaret Hit of the Fringe 2015, Puddles the Clown brings his acclaimed show to Edinburgh's Christmas. With more than 100k fans on Facebook and over 30 million views on Youtube of his jaw dropping version of Lorde's *Royals*, Puddles sings all the hits from favourites like Abba's *Dancing Queen* to tunes from Tom Jones and Sia. Puddles Pity Party is a must-see for both his musical talents and his unique comedic hijinks.

**Austentatious: An Improvised Jane Austen Novel** - Austentatious returns to Edinburgh! An all-star cast conjure up an entire Jane Austen novel based on nothing more than an audience suggestion. Whether it's *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Northanger Abbey* or *Emma*, no two shows are ever the same and the results are always hilarious. Fresh from two sell-out UK tours, four sell-out Fringe runs and appearances on BBC Radio 2 and BBC Radio 4 Extra, this show is not to be missed. swooning guaranteed.

**Frisky & Mannish** – these pop-mash-up-entertainment experts, bring back their epic Yuletide extravaganza to Edinburgh. Find out how the perfect Christmas song's created – innuendo, pathos, BELLS etc. It'll be camp as Christmas. Obvs.

**Abandoman's Bass Drop Ceilidh** – It's New Year's Eve... but not as you know it. Let the bells ring, let the bass drop! Authentic Ceilidh musicians meet Abandoman's unique hip-hop sound to create a new kind of Ceilidh music – bassy, breathless and brilliant. Enjoy some of Abandoman's favourite songs, followed by a foot-stomping, eye-popping Ceilidh Rave. Complete with a spectacular story, it's a Ceilidh, a party and a show all rolled into one.

- **The Scottish Market:** The market showcases some of the best of Scottish food, drink and crafts.

## Nativity Carol Concert

29 November, 3pm, free

In conjunction with St Andrews and St Georges West and Edinburgh Churches Together, at the start of Advent, a carol concert around the Nativity Scene, generously donated to Edinburgh by Sir Tom Farmer.

### **Winter Windows**

From 25 November 2015, East Princes Street Gardens, free to access

25 primary schools in Edinburgh are taking part in a creative project during the Autumn term to design a stained glass window with the theme of light. Thanks to the support of Scottish Gas with national charity partner Shelter, we are able to extend the number of windows from 15 to 25. 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. Doors include: The Forth Bridge (inscribed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in July 2015), Botanic Cottage, Coburg House, Custom House, The Biscuit Factory, The Glastie Meeting House, Cockenzie House & Gardens and Gilmerton Cove.

### **Photographs of Edinburgh's Christmas are available for download at:**

General Edinburgh's Christmas photos: <http://bit.ly/1ND6LT3>

Virgin Money Street of Light images: <http://bit.ly/1UWy4Mt>

### **A video with highlights of Edinburgh's Christmas is available to view at:**

[http://youtu.be/VTDNe4kyQ\\_I](http://youtu.be/VTDNe4kyQ_I)

### **Follow us:**

Facebook: [facebook/edinburghschristmas](https://www.facebook.com/edinburghschristmas)

Twitter: [@EdXmas](https://twitter.com/EdXmas)

### **Tickets for all ticketed events are available from:**

[www.edinburghschristmas.com](http://www.edinburghschristmas.com)

0844 545 8252

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

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### **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, Marketing Edinburgh and Scotland's Winter Festivals.

Event Sponsors: Citroen Retail Group, Diageo, Heineken UK, Lidl, Scottish Gas, Thistly Cross Cider, Transport For Edinburgh, Virgin Money

Event Partners: Cancer Research UK Kids & Teens, Hotel Du Vin, Edinburgh Airport

Event Media Partners: Edinburgh Evening News, Forth 1, Forth 2

#### **2. Event Producers**

Underbelly and Unique Events were confirmed in 2013 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 is creating the largest winter season that Edinburgh has ever seen. At its heart are the world famous Edinburgh's Hogmanay and the totally re-imagined programme of Edinburgh's Christmas events and attractions detailed in this release.

Edinburgh's Christmas won the Best Festival at the 2014 UK 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 230,000 tickets for over 140 shows over 25 days. 2015 marks the seventh year of Underbelly Festival at Southbank Centre and the fourth year of London Wonderground at Southbank Centre. Elsewhere Underbelly also produces Edinburgh's Christmas; Comedy Hullabaloo with the RSC Stratford-upon-Avon; Pride in London for the GLA and board of Pride; West End Live in Trafalgar Square for Westminster City Council and the Society of London Theatre. Through their Underbelly Productions arm they produce and promote live shows in London, throughout the UK and on tour internationally. In 2014 Underbelly sold over a million tickets to their various events. [www.underbelly.co.uk](http://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. Unique Events have produced Edinburgh's Hogmanay on behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council since its inception in 1993. Details of the 2015/2016 Edinburgh's Hogmanay celebrations will be announced in October. 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 Wednesday 30 December 2015 'til Friday 1 January 2016 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 Biffy Clyro, 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](http://www.edinburghshogmanay.com)

### 5. Scotland's Winter Festivals

- Scotland's Winter Festivals is a campaign led by The Scottish Government and delivered in partnership with VisitScotland's Events Directorate, supporting celebrations of Scotland's three national days, St Andrew's Day, Hogmanay and Burns Night. Scotland's Winter Festivals run from November until the end of January.
- Scots, at home and abroad, come together to celebrate Scotland's unique heritage and distinctive culture through Scotland's Winter Festivals – St Andrew's Day, Christmas, Hogmanay and Burns Night.
- A vibrant winter event programme brings together people from all over the world to celebrate Scotland's modern culture and traditions through the best selection of Scottish music, arts, food and drink, innovation and entertainment.
- Anyone, whether they are Scottish or have an interest in Scotland, can join in the celebrations with events taking place across the country. Find out what's happening near you at [www.scotland.org/winter](http://www.scotland.org/winter).
- Scotland is a year-round destination for visitors, welcoming over 15 million people every year to our shores. St Andrew's Day, Christmas, Hogmanay and Burns Night all offer a reason to come and celebrate here in Scotland or anywhere else around the world.

### 6. St Andrew's Day

- St Andrew's Day is Scotland's national day, designed to celebrate the country's history, culture and heritage with people both at home and abroad.
- We welcome people from across the world to help us celebrate the wide range of events taking place in the lead up to St Andrew's Day – so locals and visitors can embrace our national day across the entire weekend of Fri 28 – Sun 30 November. Hundreds of attractions across Scotland will be opening their doors to offer free or discounted entry to do something to celebrate St Andrew's Day. To download the Day Out vouchers, visit [www.scotland.org/dayout](http://www.scotland.org/dayout)
- For those looking to celebrate St Andrew's Day with the family, there is a selection of seasonal recipes showcasing the range of Scotland's natural larder to celebrate with a St Andrew's Night In. All recipes are available on [www.scotland.org/nightin](http://www.scotland.org/nightin)
- Wherever you are in the world, you can celebrate St Andrew's Day – from the United States and Canada to Australia, from Beijing to Bangladesh. Those who want to learn more about the traditional celebrations are encouraged to visit [www.scotland.org/standrewsday](http://www.scotland.org/standrewsday) where there is a whole host of fun and interactive digital resources, including a 'Saltire Yourself' app, Scottish Party Guide and a sample St Andrew's Day menu. There is also a St Andrew's Day app available to download for smart phones.