

# City's hugely popular annual Christmas celebration returns for 2019.

16 November 2019 – 4 January 2020



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- **POPULAR CHRISTMAS.** Return of the hugely popular Edinburgh's Christmas to which an estimated 288,000 locals came from Edinburgh and the Lothians in 2018/19.
- **POPULAR CHRISTMAS.** The 20% discount for EH residents returns, with over 186,000 tickets snapped up in 2018/19 (31% up on 2017).
- **COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS.** A new free event for Edinburgh's Christmas sees the event spread out across the city, with a projection and choral event, embracing local talent and celebrating Christmas at 12 destinations in the 4 localities.
- **COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS.** A reimaged Light Night moves to Old Town and the Royal Mile on 17 November, with Santa Claus making a spectacular if "flying" visit.

- **COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS.** Winter Windows which saw over 1,600 Edinburgh schoolchildren participate in 2018 returns with ‘A Festive Welcome’ theme.
- **GREEN CHRISTMAS.** In a new partnership for 2019, 25p from every ticket sold to the Christmas Tree Maze will be donated to Edinburgh and the Lothians Greenspace Trust’s [Tree Time](#) project which replants or plants new trees in Edinburgh.
- **CITY CHRISTMAS.** One-on-one video experience, Night Walk for Edinburgh, last seen at EIF 2019, offers a unique, multisensory tour of Edinburgh past and present.
- **CHRISTMAS FOR FAMILIES.** Santa Land returns to East Princes Street Gardens with rides for people of all ages to enjoy whilst Santa’s Grotto once again takes residence on Castle Street.
- **CHRISTMAS FOR ALL.** Christmas Market visitors with additional needs can hire free of charge a sensory backpack containing items such as fidget toys and ear defenders.
- Tickets available to book from 10am on Wednesday, 16 October at [edinburghschristmas.com](http://edinburghschristmas.com).

On behalf of City of Edinburgh Council, Underbelly is proud to present the full programme of Edinburgh’s Christmas 2019, the hugely popular, world-renowned celebrations which last year welcomed almost 1 million unique visitors snapping over 771,000 tickets to its various events, attractions, rides and markets, with 99% of visitors rating them very good or good and 8 out of 10 people saying they would be very likely to recommend Edinburgh’s Christmas.

Edinburgh’s Christmas is very much a local event with an estimated 300,00 (31%) of the unique visitors coming from Edinburgh and Lothians. The 2018 festive season also saw a whopping 186,799 tickets sold to locals who enjoyed their 20% EH postcode holders discount. That is a 31% increase compared to 2017.

This year’s offer promises another spectacular festive season for people of all ages to enjoy!

There will be nothing old-fashioned about the traditional start to Edinburgh’s Christmas celebrations this year, **Light Night with Santa making a “flying” if very special visit to Edinburgh’s Christmas and the Royal Mile** on Sunday, 17 November. Before Santa’s visit, there will be spectacular performances on the Royal Mile from local choirs and youth groups as well as a special appearance from **Ama-zing Harmonies**, a choir created through the work of Transit into Confidence, a charity supported by **OneCity Trust**, Edinburgh’s Christmas official charity partner. Only last year, 50p per ticket donations for each Silent Light and Edinburgh’s Hogmanay’s Torchlight Procession raised a total of almost £30,000 for OneCity Trust.

Hosted by Forth 1’s **Arlene Stuart**, Light Night will take place between 3.30pm and 5pm and will also feature the **Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh’s community choir**, fresh from their preparations for An Edinburgh Christmas Carol, **Little Voices, Big Stars**, the Edinburgh singing group for children between 4 and 16 year olds, **Intercultural Youth Scotland**, a movement for positive impact in the lives of intercultural young people whose Light Night performance will feature rap and poetry and **Rock Choir Live**. Audiences up and down the Mile will be able to enjoy the event thanks to three giant screens located in key spots on the street.

At 5pm a spectacular pyrotechnics display will mark the official switch on of Edinburgh’s Christmas lights **with Santa’s “flying” visit**.

OneCity Trust will be bucket shaking at the event.

Brand new this season is **Community Christmas**, a wonderful, free, fun celebration which brings local Edinburgh communities together to spread festive cheer across the whole city!

Presented in collaboration with Double Take Projections, Underbelly's partners on Message from the Skies in 2018 and 2019, Community Christmas sees 12 locally significant buildings, across all four of Edinburgh's localities, come alive with festive projections over 12 consecutive nights, a new building every night. Each event also features a different local choir performing some of the best-loved festive tunes alongside the projection. The locations are: Abbeyhill Primary School, Sandy's Community Centre in Craigmillar, Drumbrae Library and Community Hub, Corstorphine Community Centre, Gilmerton Community Centre, Pentland Community Centre – Oxcgangs, Westside Plaza – Wester Hailes, Granton Primary School, Inch Community Education Centre, The Crags Centre by Holyrood Park, Craigentiny Community Centre and Broomhouse Community Hub.

Also new to Edinburgh's Christmas this year and returning after its sell out success at the Edinburgh International Festival 2019, Canadian artists Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller present **Night Walk for Edinburgh**, an intimate, one-on-one video experience taking audiences on a specially curated tour of Edinburgh's Old Town at twilight. This unique opportunity allows participants to discover a new Edinburgh where history and memory collide and where our perceptions of what is real are challenged. Featuring a three-dimensional soundscape, Night Walk engages all senses as audiences are led through the capital by Janet Cardiff's voice, discovering the city past and present.

Once again **East Princes Street Gardens** hosts one of the UK's most stunning **Christmas Markets**, offering a range of craft and food and drink stalls as well as rides and attractions, all against the backdrop of the iconic Edinburgh Castle.

The Market's rides include, among others, the famous 60m high **Star Flyer** with spectacular 360° views of the city centre, equally not-for-the-faint-hearted **Forth 1 Big Wheel**, the most Instagrammable Christmas spot in Edinburgh the **Christmas Tree Maze**, fairground staple – **Helter Skelter** and, for the keen little travellers, **Santa Train!**

In a new partnership for 2019, 25p from every ticket sold to the ever-so-popular family favourite Christmas Tree Maze will be donated to **Edinburgh and the Lothians Greenspace Trust's Tree Time** project which replants or plants new trees in Edinburgh. ELGT have been working on this special project in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council and the Woodland Trust to enable and encourage individuals to donate towards the replacement of street trees. **The donations from Edinburgh's Christmas will raise an estimated £15,000.** For more information about the Donation Packages available visit [www.tree-time.com](http://www.tree-time.com).

With additional stalls on the south side of East Princes Street Gardens, the Christmas Market's offer is richer than ever before. Visitors will be able to sample **Aelder** - Scottish hand-crafted wild elderberry liqueur, Edinburgh's **Pickering's Gin**, **The Mac Shack**, offering the best mac and cheese or the ultimate fish and chips at **Alandas**. **The Caravan of Courage** will present their feelgood vegan junk food menu with vegan pigs in blankets on special as part of the Christmas Market whilst meat lovers will rejoice at news that the **Fox Hat** brings their 'food theatre' to Edinburgh. And those looking for gift ideas will have a chance to explore the latest from **Loch Ness Leather**, a family-run Highland business presenting handmade leather products.

Johnnie Walker continues its partnership with Edinburgh's winter festival with the **Johnnie Walker Bothy Bar** on the Mound serving the Johnnie Walker Hot Apple Toddy.

Edinburgh-based Fringe favourites **Silent Adventures** will be operating their famous **Silent Disco Adventure Tours** with a festive flavour, taking the participants on a fun tour around East Princes Street Gardens - on weekdays only.

**Castle Street** once again becomes Santa's Edinburgh base this Christmas with his **Grotto** welcoming naughty and nice children every day from 16 November until Christmas Eve. Book a visit early to avoid disappointment! The capital's scenic spot also features rides such as an adult friendly Helter Skelter, where you can take a trip to the top and then warm up at the bar underneath with a hot chocolate or mulled wine.

**Winter Windows** is back! This special creative project conceived by Underbelly in 2014 as part of Edinburgh's Christmas encourages Edinburgh's young and budding artists to showcase their talents to residents and visitors outside of the classroom and in our streets and community hubs by designing their own stained-glass window. In 2018, over 1,600 Edinburgh schoolchildren participated. This year's Winter Windows are themed around 'A Festive Welcome' and winners will be announced in November at a special reception.

Winter Windows 2019 is supported by the City of Edinburgh Council and will be displayed in West Parliament Square outside St Giles' Cathedral and continue in 4 more locations around Edinburgh: White Park - Gorgie, Great Junction Street – by Leith Library, Main Street - Kirkliston and Goodtrees Community Centre – Gilmerton.

**24 Doors of Advent** returns to offer a peek behind the scenes of some of Edinburgh's key institutions and venues, including the home to Scottish rugby, BT Murrayfield Stadium, The Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Centre, a centre for spiritual and mental wellness named in honour of the famous writer who spent many years studying spiritualism and the iconic Robin Chapel with its stunning stained-glass windows. Visit [edinburghchristmas.com](http://edinburghchristmas.com) for the full line-up.

**The Nativity Scene** moves this year to the Mound beneath the Christmas Tree donated by the Hordaland County Council in Norway. **The Nativity Carol Concert**, organised in conjunction with Edinburgh Churches Together, takes place at 3pm on 1 December on Mound Place.

Edinburgh's Christmas favourite, **Baby Loves Disco** returns with **Christmas Glitter Ball**, and a top-class selection of festive pop tunes to get families into the party mood! The ultimate daytime dance party, the event is aimed at parents and carers with babies, toddlers and young children (up to 6 years old) and features real club DJs mixing the best tunes of the last five decades, all at a baby-friendly volume! The fun beyond the dancefloor continues with face-painting, play tents, arts and craft zone and many more, all included in the entry price. The show takes place at Assembly Rooms, twice daily on 15 and 21 December.

**Christmas on Stage**, the ultimate guide to festive on-stage entertainment in Edinburgh, brings together a dazzling new line-up of shows including the abovementioned Baby Loves Disco, and also Grid Iron Theatre Company and Traverse Theatre Company co-production of **Strange Tales**, centuries-old Chinese tale, Douglas Maxwell's **I Can Go Anywhere**, an anthem to solidarity and acceptance, the famous **The Lion King** at the Playhouse, the Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh's **An Edinburgh Christmas Carol** who are part of the exciting Light Night celebrations, Usher Hall with **Children's Classic Concerts: Santa's Workshop** on 8 December, **The Chicago Blues Brothers – Christmas Party**, 20 December as well as **NOW That's What I Call Christmas** on 21 December and Gilded Balloon at Rose Theatre with **The Comedy Show: Christmas Special**.

To make sure Edinburgh's Christmas is an experience as enjoyable as possible to all, Underbelly is pleased to be offering **free of charge sensory packs to children and adult visitors with additional needs**. These will be available to hire free of charge from the main Edinburgh's Christmas Box Office and will contain a fidget toy, earplugs, water bottle, stress reliever, ear defenders and an Edinburgh's Christmas brochure including an easy to navigate map. These items are designed to help users relax in situations they might find stressful. The sensory packs are designed and kindly provided by the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society.

**Charlie Wood and Ed Bartlam, producers of Edinburgh's Christmas said:** "We're delighted to be returning with our seventh season of Edinburgh's Christmas. The nearly 300,000 unique visitors from Edinburgh and the Lothians in 2018 show what a popular local event it is but it's also the time of year when the city welcomes in hundreds of thousands of visitors and, once again, we're able to provide them with one of the best Christmas celebrations in Europe.

"We're particularly excited to be able to introduce Community Christmas to twelve different locations across Edinburgh, bringing communities together locally to celebrate Christmas and also to officially start the celebrations on the Royal Mile with Light Night and a very special appearance from Santa Claus. Merry Christmas!"

**Edinburgh's Lord Provost, Frank Ross, said:** "There is simply no better place to celebrate Christmas than Scotland's Capital. And, with 20% off ticket prices for EH postcode residents and a brand-new event celebrating 12 of our local communities, this winter will see Edinburgh's Christmas cheer spread even further across the city.

"The Festival is a chance for us to celebrate our local talent and creativity and I'm looking forward to the launch of our city's Christmas with Light Night providing a stage for so many local performers. Alongside this, budding young artists will have the chance to showcase their work with Winter Windows, the Christmas markets will be awash with Scottish produce, and this year we will have sensory backpacks available free of charge to make the visit to the festival more accessible for people with autism or who have difficulty processing sensory information.

"Importantly, the events will yet again help us raise much-needed funds to tackle poverty and inequality. As the charity's patron, I'm delighted to see Underbelly continues its partnership with the OneCity Trust."

**Charlie Cumming, Chief Executive, Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust said:** "We are delighted to be a charity partner of Underbelly for the Christmas Maze. Donations will help us to look after Edinburgh's trees for future generations through the Tree Time initiative. Our trees in Edinburgh are important. They clean our air, reduce flooding, keep us cool in summer and warmers in the winter, improve our health and give the wildlife in our city a home."

**/ENDS**

**Notes to the editors:**

Edinburgh's Christmas, 16 November 2019 – 4 January 2020  
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### **About Underbelly**

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 460,000 tickets for over 200 shows, in 22 venues over 25 days in 2018.

2018 was the sixth year Underbelly produced Edinburgh's Christmas for City of Edinburgh Council which saw 771,074 tickets sold to visitors from more than 40 countries, and the second year of producing Edinburgh's Hogmanay also on behalf of City of Edinburgh Council, which welcomed 160,000 over 3 days.

2019 marks the eleventh year of Underbelly Festival on the Southbank - one of the biggest multi-arts offerings in London and London's original pop-up festival, with over 140 shows programmed over 6 months on the South Bank.

Underbelly also produces Christmas in Leicester Square, Udderbelly Festival in Hong Kong, West End Live in Trafalgar Square for Westminster City Council and the Society of London Theatre.

In 2018 Underbelly sold over 1.5 million tickets to their various events.

### **About Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust**

Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust (ELGT) is a charity for that works across Edinburgh & the Lothians to create, improve and promote parks, greenspaces, gardens and vacant land. ELGT is working to extend and improve green and outdoor spaces for the environment and for people. The Trust works with a wide variety of local partners to help communities get the best from their local woods, parks and paths, and to enjoy healthy, physical outdoor activities. ELGT Registered Charity No. SCO18196

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