











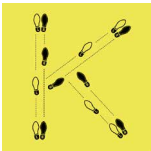










A THE Z  
WINTER IN SCOTLAND



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# INTRODUCTION

*Welcome to The A – Z of Winter in Scotland, VisitScotland's guide to things to see and do in Scotland this winter.*

*New for 2014/15, this guide gives you the lowdown on exciting activities and unique events taking place around the country. From **ceilidhs** and **craft fairs** in **November** to exhibitions and **extreme sports** in **February** – not to mention **spectacular Christmas** and **Hogmanay** celebrations – you'll find enough to keep you busy right through to spring.*

See spectacular light installations illuminate the winter nights at **Crathes Castle** and the **Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh**, and watch Scotland's cities sparkle as they turn on their **Christmas lights**. Tuck into the Perth Festival of **Chocolate** from **22 – 23 November**, or celebrate **St Andrew's Day** with storytelling, toe-tapping ceilidhs and even a spot of horse racing.

As Christmas edges ever closer, browse decadent **markets** and get into the festive spirit at **concerts** and **carol services** throughout **December**. Meet Mr. Claus and his reindeer at Santa grottos across Scotland, take a twirl on the nail-biting rides at Glasgow's brilliant **IRN-BRU Carnival**, and bring in 2015 at Hogmanay parties up and down the country, including the **Red Hot Highland Fling** in Inverness and Edinburgh's **Hogmanay**, a world-famous extravaganza of parties, music and jaw-dropping fireworks.

Get January off to a healthy start with a **New Year's Triathlon** or take a **Loony Dook** into the chilly waters off Scotland's coast – if you're brave enough! See hundreds of huskies race for glory at the **Aviemore**

**Sled Dog Rally**, discover the ancient fire festival of **Up Helly Aa'**, or dig into a scrumptious plate of **haggis**, neeps and tatties in honour of Scotland's greatest poet, Robert Burns, at a **Burns Supper** on **25 January**.

As **Valentine's Day** comes around in **February**, why not treat your other half to seasonal seafood from Argyll & The Isles, relax on a **luxury break** in a glamorous castle hotel, or enjoy a spot of **stargazing** in the Galloway Forest Park? Gardens and parks come into bloom when the **Scottish Snowdrop Festival** gets underway this month, while the **Fort William Mountain Festival** from **18 – 22 February** is the perfect time to explore some of Scotland's most impressive landscapes.



On top of all that, you'll find info on **winter sports**, **birdwatching**, **wildlife**, **pantomimes**, exhibitions, **Scottish food**, **fire festivals** and a whole host of winter traditions! Read on to start planning your unforgettable winter, and be sure to check [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com) for yet more things to see and do in Scotland.

*Let us inspire you with even more inspiring holiday ideas, exciting events and activities, and the best tips for your holiday to Scotland by signing up to our e-newsletter.*



IS FOR  
ST ANDREW'S  
DAY

*See page 4*

# A

## AVIEMORE SLED DOG RALLY

*Where in Scotland can you see a thousand Siberian Huskies, Alaskan Malamutes, Samoyeds, Greenland Dogs and Canadian Eskimo Dogs running at breathtaking speed? The **Aviemore Sled Dog Rally!***

Organised by the Siberian Husky Club of Great Britain, the 2015 rally takes place by Loch Morlich in the **Cairngorms National Park** from **22 – 27 January**. Having begun 32 years ago with just 12 teams, the annual race now sees 250 mushers between the ages of eight and 60 race their speedy hounds through demanding forest trails, making it the largest event of its kind in the UK.

The rally includes eight adult classes and two children's categories, with teams of between two and eight dogs tearing through routes of four to seven miles – an unforgettable experience for competitors and spectators alike! Head to Glenmore on **22 January** to see the dogs and their mushers practise, or witness all the speed and excitement when the first race sets off on Saturday **24 January**.



*Aviemore Sled Dog Rally, Highlands (Credit – Helen Wood at Siberprint)*

## S T A N D R E W ' S D A Y

*Celebrate Scotland's patron saint with storytelling, horse racing, fast-paced dancing and more. An official holiday across Scotland, **St Andrew's Day** falls on **30 November** and is celebrated as Scotland's national day, with ceilidhs, live music and many more events taking place all around the country.*

Saint Andrew has been the patron saint of Scotland for over 1,000 years, but little is known about this enigmatic historic figure. He was believed to be a fisherman and one of Jesus' first Apostles, crucified on a diagonal cross from which the form of Scotland's national flag, the **Saltire**, was taken.

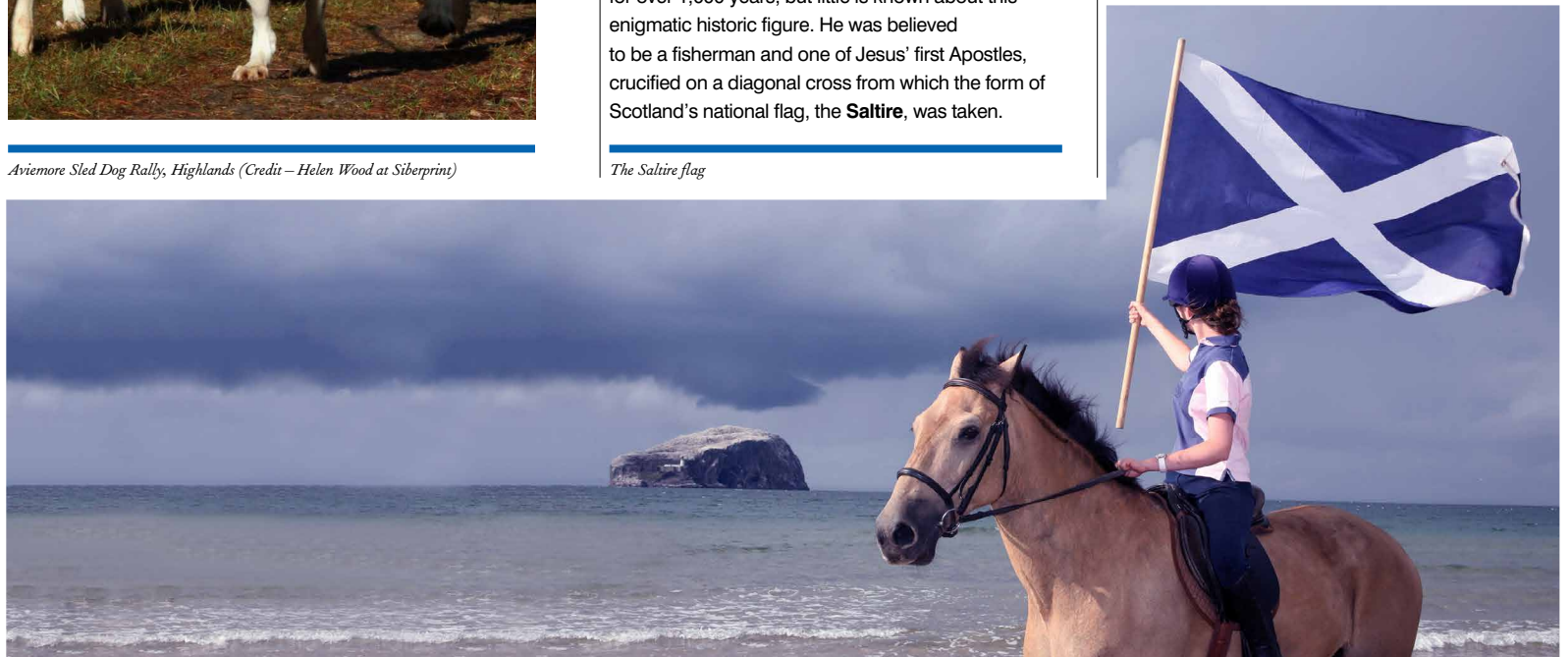
*The Saltire flag*

According to one local legend, St Andrew's remains were brought to Kinrymont in Fife by St Regulus in the fourth century; another claims that a Pictish king, Angus mac Fergus, adopted St Andrew as a patron after seeing a saltire appear in the sky before his victory at Athelstaneford.

You'll find parties and events taking place all over Scotland this year, from traditional Scottish music at the **Scottish Storytelling Centre (25 November)** to a toe-tapping ceilidh at the **Robert Burns Birthplace Museum** in Alloway (**29 November**) and much more. Keep an eye out for more usual events too – the **Saltire Raceday** at Musselburgh Racecourse on **28 November** may not be a traditional celebration, but it's sure to be fun!

And what better time to visit **St Andrews** than on St Andrew's Day itself?! Named after the patron saint, this historic Fife town will this year host a three-day extravaganza from **28 – 30 November**. Festivities include live music, an outdoor ceilidh, a pipe band procession, fantastic local food and much more.

See also: **Ceilidhs**



# A

## A U L D L A N G S Y N E

No Hogmanay in Scotland is complete without a rendition of Auld Lang Syne! Written by **Robert Burns** in 1788, this world-famous song is an ode to friendship, fond farewells and new beginnings. It is usually sung after the stroke of midnight on **Hogmanay**, with revellers crossing their arms to shake hands with the people on either side as they sing.

~~~~~  
Auld Lang Syne is now sung in many different countries around the world, often with Burns' original Scots translated into other languages. In Scotland, you might also hear it at the end of a **Burns Supper** or a ceilidh. If you don't know the words, take a look and make sure you can join in next time!

## L Y R I C S

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
and never brought to mind?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
and auld lang syne?*

### CHORUS

*For auld lang syne, my dear,  
for auld lang syne,  
we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,  
for auld lang syne.  
And surely ye'll be your pint-stowp!  
and surely I'll be mine!  
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,  
for auld lang syne.*

*We twa hae run about the braes,  
and pu'd the gowans fine;  
But we've wander'd mony a weary fit,  
sin auld lang syne.*

### CHORUS

*We twa hae paidl'd i' the burn,  
frae morning sun till dine;  
But seas between us braid hae roar'd  
sin auld lang syne.*

### CHORUS

*And there's a hand, my trusty fiere!  
and gie's a hand o' thine!  
And we'll tak a right gude-willy  
waught,  
for auld lang syne.*

### CHORUS





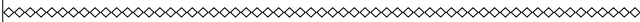
IS FOR  
BIRDWATCHING

*See page 7*

# B

## BIRD WATCHING

There's more to winter **birdwatching** than robins! The season is a great time for spotting all sorts of birdlife, with many resident species staying in Scotland for the winter while thousands more visit from the colder climes of the north and east. Here are just a few of the beautiful birds you might be lucky enough to glimpse around the country this winter.



### - Barnacle goose

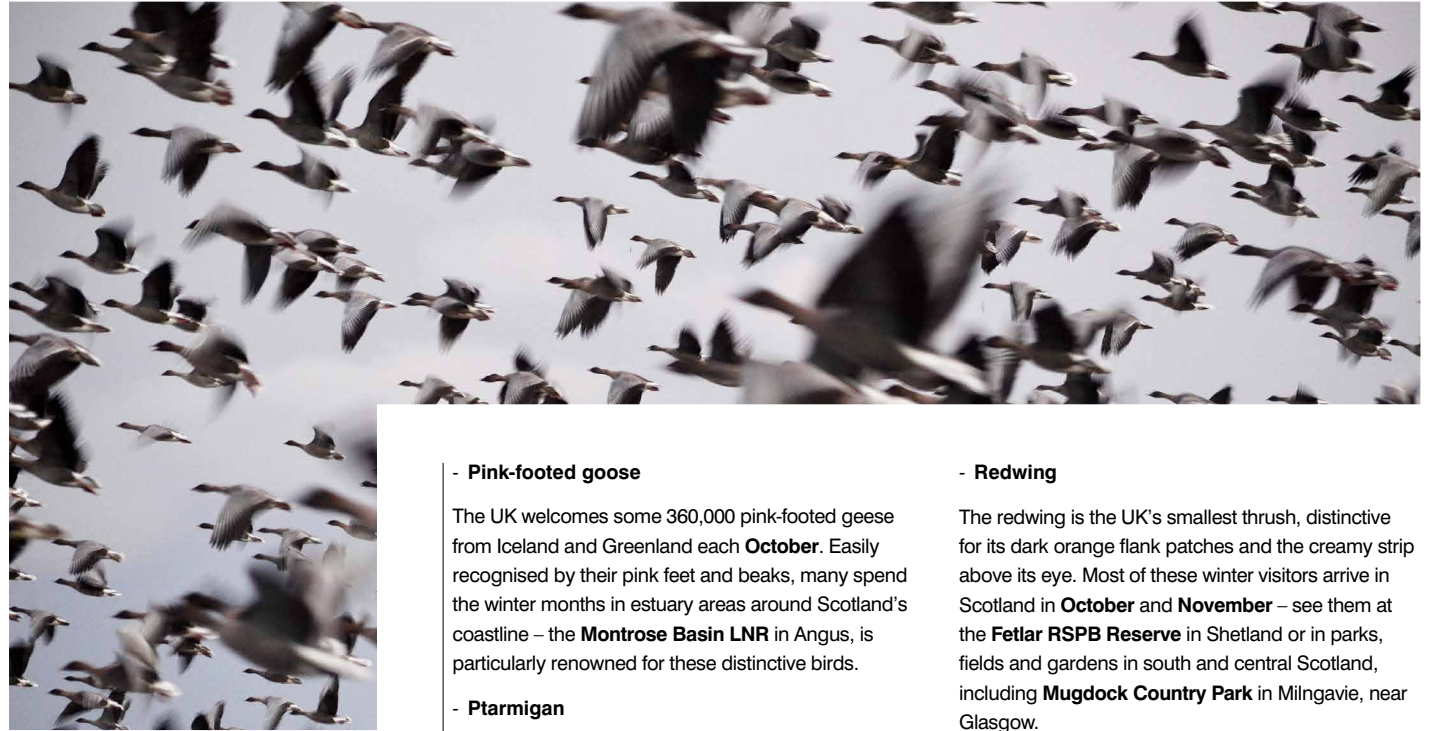
Often spotted flying in packs, barnacle geese have a creamy-white face, a blue and grey striped back and a distinctive black neck. Thousands arrive from Greenland and northern Russia to spend the winter in Scotland's milder climes, with many settling on the west coast. See them on **Islay** and at the RSPB reserves at **Coll** and Loch of Strathbeg, Aberdeenshire.

### - Goldeneye

Not to be confused with Pierce Brosnan's first turn as 007, this goldeneye is a medium-sized diving duck with bright yellow eyes in a shiny green-black (male) or chocolate brown head (female). They can occasionally be seen in the Highlands in summer, though they're most commonly spotted in winter on lochs and river areas, such as the **Loch of Kinnordy RSPB Reserve** in Angus.

### - Kingfisher

With its distinctive bright blue and orange feathers, the kingfisher is a firm favourite amongst birdwatchers. Though it's possible to spot them all year round, the winter sees some move to coastal and estuary areas around southern and eastern Scotland. Look out for them at the **Lochwinnoch RSPB Reserve** near Paisley or around the Banffshire coast.



*Pink-footed geese*  
(Credit – Scottish Wildlife Trust)

For more information and a chance to see more of Scotland's fascinating birdlife, visit the excellent **Scottish Seabird Centre** in North Berwick. Open every day except 25 December, the centre includes a Wildlife Theatre, great activities for kids, and the opportunity to glimpse some fascinating species – look out for eiders, shags, cormorants and many more.

### - Pink-footed goose

The UK welcomes some 360,000 pink-footed geese from Iceland and Greenland each **October**. Easily recognised by their pink feet and beaks, many spend the winter months in estuary areas around Scotland's coastline – the **Montrose Basin LNR** in Angus, is particularly renowned for these distinctive birds.

### - Ptarmigan

Resident in the Highlands of Scotland, the ptarmigan loses its mottled grey-brown plumage for snowy-white feathers in winter. They're perhaps Britain's toughest gamebirds, able to live through harsh winters in the mountains of the **Cairngorms National Park** and other areas, though you might spot them at the edge of Highland forests in severely cold weather.

### - Red-throated diver

Though its distinctive red throat can only be seen during summer, rare red-throated divers from more northern climes can be spotted around Scotland's islands and coastlines from **October** to **March** or **April**. Visit Orkney's **Hobbister RSPB reserve** by Scapa Flow for a chance to spot them alongside other wildfowl, or look out for them around the waters of **Shetland**.

### - Redwing

The redwing is the UK's smallest thrush, distinctive for its dark orange flank patches and the creamy strip above its eye. Most of these winter visitors arrive in Scotland in **October** and **November** – see them at the **Fetlar RSPB Reserve** in Shetland or in parks, fields and gardens in south and central Scotland, including **Mugdock Country Park** in Milngavie, near Glasgow.

### - Snow bunting

Sometimes known as 'snowflakes', these charming little birds have a white breast below mottled ginger and black winter plumage. Though some are resident in the Cairngorms, thousands more arrive to Scotland from Scandinavia, Alaska and Canada each winter. See them at **Balranald RSPB Reserve** on North Uist and in coastal areas across Scotland.

### - Whooper swan

Around 15,000 of these large white swans visit the UK from Iceland each **October**, staying in estuaries and wetlands until **March**. Distinguishable from Bewick's swans by their size and yellow bills, they're a winter highlight at the numerous RSPB reserves including Loch Lomond, **Loch Leven** in Perthshire, and Loch of Spiggie in Shetland.

See also: **Wildlife**



# B

## BURNING OF THE CLAVIE

*Hogmanay is a big deal in Scotland – the fishing village of **Burghead** in Moray even celebrates it twice! As well as bringing in the New Year with the rest of the country on **31 December**, locals celebrate the ‘old Hogmanay’ with an ancient **traditional festival** called the **Burning of the Clavie** on **11 January**.*

This unique event sees a barrel (or ‘clavie’) mounted on a pole and filled with staves of wood before being set alight. The flaming clavie is then carried through the town by a team of locals called the Clavie Crew, who hand out smouldering pieces of wood to households and local pubs to grant them good luck for the coming year.

The clavie’s journey ends on Doorie Hill, where it is placed in a stone altar and left to burn. When the barrel finally collapses, onlookers rush to gather the blazing embers scattered around the hilltop. It’s said they were once collected to ward off witches and evil spirits, though they’re now given out for good luck.

Wondering why **11 January** is sometimes thought of as ‘old Hogmanay’? When the Gregorian calendar was adopted across Britain in 1752, all dates leapt forward 11 days and the people of Burghead decided to celebrate Hogmanay twice – on January 1st under the old calendar and also on the 11th under the new one – and the tradition has carried on up to the present day.

See also: **Fire festivals, January 12**



Burning of the Clavie, Burghead



## BURNS NIGHT

As well as bringing in each New Year with a rendition of *Auld Lang Syne*, Scotland celebrates the life and works of **Robert Burns** with a special supper on the Bard’s birthday.

Known as Burns Night, this annual event is held on **25 January** each year and sees fans of the Bard come together to enjoy readings of his wonderful poetry and hear speeches about his life. It’s a chance to appreciate the rich cultural legacy left to this world by this much-loved and highly influential poet – and, of course, to dig into a delicious plate of **haggis**!

First held in 1802, Burns Night is now celebrated in homes, restaurants and other locations around the globe. The supper usually begins with the host saying the Selkirk Grace before the haggis is brought in to the sound of bagpipes. The host or a guest then recites Burns’ *Address to a Haggis* and toasts it with a glass of whisky before cutting it open for the party to enjoy. The haggis is usually served with ‘neeps’ (turnips) and ‘tatties’ (potatoes), while dessert may include Scottish favourites like cranachan or ‘Topsy Laird’, a **whisky trifle**.

Look out for **Burns Suppers** and ceilidhs at restaurants and attractions paying homage to Scotland’s favourite son all around the country, including the fantastic **Burns Big Haggis Feast & Ceilidh** at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in Alloway, his hometown. Alternatively, stock up on haggis and whisky and **host your own** tribute to the Bard at home!

Look out for our new e-book on How to hold your own Burns Supper – available from January! Visit [www.visitscotland.com/burns](http://www.visitscotland.com/burns)

See also: **Ceilidhs, Haggis**

The Big Burns Supper, Dumfries



I S F O R  
C E L T I C  
C O N N E C T I O N S



*See page 11*

# C

## CAROL SERVICES

*From Hark the Herald Angels Sing to Away in a Manger, sing along with your favourite Christmas carols and rejoice in festive cheer in some of Scotland's most awe-inspiring settings this winter.*

Admire the stunning architecture at **St Giles' Cathedral** on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh, with much-loved carol services taking place in the evenings leading up to Christmas, or soak in the atmosphere of the candle-lit state drawing room of Scone Palace in Perthshire at a **Carol Concert** on **11 December**.

You can also sing along to your Christmas favourites in the wonderful stately home of **the Haining** in the **Scottish Borders** on **19 and 20 December**, or hear festive carols in the beautiful surroundings of **David Welch Winter Garden** in Aberdeen during the annual **Christmas Carol Concert** on **20 December**.

*See also: **Gardens, Yuletide tunes***



*St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh*



## CEILIDHS

*A ceilidh at the St Bride's Centre, Edinburgh*

Scotland is fond of a good party and a lively Scottish **ceilidh** is one of the most hotly anticipated. From the well-known *Gay Gordons* and *Eightsome Reel* to regional variations such as the *Orcadian Strip the Willow*, these dances are fun, easy to follow and accompanied by lively traditional music that's sure to get your toes tapping.

There's usually a ceilidh caller talking through the steps before each dance begins too, so don't worry if you don't know your *Dashing White Sergeant* from your *Flying Scotsman*. Just grab your partner and leave your shyness at the door – this is an event where everyone gets on the dance floor and has a go!

You'll find ceilidhs taking place throughout Scotland in the winter months, particularly for **Hogmanay** and **Burns Night**, as well as at the **Ceilidh Festival** at An Lanntair in Stornoway from **31 December – 2 January**. Book your tickets and get ready for a night filled with fun, laughter and foot-stomping music!

*See also: **Burns Night, Hogmanay, The Keilidh***

# C

## CHOCOLATE

Still looking for the perfect gift for the chocolate-lover in your life? Look no further than Scotland's artisan chocolatiers. From the **Oban Chocolate Company's** decadent chocolate hampers and the Highland Chocolatier's smooth gourmet Velvet Truffles to **Cocoa Mountain's** Exclusive Selection chocolate boxes, containing 20 exquisite chocolates you can personally select online, your loved ones will be bowled over by the loving craftsmanship that has gone into every box.

**Scotland's Chocolate Trail** will give you information on all the chocolate producers around Scotland, as well as advice on the services they provide. Whether you want to host a chocolate-making party for you and your friends, enjoy an indulgent lunch in a chocolate café or simply buy boxes and bars of tasty treats, Scotland's chocolatiers can help.

Is there a better way to inject a bit of excitement into a cold November day than visiting a chocolate festival? We don't think so! **Perth Festival of Chocolate** takes place on **Saturday 22** and **Sunday 23 November** and features a host of amazing exhibitors. Co-ordinating with **Perth's Christmas light switch-on**, at the festival you'll also be able to entertain the kids in the family activities area and go on a golden ticket hunt amongst the stalls, with prizes for the lucky golden ticket finders!

*Iain Burnett, Highland Chocolatier, Legends of Grandtully*



## CELTIC CONNECTIONS

*Bring in the New Year with an emphatic celebration of traditional Scottish music, with over 300 artists coming together from all corners of the world. With concerts, late-night jamming sessions and lively folk music taking place all over Glasgow, dancing at **Celtic Connections** is a fantastic way to beat the January blues.*

Headlining this year's programme is Glasgow-born composer Craig Armstrong, best known for his heartrending scores of films such as Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge!* and *The Great Gatsby*. Fellow Scots Eddi Reader and King Creosote are both set to wow Glasgow's crowds, while international acts such as Nigerian drummer Tony Allen and US bluegrass rockers Hayseed Dixie also feature on the line-up. Check the website for more details of this year's edition, taking place from **15 January – 1 February 2015**.

*Julie Fowlis performs at Celtic Connections, Glasgow (© James Carney / firstthesongs.com)*



# C

## CRAFT FAIRS

*Pick up some unique gifts that are sure to wow your loved ones come Christmas morning on a shopping trip to one of Scotland's Christmas craft fairs. Held in **November** and **December**, these decadent markets are great places to find gifts that aren't normally on the high street, from craft and handmade jewellery to delicious local produce from around Scotland.*

Look out for fairs in towns throughout the country, as well as at historic venues such as stately homes and castles. Browse the stalls at Haddo House or Crathes Castle on **1 – 2 November**, enjoy an afternoon of shopping in Blair Castle from **7 – 9 November**, or visit **Hopetoun House's** popular market from **28 – 30 November** to find charming gifts in beautiful locations.

You'll also find local fairs in towns and villages up and down the country. In the Scottish Borders, pop by **Galashiels** from **22 – 23 November** or **Selkirk** from **29 – 30 November** to pick up quirky crafts, enter the Christmas card competition and visit Santa in his grotto, or browse locally-made knitwear and traditional goods at the Christmas Craft Fair in Lerwick, Shetland from **14 – 16 November**.

See also: **Markets**

## CURLING

*Scotland is famed as **The Home of Golf**, but did you know the Scots also invented curling? A **winter sport** in which players slide heavy stones across ice, curling was invented in medieval Scotland and is still very popular here – Scottish company, Kays of Scotland, even supplied all the stones used in the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics!*

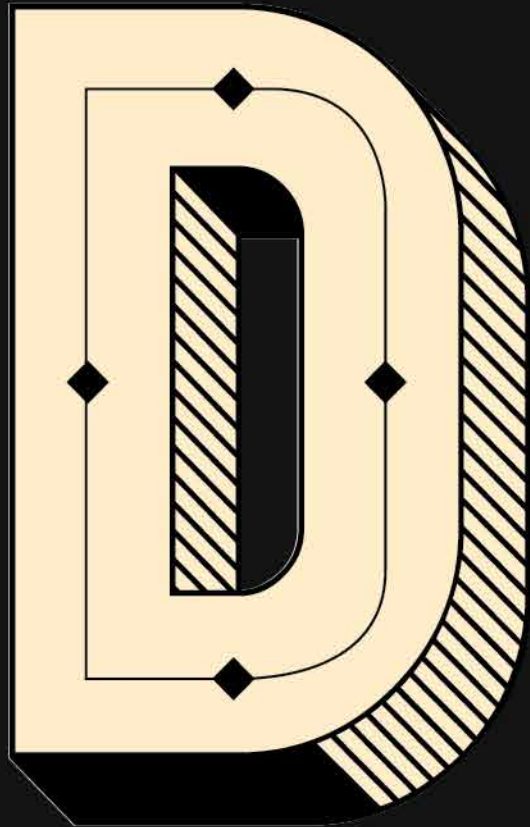
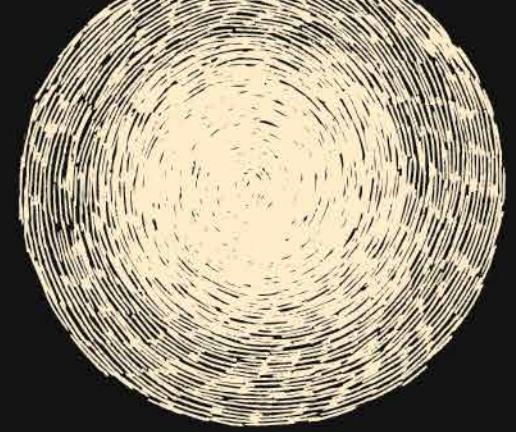
This winter, you'll find exciting curling competitions taking place at ice rinks in Stirling, Kinross, East Kilbride and across Scotland. Many events are **FREE** and feature World and Olympic Champions, competing for titles or aiming to qualify for the World Curling Championships.

**The Highlands** welcomes curling fans for the thrilling Inverness Curling Festival from **31 October – 9 November**, with talented curlers from Scotland and beyond taking part in gripping activities on the ice rink. You can also see the competitors in action at the **Dumfries Curling Challenge** at the **Ice Bowl** as part of the Champions Curling Tour from **19 – 21 December**.

Why not try out the sport for yourself this winter? You can enjoy taster sessions at the Braehead Curling Rink just outside Glasgow, and many other rinks around Scotland. Coaching is also available at the **North West Castle Hotel** in Stranraer, **Dumfries & Galloway**, the only hotel in the world to have its very own indoor curling rink!

*Curling on the Lake of Menteith near Aberfoyle*

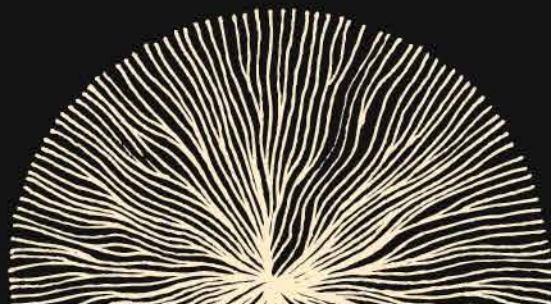




IS FOR  
DARK SKIES



*See page 14*



# DARK SKY PARK

Admire some of the **darkest skies** in Europe in Scotland's peaceful countryside, from Galloway Forest Park's first **Dark Sky Park**, to the **Isle of Coll's** Dark Sky Island. Low levels of light pollution mean Scotland is a great destination for **stargazing**, and during the winter nights, the dark skies light up with millions of stars – even the Milky Way is visible without a telescope.

Enjoy 'stargazing for beginners' events taking place once a month at the **Galloway Forest Park** throughout **October, November** and **December**, and master the basics with the park's enthusiastic guides who will take you on an informal tour of the night sky. On clear nights you might be lucky enough to witness the Andromeda Galaxy, the **Aurora Borealis** and stellar nurseries, where new suns of distant planets are born.

See also: ***Northern Lights***

---

*Stargazing at Clatteringshaws Loch, Galloway Forest Park*



# D

## D I S T I L L E R I E S

Beat the winter chill with a warming dram of Scotland's national drink, **whisky**. Indulge in the tantalising tastes of the 'water of life' at a distillery in one of the country's **five whisky regions**: Highland, Speyside, Lowland, Campbeltown and Islay. Each boasts subtle variations in taste, from the malty, zesty flavours of the Lowland malts to the honey or heather notes of the Highland whiskies.

Witness the art of whisky creation on a behind-the-scenes distillery tour and discover the secrets behind Scotland's exquisite whiskies, including the distinctive Highland Park on **Orkney**, the pleasant tastes of Glen Moray in **Speyside**, or the peaty Jura on the stunning **Isle of Islay**. Wherever you travel in Scotland, you'll be sure to find a fine dram to warm you up this winter.

You can also try blending your own whisky at the Scotch Whisky Experience in Edinburgh, or sample a delicious whisky cocktail in one of Scotland's trendy bars. A dram is the perfect accompaniment to many tasty Scottish dishes as well – find out more at [www.visitscotland.com/whisky](http://www.visitscotland.com/whisky)

See also: **Hot toddy**

## D U N D E E S C I E N C E F E S T I V A L

Head to Dundee during the first two weeks in **November** and enjoy some of the fantastic events at the Dundee Science Festival. Organised by the **Dundee Science Centre**, the festival will run from **Saturday 1** through to **Sunday 16 November** and features family fun, talks, exhibitions, shows, comedy and more.

Learn more about stargazing, discover how your brain really works and find out how to encourage more wildlife to make their home in your garden. Kids will love taking part in fun activities such as building their own brush robot or bat box, while adults can discover the chemistry behind cocktails, see whisky in a new light and even try dining in the dark – download the **full programme** for many more ideas.

Old Pulteney Distillery, Highlands







IS FOR  
EATING OUT

*See page 17*

# E

## E A T I N G O U T

Treat yourself to a delectable meal this winter and indulge in the flavoursome delights served up at one of Scotland's 16 Michelin star restaurants. Enjoy a cosy evening at the beautifully located Castle Terrace Restaurant overlooking **Edinburgh's Old Town**, or dine on the banks of one of Scotland's most famous lochs at Martin Wishart by **Loch Lomond**.

You can also enjoy a delectable Christmas Day lunch or dinner at one of hundreds of award-winning **restaurants** across Scotland. Start with Scottish smoked salmon, dig into locally-sourced turkey with all the trimmings, and finish off with a selection of delicious Scottish cheeses or a rich Christmas pudding.

If traditional Christmas dinners aren't up your street, why not head to **Glasgow** for a festive curry or a vegan feast? Four-time winner of Curry Capital of Britain and widely regarded as one of the most vegan-friendly cities in the UK, Glasgow boasts dozens of fantastic restaurants where you can treat yourself to something a little different this Christmas.

See also: **Food, Pudding**



Scottish cheese



## E U R O P E M U S I C A W A R D S

Lay down the red carpet! Glasgow welcomes the world's musical royalty when it hosts the **MTV Europe Music Awards** this winter. Hosted by Nicki Minaj, the biggest party in Europe will see many of the globe's best-selling artists take to the stage at the state-of-the-art SSE Hydro on **9 November**, wowing a crowd of 13,000 lucky fans plus an international audience of millions.

Nominees include Katy Perry, up for no fewer than seven awards, One Direction, Pharrell Williams and Drake. Beyoncé and Taylor Swift will battle it out for Best Female (hopefully without comment from Kanye West!) while Scottish electro mogul Calvin Harris faces Ed Sheeran and Sam Smith in the Best UK & Ireland category.

Visit [mtvema.com](http://mtvema.com) or follow [@mtvema](https://twitter.com/mtvema) on Twitter for full details.

The SSE Hydro, Glasgow



## E N C H A N T E D C A S T L E

See **Crathes Castle** transformed by ambient music and dazzling lights at Enchanted Castle from **19 – 23 November**. Created by some of Scotland's leading light artists, this stunning son et lumière show sees the historic **Aberdeenshire** castle and its grounds lit up by video projections, gentle music and beautiful light installations.

Wander along an illuminated trail through the woodlands to experience unique soundscapes, or take a late-night stroll through the enchanting Upper Walled Garden. While the Enchanted Castle is sure to bewitch visitors of all ages, there'll also be an adults-only night on **Wednesday 22 November**.

See also: **Night in the Garden**

Crathes Castle, Aberdeenshire

# E X T R E M E S P O R T S

*Fear not, thrill seekers – while the days may be getting shorter and colder, you can still cram tons of pulse-pounding extreme sports into your time in Scotland! Check out some of the best activities to get your adrenaline pumping this winter.*



# E

## EXTREME SPORTS

### - Bungee jumping

Though not for the faint of heart, those brave enough to bungee jump will agree it's an experience they'll never forget! Take the plunge in **Killiecrankie** with **Highland Fling Bungee**, the UK's only static jump led by experts with years of experience. Safely attached to a special bungee cord, you'll plunge towards the waters of the beautiful River Garry at 50 mph, surrounded by the dramatic scenery of Highland **Perthshire**.

### - Ice climbing

With 500 tonnes of real snow and ice to a height of 50 ft, **Ice Factor** in Kinlochleven is the world's biggest indoor ice climbing wall and the ideal place to get to grips with crampons, axes and everything else you need to scale the ice. Once you've learnt the ropes, you can head out to the mountains around **Glencoe** on an ice climbing course from **January to March**, where your expert instructor will show you how to put your skills into practise.

**Snow Factor** in Glasgow also boasts an enormous indoor wall, with a range of routes and courses catering for beginners through to expert climbers – make sure you have a go on the 30 m ice slide too!

### - Mountain biking

The **7stanes mountain bike trails** across the south of Scotland are a paradise for mountain bikers of all abilities. From the striking beautiful forest trails of **Mabie** and the great family routes at **Ae**, both near Dumfries, to the fantastic variety of graded trails at award-winning **Glentress** in the Scottish Borders, there are endless feats to tackle on two wheels this winter.

Further north, you'll find routes perfect for novice and intermediate riders at **Learnie Red Rocks**, a great network of trails in the Black Isle near **Inverness**. Winter weather in the **Outer Hebrides** can be tempestuous, but with quiet roads, rolling moorland and plains of machair, the islands are also ideal for keen mountain bikers looking for a challenge.

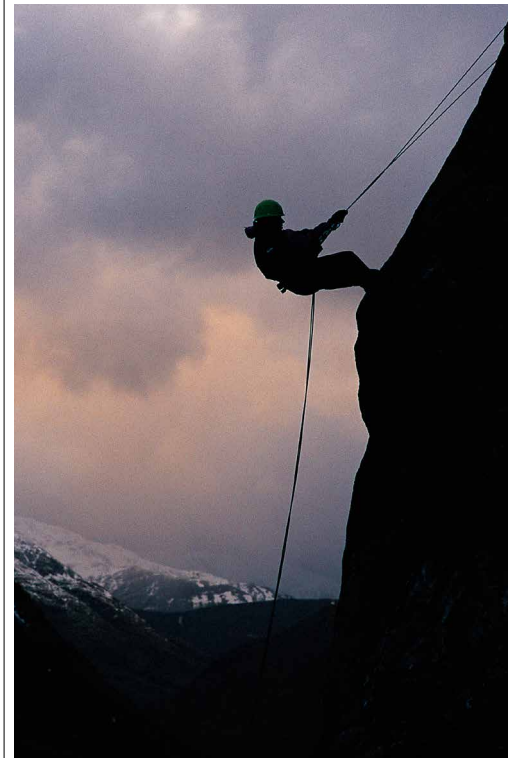
### - Rock climbing

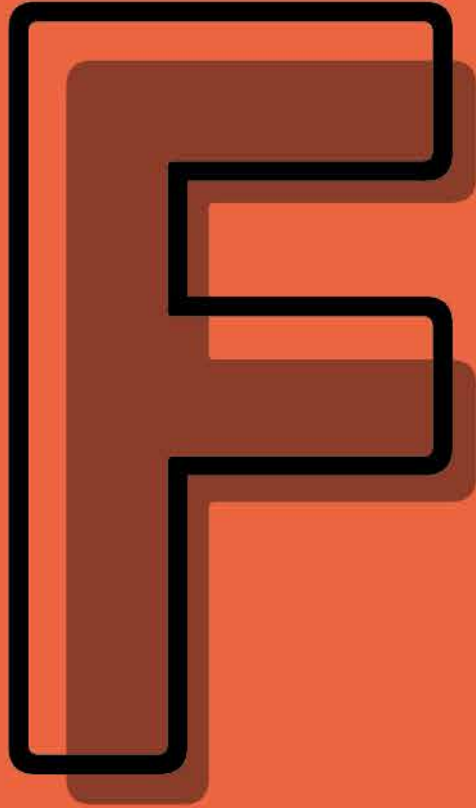
Winter in **the Highlands** is a gift for rock climbers looking for a real challenge; you'll find several expert-led courses leading classic climbs up mountains such as Creag Meagaidh or Ben Nevis. For less experienced climbers, start off with a Winter Skills course to learn about everything from mountain navigation to avalanche assessment.

When the weather is too rough, you can always scramble up the rocks at a climbing centre instead. The **Edinburgh International Climbing Arena** in Ratho is home to the biggest climbing wall in the world and also includes soft play and mini walls for kids. **The Climbing Academy** in Glasgow is ideal for indoor bouldering, while **Alien Rock** in Edinburgh offers climbs for all ages and abilities.

No matter which sport you're tackling this winter, please remember to always wear appropriate clothing, take suitable gear and security equipment, and check the weather forecast before you set off.

*Climbing, Highlands (bottom left)  
The Cairngorms National Park (top and right)*





IS FOR  
**FIRE FESTIVALS**

*See page 21*

# FIRE FESTIVALS

Fire festivals are common in Britain and many different events take place in the dark winter months throughout Scotland, particularly around **Hogmanay**. Some of these traditional displays are centuries old and descend from a time when it was believed that fire would burn away the bad spirits from the old year, ready for the fresh spirits of the New Year to be ushered in. Nowadays, they're held as fantastic community celebrations and a way of keeping Scotland's ancient traditions alive.

Here is a taster of just some of the events that happen up and down the country:

---

*Stonehaven Fireballs Festival*





## FIRE FESTIVALS

### - Scalloway Fire Festival, Shetland

Taking place in the first weeks of **January**, Scalloway Fire Festival is the first Viking-themed fire festival in **Shetland's** events calendar. Watch as a procession of guisers walk with their Viking galley down the main street to the harbour, carrying torches and singing songs, before the galley is launched into the water and the torches tossed on board. Enjoy watching as the flaming galley lights up the sky before you move with the crowd indoors to one of the village halls to continue the party with entertainment provided by the guisers.

### - Stonehaven Fireballs Festival

The **Stonehaven** Fireballs Festival is one of the most spectacular in Scotland and takes place at the stroke of midnight on **Hogmanay**. During the procession 45 expert fireball swingers march through the town, swinging a flaming metal cage, attached by a long wire handle, around their heads. This dazzling display lasts about 25 minutes before the swingers reach the harbour where they throw their flaming fireballs into the water, after which the procession is rounded off by a glorious fireworks display.

### - Comrie Flambeaux Procession

The **Comrie** Flambeaux are a sight to behold. Similarly to the Stonehaven Fireballs, at the stroke of midnight the flambeaux (long birch poles topped with tarred rags) are lit and paraded around the town, preceded by a rousing pipe band and followed by a fancy dress procession. Watch the spectacle from the pavement before the flambeaux are thrown from the Dalginross Bridge into the River Earn, symbolising the casting out of bad spirits.

### - Biggar Bonfire

Dating back to pagan times, **Biggar** Bonfire originally began as a way of warding off evil spirits before the New Year began. Nowadays it is one of the only events of its kind with a huge bonfire erected every **Hogmanay** in this charming town, close to Lanark. Watched by thousands every year, the night begins with a fiery torch-lit procession, followed by the lighting of the enormous bonfire. Join the town residents as they gather round the bonfire and enjoy a spot of impromptu ceilidh dancing to welcome the New Year.

*See also: **Burning of the Clavie, Up Helly Aa'***

## FENCING

Looking for a fun new hobby? If you like the sound of a fast paced, sociable sport that will improve both your tactical strategy and your athletic skill then fencing could be for you. **Scottish Fencing** provide information on getting started and there are a variety of fencing clubs throughout the country that run beginner classes and taster sessions.

To see fencing in action, pop along to the Commonwealth Fencing Championships held at the sportscotland National Centre in **Largs** on the **10 – 15 November**. Be inspired as 350 of the world's most talented fencers battle it out for Commonwealth glory, try your hand at fencing yourself and sample some tasty food and drink, sourced from quality Scottish producers.

*Enjoy the competition at the Commonwealth Fencing Championships, Largs*



# F

## F I R S T F O O T I N G

First footing is a proudly upheld tradition in Scotland. For those unfamiliar with the concept, the 'first foot' – the first person to enter a home on **New Year's Day** – is considered to be the bringer of good luck for the year ahead. Traditionally it was considered lucky for a tall, dark-haired man to appear as the first foot, while blond visitors were seen to be a bad omen. This superstition is said to date back to the time of the Vikings, when having a fair-haired stranger turn up at your door usually meant trouble!

Nowadays first footing is practised between relatives, friends and neighbours around Scotland. Visitors can enhance their luck by bringing a gift to the household, representing the coming of good fortune for the New Year. In the past first footers would bring salt, symbolising wealth, coal for warmth, and cake such as black bun to ensure the household never went hungry. Nowadays first footers might bring gifts of chocolates, shortbread or whisky, while residents of the house can help boost their own fortunes by providing entertainment to start the New Year on a happy note.

See also: **Redding**



First footing

## F O O D

As Scotland's landscape turns into a winter wonderland, what better way to keep nice and cosy than with some delicious **Scottish food and drink**? Indulge your taste buds with a rich Highland stew made from exquisite beef, venison or pheasant, served with colourful parsnips, chicory, kale and red cabbage, or tuck into golden pies brimming with filling.

Keep the cold out with a heaped plate of stovies, a Scottish potato and beef stew, a perfect winter comfort food. Hearty soups are another great choice – try a bowl of Cullen skink, a rich, creamy soup of smoked haddock, potatoes and onions, or a traditional Scotch broth of lamb or beef with barley, lentils and tasty root vegetables.

A traditional desert, such as cranachan, is the perfect way to round off a tasty meal whilst a rich, fruity black bun is traditionally served at **Hogmanay**. You could even add a Scottish sparkle to your traditional Christmas **pudding** with a creamy whisky sauce or indulge in some traditional tablet, a Scottish favourite that will melt in your mouth.

See also: **Pudding**

Cullen Skink







IS FOR  
GARDENS

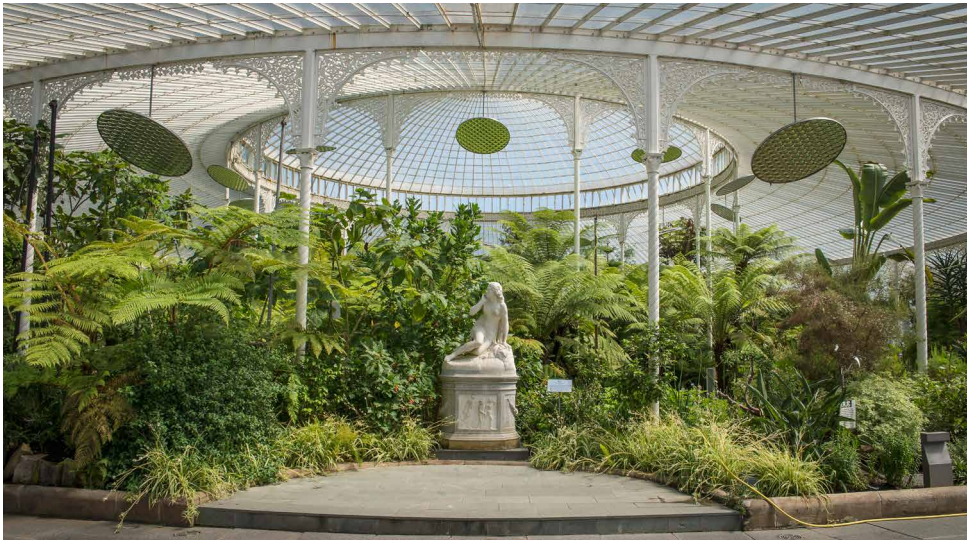
*See page 25*

# G

## GARDENS

No matter what the weather, you can enjoy the sights and scents of beautiful plants and flowers all year round in Scotland. Splendid conservatories, known as Winter Gardens, became especially popular during the Victorian era and many have remained open to this day. These iron and glass hothouses are filled with exotic plants that need more temperate climates to survive, and are perfect for a perfume-filled day out this winter.

You'll find several wonderful winter gardens in Glasgow, including the **People's Palace and Winter Gardens** on Glasgow Green and Kibble Palace at Kelvingrove Botanic Gardens. The magnificent **David Welch Winter Gardens** in Duthie Park, Aberdeen are



*Kibble Palace, Glasgow*

a must-visit on **20 December** to catch their annual Carol Concerts and sing your favourite Christmas tunes surrounded by exotic plantlife.

Scotland's fantastic Botanic Gardens also see some real gems appear throughout the winter months. See colourful winter-flowering shrubs native to Australia and Tasmania at the **Logan Botanic Garden** in Dumfries & Galloway, or visit the **Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh** to see Algerian iris in the Rock Garden or rare Turkish crocus in the Alpine House.

*See also: Carol Services, Night in the Garden, Winter Walks*



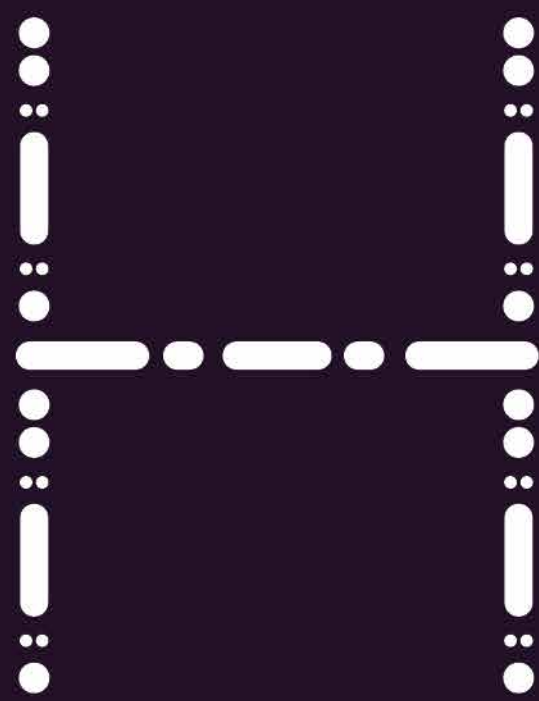
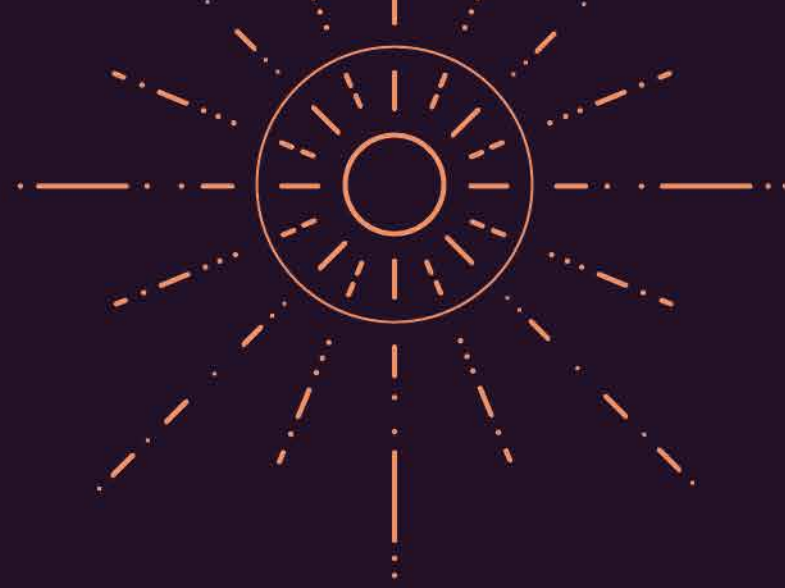
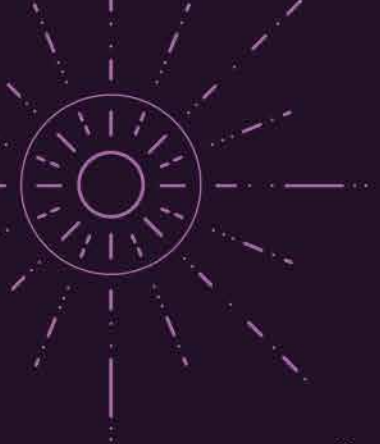
## GUY FAWKES NIGHT

Guy Fawkes Night, now often referred to as Bonfire Night or Fireworks Night, has been celebrated across the UK for the past 400 years, since the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 was discovered.

The story goes that a band of Catholic supporters conspired to blow up the Houses of Parliament, with the aim of killing the Protestant King James VI of Scotland and I of England. The plot was discovered and Guy Fawkes was found in a cellar beneath parliament, surrounded by barrels of gunpowder. People celebrated the King's safety by lighting bonfires on **5 November**, and the celebrations have lasted until this day.

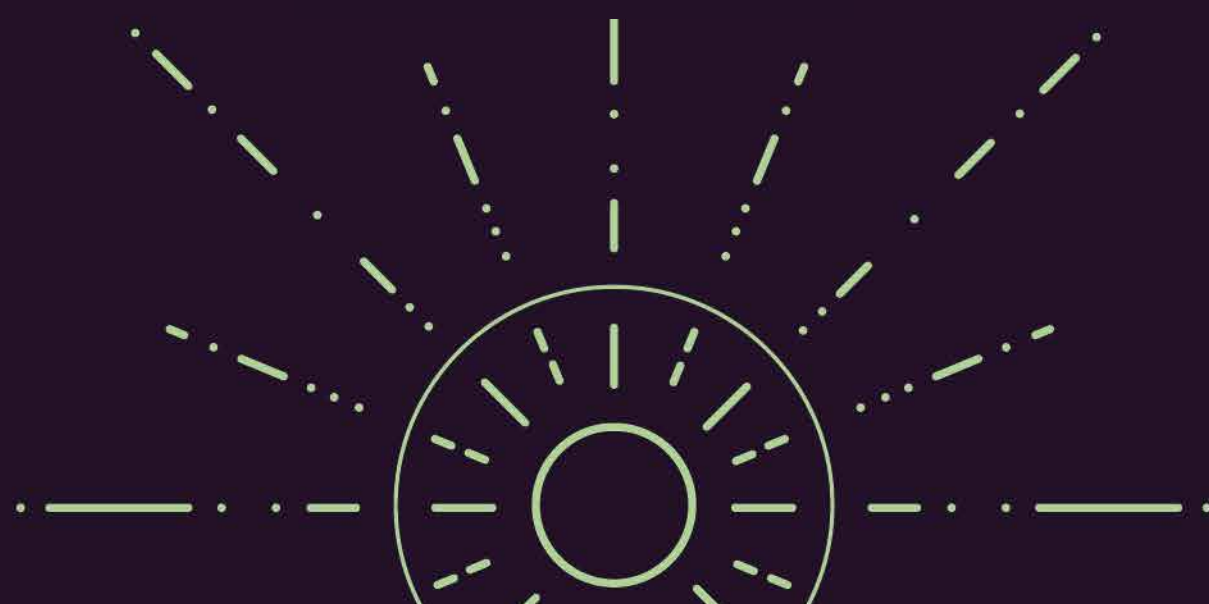
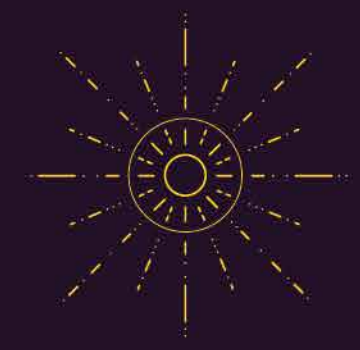
As well as huge bonfires, many Guy Fawkes events now feature a tremendous fireworks display, which lights up the night sky with bursts of fiery colour and sparkling lights. Events across the country include the fantastic fireworks displays on **Glasgow Green** and at Meadowbank Stadium in Edinburgh, **Bonfire Night** at Hopetoun House, **Pittencrieff Park** in Dunfermline, Perth's Bonfire and Fireworks Display, Inverness Bonfire Night and Aberdeen's Winter Festival Fireworks.

*Bonfire Night, Inverness*



IS FOR  
HOGMANAY

*See page 27*



# H

## H O T T O D D Y

Much like mulled wine, a hot toddy is the perfect concoction to warm your cockles once the chill of winter sets in. Believed by many to be a healing antidote to a bout of winter flu, the hot toddy is revered as more than just a delicious after-dinner tippie.

A traditional Scottish toddy involves mixing **whisky** (the more robust tasting the better) with boiled water and sugar or honey. Adding some spices, such as cinnamon and cloves, will give the drink an extra kick, along with a slice of tangy lemon for a vitamin C boost.

See also: *Distilleries*



## H A G G I S

**Haggis** is Scotland's national dish and one of the country's most famous icons. Made from oatmeal, offal, onion, salt and spices, haggis is actually a type of sausage or savoury pudding and not, in fact, a **furry wee animal** you'll find at the top of a Scottish mountain, as the common myth would have you believe.

Whether it's served traditionally with neeps and tatties (that's Scots for turnip and potatoes), stuffed into a chicken breast and wrapped in bacon (a la the Balmoral Chicken) or even baked into a lasagne, haggis is the perfect comfort food to banish winter blues. Vegetarian haggis is delicious too and is packed with oatmeal, lentils, beans and spices.

You're guaranteed to find haggis on the menu for **Burns Night, 25 January**, as communities across the world come together to celebrate the life of Scotland's National Bard, recite his famous poem *Address to a Haggis* and get stuck into a generous portion of Scotland's national dish.

See also: *Burns Night*

Enjoy haggis on Burns Night in January

## H O G M A N A Y

*One of the world's liveliest and biggest New Year celebrations, **Scotland's Hogmanay** is a time when everyone, family, friends and strangers alike, come together to bring in the New Year in grand style.*

Whether you're celebrating with your nearest and dearest at a family party, dancing up a storm at a ceilidh or heading out to the giddy bustle of a city-centre street party lit by showering fireworks, Scotland's **Hogmanay** will keep you thrilled right through **Auld Lang Syne** at the bells and into the wee hours of the New Year.

You'll find street parties in most of the major cities, as well as ceilidhs and parties all across the country. Edinburgh and **Stirling's** historic castles both take centre stage as the bells chime, with magnificent fireworks displays lighting up the night sky overhead, while Aberdeen, Glasgow and Inverness all promise an unbeatable Hogmanay atmosphere and a terrific line up of acts.

See also: *Auld Lang Syne, Ceilidhs, The Keilidh, Torchlight Procession*

Hogmanay in Edinburgh





IS FOR  
ICE SKATING

*See page 30*





## I C E S K A T I N G

*If you're not content to watch from the side-lines, why not strap on a pair of skates yourself? As well as permanent ice rinks, the run-up to Christmas and into the New Year sees outdoor rinks pop up in cities across the country.*

~~~~~

New for 2014, **Edinburgh's Christmas** will this year feature two fantastic outdoor ice rinks. As well as the charming and ever-popular ice rink in Princes Street Gardens, St Andrew Square will play host to a brand new, circular rink looping around the Wallace Monument, both open from **21 November – 4 January**.

Aberdeen's Christmas ice rink is back in Union Square Gardens from **1 December – 5 January**, while **Glasgow on Ice** sees the city centre turned into a winter wonderland when its fantastic outdoor rink arrives at George Square in late **November**.

## I R N - B R U C A R N I V A L

*IRN-BRU, Scotland's 'other' national drink, adds a splash of orange to the festive season with its brilliant winter carnival, held at the Glasgow SECC from **19 December – 11 January**.*

~~~~~

A family favourite amongst Glasgow's winter festivities, the **IRN-BRU Carnival** is Europe's largest funfair and boasts more than 60 brilliant rides and attractions. Rise 50 ft into the air for panoramic views of the city on the formidable Extreme XL, satisfy your need for speed on the Midnight Express Matterhorn, or loop through the air on the heart-racing Top Star.

Wee ones can chug along on the Mini Train Ride or climb aboard the Pirate Ship, while classics like the Waltzers and Dodgems are sure to please all ages. You'll also find dozens of game stalls, face painting, fortune tellers, a climbing wall and much more on offer.

~~~~~

*Enjoy the rides at the IRN-BRU Carnival*





IS FOR  
JANUARY 12<sup>TH</sup>

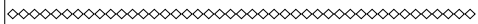
*See page 32*



# J

J A N U A R Y 1 2 <sup>T H</sup>

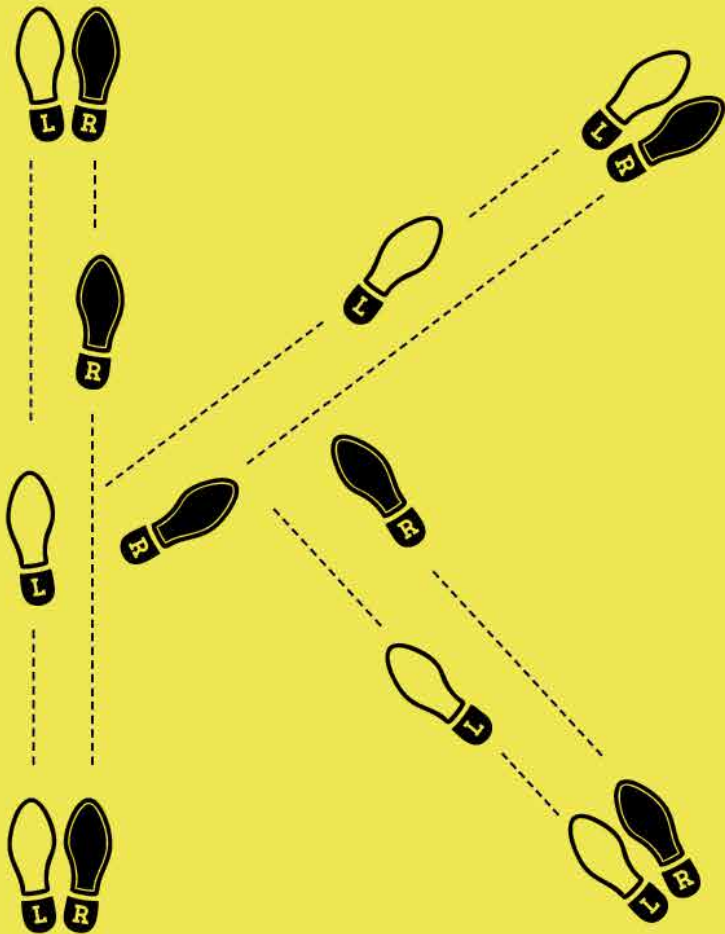
*Before Britain adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1752, New Year's Day fell on **12 January**. In the **Outer Hebrides** and some parts of the **Highlands**, Hogmanay was known as Oidhche Chullaig and involved some ancient Gaelic customs. Children would visit each house in their township, reciting a **Gaelic** rhyme and carrying sacks to collect food. One child would also bring a candle made from sheep flesh and wax, which the members of the household would light and circle around their head three times. If the flame died, the unlucky holder could not be sure to survive the coming year!*



The 'auld New Year' is still celebrated in some parts of Scotland, such as **Gairloch** in the Highlands or **South Uist** in the Outer Hebrides. Nowadays, children go door-to-door gathering sweets and coins, while some communities throw ceilidhs or parties to celebrate the ancient festival.



*Gairloch, Highlands*



IS FOR  
THE KEILIDH

*See page 34*

# K

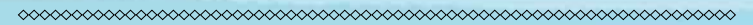
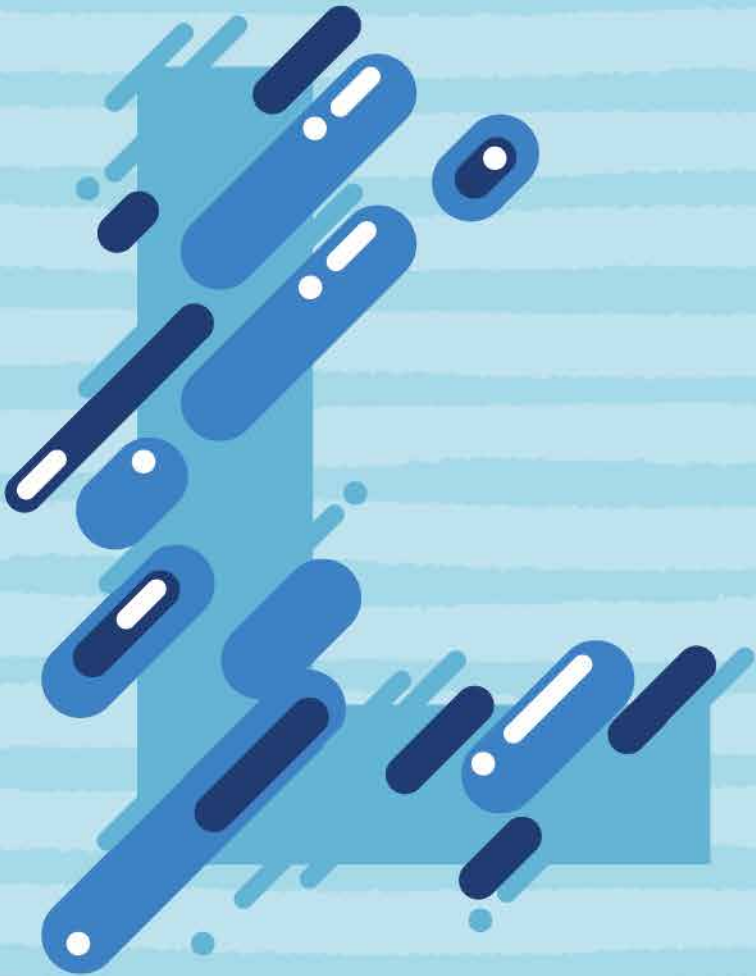
## THE KEILIDH

Enjoy a foot-stomping start to the New Year at **Edinburgh Hogmanay's Keilidh**, the largest outdoor ceilidh in the UK, held at the Mound Precinct Kicking off at 9pm on **31 December**, the Keilidh – spelt with a K to give it an extra kick! – sees hundreds of revellers jig and reel the winter blues away as the sky lights up with spectacular midnight fireworks. Live music will be provided by Scottish traditional musicians and there'll be a professional ceilidh caller on hand to provide instructions, so even total beginners can get dancing. Last year's event was a sell out, so make sure you snap up your tickets quickly!

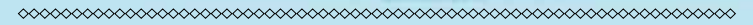
See also: **Ceilidhs, Hogmanay**



The Keilidh, Edinburgh's Hogmanay (Credit - Chris Watt)



IS FOR  
**THE LOONY**  
**DOOK**



*See page 37*

# L

## L I G H T S

See Scotland's towns and cities glitter as their Christmas lights are switched on in **November** or early **December**. With music, carol singing, live entertainment and occasionally even celebrity guests, these fun community events are a great way to kick off the festive season.

Ayr's two-day light up celebrations take place on **15 – 16 November** with a winter parade, a **Santa Race** and tons of great live music. Also on **16 November**, Glasgow celebrates the unveiling of its **Christmas lights** with a fantastic party in George Square – expect great music, a brilliant atmosphere and fireworks galore!

The weekend of the **22 and 23 of November** sees many of Scotland's cities get their festive makeover. **Perth** will be set a-sparkle on Saturday night, while on Sunday **Inverness** and **Aberdeen** will light up with hundreds of wonderful decorations. Edinburgh's lights will also be switched on as part of its spectacular **Light Night** on Sunday – don't miss the sight of 1,250 performers turning George Street into an all-singing, all-dancing extravaganza!

**Kelso** and **Maybole** get into the festive spirit when they switch on their lights on **28 November**, while **Kilmarnock** will celebrate with a parade, a Christmas market and street entertainment on **30 November**. These are just a few of the towns and cities getting into the festive spirit this year – look out for many more across the country, from the Scottish Borders right up to Shetland.



*Christmas lights in George Square, Glasgow (Credit - Glasgow Life)*



*The Loony Dook, Firth of Forth (Credit – Chris Watt)*

# T H E L O O N Y D O O K

*Whether you need to clear your head after Hogmanay festivities or are looking for an unusual way to kick off the New Year, a 'dook' (or dip) in Scotland's icy winter waters is an unforgettable feat!*

Broughty Ferry near Dundee boasts Scotland's largest **New Year's Day Dook**, based on a local tradition dating back to 1891. Many dookers now take the plunge in fancy dress – come dressed up as a fairy, Christmas cracker, reindeer or Santa for a chance to win a prize!

Brave the cold at **Edinburgh's Loony Dook**, the annual New Year's splash in the Firth of Forth.

Dubbed 'loony' because you have to be a wee bit mad to take part, the event sees hundreds of plucky visitors and locals plunge into the chilly waters by the iconic **Forth Rail Bridge** on **1 January**.

If you prefer to keep your feet on dry land, follow the Dooker Parade through South Queensferry High Street or watch from the beach as your loony friends take the dip. Don't forget to sponsor them too – the event raises thousands of pounds for UK charities each year.



I S F O R  
M A R K E T S



*See page 39*





## M A E S H O W E

Amongst Orkney's Neolithic treasures is **Maeshowe**, a fascinating chambered tomb believed to have been built around 2800 BC.

One of the best times to visit this historic monument is in the weeks surrounding the winter solstice on **21 December**, when Orkney enjoys just a few hours of sunlight. The sunset shines through the passage into the tomb, illuminating the rear wall and central chamber, while its rays align with the nearby Barnhouse Stone, a standing stone 800 m southwest of Maeshowe.

Even if you can't make it in person, you can watch the spectacle from the comfort of your own home, thanks to the webcams positioned deep within the chamber. These broadcast from inside and outside **Maeshowe** for around a month either side of the solstice and, weather permitting, let you experience the amazing sight of the sun slowly creeping along the chamber walls.



Maeshowe, Mainland, Orkney.



## M A R K E T S

*There's no better way to get into the festive spirit than to wrap up warm, grab a hot chocolate and browse a Christmas market! You'll find markets selling Christmas crafts and tasty winter treats all across Scotland, from bustling stalls in Glasgow and Edinburgh to charming traditional markets in small towns and villages.*

With quality stalls and thrilling attractions, **Edinburgh's Christmas markets** are always a highlight of the capital's exciting winter calendar. Tuck into sweet treats at the Scottish Market or pick up snacks and gifts from the continent at the European Market. Brave a whirl on the Star Flyer, or see the city sparkle from the top of the Ferris Wheel, all open from **21 November – 4 January 2015**.

Glasgow's Christmas market is set in St Enoch Square, right in the heart of the city's Style Mile. Open from **14 November – 23 December** this year, the charming, continental-style market is a truly international affair, with traders from as far afield as Ecuador, Russia and Finland offering quirky gifts and tasty local produce.

The **Robert Burns Birthplace Museum** in Alloway hosts the Ayrshire Makers Big Christmas Market on **25 November**, featuring gifts and crafts from over 50 exhibitors plus music from local band Borealis in the Museum Café. Pop back during the first three weekends in **December**, as different crafters will be back to exhibit their cards, candles, jewellery and other gifts each day.

Look out for other markets in **Dundee, Perth** and various other towns and cities across Scotland, as well as **craft fairs** where you can pick up handmade gifts and local produce.

*See also: **Craft fairs***

Edinburgh's Christmas Markets





IS FOR  
NORTHERN  
LIGHTS

*See page 43*

# N

## NEW YEAR SPRINT

*The **New Year Sprint** is one of the UK's oldest open athletics events, having been established by keen runners back in 1870. Now in its 146th year, the 2015 New Year Sprint will be held at **Musselburgh Racecourse**, just outside Edinburgh, with several heats on **31 December** before the finals on **1 January**.*

Although it's a professional event, the New Year Sprint is open to all, giving amateur runners the chance to race against professional athletes and even win cash prizes. The speedy runner who wins the final will receive £4,000, while anyone who can beat the World Professional Record of 11.14 seconds over 120 yards will take home a bonus of an incredible £20,000!

Sign up online to take part, or head along to the racecourse to witness awe-inspiring athletics and soak up the buzzing atmosphere. A ticket to the second day's races includes admission to the **Totepool New Year's Day Race Meeting** – why not treat yourself to a champagne package and start the New Year in style?

## NEW YEAR'S DAY TRIATHLON

Get 'complete a triathlon' ticked off your list of resolutions nice and early at the **New Year's Day Triathlon** in Edinburgh. Starting at the **Royal Commonwealth Pool** at 12pm on **1 January**, you'll swim 400 m in waters that have seen record-breaking feats from international swimming and diving champions. Next, you'll jump on your bike for a 12-mile cycle around the beautiful **Holyrood Park**, before finishing up with a 3-mile run across the grounds. It's an ideal first race for those new to the challenging world of triathlons, though you can always enter in a team if it sounds a bit much by yourself!

Young athletes aged eight to 15 can get involved with the Kids' Duathlon, composed of two short runs and a bike ride on closed roads. All entrants will win a special race memento to commemorate their brilliant achievement.

Holyrood Park, Edinburgh



# N

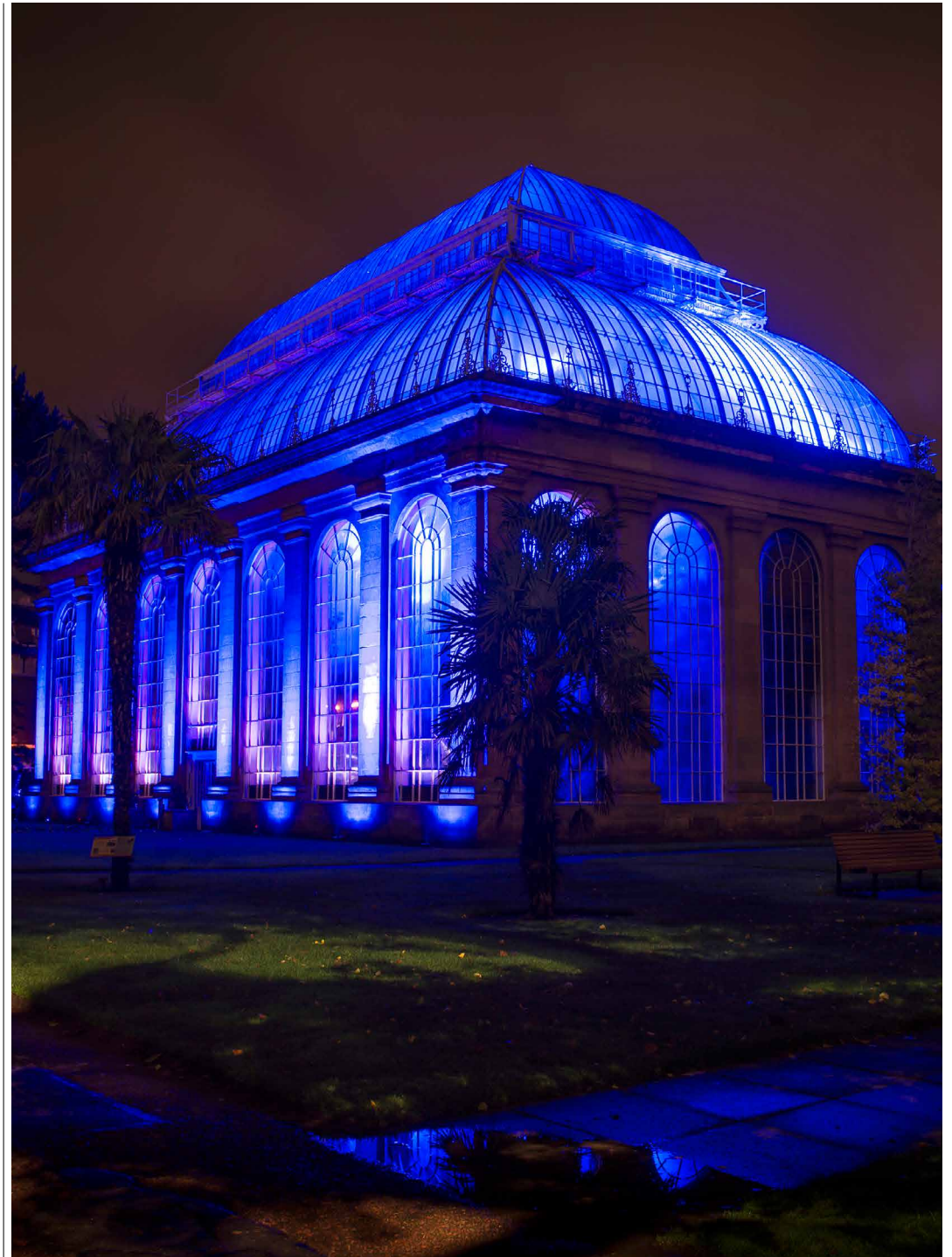
*Night in the Garden, Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Garden*

## N I G H T I N T H E G A R D E N

*As the winter nights begin to grow darker, **Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Garden** lights up thanks to **Night in the Garden**, a spectacular outdoor light installation taking place from **30 October – 24 November**. Follow the mystical trail around the garden to see some of its most iconic features transformed by artists **Malcolm Innes** and **Euan Winton**, from sunset effects in the Palm House to colourful lights glittering over the ponds.*

With multiple sessions beginning at 5pm every night except Monday, this charming family event is sure to add a little sparkle to your winter – wrap up warm and witness the gardens as you've never seen them before.

See also: ***The Enchanted Castle***



# NORTHERN LIGHTS



Luck is often involved in spotting the **Northern Lights**, but anyone who witnesses this incredible spectacle will never forget it. One of nature's most spectacular phenomena, the Northern Lights, or Aurora Borealis, are caused by solar wind from the sun colliding with magnetic particles in the Earth's atmosphere. These 'Merry Dancers' illuminate the winter nights across northern countries, sending vivid coloured lights sweeping and shimmying across the dark sky.

Scotland is the best place in the UK to spot the Northern Lights, particularly in areas with low levels of light pollution such as the **Outer Hebrides, Orkney, Shetland** and the area around **Caithness**. **January** is generally considered the best time to spot this magical display; however, if you're very lucky you may glimpse them on cold, clear nights throughout the autumn and winter months or in more southerly areas, such as the Dark Sky Park in **Dumfries & Galloway**.

*See also: [Dark Sky Park](#)*



IS FOR  
**ORKNEY BA'**

*See page 45*

# O

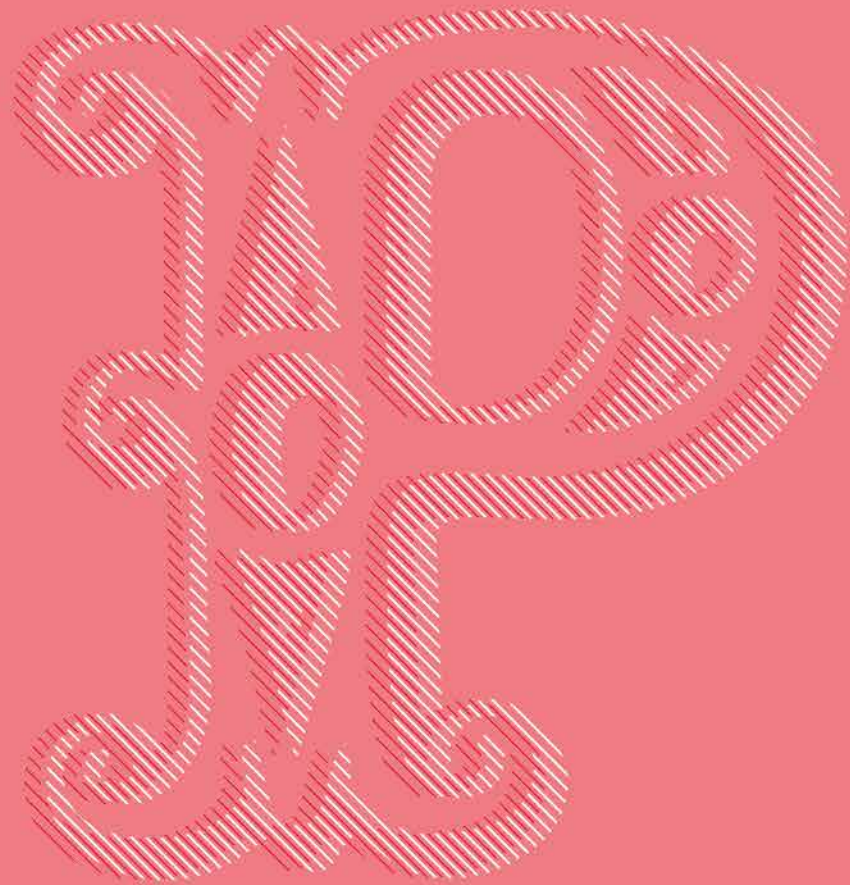
## ORKNEY BA' GAME

*The Ba' is one of Orkney's most proudly upheld winter traditions. In essence it is a mass football or rugby game, played out in Kirkwall on Christmas Eve and New Year's Day each year by two teams of boys in the morning and two teams of men in the afternoon.*

The matches begin at Mercat Cross in Kirkwall, with the boy's game kicking off at 10.30am while the men's game follows at 1pm. The rules are simple. The goal of each team, known as either 'Uppies' or 'Doonies', is to transport the ball through the streets of Kirkwall and into the opposing team's territory. The first team to score a goal against the rival team wins.

Although this may sound simple in theory, in practice the game has been known to last for several hours as up to 100 players per team struggle to gain possession of the coveted Ba'. If you happen to be in **Orkney** on either the **24 December** or **1 January**, this unique winter tradition is not to be missed!





IS FOR  
PANTOMIMES

*See page 47*

# PANTOMIMES

Book your tickets and gather your clan together for a magical trip to the theatre. A fun-filled Scottish pantomime is a great way to get everyone in the festive spirit!

Commonly held throughout **December** and into **January**, traditional pantomimes are usually a fairy tale or comedy, and combine colourful characters (commonly men playing female characters and women playing male characters) with jokes, songs, comedy sketches and energetic dance numbers. Larger pantomimes often feature celebrities in their cast too. Audience participation is a vital part of the pantomime tradition (oh yes it is!), and shows will often include humorous references to news, current affairs and local gossip.

To give you a flavour of what's coming up this winter, some of the shows taking place across Scotland include:

- **Beauty and the Beast**, His Majesty's Theatre, Aberdeen
- **Beauty and the Beast**, The Gaiety Theatre and Arts Centre, Ayrshire
- **Sleeping Beauty**, Alhambra Theatre, Dunfermline
- **Aladdin**, King's Theatre, Edinburgh
- **Peter Pan**, King's Theatre, Glasgow
- **Cinderella**, SECC, Glasgow
- **Jack and the Beanstalk**, An Lanntair, Outer Hebrides
- **Aladdin**, MacRobert Arts Centre, Stirling





# P

## P U D D I N G

*Christmas pudding is regarded by many as the ultimate festive dessert. Although not Scottish in origin, why not add a Scottish sparkle to your traditional pudding with a pouring of thick Scottish cream or a scoop of luxurious Scottish ice cream? A dram of **whisky** would probably go down quite nicely with it too...*

~~~~~  
If you're looking for something a bit different this year, why not consider making a cloutie dumpling? This traditional Scottish dessert is regarded by many as even tastier than Christmas pudding and can be served in thick slices once it's cooled or eaten while still warm with a hearty measure of creamy custard.

Another key festive dessert is a fruity black bun. Traditionally served at Hogmanay, a Scottish black bun is relatively easy to make and consists of spicy fruit cake baked in a crumbly pastry casing. Much like Christmas cake, a black bun should be made several weeks in advance and left to mature until the big day. It would also make an ideal, and very thoughtful, first footing gift!

See also: **Food**





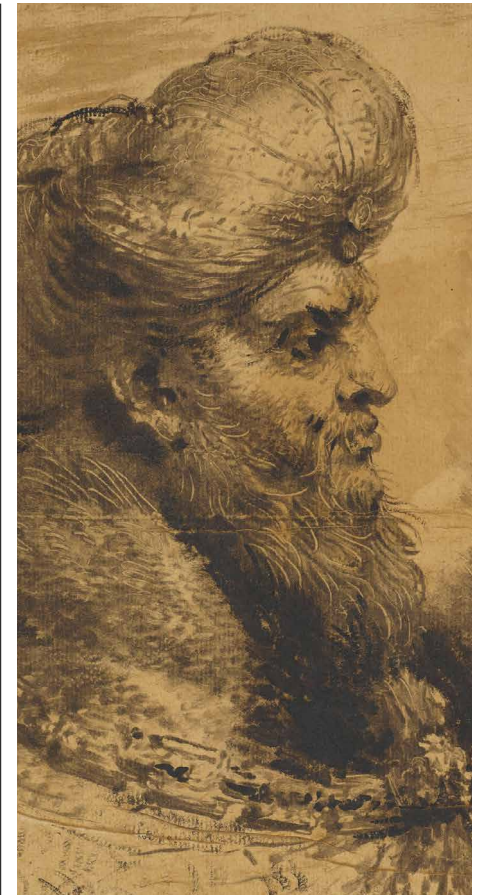
# Q

## THE QUEEN'S GALLERY

Visit *The Queen's Gallery* at the *Palace of Holyroodhouse* from *14 November – 8 February* and delve into their winter exhibition **Castiglione: Lost Genius** which focusses on the life and works of *Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione (1609 – 64)*.

This Italian Baroque artist often worked with oils on paper to produce large, vibrant compositions, though he is perhaps best known for his wonderfully elaborate engravings, and as the inventor of the printmaking technique known as monotyping, which is a combination of drawing and printmaking.

Although Castiglione's works were highly esteemed following his death, it is often claimed that his turbulent personal life overshadowed his genius and, as a result, he has fallen from fame in the modern era. *Castiglione: Lost Genius* showcases work by this great Italian artist and discusses many of the pieces in light of new archival research into Castiglione's chequered personal life, giving visitors fresh insight into one of the most innovative and technically brilliant artists of his time.





IS FOR  
REINDEER

*See page 52*

# R

## RED HOT HIGHLAND FLING HOGMANAY PARTY

*Northern Meeting Park, Inverness,  
8.30pm till 12.30am*

This **Hogmanay**, why not bring in the bells with a spectacular outdoor concert in Scotland's Highland capital of Inverness? **The Red Hot Highland Fling** is Scotland's biggest **FREE Hogmanay** party and is returning in 2014 with the most star-studded line up to date.

Join host Craig Hill, the Red Hot Chilli Pipers, **Gaelic** group Mánran and the wonderful Julie Fowles Band to celebrate Hogmanay in style. Located in the Northern Meeting Park Arena, within walking distance of the city centre, this family-friendly outdoor concert, followed by a dazzling fireworks display, is the perfect way to bring the New Year in style!

If you have younger members in the family then be sure to check out the Wee Hot Highland Fling Family Festival earlier in the day. Taking place in the city centre from noon till 3pm, the 'Wee Fling' features street performers, musicians and the Inverness Youth Pipe Band and is the perfect way to start our Hogmanay.

*See also: **Hogmanay***

## REDDING

Much like the custom of spring cleaning, this Scottish tradition consists of thoroughly cleaning – or 'redding' – your home before the New Year begins. This custom began as a way to clear the house of evil spirits so that the New Year could start clean and fresh. Most importantly, all the fires in the house had to be thoroughly swept of all their ashes, so that new fires could be laid and set alight.

Nowadays redding is not a consciously upheld tradition in Scotland, though unknowingly most people will have a tidy-up if they are throwing a Hogmanay party themselves, or in preparation for any first footers that may pop by on New Year's Day.

*See also: **First footing***

*Let us inspire you with even more inspiring holidays holiday ideas, exciting events and activities, and the best tips for your holiday to Scotland by signing up to our e-newsletter.*



## REINDEER

*What could be more magical than meeting some real, live reindeer this winter? Head to the **Scottish Deer Centre**, near Cupar in the Kingdom of Fife, and learn about their herd of reindeer on a guided walk or trailer ride. Home to 15 species of deer, otters, lynx, wolves and more, the Scottish Deer Centre is perfect for a fun day out with all the family this winter.*

You can also meet Scotland's only herd of free range reindeer on a visit to the **Cairngorm Reindeer Centre**, near Aviemore. Go on a hill visit with one of the centre's experienced reindeer herders and meet the herd as they roam free in the stunning Cairngorm Mountains. You'll even get the chance to stroke and feed the reindeer as you learn all about them from your knowledgeable guide. Experience the soft touch of the reindeer's velvety noses as you hand feed them on an unforgettable visit to the Cairngorms.

*See also: **Wildlife***



IS FOR  
SHOPPING

*See page 55*



## SANTA DASH

Ever seen hundreds of Santas running as if Christmas depended on it? Catch this fantastically festive sight at a Santa Dash, a fun family race for all ages and abilities, or dress up as Mr Claus yourself and take part!

Get fit and festive at the **Santa Dash and Reindeer Run** in Strathclyde Park in Lanarkshire, held in aid of the St Andrew's Hospice on **23 November**. Adults can get into character with a free Santa suit, while children can dress up as Rudolph with free antlers and flashing noses – you might even spot some real reindeer en route!

Catch the **Inverness Santa Run**, a refreshing 5k jog along the River Ness, on **1 December**, or follow the 6k route along the beach front at the **Aberdeen Santa Run** on **8 December**. Organised by Wild Hearts Events, both races include a goody bag, medal, Santa suit or t-shirt and hats for younger runners, with proceeds going towards great projects in countries such as Jordan and Ghana.

Don your boots and beard and race alongside hundreds of jolly Saint Nicks at the **Glasgow Santa Dash**, a 5k route through the city centre on **7 December**. Entry includes a Santa suit for all runners, while money raised will go towards the Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice and several other excellent causes.

In Edinburgh, join dozens of Santas of all ages (and their pets!) for the 10th **Great Edinburgh Santa Family Fun Run and Walk 2014** on **14 December**. Walk, jog or run the 2k or 5k circuit to win your finisher's medal and raise funds for When You Wish Upon A Star Scotland. Prizes will also be given for Best Decorated Pushchair and Best Dressed Dog!



## STEAM TRAINS

For an unforgettable day out this winter why not enjoy a magical journey on a traditional steam train? Head to the **Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway**, near Bo'ness, for their special black bun event on **30 and 31 December** and admire the wintry landscapes as you travel along the Firth of Forth. Adults will all enjoy a slice of fruity black bun and a hot drink while children can tuck into shortbread and juice on the 70 minute return journey.

Another excellent steam train event is the mince pie specials run by **Strathspey Steam Railway** near Aviemore. From **27 December – 2 January** adults can enjoy a hot mince pie and mulled wine as they travel through the stunning Cairngorms, while kids will all receive a lovely chocolate treat to take away.

*Santa Dash, Edinburgh*

## SANTA

*The ultimate Christmas day out has to include a visit to meet Santa Claus himself. As well as appearing at Christmas parties and many Christmas light switch-ons throughout Scotland, wee ones will love visiting Santa in one of his magical grottos.*

Some of the places you can catch a glimpse of Mr Claus include the Snow Factor in Glasgow, where you can meet him on real snow, or **Santa's Magical**

**Wonderland** at M&D's in Motherwell, where he'll be greeting kids in his magical grotto. You'll also find him in **Aberdeen's Union Terrace Gardens**, where kids can make crafts in the elves' workshop before showing them to Santa, or at **Santa Land** in Edinburgh's Princes Street Gardens, where the whole family can enjoy a host of activities before meeting Mr Claus himself!

Santa also visits lots of special one-off events in the run up to the big day. **Santa's Sparkle** on the Isle of Arran includes a splendid Santa procession, the chance to meet Santa afterwards and a spectacular fireworks display in the evening. At **The Reindeer Return to Holmwood**, taking place at Holmwood House in Glasgow, Santa will be asking boys and girls what they would like for Christmas, and he'll even bring his friendly reindeer along too!

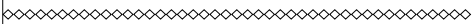


*The railway in winter (Credit - Strathspey Railway)*

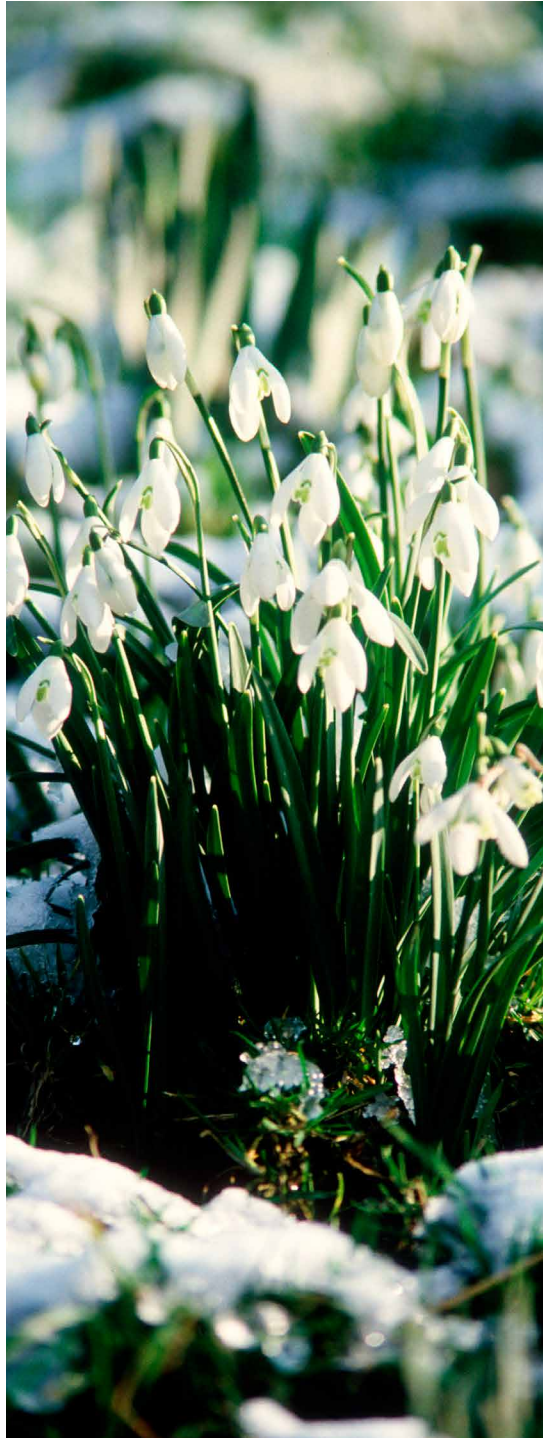
# S

## SCOTTISH SNOWDROP FESTIVAL

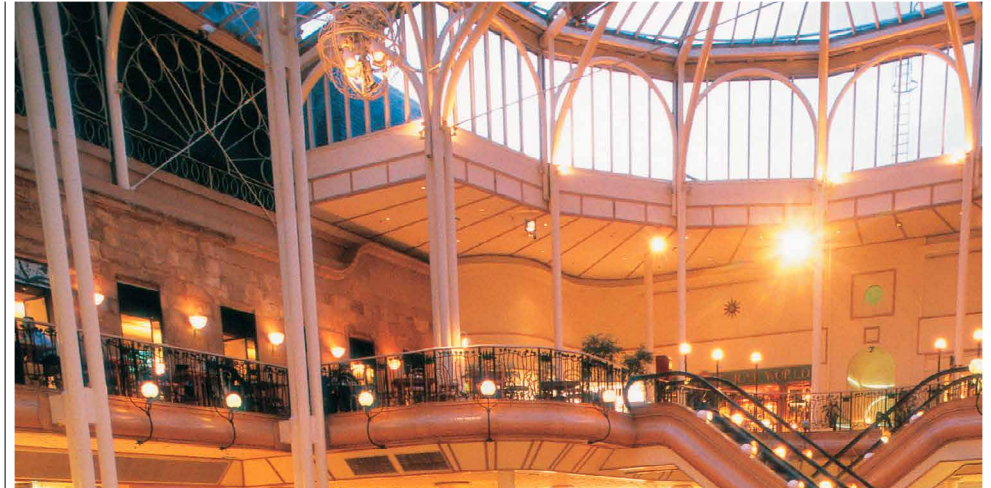
*With their perfect white petals and shiny green leaves, snowdrops are one of Scotland's most exquisite and beloved flowers. These hardy little plants are one of the first to break through the cold winter ground in the first months of the year, making them an early indicator that spring is on its way.*



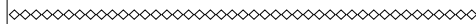
For the chance to see Scotland's forests, gardens and outdoor spaces carpeted in these exquisite little flowers have a look for participating venues in the **Scottish Snowdrop Festival**, which takes place throughout **February** and into **March**. Many of Scotland's historic estates take part in the Scottish Snowdrop Festival, with the likes of **Dryburgh Abbey** and **Traquair House** in the Scottish Borders, Lindores House in the Kingdom of Fife and **Blair Castle** in Perthshire opening their gardens for visitors to enjoy their snowdrop displays.



Snowdrops



## S H O P P I N G



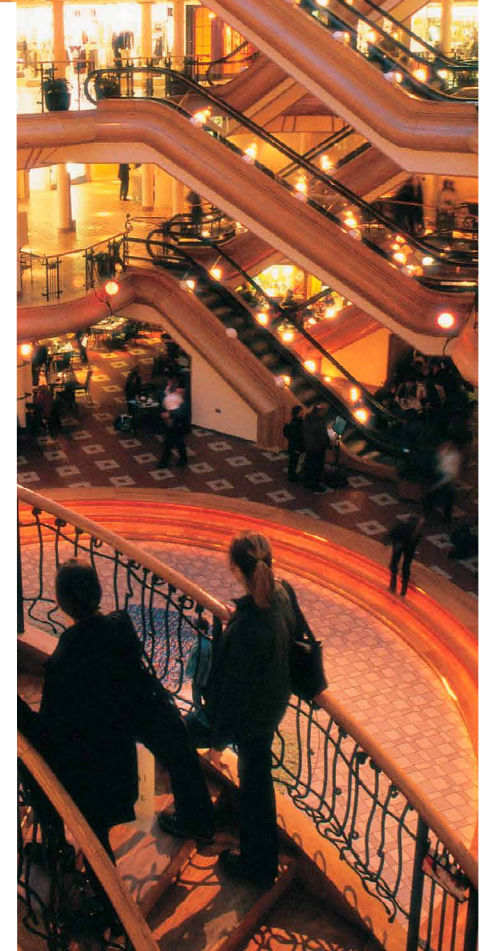
Sometimes the best way to get inspiration for gifts is simply by getting out of the house and having a look at what's on offer. Let Scotland's shops, Christmas markets and festive fairs inspire you this winter and pick up presents that your family and friends will really love come Christmas morning.

In the run up to Christmas you'll find a number of glorious Christmas markets popping up in the cities, while local festive fairs are a great place to shop for unique gifts that you won't find anywhere else.

If you prefer your shops all in one place, the shopping centres within the centre of the cities are definitely for you. **Glasgow** is often hailed as the shopping capital of Scotland and offers an extensive range of high street shops and individual boutiques. **Edinburgh** and **Aberdeen** are both shopping meccas, while **Stirling**, **Dundee**, **Perth** and **Inverness** all feature terrific shopping centres within the centre of the city along with charming independent shops where staff will be happy to suggest gift ideas.

See also: *Craft fairs, Markets*

Princes Square shopping centre, Glasgow





# SK | | NG + S N O W B O A R D I N G

Want to get your body moving and experience some of Scotland's most impressive scenery at the same time? Head to one of the country's top ski centres and enjoy the wintery vistas as you glide down the slopes. Thrill-seekers will love the testing peaks in the Highlands while beginners can book great introductory lessons. Visit one of the following centres for a fun day out this winter:

- **Glencoe Mountain Resort**, Glencoe
- **Glenshee Ski Centre**, Braemar
- **Nevis Range**, Fort William
- **CairnGorm Mountain**, Aviemore
- **The Lecht 2090**, Strathdon
- **Snow Factor**, Braehead

With World Snow Day taking place on **18 January** there has never been a better time to get the whole family involved in winter sports. Many centres run special events for kids and taster sessions for adults, making it perfect for an exciting family day out.

The **Fort William Mountain Festival** on the **18 – 22 February** offers a great range of active workshops, fun events, fascinating talks and film screenings. Activities from last year's festival included 'Learn how to ski or snowboard' workshops held at Nevis Range and classes focusing on how to take the perfect outdoor photograph with renowned adventure photographer Nadir Khan.

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*Skiing at Glenshee Ski Centre*





I S F O R  
**T R E E S**



*See page 58*

# T

## T O R C H L I G H T P R O C E S S I O N

*Edinburgh's Hogmanay celebrations open on the 30 December with the annual **Torchlight Procession**, a spectacular parade through the city's Old Town. Leading the march will be Shetland's *Up Helly Aa' Vikings*, followed by massed pipe bands, several thousand torch carriers and many more spectators – last year saw 35,000 people attend!*

The procession begins outside the City Chambers on the High Street, goes down to the Mound to Princes Street and finally ends on Calton Hill, where a fireworks display and a son et lumière show will light up some of Edinburgh's most iconic monuments. Book your torch online to join this unforgettable event, or watch as the river of fire flows through Edinburgh's historic streets.

*See also: **Hogmanay***



*Torchlight Procession, Edinburgh (Credit - Chris Watt)*

## T R E E S

Coniferous trees such as fir, pine and spruce have become an international symbol of Christmas, lit up in homes all around the world. Many of Scotland's forests are thick with these wonderful evergreens, including the native Scots pine – see them in the forests of **Glen Affric** in the Highlands or at Rothiemurchus in the **Cairngorms National Park**.

Home to hundreds of Sitka and Norway spruce, **Blairadam Forest** in Fife is transformed into a quintessential Christmas scene in the snow. Take a wander through the forest to admire the beautiful trees, or visit on **6 December** to follow a special Christmas trail, sample the local venison and hear a tale or two from a storyteller.

Admire the towering conifers of **Glenbranter Forest** in Argyll, which hosts three weeks of fun Christmas festivities from **1 – 21 December**, or pop into **Kirroughtree Visitor Centre** in Galloway Forest Park on weekends throughout **December** to warm up by the log-burning fire, enjoy a woodland stroll and pick your very own Christmas tree to take home.



While pines and firs stay green all winter, many other trees lose their leaves during the colder months; however, it's still possible to identify them by their twigs and buds. Learn how to tell your alder from your elder on an Identifying Winter Trees Walk around **Haddo House Estate** on **7 December** or at the **Royal Botanic Garden** in Edinburgh on **7 February**, or simply take a stroll around the Hermitage in Perthshire to see some of the most remarkable trees in Scotland.

*See also: **Walking***

*A fir pine tree*



# T U R N E R I N J A N U A R Y

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The **Scottish National Gallery** in Edinburgh gets 2015 off to a vibrant start with its annual display of Turner watercolours. Composed of 38 paintings, **Turner in January** spans the artist's career from early wash drawings to gorgeous depictions of Europe in the 1830s. The collection was bequeathed to the gallery by collector Henry Vaughan under the condition that they would be "exhibited to the public all at one time, free of charge, during the month of January". The limited exposure means that minimal damage has been inflicted to the works, allowing them to retain their bright colours and to keep delighting audiences for over 100 years.

Later in 2015, the Turner Prize – named after J. M. V. Turner – will be presented in Scotland for the first time at a ceremony at Tramway Arts Centre in Glasgow. Look out for more details about dates and nominees for the prestigious award later in the year.



U

IS FOR  
UP HELLY AA',  
SHETLAND

*See page 61*

# U

## U P H E L L Y A A', S H E T L A N D

Following closely on from the Scalloway Fire Festival, the famous Up Helly Aa' Festival takes place on **27 January**, or the last Tuesday of the month. Up Helly Aa' is a fire festival on a phenomenal scale. During the longboat procession Lerwick's streetlights are switched off, pitching the town into complete darkness until the light from almost 1,000 flaming torches lights up the streets with a fiery orange glow. After the longboat is burned, the crowds move into halls and event spaces throughout the town, ready for one of the biggest parties in **Shetland's** social calendar. Luckily, the following day is a public holiday in Lerwick so everyone can rest!

See also: ***Fire festivals***



*Up Helly Aa, Lerwick*



# V

## VALENTINE'S DAY

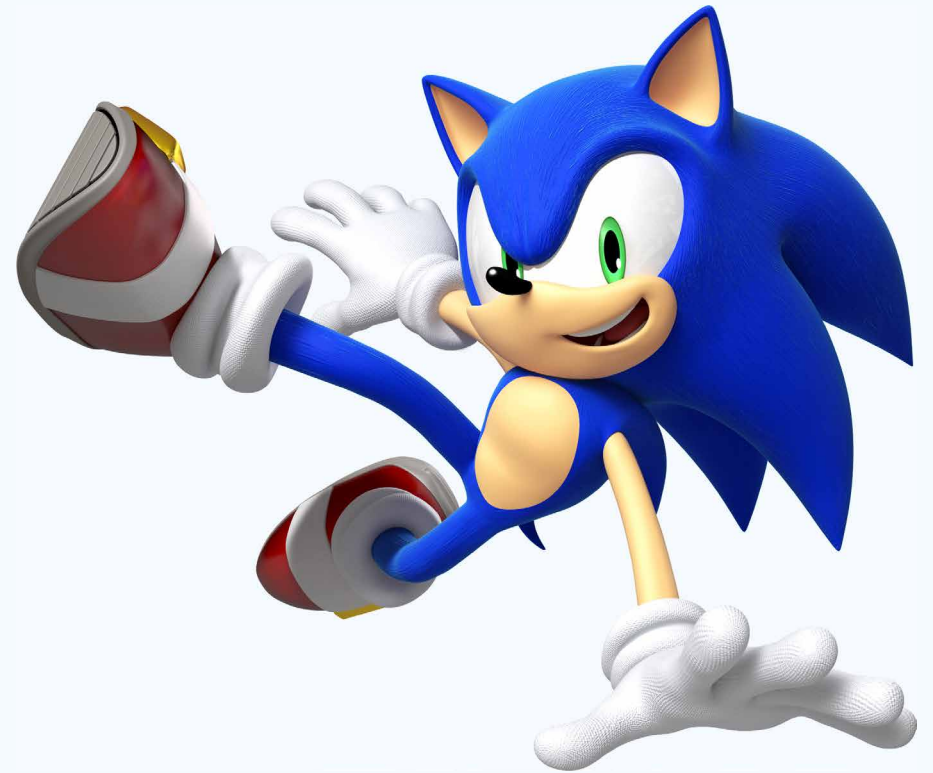
*Although not normally associated with winter, Valentine's Day is a great excuse to treat your loved one (or yourself!) after the excitement from Christmas has died down.*

If you're looking to plan something special this year, here are a few ideas for you:

- Whip up a delicious meal using freshly-caught mussels, scallops or langoustines from **Oban**, the 'seafood capital of Scotland.'
- Hand select some artisan **chocolates**, crafted by expert chocolatiers, on **Scotland's Chocolate Trail**.
- Spend a magical evening **star gazing** at Scotland's **Dark Sky Park** in Dumfries & Galloway.
- Book an indulgent **luxury break** to a hotel in the romantic **Scottish Borders**.
- For those who like a little adrenaline with their romance, brave a sky dive over historic **St Andrews** or try a **tandem bungee jump** in **Perthshire!**



*Haggis, black pudding and apple served at Douglas Hotel, Langholm*



## VIDEO GAMES

If you can't wait until Christmas morning to get your hands on some new video games, rediscover old favourites at **Game Masters** this winter. On display at the **National Museum of Scotland** in Edinburgh from **5 December – 20 April**, this fantastic exhibition showcases the work of over 30 leading game designers, with more than 100 retro and modern games available to play.

Step back to the 1970s and early 1980s as you play seminal arcade games, from *Asteroids* and *Space Invaders* to *Donkey Kong* and *Pac-Man*. Get nostalgic with much-loved console games such as Nintendo's *Super Mario Bros* and Sega's *Sonic the Hedgehog*, or delve into the complex world of role-playing games with *World of Warcraft* and *Fable III*.

Giants of the mobile gaming industry, including the super-addictive *Angry Birds* and *Fruit Ninja*, will be on show, as will competitive music and dance contests such as *SingStar* and *Dance Central*. Grown-up gamers should also check out the **Game Masters Museum Lates** on **13 February**, an over-18s party featuring live music, performers, creative art, a silent disco, video games and more.

*Sonic the Hedgehog* (© SEGA. All rights reserved)





IS FOR  
WILDLIFE



*See page 65*

# W

## W I L D L I F E

While some creatures hibernate for the colder months, many Scottish animals can still be seen throughout the winter. Look out for these fascinating species in parks, forests and nature reserves, or visit a fantastic wildlife attraction for the chance to spot animals from all across the world.

### - Beavers

Wild beavers have recently been reintroduced to the Scottish countryside after being extinct in the UK for over 400 years. At **Knapdale Forest** in Argyllshire, you can visit the **Scottish Beaver Trial** for a chance of glimpsing these incredible animals. They're most active at night, so head out at dusk or dawn for the best chance of spotting them.

### - Red squirrels

Contrary to popular belief, red squirrels don't hibernate – they can still be seen scurrying around parks and forests throughout the winter, particularly in the south of Scotland. Look out for the charming creatures along the Red Squirrel Trail at **Dalbeattie Forest** or on a winter walk through the grounds of **Drumlanrig Castle** near Thornhill, both in **Dumfries & Galloway**.

### - Red deer

Most of Scotland's red deer live in hill habitats, moving to sheltered lower ground to find food throughout the winter months. The **Cairngorms National Park** is home to 25,000 of these majestic animals, while many more can be seen roaming the **Galloway Forest Park** in Dumfries & Galloway throughout the year.



*Robin, Red squirrel, Common seal; Red deer stags, the Cairngorm Mountains  
(Credit - Neil McIntyre)*



### - Roe deer

Roe deer are most often spotted in winter, when they change their shiny brown coat for a heavier grey or black version to get them through the colder months. Spot them at dusk or dawn in the **Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park**, particularly in Balloch Castle Country Park, the Balmaha or East Loch Lomond Woods.

### - Otters

Otters live in a range of freshwater habitats around Scotland and, though very elusive, are possible to see at any time of year. Head to the **Loch of Lowes Wildlife Reserve** in Perthshire for a chance to spot them splashing around near riverbanks and waterways, or look out for them around the **Spey Bay** in the Highlands.

### - Seals

Grey seals raise their young on beaches throughout the winter months, with **November** being one of the best times to see adorable white seal pups. Orkney is

amongst the best places in the UK for seal-watchers, with some 25,000 living around the waters. **Loch Fleet Wildlife Reserve** near Golspie is another hotspot, while common seals and their pups can often be seen from the **Montrose Basin Wildlife Reserve Visitor Centre** in Angus.

### - Wildlife attractions

Many of Scotland's wildlife attractions also stay open throughout the winter. Come face to face with arctic foxes and polar bears at the **Highland Wildlife Park** by Kingussie, or spot reindeer, wolves and Scottish wildcats at the **Scottish Deer Centre** in Fife.

Meet Santa, his most trusted elf and a whole host of animals at **Camperdown Wildlife Centre** outside Dundee during the first three weekends in **December**. In West Calder, **Five Sisters Zoo** offers unique experiences where budding zoo keepers can help feed and clean out monkeys and meerkats – the ideal Christmas gift for wildlife fans aged six and up.

*See also: **Birdwatching***



# W I N T E R W A L K S



Scotland is a gift for walkers, with hundreds, if not thousands, of paths, trails and walkways waiting to be explored. This winter, head outdoors and explore some of the country's best winter routes, from peaceful ambles along the coast to challenging hikes up snow-capped mountains.

Breathe in the crisp sea air on a refreshing winter walk around **Scotland's islands**. Look out to Ayrshire as you wander the beautiful coastline of **Arran**, or follow the 3-mile waymarked route around the **Balranald RSPB Nature Reserve** on North Uist for the chance to spot snow buntings, starlings and whooper swans.

**Unst** in Shetland is the most northerly island in the UK and was the first to win a Walkers are Welcome award. Follow the Hermaness Circular across moorland and clifftops to take in breathtaking views of Muckle Flugga Lighthouse and Out Stack, or pass by historical ruins and peaceful beaches on a walk from Belmont to Lund.

Enjoy a peaceful stroll along one of the **Glentress Forest Trails** in the Scottish Borders, or discover the walks and routes for all abilities in the magnificent **Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park**. Just a few hours north, the **Cairngorms National Park** offers everything from peaceful strolls through glens and past streams to taxing hikes for more experienced walkers.



IS FOR  
XMAS

*See page 68*

# X

## X M A S

From **carol services** and **craft fairs** to parties, gifts and festive **food**, Christmas is a huge celebration in Scotland. It's hard to imagine nowadays, but Christmas Day has only been a public holiday for 50 years!

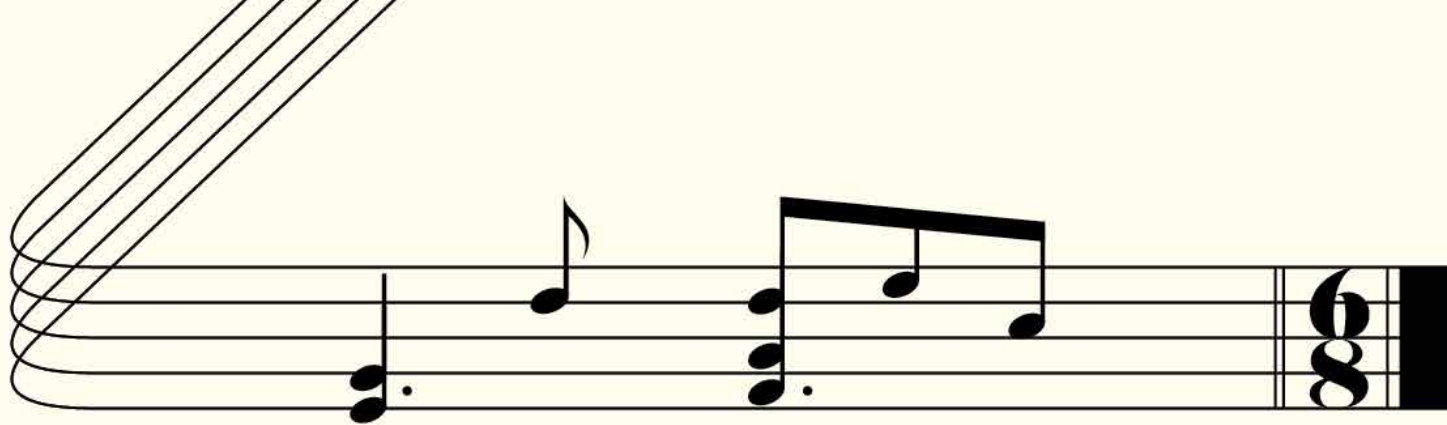
Scotland's winter festivities date back to the time of the Celtic Pagans, who celebrated the winter solstice and the end of the short, dark days in **December**. Traditions included burning a Yule log and using its char to protect the house from spirits, or kissing under the mistletoe as a fertility rite.

Pagan and Christian traditions merged when Roman Catholicism was established in Scotland in the fifth and sixth centuries. During this time, Christmas was known as 'Yule' (from the Old Norse jól) and was celebrated in Scotland much in the same way as the rest of Catholic Europe.

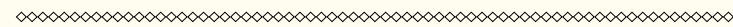
However, the Scottish Reformation of 1560 split the country from the Catholic Church. Christmas was frowned upon as a "Popish" festival, and in the 1580s was banned by Presbyterian leader John Knox. This led to a 1640 Act of Parliament abolishing "Yule vacation and all observation thereof in time coming".

Although the act was repealed in 1686, Christmas was still downplayed for 400 years, with December 25 only became a public holiday in 1958. **Hogmanay** was always the main winter celebration in Scotland so the act was accepted by many Scots for hundreds of years. Though Hogmanay is still celebrated with huge parties, ceilidhs and fireworks all across the country, nowadays Christmas is an equally important celebration for many Scots.

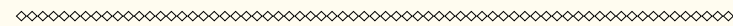




Y



I S F O R  
Y U L E T I D E  
T U N E S



*See page 70*



# Y

## YULETIDE TUNES

December just wouldn't be **December** without our favourite Yuletide tunes! From traditional carols to Christmas pop classics and even festive movie soundtracks, sing along and soak up the atmosphere at a Christmas concert in Scotland this winter.

The **Royal Scottish National Orchestra** is famous for its annual Christmas Concert, which blends much-loved carols with popular Christmas classics. Soak up the festive atmosphere at **Aberdeen's Music Hall** on **18 December**, **Caird Hall** in Dundee on **19 December**, the **Glasgow Royal Concert Hall** on **20 December** and **Edinburgh's Usher Hall** on **21 December**.

Kids will love singing along to *Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer* et al at the RSNO's Children's Classic Concerts in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Featuring beautiful ballet dancing and presented by percussionists Owen & Olly, this festive extravaganza is sure to delight the whole family. Join in the fun on **6 December** at the **Glasgow Royal Concert Hall** or **7 December** at the **Usher Hall**, Edinburgh.

The RSNO's busy winter calendar also includes *Hollywood Christmas*, a gorgeous concert of festive film scores from timeless movies such as *It's a Wonderful Life*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and *Miracle on 34th Street*. Relive your favourite scenes at **Edinburgh's Usher Hall** on **12 December**, or at **Glasgow Royal Concert Hall** on **13 December**.



RSNO Concert



House for an Art Lover, Glasgow

Also in Glasgow, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland presents a night of glitz, glamour and festive cheer with **Swingin' into Christmas** from **10 – 12 December**, while **House of an Art Lover** pairs a three-course lunch with piano renditions of Bing Crosby, Nat King Cole and Slade at their Festive Sunday Concerts on **14** and **21 December** – the perfect way to get into the Christmas spirit.



IS FOR  
ZZZZZZZZ

*See page 72*



# Z

Z Z Z Z Z

*After all that, you deserve a rest! Treat yourself to a luxury break in Scotland, where you'll find an impressive range of **5-star accommodation** across the country. Enjoy a round of golf on a championship course before you unwind in an opulent spa, or treat yourself to a sumptuous dinner before you drift off to sleep in a gorgeous designer suite.*

From iconic city centre hotels and gorgeous loch-side houses to Michelin star restaurants with rooms and exclusive hire castles, Scotland has everything you could ever wish for when it comes to spending a few days in the lap of luxury. Many hotels also offer special deals in **January**, meaning you can enjoy 5-star service at affordable prices.



Torridon, Highlands



Invergarry, Highlands

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## ARGYLL & THE ISLES

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## AYRSHIRE & ARRAN

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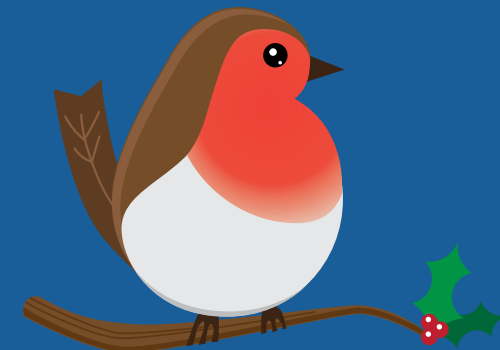
Birdwatching  
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WINTER IN SCOTLAND

Let us inspire you with even more inspiring holiday ideas, exciting events and activities, and the best tips for your holiday to Scotland by signing up to our *e-newsletter*.

