

The magical, botanical, illuminated trail

CHRISTMAS AT THE BOTANICS



General Information

What is Christmas at the Botanics?

It's the most wonderful time of the year as the tree tops of Edinburgh begin to glisten and shimmer. There's something for everyone as the one mile sparkling path winds its way through the world famous Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh in a magical after dark experience.

Now in its third year, our winter trail is established as a much-anticipated family tradition. Along our 2019 route you'll notice all-new installations; step into a Laser Garden where dancing lines of light playfully bounce across the branches; stroll towards the waterside reflections of the Festive Flotilla as hundreds of glowing boats gently bob on the shimmering surface and walk between larger-than-life icicles and neon spiral trees rising high into the night sky.

To those who have been before, rest assured the towering Tunnel of Light twinkling with thousands of pea lights festooned with seasonal cheer and the mesmerising Scented Fire Garden will both return. Plus no Botanics trail would be complete without the Inverleith House Festive Finale where brightly coloured projections dance in time to much-loved Christmas classics. Look out for Santa and his elves along the way too.

Have a holly, jolly Christmas and complete your walk under the stars with spiced cider, mulled wine or hot chocolate*. Gather around the fire pit with family and friends to toast marshmallows* and end the evening browsing the gift shop at the John Hope Gateway. Don't forget the journey home, why not pick up some treats to take away.

*Separate charges apply

What are the dates of Christmas at the Botanics?

Friday 22 nd November	–	Sunday 24 th November
Wednesday 27 th November	–	Sunday 1 st December
Wednesday 4 th December	–	Sunday 8 th December
Wednesday 11 th December	–	Tuesday 24 th December
Thursday 26 th December	–	Sunday 29 th December

What are the trail times?

4:20pm*, 4:40pm, 5:00pm, 5:20pm, 5:40pm, 6:00pm, 6:20pm, 6:40pm, 7:00pm, 7:20pm*, 7:40pm*, 8:00pm*.

*Not available for every date

Where is Christmas at the Botanics and how do I get there?

There are two entrances at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh:

East Gate Address: Royal Botanic Garden, East Gate, Inverleith Row, EH3 5LP

West Gate Address: Royal Botanic Garden, West Gate, Arboretum Place, EH3 5NZ

On foot: The Garden is just one mile north of Princess Street. The West Gate located on Arboretum Place can be accessed via Stockbridge and the East Gate is located on Inverleith Row.

By train: The nearest station is Waverley Station which is 1.5 miles from the Garden.

By bus: The Garden's East Gate is served by [Lothian Buses](#) 8, 23 and 27 from the City Centre and the West Gate (John Hope Gateway) is served by [Lothian Buses](#) 29, 42 and 24 via Stockbridge. The West Gate is also served by the Majestic Bus Tour (edinburghtour.com)

By car: If you are arriving by car, entry is via the Garden's West Gate (John Hope Gateway) where there is ample on-street parking available for the event.

Can I park at Christmas at the Botanics?

There are no parking facilities onsite at the Botanic Garden but there is ample parking around the periphery of the Garden. Please use metered parking bays on Arboretum Road, Arboretum Place, Inverleith Place, Inverleith Terrace, East Fettes Avenue, Carrington Road and Fettes Avenue (free after 5:30pm). Resident permit bays should be avoided. No event parking next to the East Gate. There are eight Blue Badge disabled parking bays located outside the John Hope Gateway West Gate entrance on Arboretum Place which must be booked in advance by calling 0131 248 2830.

Who is Christmas at the Botanic Garden suitable for?

Christmas at the Botanic Garden welcomes all visitors and aims to provide best possible access to everyone in order that they enjoy their visit. It is suitable for all ages.

Should I arrive in advance of my trail time?

We would advise arriving 15 minutes before your chosen trail start time.

I am visiting the Gardens during the day, do I need to leave before entering Christmas at the Botanic Garden in the evening?

Yes if you are visiting the Gardens during the day, visitors will need to leave the Gardens before entering for Christmas at the Botanic Garden in the evening. This is to ensure that only ticket holders for Christmas at the Botanic Garden have entry to the evening event. Visitors are welcome to dwell in the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre after the Garden has closed and before Christmas at the Botanic Garden opens.

Can we meet Santa?

At this time of year, Santa is very busy and will not have time to meet children individually. Santa will however be along the trail, be sure to look out for him!

Will there be strobe lighting?

There will be lighting sequences created within the lighting design that will have some flashing lights contained within them, however, these will not be strobe lighting. We have worked to guidelines on photosensitive epilepsy and will adhere to the industry standard of synchronising effects and locking the sequences to ensure that lights do not operate at more than 5 flashes per second.

What should I wear?

Christmas at the Botanic Gardens takes place outdoors and you may need to queue on busy days. Please wear appropriate outdoor clothing and footwear for winter weather. We reserve the right to refuse inappropriately clothed patrons access to the trail if it is felt they are open to a greater risk of injury.

Ticketing

When do tickets go on sale?

General on sale for Christmas at the Botanic Gardens is on Friday 7th June 2019.

Where can I buy tickets from?

You can buy tickets for Christmas at the Botanic Gardens [here](#) or by calling SEE Tickets on: 0844 995 1363 (calls cost £0.07 per minute plus your network access charge).

Do I have to book in advance?

We recommend that you book early. Each timed entry has a limited capacity and the early evening and weekend slots are likely to sell out.

What are the prices for Christmas at the Botanic Gardens?

Entry ticket prices for Christmas at the Botanic Gardens:

	ADVANCE	ON THE DAY
Adult	£17.00	£19.00
Child (4-16 years)	£11.00	£13.00
Family*	£52.00	£60.00

*Family ticket: 2 adults and 2 children (aged 4-16). Children under 4 and carers go free.

All orders are subject to a single transaction charge. For tickets booked via SEE Tickets: £2.00 per transaction for print at home tickets and £2.50 for tickets sent by first class post.

As a member do I get a discount on tickets?

Members will receive £2.00 off their admission ticket for Christmas at the Botanic Gardens when purchased in advance.

How can I organise a group and is there a group rate?

There is a group rate of 10% off groups of 10+ adults. Please contact SEE Groups on: 0844 412 4650 (calls cost £0.07 per minute plus your network access charge).

Alternatively, you can email SEE Groups groups@seetickets.com

Group discounts are not available to book online and apply to adult tickets only.

Can I buy tickets at the venue?

There will be an on-site box office from Monday 3rd June until Sunday 29th December which is located at the West Gate (John Hope Gateway).

How/when will I receive my tickets?

Your delivery options are either E-Tickets (print-at-home) or Standard Delivery. If you choose the E-

Ticket option, your tickets will be attached to your confirmation email. If you choose the Standard Delivery option, your tickets should be with you a week prior to the event.

I chose Standard Delivery when purchasing my tickets but have not received my tickets in the post.

Your tickets should arrive no later than a week prior to your visit. If you have not received your tickets a week prior to the event please contact SEE Tickets on: 0844 995 1363 (calls cost £0.07 per minute plus your network access charge). Alternatively, you can contact the SEE Customer Service team [here](#). You will need to have your Reference Number at hand.

If I am delayed and miss my slot, can I join a later slot?

Yes, we will try and accommodate you on the next available slot.

What are the last entry times?

The last entry time onto the trail will be 30 minutes after your chosen time slot.

Christmas Light Trail

Which Gate should I purchase for at Christmas at the Botanics?

If you are arriving by car, taxi or coach to Christmas at the Botanics, you should purchase for the West Gate (John Hope Gateway) on Arboretum Place (EH3 5NZ), where there is more street parking available. If you are arriving by public transport or on foot you should purchase for the East Gate where the entrance is on Inverleith Row (EH3 5LP).

How long is the trail?

The trail is approximately one mile long. We recommend that it will take approximately 1.5 hours to explore and enjoy all aspects of the trail.

Where does the trail start and what is the route?

Whether you join through the West Gate or East Gate entrance you will still be able to enjoy the trail in full.

Are there toilets on the trail?

There are toilets situated at the West Gate and East Gate entrances and at the Fernhouse Toilets (in the centre of the Garden). There are accessible toilets at all of these locations.

Are dogs allowed on the trail?

Assistance dogs are welcomed at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Pet dogs and other animals are not allowed.

Is the trail dark or covered?

In some areas the lighting will be low level as this is part of the experience. We do encourage visitors to bring along a torch in case of an emergency – this should not be used unless it is necessary.

The trail is not covered and all visitors are reminded that this is an outdoor event and the weather may be inclement. Please wear appropriate outdoor clothing and footwear for winter.

We reserve the right to refuse inappropriately clothed patrons access to the walk, if it is felt they are open to greater risk of injury.

Can I take photographs?

Yes. We encourage you to take photographs and to share these on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram with the hashtag **#christmasatthebotanics**. You can also follow the developments across our Christmas Trails via 'My Christmas Trails' on Facebook.

Access Provisions

What provision do you have for people with specific requirements?

The trail will be created to be as accessible as possible within the context of the natural site of The Botanics. The route is all on hard-standing, flat paths and alternative routes will be provided should they be required for customers with mobility issues.

Accessible toilets are available at the West Gate entrance, East Gate entrance, at the Terrace cafe and at the Fernhouse Toilets.

Do you have disabled parking?

Yes, there are eight spaces directly outside the West Gate Entrance on Arboretum Place (EH3 5NZ). Blue badge holders can park in metered bays for free if displaying their badge.

Is the trail accessible for wheelchair users?

The trail is approximately one mile in length. The route is designed so that it can be viewed solely from hard-standing flat paths, some interactive elements may invite the audience on to grass where additional pedestrian matting will be provided.

If weather conditions mean that the trail is not fully accessible for people using wheeled mobility aids, consideration will be made on a case by case basis to allow tickets to be transferred to an alternative date when the ground conditions are more appropriate.

Can I bring my mobility scooter or can mobility scooters be provided?

Yes you can bring your own mobility scooter and the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre has eight motorised scooters and three wheelchairs for visitors but these must be booked in advance and please note that the demand is always high. The easiest way to book a mobility scooter is by clicking [here](#) or call 0131 248 2909.

Food, Beverage and Retail

Can I purchase food and drink on site?

The Terrace café and the East Gate Lodge will be open throughout the run for hot drinks and snacks. In addition, there will a number of seasonal food and drink chalets serving seasonal hand-held food, catering also for younger visitors. Hot chocolates and mulled wine will also be on offer. Visitors can also toast marshmallows at one of our purpose-built fire pits. Please note that there is no cash point on site.

The John Hope Gateway Restaurant at the West Gate Visitor Centre will be open from 5:30pm until

7:00pm, with reservations in 30 minute increments on days when the light trail is open. Please book your restaurant reservation [here](#).

What shopping facilities are there?

The Botanics Shop is situated in the West Gate Entrance and will be open during Christmas at the Botanics until 10pm.

Cancellation, Refunds and Exchanges

What will happen if the weather is bad? Will the trail be cancelled?

If the weather presents a hazard and a risk to safety, any decision to cancel the event will be taken by 2pm on the day of the event. If you booked your ticket online or by telephone, you will be notified by email and text message and you will be informed of the re-booking process. Customers who purchased tickets at the venue will be contacted by the venue directly with details of how to reschedule. We advise you to check the Gardens website for the latest updates [here](#).

If I am unable to attend a different day, can I get a refund?

If the event is cancelled due to weather and ticket holders are not able to attend an alternative night offered, then a refund will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Where a refund is due, the ticket must be returned within 28 days following the event date. We can also offer tickets for the following year.

I have booked for the wrong day – can I transfer over to another day?

No, we are unable to offer exchanges or refunds once tickets have been purchased. It is noted on the website and at the point of booking that you need to make sure that you have chosen the right date and time slot at the time of making your booking.

I have lost my ticket, what can I do?

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Raymond Gubbay Limited and its ticketing partners SEE Tickets are unable to offer refunds/duplicates on unwanted/lost paper tickets. If you require your E-Tickets to be re-sent to you, you can do this [here](#). Please note that you will need to have your Reference Number at hand and this will render your original tickets invalid.

Sustainability & Ecology

Pollution

Light Pollution

The trail will be architecturally lit by experienced lighting designers who have developed sensitive ways of working in heritage and landscape settings.

Responding to the natural darkness of sites is key to the success of these events. The best visual work is sensitive to light “competition” and the brightness of one light source relative to another. We therefore take advantage of the environmental darkness to reduce the overall brightness of our lighting interventions, and allow ample space within our audience experiences for people’s eyes to attune to the darkness, then to allow them to appreciate the sights and sounds of the natural

environment as a contrast to, and context, for our artistic efforts. We try to avoid continuous lighting of trails and paths, and will only use audience area lighting where it is absolutely necessary for reasons of public safety.

Noise Pollution

Sound installations are created to provide atmosphere and a sense of feeling for an installation. All sounds are targeted and specific to a part of the route and are therefore contained within defined spaces, therefore there is no noise pollution over and above the natural sound level created by the presence of audiences on the trail.

Fuel Usage

Fuel for power generation is kept to a minimum by efficient use of power loadings and low wattage lighting units where appropriate.

Sustainability

- Consideration for the event's sustainability has been built into the planning process for the delivery of this event, the end result of which we hope will be to inspire and engage new and existing visitors.
- The trail designers, Culture Creative, have been appointed on the strength of their experience of working in environmentally sensitive ways in heritage and landscape settings.
- Specific attention is given to power, and where possible we use mains power. Where generators are needed, these are carefully specified and operated to ensure the most efficient fuel usage. Low wattage lighting units are used where appropriate on the trail.
- Culture Creative's design ethos is to take advantage of the environmental darkness to reduce the overall brightness of their lighting interventions, whilst maximising the effects of their artistic efforts.
- Continuous lighting of trails and paths will be avoided, and we will only use audience area lighting where it is absolutely necessary for reasons of public safety.
- Care is also taken to ensure that *we are* considerate of our neighbours who live in the roads adjacent to the venue.

Ecology

Ecological Impact Statement

The event will not be open every night and its impact must be considered both from the standpoint of the venue itself and in relation to surrounding sites.

Method

In order to assess the likely impact of this event both a desk study and workaround surveys are conducted on each site. The route proposed for the trail, is walked and checked on a regular basis with horticultural staff from the venue, this is an ongoing process and will be constantly checked as the design of the event progresses.

General comments

This event is planned and installed, by private company, Culture Creative. Culture Creative specialises in events of this kind which are often in sensitive venues with high biodiversity and important historical heritage. Its staff have valuable experience in minimising any negative impacts which might be anticipated and work with venue staff to meet and resolve any concerns which arise.

The duration of this event spans the end of November to the New Year, the time of year in which there is least wildlife activity. Many protected species such as bats and amphibians should be hibernating. These are unlikely to be affected unless the event passes directly over their hibernation sites. The earliest bird nesting activity is to be expected from February onwards but all the equipment will have been removed well before then. In addition it is open for a maximum of six hours only each night, and with two rest nights on three out of the five weeks of operation. These restrictions on the open nights and times will reduce any impacts upon wildlife particularly as outdoor evening events take place at the venue year-round and resident wildlife has adapted to the existing level of disturbance.

Lighting Trail

The majority of the power used for the trail will come from existing hard power distributed throughout the gardens. Generators used on the route are very quiet and will be inaudible from the trail and from any wildlife habituation. The power will be carried using cabling which has been used previously in sites with wildlife populations with no adverse effects. Much of the lighting will be floor based to highlight trees. The trees form part of the cultivated collections at each venue and their welfare is paramount as part of the planning of this event.

Flora

Where possible routes will be on hard surfaces i.e. paths. They pass through areas which are well-walked by visitors daily and will not take in any sections of grass with sensitive wild floras.

Birds

Sound installations on areas of water where a number of birds have the potential to roost are modified and designed to minimise any potential for damage to birds.

Reptiles and amphibians

There should be no impact from this event upon reptiles or amphibians as they should be hibernating away from the water at this time of year.

Badgers

We monitor activity in setts close to the trail for any adverse effect on the badgers underground. It is quite possible that visitors will glimpse them since the badgers are to some extent used to public presence in the evenings and are very inquisitive. To protect them from ingesting unsuitable foods, badger-proof bins are used at the catering points and any litter put into them at the end of each open evening.

The material to be used for the fire displays in the Fire Garden and fire pits is soya wax and charcoal respectively.

Bats

Every care is taken to ensure that any potential bat roosting holes in trees are not lit directly to avoid any potential disturbance during the bat hibernation season

Overview

Our events are small, tightly contained, and open for limited hours at a very dormant time of year. It is perceived that we do not foresee any adverse effect on wildlife.

Privacy Policy

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh – <https://www.rbge.org.uk/privacy-policy/>

Raymond Gubbay Limited – <http://d28dggydv1gb3f.cloudfront.net/media/1546/gdprdoc1.pdf>

SEE Tickets - <https://www.seetickets.com/content/terms-and-conditions>