# General Information

**What is Christmas at the Botanics?**Now in its fourth year, surround yourself with sparkle as the after dark trail lights up for 2020. You’ll find new moments to share with friends and family – brand new bright lights for winter nights.

Enter into a botanical world festooned with seasonal cheer enhanced by a soundtrack of festive classics. Wander beneath unique tree canopies drenched in Christmas colour. There are hidden surprises too. Watch out as lights seem to tumble from the undergrowth and flash up trees like fizzing fireworks.

Immerse yourself within bouncing lines of light in the laser garden and discover giant luminescent sculptures rising high into the night sky. There are giant baubles and snowflakes where you least expect them and clusters of trees wrapped in ever-changing ribbons of colour. Inverleith House springs to life with choreographed beams of light dancing across its historic façade and the tunnel of light returns with twinkling splendour

This year, why not pause for a moment of quiet reflection at the fire garden, aglow with hundreds of flickering flames. Have yourself a merry little Christmas and complete your walk under the stars with mulled wine and hot chocolate\*. Don’t forget to watch out for Father Christmas along the way.

\*separate charges apply

**What are the dates of Christmas at the Botanics?**Thursday 26th November - Sunday 29th November
Wednesday 2nd December – Sunday 6th December
Wednesday 9th December – Thursday 24th December
Saturday 26th December – Wednesday 30th December
Saturday 2nd January - Sunday 3rd January

**What are the trail times?**4:15pm\*, 4:30pm, 4:45pm, 5:00pm, 5:15pm, 5:30pm, 5:45pm, 6:00pm, 6:15pm, 6:30pm, 6:45pm, 7:00pm, 7:15pm, 7:30pm, 7:45pm, 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 Princes 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](https://www.lothianbuses.com/) 8, 23 and 27 from the City Centre and the West Gate (John Hope Gateway) is served by [Lothian Buses](https://www.lothianbuses.com/) 29, 42 and 24 via Stockbridge.

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

**Can I park at Christmas at the Botanics?**There are no parking facilities onsite at the Botanics 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. There is no parking next to the East Gate.

**Who is Christmas at the Botanics suitable for?**Christmas at the Botanics is suitable for all ages and aims to provide best possible access to everyone in order that they enjoy their visit.

**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 Botanics 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 Botanics. This is to ensure that only ticket holders for Christmas at the Botanics have entry to the evening. Visitors are welcome to dwell in the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre after the Garden has closed and before Christmas at the Botanics opens.

**Can we see Santa?**At this time of year, Santa is extremely busy so is unable to meet children individually, however be sure to look out for him as he will be on the trail this Christmas!
 **Will there be strobe lighting?**There will be lighting sequences created within the landscape lighting design that will have some flashing lights contained within them. There will also be a low voltage laser garden made of thousands of constantly moving green laser beams. All laser units have an output of < 1mW and flash rates of less than 2Hz which are momentary. Therefore all the lighting effects in the garden work to guidelines on photosensitive epilepsy and adhere to the industry standard of synchronising effects and locking sequences, to ensure that none of the lights operate at more than 5 flashes per second.

**What should I wear?**Christmas at the Botanics takes place outdoors and you may need to queue outside 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 Botanics is Monday 13th July.

**Where can I buy tickets from?**You can buy tickets for Christmas at the Botanics [here](https://christmasatthebotanics.seetickets.com/content/ticket-options)

**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 Botanics?**

Non-member entry ticket prices:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  **ADVANCE** | **ON THE DAY** |
| Adult | £19.00 | £21.00 |
| Family | £60.00 | £68.00 |
| Child (4-16 years) | £13.00 | £15.00 |

\*Family ticket: 2 adults and 2 children (aged 4-16). Infants (0-3 years) on the day of the illuminated trail and carers go free. Free tickets must be booked in advance.

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.

**Is there a dedicated drop-off & pick-up area?**At the West Gate/John Hope Gateway there is an area which can be used for drop-off, but it is not dedicated.

**As a member do I get a discount on tickets?**Members will receive £2.00 off their admission ticket for Christmas at the Botanics 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 email SEE Tickets 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?**Subject to availability, you will be able to purchase tickets for Christmas at the Botanics at the on-site box office located in the John Hope Gateway from Thursday 19th November at 2pm. Please note that only Debit and Credit Cards will be accepted.

**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 your chosen date on the illuminated trail.

**I chose Standard Delivery when purchasing my tickets but have not received my tickets in the post. What should I do?**If you have not received your tickets a week prior to your chosen date on the illuminated trail, please contact the SEE Tickets Customer Service team [here.](https://christmasatthebotanics.seetickets.com/customerservice) You will need to have your Reference Number at hand.

**I bought tickets but have not received a confirmation email. What should I do?**Please check your Junk / Spam folders as sometimes the confirmation email falls into these folders. If you still have not received your confirmation email, please contact the SEE Tickets Customer Service team [here](https://christmasatthebotanics.seetickets.com/customerservice). You will need to have your Reference Number at hand.

# Christmas Light Trail

**Which Gate should I purchase for Christmas at the Botanics?**If you are arriving by car, taxi or coach, 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?**The trail leaves from John Hope Gateway at the West Gate or from East Gate and follows a circular route of approximately a mile in length through the Garden.
 **Are there toilets on the trail?**There are toilets situated at the West Gate and East Gate entrances and at the Fernhouse (in the centre of the Garden). There are accessible toilets at all of these locations

**Are dogs allowed on the trail?**Assistance Dogs which are highly trained 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 illuminated trail 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.

**If I am delayed and miss my slot, can I join a later slot?**We will try and accommodate you on the next available slot within the trail operational hours on the day.

**What are the last entry times?**The last entry time onto the trail is at 8:15pm\* with the illuminated trail closing at 10pm\*.

\*Subject to change, see website for details.

**What time does the illuminated trail finish?**All customers must exit the illuminated trail no later than 2 hours after the last trail start time and in all case by **10:00pm.**

**Can I bring my drone?**Drones are not permitted.

**Can I take photographs?**Yes. We encourage you to take photographs and to share these on social media with the hashtag **#ChristmasAtTheBotanics.** You can also follow the developments across our Christmas Trails via ‘My Christmas Trails’ on Facebook and Instagram.

# 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.

**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 tarmac paths and hard standing paths as in previous years.

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](https://www.rbge.org.uk/visit/royal-botanic-garden-edinburgh/accessibility/) or call 0131 248 2909.

**Am I eligible for a free carer’s ticket?**

A disabled person purchasing ticket may bring one essential carer companion free of charge.

**I need more than one carer, what should I do?**

If you require more than one carer, please visit Customer Service [here](https://christmasatthebotanics.seetickets.com/customerservice). You will need your Booking Reference Number at hand.

**Is there a ‘quieter access’ session?**

These sessions are for adults and young people who would love to experience Christmas at The Botanics without the usual high volumes of people. The sessions will begin at twilight before the illuminated trail opens to the public, making the transition into the dark much easier. For Christmas at the Botanics 2020, this will be held on Wednesday 16th December.

The capacity of these sessions will be limited to ensure that the trail remains less crowded and more relaxed.

It should be noted that on many of our trails the path network is not tarmac, and although there are stewards along the route to assist you, the trail will follow the natural contours of the landscape and paths can be steep at times.

Ticket prices for our quieter sessions are consistent with the rest of the illuminated trail, however all carers go free. When booking please talk to our staff about any additional support you may need for exiting the illuminate trail through quieter areas or help with parking closer to the start of the trail.

To book these sessions please use this link

<https://christmasatthebotanics.seetickets.com/tour/christmas-at-the-botanics-quiet>

# Food, Beverage and Retail

**Can I purchase food and drink on site?**At present, this area is under review. More information regarding catering will follow shortly.

**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?**Christmas at the Botanics is an outdoor illuminated trail. If the weather presents a hazard and a risk to safety, any decision to cancel the illuminated trail will be taken by 2pm on the day of the illuminated trail. 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. We advise you to check the website for the latest updates and before you travel.

**If I am unable to attend a different day, can I get a refund?**If the illuminated trail 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 illuminated trail 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](https://christmasatthebotanics.seetickets.com/customerservice). 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 the illuminated trail. 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 illuminated trail’s sustainability has been built into the planning process for the delivery of the illuminated trail, 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 areconsiderate of our neighbours who live in the roads adjacent to the venue.

**Ecology**

**Ecological Impact Statement**
The illuminated trail 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 the illuminated trail 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 illuminated trail progresses.
 **General comments**
The illuminated trail is planned and installed, by private company, Culture Creative. Culture Creative specialises in illuminated trails 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 the illuminated trail 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 illuminated trail 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. 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 the illuminated trail.

**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**
The sound and light installations on areas of water where a number of birds have the potential to roost or feed are modified and designed to minimise any potential impact or damage to birds. Many ducks at this time of year will migrate to warmer climates and our resident Kingfisher will still be able to be seen in our other ponds that are also part of its feeding territory. Please ask at the Visitor Welcome Team for the best places to spot our Kingfisher over the winter months.

**Reptiles and amphibians**
There should be no impact from the illuminated trails 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 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**
The illuminated trails 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://d28dgqydv1gb3f.cloudfront.net/media/1546/gdprdoc1.pdf>

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