

DALMAHOY

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Entertainment

The Edinburgh Festival is, without doubt, the highlight of the capital's entertainment calendar. This summer extravaganza centres on two festivals that run concurrently — The Edinburgh International Festival and The Fringe Festival, both of which focus on the performing arts. The former invites touring professionals from all over the world, whilst the latter welcomes new talent and crowds of students and wannabees.

Up-and-coming comics frequent The Pleasance, whose outdoor bar is open late into the night, and the Gilded Balloon. The comedy is one of the best things at the Festival and a must on the stand-up circuit — you are very likely to see acts that will later appear on TV. Amateur theatrical and dance productions are often of a very high standard, although one of the joys of the Fringe is being the only member of the audience at an obscure, incomprehensible play.

Edinburgh goes crazy during the Festival; it's packed with street-performers, tourists, talent scouts and hangers-on. As there are so many productions on, you are never short of entertainment. If you are at all interested in the performing arts, the Edinburgh Festival should not be left off your summer schedule.

The Edinburgh Military Tattoo also takes place in the summer — during the month of August. The Tattoo is one of the world's finest military displays, attended by over 200,000 people. It's a splendid mix of pomp, pageantry, music, ceremony, entertainment and drama — all set against the stunning backdrop of Edinburgh Castle.

Hogmanay is a ticket-only (ish) affair for New Year celebrations. The festivities stretch over days and cover all forms of entertainment — a programme is available near the end of the year.

Art galleries are everywhere in Edinburgh. From architecture and design, to oils and watercolour, a plethora of disciplines can be found on show. For fine art, the National Portrait Gallery and the National Gallery of Scotland are the must-sees. But it is the contemporary art scene that is particularly exciting in the capital. Formerly thought of as Glasgow's exclusive terrain, Edinburgh now frequently displays fresh Scottish talent and cutting-edge art: the Fruitmarket Gallery is the best for this, whilst the nearby City Art Centre and Collective Gallery are also worth a look. Contemporary crafts can be found at the Scottish Gallery and Nexus Galleries.

Cinema is a popular diversion in Edinburgh. As capital city of the nation that produced Sean Connery, Ewan McGregor and Robert Carlyle, Edinburgh has a fittingly fine selection of cinemas. Lothian Road, behind the castle, offers both types of flicks — Filmhouse Cinema for art-house, and ABC Film Centre for general release. For that multiplex experience there is an Odeon on the other side of town.

Music, Dance and Opera are all on tap to entertain you in this city. You can listen to The Scottish Chamber Orchestra at Queen's Hall, rock at The Venue and indie at the Liquid Room. The best place to experience classical music, ballet or opera, however, has to be the Edinburgh Festival Theatre. There are many venues — from tiny darkened dive to classical theatre — you'll find them all in Edinburgh.

Museums have a fine reputation here and they've got much to be proud of. Educational excitement for kids and grown-ups can be found all-over, but especially in the Old Town. The Museum of Scotland is a must-see, full of ancient and modern exhibits. A visit to the capital is clearly incomplete without a visit to Edinburgh Castle and the Holyroodhouse Palace — the fun and fascination doesn't stop there. The Royal Mile holds many treats, including Gladstone's Land and the John Knox House Museum and it would be a sin for any good whiskey-drinking soul to miss the Scotch Whisky Heritage Centre. To the south of the city centre, the Royal City Observatory is a more space-age experience.

Nightclubs are easy to find in Edinburgh. Clubbers will not be disappointed with the wide choice — indie fans, rock chicks, laid-back lounge lizards and hard-core house fanatics can all shake their stuff here. Cowgate is a popular clubber's haunt, with the Attic, La Belle Angele and Wilkie House offering something for everyone. Not far from here is the rockin' Rocking Horse. Live music at the Liquid Room and gay cabaret at CC Blooms offer twists on the classic club-scene.

Theatre really comes alive during August and the Festival, but happily, the Edinburgh boards are also walked during the rest of the year. Behind Edinburgh Castle, the Royal Lyceum Theatre offers mainstream and avant-garde performances, whilst the Traverse Theatre is a real treat for contemporary writing.