

## Christmas at the Botanic 2017 – FAQs

CATEGORY	QUESTION	ANSWER
General	What is <i>Christmas at the Botanic</i> ?	<p><i>Christmas at the Botanic</i> is a mile long after dark festive trail for all the family.</p> <p>As darkness descends, come and join us in the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh for a magical, botanical and festival illuminated trail. Follow a path through the Garden which will be bathed in glowing colour and experience spectacular light effects.</p> <p><i>Christmas at the Botanic</i> is an exciting new night time trail which will draw upon the inspiration of the natural landscape, providing moments of joy, moments of contemplation and moments where the whole family can enjoy Christmas cheer.</p> <p>This is a brand new, festive event for family and friends to enjoy a whole evening out with seasonal delights of food and drink along the way.</p> <p>In addition to the illuminations visitors will also be able to enjoy seasonal food and drink at the event in John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre and food and beverage stalls situated at intervals around the trail. Late night shopping will also be available in the RBGE shop.</p>
	When is it on?	<p>Friday 24 November – Sunday 26 November  Thursday 30 November – Sunday 3 December  Wednesday 6 December - Sunday 10 December  Wednesday 13 December – Sunday 17 December  Monday 18 December – Sunday 24 December  Tuesday 26 December – Saturday 30 December</p>
	What are the times?	<p><i>Christmas at the Botanic</i> takes place after RBGE has closed to the public at 4.00pm. Gates then open for Christmas at the Botanic at 4.40pm.</p>
	Where does it take place in the Garden?	<p>The illuminated trail follows a one mile loop on the paths of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.</p>
	Who is it suitable for?	<p><i>Christmas at the Botanic</i> is suitable for a wide range of ages – to be enjoyed equally by groups of all ages or family members to enjoy together.</p>
	Should I arrive in advance of my visit time?	<p>No, you only need to arrive at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh at your chosen visit start time.</p>
	Which Gate to I come in?	<p>There are two entrances for <i>Christmas at the Botanic</i>. You will be able to choose from the West Gate entrance on Arboretum Place (EH3 5NZ) or the East Gate entrance on Inverleith Road (EH3 5LP). If you are travelling by car to <i>Christmas at the Botanic</i>, please choose to arrive by the West Gate where there is more on street parking available.</p>

<b>General cont/</b>	Will I miss out on any of the trail if I come in at the East Gate Entrance?	No, we have designed the trail with the two entry Gates in mind. Whether you join at the main entrance at the West Gate Entrance or at the East Gate entrance, you will be able to enjoy the trail to the full.
	I am visiting the Gardens during the day. Will I have to leave the Gardens before entering again for the evening?	Visitors can dwell in the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre after the Garden has closed and before <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> opens.
	Can I come to the Botanics Shop in the evening without a <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> ticket?	Yes the Botanics Shop is open to all visitors until 10pm.
<b>What else is on offer at Christmas at the Botanics?</b>	Can I buy food and drink? Which restaurants will be open?	Yes, the Gateway Restaurant at the West Gate visitor centre will be open from 25 November on Saturdays and Sundays only. Reservations can be booked in advance via SEE Tickets. The Terrace café and the East Gate Lodge will also 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, mulled wine, roasted chestnuts will also be on offer. Visitors can also toasting marshmallows at one of our purpose-built fire pits.
	What shopping facilities are there?	The Botanics Shop is situated in the West Gate Entrance and will be open during <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> until 10pm.
<b>Tickets</b>	When do tickets go on sale?	<p><b>w/c 22 May</b> – Priority Booking for Membership</p> <p><b>w/c 29 May</b> - See Tickets and other agents priority pre-sale.</p> <p><b>Monday 5 June</b> - General Public booking opens – advance rate pricing</p> <p>Tickets go on general sale on <b>5 June 2017</b>.</p>
	Where can I buy tickets?	<p><b>Online</b> Christmas at the Botanics website – <a href="http://www.rbge.org.uk/christmas">www.rbge.org.uk/christmas</a></p> <p><b>Telephone</b> Phone – 08716207051 Calls cost 13 pence per minute plus your network access charge.</p> <p><b>In Person</b> From 5 June – from the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre</p>
	Do I have to book in advance?	<p>Yes, we recommend early booking. Each timed entry has a limited capacity and the early evening and weekend slots are likely to be extremely popular. Any remaining tickets will be available to purchase at the Information Desk at the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre (at the West Gate, Arboretum Place) from 4.30pm on the day but we cannot guarantee that the slot for which you wish to book will have availability.</p> <p>Tickets can also be purchased during Garden open hours from the Visitor Welcome till of the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre. On <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> evenings the</p>

John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre Information Desk will close at 4.00pm and re-open at 4.30pm; it will remain open until 8.15pm, 15 minutes after the last timed entry to the trail at 8.00pm.

How much do tickets cost?

Entry tickets for *Christmas at the Botanics* :

	<b>Early Bird</b>	<b>Advance</b>	<b>On the day</b>
<b>Adult non member PEAK</b>	£16	£16	£18
<b>Adult non member OFF PEAK</b>	£14	£14	£16
<b>Adult member PEAK</b>	£14	£15	£16
<b>Adult member OFF peak</b>	£11	£12	£14
<b>Family price (2 adult + 2 child 4 – 16) PEAK</b>	£42	£48	£55
<b>Family price (2 adult + 2 child 4-16) OFF PEAK</b>	£38	£42	£50
<b>Child price 4 – 16 PEAK</b>	£8	£10	£12
<b>Child price 4 – 16 OFF PEAK</b>	£8	£10	£10
<b>3 years and under, disabled person carers</b>	£0	£0	£0

All tickets are subject to a single transaction charge. For tickets booked via [rbge.org.uk/christmas](http://rbge.org.uk/christmas): £2 per transaction for print at home tickets, £2.50 for tickets sent by first class post. There is no charge for tickets collected from the Information Desk at the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre (at the West Gate, Arboretum Place). Charges may vary by agent.

The schedule has been divided into the following peak and non peak days:

Friday	24th	<b>OFF PEAK</b>
Saturday	25th	<b>PEAK</b>
Sunday	26th	<b>PEAK</b>
Thursday	30th	<b>OFF PEAK</b>
Friday	1st	<b>OFF PEAK</b>
Saturday	2nd	<b>PEAK</b>
Sunday	3rd	<b>PEAK</b>

	<p>Wednesday 6th <b>OFF PEAK</b></p> <p>Thursday 7th <b>OFF PEAK</b></p> <p>Friday 8th <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Saturday 9th <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Sunday 10th <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Wednesday 13th <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Thursday 14th <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Friday 15th <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Saturday 16th <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Sunday 17th <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Monday 18th <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Tuesday 19th <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Wednesday 20th <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Thursday 21st <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Friday 22nd <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Saturday 23rd <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Sunday 24th <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Tuesday 26th Dec <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Wednesday 27th Dec <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Thursday 28th Dec <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Friday 29th Dec <b>PEAK</b></p> <p>Saturday 30th Dec <b>PEAK</b></p>
I'm a Member of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh – do I get a discount?	<p>Yes. RBGE members will be sent an e-communication which provide details of how to claim the Members discount.</p> <p>To redeem the discount, use the link in the e-flyer sent to you on the 22 May.</p> <p>Offer expires 9am on 30 September.</p>
When does the “on the day” ticket price start?	On the day prices apply from midnight on the day prior to your visit.
Can I book a ticket on the day?	Book on the day online at the Botanics website <a href="http://rbge.org.uk/christmas">rbge.org.uk/christmas</a> or at See Tickets: <a href="http://www.seetickets.com">www.seetickets.com</a> - there will also be tickets available at the Information Desk of the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre.
How many people is a family ticket valid for?	The family ticket is valid for 2 adults and 2 children.
Is my ticket for <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> valid for entry to the Glasshouse in the daytime?	<p>No , you will need to purchase a separate ticket for entry to the Glasshouse: adults £6.50, conc. £5.50, children 15 and under free prices including a small donation to the Garden). Last entry to the glasshouses is 3pm, with the Glasshouses themselves closing at 3.30pm. Visitors can dwell in the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre until the first trail at 4.40pm.</p> <p>Please note that all daytime visitors will need to depart when the Garden close at 4.00pm then re-enter at 4.40pm</p>

		for Christmas at the Botanics. They can dwell in the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre during this period.
	Can I leave tickets for collection at the Information desk?	If you're leaving tickets for collection by other members of your party please leave these at the John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre Information Desk at the West Gate entrance. Tickets for collection will be available from 4.30pm on the day of your event. RBGE takes no responsibility for tickets left for collection.
<b>Groups</b>	I would like to arrange a group visit to <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> – is there a group rate for this?	There is a group rate of 10% off groups of 10+.
<b>Ticket queries</b>	If I am delayed and miss my slot can I join a later slot?	Yes, we will accommodate you on the next slot but please be aware of the last entry times. (See below)
	I have tickets for the last slot - but am late - what are the last entry times?	Last entry for ticket holders for both the West Gate and the East Gate is 8.30pm. There can be no admittance after these times as we begin to close down the trail.
	I have booked the wrong date. Can I transfer my ticket to another date?	No. We have tried to make it very clear 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 as we are not able to offer exchanges or refunds once tickets have been purchased.
	I have lost my ticket? What Can I do?	RGBE, RGL and its ticketing partners See Tickets, Ticketmaster, ATG, Red61, Usher Hall and Amazon are unable to offer refunds/duplicates on unwanted/lost tickets
<b>Practical questions about the trail</b>	How long is the trail?	Approximately 1 mile.
	Are there toilets on the trail?	There are toilets situated at the West Gate and East Gate entrances, at the Terrace Cafe and at the Fernhouse Toilets (in the centre of the Garden). There are accessible toilets at all these locations.
	Can you take dogs on the trail?	Guide dogs and registered assistance dogs are allowed within the Gardens. Other dogs are not allowed.
	What is the route for the trail?	The trail runs in a circular loop using the paths of Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.
	Is the trail covered?	No - all visitors are reminded that this is an outdoor event and the weather may be inclement. Please wear appropriate outdoor clothing and footwear. 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.
	Is the trail dark?	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.
<b>Parking</b>	Can I park at the Garden?	There is no parking on site but parking is possible on the roads around the Garden and we strongly advise patrons to park nearby. Weekend parking is free. If coming by car, please select the West Gate entrance at time of booking.  No event parking close to the East Gate, please. This entrance is intended for use only by visitors arriving by bus or on foot.  For further information about parking, click <a href="#">HERE</a>

<b>Public transport</b>		If you are attending the trail by public transport, we recommend you select the East Gate Entrance at time of booking.
	Is there a dedicated drop off & pick up area?	There is a dedicated drop off and pick up area outside and to the left of Arboretum Place (EH3 5NZ).
<b>Access provision</b>	What provision do you have for disabled guests?	<p>The trail will be created to be as accessible as possible within the context of the natural site of the Botanic Gardens. The route is all on hard standing and alternative routes will be provided should they be required for customers with mobility issues and information will be provided for guests who may suffer from ill effects of lighting sequences. Staff will also be on hand to help with a moment of a particularly steep incline.</p> <p>The John Hope Gateway Visitor Centre has eight motorised scooters but these <b>must be booked in advance</b>. The easiest way to book a mobility scooter is by calling 0131 248 2909.</p> <p>Accessible toilets are available at the West Gate entrance, East Gate entrance, at the Terrace cafe and at the Fernhouse Toilets.</p>
	Do you have parking spaces for disabled people?	Yes, there are four spaces directly outside the West Gate Entrance on Arboretum Place (EH3 5NZ).
	Is the illuminated trail accessible for wheelchair users?	<p>The illuminated trail is approximately 1 mile in length .</p> <p>The route is designed so that it can be viewed solely from tarmac flat paths, some interactive elements may invite the audience on to grass where additional pedestrian matting will be provided. Staff will be on hand to help with a moment of a particularly steep incline.</p> <p>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.</p>
	Can I bring my own mobility scooter?	Yes you can.
	I note that there may be strobe lighting in the Illuminated Trail. Will there be white strobe lighting? Will it be possible to detour from the trail to avoid the strobe lighting and rejoin the trail further along?	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.
	Can you take photos on the trail?	You are able to take photos and we encourage you to share these on twitter, facebook or instagram with the hashtag #christmasatthebotanics.

<p><b>Cancellation / Inclement Weather</b></p>	<p>What will happen if the weather is bad? Will the trail be cancelled?</p>	<p>Inevitably bad weather can affect any open-air event. If we have to cancel the event as it unsafe to proceed, visitors will be offered an alternative date/time. No refunds will be offered simply if the weather is inclement. <i>If the decision is to taken to cancel, it will be made at 2pm on the day and bookers will be notified by email. Ticket holders for the evening in question will be offered an alternative date/time. Customers will be contacted by their ticket agent with details of how to reschedule. Customers are advised to check the website, <a href="http://www.rbge.org.uk">http://www.rbge.org.uk</a> for the latest updates.</i></p> <p>If the event is cancelled by us due to bad weather and patrons are not able to attend an alternative night offered, then a refund will be considered on a case by case basis. We can also offer tickets for the following year.</p> <p>If we are not able to offer visitors an alternative night, we can also offer tickets for the following year. Failing this, refund will be offered.</p> <p>Where a refund is due, the ticket must be returned within 28 days of the event due date. The transaction fee is not refundable under any circumstances.</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	<p>Light Pollution</p>	<p>The trail will be architecturally lit by experienced lighting designers who have developed sensitive ways of working through heritage and landscape settings over the last 7 years.</p> <p>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.</p>
	<p>Noise Pollution</p>	<p>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.</p>
	<p>Fuel Usage</p>	<p>Fuel for power generation will be kept to a minimum by efficient use of power loadings and low wattage lighting units where appropriate</p>
	<p>Is it not quite wasteful having all these lights on in the Gardens at night? Is this festival sustainable?</p>	<p>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 to RBGE.</p> <p>Our trail designers, Culture Creative, have been appointed on the strength of their experience of working in environmentally sensitive ways in heritage and landscape settings.</p>

		<p>Specific attention is given to power, and where possible we are using RBGE's mains power. Where generators are needed, these are carefully specified and operated to ensure the most efficient fuel usage. Low wattage lighting units will be used where appropriate on the trail.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Care will be taken to ensure that <i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> takes into consideration the neighbours who live in the roads adjacent to RBGE.</p>
<p><b>Ecology</b></p>	<p>How will the trail impact on the wildlife?</p>	<p><b>Christmas at the Botanics – Ecological Impact Statement</b></p> <p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>Christmas at the Botanics 2017 is in its first year at RBGE, but follows on from similar previous successful events. This event takes place in the evening after the Garden's normal closing time with the main feature being an illuminated trail around the Gardens, with retail/catering points around RBGE's two existing commercial areas, John Hope Centre and Inverleith House.</p> <p>The event will run from 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017 until 30<sup>th</sup> December 2017 but will not be open every night. It is intended to open on 30 non-consecutive nights during this period from 4.40pm until 10pm. Up to 4,500 people per night are anticipated with arrivals, each bringing 500-600 people, split between two entry points and staggered by timed entry tickets, 30 minutes apart to maintain comfortable spacings. Each round tour of the trail is expected to take around 90 minutes but, once in, visitors may spend as long as they wish up to the closing time.</p> <p>The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) is an internationally renowned centre of excellence in plant biodiversity research and biodiversity conservation. It provides habitats for a number of species of plant and animal, this temporary event must be considered both from the standpoint of RBGE itself and in relation to surrounding sites.</p> <p><b>Method</b></p> <p>In order to assess the likely impact of this event both a desk study and walkaround surveys have been conducted. The route proposed for the trail, are walked and checked on a regular basis alongside horticultural staff within the garden, this is an ongoing process and will be constantly checked as the design of the event progresses.</p>



**General comments**

This event has been planned and will be 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 are eager to work with staff at RBGE to meet and resolve concerns which arise. This company has designed, installed and managed similar events at Royal Botanical Gardens Kew, Blenheim Palace and properties belonging to English Heritage, National Trust for Scotland and National Trust. 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 five hours only each night, and with 2 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 evening events are common within the gardens 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 will only be used to supplement this power if absolutely necessary. If used, the generators are very quiet and will be inaudible from the trail and from any wildlife habituation. The power will be carried using approximately 15km of 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 RBGE and their welfare is paramount as part of the planning of this event.

**Flora**

All parts of this year's route are on hard surfaces i.e. paths. The route passes through areas which are well-walked by visitors daily and does not take in any sections of grass with sensitive wild floras, so no impact upon RBGE rich wild flora is to be anticipated from this event.

**Birds**

The Pond is an area where a number of birds have the potential to roost. Design of the sound installation has been discussed and modified to minimise any potential for damage to birds.

**Reptiles and amphibians**

Smooth or Common Newts are found here but should be hibernating away from the water at this time of year. There should be no impact from this event upon reptiles or amphibians.

**Badgers**

		<p>The route passes close to potentially active setts, but not close enough to have 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 it has been agreed that badger-proof bins will be provided at the catering points and any litter put into them at the end of each open evening.</p> <p>The material to be used for the fire displays in the Fire garden and fire pits is soya wax and charcoal respectively.</p> <p><b>Bats</b> Whist there are no known bat roosts along the illuminated trail route, every care will be 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</p> <p><b>Overview</b> This is a small, tightly contained event, open for limited hours at a very dormant time of year. It is perceived that we do not foresee any adverse effect on RBGE wildlife.</p>
<p><b>Who is it organised by?</b></p>		<p>RBGE has partnered up with entertainment promoter Raymond Gubbay Ltd who are well established for producing concerts and live events though out the UK. They regularly promote concerts and ballet at the Usher Hall and Edinburgh Playhouse. They have also co-produced the highly successful <i>Christmas at Kew</i> and <i>Christmas at Blenheim</i> illuminated light trails.</p> <p><i>Christmas at the Botanics</i> has been developed in collaboration with Culture Creative, producers of trails that celebrate the heritage and landscapes of stunning locations across the UK. They have previously worked with English Heritage, the National Trust, Forestry Commission, and the National Trust for Scotland.</p>