



MUST LOVE FESTIVALS

*A collection of handpicked
travel stories from festivals
across Europe*

With stories and photos by

Time Travel Turtle | Beers & Beans | Travel Unmasked | Inside The Travel Lab | Bridges and Balloons | Fotostrasse | Alicia Explores | The Shooting Star | Flora the Explorer | Girl vs Globe | Smaracuja | The Travel Tester | Fevered Mutterings | Hejorama | Travmonkey | BudgetTraveller

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

DIFFERENT FESTIVALS BY DESTINATION

CANADA

1. An Introduction to Rodeo: My First Stampede [Williams Lake Rodeo](#)
2. 33 Things Travel to Canada Taught Me [Canada Day Vancouver](#)
3. Under the Skin of the Calgary Stampede [Calgary Stampede](#)
4. Talking to Professional Clowns in Canada [Street Performers Festival Edmonton](#)
5. Music Made for Summer [Folk Festival Winnipeg](#)
6. What Terry Fox and Canada Day Taught Me About Patriotism [Canada Day, Ottawa](#)
7. A Guide to Montreal Jazz Festival [Montreal Jazz Festival](#)

IRELAND

8. Galway Film Festival [Galway Film Festival](#)
9. Why You Should Visit Dublin for Bloomsday [Bloomsday](#)
10. Its About The Festival as Much as the Arts [Galway International Arts Festival](#)
11. Ulster Bank International Arts Festival [Belfast International Arts Festival](#)
12. Temple Bar Tradfest, Dublin [Tradfest](#)
13. “We Take Halloween very Seriously in Derry” [Banks of the Foyle Festival](#)
14. Why Dublin is an amazing place to celebrate New Year [New Year’s Eve Festival](#)

LATVIA

15. The Tiny Latvian Town with Eight Hundred Years of History [Cēsis Town Fair and Cēsis Art Festival](#)
16. 7 Things to do in Riga in Winter [Staro Rīga Festival of Light and Independence Day Celebrations](#)

GERMANY

17. Welcome to Oldenburg [Oldenburg International Film Festival](#)
18. Rudesheim Wine Festival: Sneak a Peek Into Germany’s Wine Culture [Rudesheimer Weinfest](#)
19. Reviving Medieval Traditions at Imperial City Festival [The Imperial City Festival of Rothenburg](#)

GIBRALTAR

20. Food From a Melting Pot [Calentita Food Festival, Gibraltar](#)
21. The Best Acts of Gibraltar Music Festival 2015 [Music Festival](#)
22. 10 Reasons Why You Should Visit Gibraltar [National Day](#)
23. Searching For the Spirit of Place in Gibraltar [Literary Festival](#)

NEW ORLEANS

24. What a Wonderful World Louis Armstrong [Satchmofest](#)

GREAT BRITAIN

25. The Garlic Festival, Isle of Wight, England [Garlic Festival](#)
26. The Suffolk Adventure [Latitude](#)
27. Brighton’s Epic 25th Pride Festival: Carnival of Diversity [Brighton Pride](#)
28. Art Beats Weather at Durham’s Lumiere Light Festival [Durham Lumiere Festival](#)
29. A Guide to Manchester Bands and Music History [Manchester Punk Festival](#)
30. I Went to Europe’s Biggest Viking Festival [Jorvik Festival](#)
31. On The Isle of Wight’s Fringe [Ventnor Fringe Festival](#)

ROTTERDAM

32. Turning Japanese in Holland [North Sea Around Town](#)
33. Tracking Down Arts and Architecture [Kunst in Het Witte de Withkwartier/ Contemporary Art Festival](#)

THE HAGUE

34. The Magic of Mobile Restaurants at Food Truck Festival [TREK Festival](#)
35. Meet the Dutch Royal Family at Prinsjesdag in The Hague [Prinsjesdag](#)
36. A Border Where Music and Words Meet [Crossing Borders Festival](#)

FESTIVAL CALENDAR

MEET THE BLOGGERS

THANK YOU!

CONTACT US

Introduction

It was the Spring of 1859. A young man by the name of Samuel Clemens, was guiding his steamboat along the banks of the Mississippi River. When he anchored his steamboat and came ashore to New Orleans he was assailed by a wondrous vision. The whole city had come alive under the influence of Mardi-Gras.

So moved was our steamboat pilot, that the next day he raved about the festival to his sister Pamela Moffett in a lengthy missive:

“It has been said that a Scotchman has not seen the world until he has seen Edinburgh; and I think I may say that an American has not seen the United States until he has seen Mardi-Gras in New Orleans.”

Our steamboat driver would later be known throughout the length and breadth of America and the world at large as the estimable writer Mark Twain.

Mardi Gras, the pre-Lenten festival, was no doubt a sight to behold but its image was amplified, its vision was lent wings in the hands of a gifted storyteller and it is has been preserved for all posterity through the medium of his gifted words.

In many ways, Mark Twain’s description of Mardi Gras was a precursor to our present day storytelling project Must Love Festivals.

Festivals are an embodiment of a sense of celebration, a joyous feeling of sharing a common love that transcends all boundaries.

This year Must Love Festivals transcended all country and state barriers and our gifted storytellers searched for this sense of celebration in the most unlikely places.

They celebrated the joy of the written word at Gibraltar’s Literary Festival. They celebrated the beauty of music at the Manchester Punk Festival, New Orleans’s Satchmofest and the Montreal Jazz Festival. They celebrated ancient civilisations (Jorvik Festival, York) and imperial cities (Imperial City Festival, Rothenburg). They celebrated that most humble of food items – the much-maligned vegetable called garlic and also found incandescent light at the Lumiere Festival in Durham and at the Staro Riga Festival of Light in Latvia.

What is more, our seventeen storytellers visited these festivals and have brought their thirty-six personal stories to your doorstep in the form of this e-book.

I hope that you will feel moved to visit these festivals in person. Apart from providing outstanding spectacle, these festival stories will hopefully provide you with points of meaningful connectivity.

Arpita Bhattacharya
Must Love Festivals Ebook Editor



CANADA

1 An Introduction to Rodeo: My First Stampede by Abigail King

insidethetravellab.com

Williams Lake Rodeo

The bell rings, the gate slams open and we're off.

Dust, sweat and incredible courage fire out into the stands as horses buck, lassos swirl, bulls charge and grown men fly through the air like projectile rag dolls.

I have, quite literally, quite staggeringly, never seen anything like it before.

From time to time, something more elegant appears. A pause, a glance, a glide between the raw, rugged mayhem. But whatever it is, it doesn't last long.

At least, that was my first impression.

And it was completely and utterly wrong.

Strict Rules

Rodeos are strictly timed, strictly regulated



procedures, consisting of a fixed pattern of events that must be completed within a regulated timeframe.

This should, I suppose, come as no surprise, but it does. Rugby matches have rules and fixed times. So, too, do boxing rings.

I think it's because I'd fallen into the trap of seeing the rodeo as something of a circus stunt or a battle for survival rather than the athletic endeavour that it actually truly is.

The Bucking Bronco

For example, on the bucking bronco, the idea isn't simply to stay on the horse. The idea is to move in time with the horse, while it bucks in the buckiest way possible.

There's half a mark for the rider; half for the horse.

And there's no special prize for still being on when that buzzer sounds: it's essential, an entry requirement not the final flourish of a job well done.

The cowboys speak slow but move fast and it's not just their conduct towards their colleagues that the judges are watching.

One harsh move towards an animal, and the athlete is banned, full stop.

Rodeo Myths

To be fair, I hadn't heard many of these before I arrived. Once I started tweeting, I heard them thick and fast.

- Animals are beaten to perform
- Bulls have barbed wire tied around their balls
- Animals die here as a matter of routine

And more.

Behind the Scenes at the Canada Rodeo

I took the chance to go on a behind the scenes tour (which most rodeos offer) where you can see the animals and their handlers up close and feel the equipment they use in the palm of your own hands. **Blunt metal skims across skin and spongy white fleece feels soft to the touch.**

I also went a stage or two further and interviewed different athletes, handlers, volunteers and stock contractors. These are not just farm animals rounded up on the day. They are bred to buck. Or bred to be fast.

And most interesting of all, the animal's owner only makes money when the animal competes; the industry is rigged to make sure that it's in the owner's financial interests for the animals to live long, healthy and productive lives.

If only our human businesses could be designed that way.

So let's clear a few things up: those are all completely false.

Animal Care

What's more, rodeo rules insist that vets check the animals frequently throughout the event to ensure they are not distressed.

There is no such provision for the athletes. So does that mean that I have no animal rights concerns?

Not entirely. You know me. Think too long about anything (as I usually do) and I can see more sides, issues and counter-arguments than a kaleidoscope spinning with speed.

However.

I eat meat. I wear leather. I drink milk (well, at least I did until I got sick.)

These rodeo animals live far better lives than those that went into my dinner. And, I'd wager, a great deal better than many humans get, including those in our armed and emergency services. These events, apart from the bull riding, give an insight into how we all once depended on this blend of courage and craziness to survive – and in many instances, still do.

So. It leaves me thinking.
And watching.
And remembering that these are some of the most polite, kind and welcoming people I've met on earth.



Canada Rodeo: Team Spirit

There's a core team spirit here, and given the stakes, there has to be. The rodeo clown and bullfighters keep the athletes safe. The pick-up cowboys, (true expression) pick up cowboys on horseback at the end of each round. Volunteers help man the chutes. Vets check the animals.

And, because this is Canada, many hands make maple syrup and pancakes. Because the rodeo is in town.

2 33 Things Travel to Canada Taught Me

by Abigail King

insidethetravellab.com

Canada Day Vancouver

Earlier this summer, I travelled to Canada, whipping through the west from Vancouver to Williams Lake, Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg, all in search of unusual journeys and festivals to tell you about. Along the way, aside the in depth stories, I noticed plenty more.

So, just for fun, here are:

33 Things Travel to Canada Taught Me

1 - That hotels have **DIY waffle stations**. Squeeze batter from a machine as you would a soda. Pour it into a waffle iron, flip and wait until it beeps.

2 - The wait for the beep takes a disconcertingly long time for a first time foreigner (but that all's well that ends well.)

3 - That maple syrup comes in plastic cubes – and come with everything.

4 - On the subject of food, bannock (s) pop up at breakfast time too. They're First Nations fried bread often served with cinnamon and sugar.

5 - First Nations is the "correct" term when talking about people who descended from the people who lived here before the Europeans arrived. Not Native Canadians, which you might guess at from the USA.

6 - **There's a song about how much Canadians love hockey And people sing it.**

7 - That "Western culture" extends to this fine land in the tradition of rodeo.



8 - That rodeo has rules.

9 - And so does wearing a cowboy hat.

10 - **That Canada claims all kinds of celebs I hadn't realised were from these parts like...**

11 - Shania Twain

12 - Celine Dion

13 - Ryan Gosling

14 - Justin Bieber. Enough said.

15 - There are rodeo princesses and queens

16 - And Indian princesses

17 - And British princesses. (Liz is still the head of state and she's on the printed money.)

18 - Some coins, meanwhile, **are called loonies and toonies**. This phrase is said with a straight face and serious manner.

19 - When it comes to wildlife, there really are bears.



20 - They can apparently outrun a horse

21 - There is hunting but ever so strict gun control

22 - Strangely, Vancouver oozes with marijuana

23 - Yet still has the nickname of "the no fun city"

24 - As well as being labeled the happiest place to live in the world

25 - Though I'd reward it for being the most scenic landing view on arriving in a big city

26 - That Canada shares plenty with its neighbour south of the border, like...

27 - Filling glasses with more ice than water. Cold teeth, head colds and thirst all round.

28 - Setting the air conditioning to sub-arctic levels

29 - Forcing arithmetic into every single purchase. Thought you'd agreed a price? Oh no. There's sales tax to be added on (at some mystical figure) and an arbitrary (whopping) 20% for service. Ouch! Just pay people properly, businesses, and then we can all avoid this debacle!

30 - Calling Britain England.

31 - But unlike Independence Day in the US, **Canada Day marks a different road to independence.** The day itself, 1st July, commemorates the enactment of the British North American Act. Signed in 1867, this joined together the three colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and the province of Canada into a single country called Canada within the British Empire. While Westminster still kept some control, Canada's road to independence came in slow but steady steps until all power was surrendered in 1982 with the passing of the Constitution Act.

32 - **With varying degrees of success, Canada claims to have invented the zipper, the Wonderbra, peanut butter and even basketball**

33 - And they're very pleased to be Canadian! But, then again, maybe I knew that anyway. Didn't you?

Celebrate Canada Day in Vancouver

Head to (where else?) Canada Place to see how the city celebrates Canada Day. You'll find a stage, music, food stalls and plenty upon plenty of Canadian flags. The day finishes with a flourish and a firework display.

3 Under the Skin of the Calgary Stampede

by Abigail King

insidethetravellab.com

Calgary Stampede

The Calgary Stampede

There are moments in life that you never see coming: moments when clothes, colours, flavours, words, and maple syrup pancakes combine in a kaleidoscope of surprise and deep-fried sandwiches.

The Calgary Stampede takes those moments then flings them into a dirt-stomping, buckle-shining extravaganza of weeklong events that left me gasping for breath after just two days.

Dubbed "the greatest outdoor show on earth" by some locals, and the "trampede" by others, one thing's for sure: Canada's biggest rodeo is no place to go if you're looking for a quiet life. Amid the brilliant bucking horses, fluorescent First Nation feathers and campaigns to further the reach of science, you may also find yourself posing with a giant beaver.



Getting Serious About the Calgary Stampede

Every year, Calgary attracts over one million visitors to its 10-day Stampede, bringing and binding together almost everything that is modern Canada: rodeo and Western culture, modern art, music and dance, First

Nations traditions, agricultural education, science education, language education, free-spirited Burning Man soul mates and deep-fried everything with the odd organic treat... together with a whole lot of drinkin' and dancin' and foot stompin' fun.

If any one of those components puts you off - it shouldn't. This place is big enough and bold enough for everyone to find a home, from bright-eyed children to, well, those prefer the Cowboy bar and it's slogan "the most fun you can have with your boots on."

The Calgary Stampede Rodeo

At the heart of the Stampede is the rodeo, a strictly monitored two and a half hour event that attracts professional cowboys from across the world to compete for some of the best atmosphere - and money - in the sport. To really appreciate rodeo, you need help to understand the rules and I'd highly recommend taking a behind the scenes tour or (better yet) visiting a smaller rodeo first where there's more chance of interaction. Talk to the vets, cowboys, volunteers and pick up cowboys (it's not what it sounds like) to put the competition into context.

In particular, I could address many of my concerns around animal welfare: the animals in professional rodeos receive better healthcare than most people across the Americas and the legends about tying barbed wire to genitals in order to make bulls buck turns out to be utterly false.

Stock contractors (the people who own the animals) have an economic as well as moral imperative to look after their animals: a bucking bronco costs around \$100 000 dollars and only earns money if healthy and happy enough to buck. If well cared for, such a horse can have a career spanning over 20 years.

Competitors are disqualified at any sign of animal cruelty and vets are on hand throughout the entire event, checking on the animals more often than anyone checks on people. If you're against farming in general (no eggs, dairy, meat, fish, leather etc) or pets (cats, dogs, horse racing) then this is unlikely to suffice. For everyone else, it's more likely to make you more closely question how much thought and care you've given to your food in the past when you've asked for your eggs to be sunny side up.

But whatever your stance on the rodeo (and the associated agricultural education areas) you could still lose a week here seeing everything else.

The Calgary Stampede at Night

At night, the rodeo arena converts itself into a high level scaffolding stage where dancers, singers and acrobats put on a show to rival an Olympic opening ceremony (well, the show put on in 2015 was the brainchild of an Olympic show director so its flamboyance reflects its roots.)

But for a European visitor, perhaps the most striking aspect lies in the small details. Cowboy hats. Cowboy boots. Belt buckles and big hair and rodeo princesses and the frequency of deep southern drawls.

For many, Western culture is a real way of life based on hard work on ranches and a certain code of hospitality. To see that away from the



Crazy Food at the Calgary Stampede

The food stalls love to shock, aiming to out-fry each other through dunking oreos, "peanut butter 'n' jelly" sandwiches and cheese donuts into the batter.

The Indian Village at the Calgary Stampede

An Indian village (yes, that is the politically correct name) invites guests into genuine tipis. Young, approachable interpreters roam around to talk about growing up in modern Canada as part of any one of the local First Nation tribes.

movies and come to respect it is one of the greatest treats that travel has to offer.

My stampede experience left me with plenty more questions: about stampede royalty, First Nation history, 21st century interpretations and more.

But a girl can only cover so many things at once. And while those deeper thoughts swirl around, clarification does arrive on simpler matters.

Those deep-fried oreos? There is a reason they haven't caught on.

Everything else at The Stampede? Go check it out for yourself!

4 Talking to Professional Clowns in Canada

by Abigail King

insidethetravellab.com

Street Performers Festival Edmonton

A Little Secret

Can I let you in on a secret? I'm a little scared of clowns.

Don't ask me to explain the whys, wherefores and what-have-yous. There's just something about them that leaves me uneasy.

So, too, with street performers, (many of whom are, of course, clowns.)

From the ones that grab your hand and don't let go to those others who call out names while you're not looking, it's all one big gag reel with yours truly at the butt of the joke.

And there's no escape, under normal social circumstances. I mean, we could scream and run for the hills but to most folk that would seem like an overreaction.

And so, instead, I grin and bear it. (While wondering whether everyone else is doing that too.)

Edmonton Street Performers

All of which brings me to covering the Edmonton Street Performer's Festival, a gig that left me more unnerved than the time I got into the water with a croc.

So here's the lowdown.

I was in western Canada covering five festivals for the wonderful mustlovethefestivals project. Rodeo fascinated me; Vancouver I longed to see.

And Winnipeg, well, it just has too amusing a name to miss.

But Edmonton? And street performers? It was honest work, it was intriguing work. It was a wild card.

Sunday Morning Silence

And so it was, that I found myself one late Sunday morning standing all alone in Sir

Winston Churchill Square, with passer by after passer by wondering whether or not I'd been mistaken, that instead I meant the Fringe Fest. The joke's already begun, I thought. They've sent me to the wrong place.

Lest I be mistaken for a street performer from standing still for too long, I ducked into the nearby Art Gallery of Alberta. All swirling, whirling sheets of metal, the architecture alone made it worth the trip.



Art Gallery Alberta

Canada has a reputation for being a friendly place, but with few exceptions, it's extraordinary to notice how friendly indeed it is. I got chatting with the guys on the desk, the security guard monitoring the silver knots and scarlet daubs of paint and again with a fellow visitor who alerted me to the best view up on the second floor.

I emerged to see a corn dog van, long squidgy balloons, hula hoops and tents that told me I was on the right track.

A friendly traffic guard confirmed as much.

Follow the Wires

But the square still snoozed its way through Sunday morning and it was no easy task to find out who's who and what's what.

Who was audience and who was performer? One wrong move on my part and I'd be forced to shake someone's hand till the sun went down while everyone else laughed and tracked down the best elephant ears and beaver tails on sale.

No, there had to be a better way.

Eventually, I decided to follow the wires. Even for live street performances, the night shows need lights. Lights need wires and wires need someone to operate them. All I had to do was follow the wires and look for men in black, the signature style for backstage crew the world over.

I found them. I found my media pass. I was in. ***Who needs a media pass for an open air event that's free for the public?***

Someone who's afraid of clowns, that's who. It was time to get to work.

Picking Professional Street Performers

"It's all about saying no and wearing my grown up pants."

So says Shelley Switzer from the Edmonton Street Performers' Festival, and I'm assuming at this point that Canada, like America, means trousers with pants, not undies as Britain does. But then again, British pants in this case would perhaps be more fun.

Regardless of sartorial preference, the serious topic she's talking about is in fact the festival's tough selection process for performers.

As the Artistic Producer, Switzer is the mastermind behind this year's event. She joined the project in 1989 and she graciously agreed to talk to me about what the whole thing is and what it tries to achieve.

And she's not aiming low.

"Street art is the last democratic art form," she tells me. "It's the only sort that's accessible to everyone. And it's the only one

where the value is expressed at the end of the show.

"At the theatre, you pay a price (if you can afford it) before you go in. You don't know what you're going to see. If you don't think it's any good, well, it's too late. You've already paid.

"On the street, the lights are all on. There's nowhere for the performers to hide and there's nowhere for the audience to hide. And at the end, people vote with their wallet.

"It's the only place where a businessman can share the same joke and smile the same smile with a homeless guy on the street."

A Festival in Hot Demand

The Edmonton Street Performers' Festival relies heavily on volunteers, another aspect Shelley is keen to emphasise.

"We have everyone from doctors (dodgy people - Ed) to the homeless helping out around here. We don't turn anyone anyway." Most volunteers need to take two week's annual leave, a hefty commitment in a fragile global economy, but the festival is in hot demand.

From a performer's point of view, not only is it prestigious but it pays well too (though no-one will quote me a figure. Fair enough, I suppose, I wouldn't either to someone I'd just met in the street.)

"People in Edmonton know what to do," says Darka, another of the festival's organisers. In my foreign confusion, I ask what she means. It turns out it's another of those things you're just supposed to know when it comes to travel in the northern Americas: tipping.

So how much is a decent tip?

"It depends. But people here know what to do."

And, er, hapless foreigners?!

"Whatever you feel is right."

Hm.

Tipping policy from the US mixed with politeness from Canada. What's a girl to do?

Immerse myself in the crowds and watch and learn, of course.

Besides, Shelley has just introduced me to another of the festival's key acts.

He says he's a clown.

An angry clown.

I make appropriate pleasantries. Try to chat even. But it doesn't work.

He's got that look. I'm nervous.

I need to be among the people.

I'm off.

Into the Fray

Armed with a media pass and a mighty big camera, I feel safe. Enough.

I figure that no clown in his (or her) right mind would want to rob themselves of any publicity by dragging me into the drama. Plus squinting at the LCD screen seems a good enough excuse to avoid eye contact.

I wonder where to start.

Behind the chicken poutine and deep fried pickle vans, two men in suits are saying nothing but folding newspapers.

On a Sunday. Eccentric commuters or...

One of them does a handstand.

Aha!

Geronimo!

It's time for an act.

The two men carry on silently for a while. I learn later that this is the Crowdbuilding Phase, one of the hardest aspects of street performance.

The pros don't pitch up and start performing. They deliberately delay, pause, tease and take their time. When the crowd is big enough, they begin.

Humiliation

Within moments, one hapless voyeur finds himself the mix, standing on one leg as a hat stand, holding an umbrella. Moments later, another man is humiliated and a small girl takes to the (fake) stage.

And here's where it gets interesting.

By the end of the second day, I've seen the act through to its completion several times from several angles. And it's always at this point that I feel truly impressed.

The gym antics (see photos) really SHOULD be the stuff that stands out. But in this cruel and fickle world, being good at something just isn't enough.



You need to package what you can do. You need to know how to entertain. How to handle the people. How to feel their pain, guess their rewards.

And know how to deal with an eight year old child who may just choose the 10 dollar bill over a lollipop, pee on your shoulders or actually well and truly steal the show with her quips, sass and sweetness.

Fair play and three cheers to them all. Each time I watched, something else happened and each and every time, they dealt with it with panache.

The English Gents

Interestingly, they're not from England at all but Melbourne, with a laid back Aussie drawl. Hamish McCann plays the silent partner during the act. Off "stage," he's warm and approachable.

"We never learn from our mistakes," he laughs when I ask him. "That's why we keep making them."

He explains that their street performance work rose out of "desperation" during a lean period for their usual acrobatics and gymnastics work.

They liked the idea of the English gents because of the props, the style and the fact that they've always found the Brits "a bit funny."

"We're silent in the crowdbuilding phase. That's how we get them. And then we wondered how to keep them..."

"So we stripped," added partner Denis Lock. "And that seemed to work."

It certainly did.

But then there's the third part.

"The hardest part," according to Denis and that's the part where they ask for money.

"I've seen great acts, really great artists walk away with nothing because they forget to sell

at the end," he says. "And others who haven't put on such a good show do much better because they've got excellent sales skills."

Ah, and so it is with so many creative walks of life.

As they say in the act, they're professionals. "That's why we stand on the street and beg for money."

That's part of the act, too, as it happens, since they spend nine months a year in London as part of the prestigious La Soiree

All in, the English Gents have certainly been the highlight of my time in Sir Winston Churchill Square. But that's not an easy claim to make. I've seen a ballerina who melted the most cynical of hearts with her ribbon fluttering routine involving children, a local breakdancing band, fine folk on stilts and a man who earns a living by roping the audience in to pelting passers by with bricks of bread (yes, it's cruel, but oh, it's so funny.)

I even plucked up the courage to stand and watch some clowns.

So is it time for me to put myself behind me, get over my shyness, shake someone's hand and get roped right in?

After all, they're a professional, talented bunch, we're in friendly Canada, and in all seriousness, really, what could possibly go wrong?

What do you think?

5 Music Made for Summer by Abigail King

insidethetravellab.com

Winnipeg Folk Festival



*They dance, they dream, they come to close
Their eyes, amid the butterflies
Deckchairs, rug chairs, grass chairs, stone
They watch the masters on their throne
And when the twilight fills the sky
The air plays soft sweet lullabies
String guitars and tight, taut drums
Sticky candy
More free hugs
Each year the ground fills fast and fresh
With children, grannies, Sunday best
In hippy flowers and thick plaid shirts
They sing, they dance, they sway, they burst
Onto the green beneath the stars
They sing, they listen, just because*

Every summer in Winnipeg

The Winnipeg Folk Festival takes place every

year in a vast patch of land called the Birds Hill Provincial Park. Bathed in hippy-love sunshine and sprouting corn dogs, elephant ears and beaver tails from fairground vans, it's a surprisingly mixed crowd and a surprisingly mixed line-up.

Actually Not A Folk Music Festival

Despite the folksy name, music here ranges from funk to gospel with Indie, Americana and bluegrass to boot.

"It's a celebration of life," says Lynne Skromeda, the Executive Director, when I talk to her about **this four day event that invites over 70 performing bands and entices over 80 000 people to hike into the Canadian wilderness.**

(That's something of an exaggeration, that last point, in a country with real life polar bears,

glaciers and moose. But still, we're about an hour from the city and for the rest of the year, there's nothing here but grass and sky. And over 132 days of snow.)

"It feels like an escape," says Skromeda. "And people come back here year after year. From Winnipeg, from Dakota, Minnesota. Other isolated places."

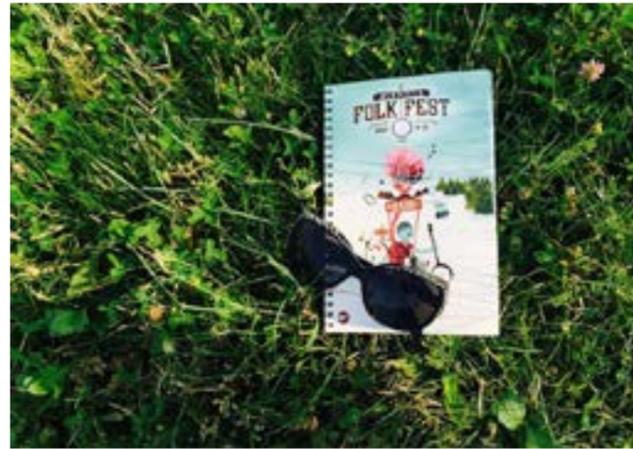
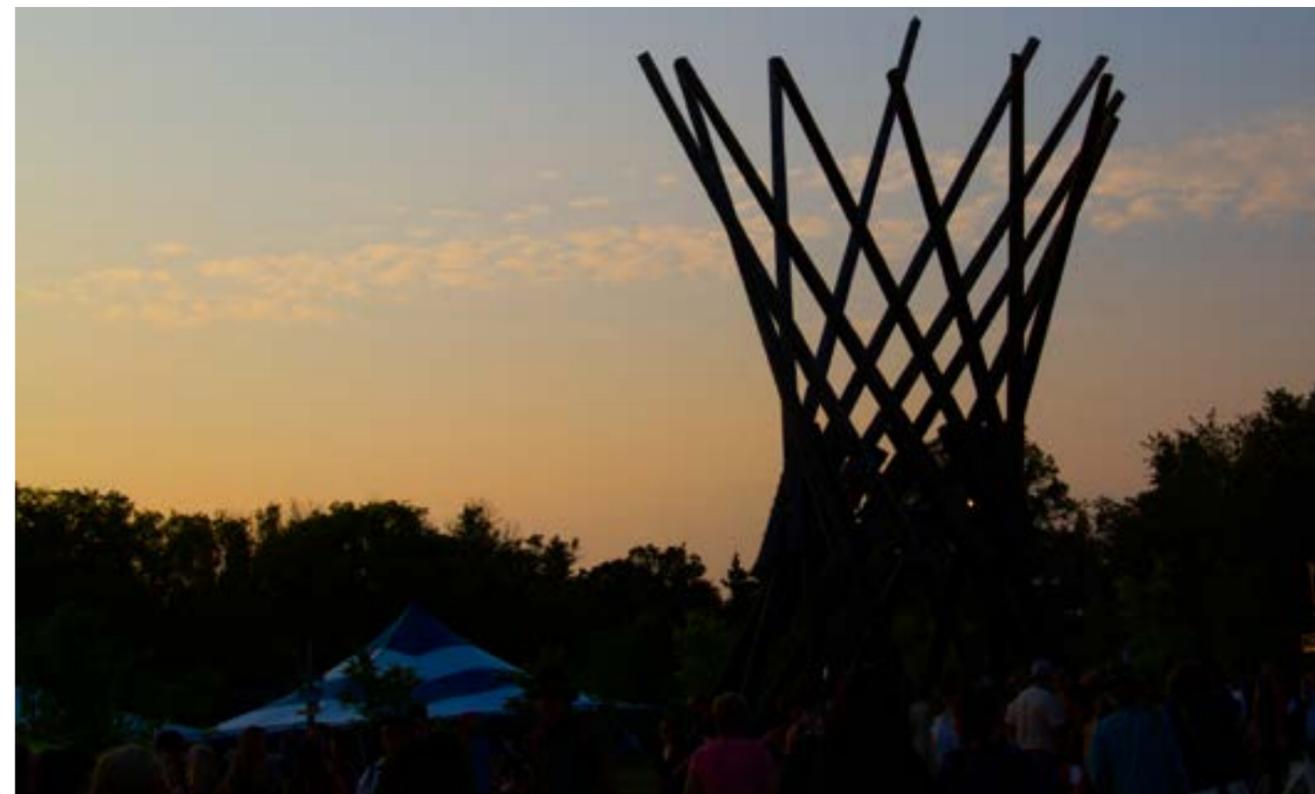
"We have jam sessions with four or five bands on stage at a time, around a theme. That's unique," says Skromeda.

"Someone proudly came up to me and said that they had been coming here since they were six years old. People grow up together at this festival. It's like a badge of honour."

Eco Credentials at the Winnipeg Folk Festival

Another badge of honour is the festival's commitment to sustainability:

"We have water fountains for refills and all our plates and cutlery are 100% compostable." They aim to leave no mark behind and are trying to bring the 80 000 revellers along with them.



But away from the logistics, the planning, the stages and the sugary beaver tails (am I back to those already?) it's important to remember the most important thing for all ages to do: listen to the music and have fun.

Isn't that what summer and music festivals are all about anyway?

6 What Terry Fox and Canada Day Taught Me About Patriotism by Kash Bhattacharya

budgettraveller.org

Canada Day, Ottawa

"I am proud to be Canadian because this country is strong, bold and beautiful. Canada is multicultural and accepts immigrants for who they are and accepts their country and colour, sharing its beauty with every country in the world. Canada has very generous people who are willing to give to other countries and Canada is peaceful" Marika, aged 9

"True patriotism: Kids tells us why they're proud to be Canadian"

- Canadian Living Magazine.

I wasn't sure about the act of patriotism before visiting Canada.

That is maybe due to the fact I have never truly loved one country.

I was born in England and lived there for a few years before I moved with parents to Calcutta



at the age of 9.

While I love India for all its beauty and faults, it has never truly felt like home to me.

I guess it is difficult to build a strong attachment

with a place when you travel as much as I do. Nevertheless, the ideal of patriotism is something that I admire in people. It is an ideal alien to me, but one I would like to desperately believe in.

I love watching global sporting events like the Olympics or the World Cup. Seeing the emotions on the faces of athletes and their countrymen as their national anthem plays is something that always leaves a lump in my throat.

I came to Canada, Ottawa specifically to celebrate their 'National Day' here as part of my Must Love Festivals project. I had no clue what to expect about the event and about Canada in general when I arrived on a quiet rainy June afternoon earlier this year.

'Come to Canada with an open mind', was the brief but wise advice from the taxi driver, Francois who escorted me to my hotel from the airport. He was originally from Albania. Canada had been home for 20 years.

'We live in a world ruled by fear...' he continued... 'We listen to everyone and no-one. We're too scared to open our minds...our eyes and see places without a preconceived opinion. So yeah..that's my tip. Be open. And most importantly have FUN. We are a city and nation that likes to have FUN.'

I was moved by his words but at the same time unsure. He said the word FUN loudly and fiercely, the same way your father would awkwardly tell you to have fun when he dropped you off at school.

As we edged into the city, rolling past lush green meadows and mirror like clear lakes,

the streets looked a bit quiet to me. It was the day before National Day. I expected to see a trail of beers cans, an invisible thread of happiness, leading me to the scene of the fiesta. It was only when I arrived on the street of my hotel in downtown Ottawa, did I spot a merry throng of 16 something youngsters. Their faces were painted red and white. They were thoroughly inebriated, slightly unsure in their movements but in good voice as they clambered their way up to Parliament Hill, the site of the main festivities. The big stage was empty except the audio guys doing a sound check. The hill was glowing in the dark with the red and white flashing strobe lights. The stage was set for the festivities. It was quiet but there was already a buzz of anticipation on everyone's faces. I went to bed, excited about what lay ahead.

I woke up early next day feeling morose. By the time I headed to the breakfast table, I had perked up. The cold shower did the trick. I daubed myself with a sunscreen factor 50. I was carrying a Canadian paper flag that I had found lying in my room. Ravenous, I stuffed myself with Canadian buttermilk pancakes with maple syrup, which were delicious. I think I ate one too many, they were that good. I needed to walk and digest it. I stepped out of the hotel and suddenly found myself swimming in a sea of humanity, riding on a rising tide of red and white, a surging wave that reached its crescendo on Parliament hill. Everywhere my eye looked, from the ground to the towering skyscrapers of Ottawa's Downtown, there was red and white. The decibel levels were going up a few notches. There was a multitude of red and white blow horns. Is there a strange level of agreement in the world that the louder you are, the more patriotic you are?

The air was heavy with the smell of hotdogs. It is the fast food of choice on Canada Day. All kinds of hotdogs. Polish hotdogs. Hotdogs with poutine. Hotdogs with strange toppings like Kraft Dinner or sour cream and Doritos. There were people of all ages, people from

all walks of the world. I can't remember seeing such a huge, culturally diverse crowd of people anywhere on my travels. It was a heart warming moment to be just standing there in front of Parliament Hill as a list of the country's most celebrated musicians lined up to entertain the crowd. I then drifted off a little to escape the crowds.

On every street corner, there was a little party going on. DJ's, some guys beatboxing, a guy in a kilt busting his lungs and playing the bagpipes (trying to raise money for his Masters degree) and then a 70 something guy swing dancing with a young lady in a hot red dress and the biggest white heels you can imagine.

The rest of the day is a series of serendipitous happy events. I took a break from festivities and headed to the Musee Des Beaux Arts, the National Gallery of Canada. All museums are free on Canada day, a great opportunity for tourists and locals alike, to make the most of the day and see some of the city's fantastic museums for free. How cool is that? I stumble into the final day of the local Ottawa Jazz Festival, which was again FREE and had some fab musicians.

In the evening, I savour a most amazing fireworks display from Parliament Hill.

In almost every scene I saw before me on that day, Francois's words eerily echoed in my ear. 'We are a city and nation of people that likes to have FUN.'

Being patriotic can be fun? Somehow the act of being patriotic I feel has taken a bit of a beating in recent years. It could be to do with the fact that people mistake patriotism for nationalism.

When I think of patriotism, I reflect on the fiercely fought independence referendum in Scotland recently where there were strong arguments placed for and against the idea of Scotland being its own nation. The 'Yes' campaign, some argue was being driven by a



blind wave of nationalistic fervour rather than rooted in any real economic reason. Others would argue that the yes vote was not about nationalism but actually based on apathy of the current economic system and the real lack of choice in British politics.

I lived in Scotland for 9 years and it is probably the closest thing to what I might call 'home.' (Give me a few years in Madeira and maybe my opinion will change). So when the debates took place about whether Scotland would be independent, I was really hooked. There are strong emotional ties there because I have many friends still there. The more I heard about the bitterness, negativity and scare mongering from the 'no' campaign, the more my heart longed for the 'yes' campaign to win. My emotions here were not being driven by nationalistic fervour but more the need to believe in someone who is willing to be positive and offer a vision of the future. Offer us hope.

Ultimately that's what we humans live for. Hope.

"In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years."
Abraham Lincoln.

Hope. If there was one person in Canadian history that was the embodiment of hope, then that person was Terry Fox.

I didn't know who Terry Fox was until I came to Canada. I remember seeing his striking statue in front of Parliament Hill on National Day and wondering who he was. A young determined looking boy with a wonderful curly mop of hair. Kids were draped around his neck to get a birds eye view of the festivities. Elders stood solemnly at his feet in silent reverence.

The following day, before leaving Ottawa I paid a visit to the Canadian Museum of History. It is a beautifully laid out museum, rich in detail and offering a wonderful insight into the magnificent layers of Canadian culture and history. It was here I discovered the man behind the statue. There was an entire exhibition dedicated to him and his epic 'Marathon of Hope.' Who was Terry Fox? **"Terry" Terrance Stanley Fox** was a Canadian



athlete, humanitarian, and cancer research activist. In 1980, aged 21, with one leg having been amputated because of cancer, he embarked on a heroic cross-Canada run to raise money and awareness for cancer research. Although the spread of his cancer eventually forced him to end his quest after 143 days and 5,373 kilometres (3,339 mi), and ultimately cost him his life, his efforts resulted in a lasting, worldwide legacy. He set out with a goal to raise \$1m through his run and along the way that became a goal to raise \$1 for every Canadian, which at the time would have been \$23m. He reached that goal before his untimely death. Till date, \$650m has been raised.

I don't whether I was tired. Sometimes travelling solo can be an intense, lonely and emotional experience. However, there were a few moments, walking through that exhibition that I started choking and feeling a swell of tears ready to burst from my eyes. That jug of water got me.

At the start of the Marathon of Hope Terry

dipped his leg in the Atlantic Ocean and collected this water. He intended to pour it in to the Pacific Ocean at the end of his journey. Ultimately, Terry never made it to the Atlantic Ocean. However, his mother Betty Fox kept that jug of water in her home where it lay for three decades. After Mrs Fox's death in late 2012, it is one of the dozens of artefacts from Mr. Fox's life that were gathered together for the first time, in this exhibition. The exhibition also features two of Terry's prosthetic legs, the camper van that he, Darrell and friend Doug Alward ate and slept in. You can see personal items that Terry wore or used on the journey including his worn out Adidas shoes.

The exhibition was an intimate, very moving and personal journey into the short but amazing life of Terry Fox.

One that will stay with me for many years. It has been 35 years since his untimely death. However, the spirit of Terry Fox burns brightly in every Canadian. He continues to inspire a new generation of people, young and old who continue to run and walk and cycle to raise funds for the Terry Fox Foundation.

So what did Terry Fox teach me about life, patriotism and being Canadian? In the end, patriotism is not just about holding your national flag aloft and singing your national anthem. True patriotism aspires to be something more than that. It is about sticking together as one nation and overcoming all odds, however daunting they maybe. It is about empowering yourself and your fellow countrymen.

It is an ideal, a dream that we can live in and create a better world if we demand it. Ultimately Terry's dream is the dream of every Canadian. Mine too. Possibly even yours?

7 A Guide to Montreal Jazz Festival

by Kash Bhattacharya

budgettraveller.org

Montreal Jazz Festival

2 million people arrive in Montreal for the Montreal Jazz Festival. Whether you are a jazz fan or not, everyone in their lifetime should make a pilgrimage to the Montreal Jazz Festival.

"It's first and foremost a big party. 10 days of partying. People forget that Jazz music is the music of the party people. This festival is all about letting your hair loose and having fun," when Vincent, Comms Director of the Montreal Jazz Festival was asked as to why 2 million people descend upon Montreal to make it the biggest Jazz Festival in the world.



Headline acts in the past who have rocked the show include Oscar Peterson, Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, Bob Dylan and the legendary B.B King (who died earlier this year) who was a longtime friend of the festival. It was fitting that this year's festival, 36th year in existence was dedicated to BB King with a free concert in his memory on the final night, which featured Bob Walsh, Kim Richardson and Jimmy James, amongst others.

Not just Jazz acts. There is something to suit everyone's musical taste at this festival. The festival launches every year with a big free show at the Place des Festivals and this year

the honour went to the indie sensation, Beirut. Other household names that performed this year included Erykah Badu, Huey Lewis and the News and Jamie Cullum.

Tips and Insights

Montreal in a few words? Alive, historic, food heaven and yes, they sure know how to party here.

Montreal is festival city. On the last weekend of the Jazz Festival when I visited, there was several other festivals and events taking place: Carifesta, Montreal Cirque Festival, Poutinefest, Percussion Festival, Picnic Electronik and also Comic Con. The good news is that even on the rare weekend when there are no festivals, the party continues here. The nightlife hotspots are on Rue Crescent, Boulevard St-Laurent, and Rue St-Denis, as well as Old Montréal.

The Vieux Montréal has lovely historic core, that is very Victorian English in style (English elites ran Montreal's show in the inner city mid 19th century) with cobblestone streets and a bustling waterfront. Waterfront is home to a few stationary food trucks such as Muvbox, Porchetta and Mister Felix and Mr Norton that are definitely worth checking out.

Montreal is a foodie's paradise. The rich ethnicity of the city means that you can savour a diverse range of food: from Haitian food to Italian, the best bagels, smoked meat and then you have the heart stopping poutine. This Quebec dish made out of French fries with melted cheese on top, topped up with lots of a brown sauce is a must try for foodies. With over 20 different types of poutine to try and open 24 hours, the place to go to eat Poutine is La Banquise on 994 Rue Rachel E. Take time to explore Marché Atwater (chill in Premiere Moisson with a bowl of their cafe au

lait) one of the city's oldest public markets and the fabulous bustling Marché Jean-Talon, the largest open air market in North America. Talking about food, do take time to explore Mile End in Montreal, which amongst many things is home to the legendary Fairmont and St. Viateur bagel shops and the Dieu du Ciel brewery.

If all this food is making you thirsty, back in town pop into Benelux and choose from their wide selection of top-quality homemade beers. It has a very cheerful vibe, nice staff, lots of outdoor seating that make this the ideal summer setting. Plus do visit during their happy hour between 5 and 7 for discounted beers.

To get a sense of your bearings and perspective hike up to Mont Royal and the Kondiaronk lookout from where you'll get cracking views of Downtown Montreal. Sunsets, as you can see are pretty epic from here too.

Montreal has a fabulous live music scene. My pick is 'Quai des Brumes' in the hip neighbourhood of Le Plateau. Quaint D shaped bar, stained glass and thick deco wood, high white ceilings and cosy corner booths. Great atmosphere and live bands every night.

Top Festival Tip

If you are on a budget and can't afford the big-ticket shows, the good news is that there are dozens of free outdoor concerts every day. The free concerts take place in the Place des Arts. Accommodating up to 60000 people, this square is jam packed in the evenings but still never feels too crowded and suffocating. With seven easily accessible outdoor stages, you could spend an entire day (or an entire week) wandering from one fantastic show to another. To help plan your schedule, pick up the 200 page long free program which has an easy-to-read schedule of events and a map. You'll find a copy of the programme at any tourist information centre or simply download the free iPhone application. Also, the opening and closing concerts are free but usually crowded so my tip is to get there early to get a good view.



Keep an eye on the festival website to see what they have up their sleeves for next year.

Money Saving Tip

Montreal is a city best explored on foot and all the neighbourhoods like Plateau, Mile End and Vieux Port are very walkable. If you need to jump from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, the city has a clean, cheap and efficient metro system. A single journey on bus or Métro costs just C\$3.

Personal Highlight

Visiting Kem CoBa in Mile End. Choose their Mango Sorbet and Dulce de Leche soft ice cream. It is the taste of summer in Montreal.

Top Tip: Where to Stay

I stayed in the HI hostel in downtown Montreal. It's clean, comfortable with the choice of dormitory style and private rooms, staff are friendly and helpful plus the free Wifi is excellent: what more could you want? Hostel offers a filling, free breakfast till 11am, they organise a bunch of daily activities from walking tours to pub crawls plus they have their very own cafe/bar/bistro in the basement where you can sip on craft beers from local Quebecois microbreweries. Personal lockers are available (padlocks not included), as well as towels on request. Kids 5 and under stay at no extra charge.



8 Galway Film Festival by Randy Kalp

beersandbeans.com

Galway Film Festival



On the western fringes of Ireland, Galway (Gailimh) is a bohemian beacon. Recognized as one of Europe's best cultural cities, Galway melds tradition, art, and pleasure in a way that few cities can pull off. Colourfully painted pubs and outdoor cafes add to the buzz of the medieval town, where students make up a quarter of the population. Shops selling handcrafted Claddagh rings, Aran sweaters, and second-hand bookstores make it far too easy to lose track of time (and money). It is Galway's vibrant culture that puts it in the league with the likes of San Francisco and New York City, despite it only being a fraction of the size.

Considered the 'most Irish' of Ireland's cities, as Galway is the only place where you're likely to hear Irish spoken, it may come as a surprise then that the city boasts of a creative food scene. That's not to say there's any shortage of traditional Irish food to be found.

McSwiggan's Restaurant offers up some of the best Irish cuisine in the city, not to mention a great craft beer list. However, for those craving something different, these three restaurants will do the trick.

Loam

Located near Eyre Square, Loam is reimagining what Irish cuisine used to be. With its hip décor and open floor plan, the chefs at Loam are driven by their passion for creative, yet, simple seasonal dishes. The restaurant works closely with local farmers and producers to highlight the delicious flavours of western Ireland. For wine enthusiasts, Loam's wine list showcases an excellent selection of organic, biodynamic wines from small family run vineyards. Its wine bar offers a more relaxed affair where guests can pair wines with a small plate menu featuring local and house made charcuterie, snacks, cheeses, and pickles.

La Salsa

This family-run Mexican restaurant offers up large Tex-Mex style dishes at a good price. After spending more than a decade in the San Francisco Bay Area, eating some of the best Mexican in food in the country, the owners decided to bring Mexican food to Galway when they moved back to town. Drawing inspiration from the Mexican food served in San Francisco's Mission District, the restaurant is a welcome addition to Galway's flavourful food scene, and a must-try for anyone, including vegetarians, needing a Tex-Mex fix.

CHI Asian Bistro

While Galway has no shortage of Asian bistros—many, including Chi Asian Bistro, sell cheap, delicious noodle boxes—CHI Asian Bistro's flavours stood out among the pack. Situated in the heart of Galway, the restaurant offers diners (and takeaway lovers) an array of classic dishes as well as regional favourites from Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, and China that use locally sourced produce and ingredients. Additionally, the menu includes an array of vegetarian and vegan dishes as well as gluten-free Thai curries.



Money Saving Tips

- When it comes to eating cheap in Galway, Asian noodle boxes are your best friend. For about €5, you can feast on a takeaway box that's not only filling but delicious too.
- The Galway City Museum, which offers free admission, covers the city's history from 1800 to 1950, featuring permanent and touring exhibitions that highlight the city's rich history.

Did You Know?

- Galway was abandoned temporarily in the mid-17th century after a Spanish ship introduced the Bubonic plague to the city, killing nearly 4,000 residents.
- In addition to being Ireland's largest medieval church still in use, St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church is also believed to be where Christopher Columbus worshiped in 1477.
- Galway got its nickname "The City of the Tribes" from the 14 families that ruled the city during its Anglo-Norman period.

Your Personal Highlight

Attending the premier of the excellent film 'My Name is Emily' at the 27th annual Galway Film Festival. The film was written and directed by Simon Fitzmaurice, who is paralysed from motor neuron disease (MND) and can only speak with his eyes. Not only was the Irish director in the crowd for the premier of his first feature film, but he also held a Q&A following the screening.

9 Why You Should Visit Dublin for Bloomsday by Abigail King

insidethetravellab.com

Bloomsday

He stood on a street corner and took a deep breath.

“and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.”

Dublin: Awash with Literary History

In a city full of literary history, pursuits, and festivals, **Dublin excels itself with Bloomsday**. Held every 16th June since 1954, Dubliners celebrate arguably the greatest work from arguably one of their most talented authors by retracing many of the steps and the scenes from the book.

Ulysses, the book it’s all about, takes place in Dublin within the course of a single day: 16th June 1904.

We follow two men in particular, Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, as they stumble through the trials and tribulations of a fairly standard day before Bloom creeps home to his unfaithful wife, Molly.

A Day in Dublin

They take in, among other things, a funeral, a strip parlour and an open-air beach, not to mention roaming through father-son relationships, grief, infidelity, racism, nationalism and quiet, understated, marital love, all set against the unmistakable salty air of Dublin.

But I’m getting ahead of myself.

The day, both in bookland and in real life, begins with breakfast, in particular this

nutritional nugget from the start of chapter four.

‘Mr Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls. He liked thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards, a stuffed roast heart, liverslices fried with crustcrumbs, fried hencods’ roes. Most of all he liked grilled mutton kidneys which gave to his palate a fine tang of faintly scented urine.’

Inner Organs. Quite Tasty Actually.

And so I found myself with a plate of inner organs in the James Joyce Centre, searching for inner and outer relish while a costumed Bloom and Molly romped through the pages with both passion and panache.



It followed the walking tour of Dublin that included the memorable speech about the perfumed breasts, from Marty Gilroy of the James Joyce Centre itself.

Marty spends Bloomsday guiding tours, heaving breasts and all, and I wonder whether or not he feels it’s worth it.

“Oh, yes, it’s incredibly important,” he tells me. “Bloomsday is about trying to take the book away from the realm of academia and to make it accessible to everyone.”

“Because that’s what it’s really about, away from the chapter by chapter references to Greek mythology, it’s this great tome that’s about everything – and yet nothing at all.”

This, apparently, was one of Joyce’s main aims, **to bring honesty into literature through ruthless attention to details**. There’s nose-picking, urination and even a masturbation scene amid the more high level debates.

Unsurprisingly, this did not go down well in the old conservative, Catholic Ireland.

Controversy

Joyce left in 1904 and spent most of his adult life abroad, in Zurich, Paris and Trieste, although his work focused solely on Dublin.

“Ireland exports all its talent,” mutters Dubliner Mena Byrne who’s joined us on our route. “I love Ireland,” she tells me “but it was only when I left the country that I realised the stranglehold the church had on us all. I sat in Hyde Park listening to two girls talk about boys and women’s issues and I couldn’t believe it. But that was back in the day, things are changing now.”

Indeed they are. Only days later, Ireland voted to allow same sex marriage.

And Ulysses itself tackles nationalism and the power of the Catholic Church, when taken in a small-minded way, through a man who mirrors the one-eyed Cyclops of the original odyssey in Greece. Apparently, Joyce viewed the Gaelic Revival movement as culturally myopic.

“It’s a complex text with many layers,” concedes Marty, who secretly recommends

readers skip the first three chapters if they’re finding that the going gets tough.

“I struggled with it the first time,” confides our fabulous local guide Ali. “But then everyone has a moment when they just go ‘boom.’”

Blooms and Mollys in Sandycove

Apart from anything else, this opens up a new challenge for the day. How many (of the many) people out celebrating in Dublin have actually read the book cover to cover?

A quick street poll of costumed Blooms and Mollys tends to yield the following result.

“Yes, but only the dirty parts!”

Highlights of Dublin

By the end of the day, we’ve taken in the Guinness-lit stone of central Dublin, the waves around the Martello Tower where Joyce himself once lived and the heather-tinged cliffs in Howth, the seaside town where Molly said yes (though, to be truthful, we snuck there the day before as well as the sprawling Glasnevin Cemetery that also features in the book.)

But it’s the plan for the evening that for me held the biggest draw.

In the hallowed halls of Belvedere College, Joyce’s former stomping ground, intellectual heavyweights David Norris and Stephen Fry





assemble to discuss the importance of the whole thing (there's another confession at this point too. Readers may know Fry from all sorts of things but I will forever hold a place in my heart for his role as Melchett in the unforgettable Blackadder.)

No-one dares to ask whether Fry has read the book and the rapid fire discussion mirrors the day, ranging from heavyweight literature to the nature of religion and finding the time to fit in a reference to grindr.

And at the end of it all I find myself wondering why it is exactly that people should visit Dublin for Bloomsday.

Why visit Dublin for Bloomsday?

Perhaps it's the nudge to take another nibble at a must-read literary book.

Perhaps it's the change to throw on a straw hat and tuck into grilled kidneys.

Or perhaps it's just the chance to join in with a city when it's in a good mood. As the velvet Molly and Blooms strolled past

the Martello Tower while youngsters stripped and splashed into the waves, a foreign voice asked a hip-hop local to explain what it was all about.

Uber cool and dangerously relaxed, he shrugged, looking even cooler.

His answer was simple.

"It's Bloomsday, man."

10 Its About The Festival as Much as the Arts

by Michael Turtle

timetravelturtle.com

Galway International Arts Festival

On the first evening, I almost miss the concert. I don't blame myself, though. I blame the Irish and their almost magical ability to make you live in the moment.

I had spent the afternoon exploring the city of Galway and had noticed a couple of nice pubs. I stopped into one of them on my way to the venue. The sun was shining so I sat in

It felt like I was catching up with old friends. Perhaps I was... just new old friends.

I'm in town for the Galway International Arts Festival – one of Ireland's premier cultural events and, in fact, one of Europe's top arts festivals these days. The focus for my stay is clearly the arts – it's in the name of the event – but the drinks and conversations with my new



an outside area with my Guinness. It must have only been ten minutes later that a group of locals called me over and invited me to join them. I pulled up a chair and we started talking. One story turned into another; one drink turned into another. One joke led straight to another one; one drink led straight to another one. Before I knew it, I had lost track of time.

old friends are also an important part of the experience. It's about the 'festival' as much as the 'arts' and about 'Galway' as much as the 'festival'. And it's the people who make Galway what it is.

I do make it to the concert in time – thanks to a casual glance at the clock and a quick panicked



exit. This is one of the headline events – Irish band Kodaline (who, interestingly, I saw last year at the Belsonic Festival in Belfast). They're the kind of band that can command a stage and embrace a crowd. Here in Galway, though, they seem even more connected than the last time I saw them. I think it has something to do with the venue – a Big Top tent erected in a park by the river. It's just a short walk from the city centre and creates an atmosphere that transports you into the moment.

Over the days that I explore the festival, this is one of the aspects I enjoy the most – the way the venues take you through the city on a geographical journey but let you focus on the events once you're inside. And I can see how focus could be a problem because there is always so much going on.

This year, more than 200,000 people will attend the Galway International Arts Festival. There are almost 400 events or exhibitions across the city in 25 venues. For those who live here or come for a long stay during the

festival period, there are always new things happening. For me, who is just here for a weekend, there is more than enough to fill a few days.

I've come into the event with a motivation (although not a detailed plan) to see a good mix of events and the first afternoon I arrive, I head straight to a comedy show at the popular pub, The Kings Head.

It's an Irish comedian. Fitting. There's something so comfortable, so appropriate, about an Irishman telling jokes in a small pub. Patrick McDonnell is his name and, while he pokes some lighthearted fun at the international guests, the bulk of his routine is about local issues – the church, the recession, the history with the English. It's almost a conversation rather than a presentation (like some of the best stand up comedy) and a good transition into my Irish surrounds.

Galway is well suited for festivals and it hosts quite a few during the year –

celebrating everything from literature to oysters. It embraces a party and so parties embrace it. Galway is known as the city that people from Dublin come to for their hen and stag parties. It does not seem odd to stumble upon a man performing acrobatics on a metallic arc, as I do when I find the Man On The Moon performance.

The population of Galway is around 75,000 but it feels so small in the centre. It's easy to walk around and even when you think you're lost, you pop up somewhere you recognise within minutes.

And that's one of the great things about holding an arts festival here. The 25 venues are all so close together that you can easily get to anything you want. I spend half a day walking around to all the art galleries and appreciate the variety. Different media, different themes, different countries.

There's the exhibition by Russian artist Varvara Shavrova in an industrial shed that really speaks to me – paintings, drawings and photographs of her travels that evoke feelings and moods more than specific places or times. There are the video works of French artist Sophie Calle that are about the journey of creation rather than the finished works. Louise Bourgeois has a series of drawings on display in the Galway City Museum that are a good reason to walk through the museum and see some local exhibitions. And then there's my highlight – Australian artist Patricia Piccinini and her sculptures. She creates an unsettlingly beautiful world of humans and creatures that blend the imagination with reality.

The Galway International Arts Festival brings international artists to this part of Europe – but also launches new endeavours by established locals. One of the flagship events of the festival is a new play called The Match Box by Irish playwright Frank McGuinness (best known for the play 'The Factory Girls'). One evening I join the audience for the intense performance, which has a solitary actor

(Cathy Belton) onstage for more than an hour and a half. Over the course of the evening, she explains why she is all alone in a house in the countryside and unravels the events that have led to this moment. It's captivating and an incredible testament to her abilities that she can hold the crowd enthralled for such a long time all by herself.

I think the most defining moment, for me, at the festival is of three women. Let's call them divas, because that's what they call themselves – **The Giant Divas**.

These three women roll through the streets of Galway one evening, high atop enormous dresses of frills that elevate them five metres above everyone else. As they roll along, they sing. It's no Irish ditty, though. They blast out opera, building to crescendos and stirring the crowds gathered along their path.

It captures the spirit of the Galway International Arts Festival so well. Not only is it a free event that brings the community together, but it is a blend of populist and classical. It is colourful, it is fun and – most importantly – it uses the city as its backdrop. It's about the 'festival' as much as the 'arts' and about 'Galway' as much as the 'festival'.

11 Ulster Bank International Arts Festival

by Mike Sowden

feveredmutterings.com

Belfast International Arts Festival



For more than half a century, Belfast has been the home to one of the most celebrated international arts festivals in Europe. It may have a different name these days (thanks to shifting its main sponsor from Queen's University to Ulster Bank) but its focus remains the same, and 2015's event was the biggest in its history: 134 events representing the creativity of 23 countries.

For a whole month, you'll find performances of dance, music, theatre, interviews and artwork scattered across Belfast, some of it making its first appearance (2015's event included 18 UK and Ireland premières and two world premieres). It's a place where big names have their debut – and of course, it's the public that benefits the most (as long as they don't assume they can see everything – it's just too big of an event, even if you have the whole month free).

It's also an opportunity for the festival's artists to experiment and rewrite the rules, as with director Calixto Bieito's brutal, bloody reinterpretation of Puccini's 'Turandot' in 2015 – controversially performed without the traditionally upbeat ending. Or take 'The Kitchen', a piece of theatre about a strained marital relationship, delivered wordlessly against a backdrop of two huge pots making an Indian rice dessert, accompanied by thunderous drumming. At the end of the performance, the audience had the chance to go forward and taste what had been cooking while they'd been entertained. If there's an official name for this type of performance, this writer isn't aware of it.

Staying with India – this festival works hard to earn the "international" part of its title. While you'll find a lot of Northern Irish culture in the festival lineup, it's the festival's ability to attract luminaries (and visitors) from around



the world that makes its flavour unique. Every year the mix is different, with 2015's event centred around Indian and Mexican influences. It's a great time to see a very different side to Belfast.

Visiting Belfast

If all you know of Belfast is its troubled recent history and you're expecting an exhausted, rainy, poignant corner of Northern Ireland, you're in for a surprise. It's a rejuvenated modern city that's open for business in every sense, attracting investment and tourism in record numbers.

Take the Titanic quarter, the riverside area that was home to the famous Harland and Wolff shipyards where the world's most famous ship was built. After nearly £400m (\$580m) in investment, this 185-acre stretch of land now houses one of Belfast's most spectacular visitor attractions, Titanic Belfast – halfway between a museum, a monument and a spectacular fairground ride, and well worth a visit. A few hundred yards away is Titanic Studios, one of Europe's largest film & television studios where HBO's 'Game Of Thrones' is filmed – and a short walk in the other direction is the dry-dock where SS Nomadic is on display (see 'Personal Highlight', below). These are the results of the first phase of a 30-year redevelopment project that's bringing enormous amounts of money into the city,

changing the skyline forever, and already attracting in excess of a million visitors a year. If you want to explore Belfast's history, the best place to start is the Ulster Museum. It'll give you an admirably frank and even-handed overview of the Troubles – and then it'll put it in the right context. Belfast's history stretches back 5,000 years, as a nearby henge monument called the Giant's Ring attests. Wander up into the Cave Hill country park (a mountainside overlooking the city) and you'll find the 19th Century incarnation of Belfast Castle, gifted to the city in 1934. If the recent political and religious history is your thing, you can go chasing down the many impressive murals on displays on the city streets, including the ones either side of the 'peace lines' – it's best to book a taxi tour for this, as it's quite a walk...

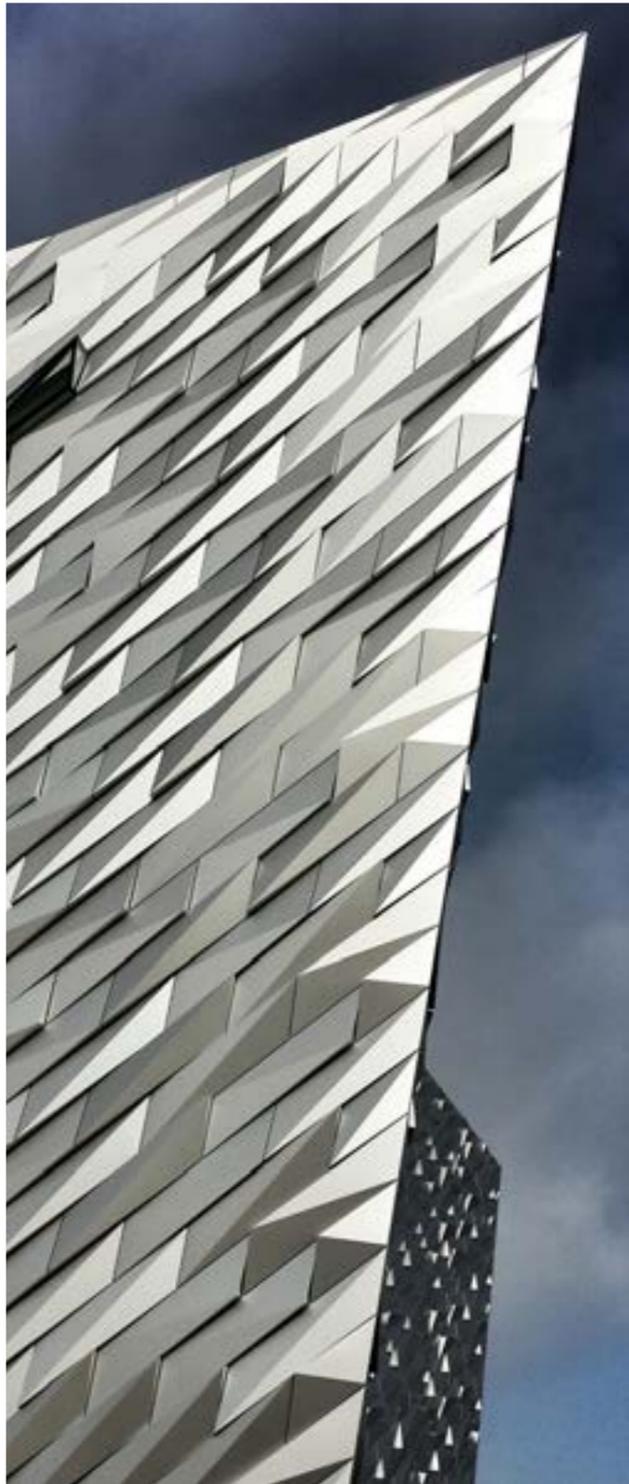
A word on walking: Northern Ireland is lush and green, and the reason for it falls out of the sky around 200 days every year. If you plan to walk around Belfast (and in some places, it's absolutely the best way to explore it), always carry a waterproof!

Money Saving Tips

- If you're getting around using public transport, a Belfast Visitor Pass will save you a ton of money. It gives you unlimited bus & rail travel within the city for 1, 2 or 3 days – and a significant discount on some of the biggest paid attractions (for example, Titanic Belfast).
- If eating out threatens to overwhelm your food budget, pop into St. George's Food Market (Oxford Street). It's been offering tasty things to eat for over a century, and it's a great place to stock up on ingredients (plus, wander round with your nose in the air, chasing delicious smells).

Did You Know?

- It's believed that Cavehill so resembled a sleeping giant to visiting writer Jonathan Swift



• At the time of its launch in 1912, Titanic was the biggest passenger ship in the world, and the previous record-holder was its sister, Olympic, launched the previous year. At one point, incredibly, both ships were in construction alongside each other in the Harland & Wolff shipyard – surely one of the greatest feats of ambition in modern engineering (although it also made sound financial sense too).

Personal Highlight

• As impressive as Titanic Belfast is, I felt far more of an emotional impact by walking the deck of SS Nomadic. It's a steamship originally built to ferry passengers to the Titanic, and today it's the last surviving vessel of the White Star Line still afloat. After a return journey involving two world wars, thousands of passengers (many of them troops) and a stint as a restaurant while moored under the Eiffel Tower, Nomadic's new home is in drydock in the Titanic quarter – and it's a wonderfully atmospheric and beautifully restored reminder of one of the most celebrated stories of Belfast's shipping history. Unmissable.

that it gave him the inspiration for a satirical fantasy story in which a traveller is imprisoned by a race of tiny men...and so 'Gulliver's Travels' was born.

• Led Zeppelin gave their first performance of 'Stairway To Heaven' in Belfast's Ulster Hall on March 5th, 1971 – to an apparently underwhelmed audience that thought it was "too ballady".

12 Temple Bar Tradfest, Dublin

by Kash Bhattacharya

budgettraveller.org

Tradfest

Tradfest describes itself as:

"a festival showcasing the full spectrum of traditional and folk music in some of Dublin City's most unique venues. Feel every note."

The festival is held annually and celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2016. It started out in 2006 as a niche traditional folk music festival but now encompasses a broader spectrum of musical styles like new age folk music and even rock-and-roll.

Tradfest is held in the Irish capital of Dublin, a city renowned for its Guinness, its music and its literature. Some of Dublin's most famous musical exports are Sinead O'Connor, U2, The Dubliners and Thin Lizzy. Dublin's ancient university, Trinity College has notable names like Jonathan Swift, Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde on its roster and it is also home to numerous Nobel Laureates in Literature. Visit Tradfest and discover not only a unique winter musical festival but also a historic international capital city with a unique flavour.

Guinness Storehouse

There is a saying that Guinness does not travel well and is always best consumed at source. If that is the case then The Guinness Dublin is the place to visit! 2 and a half million pints of the dark drink are manufactured each day. Situated in an old granary (that Arthur Guinness purchased on 31st December, 1759 on a 1000 year lease) in the heart of the St James's Gate Brewery, the Guinness Storehouse is Dublin, Ireland and Europe's most visited tourist attraction.

The entry fee is a steep €20 but the lengthy queues and €2 can be saved by purchasing a ticket online.

A free-guided tour of the brewery will let

you into the hidden inner secrets of the beer making process and the history of the brewery.

Popping into the Guinness Academy allows you to master the art of beer pouring!

The best part of the tour is at the end, drinking the best pint of Guinness in the world at the iconic top floor Gravity Bar where you have some splendid views of the city.

Kilmainham Gaol

Kilmainham Gaol crams two hundred years of Irish revolutionary history into one fact-filled tour of the site of incarceration of several of the nation's leading nationalist freedom fighters.

How to get there: hop onto a bus (No. 69, 79 from Aston Quay Dublin 2; No 13 & 40 from O'Connell St. Dublin 1 or College Green Dublin 2) and you'll find yourself in the former home of many Irish characters in just a jiffy.

Trinity College: Book Of Kells

Imagine a vast 40-acre green oasis of learning in the midst of a crowded city and you have





Trinity College. Founded in 1592, by the order of Queen Elizabeth I, the college claims to have produced respected literary stalwarts in the form of Jonathan Swift, Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde.

The highlight of a visit to Trinity College is undoubtedly a visit to the Long Room library for a glimpse of the famous Book of Kells. This is a Celtic-Christian illuminated manuscript written in spectacular Western calligraphy, containing the four Gospels of the New Testament. The Long Room itself, is a joy to behold for any bibliophile. It is the repository of over 3 million manuscripts and books.

Glasnevin Cemetery

The Glasnevin Cemetery, a 250 acre Parisian style cemetery and the final place of rest of several of the country's notable sons and

daughters, is located a short distance to the north of the city. A museum, located on the cemetery grounds provides an interactive exhibit that chronicles the history of Irish religious sentiment. The innumerable, grey gravestones and old cobblestone paths that form an intricate maze, create a long-lasting memorable impression.

The Glasnevin Cemetery is located to the north of Dublin, and can be accessed from the city-centre by local buses.

Top tip: Make sure you take a cemetery tour, which runs frequently throughout the day. Museum entry and the walking tour will set you back only €6.

The Gravediggers

Adjacent to the Glasnevin Cemetery is a

famous public house called the Gravediggers. The dark, cave-like interior has a welcoming iron fireplace to the rear of the establishment and an endless supply of Irish drinks; be it Guinness, an Irish Ale or whisky. The smoky ceiling of the pub provides testament to many years of concerted smoking and drinking and probably the walls have been privy to lots of good conversation.

Do not miss the opportunity to soak in this little piece of Irish culture and definitely be prepared to listen to tall stories of hearses being left outside the pub for days on end, during times of emotional upheaval.

Viking Splash Tours

What could be better than an amphibious tour of Dublin city via Viking Splash Tours? The tour even features elements of the city's Viking history. A WW2-era amphibious vehicle tour, in the presence of knowledgeable guides will set you back quite a bit, but it is worth every penny.

Cost: Adult €22

Where to buy tickets: online or at the departure point on St. Stephen's Green North.

Listen to the Buskers on Grafton Street

If interested in music, do visit Dublin's famous Grafton Street. This is the place musicians like Bono, Glen Hansard of 'Once' fame got their first opportunities. The entertainment is unending and free flowing and will cost you only a few pennies (or a crisp note if feeling generous) slipped into a busker's hat.

Where to eat is a difficult but pleasant problem to tackle when you are presented with the enormous number of culinary choices that Dublin provides.

To minimize this problem we have a few suggestions: **O'Neill's Pub** (Suffolk Street,



Dublin 2), perfect for traditional Irish food, soups, **Cornucopia** (19/20 Wicklow Street Dublin, 2) for wholefood and vegetarian fare, **The Counter** (20 Suffolk Street, Dublin, 2) for custom made burgers, **Sheridans Cheesemongers** (11 South Anne Street, Dublin 2) and **Steps of Rome** (Chatham Street, Dublin, 2) are some points to ponder.

Top Festival Tip

Some of the events at the Temple Bar Tradfest are free to attend like the Front Row Sessions, which features the very best in Irish music. Taking place in the intimate setting of the bars of Temple Bar, you can get the chance to see some of the biggest name in trad music like The Dublin Legends, The Fureys, Picture House, Declan Sinnott or Stocktons Wing. Visit the **Temple Bar Tradfest** website well in advance to find out details of how to book your free tickets to this event.

Personal Highlight

I listened to some superb musicians but my pick of the festival was listening to solo singer-songwriter Aoife O'Donovan (former lead singer of Crooked Still) who performed some tracks from her new album, *In the Magic Hour*. Meditative and melancholy, O'Donovan's music is very evocative of her Cork roots and has a lush, beautiful voice. She's definitely worth adding to your Spotify playlist.

13 "We Take Halloween very Seriously in Derry"

by Hejorama

hejorama.com

Banks of the Foyle Festival

For this new Must Love Festivals trip, we were invited to spend Halloween on the banks of the river Foyle, in Derry, Northern Ireland.

The whole city sees orange for a week. If you love the Pumpkin-fest as much as we do, the Banks of the Foyle festival is a pilgrimage, a must, as it's simply the biggest celebration of Halloween in Europe. Performances, music, big parade, massive firework, lectures, ... name it. Don't forget the costume, you might get lonely.

We spent 3 days, walking around the city, having beers with zombies, discussing history with ghosts, and singing Irish songs with witches. And sharing Fish n' Chips with a dozen Marios and Luigis...



We even (easily) managed to escape for a day, to have a peaceful moment by the sea, across the border...

The Walled city

Lying on the banks of the river Foyle, Derry (LondonDerry if you dare to call it that...) is a walled city, stage of many historical events, from Plantation of Ulster to The Troubles, more recently.

You can feel the weight of the past, turned into lust for life.

A city packed with good vibes, especially during this Banks of the Foyle festival.

Our first step in History was the Saddler's House, our mansion for this trip.

We were invited to stay in this charming, centuries old Bed & Breakfast ... Family mood, easy going and super interesting. Regulars from everywhere come back every year, especially for the festival.

We learned a lot from our hosts and their guests, passionate about Derry and both Irelands.

We spent our time walking around Derry, along the wall, on the wall, on both sides of the river.

A big part of the center (*Cityside*, West bank of the Foyle) is pedestrian, and is perfect to wander. This is the oldest area, where most of the shops are, museums, bars and restaurants. Use the wall to go from A to B, stop here and there for a coffee. Perfect.

The impressive Guildhall is a symbol of the city. It is not only the city hall, but a museum and culture centre as well.



The building is pretty much the highest in town, and you can see its red brick clock tower from almost everywhere.

It's also a smart place to start a full tour of the wall. (We highly recommend to start or/and finish your tour with a good meal at Cafe Soul, just next to the Guildhall).

The Free Derry area was pretty intense as well... One of the places you go and wonder if it's over.

You can discover by yourself, or try out the walking tour.

The original western core of the city grew bigger and bigger outside the wall, to finally reach the other side of the river (Waterside, East bank of the Foyle). You can cross the river, in the centre, using a bridge I fell in love with... The Peacebridge. I love its twisted look.

We "stepped into history" again, in the **City Walled Brewery** of James Huey. A brewery and restaurant, located on Ebrington Square, in barracks of a former military base, turned recently into a more entertaining area. I still wake up at night, thinking about Huey's BOOM pale ale...

Halloween crawl

The **Banks of the Foyle festival** takes place all over the city, offering a wide and diverse bunch of activities.

More than just a big costume party, it's a cultural event merging the spirit of Halloween and the local rituals and traditions. You're invited to wander all around the city to attend a play, watch some art installations, listen to music, play a Halloween-special laser tag, learn how to use make-up, etc...

On Saturday, the parade reaches a climax: a show dedicated to the *Rise of the River Gods*, protectors of the city is accompanied by a dancing joyful crowd of skeletons, witches, and other fantastic creatures. Everybody is already costumed since the morning and gathers slowly on Strand Street and behind the Guildhall, for the Finale.

A giant firework concludes this together-moment, and kids can go home, everyone else to the pub.

We made the best of the second option: **Pubs**. We went to a small area, *Waterloo street*, where you can find good pubs next to each other. You can walk in and out, discover new ones, follow new friends ... Special shows for the occasion, the only way to see a Jedi playing the bass guitar on Folk Irish music if you ask me...

We just followed the flow, asked people questions, and had an amazing night, having beers, floating like zombies in the streets of Derry, listening to Irish music or Beyonce.

A real festival atmosphere, safe and lively.

Bar/Pub Top 3:

- Grand Central Bar** (Strand Rd)
- Gainsborough Bar** (Shipqay Pl)
- Sandinos** (Water St)

(Oh, and if you're around Waterloo Street, day or night, Halloween or not, don't forget to check **Frankie Ramseys Cafe**, in William Street, for a Fish n' Chips or a breakfast. It's so good you'll cry.)

Loch Súilí and Bun Cranncha

After this Halloween night, we needed some fresh air and green space.

So we asked Joan from the Saddler's House and she informed us the sea was only 30min from Derry.

After an amazing brunch at Primrose Cafe, we grabbed a bus, destination: the **Lake of Shadows** (or Lough Swilly. Perfect for Halloween!!), in Ireland!

Actually we did not realize at first, that we would cross a border. We were just told "Go to Buncrana, it's only 30min from here".

Buncrana, on the other side of the border is a cute little village on the shores a Fjord. It was so peaceful, perfect to finish this weekend.

It made us want to come back in Derry as starting point for a road trip all over both Irelands.

Maybe next year, "Knock on Pumpkin".

14 Why Dublin is an amazing place to celebrate New Year by Victoria Watts Kennedy

bridgesandballoons.com

New Year's Eve Festival

In Ireland, it's rude to not ask questions. If someone asks you the time and you answer with "5pm", expect a look of surprise. "5pm. Are you late for something?" would be a better reply. Questions should be answered with questions; it's the Irish art of conversation and one of the many reasons that Irish people are considered to be among the most friendly in the world.

It's also one of the reasons that Ireland is an ideal place to spend New Year; surrounded by friendly faces and never without some banter to keep you entertained. We were there for the three-day New Years Festival; a citywide celebration of all the best Dublin has to offer. From spoken word events to guided city tours, there's a whole programme of events to choose from so you can pick and choose to create a festival that's unique to you.

These were some of our highlights:

NYF Poetry Slam

Ireland has a long tradition of spoken word performance and the Irish accent lends itself well to poetry readings. I mean, who doesn't love an Irish accent?! A dedicated Spoken Word Festival forms part of Dublin's New Year program and features some of Ireland's best spoken-word stars. We went to the NYF Poetry Slam at the Workman's Club and were blown away by the quality of the performers. Steve and I are both huge fans of slam poetry and the event inspired us to seek out more events in 2016. If you go to the festival next year, I'd say this is a "must see".

Proclamation

New Year in Dublin isn't just about New Years Eve, it's also New Years Day and there are plenty of events to choose from. A highlight for us was the TED-style Proclamation event at Christ Church Cathedral. The event marks the end of the New Year Festival and the start of First Fortnight, a festival dedicated to challenging mental health prejudice through the creative arts. As such, all the talks were on the theme of mental health, and included some beautiful personal stories and some equally excellent music. It was a wonderfully inspiring way to start 2016.

Bodhrán World Record Attempt

Before attending NYF Dublin, I didn't know what a bodhrán was, but by the time I left I was a world record holder for taking part in the world's largest bodhrán session! It turns out a bodhrán is a traditional Irish drum, and on New Year's Eve we joined around 1,300 other people to smash the current world record. Having never played before, we had a little lesson in the morning from leading bodhrán player, Robbie Walsh from Bodhrán Buzz. He's a great teacher and the drum is really fun to play, especially as part of a group. We have a couple we're taking home with us.

Procession of Light

On New Year's Eve before all the parties kick off, there's a procession of light through the city centre. The procession is headed up by a parade of floats and circus performers, which you can follow with your candle. It's nice to mix it up a bit by taking part in the procession as well as occasionally stopping to watch it all go by.



Luminosity

At the end of the procession of light, you can watch a 3D light projection on the side of Iveagh House, a grand building on St Stephen's Green. This year, it was a celebration of Irish heroes and was a beautiful sight to see.

Music Trail

Throughout the whole 3-day festival, there's a programme of music events to choose from. One highlight is the Ruby Sessions, which sadly we couldn't get tickets for. This two-night gig is a special edition of the weekly acoustic club of the same name, which is renowned for hosting cosy secret gigs, featuring top artists. Another highlight is the First Contact Music Trail, where 15 venues play host to some of Ireland's best new performers – and all the gigs are free.

Street Performers

As you walk around the streets of Dublin on

any day of the year, you'll see plenty of street performers, especially along the famous busking spot, Grafton Street (made famous in the film, *Once*). But during the New Year Festival, those performances are multiplied and you'll also come across circus performers and other pop up events. One thing we loved was the Team Fuinneamh drum, a giant 14ft-drum that around 50 people can drum together. It was fun making so much noise!

Walking Tours

There were free walking tours on 30 and 31, and we chose to go on one with historian, Pat Liddy who gave us an overview of Dublin's past New Year traditions as we walked around the city's north side. It turns out New Year as we know it is a relatively new thing to Dublin. The New Year was historically celebrated on 1 November; in fact that's where Halloween came from – the boundary between the years was seen as a time when spirits were particularly active so people would invoke the protection of the gods to ward off evil spirits.

This resulted in all sorts of activities that formed the roots of all the fancy dress and jack-o-lanterns of today. The tour was filled with lots of interesting little facts like this and I'd recommend Pat Liddy for a good historical insight to Dublin.

New Year's Eve Festivities

On New Year's Eve itself, there are plenty of options to choose from. Our friends and fellow bloggers, Kash and Sofia, went to the Countdown Concert, which was headlined by Fat Boy Slim, and we picked the Street Fest, an outdoor concert on St. Stephen's Green featuring three of Ireland's favourite bands, Le Galaxie, All Tvivins and Wyvern Lingo. We also spent some time just wandering the streets and taking in the atmosphere. We found that, unlike in England, most pubs weren't charging an entrance fee so it was easy to dip in and out of places. Most venues were packed, but we did find a fantastic cocktail bar called Puke & Periwig, which was playing great music and where we even managed to get a seat. Depending on whether you fancy watching live music, dancing in the streets, going out for a great meal, or enjoying some excellent cocktails in a beautiful setting, we found that there was something to suit everyone in Dublin on New Year. Just bear in mind that if you go to the Countdown Concert or the Street Fest, there is no re-admission, so plan your evening accordingly.

Explore Dublin

Finally, if you're in Dublin for the New Year Festival, don't forget to explore the city itself. Lots of places – from breweries to galleries to museums – have special New Year discounts as part of the Dublin Discovery Trail. We learned to pull a pint at the Guinness Storehouse and learned all about the history of whiskey at the Irish Whiskey Museum. Unfortunately The Old Library, which holds the Book of Kells was closed, but that's just a reason to go back. We also loved simply walking around all the

streets, especially the charming Temple Bar and Georgian Dublin – our Instagram feed is filled with all the photos.



Weather warning!

One thing to bear in mind if you're travelling to Dublin for New Year is that the weather is unpredictable and variable (the photos above were taken on the same day). Steve and I are from England so we're used to it and were happy to wrap up warm and withstand a little drizzle. If you're not good with cold weather, then make sure you go there with open eyes. We were lucky and it only rained heavily on New Year's Day, which meant we got to enjoy all the outdoor events on the 30 and 31 December. That said, there are plenty of indoor events and Dublin does cosy very well so wet weather wouldn't ruin the festival. Just don't go there expecting constant clear skies!



15 The Tiny Latvian Town with Eight Hundred Years of History by Flora Baker

floratheexplorer.com

Cēsis Town Fair and Cēsis Art Festival



At over eight hundred years old, Cēsis (pronounced 'Tsaaysis') is exactly what you'd expect a medieval Latvian town to look like.

The streets are narrow and occasionally cobblestoned; the small squat houses are made from faded wooden panels; the half ruined complex of a 13th century castle and the oldest brewery in the country sit within spitting distance of each other.

It's a town where one of the parks is known colloquially by its two resident black swans – and where said swans' mating habits occasionally make the front page of the local newspaper.

But Cēsis also has an undeniably modern feel. In amongst the old buildings there are tall trees, big fountains at the centres of open squares, peaceful parks, calm lakes and a newly built contemporary art gallery.

So why exactly was I in Cēsis?

Every summer, like many other towns and cities in Latvia, Cēsis holds an annual weekend-long festival. As the official description states, "this festival is the best time to see how Latvian

traditions of different centuries meet today." Of course, I wasn't actually sure what Latvian traditions from across eight hundred years of history would actually look like. The only thing I knew was that out of all the summer celebrations in Latvia, the festival in Cēsis has always been regarded as one of the best. So why not discover the essence of why this tiny Latvian town is so popular?

Exploring Cēsis Town Festival

I awoke on Saturday morning to the sounds of an orchestra marching along the street outside my hostel. Looking through the window proved that, yes, a number of musicians were indeed 'awakening' the townspeople – the festival's opening tradition which repeats itself year after year.

I took the intended cue and got myself out of bed.

Brushing my teeth in the small upstairs bathroom of my hostel, I watched the staff rush between rickety tables, rag rugs and piles of unidentifiable silverware. As part of the festival, the quaint back garden of the aching hipster hostel had been appropriated for an antique sale.

Once out in the streets I wandered aimlessly, letting different elements of the festival tempt me to come closer.

And I wasn't disappointed. Walking through different parts of Cēsis, I realised that each area seemed to be running its own 'mini-festival': some were clearly children-friendly, others designed for sports and games, some for art and others for music, a few for dancing and still more for late night action. There was the family section in Black Swan

Park, filled with families and elderly couples walking their young children or grandchildren around the hook-a-duck games and introducing them to the occasional costume-clad elephant.

In one corner, there was a skate park area for the teenagers – both the ones competing and the ones clustered at the edges to watch. A few streets away, one of Cesis's main roads was closed off the duration of the weekend so that street hockey players could practice their craft. It was a clear teenage hangout; music blaring, gaggles of kids sitting on the pavements, and the teams all getting progressively more competitive.

On the small grassy area beside the castle, groups of school children performed classical music inside a white curtained, ivy strewn stage, while families lounged around on the hay bales in front and ate food from farmer's market-esque stalls set up alongside.

Below the newer buildings of the castle, an interactive art installation invited people to don headphones and listen to musical accompaniment as they absorbed the paintings.

At the base of the ruined castle, a huge stage was set up where yet more groups of teenagers congregated in front of various musical acts.

The evening before, I had managed to inadvertently stumble upon a late night performance by the famous Latvian pagan metal band Skyforger, which heralded an influx of pierced, tattooed, leather wearing metalheads all around me.

Let's just say I've never been more awestruck by a collection of bellowing Latvians. Or more terrified.

In the streets surrounding St John's Church, Latvians from all over the area stood at little stalls and sold their traditional handmade products to eager customers.

Everything was offer, from hand-stitched lace and carved wooden bowls to clothes made from hemp and freshly made honey – with the bees responsible actually buzzing around their honeycomb on the table.

Inside the castle grounds was the medieval area; stalls selling hand carved wooden instruments, animal pelts, hand made jewellery and clay pots, which vied for people's attention alongside a central stage featuring bands singing in ancient Baltic languages, and various places for children to make their own candles, soap, and practice their clay throwing. There was even a discreetly placed tent for dry birch massages, which involved a pair of Latvians raising their bunches of twigs in an almost dance-like routine as they massaged the body in front of them.

Getting to grips with Latvian culture

Watching the birch-branch-wavers, I started thinking properly about these traditions that the festival was supposed to display. While I'd definitely been privy to various elements of Latvian living, I didn't really feel like I'd seen any that had been carefully passed down through the ages, preserved and emulated for generations.

But any doubts I may have had about the traditional aspects of the Cesis town fair were dispelled that evening, when I reached the Rožu Park, the main square of Cesis.

Waiting in the soft dim light were a collection of young Latvians, each holding a lantern and dressed in old style clothing. The girls had their hair gathered into long plaits tied with red ribbons, the boys wore suits and bowler hats.

All around, people were waiting for the procession to start, holding their cameras, phones, jackets – but suddenly they were the ones that looked out of place. Like ancient Latvia had somehow come to the foreground again in the modern day.



And even when the camels appeared (on loan from a local Camel & Alpaca Farm...) – complete with teenage sheikhs to lead them – it didn't break the spell.

Cesis: where history meets modernity

I haven't been to many town fairs around the world, so I can't exactly compare them – but I wondered if Cesis Town Fair was the Eastern European version of what state festivals are like in the US. I had the sense that literally everyone in the town was there, in a small easily navigable place where people offer continuous greetings to the friends they keep passing, where kids wander around with meat on sticks and dogs on leashes can barely handle all the excitement.

Moreover, it felt like people were simply relishing an occasion that brought everyone together, from every age group, so they could all enjoy themselves as a community for a weekend.

And most crucially, the younger generation of Latvians are coming back to Cesis. Even when they head off to university in Riga, many of

the Cesis-grown still return to the little town after their studies are over, interested enough in their town's heritage and history to help preserve and prolong it.

During the procession, holding my phone skyward to imitate a lantern, I spoke to a few Latvians my age – some from Cesis and others from Riga, just in town for the evening. All of them find Cesis to be a special place, even though none could put their finger on why, exactly.

For me, it was the sense of tranquillity and calm that falls on you when you walk around the streets. There's no sense of urgency or duty, and I felt myself actively relaxing.

After only a few days in Cesis, I decided the reason why this town feels so special is that there's room for every period of history here. No one element tries to outshine the other; and although the town is undoubtedly contrasted between the old and new worlds, it's a strangely satisfying hybrid.

I can only imagine what it would be like to actually live within it.

16 7 Things to do in Riga in Winter

by Paul Dow

travmonkey.com

Staro Rīga Festival of Light
and Independence Day Celebrations



It's hard to imagine just what Riga is like if you've never been before. I remember being surprised on my first visit with how modern architecture blended with the old, yet the old town still retains its historical charm.

On the east side of the Daugava River, the old Riga is a UNESCO world heritage site and Riga's historical centre, famed for its old churches and cathedrals. It's easy for people visiting Riga to get stuck in the old town, but there's so much more to Riga. Do spend plenty of time admiring the structurally beautiful Riga Cathedral and St. Peter's Church, the cobbled Town Hall Square, but remember that the old town is only about 5% of Riga itself.

There's plenty more to explore and I'm going to show you a perfect combination of 7 things to do in Riga in the Winter that takes in some of old, some of the new and plenty of food and culture along the way.

1. Experience Independence Day

The 18th November sees commemorations and celebrations of the proclamation of the Republic of Latvia. Witness emotional and moving scenes as the public and dignitaries lay flowers at the Freedom Monument. Then

head down to the 11. Novembra Krastmala by the river to see members of the armed force march to commemorate along with brass bands and flag-waving crowds.

2. Staro Rīga the festival of light

Staro Rīga the festival of light intertwines with independence day, with a beautiful torch lit procession through the old town and the Bastejkalns Park by the freedom monument. Locals light candles in the park and large torches burn at the top of Bastion Hill (Bastejkalns). From 6pm till 11pm, buildings and installations across the city are lit up in lights for the Staro Rīga. Historical old buildings are drenched in animations and parks are littered with intriguing objects and interactive pieces. There's a lot to see and it feels a little like a treasure hunt as you roam the city hunting down the latest glowing piece of art.

3. Experience the coffee

If you're into your coffee and enjoy the intricacies of the brewing process then Rocket Bean Cafe will be right up your street. Even if you're not a coffee snob, you'll find the cafe a relaxing and super friendly place. Just ask them about the coffee and brewing process and watch their eyes light up with enthusiasm. They'll let you sit down at the brew bar and watch the whole process, try asking your coffee questions as they brew.

The food is also pretty special. For more information and even a 360 degree tour, take a look at the Rocket Bean website.



4. Get your beer on!

So you were expecting Latvian beer to be some kind of bland lager, right? Well you'd be wrong, seek out the right places and you'll be up to your neck in strong tasting craft beer before you know it.

Labietis

Labietis is a mini Latvian brewery and bar with a huge range of craft beers to choose from. There's a range of some classic beers on offer as well as a mixture of very modern styles. There's plenty of experimental brews using a variety of interesting herbs.

Aldaris Brewery/Museum

At the Aldaris Brewery you'll also discover a beer museum. As you'd expect there's plenty of beer tasting involved too. The museum itself is well presented, interesting and the guides have great brewing knowledge, taking you through the brewery's history and the brewing process. Aldaris is a little bit out of town but quite easy to reach via Riga's tram system.

5. Try A Proper Burger

Fontaine Delisnack (Deli Snack)

If you're a burger connoisseur then Riga won't let you down. If you're in and around Miera street at Rocket Bean Cafe or Labietis then your best burger bet may well be Deli Snack. Just round the corner from Labietis, Deli Snack is a pretty straight forward, no frills dinner but the burgers and the chilli cheese fries are beautiful! A perfect stop after sinking a few too many craft beers at Labietis.

If you're nearer the other side of the Daugava River, I've been told that Street Burgers is also a very good homemade burger joint in Riga. Give it a go!

6. Discover the old town

Ok, so it's probably cheating adding this one but you can't possibly visit Riga without exploring the Old Town. It's a UNESCO World Heritage Site after all! Wander the cobbled streets and narrow laneways tucked away from the busy roads and admire the beauty



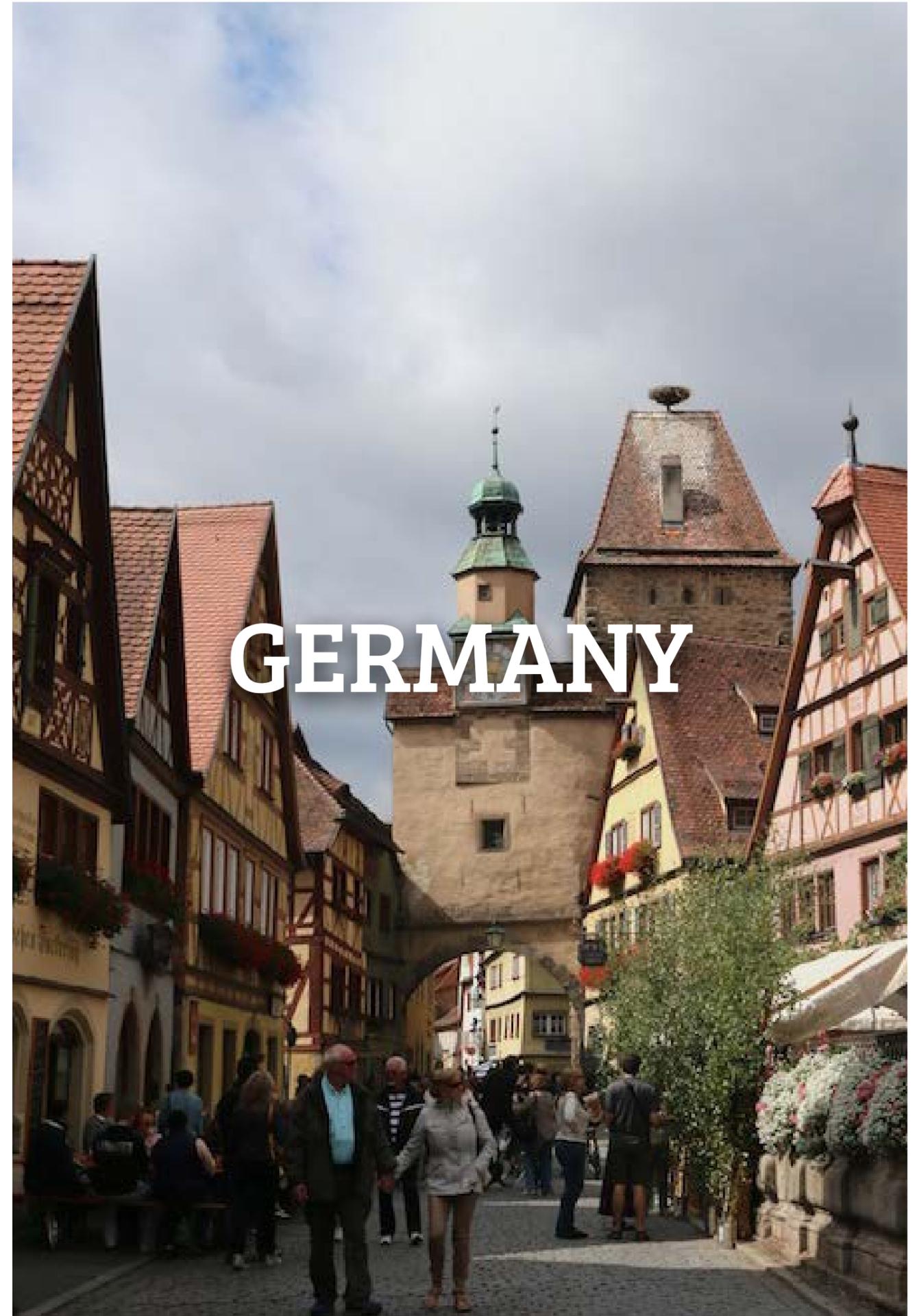
of the architecture that's survived the test of time and ravages of war. Walking the cobbled streets of the old town you'll find one of the oldest medieval places of worship in the Baltics, Riga Dome Cathedral. For a stunning view of the quaint rooftops of the old town and Daugava River head to the top of Riga's tallest church, St Peter's Church.

7. Explore the Central Market

What's fascinating about Riga's Central Market isn't necessarily the hustle and bustle of the market itself but it's rich history. During WWI the market's huge pavilions were used as zeppelin hangars rather than the impressive variety of meat, fish and vegetable stalls of today. The pavilions are arranged into different food types with the most established stalls indoors whilst slightly cheaper ones spill outside. You'll find locals shopping here rather than a tourist attraction but it's well worth visiting to appreciate its sheer size and scale. What I also found interesting was just how fresh the fish was, seemingly still breathing

whilst lying on ice. Towards the back of the fish stalls sit big tanks of water to keep the fish as they arrive at the market.

Riga is so different to most people's expectations. It's got beautifully historic landmarks and architecture that you're more likely to expect from a place like Prague rather than the capital of Latvia. It's got trendy craft beer joints, great coffee spots and food that will blow the stereotypical potato and cabbage combo out of the water.



17 Welcome to Oldenburg

by Kash Bhattacharya

budgettraveller.org

Oldenburg International Film Festival



We were stuck at the traffic lights for what seemed like an eternity. The windscreen wipers furiously pawing away the fat drops of rain. The city remained blurred and a complete mystery. The sky was dark as coal. I felt a shudder down my spine.

This seemed like a good or probably very bad time to ask the driver about what Oldenburg was like.

"Ahh Oldenburg..." He cursed again something coarse under his breath before declaring brusquely.

"Oldenburg. I don't like this city."

It was a bit of a startling declaration. I usually find taxi drivers to be the most earnest and passionate ambassadors of the city.

He then went quiet for a while and then resumed his gloomy diatribe.

"Oldenburg really is not a city for young people. People like you." (Great, I still look young).

"There are no girls here. No clubs or bars to meet girls. Just people with families. It is not a great place for a single man like me. I really don't know why I still live here."

I asked him where he would prefer to live and he mentioned to me.

"Groningen. I heard it is really nice there."

So that was our introduction to Oldenburg.

When writing a piece about a place I have visited, I am often guilty of falling into the

habit that many travel writers have.

I start thinking of what memorable pithy epitaph I can come up with to catch the reader's attention.

Welcome to Oldenburg, Germany's most underrated city.

Or how about that classic headline?
Europe's undiscovered gem, Oldenburg

Or if you are really desperate.
Welcome to Oldenburg, the new Berlin.

Truth is Oldenburg, is none of the above.
Oldenburg is just... Oldenburg really.

I googled Oldenburg and found precious little written about the city other than the fact that the city is capital of curly kale (with a dedicated festival held every year).

So in the absence of any information, we just let fate be our guide.

We walked out of our apartment and tried to head towards the city centre with the help of a map.

I am not at all good at reading maps. After 15 minutes of walking I realised we were horribly lost. We found lots of wide green spaces, gardens and walked pass by some very grand houses. Finally we realised we had been heading in the wrong direction so with the help of a local, we finally found our way into town.

We needed a caffeine boost and that's when we discovered Cafe Klinge. This family run cafe and bakery has been satisfying the sweet tooth of locals since 1884. The coffee is fantastic as well as their handmade chocolates.

After Klinge, we ventured further into the city centre and then discovered another fantastic cafeteria called 'Kaffee und Kleid.'

Besides serving delicious cakes and great coffee, I am impressed at how the owner has combined the concept of coffee with unusual high quality fashion. They also specialise in jewellery, home accessories and Italian footwear. Perfect place to take your lady shopping.

The next day we went to the film festival. It was there we bumped into Achim Barghorn, a 29 year old entrepreneur, master barista and owner of one of the best mobile cafeterias in Germany: Kathe Kaffee. Since he is mobile, checkout his website where he is based when visiting Oldenburg. His coffee is seriously some of the best coffee I've had in the world. Plus his latte art is awesome too.

Wake up and smell the coffee in Oldenburg. Sometimes the absence of a guidebook can be a blessing. You just let your instinct be your guide. You don't have a plan.

However if you are not sure, just ask the locals in Oldenburg.

That's how we discovered Heimathaven.

Situated on one of the side streets off the main city centre, this place is a wee gem serving fabulous coffee, does excellent vegan blueberry muffins and also serves fine G&T's. My favourite thing here though was Sascha's homemade lemonade where you can choose flavours from lime and peppermint or vanilla and lime. Plus it is served in a very photogenic crystal glass.

The more I walked around city, the more I liked it. I like that it is a walkable city. Oldenburg enjoys the status of the largest connected pedestrian precinct in Germany with over 1000 businesses.

Plus it has tons of character.

We visited quirky local museums like the Computer Museum, which is run completely by local volunteers. Home computers and

video games of the seventies and eighties like Commodore PET, Sinclair ZX 81 and Atari 800 XL can be seen and also tested by visitors. Later we visit the Horst Jansen Museum where we discover a fantastic exhibition of illustrations from Salvador Dali.

The city enjoys a beautiful architecture. This can be explained by the fact that for almost 200 years the city enjoyed princely status.

Everywhere you go there are lots of bikes that contribute to the idyllic charm of the cityscape. There are a quarter of a million or so bicycles (1.5 per resident), which makes Oldenburg one of the bicycle cities of the world. 160 km of city bicycle lanes means that virtually the whole city is quickly and easily accessible by bicycle.

The grand former residence of the counts, dukes and grand dukes of Oldenburg: the Schloss Oldenburg serves as the green lungs of the city.

Designed in keeping with the natural English style, the palace gardens, extends over 16 hectares and have retained their picturesque atmosphere with natural planting and winding watercourses and paths. Garden and nature enthusiasts are especially in their element when the rhododendrons, which are typical for this region, are in bloom.

Oldenburg.

Other than the fact that the city boasts the oldest rhododendrons of their kind in Germany, how else would I introduce this city to you?...

Oldenburg is the home of independent cinema in Europe

Equidistant between Hamburg and Amsterdam, this sleepy medieval city in Northern Germany is the unlikely host of one of the world's leading Indie film festivals.

As part of the Must Love Festivals project

with kind support from the German National Tourism Board, I managed to wrangle myself an invite to the festival for me and Madeiran based filmmaker, Rui Dantas Rodrigues.

I love my movies. So this year as part of the



festivals project, I wanted to visit a different kind of festival. The idea of going to a festival and watching movies all day long sounded like the perfect festival for me.

Plus I always am a sucker for the underdog. Oldenburg Film Festival's reputation has been built on championing the cause of the lesser-known, not very mainstream orientated movies. Oldenburg is Europe's answer to Sundance.

Director, Torsten Neumann is keen for the festival to be a showcase for 'films that are more challenging-harder to market-that get lost.'

The Festival's job, in his mind, is to stand up for exactly these type of films.

With this challenge in mind, Neumann opened the festival with Jack, a film directed by Elisabeth Scharang, which tells the real-life story of an Austrian murderer turned literary sensation.

The festival is also strong on the American Indie scene. The festival bestowed a lifetime achievement honour for 72 year old U.S.

director George Armitage, director of Miami Blues and the classic, Grosse Pointe Blank starring John Cusack.

My personal highlight of the film festival was a wonderful encounter with the beautiful luminous Joanna Cassidy of Bladerunner and Who Framed Roger Rabbit fame. After watching the thrilling Under Fire, we had an intimate Q&A session with this living legend. She touched upon a variety of subjects, from how much she loved the creative spirit of the festival and its bravery for supporting independent films that did not have the financial backing or distribution, to her love for gorgeous German men when she lived in Berlin, before the wall came down. Later we discussed about how difficult it is for photo journalists to remain neutral in an emotional scenario of a civil war and how Under Fire subsequently had an influence on films like Salvador and Year of Living Dangerously which have a similar gritty portrayal of how journalists operate amidst a terrifying bloody war.

If there is one word I would use to describe Oldenburg and the film festival, it would be 'accessible.'



Usually film festivals have this reputation of being snooty, pretentious and the preserve of the A list stars.

Oldenburg Film Festival couldn't be more different.

How many film festivals can boast screenings at a maximum security prison with guards? Sometimes after parties are held at the local McDonald's or neighborhood car wash.

In our case, the after party was at Polyester, which is a fine dive bar. All the directors, actors and locals mix. It is a bit of a drunken haze but I do remember speaking briefly to Deborah Kara Unger. I also do vaguely remember Rui mistakenly smashing his camera backpack in her face. At some point the festival director, Torsten Neumann gets up and starts DJ-ing at the party. I can't think of a film festival where that happens...

This is definitely no ordinary festival, in no ordinary city.

Welcome to Oldenburg.



I had an unshakable image of Germany in my head – drinking freshly brewed craft beer at an open-air beer garden, hearing locals cheer “prost” with every chug and watching women dance in traditional dirndls. But two weeks ago, when I arrived in the Rhine Valley, an hour from Frankfurt, that image was shattered.

The Rhine River flowed gently amid hills covered in steep vineyards. Rudesheim’s cobble-stoned streets brimmed with wine stalls, wine gardens tucked away under vines replaced beer gardens, and my first drink was not a Radler (like on every other trip to Germany) but a Riesling from a small family-run winery!

I found myself in Rudesheim as part of the Must Love Festivals project, which has bloggers travelling across the world to showcase quirky traditional festivals! Here’s why the Rudesheim Wine Festival is a great introduction to Germany’s lesser-known wine

culture:

Hiking meets wine-tasting in the vineyards

My withdrawal symptoms of Georgia gradually dissipated on the first afternoon, when the festivities began with a hike through the vineyards of Rudesheim! Barring me and two other English-speakers, the forty odd people were all locals from the Rheingau region and other parts of Germany, and along the seven kilometre hike, wine growers from Rudesheim greeted us and offered us their finest wines to taste. A surprising yet intimate way to bond with this wine region and get into festive mode.

The “wander shoe” party!

I’m no party animal and would go to great lengths to avoid a party where I don’t know anyone (yeah, the introvert), but this one was dedicated to “wandering shoes” – how cool is that? It was a party the townies threw for

the hikers upon our return, complete with a mini parade on stage, a lot of dancing and a lot more wine.

81 years of wine tradition

Considering the number of people who made it to (or have even heard about) the Rudesheim Wine Festival, I thought it was a pretty recent affair – but I was wrong. For 81 years, Rudesheim has proudly celebrated its love affair with the Riesling, and I heard that dwellers of the Rheingau region await it all year long. These days, there are wine festivals through summer and autumn in every village along the Rhine and the Moselle, but Rudesheim Weinfest is one of the oldest and most traditional. That is reason enough to put on your party hat and coincide your Germany trip with this festive weekend in mid-August.

Rubbing shoulders with the “Wine Queens”

In the olden days, wine queen was the figurative title bestowed upon the daughters

of wine merchants. The tradition has evolved since, and today, each wine-growing village in the Rheingau region has a wine queen – the ambassador of the village’s wineries and a warehouse of wine knowledge. Wine Queens from all across the Rheingau meet annually at the Rudesheim Wine Festival, and watching these ladies parade around town in a special train, I felt like I was transported to another era.

A (different) taste of German culture

On the last night of the wine festival, after all the tourists (from other parts of Germany and the cruise ships that dock daily at Rudesheim) had left, I walked in on a fascinating gathering of locals in the town square; they sang songs about Rudesheim and the River Rhine, drank wine late into the night, gorged on freshly baked flammkuchens, and danced uninhibitedly. I think that also forever changed the image of German people for me!



19 Reviving Medieval Traditions at Imperial City Festival by Alicia Drewnicki

aliciaexplores.com

The Imperial City Festival of Rothenburg



Rothenburg ob der Tauber is a romantic fairytale town in the heart of German Bavaria. It's known for many things – including its schneeball (traditional sugar-coated deep fried pastry balls), its Christmas museum, its Medieval Crime museum and some of the best-preserved medieval architecture in Germany. The city is surrounded by a wall with ancient fortifications and there are 42 gates and towers – making it a truly fascinating place to explore.

For centuries, artists and writers have taken inspiration from Rothenburg – and famous films such as Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Pinocchio and even the Japanese Manga and anime series 'A Little Snow Fairy Sugar' have based their towns on this Bavarian beauty.

Imperial City Festival is a festival that takes place every September for three days and it couldn't have a more fitting location. The festival focuses on bringing together the local community to re-enact customs and traditions from the past dating back to the Middle Ages.



Here are my top 5 must-see elements of the festival:

1. Torchlight Procession and Fireworks

The first day of the festival starts with a bang; thousands of costumed locals carrying torchlights line up at the 'Double Bridge' before parading down the cobble streets towards the iconic market square in the Old Town. The parades involve signing, chanting, fire-eating, juggling and playing music instruments – it really is a sight to behold. The Lord Mayor of Rothenburg then welcomes all participants and guests before a spectacular fireworks display and illuminations over the Town Hall

2. Musical Performances

From brass bands to folk singers, drummers and solo flute performances – music brings the Imperial City Festival to life. Wherever people lived together in the Middle Ages, music was at the heart of the community and the main form of entertainment. Many different groups play during the festival including 'Rothenburger Stadtpfeifferey' and stunning night concerts at St Jacob's Church.

3. Medieval Market

As you enter Rothenburg Old Town under the arched bridge, you will see a campsite on your right. This is the medieval market where locals gather together to eat, sing, dance and create arts and crafts. What I found fascinating was that they even sleep in beds crafted by hand during the three-day festival, wearing clogs and sleeping under fur blankets. You can buy traditional costumes, jewellery, trinkets and food at this lovely market place.



4. The Shepherd's Dance on the Market Square

There are dance performances throughout the festival days, but the most famous dance is 'The Shepherd's Dance' which dates back to 1517 in order to celebrate the Rothenburg Guild of Shepherds. Locals gather on the market square in colourful costumes adorned with ribbons and live by the motto: "For the honour of the city and for the enjoyment of the guests."

5. Stoberlein Open-Air Theatre

Throughout the weekend, historical groups gather in the market square and each take their turn to perform a play from the past. With knights on horseback, masked warriors, monks, jugglers, kings and queens – you'll learn a lot about Rothenburg's history while enjoying the theatricals too.



20 Gibraltar Food From a Melting Pot
by Michael Turtle
timetravelturtle.com

Calentita Food Festival



The fish and chips shop certainly looks British. The chain café is British, I know for sure. And that iconic red mailbox – well, we would all recognise that.

But the market square that they are all placed around feels more like continental Europe. It's got the atmosphere of a place where locals gather together in the evening after the hot day has subsided – rather than the English tradition of office workers soaking up sunshine during a lunch break on the dozen or so summer days when there's actually sun to be felt.

We recognise these cultural symbols but are not used to seeing them together – but it's this combination that creates Gibraltar. A British territory at the very end of Spain, it is a blend

of the two countries. Pubs where ales are served by a waiter with a Latin accent.

Gibraltar is more complicated than this, though. Sitting at the meeting point of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, it has always been a meeting place for different races. Within the small territory – just 6.8 square kms in size – there are pockets of Italians, Moroccans, Irish (and many more) amongst those who identify as having British or Spanish heritage.

That's why a world food festival in Gibraltar is seen more as a celebration of the local community than an exotic journey around the cuisines of the globe. At least, that's what I take away from the annual Calentita food festival, which is held in the main square

with its European atmosphere and its British shops.

It's warm in Gibraltar this time of the year and the sun disappears late in the evening like all the other summer revellers. All through the square are different stalls – about 50 of them – serving various types of food. There's the Moroccan stand with its meat skewers; the Argentinian stand with a mix of barbeque meat; the Indian stand with curries; the Hong Kong stand with dumplings; and so on.

One of these people is Justin Bautista, who is running the stall serving local Gibraltarian food. He works as a designer but has learnt how to cook traditional local meals from his grandmother, known as Mama Lotties. He's now turned these recipes into a cookbook (and you can find out more about it here).

"They're all home cooked meals enjoyed by almost every family," Justin tells me.

"There are a lot of stews, fresh fish meals



Some is cooked right in front of your eyes, while some was clearly made in the kitchen of a local home earlier in the day. There are different levels of professionalism here – but that is certainly not a negative thing. It's what makes Calentita such a special local event. There may be some fulltime chefs working at some of the stands but many of the people here are just making the meals they learned from their family for celebratory community occasions like this.

because the seafood is a very vibrant part of Gibraltar. A lot of the recipes are also pasta dishes because of the Italian nature of the cultures here and there's a lot of Spanish influence – but there's a big mix!"

By the time I meet him at his stall, he's sold out of many of his signature dishes like a spinach pie and a sweet potato tortilla. Even though there are dozens of food options from around the world, the dishes from Gibraltar are just as popular. Perhaps it's an indication of how



eclectic the diets of residents here can be.

"We are a melting pot of cultures," Justin says when I ask him to describe Gibraltarian cuisine – although I'm not sure the cooking reference is intentional.

"It's the Spanish influence, the Portuguese influence, the overall Mediterranean – especially the Genoese and Italian – is a big part of Gibraltar. So all that mixed and batted around makes what Gibraltar cuisine would be described as, I guess."

The focus of the Calentita festival is food but a large stage in the centre of the square hosts performances from local groups. There are the schoolgirls doing their choreographed dance routines, the flamenco club takes their turn, and then the singers blast out some impressive vocal ranges. Just like the culinary offerings, there is a mix of professionals, veteran amateurs, and newcomers. Again, it's about the community and the cheers from the audience are not just for the talent but for the celebration of inclusion. The diverse cultures are represented in the range of performances but ultimately they are all Gibraltarian.

I get the sense that it's important for the people here to be proud of what they have – for centuries they have lived with a constant threat of invasion and even now there is conflict over the ownership of the territory. But that's politics and this is life. The residents of Gibraltar have always defended their land because it is theirs, not because a particular

government has raised its flag overhead.

Whether it's the local language (English is the official language but many people speak in the Spanish-based 'Llanito', which has a mix of Mediterranean sounds), the concentration of different religions, the military uses of the mountain, or the food, people in Gibraltar have always made do with what they have and turned it into an advantage.

Seeing as this is a food festival, perhaps it's appropriate to finish by looking at how this relates to food. The traditional dishes were mostly created from necessity but have been embraced as much as anything else.

"We don't grow anything here, there's no agriculture," Justin Bautista explains to me.

"So historically fresh produce was scarce so we had to make do with what we had here – which was potatoes and starchy foods. Things that would fill you up because back then there wasn't a lot of money."

And that's where the word Calentita comes from. It's the name of a national dish that's a bit like a pancake or a flan and it's made from chickpea flour, salt, pepper and water. Very simple but nourishing. But now it has been taken as the name for a festival that has rich and diverse foods from all over the world. It's an appropriate symbol for Gibraltar and what the community represents these days.

21 The Best Acts of Gibraltar Music Festival 2015

by Peter Parkorr

travelunmasked.com

Gibraltar Music Festival



This year was the 4th edition of the Gibraltar Music Festival.

It's grown from a relatively small event in 2012, where the first festival goers watched Jessie J headlining and Ali Campbell from UB40, to a hugely impressive lineup for 2015. This year 15,000 people packed in to Victoria Stadium over 2 days for the festival beneath The Rock. They had some big household names across the 3 stages with plenty of popular upcoming bands and performers too.

I visited Gibraltar this year to report on the music festival and the National Day for Must Love Festivals. I managed to snap a number of shots from various places around Victoria Stadium (while shooting a video). Where I stood ranged from being right at the front of the crowd to up above in the VIP section, but I managed to get plenty of great shots and really enjoy the two days of music.

Gibraltar Music Festival 2015 Day 1 Performers

- Little Mix
- Tom Odell
- Paloma Faith
- Duran Duran

Gibraltar Music Festival 2015 Day 2 Performers

- Ella Henderson
- James Bay
- Gabrielle
- Kaiser Chiefs
- Madness
- Kings Of Leon

The Gibraltar Music Festival is an official part of the build-up to the National Day, which is celebrated annually on the 10th of September, the date in 1967 that they voted to remain under British sovereignty while still

retaining some powers to self govern. People from Gibraltar are fiercely proud of their heritage, referring to themselves as British Gibraltarians and celebrating hard!

Gibraltar Music Festival 2015 was a complete sell out and it's no surprise with names like these.

Little Mix

Little Mix were a big hit with the crowd early in the day, which saw more families and teens than later shows.

Tom Odell

Tom Odell came out swinging and gave his performance all he had which the crowd really responded to. Some members of the crowd more than others!

Paloma Faith

Paloma Faith was one of the acts I was most looking forward to, and she got a great reception, despite putting her foot a little wrong when she called Gibraltarians 'half-English and half-Spanish'. I know exactly what she was getting at but some of the crowd were not so impressed! Avoid making the same mistake if you come over for a visit – Gibraltarians are very proud to be British Gibraltarians, hence their celebrations around National Day. You won't offend anyone too much, but nobody likes it when their heritage is confused.

Duran Duran

Duran Duran closed the first day of the festival with a great set that surprised me with how many songs of theirs I knew! Lead singer Simon Le Bon kept the crowd happy but I'm yet to work out what his 'Delete' T-shirt meant – or the blurred out adult movies on the big screen in the background!

Ella Henderson

Ella Henderson was the first act I caught on day 2 and she enjoyed herself on stage. Plenty of fans turned out to see her early in the day

as well as the next act.

James Bay

James Bay was popular and put plenty of energy into his performance, with sweat streaming off his face in the afternoon sun. He's got one of those nicely rasping voices that always sounds good to listen to.

Gabrielle

Gabrielle was a surprise announcement and played on the smaller Radio Gibraltar stage. Another one of my favourite acts at the festival, it was easy to get right up front and she was very relaxed, having a laugh and a joke with the crowd. Or, as she put it, she's 'a chatty bird' and 'has been around for a while now'. I found myself still humming her songs (along with some Madness) long after I left Gibraltar!

The Kaiser Chiefs

The Kaiser Chiefs were indeed Chiefs of the whole festival, mainly thanks to their lead mentalist – sorry, lead singer. They had the most festival-fit style of music for the crowd to really get into, but lead singer Ricky Wilson also did as much work as any aerobics instructor. Highlights of his performance were repeatedly trying to grab at the crane camera, eventually managing to hang a cymbal over it, riding the motorised track camera at the front of the stage, tipping up stage speakers to stand on them, and finally just sprinting up and down the length of the stage to roars from the crowd. The best act to watch by far with almost endless energy.

Madness

I was expecting to be one of the only people excited to see Madness, old-school ska rockers, but I couldn't have been more wrong. The older fan base turned out in force and the whole of the Radio Gibraltar stage was crammed to its limits. Being in the middle somewhere as everyone went crazy for classics like Baggy Trousers and Our House can only be described as excellent.



Kings Of Leon

Kings Of Leon drew the biggest crowd in the end back at the main stage. They had the best light show with some fairly mind-bending video trickery happening as they played out the festival. They weren't the most energetic on stage and lead singer Caleb said a few cryptic words about wanting to enjoy this gig as it would be their last for a long while, but it was brilliant anyway to hear their most crowd-pleasing tunes live. I couldn't figure out what the guitarist was up to at one point but I think he was using his voice through the guitar mic! Sounded good anyway.

More about the festival

Tickets at the festival were priced at £65 for one-day entry or £79 for both days. The festival operated an electronic card payment system for other bars and food stalls which could be topped up easily at kiosks near the back of each stage. A VIP ticket cost £250 for one-day entry or £300 for both days. VIP tickets included unlimited food and drink, with well-stocked bars and food from some of the best local restaurants – it's definitely

worth considering for the price difference if you want an easy life!

There was a long queue to get into the festival at around 3pm on the first day so try to either get there earlier or turn up a little later, depending which acts you want to see. The queue only lasted 45-minutes or so, but the VIP entrance was clear for the duration. Lots of people brought picnic blankets and camping chairs which they set up around the edges of the arena or further back from the stage. This is a good idea for groups with kids and older people, although the drawback is that people will be standing in front of you so you won't get the best views later in the day without getting on to your feet.

Would I go to Gibraltar Music Festival again?

Yes, definitely! Especially as you can fly direct to their new airport from many parts of the UK and probably be close enough to walk straight to your accommodation. I'm look forward to seeing which acts they announce for next year...

22 10 Reasons Why You Should Visit Gibraltar

by Sabina Trojanova

girlvsglobe.com

National Day, Gibraltar

I'll be honest – before visiting Gibraltar I didn't know much about this little stretch of land. The only two images its name conjured up in my mind were a giant rock and a rowdy little monkey.

Visiting a new place with very few preconceived notions is a rare occurrence for me – in high school one of my favourite ways to kill time was playing online blank map games, memorising the names of capitals and reading up on useless facts. Like, did you know that in England chickens outnumber humans?

Anyway...



Perhaps it is because Gibraltar isn't actually a country (it's a British Overseas Territory) that my knowledge of it was so limited. Regardless of the reason, I found it kind of refreshing. Exploring a new country with an open mind, soaking up experiences with no preconceived notions – it felt wonderful. Here is a list of everything I've learnt in the form of ten reasons why you should visit Gibraltar!

1. Festivals

My main reason for visiting Gibraltar were two great events – the Gibraltar Music Festival and the Gibraltar National Day. It turns out

the territory is an undiscovered festival gem. Take the Gibraltar Music Festival – it's been going for four years and this time there were more than 10,000 party people in attendance! For just £79, you could see incredible acts like Kings of Leon, Paloma Faith, Kaiser Chiefs, Ella Henderson, James Bay and Duran Duran. Needless to say I had an incredible time! It didn't take place in some dusty field either – the views of the Upper Rock from the main stage at Victoria Stadium were definitely Instagram-worthy. Oh, and the VIP section had unlimited food and drink which made it so worth the extra bucks!

There's a big variety of other events you could attend like the annual Polar Bear Swim (a dip in the sea at the end of December...no polar bears included!) or Calentita Food Festival in mid-June which celebrates Gibraltar's cultural and culinary diversity.

2. Location

Speaking of diversity, I can't fail to mention Gibraltar's unique location. On a clear day you can see three countries (Spain, Morocco and Gibraltar, which is technically not a country, but still!) and two continents (Europe and Africa) from the top of the Upper Rock. That makes Gibraltar a great starting point for further exploring – a short ferry crossing will take you to the winding souks of Morocco, a hop across the border to Spain will connect you with the rest of the mainland.

Thanks to its location Gibraltar also has some pretty spectacular sunsets – seeing the light fade across two continents at once gives you a peculiar sense of connectedness. Take a drive to the Upper Rock and just gaze across the narrow strait – if that doesn't make you feel at

least the tiniest bit philosophical I'm not sure what will.

3. British Culture

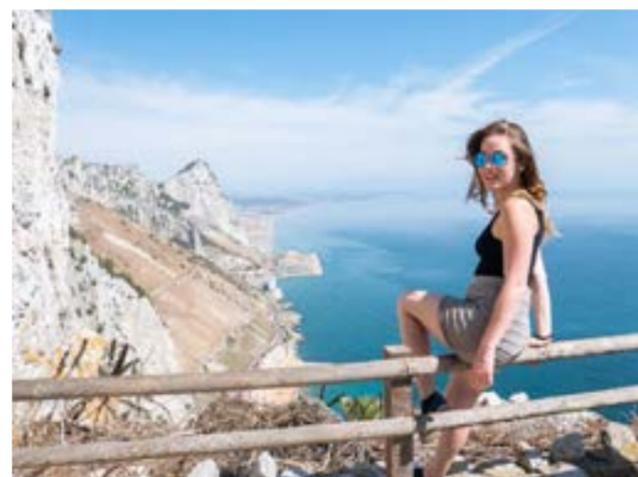
Despite being nestled just a stone's throw away from Africa, Gibraltar can feel like a British enclave... which is precisely what it is. After being fought over by the British and Spanish for centuries, it officially decided to remain part of the UK in a sovereignty referendum on 10 September 1967.

To remind themselves and the world, the locals celebrate Gibraltar National Day on that date every year. The entire city is decked out in red and white, the streets flooded with singing and dancing Gibraltarians. If you're a fan of all things British (Queen Elizabeth II and warm-ish beer in particular), this one will be a particularly sweet treat for you.

This British connection is also useful if you're coming in from the UK, because Gibraltar's primary currency is the pound. But don't worry – you can use euros in all the shops as well. Plugs are European though, so pack that adaptor for your appliances.

4. Hiking

The Upper Rock Nature Reserve with its lush greenery and wild monkeys is the perfect place for a hike! For the sportier among you (a group I forced myself to join on this trip), the



Mediterranean Steps are possibly the most beautiful nature trail in Gibraltar.

The path was originally built by the British military and it links Martin's Path at the foot of the Rock to Lord Airey's Battery near its summit. It was refurbished and made safe in 2007, although I can't vouch for things like sunstroke, scraped knees or sore calves the next day. The incredible views make the sweat fest more than worth it though – and it definitely beats the gym!

5. Beaches

Gibraltar has beaches? I don't know why, but that information blew my mind. I knew it was right next to the sea and all, but I didn't expect beaches to be that integral to local life. There are six of them along the shoreline and four are sandy.

Eastern Beach is the largest and most popular, but I found Catalan Bay particularly picturesque. Until the nineteenth century it was populated by fishermen and it has kept a lot of its character. Be warned though – like most beaches on the island it can get very crowded in the summer!

6. Caves

If the beaches are too crowded and the weather too hot for a proper hike, Gibraltar has the perfect indoor activity. No, I'm not talking about going to the cinema – I'm talking about stepping inside the belly of St. Michael's Cave. There are two options, depending on how adventurous you're feeling. If you're looking for something relatively low key, you can just waltz into the upper part of this ancient sea cave. It was first mentioned in 45CE by Roman travel writer Pomponius Melia but now it plays host to millions of tourists, a light show and lots of concerts.

If it's adrenaline you're after, try your hand at rappelling down the slippery rocks inside



Lower St. Michael's Cave. If that doesn't sound adventurous enough, I should mention that the journey includes walking on a two-inch rim around a very deep lagoon inside the cave. I could also mention that wearing a skirt is not advisable, but I don't think anyone is silly enough to make the same mistake I made...

7. Fresh Seafood

Gibraltar may not be a renowned foodie



destination, but thanks to its cultural diversity there's a huge variety of places to eat. If it's a proper British pub you're after you'll be on cloud nine, but if the idea of bangers and mash in 30°C heat makes you feel a little nauseous (I don't blame you) you have many other options.

I made it my mission to seek out some of the best fresh seafood this peninsula has to offer and I was not disappointed. From tuna served on a hot lava rock at Papparazzi and langoustine linguini at Cafe Rojo to freshly caught seabass at Bianca's, I was very pleasantly surprised.

8. Monkeys

I'll be the first to admit that few things excited me about my upcoming trip to Gibraltar as much as knowing I'd get to hang out with its resident macaques! As the only free-running monkeys in the whole of Europe they're one of the territory's biggest attractions – but that's both a blessing and a curse. Instead of seeing these encounters as a learning opportunity, most tourists just consider them



convenient photo props who sometimes steal their tuna mayo sandwiches.

I don't think I need to explain that there is much more to these intelligent creatures and it would be a shame to ignore that. Local primatologist Brian Gomila holds weekly familiarisation tours for small groups during which he takes you to see the local Barbary macaques in their natural environment, right before their bedtime. You can find out more on his Facebook page – the tour was one of the main highlights of my stay because it really helped me understand the way these little monkeys live and think.

9. Dolphins

Speaking of animals in their natural environment, Gibraltar is also one of the best places in Europe for spotting wild dolphins. So after you visit the monkeys at the top of the Rock, get thee to the waters below and go meet the dolphins that live there.

I booked a dolphin-watching trip with Dolphin

Adventures whom I'd definitely recommend. Their yellow boats depart from Marina Bay – the perfect place for a leisurely lunch by the water – and the guides on board are very knowledgeable about all things sea life. If you're lucky, you might even see a whale, turtles or sunfish!

10. Shopping

Before you leave Gibraltar, don't forget to go on a little shopping spree – especially at the airport, which I found even cheaper than the shops in town. Why? Gibraltar is a VAT free jurisdiction, which means things like makeup, perfume, jewellery or electronics can often be cheaper than in your home country. This is especially true of naughty things like alcohol, so take this opportunity to buy yourself a nice bottle of whiskey or champagne... or both!



"You always start with the senses."

I try my best to suffocate the sound of my growling stomach. There's a Marks and Spencer's sandwich hiding in my bag, but I don't want to grab for it and noisily interrupt the English author who's sitting opposite me at the front of a tiny gallery space.

It's a sunny Sunday morning – the last day of Gibraltar's annual International Literary Festival – and Iain Finlayson is discussing the ways to evoke a spirit of place within a piece of writing. He begins to talk about Molly Bloom, a character from James Joyce's 'Ulysses' who waxes lyrical about Gibraltar and its colour, its heat and its beauty.

I look around at the gallery's walls, hung with

bright modern artworks, and my attention turns to the varied audience: a journalist from Gibraltar; a Scottish woman who relocated to the territory decades ago; another speaker who's recently written a children's book about water voles.

And then there's me. A fellow writer who's yet to publish a book and who, unbeknownst to Iain Finlayson, has also been thinking about the concept of 'place' a lot recently.

Spending the last eighteen months writing a book for my MA degree has brought a number of questions along with it: how I perceive the world, why I think the things I do, and how I put these thoughts and perceptions into words. I've questioned how I identify myself as a traveller, as a Londoner, as a woman, and

as someone still in the grieving process.

I'm constantly wondering exactly where I fit, and what my place really is.

So what was I doing at Gibraltar's Literary Festival?

In one way, it felt like a natural progression to attend a literary festival for four days and be surrounded by published writers who, if they've ever questioned themselves, have still got far enough in life to be discussing their now published opinions in front of rooms filled with strangers.

On the other hand, I was just a bit nervous. I've never read Joyce's 'Ulysses'. I write blogs about foreign countries and share them on social media for a living. I constantly doubt the quality and importance of what I say. What if these writers were all way more intelligent than me?

Even worse – what if they knew it?



Of course, this isn't the usual attitude of someone attending the Gibraltar Literary Festival. The festival is a place to spend a long weekend immersed in an intimate series of over fifty lectures, panels and talks given by expert writers in every topic from the Arab Spring to Nelson Mandela to modern Spanish history, and it's appealing to anyone who loves literature.

Particularly when they're held at an array of beautiful venues all over the Rock.

Thanks to Gibraltar's tiny size, I spent each day of the festival moving around the eight different venues – from the beautiful Garrison Library set in a shaded square to the King's Chapel, and from the historical Convent building to the five star Sunborn Hotel, built on a boat in the harbour.

And these little wanderings also gave me the perfect opportunity to gauge what Gibraltar itself is like.

What I knew about Gibraltar before visiting If I'm honest, Gibraltar has never really been on my radar. I know it sits at the edges of two continents; has a number of macaque monkeys living on its famous rock; has a long contested history of being part of the landmass of Spain, yet remaining a British territory for over three hundred years – and that there are vestiges of English influence scattered all over the area.

My first instinct upon arrival was mainly to try to speak as much Spanish as I possibly could – and the shallow traveller in me was mainly eager to take photos of red telephone boxes and play 'Spot the Britishisms' throughout my visit.

But perhaps because I was exploring parts of the city in the midst of the festival with the words of various writers ringing in my mind, it quickly became apparent that there was a lot more to Gibraltar than just 'Britain versus Spain'.

Getting to grips with Gibraltar

The territory of Gibraltar only measures 2.6 square miles, but it holds a population of 30,000 people from a number of different nationalities. There are Italians, Portuguese, Moroccans, Maltese and Indians all calling the Rock home, and they all represent a number of different faiths like Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Roman Catholicism.

For me, that suddenly meant more than just passing palm trees beside phone boxes. I began to see Gibraltar as a unique space where these different nationalities all converge, and none seemingly takes 'majority status'.

I peered inside a synagogue that sat across the street from a cathedral, wandered down the main street past English pubs advertising pie and mash and turned into a side street, where elderly men sat on benches and the air echoed with Arabic.

Schoolchildren walked ahead of me, clutching paper-wrapped fish and chips and gossiping to each other in Spanish. I grinned profusely when I realised that two men were speaking a flawless mixture of Spanish and English words within each of their sentences: the hybrid language called 'llanito' that's native only to Gibraltar.

I couldn't help wondering whether these different cultures cross over in behaviour as well as language. Do the Spanish families spend Sundays sitting down for plates of roast beef and Yorkshire puddings? Have the Three Lions football fans ducked inside the mosque doors before? Do the women speaking Arabic ever snack delightedly on tapas?

With this new found appreciation for Gibraltar as a place for cultures to come together, the literary festival took on another, deeper meaning.

Finding the heart of the literature festival

I listened to historian Christopher Lloyd discussing global history from the Magna Carta to the present day, and explaining how vital it is to see the bigger historical picture: to zoom out and connect everything that's happened all together, like so many beads in a necklace.

I watched three time Nobel Peace Prize nominee Scilla Elworthy speak about her experience working with many of the world's most prestigious leaders and thinkers; about the roles of women in the process of attaining global peace; and about the ability all of us have to master our own dark side of reluctance, apathy and unworthiness.

And then I sat in awe as Samantha Herron, the British author of a collection of stories based on her travels in Morocco, explained how she'd felt so immersed and welcomed into Moroccan culture by her surrogate family that



she eventually converted to Islam. She told us how Moroccans shape a story so instinctively: “like they’re giving you a gift. Something precious.”

She said that the culture of a country is in its language – and Arabic speaks to her, just like I feel with Spanish.

The idea thrilled me more than anything else that weekend.

Each evening there was a dinner for all the writers and speakers which, in my blogging capacity, I was also invited to attend. With every question someone asked me about my blog, the methods of using social media and my writing background, the nerves and self-doubt dissipated.

Soon, I was happily chatting away with the speakers I’d been so in awe of during the day, detailing the importance of having a Twitter account, and I couldn’t have been more comfortable with myself.

Coming together for a love of the written word
The more talks I attended, the more I

realised that the books themselves were merely the precipitators for intelligent, urgent conversation about any topic that happened to spiral into the foreground – and what really mattered was the social interaction.

The part I sometimes tend to forget when I’m typing away in my flat.

Iain Findlayson mentioned in his talk that the spirit of a place can be found in its language, and that every culture hinges on its communication.

Well, as far as I can tell the cultural significance of a literary festival like Gibraltar’s is to get all these like-minded people together: a collection of anyone passionate about writing, regardless of whether they’re authors or readers. And when the setting of a literary festival is in a new and unexplored country for you, so much the better.

It means you’ll start to understand the spirit of the place specifically through the dozens of different perspectives you’re listening to.



24 What a Wonderful World Louis Armstrong

by Abigail King

insidethetravellab.com

Satchmofest



Beneath the sticky Louisiana sun, I lie back on the grass and open my eyes.

I see trees of green...

A low-slung stage stands behind 200 or so people who are swaying with the sun. Beyond black railings, people sit on fold-out chairs. And above them, fingers and faces peer through wrought-iron balconies on candy-coloured walls.

I see skies of blue and clouds of white...

I'm sitting in the summer of Satchmo Fest in New Orleans, a three-day festival devoted to local hero Louis Armstrong (where you pronounce the "S" in Louis, by the way.) It's small, on a festival scale, attracting only 36 000 guests over the whole weekend, which makes it all the sweeter. I can wander between two open stages, sit, snooze, shimmy and even duck into a museum in the middle of the music to learn more about the place. Geek alert on high: this is my kind of music festival.

My Guilty Secret

I'm going to let you in on a little secret: I've never been comfortable talking (or for that

matter) writing about music.

Instead, I have always felt shy. Traditionally, here would be the part where I introduce some anecdote that involved some kind of childhood trauma to explain it.

A beating at the behest of a trombone, perhaps. Skinned by a saxophonist or violated by a violinist.

Of course, in truth, it was the neighbour's ears that were violated through my clumsy efforts to learn the strings.

Sneering About Music

Ach, but I've met enough people who just love to sneer whenever you talk about music.

"If you don't know who gobbledeygook-Mildred is, then you don't like jazz."

"If you can't tell me the difference between a blah-de-blah dooberry and the essence of a sound then you don't know jazz."

And, annoyingly looking back. I believed them. As an adult, it's clear to see what a ridiculous, bumptious responses those were. *Music, like art, is there for us all.*

I'm cross that I let them get to me. And I'm cross that as a result I missed out.

SatchmoFest in New Orleans offers a gumbo-laced chance to fix some of that. Not least because of a delicious Armstrong quote that says "if you have to ask what jazz is, you'll never know."



Learning About Louis

Near everyone I know can recognise that gravelly voice and that wonderful, wonderful world.

Plenty I know could recite his entire discography and place in the annals of music history.

Me? As ever, I'm a little lost by talk of French quadrilles and modal jazz and more interested in the story of the man himself. In particular, the inspiring story of his success.

***I hear babies crying. I watch them grow
They'll know much more than I'll ever know***

And inspiring is the word when it comes to the life of Louis Armstrong.

Not Such a Wonderful World

Because I'm lucky enough to live in one of the most free and tolerant places in the world – and because even here a real sense of equality is far from perfect, it has taken me a long and

hard old time to realise just how bad things were just so recently when it comes to rights I take for granted.

I am still shocked to learn that women did not get the legal right to equal pay here until as late as 1970.

That in Australia, the aboriginal people were not counted in the census until as late as 1967. And that the United States of America, a nation founded on the ideals of equality and freedom, somehow managed to live in a way that when Louis Armstrong, son of the south, became one of if not the best jazz musician in the world, his band was still forbidden to play because of its mixed race nature.

Armstrong could play. But not on the same stage as his white band members.

Louis Armstrong in New Orleans

What on earth and how on earth did the world manage to continue with such nonsense for so long?



Armstrong, the boy, was born in 1901 in this intoxicating city of New Orleans, with its cajun and creole flair and crocodile-laden swamps nearby.

Born the grandson of slaves, his father left when he was young, his mother worked in a brothel and by his teens, somewhat unsurprisingly, young Louis was in trouble with the law. After firing a pistol on New Year's Eve 1912, he was arrested and – in a sign of the times – sent to a place called the New Orleans Home for Colored Waifs.

In one of those strange twists of fate, the Waif's Home gave him music lessons and the rest, as they say, was history.

“There is two kinds of music, the good, and the bad. I play the good kind.”

Louis Armstrong

The Pain of New Orleans

By now, I'm no longer in sunshine. I've made my way through the Louis Armstrong exhibit, housed in the New Orleans Mint, and have shuffled in to the back of the lecture hall. It is 2015, and, astonishingly the ten year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina and the destruction, desolation, deficiencies and deceit that accompanied it.

The panel talks about the rescue efforts, the loss, and the attempts to rescue the heritage and tradition of music in New Orleans.

It's a tough listen, and too in-depth for me, a first time visitor to this swampy succulent land.

But that's the beauty of Satchmo SummerFest: it offers layers for all. Music aficionados, New Orleans residents, and people like me: here to explore the city for the very first time.

“Every time I close my eyes blowing that trumpet of mine—I look right in the heart of good old New Orleans... It has given me something to live for.”

Louis Armstrong

And for all the muck of the past that I've raked up here (or rather, that the museum carefully presented within the heart of the festival) I think that, ultimately, we can all draw great inspiration from it.

I see trees of green

I see friends shaking hands, saying how do you do.

They're really saying “I love you.”

What A Wonderful World Louis Armstrong

Despite the misery and inequalities of the past – and even the misery and inequalities of today – there are still places with sunshine, laughter and music. And that, despite the headlines, most people really do want the world to change for the better.

Yes, as the red beans and rice sizzle from the stand-up stalls nearby and those lyrical notes blend with scratched-out voices, I find myself agreeing with Louis.

Yes, I think to myself, what a wonderful world.



25 The Garlic Festival, Isle of Wight by Michael Turtle

timetravelturtle.com

Garlic Festival



For a festival about garlic, it doesn't smell half bad. I guess garlic is fairly odourless when it hasn't been cracked open yet and quite pleasant when it's being cooked. It's only after it's been consumed that the stink wafts out of open mouths – and it's a bit too early in the morning for many people to have eaten. But, regardless, there's a huge fuss going on today about a pretty small plant.

Here, on the Isle of Wight, in the south of England, there's a good reason to be celebrating garlic. There's quite an industry of garlic production because this is one of the best parts of Northern Europe to grow it. The soil is rich and as Colin Boswell, owner of the island's Garlic Farm and festival organiser, puts it:

"We have been blessed with a climate here which is particularly well suited for growing

most types of garlic. When the sun does come through the clouds, it has a very high light intensity, so we're a diamond set in the sea in the English Channel and light comes in, reflected off the sea, on all sides."

I'm not sure the island's local cuisine has been influenced greatly by the garlic over the years – it's still your standard British fare as far as I can tell, but the ingredient has worked its way into the culture. The annual Garlic Festival is a perfect example. What started as a small fundraising event in 1983 is now a weekend-long party that will attract about 25,000 people. Some are locals, some are tourists. Either way, Colin Boswell thinks everyone feels like they're on holiday when they're here. *"Garlic has a Mediterranean association and therefore a warmer softer climate would appear to be what you need for growing garlic – and it is what you need. In the 1970s*

when British people first started to eat garlic seriously, why did they want to eat garlic? Well, the smell of garlic and red wine cooking was an evocation of the holiday they had just had on the continent and they wanted to replicate that."

The Garlic Festival on the Isle of Wight feels like a typical country fair. It has rides for the kids, sideshows, market stalls and entertainment. At one end a large stage has bands playing throughout the weekend and, as I walk around, I spot smaller stages for things like circus acts and clowns.

While you could find many of these activities at most rural festivals through the UK, there are a few special ones that stand out. Take, for instance, The Lamb National. In a pun-fuelled event based on the Grand National, a group of sheep wearing little toy riders race around a track to see who wool make the chop.

All of the sheep get to race another day. A pity. There are some wonderful garlic sauces here that would be perfect on a roast lamb.

And, despite the carnival atmosphere, the focus of the festival is still clearly on the garlic. I find a tent where there are talks and cooking demonstrations all weekend about garlic. I catch a chef at one point showing a few simple recipes that you can do with different types of the ingredient; there's also a fascinating lecture about a journey into Central Asia to find the original species of garlic. Who would've thought that the little thing that I just crush up and throw into a pan had so many interesting facets.

There's also a large tent with all sorts of different garlics and garlic-related products on display (and for sale). It's here that I meet Nick James, a local expert on this particular topic. He's working in the tent, selling different varieties to the crowd that has gathered around the stalls, but he takes a few minutes to have a chat.

I get a disappointed look when I explain that I use normal supermarket garlic for all my cooking. So I ask why the varieties here at the festival are better.





"A lot of that garlic comes from China and it doesn't really have the depth of flavour," Nick explains, "and you find you have to use a whole bulb instead of just using one or two cloves, as you do with ours."

"We have so many flavours of garlic. We have something, which is like an early purple variety – top note zingy, very fresh, very juicy. We've got elephant garlic – mild, tastes great roasted. We then come onto our hotter varieties – we've got red duke, we've got purple mendoza – real hot fiery ones for the best garlic breads and curries ever."

All these different names confuse me. I never realised there was so much variety. I might have to rethink the way I cook (when I cook). It's interesting to learn more and, judging by the crowds of people who are lined up to buy some of this garlic, I'm not the only one who has learned about the benefits of the locally-grown produce.

It wasn't always this way, though. Garlic is a relatively new introduction to the Isle of Wight (in the broader history of agriculture). It didn't

arrive until the Second World War when French soldiers were based here. They wanted to cook their own cuisine so they brought some garlic over from France. They then discovered that it grew extremely robustly and... well, that story leads us to today.

So what do I think of the Garlic Festival? The short answer is that it's great fun and has a wonderful community feel. It would be a success even if it was just a general fair but the focus on garlic makes it even more interesting. You can spend your hours here learning more about this important product and improve your cooking as a result. For people who can travel to the Isle of Wight easily, it's worth the trip. For others, it's a good excuse to come and explore the island for the weekend.

However, for the best description, I'll leave the final word to garlic expert, Nick James:

"It's just a nice idea for a festival, isn't it? It's all about food and making that food taste great by adding that little thing called garlic!"

26 The Suffolk Adventure by Alex of Hejorama hejorama.com

Latitude



For this new edition of the "Must Love Festivals" we started by exploring the Suffolk region of England and attended Latitude Music Festival. During the week long adventure we slept in yurts, biked around the English countryside and listened to some of the most brilliant current musicians. This is the story of another successful #MustLovefestivals trip.

Going going, back back, to London London

It all started with a short stay in London, one of my favorite cities in the world and natural beginning for any good English road trip. We stayed in East London as always but this time decided to choose a hostel close to London Bridge as we really enjoy the development of the lively and fun Southwark/Bermondsey area. Not to mention Borough Market, one of our favourites in the city along with Broadway

Market. It also gave us the chance to discover the BFI, the British Film Institute located on the South Bank, for drinks at night, which we highly recommend.

For accommodation we chose the Rose & Crown, a proper English pub with a few hostel rooms, which we really enjoyed: great location, super friendly staff and convenient amenities. It also gave us the chance to experience something new when our 2 American dormmates decided to bring back boys in our 4-bed dorm. But that's for another story...

After two days in London, we got our rental car and headed to Suffolk. Now for all our readers driving their car on the right side of the road, don't assume that it will be easy to switch to left and be extra careful at the beginning. If you can, pay the extra for an automatic car

and spare yourself the effort to adapt to the shifting stick on the left. It's all very worth it as it will allow you to really explore various areas of the country very easily but make sure you don't ruin your trip with an accident.

And if driving a car isn't an option for you, bear in mind that England has a good railway system and Suffolk is only a couple of hours away from London. Once there, biking or hiking are two great ways to get around as we experienced as well.

Ivy Grange Farm

Thanks to VisitBritain, our base for our Suffolk exploration was a fantastic yurt in Kim and Nick's amazing Ivy Grange Farm. It was our first glamping experience and their glamorous yurts really are a new way to camp in comfort but still very close to the nature. It was a perfect fit for us as we are quite fascinated by all nomadic tribes and for a couple of days we felt a bit like a part of the Golden Horde of Batu Khan. And while we were not there to conquer any land, we did ride the camp bikes with passion around the countryside like fierce Mongol horseriders.

Among all the activities available, discovering the area by bike was definitely our favorite one and we spent an entire day in a quest to see all the Saints of Suffolk. It was a brilliant orientation race recommended by Kim and Nick on our arrival at the farm. We biked for about 40km in the area and managed to see all the beautiful churches of the Saints but one. I guess we wanted to leave ourselves a reason to come back and complete the quest!

Chillin' on the English Riviera

A ride to Southwold would be only about an hour and half but we decided that the car would save us time to reach there before heading to the festival which was luckily exactly between Ivy Grange Farm and the coast. And this beautiful beach city of Suffolk

definitely deserves the time.

Southwold has a typical pier like most English beach towns but features a very unique attraction: "The Under The Pier Show". If you expect a typical arcade game area when you enter the space created by Tim Hunkin, you will quickly realize that there's something odd about the coin-operated machines in there. Just to give you a quick glimpse of the arcade "games" available, our favorite one is "microbreak", a motorized armchair and TV set that takes you on a very ironic trip around the world through a hilarious animated film. Forget about Street Fighter and Pro Evolution Soccer, the real deal is in Southwold: Rent-A-Dog, Bathyscape or Microbreak are way more fun and unique experiences!

During our research for the trip we also learned that English writer George Orwell spent some time in Southwold during his youth and actually took his pen name from the Orwell river that crosses Suffolk. As a homage to one of our favorite writers we had lunch at Mark's Fish Shop on the High Street where he was supposed to be a regular customer.

Getting the proper attitude for Latitude

After a coffee on the beach, we had to leave sunny Southwold and a short drive took us to Henham Park where Latitude festival takes place. We decided to arrive early and avoid the usual hassle of big festivals: massive jams at the parking lots, queues to get the bracelet, etc. But from what we could see everything is well organized at Latitude to avoid those inconveniences and the staff was super helpful. Didn't take us long before we were laying on the grass with a beer deciding on the acts we would go and watch at night.

We had a great time at Latitude and were delighted to discover a festival that is about much more than just the music. It's a fantastic artistic experience in the beautiful forest of

Henham Park. Of course, having the chance to see Santigold, Young Fathers, UMO, Ezra Furman, Caribou and Django Django perform almost back to back was amazing.

But we were also stunned by the unique theatrical experience of "With a little bit of luck" co-produced by the company Paines Plough and writer Sabrina Mahfouz.

And this was just one of the great acts we saw over the couple of days of the festival which

site. Honestly there isn't that much to see outside of the museum but it's an interesting spot to get some information about the past of Suffolk.

The city of Woodbridge nearby can also be a good stop on the way to or from London. It has some beautiful medieval houses including the Hill House Hall Bed and Breakfast where we had the chance to stay for a night. Located in the oldest house of the region, this charming bed and breakfast takes you a bit closer in



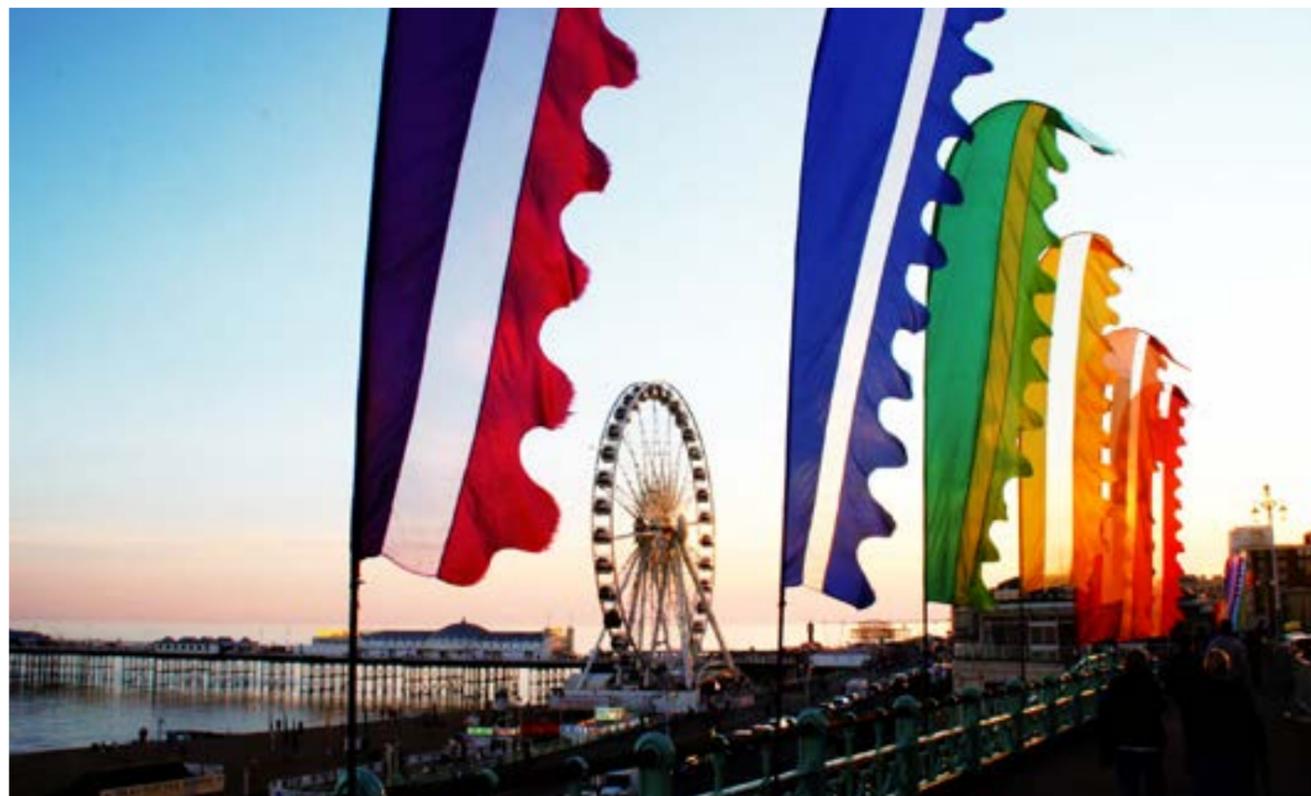
included wild parties at the Electro Shack, hilarious comedy in cabaret and old school soviet Russian vibe at the Dasha.

Last day, with ancestors

After two days of fun at the festival, it was time to head back home but not without a stop in Sutton Hoo, an archaeological site where you can discover a bit more about the 'East Anglia' history and walk around the medieval burial

time to the East Anglia back when it was ruled by the kings buried in Sutton Hoo. But with much more comfort!

This final episode was the end of our trip in Suffolk, which was much more than just a getaway trip to the countryside as you can see and we had the chance to live many cultural and artistic experiences over the course of only a few days!



A gorgeous seaside location, a community known for their tolerance and diversity, and celebrating a quarter of a century of Pride Marches, which is a huge milestone – what could possibly go wrong at this year's Brighton Pride?

Well, with the infamous British summers, Pride can be hit or miss. I went to Pride events in England where it poured down on us, and then there were years when I went to Pride events and got sun burnt. In England, it can go either way, and when my plane touched down in the middle of a rainstorm on a chilly summer morning, I was worried. Would the epic Pride weekend I was hoping for get rained out?

But I didn't have anything to worry about: I woke up to bright blue skies on Friday morning and it seemed all of Brighton was already in a festive spirit, even though the main festivities

wouldn't start until Saturday.

Usually, around 160,000 spectators line the streets for the parade, but with the event's big anniversary, close to 200,000 people were expected to attend Pride this year. The 2015 motto was *Carnival Of Diversity*, honoring Brighton's diverse and open-minded LGBT community. I really couldn't have chosen a better occasion to return to one of my favourite cities in England.

The city had already felt super festive when I arrived on Thursday, with more rainbow flags flying around town than I've seen at any other Pride event I ever attended (and I am not exaggerating here!). That reminded me of just how liberal and nonjudgmental Brighton was. Kids with two mommies or two daddies were nothing out of the ordinary here, and a local friend told me her 9-year old had a boy

in his class who had a gender change over the summer – and when it was announced at school, nobody even bat an eye. Brighton, as accepting as ever.

So it shouldn't have surprised me that each and every business was flying rainbow flags and that the city is home to one of the biggest Pride festivities in the country – in fact the second biggest after London Pride – but that said, not even London has the same kind of festival atmosphere that you have in Brighton. Brighton parties the entire weekend. And Brighton parties hard. From the opening parties on Friday night until the early hours of Monday morning, the entire city feels like a huge festival ground. A massive festival ground is set up in Preston Park, complete with a funfair! That's where the main party takes place on Saturday, and the celebrations in Preston Park feel almost more like a music festival instead of a Pride event – but more on that below. The other party hot spot is in Kemptown, Brighton's gay neighborhood, where during the village street party on Saturday and Sunday thousands celebrate in the streets, DJs spin records outside of bars and bartenders mix drinks right on the sidewalk.

And then there is the parade, which was so colorful and vibrant that I never once got tired of watching float after float go by. While there was a number of floats that were all about being jolly and celebrating how far the LGBT community had come over the past 25 years since the first small Pride March in Brighton, there were also organizations reminding us that there are still 70 countries in which homosexuality is a crime – not to mention the five countries in which homosexuality is punished with death penalty.

The range of floats was very divergent: political organizations campaigning their purposes, fun floats including gay and lesbian dance groups, cheerleaders, LGBT divers, runners, etc., and the people who came out to watch the parade were just as diverse: families, groups of friends, same-sex couples as well as straight couples – it was amazing to see how many people (and dogs!) had come out to show their support for the LGBT community. The parade made its way from the seafront (a slightly altered route and a delayed start due to a suspicious package that was found on the parade route) to Preston Park. After watching it for a while we made our way along with the floats towards Preston Park, as did a big part



of the crowd.

By the time we arrived in Preston Park, the festival grounds were already packed and the festive atmosphere was infectious. I don't know any other Pride event that feels as much like a music festival as Brighton Pride does, and we started exploring the grounds.

Preston Park's festival grounds are big enough to fit tens of thousands of people – some of the tents alone fit up to 8,000 people, just to give you an idea of how big the area is. In addition to various dance tents and a cabaret tent you can find bar tents here, lots of food stalls, some smaller stalls that sell Pride merch, lots of carousels and thrill rides, and the main Pride stage.

The line-up shows how big of a festival Brighton Pride is: every year, the organizers manage to attract top acts and chart toppers like The Human League, Mary Lambert, Ella Henderson, and British pop stars Ms Dynamite and Tulisa. On the DJ front, Fatboy Slim was the biggest name and had no difficulties in making the crowds dance, and the ladies were ecstatic when Ruby Rose took over the turntables in



the Girls Dance Tent, and I would be lying if I said I wasn't impressed by her hot looks DJ skills.

About 40,000 people enjoy the DJs and performance acts here, and I loved seeing how many non-LGBT people had joined the festivities. Some people might be turned off

by having to pay for the festival, but at £16 I found the tickets to be more than reasonably priced, considering how much you got for it: all the DJs, the acts, the rides, and not to forget all the logistics and security necessary to organize an event like this.

Later on, we joined the 30,000 people that were roaming the streets of Kemptown where the Village Party went on until Sunday morning, long after Preston Park had closed. Kemptown is where all of Brighton's gay bars and clubs are located, and places like Revenge, the Terrace Bar, A Bar, Camelford Arms, Legends Bar, the Queens Arms and Charles Street Bar were all packed, with people dancing inside and spilling out onto the streets which had been blocked off for cars and limited for pedestrians.

While Pride usually slows down on the third day, Brighton Pride was still going strong on Sunday and I was impressed with everyone's stamina, considering that some people were still dancing when I was already having breakfast.

But by late afternoon, Kemptown was packed again, and the street party continued with people flirting, dancing, drinking and enjoying the sunny weather.

When I left Brighton the next morning, I was still brimming with excitement though I was utterly exhausted after this party weekend. As a festival lover, I loved how much this weekend – especially Saturday in Preston Park – felt like a music festival, with tens of thousands of music lovers coming together to dance, sing along, drink and celebrate, no matter if gay or straight.

I have no doubt that I will be back in Brighton for Pride.

28 Art Beats Weather at Durham's Lumiere Light Festival by Mike Sowden

feveredmutterings.com

Durham Lumiere Festival



Durham Cathedral is on fire, and everyone's cheering.

Flames lick up the time-blackened battlements, turning the sea of faces around me a lurid footballer's-wife orange. In its thousand-year history, Durham's never suffered a serious attack – the closest being the final battle of a failed Scottish invasion of England a few miles and seven centuries away. The only person to successfully storm the cathedral was Henry VIII, and he didn't use the front door – but it weathered a greedy royal plundering, it weathered everything else (including, you know, the weather) and here it stands today.

And now it's ablaze.

For a second I forget the context, and it's all very surreal. We're stood in the rain, a thin drizzle that will later turn to a thundering assault. Everyone's rapt, heads craned back, faces flicking with reflected light. It'd be Orwellian if it wasn't for the expressions. Even

A Clockwork Orange didn't feature eyes as wide as this. Mouths are open in pure wonder. Durham Cathedral continues to explode. Now it's showing astronomical symbols, equations, stars. A black hole rages back and forth, sucking on windows and towers. Machines clank, wheels turn, tides of colour sweep across, and I realise with self-disgust that I'm watching all of it through the lens of my camera. *Forget it, Mike. Someone here is taking better photos than you ever will.*

It's called **The World Machine**, it's an abstract sprint through the history of modern cosmology – and it's the opening act in England's premiere light festival. And when the light fades and everyone realises how much the rain has intensified, we all file out of the cathedral's courtyard, replaced by the next crowd for the next (identical) performance, and dissipate into the city's streets...

Lumiere has begun – and I don't know where anything is.

The barriers are a big hint. Visitor numbers were so high in 2011 that crowd flow became a big issue, leading to the implementation of a crowd control system during the next festival, two years later. Good job too: it attracted 175,000 people, and Durham is tiny. Space on this peninsula is so tight that the city itself has spilled outwards, crossing the river that forms its boundary on almost all sides, and now it stretches far to the south, where the city's university now sprawls. Out there, walking around is manageable. In here? It's packed.

I retreat. Popping back to my room at the Radisson Blue for a raincoat and a hastily-gulped coffee, I stroll along the river in search of entertainment – and find a cloud.

Closer inspection reveals that it's made of light bulbs, 6,000 of them, all operated by yanking on the appropriate chain. Considering the sky, it's all very apt. Clearly **Cloud's** designers Caitlind R.C Brown and Wayne Garrett had heard about the amount of rain Durham usually receives in November. Hopefully, anyway – this sucker's electric. Like everyone else I pull on a chain or two, enjoying the weirdness of it, and think up a game: "Turn All The Lights Off/On In 60 Seconds." A quid a go. There are 200,000 people at this year's Lumiere. Missed opportunity, guys.

Nearby, a riverside bench is lit up like a colossal glowstick. There's one across the river too. It's meant to spark conversation between strangers, and it does, as follows:

"Is this your hat?"

"Oh. Right. Yes, sorry. Couldn't see it because of the glare."

"Yeah. You left your keys as well."

"Oh god. Thanks."

The **Lightbenches** will be a permanent feature of Durham's riverside after Lumiere wraps, so I'm guessing they'll need to build Lost Property offices alongside them as well. A short stroll away, a whale's huge tail is erupting from the water, flipping lazily and going back under. It's a beautiful illusion, and

the sequel to 2013's most popular display, Elephantastic, the work of Top' Là Design. This year's piece requires a calm river and an artificial mist of water that can be used as a projector screen. It's striking, and I now feel bad for the folk on the festival's third night, when **Mysticete's** final performance was cancelled due to rising water levels, because of the rain.

Ah, the rain. I know I keep coming back to the rain, but then, so did the weather. Yet it brought out the very best crowd spirit. If you want British people to feel cheerful, gregarious and absolutely determined to have a great time, throw some rain on them. You'll see this with family outings to the seaside in January. The kids are shrieking, the rain is churning against the windscreen like a washing-machine on rinse, and everyone's trying to unwrap a number of damp sandwiches that the thermos has squished into shapes that would give H.R Giger nightmares. Nevertheless, there's an air of quiet satisfaction in the clammy, spectacle-fogging air: **We did this. We beat the weather. We won.**

Every time the rain gathers its strength and blasts down like a weapon made of water, we head for doorways and awnings and the undersides of trees, and there we look at each other, shaking our heads and laughing. Complaints are half-hearted and amiable, laced with the thrill of it – and absolutely unconcerned. **It's raining – so what? Haven't you seen rain before? Think what you like, but getting annoyed at rain is a bit daft, right? Do you want a crisp? Sorry it's a bit damp.**

And when the rain's gone, out come the people. The floating creatures of **Les Luminéoles** drift and swoop around their masters, while a few yards away, someone makes a buck from selling anti-floating-creature personal weaponry: (That's my interpretation, anyway. I might be wrong.)

All the lights in Durham are alive tonight. They dance against buildings, they hover

above the river in a clot of fog. A glowing projection ripples and shatters every time someone walks past it. Between the inner and outer city is strung a web of colours called **1.26 Durham** (Studio Echelman), referencing the 1.26 microseconds added to the Earth's rotation by the 2010 Chilean earthquake.

The shape – looking like the offspring of a Zoom lolly and a mosquito net – is modelled from NASA data of the earthquake, mapped in 3D. It's also a kind of game: using a web app, passers-by can manipulate its colour – although maybe this would have been more fun if visitors could see their progress, getting invested in numbers as they battle for the right to light up the river their way...

But my favourite piece of Lumiere-style interactivity comes courtesy of Durham's emergency services. **Asalto Durham** (Daniel Canogar) involves members of the public climbing up the railway station's viaduct arches. More specifically: they were invited to crawl over a horizontal green screen a few months ago, and the filmed results are now projected vertically against the side of the bridge...

All very fun. But then the local police joined in, and they really got into it – "helping" other people as they reached the "top", then clambering everywhere while stretching out police-tape behind them, until the whole bridge looks like a Christmas present from Jim Bergerac. Not to be outdone, the local fire-brigade had a go next, actually clambering down the screen/bridge to help other people up. And apparently none of it was scripted. Grown adults behaving like children, in the very best, most inspiring sense.

Durham is a city founded on a rattling good yarn (more on that another time), and Lumiere also acts as a storytelling platform for local history and modern social issues. Late in the evening I haul my weary, sodden frame through the backstreets of greater Durham until I find the house I'm after. I can't miss it – it's strobing like a malfunctioning TARDIS.

One minute it's a cheery domestic scene; next, a coal-miner's lift is clanking down. It's all projected onto the outside of a real townhouse (I'm guessing the residents skipped town for a few days) and the CGI is mapped perfectly to the surface it's thrown on. The result is trippy and engaging: a resident wanders out (appears to wander out) the front door, or leans out of the window, and starts telling their story – and the house warps itself to fit. It's brilliant work, and I stay for the full ten-minute loop, seeking shelter in the corner of a stranger's umbrella when the rain siles down once more...

But that's my lot. The weather's done me in. Nevertheless, one more surprise awaits. It's modest-looking, snuck into the foyer of my hotel without much announcement or fuss, but it resonates. It's like they knew I was coming.



(Ego-deflating fact: it's part of the festival. Well, fine. Whatever.)

Next time Lumiere's on the horizon, head in that direction. (Expect the next one in 2017.) It's an exciting, mind-expanding, mouth-gaping time to be exploring one of the north's most dramatic and beautiful cities, and it's a great showcase of what can be achieved with a little light and a lot of imagination.

Just remember to bring a raincoat, ok?

Punk, Post Punk, Brit Pop... You name it, Manchester has it.

Manchester is home to some of the most successful bands in England's music history. The Bee Gee's, Smiths, Oasis, Joy Division are some of the few names of the vast list of Manchester Bands. Throughout the history of music in England, there are a lot of famous Manchester bands.

What a better way to experience the city of Manchester than to go to all the iconic places that celebrates all those Manchester Bands?



Some of the Best Spots for Manchester Music

Craig Gill holds one of the best music tours I've ever been part of. In just 1 afternoon he took me to see the most important places for the Manchester Bands I love the most. Craig is the drummer for Inspiral Carpets, one of the notorious bands from Manchester. He knows what he's talking about it.

I went to see the building where the Buzzcocks used to have their office, the legendary Salford Lads Club and the building where

Noel Gallagher lived before his fame. I saw many other spots too, but those ones were my favorites.

I also learnt a lot about the history of Manchester Musicians like the fellows from Joy Division and important places like The Hacienda.

With loads and loads of information about the bands he personally knew and places where he used to hang out, Craig made me love Manchester in just a few hours.

Another fun fact I have to add here for the Oasis fans reading this: The name Oasis came from a Inspiral Carpets' poster. And Noel used to be the band's roadie. So it is like having a tour of one of the most fantastic cities with a personal friend of one of the best bands from Manchester.

There's a map and photos with most of the locations Craig took me but please, do contact him for a full tour. It is outstanding and by far the most interesting thing I did in a long time.

The Northern Quarter and the Record Shops

After I left Craig, I headed to the place that I liked to walk around the most: the Northern Quarter.

The old red brick industrial buildings contrasting with the young hip business all over was too good of a combination to let it slide.

It looks like an old New York atmosphere meeting the crazy street art of London. Plus the Manchester accent that make things just

way more fun. And I'm not lying about the back in the days NYC vibe, ok? Many major blockbusters used this area of Manchester to recreate what New York used to be. The alleys, the fire exit stairs, the smoke coming from nowhere... Manchester is so versatile.

Besides, all the record shops in this area... So good! This area holds the highest number of record shops per square meter in the whole city. Titles go from the good old punk rock, passing by Brit Pop all the way to electronic and so on. And if you love vinyls, this is the place for you! All the stores I've visited had a super large collection of vinyls.

Reserve a whole day for this area of Manchester. And please have lunch or dinner while you're there. The Northern Quarter is filled with cool, young and hip new restaurants waiting to be tested by you. Good food, great beer and awesome environment.



Check a Live Manchester Show With Real Manchester Bands

My brief visit to Manchester happened because I went to see the super cool Manchester Punk Festival.

This year the line up had big names like the Flatliners, Bouncing Souls and Oi Polloi.

I will admit here that my 16 years old self was so happy to finally see Oi Polloi live that I cannot put it into words here.

The festival itself was a super fun and different experience for me. It was my first time going to a music festival that was hosted in a city. So all those bad stories of going to music festivals you can forget about all about it. No camping, no walking 190 kilometers to go to the toilet, no overpriced and bad festival food, no stay without a shower for 3 days because you refuse to shower in front of 50 men... No nothing of that kind.

I got a hotel near the main train station and it was a 15 minute walk to the venues, I slept in a super nice bed, I had time to explore Manchester... It was fantastic.

Besides, since it is a small festival, there's not even a single band that I had to miss.

Manchester Punk Festival started a few years ago hosting its concerts in just one venue but now the festival is held in 4 different ones. And each of the venues are just a few meters from each other. And I mean it. Sound Control, The Thirsty Scholar and Zombie Shack are in the same place basically. The 4th venue, Zoo, was 2 blocks down.

Everything close, everything easy, loads of information everywhere and super well organized. Everything that I like in a festival. My favorite part of the festival was of course when Oi Polloi played, but I got to know so many bands that I genuinely liked... The Pale Angels, Brassick and Throwing Stuff are some of the names you guys need to check it out.

But if you're going not going to Manchester in time for this festival, I've got to say that the amount of posters and flyers on the streets were something else. The city thrives on its music past and offers loads of space for the new names.

I think I saw at least 3 or 4 gigs happening on all the days I was there. I'm pretty sure that opportunities for live music will not be a problem you'll have to face if you visit there.

30 I Went to Europe's Biggest Viking Festival

by Sabina Trojanova

girlsvs globe.com

Jorvik Festival



When I found out the biggest Viking festival in Europe was happening at my doorstep, I felt obliged to investigate.

Although I wouldn't call myself a Viking expert, something about Jorvik Viking Festival intrigued me. Seafaring explorers, heroic warriors and majestic ships – how could I say no?

Are you curious what it's like being one of the forty thousand visitors who flock to the festival from all over the world every year? Read on and find out if it's for you...

Jorvik Viking Festival: History

The annual **Jorvik Viking Festival** takes place in the fairytale city of York during the second week of February, a date that coincides with Jolablot. Jolawhat?

Let's back up a little... The Vikings first invaded Britain in 793 and by 866 arrived in York, or Jorvik as they called it.

Nowadays York now doesn't even make the top 50 list of England's largest cities. But under Viking rule it thrived as the country's second biggest city after London, a major river port and part of their extensive trading routes throughout northern Europe.

Vikings brought many traditions along with them and one of them was Jolablot – an annual festival heralding the arrival of spring and the end of winter hardships.

It was forgotten for many years, but in the 1980s, York Archaeological Trust rediscovered this long lost tradition. But there's a lot more we've been learning about the Vikings...

Jorvik Viking Festival: Myths debunked

Do you think Vikings were dirty pillagers who came to Britain to loot and rape? There are lots of myths out there but many of them are just Victorian inventions.

Yes, some Viking raiders plundered but **most of the settlers were farmers**. They started a new life in British cities, married local women and minded their own business.



Speaking of women – they weren't exactly oppressed, for the most part. They ran their households and were in charge when the men were away (which was pretty often). Vikings were not the brutish giants we consider them to be – archaeological finds show that the men were about 5'7"/170cm tall.

They also didn't reek of sweat from a mile away. Contrary to popular belief they bathed weekly, unlike many Europeans who considered it unnecessary.

Oh, and they wore kohl eyeliner. According to an Arab traveller visiting the Viking town of Hedeby in 950, "when they use it beauty never fades, on the contrary it increases in men and women as well".

So although their uber-masculine image might be a bit of a lie, you can rest assured that the Vikings were an attractive bunch.

Fascinating how the truth can get bent out of shape, isn't it? I loved learning more about these adventurous explorers and find them more interesting now than even before...

Jorvik Viking Festival: Activities

Jorvik Viking Festival offers tonnes of family-friendly events and as a young solo traveller I was worried that I'd feel out of place or **gasps** be bored.

Luckily that was far from being the case. A few of the activities – like fights in the Combat Arena or child-friendly workshops – were aimed at kids, but the majority of the events were interesting for people of all ages.

From **lectures to guided walks and encampments selling Viking memorabilia** (like the gorgeous boxes above which I regret not buying!) the itinerary had me running from one corner of York to the next in an attempt to see it all.

I definitely left Jorvik Viking Festival with a **better grasp of British history**. I particularly enjoyed learning about Cnut the Great also known as King Canute... and not only because of his profane-sounding name, which lends itself to dozens of puns.

I simply *Canute* bring myself to share them all with you. I know his name sounds funny, but I won't be a *Cnut* about it.

Yes, I think that's enough.

Eager to learn more about his reign, I decided to attend a **Viking banquet** celebrating his coronation! I was so excited that I sourced some traditional Viking clothes – the colourful ensemble in my first photo – before heading to York's Merchant Taylors' Hall for the feast.

I was greeted by several Viking guards and whisked away to a torchlit dining hall, with King Canute and his new wife Emma of Normandy sitting at the front of the room.

As the evening wore on, I almost forgot that it was 2016 and felt like I was at his coronation, which happened exactly one thousand years ago in 1016!

The delicious three-course banquet – complete with lots of wine in true Viking fashion – was definitely one of the highlights of my time at Jorvik Viking Festival. If you get a chance to go, **do it.**



But my favourite event was without a doubt the **firework finale**. I'm a sucker for a good firework show – I even went to the Fireworks Festival in Cannes a few years ago – so this was right up my street.

Recreating the tale of the Battle of Assandun, I watched with baited breath as an army of Danes led by not-yet-King Canute clashed with a throng of Englishmen led by still-King Edmund Ironside (whose table I happened to sit at during my Viking banquet the night before).

Although my face felt numb in the cold wind, I felt a wave of warmth wash over me as fireworks ascended from Clifford's Tower and lit up the night sky.

For a short moment right there I felt completely transported back in time. Don't worry – I'm well aware Vikings had no fireworks.

But the atmosphere, the raw energy, the celebratory roars... the Vikings came alive and I felt like I was one of them, witnessing King



Canute's victory first hand.

Jorvik Viking Festival: Final verdict

York is a gorgeous historic city and imagining what it looked like in times bygone isn't difficult. But seeing an army of Vikings march through its streets on their way to Coppergate felt completely surreal.

The juxtaposition of Vikings in full armour and the frilly displays of Patisserie Valerie – a cafe chain which I sometimes visit for a large plate of eggs benedict – seemed a little jarring at first.

But by the time the festival ended I no longer questioned it. York then and York now became one.

If you love learning about Europe's complicated past or just like the sound of partying like a Viking, this festival is definitely worth checking out.

Jorvik Viking Festival: Practical info

If you're thinking of going to Jorvik Viking Festival next year, do *it!* Many of the events are free, so you can learn about Britain's Viking past even if you're on a tight budget.

But if you can't make it to York during the second week of February don't despair. **The Jorvik Viking Centre** is available all year round – or it will be once all the damage from York's recent floods is reversed, likely in early 2017. Let me leave you with one final recommendation: stay at the Monkbar Hotel.

The place recently underwent a £3 million refurbishment and the rooms are *beautiful*. It's centrally located, has delicious cooked breakfast and free WiFi.

Because let's be honest – it's a lot more fun pretending to be a Viking for a weekend with reliable Internet than fighting to the death in muddy fields.

31 On The Isle of Wight's Fringe

by Michael Turtle

timetravelturtle.com

Ventnor Fringe Festival



While thousands of people head to Edinburgh for the annual Fringe Festival, at the other end of the UK there's another event that captures the true spirit of a 'fringe'. It may not have the reputation, the big names or the crowds, but the Ventnor Fringe Festival has something special. It has the soul of the community.

The Isle of Wight, just off the coast in the south of England, seems like a bit of an outpost in itself. But within the island, the town of Ventnor is even more isolated. It's on the opposite side to all the ferry arrivals and has no direct train link, like some of the other coastal communities. It seems an unlikely spot for an arts festival.

But it's this isolation that gave birth to the idea for a Ventnor Fringe Festival. It started with a group of young locals who thought their town needed more events. It was them – not the local authorities – who began the initial work

to create the festival. Five years on and their dream is well and truly realised.

One of the first things that strikes me as I start to explore the town is how the whole community has come together to help create the festival. There aren't nearly enough traditional venues to host all the performances that happen during the week, so they are held in a range of odd places. The local taxi driver has put his cab away for the day and I spot him playing the guitar with some friends out the front of his shop; A church up on a hill is used for a lengthy Shakespeare performance; A drop-in centre for the local youth is now exhibiting a range of artworks; and (most memorably) a laundromat is the venue for a small concert where the audience sits on top of washers and dryers.

There are a few festival bars – in places you might not expect. A plot of land surrounded

by trees near a church feels like a fairy forest from a music festival, for example. Or the rotunda next to the beach, which has tunes pumping into the late evening. Everywhere you walk in Ventnor during the Fringe there is something going on. Perhaps it's not a huge surprise. The town's population is only about 6,000 people.

It's this small size which allows it to be so 'quirky'. And that's what attracts many of the artists who come here to perform or exhibit. It's not just locals – I meet performers from across the UK and Europe. There are no restrictions to entry and, as long as there's a venue available, the organisers will put anyone who wants to be in the festival in the program. The artists also get to keep 100 per cent of the box office.

For me, this festival is one of those discoveries that you immediately want to share with everyone. Most people have presumably never heard of it (I hadn't) but there is such a fun atmosphere in the streets and I wish I could spend a few days hanging around and going to more of the events. The attitude of the organisers and the participants is inspirational and there are so many little creative oddities to uncover.

To understand a bit more about the festival, I sat down for a chat with one of the founders, Jack Whitewood. You can read the transcript below:

Time Travel Turtle: *How did the festival start with just a small group of young people leading the charge?*

Jack Whitewood: *It was six friends, all 18, and we had all just gone off the university and I think we wanted a reason to come back to our hometown. Where we live is very beautiful, very scenic and we love everything about it – the way of life – but there just wasn't really much to do... as is the same in many seaside towns around the country, even moreso being on an island. So we wanted a reason to come back every year and it's grown from not just us, but other people coming to visit.*

Time Travel Turtle: *When you first started, what was the reaction from the community?*

Jack Whitewood: *I think everyone has loved it right from the beginning but there have been individual things that everyone has been a bit bemused by to start with – but everyone has really embraced it now. I remember the first time we put pianos in the street, that was quite an interesting experiment but there were just so many people who could play piano but none of the pubs have pianos in them anymore – just things like that. You start to let them use space in different ways. People love being able to go into areas they're not normally allowed to go into or to places at times they're not allowed to go into. So we do a late night lock-in at the local library most years and it's great to have a bar in the library and have people doing poetry and spoken word until 1am. Even places that you can go, you tend to only go to one or two places that fit within your routine and there are so*



many shops in your own home town or city that you've never been into because they don't sell something that interests you, but it's really fun to be able to put on events there and suddenly you meet a whole new range of people and that's a really fun experiment.

Time Travel Turtle: *Was that part of the mission at the start to involve the community or has that evolved over time?*

Jack Whitewood: *I think it's kind of been there since the beginning but it's evolved a little bit now. I think before it was all with the ambition of just being fun and now it's now evolved a*

bit more than that into how can we look at a different model for how a small town like Ventnor can thrive and how can we use what we've learned through the festival and embrace that year round. High streets in the future need to be dynamic spaces that can't compete with the internet on price and product so they need to find different ways to be engaging and be places that people want to be in and live in.

Time Travel Turtle: Can you explain how the artists keep 100 per cent of the profits and why there are no requirements to be a part of the festival?

Jack Whitewood: The idea is to have a festival that isn't formulated and controlled by a programmer that dictates their interests. The festival has a life of its own beyond the team running it, so we never know each year what the festival program will look like and that's kind of very scary and really exciting. It means it's a product of its place so artists feel like they have control over what goes on because they dictate what's in the program. So if somebody says, 'guys we really want to see more dance shows', then they can create it if they want and lean it in that direction. The festival at different times has had big leanings. In the early years it was much more music-focused and now there's a lot of performing arts and film coming through so it's fun seeing it takes its own course. I think if you try to control something too much you'll create a false vibrancy. I think for it to be truly organic it needs to grow in its own way and if we dictate and choose what is shown here, that won't happen.

Time Travel Turtle: As someone who grew up here, how would you describe Ventnor?

Jack Whitewood: It's a slightly eccentric hillside town. It's beautiful, it's got a lovely beach, it's got an amazing cliffline, it's right on the southern tip, it's got its own microclimate and botanic gardens – lizards and things you'd never get anywhere else in the UK. But it's also somewhere that embraces being a little bit odd and a little bit eccentric and I think compared to the rest of the island, it's much more European-feeling. I think that's a result of its geography and when

you look out to sea you can't see the mainland, it's just the sea, which is quite nice.

Time Travel Turtle: You're on the same time as the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Do you see that as something you would like to become?

Jack Whitewood: Edinburgh is a product of its place and its location and we're a product of ours. Just like Edinburgh has evolved as a capital city of a nation and so it's adapted as a major cultural city, we're obviously not that so what we've developed is something a bit different. I feel like the Fringe here is a cross between a city festival and a field festival and that's because it is between those two places. Most people know the Isle of Wight for its field festivals like Bestival and the Isle of Wight Festival and not its more arts festivals and we try to cross over between the two. So while we have a lot of indoor theatre and concerts, we also have bars that are built much more like music festival bars and that hopefully makes it something that appeals to a really wide range of people. We also run every single venue, which is unlike any other fringe festival in the UK. Edinburgh has individual venues that people book and hire but they are year round venues whereas here the Fringe directly controls all of them which means it has a bit more continuity across the whole festival for a fringe.

Time Travel Turtle: What's the dream for the festival going forward?

Jack Whitewood: I think it would be great to get the word out a bit more about it and encourage new audiences to come and visit. We have a really fantastic core support group of a couple of thousands people who come every year and really enjoy it and it would be nice to get new people to come and take part and explore the city. But, at the same time, it will always be about intimate spaces and intimate performances. We've always said that we can carry on creating as many venues as we like as long as they always stay intimate. Our largest venue is about 200 seats and most are under 100. And that's what makes it what it is.



I didn't expect it to happen here.

San Francisco? Definitely. Paris? Sure. Amsterdam? Certainly. But Rotterdam?

That's where I was wrong. Rotterdam is a world-class jazz city; I just didn't know it, yet. Thankfully, Tokyo jazz band, Soil & "Pimp" Sessions, were already in the know. Last year, they laid down my dream jazz show in Rotterdam. It was a raucous affair, similar to what I imagine performances were like in American nightclubs in the days of Charlie Parker and Sonny Stitt.

But it was more than just a dynamite show. For me, their performance, which came towards the end of our stay in the city, capped off a weekend of discovery in South Holland, both musically and culturally.

Bombed sadistically by Nazis during World

War II, Rotterdam is the rose that grew from concrete and then went on to win first place at the county fair. The silver lining to Adolph Hitler's Rotterdam Blitz is the architectural landscape and smart urban planning that took root in the city following its destruction. In 2015, Rotterdam was named "European City of the Year" by the Academy of Urbanism. Rotterdam's port has long been a key gateway to Europe. (Currently, it is the tenth largest in the world.) In the mid-20th century, as jazz musicians headed across the Atlantic, their travels likely took them through Rotterdam, helping to turn the city onto modern jazz.

For the last decade, Rotterdam has hosted the North Sea Jazz Festival. What started in The Hague in 1976, with six venues, 300 artists and several thousand attendees, has blossomed into a three-day festival across 15 stages with 1,200 artists and 75,000 visitors. The festival is now recognized as the largest indoor jazz



festival in the world.

To build excitement for the jazz festival, Rotterdam started North Sea Round Town. The two-week festival showcases local artists as well as international musicians at venues and clubs throughout Rotterdam, such as Dizzy and the NRCafe. Soil & "Pimp" Sessions had a gig at Bird for North Sea Round Town, and we were fortunate enough to be in attendance. Neither Beth or I had heard of the band before we saw them that evening. I expected it to be a good show, but within minutes of the group taking the stage, I knew we were in for something special; I just didn't realize how special it would be.

Soil & "Pimp Sessions is a son born of two fathers: Miles Davis and George Clinton. A tremendously talented band, the quintet performs Death Jazz, a form of aggressive alternative jazz that has no boundaries when it comes to eras or musical styles. All the while, the group's hype man (think: Flavor Flav of Public Enemy), Shacho, paces the stage, at times with a megaphone, bridging the gap marvelously between the audience and band.

"We always felt that in the world of jazz, there was an unwritten rule that the musicians were to concentrate on their techniques and the audience were simply there to admire, like a transmitter/ receiver relationship," the band states on its website. "We wanted to break away from that and create exciting jazz with far more interaction between the players and the audience."

Mission accomplished.

Know Before You Go

The 411 on North Sea Round Town

• North Sea Round Town occurs each year in the two weeks leading up to the North Sea Jazz Festival. The dates for the 2016 festival



are June 24 to July 10.

- Ticket prices vary from show to show.
- Information and publicity about the festival seems to be rather limited. For example, outside of a few posters in shop windows, we wouldn't have known about the festival had we not been there specifically to cover it. The best place for updates about the festival is the North Sea Round Town Facebook page.

Money-Saving Tips

- Markthal Rotterdam, the city's new indoor market, is great place to grab quick, cheap meals or snacks, like fruits and nuts.
- The Rotterdam Welcome Card offers visitors unlimited travel on the city's excellent public transportation system, plus 25% discounts at 50 museums, attractions, and restaurants. We took advantage of the discount at the Rotterdam Zoo. Highlights for us included the Amazonia and Oceanium.

- The Student Hotel is a budget design hotel with tons of character (see below). It's got a great vibe as well as some tasty food too, and it won't break your budget either. The hotel is located on a main metro line so it makes getting around the city a breeze.

Rotterdam is not on everyone's radar when it comes to city travel, but it is very well worth a visit for sure. Just like many other harbour cities within Europe – such as Gothenburg, Hamburg and Liverpool – Rotterdam is a culturally very dynamic city and home of many students, designers, architects and artists, due to its creative atmosphere. From vintage shopping sprees, an afternoon in the Museumpark, a culinary stroll in the famous Markthal, a sculpture or architecture walk, to a night out in Rotterdam's vibrant bar scene – the Netherlands second largest city sums up as the perfect destination for a weekend getaway and is by far less crowded with tourists than its bigger sister Amsterdam.

Must-See/Hidden Gems

Because Rotterdam was mostly destroyed during the Second World War, it is now home to a lot of interesting architecture in many unusual shapes, colors and patterns. Visiting some of the city's famous landmarks such as the Cube Houses by Piet Bloom, the Blaak Tower, the central library or the Van Nelle factory, which is now an UNESCO world heritage sight is an absolute must.

Another interesting construction is the 'Luchtsingel', a yellow wooden bridge that connects the city centre with the northern districts over a railway line and even through a building. The area is full of tiny urban art projects, galleries, concept stores and open-air bars as well.

The museum Bojmans van Beuningen impresses with a extensive permanent exhibition – with pieces by van Gogh, Kandinsky, Magritte, Dalí, Beckmann and Rembrandt – extraordinary temporary



exhibitions, a very photogenic inner courtyard and a really exciting exhibition concept overall.

But you don't have to go inside to see famous artists work in Rotterdam. Pieces by Henry Moore, Pablo Picasso and Paul McCarthy can simply be viewed in public areas around the city, especially in the sculpture park of Museumpark.

Getting Around

Even though you can cover pretty much everything in Rotterdam's city centre by foot, their public transport system works really well and also offers free WiFi on trams. There are bike rental stations at the main station and the fastest way to get around in the harbour area is by water taxi. Rotterdam airport lies 15 mins outside the city and it is only 30 mins by train to Amsterdam Schiphol airport as well.

Kunst in Het Witte de Withkwartier

The Witte de Withstraat is the hub of Rotterdams contemporary art scene and home to many galleries, workshops, art centres, restaurants, clubs and bars. Once a year on a weekend in September, the whole neighborhood hosts a free art festival called

'Kunst in het Witte de Withkwartier' with many pop up installations, presentations, performances and art exhibitions open to the public. The festival showcases local artists and initiatives, ranging from new talent to internationally established names and is an institution among young locals. Strolling the streets of the area around Witte de Withstraat, it is like a little art treasure hunt, where there is something to be discovered behind every corner. Most of the installations are live and draw visitors, as they interact, dance, paint and play themselves during the weekend, just like a huge playground for grown ups. Many local personalities host free walking tours around the exhibitions during the weekend for different levels of art knowledge. Make sure to be there for the open air opening party on the main street.



Money Saving Tips

- Apart from the great concept stores and young designer shops around the city, vintage shopping is really good in Rotterdam
- The Rotterdam Welcome Card includes public transport in the city as well as discounts for museums, restaurants and shops
- If you are in for a quick and cheap eat, head to one of the traditional chip stands to get fries and Bitterballen
- For a cheap stay, check out 'The Student Hotel', a combination of student residence

and boutique hotel

Did You Know?

- A famous dish in the whole Netherlands called 'Kapsalon' roots from Rotterdam. Consisting of fries, topped with shawarma meat and melted cheese, covered with salad was first ordered by the employees of a hair salon in Rotterdam at a local shawarma place. 'Kapsalon' means hair salon in Dutch.
- Rotterdam locals have funny names for their architectural sights around the city. As the Erasmus bridge looks like a swan, it is called 'De Zwaan' in Dutch, the main shopping street below street level is 'Koopgoot' (Shopping Gutter) and the main station in the vernacular is called 'Station Kapsalon' as it looks just like the aluminium plate the dish is served in.
- The five tallest buildings in the Netherlands are all located in Rotterdam (Maastoren -165m, New Orleans -158m, Montevideo -152m, Delftse Poort -151m, De Rotterdam -150m) and it is the only Dutch city with a skyline, also called 'Manhattan on the Maas'.

Personal Highlight

What I loved most about Rotterdam, were without doubt the lovely people everywhere. I can't tell how many times I have been stopped on the street by a nice lady or charming older gentleman, just to tell me I look beautiful or to mention how wonderful the weather is today. The staff in shops and museums, baristas, tram drivers, water taxi captains – everyone was just super nice and friendly overall.



34 The Magic of Mobile Restaurants at Food Truck Festival TREK by Nienke Krook thetraveltester.com

TREK Festival

As part of the Must Love Festivals Team, I travelled to my home country The Netherlands last week! Not to Amsterdam this time, but a city just one hour away (that I must admit to my shame I'd never visited before): 's-Gravenhage, or as we usually say: Den Haag (or maybe even as you probably know it: The Hague -we seem to like giving everything in our country as many different names as we can, just to confuse you).

Just in time for the last weekend of the **Food Truck Festival TREK**, I ate my way through the handmade produce of several mobile kitchens and soaked up the atmosphere that I always love so much in festivals.

Unfortunately, I also got to soak up some typical Dutch weather and got a massive cold that made me leave quite soon, but I did manage to find out just what the magic is behind this unique food truck festival and why I think you should definitely visit next year, so let's have a look:

The Rise of the Food Truck

In the Netherlands, the concept of the food truck is rather new. It used to be illegal to have one actually and apart from the fish stalls (selling the famous raw herring) and the stalls selling fries ('patat') & deep-fried goodies as *kroketten and frikandellen*, you would only really find a food truck at the markets or at a sports event, and then they were usually just practical and definitely not shaped in the fun and creative ways you can see at TREK. But since you can now get a licence as a food truck vendor, it's becoming more and more popular. Another popular food truck event in The Netherlands is the 'Rollende Keukens' ('Rolling Kitchens'), which is a yearly festival in Amsterdam also showcasing great mobile restaurants.

Food Truck Festival TREK: The Highlights

To start off, the best thing about the TREK foodtruck festival is that it's completely free. Sure, the food at the different stalls wasn't very cheap, but because there were so many options, you can keep a good eye on what you spend and make a choice what to spend it on. At the entrance, you can pick up your very own TREK environment-friendly hard plastic cup for €2,50, that will be rinsed and re-used every time you top up your drink at one of the stalls. Another thing I liked about the TREK festival was the mix of different food and drink options, live music, theatre and cabaret. There was a great atmosphere -even when it started pouring down and there really was only one little tent that provided some cover.

The Magic of Food Trucks

I don't know about you, but I find these gatherings of food trucks such a great idea and this year I got to visit no less than three food truck festivals around Europe. One in Lloret de Mar, Costa Brava, Spain, one in Manchester, UK and now in Den Haag.

So what makes these type of food festivals so special? Let's have a closer look.

Specialty Food

What I really like about all the different foodtrucks, is that they all chose a specialty dish to focus on. For example at TREK, there was a mobile kitchen selling Temaki (Sushi Handrolls) & Yakatori (Japanese Skewered Chicken), so not just Japanese food in general, not even 'sushi', no specially the handrolls and chicken skewers, nothing else. Another stall sold smoky BBQ burgers, but just three different variations. Yet another sold just Spanish Paella.



It's this specialty that makes these mobile restaurants exciting for me, as the seller is (or at least seems to me) a real pro in his field. Another reason is because I simply HATE choosing from a menu, this makes life so much easier for me.

Community Spirit

There is a strong community around food trucks I've noticed. Because the setting of dining at a food truck is less formal than in your typical restaurant, it's easy to strike up a conversation with others waiting in line or sitting next to you on picnic table benches. And the best thing: you get to speak to the person actually preparing the food, learn more about their ideas behind the food truck and their passion for food in general. If they are locals, they are a great resource to ask for other restaurant (food truck!) recommendations and of course recipe tips.

Creative Vibe

The creative aspect of festivals is probably the main thing that attracts me to them. From the music to the festival food itself, the organisers have gone all out to create a unique vibe. I

love how some mobile restaurant owners went creative on their names ('Curry Up!' and 'Mister Maisguy') and made sure their cars, trucks or caravans looked the best. Some of the trucks even had their own entertainment, with a DJ, lounge area, face paint/photo booth and games section. There was also a podium where a live band was playing. Cool!

The Joy of Discovery

I guess what I like best about food trucks, is that you always discover something new to try out. Usually it's food you've never even tasted before! As truck owners have all creative freedom, even with known kitchens, they usually give a spin to a dish that makes it unique to try out.

On top of that, as they only prepare food in small batches, it's fresh and you won't have to wait too long before being served! So you have time left to eat even more at other stalls :)



The Travel Tester is getting up close with the Dutch Royal Family and Politicians at the yearly Prinsjesdag in The Hague (Den Haag): The opening of the Financial new Year of Holland... which is more exciting that it might sound!

If there is any country in the world where it's easy to get up close with politicians and even the Royal family, I'm sure it's The Netherlands.

Our little country is known for being open and accessible, but most important we find it that everyone is considered equal.

We even have a phrase saying something like: 'Just act normally, you'll be as crazy as you need to be' ('Doe maar gewoon, dan doe je al gek genoeg'), meaning we don't really give a — where you come from or who you (think) you

are... everyone gets the same treatment. So when you visit The Hague (or "Den Haag", as we call it), a city just one hour South of Amsterdam and seating our government, chances are you'll spot a minister on a bike or a member of the Royal family shopping for a new hat. Because, why not?

The Basics The Dutch Monarchy

For centuries, The Hague has been the centre point of our country's history. The bonds between the city and the Royal family date back to 1248, when count Willem II settled over here. And while we probably won't admit it ('they just cost us money!', 'the monarchy is so outdated!'), most Dutchies secretly love the Royals.

This comes to show for example at our famous

annual King's Day celebrations (before this was our 'Queens Day', pay attention if you have an old guidebook, dates have changed :)), where everyone is dressed in Orange spending hours partying and watching television to get a glimpse of the Royal Dutch parade.

Royal The Hague

Another, lesser-known celebration including a King's parade is 'Prinsjesdag' ('Prince's Day'), which is held every year on the third Tuesday of September. Here we celebrate the opening of the parliament.

The Royals travel in a procession (including a golden carriage and many marching bands and military parades) from the working palace 'Noordeinde' to the 'Ridderzaal' ('Knight's Hall'). From the throne in this hall, our King Willem-Alexander delivers the 'Troonrede' ('Speech from the Throne') in which he announces the plans of the government for the next term. During the day, there are several activities you can attend. I took my mum with me to experience this important event for the first time and from our seats on the 'Lange Voorhout', we had a perfect view to see all the music, military and horse parades and of course the carriages with the Royal family from up close. A short impression:

The Experience

Practice Run

Before the official ceremony takes place, there is a practise run of the horse parade two days before. With so many people making noise along the way, the horses have to get used to the crowds a bit, even though all of them are trained well for it.

It's great to watch as they are still all dressed up and you can really get a good view as it's not that busy yet. The best place I found to watch it is at the Binnenhof itself, as you can watch the horses come through the gates and you get a great backdrop for your photos!

Of course the Royals are missing from the practice run, as well as the golden carriage. The black coach above is used instead!

If you're really into the horses, then there is another great event you can't really miss (ok, I missed it, I wasn't feeling well). On the day before Prinsjesdag, head over to Scheveningen Beach at 10AM to see the 'Cavalerie Ere-Escorte' (Cavalry Honorable Escort).

An Early Start

As with every royal celebration, everyone from young to old can join in! At Prinsjesdag, there are some areas (such as alongside the pond behind the Binnenhof) where the kids can play, dress up and get their crowns or balloon hats.

Some people arrive incredibly early to get the best seat along the way. And of course, dressing in Orange (even when you're a bit too old for it) is totally fine! My mum and I wore a paper crown. Understandably, there is no photographic evidence of that left.



Traditions

Before all the official people, some people in traditional clothing pass us. It's a tradition for many people from villages in the Netherlands to wear their traditional clothing to these kind of events.

Also represented are people from Suriname, an



old colony of the Netherlands where most people still speak Dutch. While they now have their own President, many people still feel a connection to the Netherlands and the Dutch Royals.

Let the Party Start!

From 1 PM, the royal parade starts from the Noordeinde Palace and it goes around the pond of Binnenhof to end up at the inner court. You can buy a ticket to sit on one of the podiums, but you can also get there early and grab a spot along the rout on the Lange Voorhout, there is plenty of space.

First in the parade are all the military, police and navy people and the marching bands. It's so great to see how everyone has a different uniform and how well they must have trained to march all together.

The Royals Arrive!

The parade is then followed by the royal carriages. This is of course the best part of the parade and the most tricky as well. Who

gets the best glimpse of the golden carriage with our King Willem Alexander and his wife Maxima? Think our photos turned out great! Stunning to see them from so close!

Once everybody gets inside, the King reads out the 'Troonrede', with all the financial plans of the next year. While this is interesting mostly for the Dutch, watching the show is still great, because the female politicians and royals always have a sort of a competition of who wears the best hat. Or the craziest, mostly. This year, there was even a wooden one!

After the Troonrede, the whole parade (without the marching bands) turns around and you get one last look at the Royals, before they disappear into Paleis Noordeinde. There, they will get onto the balcony and wave at the people lucky enough to get there on time to see it. We were obviously way too late and couldn't get there in time through the crowds. So all you get is a picture of the balcony. Also nice, right? :)

36 Crossing Border Festival: A Border Where Music and Words Meet by Kash Bhattacharya

budgettraveller.org

Crossing Borders Festival



We live in a world of constant distraction. Email. Twitter. Facebook. Instagram

We watch TV on the tablet or laptop. We play games on the iPhone.

We read the news on the iPhone in the toilet.

Ok, I do that and maybe you do too.

In this world of the quick digital fix and constant notifications, reading books is not so appealing anymore. Or we just don't have the patience or energy. This is where novelists should try and compete for our ears instead of our eyes.

These are the thoughts of Irishman **Kevin Barry**, author of the most innovative novel of the year, **Beatlebone**. He is definitely competing for my ears and the rest of the 40

strong audience, that have been crammed into one of the rooms of the former Royal Palace of the Hague, the Koninklijke Schouwburg.

It feels quite surreal. I am sitting directly under the dim light of this huge glass chandelier that is twenty times the size of my head in the very regal surroundings of this palace. Actually, it is a performing arts theatre I've been told but it still feels like at any moment King Willem Alexander might walk in.

I'm listening to Barry read out a passage from **Beatlebone** (a mythical story about John Lennon escaping New York to an island of the west coast of Ireland that he had actually bought 9 years ago but never visited in real life).

Listening to his distinct raw Limerick/Cork accent I feel a million miles away from home,

my iPhone and its bloody notifications. And it feels great. I sip gently on my ice-cold pint of local craft beer they've been dishing out by the dozen in the foyer and slowly, surrender myself to the spoken word.

Barry's prose is very playful and has a wonderful musicality to it: it translates really well live.

As someone who writes for a living, it is fascinating to hear other writers open up about the creative process of writing. Barry asks the audience whether he is actually funny in Dutch and whether they got his jokes. He sometimes finds that humour is hard to translate. He writes his short stories around a theme. It is liberating for him to write about various themes. He once wrote a story about a woman who fell in love with a bull. In such stories, he tries to be as concise and succinct as possible. He finds writing short stories difficult to write and intense. Like walking a tightrope: sometime you'll fall off and break your neck. He feels that you can get away with a lot in a novel but there is no room to work with in a short story: there is no freedom. He wants his stories to be 'fucking wild.'

Quoting Pinter, he never gives the reader what he/she expects. Barry's philosophy of keeping his readers on the edge of their seats is shared by the organisers of Crossing Borders. I had never even been to a book/writers festival before this so I was absolutely clueless as to what to expect. I wasn't sure what to expect about a festival that mixes acclaimed and emerging authors with alternative pop.

With performances occurring simultaneously on several stages over the course of 2 days, Crossing Borders is quite an intense, heady mix. Lot of festivals have the habit of splitting things up into a literary tent and then a music tent but at Crossing Border they all mix together in one potent cocktail. It is a mix that works well according to festival director, Michel Behre.

'Lot of musicians dream of being writers and likewise writers often dream of being musicians so the mix works well for us. Writers feel like rock stars being programmed in-between music acts on the main stage in front of a huge crowd of music lovers. It is a different atmosphere altogether to what writers are used to so they really raise their game to perform for the crowd. The whole thing becomes original as well as personal.'

I hop skip and jump from Barry's session to the next-door performing arts theatre, the Nationale Toneel Gebouw where they have two stages named the 'Raven' and the 'Heartbreak Hotel'

The names of the bands are obscure so I google the website of the band that is next on at the Raven.

Bewilder.

The native Dutch band describes themselves on their website as having a groovy vivacious indie sound. Sounds good to me and not bewildering at all.

Their music, true to their website is very vivacious, infectious and gets the crowd on their feet. The songs they play on the set are from their first album **Dear Island**. The album is a tribute to the isle of Vlieland, one of the beautiful Wadden islands where they wrote, rehearsed and recorded the album. The standout tracks are the funky soulful 'The Unknown', and my favourite the rousing, uplifting 'Carry on Carry on.' Lead singer Westerik is a charismatic presence on stage and has a soulful voice that reminds me a bit of Dylan, Bowie and Lou Reed.

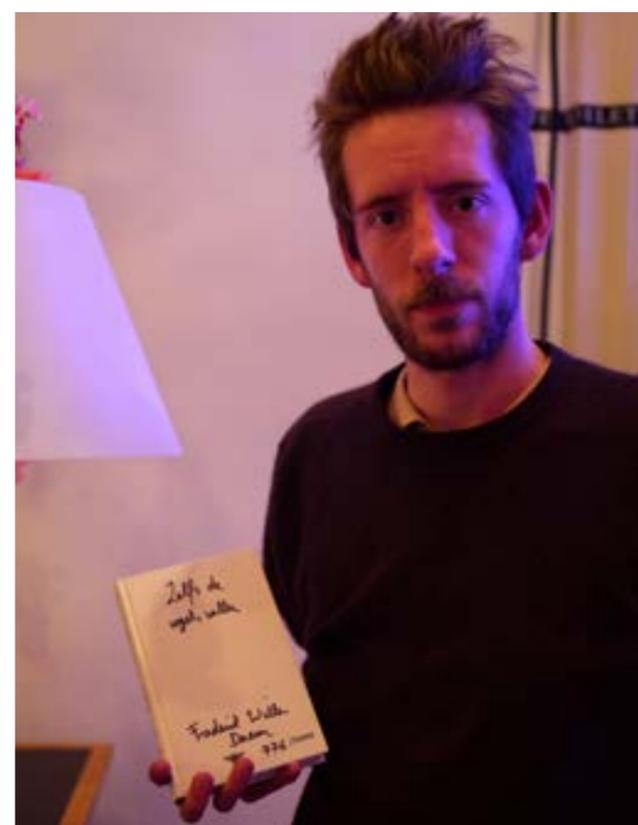
While I also enjoyed the more notable followup act of American Indie band, Lord Huron, the Bewilder set was definitely one of my highlights of the day and the festival. Maybe its me and my joy of discovering emerging voices in the world of music but this is where festivals like Crossing Border excel in

giving a platform to lesser known, unheralded talent. It's definitely something Michel Behre has an eye for with bands like the National, Mumford and Sons, Coldplay, The Black Keys and recently Ed Sheeran all performing at Crossing Borders before they made their big breakthrough on the international stage.

The following day, I enjoyed another relatively less known Birmingham based indie trio 'Little Comets'. Again, I was flitting from stage to stage and sadly caught at the end of their set. In 2009, the band achieved moderate success with their debut album 'In Search of Little Comets.'

Upbeat music and very melancholy lyrics. Loved all their tracks I heard: 'The Blur, the Line and the Thickest of onions', 'Worry' and the 'Dancing Song.'

After experiencing the highs of discovering cool bands and promptly adding them to my Spotify playlist, I retreated back to the world of the written word and the Royal Palace. I decided to attend the Chronicles session where I listened to an interview with an



emerging Dutch author Frederik Willem Daem talk about his new collection of short stories *Even the birds fall*.

He shared with us some insights from his favourite short story from the book, *Beyond the cliff*.

To Daem it is a very personal story, a fictionalized autobiographical story about him and his ex-girlfriend moving to Paris to rescue their relationship, which ultimately ends in tragedy.

"I think it has something to do with me not wanting to accept the end of things even if they are unavoidable." says Daem. This explains also the title of his book.

Some things in life are inevitable.

While not real, the book to him is a piece of realistic fiction. Invested with personal emotions. Friends came to him after he published the story, asking him how he was coping after his breakup in Paris, which was funny because in reality he never moved to Paris!

The last major act of the festival I attend is the genre-transcending Cinematic Orchestra who perform some of their classics like 'The Man with the Movie Camera' while also performing a few tracks from their upcoming new album. I leave the festival and The Hague moved, beguiled and enthralled.

I definitely will be back. At €30 for the day and €50 for the whole festival, it is fantastic value for money. One weekend that you will not regret.

Like Barry's short stories, going to the Crossing Borders Festival is like walking a tightrope. There are a few twist and turns, you'll fall and fail occasionally but in the end you will leave enriched and so much more better for the experience.

Festivals Calendar

DATE	FESTIVAL	LOCATION
Jun. 13 - 16	Bloomsday	Sligo, Ireland
Jun. 20	Calentita	Gibraltar
Jun. 26 - 28	North Sea Around Town	Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Jun. 28 - 29	Williams Lake Rodeo	Williams Lake, Canada
Jul. 1	Canada Day Vancouver	Vancouver, Canada
Jul. 1 - 2	Canada Day, Ottawa	Ottawa, Canada
Jul. 2 - 3	Calgary Stampede	Calgary, Canada
Jul. 3 - 4	Montreal Jazz Festival	Montreal, Canada
Jul. 4 - 6	Street Performers Festival	Edmonton, Canada
Jul. 7 - 12	Galway Film Festival	Galway, Ireland
Jul. 9 - 10	Folk Festival	Winnipeg, Canada
Jul. 16	Latitude	Suffolk, UK
Jul. 17 - 18	Galway Arts Festival	Galway, Ireland
Jul. 25 - 26	Cēsis Town Fair & Cēsis Art Festival	Cēsis, Latvia
Jul. 30 - Aug. 3	Brighton Pride	Brighton, UK
Jul. 31 - Aug. 2	Satchmofest	New Orleans, USA
Aug. 11 - 16	Ventnor Fringe Festival	Isle of Wight, UK
Aug. 14 - 17	Rudesheimer Weinfest, Rudesheimer	Rudesheimer, Germany

DATE	FESTIVAL	LOCATION
Aug. 14 - 15	Garlic Festival, Isle of Wight	Isle of Wight, UK
Sep. 4 - 6	Imperial City Festival, Rothenburg	Rothenburg, Germany
Sep. 5 - 12	Gibraltar Music Festival	Gibraltar
Sep. 5 - 12	Gibraltar National Day	Gibraltar
Sep. 11 - 13	Kunst in Het Witte de Withkwartier	Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Sep. 13 - 15	TREK Festival	The Hague, The Netherlands
Sep. 13 - 15	Prinsjesdag	The Hague, The Netherlands
Sep. 16 - 20	Oldenburg, Film Festival	Oldenburg, Germany
Oct. 9 - Nov. 1	Belfast international Arts Festival	Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK
Oct. 27 - 31	Banks of the Foyle	Derry, UK
Nov. 12 - 15	Gibraltar Literary Festival	Gibraltar
Nov. 12 - 15	Lumiere Durham Festival	Durham, UK
Nov. 13 - 17	Crossing Borders Festival	The Hague, The Netherlands
Nov. 17 - 18	Staro Rīga Festival of Light	Rīga, Latvia
Dec. 30 - Jan. 1	NYE Festival	Dublin, Ireland
Jan. 28 - Feb. 1	Tradfest	Dublin, Ireland
Feb. 15 - 21	Jorvik Festival	York, UK
Apr. 21 - 23	Manchester Punk Festival	Manchester, UK

insidethetravellab.com

Abi King



Abigail King is a writer and photographer who swapped a career as a doctor for a life on the road. She focuses on unusual journeys, thoughtful luxury and seeing the world through new eyes. "My favourite festivals are the dreamy, spacious kind. The kind where you can immerse yourself in something new, be it food, wine, literature or history, and find yourself surrounded by people doing the exact same thing."

aliciaexplores.com

Alicia Explores

Alicia Drewnicki is a freelance presenter, writer and video content creator from London. "I love how there's always something to celebrate or discover at a festival - whether it's new music, food, art or traditions. It's infectious when you meet people who are passionate about something in life... and that happens a lot when you go to festivals. Different ages and backgrounds all enjoying the same things."



beersandbeans.com

Bethany & Randy



Bethany and Randy are the photographer-journalist team behind Beers and Beans, a website loaded with more than six years of travel stories. They're also kind of a big deal on Pinterest with over 8.5 million followers on their travel boards. When it comes to festivals, what do they think makes them so special? "We dig the spirit and energy that surrounds festivals. Everyone who attends is united by a common passion and a desire to be part of something that is bigger than themselves."

floratheexplorer.com

Flora Baker

Flora Baker is a freelance writer, traveller and avid volunteer. "My favourite thing about festivals is that they make you feel at once immediately part of a community and also strangely separate from the real world for a few days. I love immersing myself in all the unique atmospheres: whether it's at a music festival in Iceland, a flower parade in Colombia or a tiny town fair in Latvia, every one is different!"



Meet the Bloggers

Meet the Bloggers

Sabina girlvsglobe.com



Sabina Trojanova is the founder of www.girlvsglobe.com a blog documenting her international adventures and personal style.

"My favourite thing about festivals is definitely the atmosphere. People are there to relax and have fun - and it really shows! I think a good festival is not just an event, it's a mindset."

GlobetrotterGirls globetrottergirls.com

Dani Heinrich is the vagabonding writer and photographer behind GlobetrotterGirls.com.

"I love festivals of all kinds – food festivals, gay Prides, but music festivals are my favorites. I love how they bring people together, everyone is in good spirits, the atmosphere is fantastic, people are celebrating something together they are all passionate about."



Hejorama hejorama.com



Full of colour, character and charm, Hejorama describes itself as a social platform for travellers to share their journey. In fact, Alex, Ben and Maeva's work is about much, much more as they capture the magic of travel through video, photos and quirkily designed T-shirts.

"Festivals are like breaks in time, where all people are on the same page, having fun together. Festivals are a great opportunity to travel abroad and meet local people in very open-minded conditions, as everyone's very friendly (and drunk!/, most of the time."

Nina Hüpen-Bestendonk smaracuja.de

Nina is a graphic designer and bouncy ball world champion based in Berlin, Germany.

"To me, festivals are a magical hub of people sharing the same passion - like a huge playground for adults, full of art, music and kindness. Every festival is different and every festival is inspiring in its own way - the smaller, the better."



Kash Bhattacharya budgettraveller.org



The award-winning Budget Traveller has revolutionised travel for the stylish, design-led budget-conscious traveller with his internationally successful projects Luxury Hostels and Cool Budget Hotels that have been featured in the New York Times. But why does Kash love festivals?

"I love festivals because they allow us to celebrate the things we cherish the most; music, food, traditions... Festivals also fulfill our cultural curiosity. We come back, transformed and rejuvenated by the experience."

fotostrasse.com

Marcela Fae



Fotostrasse are a travel and lifestyle blog written by a Brazilian couple (Marcela Faé and Felipe Tofani) living in Berlin, surrounded by three cats.

"Music festivals are one of the top reasons why I choose Europe as my home continent. The clash of cultures, backgrounds, colours and faces amazes me. It is the best opportunity for anyone to have a unique experience that will bind you and whoever is with you forever. So many great stories of my life are related to festivals... The kind of story that you'll tell your kids because you'll never forget"

timetravelturtle.com

Michael Turtle

Time Travel Turtle combines Michael's love of travel with his journalist background as he investigates the fun, the fascinating and the frankly bizarre sights and experiences he encounters as he travels the world.

Michael explains what he loves most about festivals:

"I love the way a festival draws you into its own little world. You can spend all day exploring and discovering and still feel like there's more to do. Where else do you have so much happening in just one area? And it's all there for you!"



mikesowden.org

Mike Sowden



Professional storyhacker and a magnet for all manners of travel disaster, Mike Sowden's scribblings and (mis)adventures have been featured on CNN Travel, Prologger, AOL's Gadling and the San Francisco Chronicle. His blog, the aptly-named "Fevered Mutterings", has been mentioned by Lifehacker and Lonely Planet. He's happiest when everything is going wrong. Which is a good job, really.

"It's the raw creativity. All the rules are in flux. People feel things they'd never feel elsewhere - a connection with each other and with things they won't be able to put into words, but will recognise when it comes out in their work and in the way they approach the rest of their life. At festivals, Things Really Happen."

Shivya Nath the-shooting-star.com

Shivya Nath is a 20-something travel blogger from India, who quit her corporate job, gave up her apartment and embraced a nomadic life.

"I think of festivals as an intimate peak into aspects of the local culture and way of life that might otherwise remain masked to an outsider. Throw in good food and a chance to make new friends, and you have the perfect recipe to (re)discover a place!"



Peter Parkorr travelunmasked.com



It's easy to spot the superhero theme to Peter Parkorr's Travel Unmasked, which aims to inform, inspire and enlighten those with grand adventures in mind. In fact, other people are at the heart of Peter's real love for travel and for festivals. Always travelling with his camera in hand, Peter likes to look at how people work and live around the world, sharing lots of photography & video on social media and his blog.

"I love festivals for three reasons; the people, the people, the people. Coming together, sharing the atmosphere, and having a great experience that you'll always remember. Whether everything goes to plan or disaster strikes, it's great to look back at. And you get to enjoy it all over again for years to come, whenever you share the story with someone else."

thetraveltester.com

The Travel Tester

Nienke Krook a.k.a. 'The Travel Tester' is a Dutch travel blogger living in London, writing about expat life and self-development through travel.

"I have been going to music festivals since I was 14 and love the creativity with which these festivals are run -both by the organisers as by the visitors. I'm curious to experience many other types of festivals around the world, focused around arts & culture, heritage and local food."



TravMonkey travmonkey.com



Paul (TravMonkey) is a London-based award winning travel blogger who focuses on solo adventure travel and has a passion for using new technology.

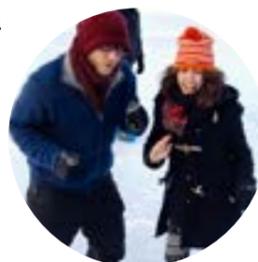
"I have fond memories of my first Glastonbury festival back in 1999, it was all a bit of an adventure. From the long train journey and bus ride out into the country to pitching tents in the dark and waking up to be surrounded by thousands of tents, it was a unique experience. The variety of music and acts on stage was mind blowing and you're able to wander around the site stumbling across quality live acts... it's best to not have any fixed plans at Glastonbury! I also have great new years memories from Dublin's Gathering and Edinburgh's Hogmanay, two wonderful cities that know how to party!"

bridgesandballoons.com

Victoria and Steve

Victoria and Steve are the writer-filmmaker couple responsible for Bridges and Balloons, a website that inspires people to explore the world and their path within it. Festivals have played a big part in Victoria's life.

"I'd say I'm a festival addict. I once spent a whole summer making pancakes at festivals in the UK - just so I could be in the atmosphere. Later I worked on Oxfam's festival campaigns. There's nothing quite like the collective smile of a festival. They bring out the best in everyone."



It has been an amazing journey from the moment when the idea popped into my head, to this moment, when this book is actually in your hands (or rather on your screen).

There a lot of people I am thankful to for making this book and project a reality.

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Must Love Festivals was a joint collaboration between 19 very gifted digital storytellers: Michael Turtle at **Time Travel Turtle**, Bethany Salvon and Randy Kalp of **Beers & Beans**, Peter Parkorr at **Travel Unmasked**, Abigail King at **Inside The Travel Lab**, Victoria Watts and Steve Kennedy at **Bridges and Balloons**, Marcela Fae at **Fotostrasse**, Alicia Drewnicki at **Alicia Explores**, Shivya Nath at **The Shooting Star**, Flora Baker at **Flora the Explorer**, Sabina Trojanova at **Girl vs Globe**, Nina Hüpen-Bestendonk at **Smaracuja**, Nienke Krook at **The Travel Tester**, Mike Sowden of **Fevered Mutterings**, Alex Kovalenko and Ben Etco of **Hejorama**, Paul Dow at **Travmonkey** and lastly myself, Kash Bhattacharya at the **BudgetTraveller**. If you are looking for some travel inspi-ration, do pop over and check out our blogs.

Big love to our creative director, Bethany Salvon, the amazing Felipe Freitas (shoot me a line if you need his contact) for designing this e-book. Also a big thank you to Arpita Bhattacharya from **Bag Full of Books** for editing this year's edition and helping me put this guide together.

Umi Digital were the brains behind creating our website- if you need a slick, cool site, Marc and Steve are the guys to speak to.

This is beginning to sound like a long, dreary thank you speech, so I'll stop here and let you dive into our world of quirky, magical festivals. Thank you for downloading this e-book, and hope it inspires you to visit some of these festivals yourself, and have an even better time than we did.

If you have any suggestions for any unusual, quirky festivals we should visit in the future, drop me a line at europesbudgetguide@gmail.com

Kash Bhattacharya,
Founder, [Must Love Festivals](http://MustLoveFestivals.com)

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