

CHRISTMAS at the Botanical Gardens



2017 – FAQs

| CATEGORY | QUESTION | ANSWER |
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| General | What is <i>Christmas at the Botanical Gardens</i> ? | <p>It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas when the trees and glasshouses of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens are playfully lit and all aglow. There's something for everyone at this festive time of year as a sparkling path winds its way through the Gardens in a magical after dark experience.</p> <p>Birmingham's newest festive attraction follows a jewel-coloured trail amongst glowing hedgerows and under tree canopies drenched in Christmas colour as seasonal melodies hang on the air. Be welcomed by glittering trees dripping with giant crystals, gaze at the carol-singing cedar coppice rising high in to the night sky and pause for a moment of reflection at the flickering Fire Garden. Just ahead, wander through the twinkling Pealight Tunnel before stopping for a kiss at Mistletoe Moment. Framed by spectacular ribbons of brightly coloured light the Lawn Aviary Finale springs to life as it dances in time to much-loved Christmas classics.</p> <p>Complete your Christmas treat under the stars with spiced cider, mulled wine or hot chocolate whilst the aroma of roasting chestnuts fills the air. Gather to toast your own marshmallows and enjoy the Botanical Garden's well stocked gift shop and other traditional fare.</p> <p>For the young ones, and the young at heart, ride the Victorian carousel*, the steam-boat swing* or inside a giant bauble at the fabulous giant Christmas Tree* and don't forget to look out for Santa and his elves along the way.</p> <p>*separate charges apply</p> |
| | When is it on? | <p>Wednesday 29 November – Sunday 3 December Wednesday 6 – Sunday 10 December Wednesday 13 – Sunday 17 December Monday 18th – Sunday 24th December Tuesday 26 – Sunday 31 December Monday 1 January</p> |
| | What are the times? | <p><i>Christmas at the Botanical Gardens</i> takes place after the Birmingham Botanical Gardens have closed to the public at</p> |

| | | 16.00. Gates then open for <i>Christmas at the Botanical Gardens</i> at 4.45pm and close at 10.00pm. 9 slots nightly, ½ hr slots between 5pm – 7pm, then 20 minute slots between 7pm and 8pm and last slot at 8pm. (Last entry 8.30pm) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| | Where does it take place? | <i>Christmas at the Botanical Gardens</i> takes place at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Westbourne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 3TR The illuminated trail follows a one kilometre loop on the paths. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Who is it suitable for? | <i>Christmas at the Botanical Gardens</i> is suitable for all ages – to be enjoyed equally by groups or family members to enjoy together. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Should I arrive in advance of my visit time? | No, you only need to arrive at Birmingham Botanical Gardens at your chosen visit start time stated on your ticket. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Where does the trail start? | The trail starts from the car park from which you will follow the path to the Gardens. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | I am visiting Birmingham Botanical Gardens during the day. Will I have to leave the Garden before entering Christmas at the Botanical Gardens in the evening? | Yes, to ensure that only ticket holders for <i>Christmas at the Botanical Gardens</i> have entry to the evening event, daytime visitors must vacate the Garden at the normal closing time. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| What else is on offer at Christmas at the Botanical Gardens? | Can I buy food and drink? Which restaurants will be open? | Yes, you will be able to purchase from the Pavilion Tea Room. In addition, there will a number of seasonal food and drink chalets serving seasonal hand-held food, catering also for younger visitors. Hot chocolate, mulled wine, roasted chestnuts will be on offer. Visitors can also toast marshmallows at one of our purpose-built fire pits. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | What shopping facilities are there? | The Birmingham Botanical Gardens shop is situated in the Visitor Centre and will be open during <i>Christmas at the Botanical Gardens</i> until 10pm. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | When do tickets go on sale? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday 15 August – Birmingham Botanical Gardens Members e-shot. • Thursday 17 August – agents onsale. • Friday 18 August – general public onsale. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tickets | Where can I buy tickets? | Online Birmingham Botanical Gardens website– birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk Telephone 08448737336 (calls cost 7ppm per minute plus your network access charge.) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Do I have to book in advance? | Yes, we recommend early booking. Each timed entry has a limited capacity and the early evening and weekend slots are likely to be extremely popular. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | How much do tickets cost? | Entry tickets for <i>Christmas at the Botanical Gardens</i> : <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>ADVANCE</th> <th>ON THE DAY</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Adult Non-Member PEAK</td> <td>£16.00</td> <td>£18.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Adult non Member OFF Peak</td> <td>£14.00</td> <td>£16.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Adult Member PEAK</td> <td>£15.00</td> <td>£17.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | | ADVANCE | ON THE DAY | Adult Non-Member PEAK | £16.00 | £18.00 | Adult non Member OFF Peak | £14.00 | £16.00 | Adult Member PEAK | £15.00 | £17.00 |
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| | Can you take dogs on the trail? | Guide dogs and registered assistance dogs are allowed within the Gardens. Other dogs are not allowed. |
| Practical questions about the trail | What is the route for the trail? | The trail runs in a circular loop. |
| | Is the trail covered? | No - all visitors are reminded that this is an outdoor event and the weather may be inclement. Please wear appropriate outdoor clothing and footwear. We reserve the right to refuse inappropriately clothed patrons access to the walk, if it is felt they are open to greater risk of injury. |
| | Is the trail dark? | In some areas the lighting will be low level as this is part of the experience. We do encourage visitors to bring along a torch in case of an emergency – this should not be used unless it is necessary. |
| | Can I park at Birmingham Botanical Gardens | There is no parking onsite – unless pre-booked. The gardens are 10 minutes from the centre of Birmingham and we would advise using public transport. |
| | How can I get to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the M5: Leave at junction 3 and take A456 signposted City Centre. Turn right onto B4129 (Norfolk Road) signposted Botanical Gardens. • From the M6: Leave at junction 6 and take A38(M) to City Centre. Follow underpasses signposted Birmingham West to A456. At Five Ways island turn left onto B4217 (Calthorpe Road) signposted Botanical Gardens. • Local Traffic: Follow signs for Edgbaston then brown tourist signs to Botanical Gardens. • Buses: 10, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 29 stop in Westbourne Road (westbound) and Harborne Road (eastbound). • Trains: From Five Ways Station – 15 minutes walk/bus. Turn left on leaving the station, walk to the roundabout (8 mins.), take bus 22 from the stop in Calthorpe Road to Westbourne Road (4 mins.) and then alight near the Gardens (1 min.). <p>From Birmingham New Street Station – Buses (as above) from Colmore Row or 20 minutes' taxi ride.</p> |
| Is there a dedicated drop off & pick up area? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, the drop offer area is in the car park. | |
| What provision do you have for disabled guests? | <p>The trail will be created to be as accessible as possible within the context of the natural site of Birmingham Botanical Gardens, but does include some steps. The route is all on hard standing and alternative routes will be provided should they be required for customers with mobility issues. Information will be provided for guests who may suffer from ill effects of lighting sequences.</p> <p>An accessible toilet is located at ground floor level adjacent to our customer lavatories. It is accessible by wheelchair and motor scooter.</p> <p>Additional toilets are located outside at the western end of the Loudon Terrace. These are accessed by level paths. The Ladies contains a disability friendly toilet with wall mounted baby change.</p> | |
| Access provision | Do you have parking spaces for disabled people? | Yes, there are spaces available and these should be booked at the same time as you purchase your trail ticket. |
| | Is the illuminated trail accessible for wheelchair users? | The illuminated trail is approximately 1 kilometre in length. |

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| | | <p>The route is designed so that it can be viewed solely from tarmac paths.</p> <p>If weather conditions mean that the trail is not fully accessible for people using wheeled mobility aids, consideration will be made on a case by case basis to allow tickets to be transferred to an alternative date when the ground conditions are more appropriate.</p> |
| | Can I bring my own mobility scooter? | Yes |
| Access provision | I note that there may be strobe lighting in the Illuminated Trail. Will there be white strobe lighting? Will it be possible to detour from the trail to avoid the strobe lighting and rejoin the trail further along? | There will be lighting sequences created within the lighting design that will have some flashing lights contained within them, however, these will not be strobe lighting. We have worked to guidelines on photosensitive epilepsy and will adhere to the industry standard of synchronising effects and locking the sequences to ensure that lights do not operate at more than 5 flashes per second. |
| | Can you take photos on the trail? | You are able to take photos and we encourage you to share these on twitter, facebook or instagram with the hashtag #christmasatthebotanicalgardens |
| Cancellation / Bad weather provision | What will happen if the weather is bad? Will the trail be cancelled? | <p>Inevitably bad weather can affect any open-air event. If we have to cancel the event as it unsafe to proceed, visitors will be offered an alternative date/time. No refunds will be offered simply if the weather is inclement. If the decision is to taken to cancel, it will be made at 2pm on the day and bookers will be notified by email. Ticket holders for the evening in question will be offered an alternative date/time. Customers will be contacted by their ticket agent with details of how to reschedule. Customers are advised to check the website: birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk for the latest updates.</p> <p>If the event is cancelled by us due to bad weather and patrons are not able to attend an alternative night offered, then a refund will be considered on a case by case basis. If we are not able to offer visitors an alternative night, we can also offer tickets for the following year. Failing this, refund will be offered.</p> <p>Where a refund is due, the ticket must be returned within 28 days of the event due date. The transaction fee is not refundable under any circumstances.</p> |
| Sustainability | Light Pollution | <p>The trail will be architecturally lit by experienced lighting designers who have developed sensitive ways of working through heritage and landscape settings over the last 7 years.</p> <p>Responding to the natural darkness of sites is key to the success of these events. The best visual work is sensitive to light “competition” and the brightness of one light source relative to another. We therefore take advantage of the environmental darkness to reduce the overall brightness of our lighting interventions, and allow ample space within our audience experiences for people’s eyes to attune to the darkness, then to allow them to appreciate the sights and</p> |

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| | | sounds of the natural environment as a contrast to, and context, for our artistic efforts. We try to avoid continuous lighting of trails and paths, and will only use audience area lighting where it is absolutely necessary for reasons of public safety. |
| | Noise Pollution | Sound installations are created to provide atmosphere and a sense of feeling for an installation. All sounds are targeted and specific to a part of the route and are therefore contained within defined spaces, therefore there is no noise pollution over and above the natural sound level created by the presence of audiences on the trail. |
| | Fuel Usage | Fuel for power generation will be kept to a minimum by efficient use of power loadings and low wattage lighting units where appropriate |
| | Is it not quite wasteful having all these lights on at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens at night? Is this illuminated trail sustainable? | <p>Consideration for the event's sustainability has been built into the planning process for the delivery of this event, the end result of which we hope will be to inspire and engage new and existing visitors to Birmingham Botanical Gardens.</p> <p>Our trail designers, Culture Creative, have been appointed on the strength of their experience of working in environmentally sensitive ways in heritage and landscape settings.</p> <p>Specific attention is given to power, and where possible we are using Birmingham Botanical Gardens mains power. Where generators are needed, these are carefully specified and operated to ensure the most efficient fuel usage. Low wattage lighting units will be used where appropriate on the trail.</p> <p>Culture Creative's design ethos is to take advantage of the environmental darkness to reduce the overall brightness of their lighting interventions, whilst maximising the effects of their artistic efforts.</p> <p>Continuous lighting of trails and paths will be avoided, and we will only use audience area lighting where it is absolutely necessary for reasons of public safety.</p> |
| Sustainability | How will the trail impact on the wildlife? | <p>Christmas at the Botanical Gardens – Ecological Impact Statement</p> <p>Introduction</p> <p>Christmas at Birmingham Botanical Gardens 2017 is in its first year. This event takes place in the evening after the Garden's normal closing time with the main feature being an illuminated trail around the Gardens, adding retail/catering points to Birmingham Botanical Gardens's existing commercial area, the Visitors Centre.</p> <p>The event will run from 29 November 2017 until 1 January 2018 but will not be open every night. It is intended to open on non-consecutive nights during this period from 4.45pm until 10pm. Up to 4525 people per night are anticipated with arrivals staggered by timed entry tickets, 30 minutes apart to maintain comfortable spacing, each bringing 300-500 people. Each round tour of the trail is expected to take around 90</p> |

minutes but, once in, visitors may spend as long as they wish up to the closing time.
The Birmingham Botanical Gardens provides habitats for a number of species of plant and animal, this temporary event must be considered both from the standpoint of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens itself and in relation to surrounding sites.

Method

In order to assess the likely impact of this event both a desk study and walk around surveys have been conducted. The route proposed for the trail, are walked and checked on a regular basis alongside horticultural staff within the garden, this is an ongoing process and will be constantly checked as the design of the event progresses.

General comments

This event has been planned and will be installed, by a private company, Culture Creative. Culture Creative specialises in events of this kind which are often in sensitive venues with high biodiversity and important historical heritage. Its staff have valuable experience in minimising any negative impacts which might be anticipated and are eager to work with staff at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens to meet and resolve concerns which arise. This company has designed, installed and managed similar events at Royal Botanical Gardens Kew, Blenheim Palace and properties belonging to English Heritage, National Trust for Scotland and National Trust.

The duration of this event spans 29 November – 1 January, the time of year in which there is least wildlife activity. Many protected species such as bats and amphibians should be hibernating. These are unlikely to be affected unless the event passes directly over their hibernation sites. The earliest bird nesting activity is to be expected from February onwards but all the equipment will have been removed well before then. In addition it is open for a maximum of five hours only each night, and with planned rest nights on three out of the four weeks of operation. These restrictions on the open nights and times will reduce any impacts upon wildlife particularly as evening events are common within the gardens and resident wildlife has adapted to the existing level of disturbance.

Lighting trail

The majority of the power used for the trail will come from generators that Culture Creative will carefully locate around the Garden. The generators used are chosen as they are very quiet and will be inaudible from the trail and from any wildlife habituation. The power will be carried using approximately 12km of cabling which has been used previously in sites with wildlife populations with no adverse effects. Much of the lighting will be floor based to highlight trees. The trees form part of the cultivated collections Birmingham Botanical Gardens and their welfare is paramount as part of the planning of this event.

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| | | <p>Flora All parts of this year’s route are on hard surfaces i.e. paths. The route passes through areas which are well-walked by visitors daily and does not take in any sections of grass with sensitive wild floras, so no impact upon Birmingham Botanical Gardens rich wild flora is to be anticipated from this event.</p> <p>Birds The design of the illuminated trail has been discussed and modified to minimise any potential for damage to birds. The trail is unlikely to cause an issue to birds as there are no nesting birds at this time of year.</p> <p>Reptiles and amphibians Generic frogs and toads can be found in the garden but will be hibernating away from the water at this time of year. There should be no impact from this event upon reptiles or amphibians.</p> <p>Badgers There are no badgers in the garden although they are occasionally seen in the deer park. No badger setts have been identified in the garden.</p> <p>Bats The Park and garden has approximately six species of Bat, they should be hibernating at the time of year that the illuminated trail is present. Sensitivity will be given to ensure that there is no disturbance to roosts. Flight lines will not be a concern due to the bats hibernating. Please see separate bat survey for further details.</p> <p>Overview This is a small, tightly contained event, open for limited hours at a very dormant time of year. It is perceived that we do not foresee any adverse effect on Birmingham Botanical Garden’s wildlife.</p> |
| <p>Who is the event organised by?</p> | | <p>Birmingham Botanical Gardens have partnered with entertainment promoter Raymond Gubbay Ltd who are well established for producing concerts and live events though out the UK. They have also co-produced the highly successful <i>Christmas at Kew</i> and <i>Christmas at Blenheim</i> illuminated light trails.</p> <p><i>Christmas at the Botanical Gardens</i> has been developed in collaboration with Culture Creative, producers of trails that celebrate the heritage and landscapes of stunning locations across the UK. They have previously worked with English Heritage, the National Trust, Forestry Commission, and the National Trust for Scotland.</p> |