

Get into the festive spirit this winter!

Monday 12 November, 2018

Visit a Victorian festive market, get involved in Christmas Crafts, and take part in a Boxing Day Dip... if you dare! Whatever you choose to do, there are many reasons to visit the North East this winter, say the North East Culture Partnership

The weather might be frightful, but the North East's cultural offering is set to be delightful, with an exciting programme of events planned across the region this winter.

Twelve local authorities, the region's five universities, the North East Chamber of Commerce, and individuals from Historic England and Arts Council England are working together as part of the North East Culture Partnership (NECP) – with the aim of championing, promoting and supporting the North East's arts and heritage sectors.

Peter Bromley, partnership manager at NECP, says:

"Our partners across the local authorities continue to create and host vibrant cultural, heritage and art events that bring visitors from around the country. We know from recent Historic England figures, that the heritage sector brings over 10 million people to the region each year, so from Hartlepool to the Tees Valley, South Tyneside to Sunderland, Middlesbrough to Redcar, Durham, Gateshead and everywhere in between, we've got plenty for those visitors to enjoy."

Happening in November...

Kicking off the festivities, on Wednesday 14 November, is Stockton's *Festival of Light and Colour*. Inspired by the spirit of Diwali, the free event will feature performances of music and light from 6:30pm – 8pm, marking the triumph of light over darkness; good over evil. Guests will also have the opportunity to purchase items from a range of stalls and traders at the event, including traditional Indian cuisine.

Be sure to mark the 22nd in your diaries, which is when many of the region's Christmas Lights will be switched on. In Middlesbrough's Centre Square, there will be an incredible staged performance of *The Christmas Dream Machine*, taking the whole family on an adventure across the skies. Starting at 6pm, the performance will be followed by a spectacular fireworks display.

South Tyneside's light switch on in South Shields is 22 November - where stars of The Customs House award winning panto which is *Beauty and the Beast* this year, will perform the honours. *Beauty and the Beast* kicks off on 27 November and runs right through until 5 January 2019.

Join a programme of local choirs and panto stars in Sunderland, for a full stage performance, before Richard McCourt of 'Dick and Dom' fame flicks the switch for the City's lights. The night sky is then set to explode in a burst of colour, thanks to a breath-taking fireworks display.

Bring the family together for an evening of entertainment, including live music and street performers; seasonal stalls and lots of goodies, before joining the Mayor in switching on the Christmas Lights in Redcar.

Celebrate all things arts and crafts the weekend of 23 November, with Hartlepool's fourth annual *Wintertide Festival*. Opening at 5:30pm with a lantern parade, and closing on Sunday 25th with a fabulous fireworks finale, the *Wintertide Festival* is free to enter, and will be full to the brim with activities, crafts, handmade wares, a festive market, live music... and much more!

Hartlepool's *Christmas Lights Switch On* is taking place on Friday 30 November, with Coronation Street's Brooke Vincent doing the honours in Church Square. All of the family can get involved in an evening of free, festive fun and entertainment, guaranteed to please even the most scrooge-worthy.

Happening in December...

Join Santa and his mischievous elves every weekend of December in Saltburn. Take an unforgettable journey on the Saltburn Cliff Tramway, where each child will receive a gift, including a specially written book about their visit to Santa.

Gateshead locals should head to Saltwell Park after-dark from Tuesday 4 – Sunday 9 December for *The*

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House of Lost and Found – a magical wonderland of lights, colour, sound and performance.

Those in South Tyneside should visit The Word on Wednesday 5, 12 and 19 December, for their *Christmas Craft and Make Course*. Just £20 for a three-week course, guests can learn how to laser cut and vinyl cut, producing their own bespoke Christmas decorations in the process!

And on December 7, you can celebrate some of your favourite fashions of the 20th Century – with added Christmas sparkle. Join the two Lucys at The Word as they showcase sensational special occasion outfits: ball gowns; work suits; first date frocks and frillies... Be sure to book in advance for the History Wardrobe's *Dressed to Impress*.

If the Royal Northern Sinfonia is more your cup of tea, head to St George's Church in Tynemouth on December 8 for their *Baroque Christmas* performance. Featuring seasonal instrumental favourites, this unique candlelight performance is set to delight within this stunning Grade 1 listed church by the sea.

Spend the weekend in the historic town of North Shields from December 8 – 9; the return of North Tyneside's annual *Victorian Christmas Market* is set to welcome visitors in their thousands. With over 100 stalls, featuring gifts, food and crafts, you're bound to find the perfect presents for your nearest and dearest – all against a backdrop of traditional carol singing.

Children are in for a real treat in Darlington, with the only dedicated Children's Theatre north of London hosting an enchanting first theatre experience about friendship, the moon and being brave. Children aged 2 – 5, and their families, are encouraged to head to The Hullabaloo for a Christmas tale guaranteed to raise a smile.

In South Tyneside, under 7s and their families can listen to a captivating collection of Christmas tales on December 8, 15 and 22. Taking place at The Word, *Christmas Tales* will tell the stories of some favourite Christmas characters, as well as inviting guests to sing along, get crafty and play games. Be warned: No Scrooges allowed!

Crafty kids are in for a treat on Saturday 15 December, as Gateshead Central Library's hugely-popular *Elf Yourself: Animation Workshop* is back for 2018! Suitable for ages 8 and above, you will create your very own animation alongside animator, Sheryl Jenkins.

Gather the whole family for Hartlepool Town Hall Theatre's *Cinderella Pantomime*. Featuring all the fun and laughs of a traditional, family pantomime, and backed by a live band, this Fairy God-Mother of a panto is one you won't want to miss... oh no you won't!

If fundraising is more your thing, why not take part in one of the region's Boxing Day dips? From Redcar to Seaburn, join hundreds of other brave souls as they run into the icy water of the North Sea! Not feeling quite so brave? You can always cheer on friends and family.

Lastly, join the hugely-popular Monster Ceilidh Band in ringing in the New Year at Arts Centre Washington. Enjoy an evening of great food, drink and dancing – the perfect way to see in 2019!

Happening in January...

Christmas might be over for another year, but that doesn't mean you have to shake the festive feeling! Join in with North Tyneside's annual traditional Morris Day Dancing on New Year's Day at The Ship Inn in Monkseaton – guaranteed to turn any frown upside down.

If you haven't already, get your skates on for Sunderland's Ice Rink, which is open 'til January 6 at Keel Square. Show off your best frosty moves, and warm up afterwards in the adjoining Hadrian's Tipi – complete with log fires.

Lastly, join chief digital sparkler and social media trainer, Nicola Jayne Little at St Mary's Heritage Centre on Thursday 10 January for *New Year, New You on Social Media*. Reflect, share your experience, and hear Nicola's top tips for a more effective social media presence in 2019!

For more information on any of the cultural events happening across the North East this winter, please refer to each individual local authority's website, details below.

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