

CULTURAL EVENTS WITH NATIONAL CHARACTER
IN WALES AND SCOTLAND

Festivals in Wales and Scotland have been a deep-rooted part of their culture since ancient times. They managed to survive despite a very complicated history.

Held during the first week of August every year, the National Eisteddfod is a celebration of the culture and language in Wales. The competition-based festival alternates between north and south Wales, attracting around 150000 visitors and 6000 competitors in a number of categories, including Folk Songs, Brass Bands, Cerdd Dant; it is also the natural showcase for music, dance, visual arts and literature. Alongside the competition, the Eisteddfod offers evening concerts, exhibitions and community activities. All competitions and performances are held entirely in the Welsh language. To attract more non-Welsh speakers to the festival, the organizers provide a simultaneous translation service and have a centre for learning Welsh. It gathers together people of all ages and backgrounds from a different part of Wales every year, moreover, most of Wales' leading writers and musicians have competed at the Eisteddfod.

The history of the Eisteddfod in Wales can be traced back to 1176, when Lord Rhys started it, with the modern history of the organisation dating back to 1861. A chair at the Lord's table was awarded to the best poet and musician, a tradition that continues nowadays. Eisteddfod means a 'sitting' (from *eistedd* – 'to sit'). The festival has been held every year except 1914 because of the First World War. Even during the global pandemic of 2020 the Eisteddfod was held via social media platforms and broadcasted on TV.

Highland games are one-day outdoor events that take place all over the country during the period from May to September. They include sport competition, dances, music and lots of family fun. Moreover, these games are deeply rooted in the past and are surrounded by folklore and legends.

The origins of the Highland Games may date back to the 4th or 5th century. However, the games we know today have been developed only since 19th century because of the Proscription Act, which forbade Scottish culture. The Highland games are so important nowadays because of the saved legacy of the Scottish people. To add more, in 2013 the Scottish Highland Games Association made it an official ruling that all competitors in Open Heavy Events at Highland Games are required to wear kilts. These events attracting a lot of people. The largest of all the Highland Games attracting over 3000 competitors and 20000 spectators from all over the world.

In peculiar ways these two festivals mirror the national character of unique and beautiful cultures in the UK. Expressing their national identity, they help the Scottish and Welsh people to move forward without forgetting about their Celtic culture of the past.