

Hogmanay: Scottish New Year [C1]

La festa di Capodanno in Scozia dura quattro giorni, con danze, fiaccolate e spettacoli di giocoleria con il fuoco. Si chiama Hogmanay e risale all'epoca vichinga, quando il solstizio annunciava la fine del buio e freddo inverno.



Hogmanay is how Scotland welcomes the new year. [Unlike](#) New Year's Eve in the rest of the world, Hogmanay is a four-day event full of unique customs and rituals. These range from the mundane, like saining (or cleaning) the house, to the wild, turning the streets into a giant party. Speak Up spoke to Juliane Frank of VisitScotland to find out more about this typical Scottish celebration. She explains that its roots are [tied](#) to the winter solstice. **Juliane Frank**(Scottish accent): So the origins go far, far back, back to the Viking times and pagan traditions basically, celebrating that the shortest day of the year was over and celebrating that new beginning, of days getting longer again and having... basically, the Vikings liked to party anyway, having a big party at the end of sort of a dark time.

A FRENCH PARTY?

The name 'Hogmanay' is very unusual. Juliane Frank says that there is a lot of debate about where the word comes from. While a number of theories exist, she thinks it comes from medieval times. **Juliane Frank:** The most likely, apparently, is that it comes from French. So, there's a French word for 'gala day' — and I'm not going to say it now, because I'm not going to pronounce it correctly — but there is a word that sounds fairly similar to 'Hogmanay', which means 'gala day' in French. And it so happened that, when you look back in Scottish history, our famous queen Mary, Queen of Scots, she grew up in France and they think, when she came back to Scotland, that she started using that word, introducing that word here in Scotland for the New Year's celebrations.

INAPPROPRIATE FEAST

Scotland goes all out during Hogmanay, where the nation-wide festivities exceed Christmas in popularity and scale. Here, too, an explanation can be found in history. **Juliane Frank:** Hundreds of years ago, during the Reformation, there was debate on how you should celebrate or not celebrate Christian religion and it was deemed that having a big party, basically a feast, wasn't appropriate, in line with [the] Reformation. So, there was actually a time when, in Scotland, Christmas was banned. So people just pushed our celebrations right to the end of the year and had those particularly big New Year's celebrations instead.

FIRST FOOTING

Hogmanay has its own customs and rituals. Some are regional, like the Loony Dook in South Queensferry, where people dive into the freezing waters of the Firth of Forth. Others are observed across the whole of Scotland, such as cèilidh dancing and singing Auld Lang Syne. Juliane Frank describes some of the other main customs. **Juliane Frank:** First footing is

probably the most famous tradition. After the New Year's, after the bells, you want to be the first person to visit your family and friends, to have the first foot in the door. And traditionally, it was good luck if your first visitor to the house was a [dark-haired](#) man, ideally. Apparently, that goes back to the Vikings again, because the Vikings tended to be blond and they often brought trouble. So you didn't want them. And when you come and visit right after midnight, you want to bring some little gifts, symbolic gifts almost, to family and friends, to wish them a happy New Year. What do they need in the new year? You don't want them to go hungry, so you would bring something like bread or [shortbread](#), which is a famous Scottish biscuit. Often these days, you'll bring some whisky and then traditionally you would always bring a piece of [coal](#), as well, to symbolically give them [warmth](#), a warm house for the year to come.

THE VIKINGS ARE COMING

The biggest, most famous celebration is Edinburgh Hogmanay. This year is its 30th anniversary. There is a special programme, but it starts early with one of the best-loved events. **Juliane Frank:** It already starts on 29th of December with a [torchlight](#) procession through the Old Town. So everybody who buys a ticket, you will get your torch and so you'll be really part of that procession. And it has some Vikings from Shetland coming along, from the very top of Scotland, and they are leading this procession and it really turns the Old Town into a river of light.

FIREBALL CELEBRATION

Besides Edinburgh, there are plenty of events all over Scotland. **Juliane Frank** has a couple of recommendations for visitors. **Juliane Frank:** The biggest free celebration, the biggest free event is happening in Inverness, the capital of the Highlands. There is a lot of music, fireworks, entertainment along the River Ness. They're in a beautiful setting in Inverness, where you can just mix with the locals and take part in those celebrations. And there are also some smaller towns in Scotland that have their own traditions that are a little bit different again. There is Stonehaven, for example. They have a specific

fireball celebration, which has become quite famous. Stonehaven is a small town on the East Coast of Scotland, just south of Aberdeen, and it's a lovely coastal place. And for Hogmanay there is this procession again where they're [juggling](#) with fireballs. So that's definitely an unforgettable event to join!

DANCE YOUR WAY INTO 2024

Edinburgh is known as the Home of Hogmanay. Its New Year's celebrations are among the biggest in the world, attracting thousands of people. This year's events mark its 30th anniversary and run from Friday 29 December 2023 to Monday 1 January 2024. Celebrations start with the famous Torchlight Procession through the Old Town. On 31 December, the Street Party and Concert in the Gardens, [headlined](#) by Pulp, will welcome fifty thousand [revellers](#) into the city centre and Princes Street, [to dance their way into 2024](#), counting down to the spectacular Midnight Moment from Edinburgh Castle. www.edinburghshogmanay.com

Glossary

- **Unlike** = a differenza di
- **fairly** = abbastanza
- **banned** = proibire
- **goes all out** = fare del proprio meglio
- **footing** = fare un passo
- **shortbread** = biscotto al burro
- **coal** = carbone
- **revellers** = festaioli
- **nation-wide** = a livello nazionale
- **feast** = banchetto
- **dive** = tuffarsi
- **warmth** = calore
- **torchlight** = luce della torcia
- **headlined** = essere l'attrazione principale
- **tied** = legare
- **deemed** = ritenere
- **Firth** = fiordo
- **dark-haired** = dai capelli scuri
- **juggling** = destreggiarsi
- **to dance their way into 2024** = raggiungere il 2024 ballando