

# DESTINATION HARROGATE

## New open-top bus leads the way for festivities in Harrogate

Visitors to Harrogate during the festive season can travel in style this year with the introduction of a new **open-top bus experience**, giving passengers greater access to attractions and businesses on its circular route of the town to help drive forward the spa town's visitor economy.

The new open-top sightseeing bus experience is being launched at the start of December, as part of the town's Christmas Fayre which is being extended to help draw in more visitors after the success of previous years.

The festive open-top bus will run during the weekends of the Harrogate Christmas Fayre in addition to the free Candy Cane Express road train, which is returning to the Christmas Fayre this year, and will transport visitors on a 15-minute route around the town. Passengers will be given a unique view of Harrogate from above alongside an on-board guide pointing out landmarks along the way.

**North Yorkshire Council's executive member for the visitor economy, Cllr Derek Bastiman, said:** "The programme of festive events in Harrogate always attracts a lot of interest and sees people from across the region and beyond travel to the town to enjoy what is on offer which is a big driver for the local economy.

"The addition of the new open-top sightseeing bus will give visitors the chance to experience Harrogate in a new way, and it will hopefully help people explore even more of what is on offer."

Delivered by Transdev and part of the York City Sightseeing tour fleet, the open-top bus experience, thought to be the first of its kind to come to Harrogate, will run during the weekends that Harrogate Christmas Fayre takes place from **December 1 to 17**. The services will be available from **December 1 to 3**, then **December 8 to 10** and finally from **December 15 to 17**.

The bus will leave approximately every 20 minutes from Montpellier Hill, Crescent Gardens, Cheltenham Parade, the Bus Station and West Park. Tickets cost £1 for adults, while up to three children aged under 16 can travel for free with each paying adult.

In April, it was announced that the Christmas Fayre had been extended to run for 17 days this year – a week longer than the previous two years, and in response to calls from town centre businesses who reported increased footfall in December during the market's run.

Harrogate Christmas Fayre, which launched in 2021 and is delivered by Market Place Europe alongside Destination Harrogate, has grown year-on-year and now offers an eclectic mix of up to 50 stalls selling Christmas gifts, decorations and seasonal foodie treats, which complement Harrogate's independent retailers, restaurants, bars and boutique stores.

Also confirmed for the first three weekends in December, Little Bird Made artisan market will take up residence in Harrogate's historic Valley Gardens, offering jewellery, crafts and gifts from local traders.

The Country Living Christmas Fair is also coming to Harrogate Convention Centre between November 30 and December 3, while the Harrogate Ice Rink, which made its debut in 2022, is also set to return from December 1. Tickets for the Harrogate Ice Rink will start from £10

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per adult and online bookings open from Friday (October 27) via the [icerinkharrogate.com](http://icerinkharrogate.com) website.

Alongside the festivities in central Harrogate, a programme of events and activities are being staged in the surrounding area. Ripon Cathedral hosts its annual Christmas Gift and Food Fair on November 24 and 25, while the Knaresborough Christmas Market weekend takes place on December 2 and 3.

Other events in the Harrogate area include an illuminated lights trail called Glow at RHS Garden Harlow Carr, Music and Lights and Carols by Candlelight at Fountains Abbey and the Christmas Adventure event at Stockeld Park.

**Transdev commercial manager Matt Burley said:** "We're delighted to be chosen as Harrogate's leading bus operator to deliver this exciting open top bus tour of Harrogate as part of this year's bigger and even better Harrogate Christmas Fayre.

"We're teaming up with our colleagues at CitySightseeing York to take visitors and locals on an entertaining tour, hosted by one of our award-winning live guides - so what better way to discover the hidden gems of Harrogate than by wrapping up warm and joining us on the three weekends before Christmas."

**Market Place Europe's managing director, Nick Rhodes, said:** "We're delighted that once again the Harrogate Christmas Fayre will return for an extended period of 17 days, bringing an amazing variety of traders into the town centre, offering a magical experience that all the family can enjoy. Working with our North Yorkshire partners, we aim to increase footfall in the beautiful town of Harrogate and significantly contribute to the local economy."

**Matthew Chapman, the manager for Harrogate BID,** which is supporting the Harrogate Christmas Fayre, said: "Here at Harrogate BID we are yet again delighted to be supporting the Christmas offer in Harrogate to deliver another magnificent festive season for the town.

"From more than 100,000 festive lights to the unique additional animations, we can't wait to welcome the thousands of visitors and residents alike to our great town. This time of the year is so important to local and national businesses, and we are proud to play a part in supporting this."

More information about festive events is available on the Visit Harrogate website at [visitharrogate.co.uk/christmas](http://visitharrogate.co.uk/christmas)