



STIRLING
CASTLE

THE PALACE OPENING CELEBRATIONS

Historic Scotland is organising a fabulous and fun weekend of activities to celebrate the opening of the refurbished Renaissance royal palace. The event, entitled *Stirling Castle Presents – a Palace Fit for a Queen* will feature around 60 costumed performers and will give ticketholders the chance to be among the very first people to tour the castle's palace block – stepping back to life in the royal court of the 1540s.

The celebrations will take place on 4th and 5th of June. It will be a specially ticketed event, with full public opening from Monday 6th. Numbers are being limited, and all tickets must be bought in advance, to avoid overcrowding and ensure the best possible experience for all. Weekend opening hours will, though, be specially extended so those without tickets will still be able to get into the castle and palace from 4pm, with the castle closing at 7pm. *Stirling Castle Presents – a Palace Fit for a Queen* will take place between noon and 4pm on both days. The provisional programme includes:

- *Royal procession – 11.45am, Saturday only:* The arrival of the royal party to take up residence at the palace could be an impressive occasion – on the Saturday we will provide an idea of what it would have been like in the 1540s. The celebrations will begin with the horseback arrival on the esplanade of Mary of Guise, dowager queen, and an outrider. They will be accompanied by a colourful royal party on foot. Alms will be dispensed to the crowd and a cannon fired from the parapets to announce their entry to the castle.
- *Palace apartments:* Be among the first to see inside the sumptuously refurbished royal apartments that were once the majestic residence of Mary of Guise and her young daughter, Mary Queen of Scots. An expert team of costumed interpreters will enable visitors to step back into court life of the 1540s, meeting the nobles, officials and servants who lived and worked in this wonderful building.
- *Image Makers for the King:* See the original Stirling Heads in a specially-created gallery and find out more about Renaissance Scotland.
- *All the Queen's Men – Great Hall:* Mary of Guise and her daughter the 'Little Queen' will meet her courtiers and seek advice on important royal matters of the day.
- *Military – Queen Anne Garden:* Living history encampment, pike drill, musket firing, cannon firing and a challenge of combat by knights in armour.
- *The Royal Feast – North Gate:* See cooks and their assistants prepare a right royal feast – from sweets and sugar fancies to a boar's head.
- *Music and Dance – Great Hall:* Dancers and musicians will perform the popular hits of the era – watch them strut their Renaissance stuff, and learn about the delights of a masqued ball.

- *Jesters, Smith and Swordsman – Outer and Inner Closes*: See the antics of jesters and fools, and meet a working blacksmith at his forge. Also meet Adam Otterburn who will demonstrate how to fight with rapier and dagger.
- *Interactive games*: Interactive displays – specially designed for family entertainment – let visitors find out more about castle life. Discover what it was like to be a court jester or artist.
- *Casemates exhibition*: Our spectacular new exhibition telling the story of Stirling Castle from its earliest days, through the Wars of Independence, into Renaissance times and beyond.
- *Esplanade*: Small-scale entertainments will be provided for people who do not have tickets for the castle events, or are waiting to get in after 4pm (see below). These will include fun and pastimes from the 1500s – a chance to play popular games of the past, like ring toss, and discover their origins.

Tickets

In order to avoid overcrowding entry to *Stirling Castle Presents ... A Palace Fit for a Queen* will be by pre-ordered ticket only, with normal opening from Monday. Visiting hours have been specially extended so people without pre-booked tickets can come into the castle and palace from 4pm to 7pm (last entry at 6.15pm) on the Saturday and Sunday. Tickets will go on sale from the start of May – see our websites at www.stirlingcastle.gov.uk and www.historic-scotland.gov.uk and watch out for details in the media.

Event prices

Event tickets will cost £13 for adults, £10 for concessions and £6.50 for children.

Shops and café

All three shops at the castle have been modernised and refitted, as has the Unicorn Café – which now serves cakes and tray bakes from the castle's own bakery. The main shop and ticket office, now renamed the Courtyard Gift Shop, has been extended and a quicker ticketing system installed. The shop on the esplanade has been renamed the Clan and Craft Gift Shop, there is also The Palace Gift Shop – which has a special range of gifts and mementoes related to the royal palace.

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