

Niagara Celtic Heritage Festival & Highland Games returns Sept. 16

Submitted

An annual tradition for many, the Niagara Celtic Heritage Festival & Highland Games is back, and you're invited!

Niagara Celtic is now the largest Celtic gathering in upstate New York. It's a delightful weekend full of unique experiences that often only happen once - which means a weekend pass is the best chance to have as much fun as possible.

The 22nd Niagara Celtic will be held Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 16 and 17, at the Niagara County Fairgrounds in Lockport. Daily and weekend tickets range from \$12-35 (buying online is less expensive than at the gate). Kids 12 and under are free, and on-site parking is free. For further information, visit www.NiagaraCeltic.com.

The festival is split into five regions filled with unique aspects of culture and to help visitors navigate their way around. This year, the regions will host five music stages, athletics, more than 40 vendors, 30 clans, history groups, free kids' activities and plenty of attractions.

A featured attraction is, of course, the Highland Games. Niagara Celtic hosts one of the largest multiple division games in the world, with over 60 athletes from across the U.S. competing in the ancient strongman competition.

On stage, guests will find a variety of performances from more than 45 acts. This year's "Saturday After Hours Ceilidh" features Syr (from South Carolina) and The Screaming



The 22nd Niagara Celtic Heritage Festival & Highland Games will be held Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 16 and 17, at the Niagara County Fairgrounds in Lockport. The hours are 10 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Saturday; and 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sunday. In the photo, one of the musical groups performs at a previous Niagara Celtic festival, in the event "Music at the Fires." (Photo by Wayne Peters // submitted by Niagara Celtic Heritage Festival)

Orphans (from Ireland). Sunday's grand finale concert is headlined by Steel City Rovers (from Hamilton, Ontario).

Niagara Celtic also showcases dozens of local groups, including McCarthyism, The Blarney Bunch, Crikwater, O'Braca Irish Band, and Three Parts Whiskey. Nine pipe bands will be in attendance, including MacKenzie Highlanders' Pipes and Drums, "D" Company Buffalo City Guard Gordon Highlanders, and Celtic Spirit Pipe Band. Dance

groups include Harris-Grieco Academy of Irish Dance and ROCeltic.

For a complete list of all performers, visit www.NiagaraCeltic.com.

Throughout their visit, people will never be far from many great artisans and vendors, selling a wide variety of items, from swords and Celtic garb to toys, jewelry, crystals and other artisanal goods. Your stomach will also be happy as you sample food from vendors offering Celtic and lo-

cal favorites, including Scotch eggs, haggis, specialty desserts, Celtic chicken wings, shepherd's pie, and wines. Enjoy Celtic beverages from the festival's three pubs.

The festival hosts many nonprofits, including Celtic and local organizations who better the Western New York area. It's a great chance for them to do outreach and fundraise to thousands of people at one time. Niagara Celtic's organizers are honored to support the many groups that attend.

Festival Director Beth Banks explained, "Most of the performance, historical, and nonprofit groups earn money from the festival, along with many local businesses we work with. It's important our guests know a large portion of their paid ticket directly supports many local groups and businesses, with the rest used to host the festival itself. We're grateful to remain an independent event that is still growing thanks to the support of attendees."

Niagara Celtic is itself a nonprofit organization. Hundreds of volunteers work hard all year to create a welcoming environment for all who join. Guests also wear garb and costumes, adding to the warm and colorful atmosphere.

A highland athlete recently explained the festival accordingly: "It's the best overall Celtic Festival I attend; all aspects: the food, music, games ... all together, it's a great time."

Niagara Celtic is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 2001 that serves the WNY Celtic community. For further questions not addressed on the website, email vickib@niagaraceltic.com.

This festival is made possible with funds from the Statewide Community Regrant program, a regrant program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature and administered by Arts Services Inc.



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