

7/9/2004 Visit Britain: Literature, music and poetry celebrated at Britain's fall festivals

On virtually any day of the year a festival is under way somewhere in Britain. While many of the best known take place in the summer months, the fall season offers exceptional choices for those who want to be absorbed in music, literature and the arts. With two leading literature festivals taking place in October; and major music events in historic venues throughout Britain, visitors can hear from the best of today's musician's and authors, as well as explore the homes and landscapes that inspired literary greats like the Brontës, Chaucer, Wordsworth and Dylan Thomas.

Visitors to the well known region of the Cotswold's should stop at the elegant Regency spa town of Cheltenham. The historic settings provide the ideal venues for the **Cheltenham Festival of Literature** (October 10 – 17). Founded in 1950, the festival is thought to be the oldest event of its kind in the world and features readings, exhibitions, movies and a book fair.

Those seeking further inspiration could combine the festival with a driving tour along the '*Romantic Road*', heading a little deeper into the Cotswolds where you may fall for the honey-colored stone cottages of the villages of Broadway and Lower Slaughter before arriving in the city of Oxford.

The little-known **Cuppers Festival** in Oxford, at the Burton Taylor Theatre in late November, showcases more than 40 short plays put together and performed by first-year students at Oxford University in the Drama Society's annual Freshers' Theatre Festival. It is primarily aimed at students but, with tickets costing just £1 a night, it is a good opportunity to spot future stars and enjoy new, cutting edge drama.

Further north in England, the **Ilkley Literature Festival** (October 1 – 17) is host to more than 60 events. Set within rolling hills of the Yorkshire Dales, visitors can take literary walks and, what is described as, a "*poetry pub-crawl*". For those keen to explore British literature, Yorkshire is the place to be. A visit to Haworth, home of the Brontë sisters, should not be missed and, with a short drive north, you are in the Lake District, home to William Wordsworth, Beatrix Potter, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and many others.

For visitors short of time and staying in London, among the vast choices of festivals held in London is the 12th **London Jazz Festival** (November 12 – 21). The performances are held in many of London's arts venues and this year's possible lineup includes young British contemporary jazz sensation, Jamie Cullum. If classical music, food and wine are more to your palate the **St. Cecilia International Festival of Music** (November 20 – 28) might be what you are looking for. Featuring major performers in concerts, choral events and a tutored wine tasting, the events all honor St. Cecilia, patron saint of music.

Just a short journey south east of London, visitors can share a unique experience of a festival at a World Heritage Site. The city of **Canterbury** holds its festival (October 9 – 24) with a huge range of shows organized by individual artists and groups throughout southeast England. The festival has a mix of concerts, plays, live music "gigs," exhibitions, comedy, talks, walks and movies. Canterbury, famous for its Cathedral and the destination of Geoffrey Chaucer's characters in 'The Canterbury Tales' - is situated in the heart of the 'Garden of England' and is the ideal base for touring rural Kent and beyond.

Celebrate the 50th anniversary of the publication of 'Under Milk Wood' with a visit to the 7th **Dylan Thomas Festival** (October 27 – November 9) in Swansea, South Wales. The festival also marks the 20th anniversary of the death of Richard Burton, a lifelong admirer of the works of Dylan Thomas. Visitors can take a short trip northwest to see Dylan Thomas' Boathouse in the village of Laugharne near Carmarthen, where he lived and wrote 'Under Milk Wood'.

Among other music festivals in the fall are the **Bewdley Music Festival**, Bewdley, near Worcester in central England (October 8 – 16), described as an “*eclectic mix of artistic genres*”; **Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival** (November 19 – 28) showcasing leading international composers and performers; and the **Britten Festival**, Aldeburgh in eastern England (October 15 – 17), featuring the works of British composer Benjamin Britten, who founded the prestigious annual Aldeburgh Festival of Music and the Arts.

More information on festivals, events and traveling to Britain can be found on VisitBritain’s website: www.visitbritain.com/usa. Contact VisitBritain’s Travel Center, 551 Fifth Avenue, Suite 701, (at 45th Street), in New York City, Mondays through Fridays between 9.00am and 6.00pm. VisitBritain’s Travel Center can also be reached via email at: travelinfo@visitbritain.org or telephone on Toll Free: 877 899 8391.

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