

Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Grandfather Mountain Highland Games return July 7-10

LINVILLE, N.C. — Blaring bagpipes, astounding athletes and tons of tartans converge in Western North Carolina July 7-10 for the 61st annual Grandfather Mountain Highland Games.

As the Games continue in their sixth decade, they hearken back to the rich cultural traditions of Scotland in a setting not so different from the mountains and glens 3,600 miles away.

The event begins Thursday afternoon, July 7, with border collie sheepherding demonstrations, Celtic entertainment, the running of “The Bear” and the opening ceremonies.

“The Bear” pits roughly 700 runners against the steep switchbacks of Grandfather Mountain in a five-mile run that climbs 1,568 feet from the town of Linville to the mountain summit. It's followed Saturday by another test of extreme endurance as the Grandfather Mountain Marathon winds from Appalachian State University in Boone to the site of the Games in Linville.

But the Games truly get under way at the torchlight ceremony on Thursday evening, where representatives of more than 100 clans announce their families' participation in the gathering. The “raising of the clans” proclaims that they have once again convened to celebrate their heritage.

Guests often bring dinner or purchase concessions at the field to enjoy a picnic at the opening ceremonies.

Friday, Saturday and Sunday are filled with competitions in traditional heavyweight Scottish athletic events; highland dancing competitions; bagpipe band parades; piping, drumming and harp competitions; sheepherding demonstrations by Scottish border collies; and concerts, featuring a wide variety of Celtic music.

The nation's top Scottish athletes clash Saturday in traditional heavyweight events, such as “Turning the Caber” and “Tossing the Sheaf.” In the caber toss, athletes flip a telephone pole-sized log end over end. The sheaf toss challenges athletes to loft a 16-pound sack of hay over a bar more than 20 feet high. Other ancient tests of strength await the contestants, including highland wrestling, the hammer throw and various weight throws.

Events are repeated Sunday for amateurs and athletes 40+, also offering spectators opportunities to witness the “kilted mile,” clan caber toss and clan tug-of-war.

On Friday night, the Celtic Rock Concert at MacRae Meadows highlights high-energy band and GMHG favorite Seven Nations, followed by traditional and contemporary Celtic music at the Celtic Jam on Saturday night.

Musical guests in 2016 include Elias Alexander, Chambless and Muse, Hannah Seng, William Jackson, Brian McNeill, Syr, John Taylor, Nick Watson, Piper Jones Band, Raven and Red, Steven McDonald, Brothers McLeod, Marybeth McQueen, Jack Devereux and The Freestylers of Piping. Many of the groups also perform during the daylight hours in the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games’ Celtic Groves.

Throughout the weekend, visitors can learn about their own Scottish history and genealogy at clan tents or browse the open-air market for Gaelic and tartan gift items and a variety of concessions, including traditional Scottish meat pies.

One of the Games’ newer additions, the Scottish Cultural Village, will also return. There, experts will discuss or demonstrate numerous aspects of Scottish culture, including blacksmithing, weaving, spinning, athletics, piping and drumming, dancing and more. The experts will present every 30 minutes throughout the weekend in Grove 3.

Youngsters enjoy participating in highland wrestling clinics and competitions, foot races and tug-of-war battles.

Whether you're new to the Games or a return visitor, the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games offer a hearty “céad míle fáilte” — a hundred thousand welcomes!

IF YOU ATTEND

Adult admission to the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games is \$15 Thursday, \$20 Friday, \$30 Saturday and \$15 Sunday. Tickets cover all activities in the meadows, which on Friday and Saturday last from early morning to midnight. Tickets are \$5 each day for children ages 5-12, and children younger than 5 enter free.

Tickets for Thursday night's opening ceremonies are \$15 for adults and \$5 for children ages 5-12. Tickets for the Celtic Jam only (no Friday Games activities) are \$15 for adults or \$5 for children (ages 5-12). The Saturday night concert is also \$15 for adults and \$5 for children (ages 5-12). This does not include admission to the Saturday Games activities.

Tickets purchased at the entrance must be paid with cash or credit card.

Four-day passes are also available online at www.gmhg.org. Adult passes are \$75 (including shuttle), and children's passes are \$20 (also including shuttle).

Parking is available at the Games on Thursday and Friday on a first come, first served basis, with overflow parking at shuttle lots in Linville Friday only (no shuttle buses run on Thursday). Public parking is NOT available at the Games on Saturday and Sunday.

Shuttle service is provided for a fee between MacRae Meadows and satellite parking areas in Linville, Newland and Boone. Shuttle fees vary depending on the distance between the lots and MacRae Meadows. Buses do not run in the evenings.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Games, visit www.gmhg.org, or call (828) 733-1333. For lodging and travel information, contact the High Country Host visitor center at (800) 438-7500 or highcountryhost.com.

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ATTACHMENTS:

062816_GMHG_pipers: A parade of pipers circles the field at the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games. The Games return for their 61st year July 7-10. Photo courtesy of the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

062816_GMHG_Frasure_SS: Athlete Eric Frasure competes in the caber toss at the 2015 Grandfather Mountain Highland Games. Photo by Skip Sickler | Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

062816_GMHG_music: The sounds of Scotland and beyond will again fill MacRae Meadows at the 61st annual Grandfather Mountain Highland Games. The Games return July 7-10. Photo courtesy of the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS AVAILABLE BY REQUEST