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Bagpipes, Athletes, Jousters Come to Estes Park Sept. 9-12

The haunting sound of bagpipes will fill Estes Park's crisp mountain air during the Longs Peak Scottish Irish Highland Festival scheduled for Sept. 9 through 12, 2010 at Stanley Park. The park area is located at the intersection of U.S. Highway 36 and Community Drive adjacent to Lake Estes.

For more than three decades Estes Park has been the backdrop for one of the nation's largest gatherings for those of Scottish heritage, those interested in Scottish heritage, those who like the sound of Scottish brogues, those who enjoy a Scottish beverage, those who enjoy the rhythmic sound of Scottish footsteps on a dance floor and more.

Now in its 34th year, the festival offers classic pipe music, Highland and Irish dance, International Scottish Athletic championships, jousting, Scotch tastings, food vendors, history seminars, exhibitions, and much more.

There will be an hour-long parade through downtown Estes Park, evening tattoos (massed pipe bands in performance), pipe band and folk concerts, jousting, athletics, a dog show, dancers, musicians, scotch tasting, food and crafts and all things comprising a veritable encyclopedia of all things Celtic.

Each evening beginning Thursday, Sept. 9, visiting guest bands and groups gather at the arena at the Fairgrounds at Stanley Park to perform evening tattoos, a traditional parade ground concert of military bands. Scheduled to perform this year are the U.S. Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Band, Canadian Ontario Police Services All Star Pipes & Drums, the US Army Color Guard, Celtic Armory Cannons and the Pikes Peak Highlanders.

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One of the highlights of the weekend is the parade through downtown Estes Park on Saturday morning, Sept. 11. Beginning at 9:30 a.m., clans, pipe bands and pure breed dogs march through the heart of Estes Park in the largest Celtic parade in the United States.

During the day, festivities center at the Fairgrounds at Stanley Park where more than 70 clans and societies gather and display their histories. Watch the Highland Fling and the Sword Dance dating from the 11th and 12th century and listen to the Celtic harp, fiddle, tin whistle and hammered dulcimer. A special treat is the Irish Fies Dance, where dancers hold their upper body rigid during the dancing performance.

Stop by the competition field for hammer throws, putting the stone and caber throwing contests, where men toss a 19-foot, 7-inch, 140-pound caber end over end. The clatter of heavy armor draws spectators to the jousting competitions, a dangerous sport for only the brave. If you enjoy watching dogs compete, don't miss the herding test, the terrier races and the agility drills on the obstacle course.

Celtic entertainers perform on Friday and Saturday night at the Estes Park Conference Center ballrooms. In the Grand Ballroom veteran entertainer Alex Beaton performs Celtic ballads while the ever popular Brigadoons return with their traditional Scottish music. The band Albannach offers a blend of energetic and rhythmic drumming, piping and enchanting vocals while power trio Rathkeltair features guitarist Trevor Tanner, drummer Nick Watson and piper Neil Anderson. Performing in the Junior Ballroom, Prickly Pair & the Cactus Chorale brings vintage western and cowboy music to the stage while the award-winning band Mythica fuses Celtic with World, rock & alternative music.

During the festival weekend, free shuttle buses run on a continuous loop route between the Festival grounds, the Estes Park Visitor Center, Estes Park Town Hall and the Holiday Inn. On Friday and Sunday the buses operate from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.; on Saturday, the schedule calls for the buses to operate between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Day passes are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the gate. Admission for juniors (ages 11-16) is \$10 and children (ages 5-10) is \$5. There's no charge for those under five years old. Parking is \$5 each day. Tattoos and evening concerts are \$25.

Ticket orders and more information is available at (970) 586-6308 or online at www.scotfest.com.

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