UK HOLIDAYS AND CULTURAL EVENTS

Nigel Haward (Great Britain)

BANK HOLIDAYS

In the United Kingdom, we call official days off bank holidays. The banks close for a day, and so do most businesses and services.

New Year’s Day is the first bank holiday in the year. May Day is in early May, Spring Bank Holiday at the end of May and then finally Summer Bank Holiday at the end of August, when there is a mass rush to the seaside. Christmas and Easter are also considered bank holidays.

In Northern Ireland, there is also the Orangeman’s Day on July 12th. This commemorates the victory of the protestant Prince William of Orange over Catholic King James in the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, which strengthened the Protestant dominance of Ireland. When the Orangemen try to march with pipes and drums through protestant residential areas, serious rioting occurs. Most people try to be away on holiday at this time.

CULTURAL EVENTS

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EDINBURGH FESTIVAL AND THE ‘FRINGE’

The Edinburgh Festival and the Edinburgh ‘Fringe’ with its music and drama take place each August in the city. Aspiring actors, singers, comedians and dancers hire local venues to perform their work to small audiences. Street theatre is very popular.

GLYNDENBOURNE FESTIVAL OPERA

The attraction, apart from the opera, is that you can picnic with your champagne and cucumber sandwiches on the lawns and in the gardens of Glyndebourne near Lewes in East Sussex, England, during the intervals. In May to August this year, operas will include Verdi’s Macbeth and Bach’s St. Matthew Passion.

GLASTONBURY FESTIVAL

The Glastonbury Festival in Somerset in England is a major contemporary music festival that takes place in the fields of a farm near Glastonbury in June. Many groups and musicians have played here such as Coldplay, Kaiser Chiefs and Paul McCartney.

THE BBC PROMS AT THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL

From July to September each year, The Royal Albert Hall in London is the venue for the world’s largest classical music festival. With over 70 concerts, it culminates with the televised ‘last night of the proms’ (‘the proms’ is a colloquial abbreviation for Promenade Concerts). Traditional English tunes such as ‘Land of Hope and Glory’, the unofficial English national anthem, are sung.

NOTTING HILL CARNIVAL

The end of August is carnival time in London. Steel bands, parades and calypso competitions bring music, rhythm and the colour of the Caribbean and Brazil to the streets of Notting Hill.

Vocabulary

Language point

Fringe can describe anything on the outside, or on the edge. (“I live on the fringe of the city.”) The Edinburgh Fringe Festival is named because the performances of the musicians and actors are not mainstream.

British versus American English

interval (BrE) – intermission (AmE)