

Travel



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Strawberry fields forever

Annual Strawberry Festival underway in Wexford

THE 47TH Strawberry Festival began in Enniscorthy, Wexford at the weekend, and organisers are expecting record crowds to enjoy the summer fruits, live music and free events across the festival.

Ryan Sheridan, Wallis Bird and Damian Dempsey took to the Main Stage in The Big Red Barn, and there is a Teddy Bears Picnic, a busking competition, a cowboy disco and more are on offer throughout the festival.

Not forgetting the famed fruit, there will be the crowning of the Strawberry Queen. Paolo Tullio will join Wexford chef Phelim Byrne for A Taste of Wexford Strawberries, where chefs and home-cooks compete to impress the Strawberry Queen as she awards the winners their Bord Bia and Wexford Strawberry Growers Trophies.

The annual All-Ireland Farmers Market features a host of artisan producers from across the isle, all showcasing their wares along with the awarding of the Strawberry Grower of the year.



Picking up some strawberries is Amelia Harrington age 4 and Nate Harrington age 2 with Strawberry Festival organiser Patricia Bird

Event manager Patricia Bird said: "This festival is a legacy in the Irish festival calendar and the line-up is stellar. We are particularly pleased this year with the huge level of interest from international visitors traveling to Wexford to enjoy the festival."

A new element of the Strawberry Festival this year will focus on home-

grown Wexford literary talent. Authors Carmel Harrington, Paul O'Brien, Mary McCauley, Andrew Hughes, US Author Lynn-Marie Hulsman and others will be taking part.

More info

Festival events take place until June 29. For more, see www.strawberryfest.ie.

Donegal's rugged beauty inspires writing retreat

International creative writing program launches this weekend in the northwest of the country

Inspired by the raw beauty of coastal northwest Donegal, scribes from several different countries, including England, are bound this weekend for the tiny hamlet of Bun na Leaca in the Gaeltacht.

Established authors from genres including crime, literary fiction, memoir, sci-fi and magical realism will be among those speaking at the week-long event, which lasts from June 28 until July 5. Participants will be arriving from as far away as Minneapolis and New Hampshire in the US and Perth and Victoria, Australia.

There are still a few places available for those



Budding creative writers can learn from the very best in Donegal

wishing to attend the retreat, which has been organized under the catchphrase

"Forgotten County, Remembered Words." You can do so by contacting www.irelandwritingretreat.com

The Ireland Writing Retreat is led by Sean Hillen, who lived in Andersonstown for twenty years before emigrating to the US and then becoming a foreign correspondent in eastern Europe during the fall of Communism. Sean, who now lives in Gaath Dobhair, is harnessing the talents of the authors he has met in his travels.

"There are so many wonderful Irish writers with strong west Donegal connections," said Hillen. "This sort of talent combined with the raw, natural landscape and dramatic history that west Donegal offers, a pristine mix of lake, island, mountain and sea second to none - cannot but inspire. He added: "Pearls of beauty such as Errigal and

Muckish Mountains, the Poisoned Glen, Bloody Foreland, Glenveigh National Park and Tory and Gola Islands provide perfect mood-setters for meaningful conversation, contemplation and fine writing. And for program participants to also learn some of the native language, traditions and legends is a wonderful bonus."

In addition to his own writing, Sean has conducted a series of comprehensive interviews at book fairs and writing conferences worldwide including London, Paris, Belfast and Derry, with a wide range of best-selling authors in many genres including David Nicholls, Lee Child, Ian McEwan, Douglas Kennedy, Kate Moss, Daniel Wallace, R.J. Ellory and John Connolly and their insights will be passed on to participants on the writing courses.

Participants will learn a range of key skills for writing good fiction.

More info

Visit www.irelandwritingretreat.com.

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