# Soaring accommodation costs and new regulations threaten Edinburgh Festival Fringe’s future



The Edinburgh Festival Fringe, a pillar of the city’s cultural identity since 1947, faces mounting challenges that threaten its very existence. As preparations ramp up for the 2025 edition, which is anticipated to feature one of its most extensive line-ups in history, leading figures in the arts community are sounding alarm bells over the detrimental impact of soaring accommodation costs and shifting regulatory landscapes. The festival, valued at over £200 million to Edinburgh’s economy, appears to be precariously balanced on the edge of a crisis.

Central to the concerns is a dramatic rise in accommodation expenses, with reports indicating that some properties are commanding rates as high as £9,000 for the festival duration. According to advocates from the arts community, this inflation is not merely a byproduct of demand but also a direct consequence of recent changes in city council regulations regarding short-term lets. As of September 2022, the entire city was designated as a short-term let control area, complicating the dynamics of availability and affordability for both artists and visitors. The council’s new framework demands that hosts secure licenses to operate, effectively constraining the supply of rentable properties.

The repercussions of these changes have not gone unnoticed. Venue operators have stated that the financially untenable conditions are forcing artists to reconsider their participation, with many opting for shorter performance runs to mitigate costs. Tony Lankester, the newly appointed chief executive of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, expressed concerns that the festival's long-standing success is becoming a victim of complacency among stakeholders. Meanwhile, Anthony Alderson, director of the Pleasance Theatre Trust, encapsulated the atmosphere of unease, asserting that “the risks and individual losses are now too great for artists and venues alike.”

The situation has been exacerbated by the introduction of additional events in August, notably concerts at Murrayfield Stadium featuring prominent acts like Oasis and AC/DC. This overlap threatens to further hollow out the availability of accommodation, as theatre attendees and concertgoers compete for limited spaces. Reports suggest that up to 94% of accommodations may be unavailable during concert nights, driving prices even higher and fuelling resentment among local advocates and festival-goers alike.

In recognition of the shortage of affordable lodging, the Fringe Society has launched initiatives encouraging local residents to open their homes to performers, which they hope will ease some of the strain on resources. This “host an artist” programme aims to foster community involvement while alleviating accommodation challenges, providing a unique festival experience for hosts at the same time. However, there remains a palpable sense of trepidation regarding whether these grassroots solutions can sufficiently address the broader structural issues at play.

The opportunity for local businesses and the city itself to engage with solutions is essential. Observers note that should these problems remain unaddressed, the long-term viability of the Fringe—and indeed other summer festivals in the city—could face dire repercussions. Producer James Seabright cautioned that “all the city's summer festivals will wither on the vine if the city prices out visitors who normally travel to attend the Fringe.” As the festival gears up for its 2025 launch, stakeholders are imploring both local government and community members to recognise the urgent need for collaborative action, emphasizing that without significant intervention, the vibrant tapestry of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe could begin to fray.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25188707.crisis-slowing-killing-edinburgh-festival-fringe/?ref=rss), [[6]](https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/edinburgh-festival-fringe-accommodation-threat-costs-fears-4869104)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25188707.crisis-slowing-killing-edinburgh-festival-fringe/?ref=rss), [[3]](https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/planning-13/short-term-lets-planning), [[4]](https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/edinburgh-fringe-festival-airbnb-cost-b2560541.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25188707.crisis-slowing-killing-edinburgh-festival-fringe/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/7843a94a-451d-4eac-a890-159c5b41e159), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/music/article/2024/sep/02/oasis-concerts-edinburgh-festival-room-rental-prices-soar)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/scottish-news/fringe-asks-locals-to-host-an-artist-during-edinburgh-festivals-after-short-term-lets-rule-change-5054419), [[6]](https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/edinburgh-festival-fringe-accommodation-threat-costs-fears-4869104)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25188707.crisis-slowing-killing-edinburgh-festival-fringe/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/7843a94a-451d-4eac-a890-159c5b41e159)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25188707.crisis-slowing-killing-edinburgh-festival-fringe/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/7843a94a-451d-4eac-a890-159c5b41e159> - This article provides a comprehensive guide to navigating the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, offering tips on accommodation, packing, and exploring the city's venues. It highlights the importance of booking accommodations well in advance due to high demand during the festival period. The piece also suggests packing for variable weather conditions and recommends exploring both central hubs like the Royal Mile and lesser-known venues to enhance the festival experience. Additionally, it touches upon the overlap with other festivals and the diverse food options available in Edinburgh during this time.
3. <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/planning-13/short-term-lets-planning> - The City of Edinburgh Council's official page outlines the regulations for short-term lets, including the designation of the entire city as a short-term let control area effective from 5 September 2022. It details the requirements for planning permission when a dwellinghouse is used as a short-term let and provides information on home sharing and home letting. The page also mentions the need for planning applications or certificates of lawfulness to confirm the lawful use of properties under these regulations.
4. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/edinburgh-fringe-festival-airbnb-cost-b2560541.html> - This article discusses the significant increase in accommodation prices in Edinburgh during the Fringe Festival, with some properties inflating by as much as £1,125 a night. It highlights the impact of new short-let regulations introduced in Scotland in October 2023, which require hosts and hotels to have a license or face fines. The piece includes perspectives from locals and performers expressing concerns about the affordability and accessibility of the festival due to soaring accommodation costs.
5. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/scottish-news/fringe-asks-locals-to-host-an-artist-during-edinburgh-festivals-after-short-term-lets-rule-change-5054419> - In response to accommodation shortages during the Edinburgh festivals, the Fringe Society has launched a 'host an artist' initiative, encouraging locals to offer lodging to performers. This move follows changes in short-term lettings legislation in Edinburgh, which have made it more challenging for artists to find affordable accommodation. The article emphasizes the mutual benefits of such arrangements, providing artists with a place to stay and hosts with a unique festival experience.
6. <https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/edinburgh-festival-fringe-accommodation-threat-costs-fears-4869104> - This article highlights the growing concerns about the future of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe due to soaring accommodation costs. It reports a 300% increase in accommodation expenses over six years, with one-bedroom flats now charging up to £9,000 for the duration of the festival. The piece also notes a decline in the number of UK-based ticket buyers and a reduction in affordable accommodation options for performers, raising fears about the festival's accessibility and sustainability.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/article/2024/sep/02/oasis-concerts-edinburgh-festival-room-rental-prices-soar> - This article discusses the impact of Oasis concerts at Murrayfield Stadium on accommodation prices in Edinburgh during the festival period. It reports that the few remaining rooms in serviced flats are being offered for more than £1,000 a night, with 94% of rooms unavailable on concert nights. The piece also highlights the frustration of housing activists and political leaders over the timing of these concerts, which coincide with the already stretched accommodations due to the Fringe Festival.