



Scottish Highland Games

The summer months, for many, are a time of travel and vacation. Some enjoy family reunions. The Highland Games is like a family reunion for Scottish clans and is a time of enjoying the culture and customs of Scottish heritage. All around the world Scottish clans gather to celebrate and compete at the Highland Games. These events include track and field competitions, dancing competitions, and bagpipe music.

Many accounts of the history of the Highland Games claim that King Malcom III of Scotland, in the 11th century, created a foot race to the summit of Craig Choinnich to find the fastest runner in the land to be his royal messenger and used other contests of strength to find able men to be his soldiers. This gathering near Braemar, held every September, is the largest and most prestigious Highland Games and is attended by the Royal Family each year. Clan chiefs would pick their strongest and fastest clansmen to represent their clan in various sporting events. Each clan would proudly wear their clan dress. Over time the Games grew in number and popularity, but in 1746 the Act of Proscription outlawed Scottish dress, customs, and gatherings. This lasted for almost 40 years. After the ban was lifted the Games started again and have been a part of Scottish custom to this day.

Some of the standard competitions at each Highland Games include the caber toss, the stone put, Scottish hammer throw, and the sheaf toss. A caber, or long tapered pole or log, is stood upright and hoisted up by the competitor vertically and then tossed end over end. The stone put is a heavy stone (8-22 pounds, depending on male or female competition) that is thrown with one hand and the winner is determined by distance of throw. The Scottish hammer throw is not actually a hammer, but a round metal ball attached to a handle that is whirled over the head and then thrown. The sheaf toss event uses a bundle of straw (the sheaf) that weighs 10-20 pounds, bundled in burlap and is tossed up in the air by a pitchfork over a horizontal bar.

Other fun activities include sheep herding by dogs, piping competitions, dancing competitions, and visiting different clan tents to learn about their history. You can sample lots of Scottish foods, look at Scottish weapons and costumes, and take home some fun memorabilia to remember your time there.



Top Left: Clan Turnbull Tent
Bottom Left: Sheep Herding
Below: Caber Toss



Top Left: Bagpipe procession
Bottom Left: Scottish hammer throw
Above: Scottish Highland Dancing



~Family Fun~



Create your own version of the Highland Games in your backyard and invite neighbors over for some friendly competition.

Ideas taken from www.listotic.com/32-best-diy-backyard-games



Cut different shapes out of a tarp, edge with colored tape to avoid fraying, and then designate point value of each hole. Hang tarp up and have fun throwing balls through each hole. First team to 500 wins!



String yarn up between a bunch of trees in a zig zag pattern. First team to make it through the string course wins!



Tug of war on upside down milk crates not only tests strength, but balance as well.



Pool Noodle Games



Pool noodles can easily be bent and duct taped to make almost anything. Use them to make your own "caber toss" or obstacle course.



Book Nook~

Scottish Highland Games by Francie Hall
(32 pages, ages 4+)

An informative book that explains many of the activities held at a Highland Game such as caber toss, stone toss, sheep herding, dancing, and bagpipe music. The illustrations spark interest in any age reader.

