



Katie Macleod in New York

Vote now to give Isles writer big chance of international recognition

Award-winning travel writer and EVENTS feature writer Katie Macleod, from Eagleton on Point, is challenging for another blogging success as she has reached the finals of this year's blog awards run by Cosmopolitan magazine.

In the travel blog category, Katie, aged 26, who writes *Stories My Suitcase Could Tell* is up against tough competition from six other writers from right across the world, often based in far bigger centres in the UK or the US.

The competition is a major one in a magazine that has 64 international editions available, in countries from Singapore to Spain. In the UK, Cosmopolitan is the most widely read monthly magazine, reaching over 1.6 million readers.

It's on the website of this "global juggernaut" – as described by the New York Times – that you can vote for *Stories My Suitcase Could Tell* as Best Travel Blog in the Cosmo Blog Awards 2014.

Looking back to when she realised she had been shortlisted, Katie wrote: "Elated doesn't cover it; neither does surprised ... I had just sat down in the office on Monday morning, coffee in hand, ready to get started on the day's features, when my phone beeped. What I assumed would be a Facebook notification turned out to be a blog update, letting me know that *Stories My Suitcase Could Tell* was getting high numbers of visitors.

"Even when I saw where the traffic was coming from – Cosmopolitan's UK website – I still didn't let myself believe it. Surely not? I had never expected to make the shortlist (this is

the legendary Cosmo we're talking about) so seeing it in black and white (or should I say, pink and white) on the computer screen was a shock – a very welcome one!"

You can vote for your favourite blog in each category until August 29th, after which the magazine's editors have their say.

Katie has worked for EVENTS since 2007, first as a freelance and in recent years as a member of staff. Her features for EVENTS have included ones written from China – where she started her blog as a way of keeping people in contact with what she was doing. Apart from working in China, she has studied in the US, from where she also contributed articles to EVENTS. In recent years, she has reported from Tartan Week in New York on a couple of occasions as well.

Recently, she won a holiday to Kenya after coming top in the Holiday Hypermarket Travel Awards, and previously won a trip to Paris after success in awards organised by Black Tomato, an award winning travel company that specialises in putting together exceptional trips around the globe.

A glance through *Stories My Suitcase Could Tell* takes you from Tuscany to Tianjin, from St Paul, Minnesota to Montmartre in Paris; and gives the world a chance to find out about Ness, Harris and other familiar (to us) parts of the Western Isles.

EVENTS editor, Fred Silver, himself a veteran of periods of work and travel in Wales, France, the US, China and New Zealand, urges everyone to take the time – if they have not done so already – to become familiar with *Stories My Suitcase Could Tell* and to vote for it on the Cosmopolitan website – <http://www.cosmopolitan.co.uk/blogs/cosmo-blog-awards-2014/cosmo-blog-awards-2014-shortlist>



Gaelic children's group meets in Laxdale



By Katie Macleod

A new Sradagan group has started in Stornoway this year, following increased demand from parents who wish to see more Gaelic groups for children in their communities.

The newest Sradagan group began in May, welcoming an initial intake of 20 children from Laxdale School and Stornoway Primary School who meet every Tuesday evening in Laxdale

Community Hall.

Numbers have been increasing steadily since then, and Commun na Gàidhlig, who assist the groups, say there has been positive feedback from both parents and children. As Sradagan only takes place during term time, June saw the new group host a barbecue at Laxdale Playpark to celebrate the start of the summer holidays, which over 50 people attended.

These Gaelic youth clubs for children are

conducted entirely through the medium of Gaelic, giving children the opportunity to develop their language skills through fun interactions with friends. Involvement in Sradagan is especially important for children whose only exposure to Gaelic is in the classroom.

Speaking Gaelic in a fun, informal environment helps establish the language among children, while on a larger scale Sradagan helps create a bridge between Gaelic Medium Education in schools and the use of Gaelic in the wider community. At

the Stornoway Sradagan, children from the two different schools are given the opportunity to get to know one another through speaking Gaelic and taking part in games and activities together.

The benefits of Sradagan, both social and educational, are plentiful. For parents in other areas who would like to see Sradagan established in their community, CnaG are there to help provide information and guidance.