

SCOTLAND

Historic Cities, Highlands & Whisky

10 days

Created on: 23 Nov, 2024

Day 1 Arrival in Edinburgh

Today we arrive in Edinburgh, where the buzz of Scotland's capital city sits in perfect contrast to the peaceful tranquility of the surrounding Lothians region. Edinburgh has one of the most beautiful cityscapes in the world, making it the ideal city break destination. With Scotland's most famous castle dominating the city skyline, there is plenty to see and do with the perfect balance between all things traditional and contemporary.

Overnight in Edinburgh.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Edinburgh: City Touring

Today we have a half-day guided tour of this most beautiful of cities.

We'll begin with a walk through Edinburgh's Old Town with our local guide, ready to learn about the history of Edinburgh. We start at Holyrood Abbey, before passing by the Scottish Parliament building. We continue to St Giles' Cathedral, Greyfriars Kirkyard, and the vibrant area of Grassmarket before exploring the National Museum of Scotland.

Our sojourn proceeds with a tour of one of Europe's foremost attractions; the dramatic Edinburgh Castle. Standing aloof and massive on its hill, Edinburgh Castle both dominates and adds majesty to the historical ambiance of the city. Within the castle itself we view the Honours of Scotland Exhibition and display of Scottish crown jewels; visit St. Margaret's Chapel, see the famous 500-year-old cannon "Mons Meg", then stroll through the Great Hall.

The rest of the day is yours to explore Edinburgh independently (your Tour Leader can help you plan your afternoon). Museum lovers might consider the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and/or The National Museum of Scotland. Johnnie Walker Princes Street is spread across eight floors and offers an experience perfect for whisky lovers and novices alike, along with incredible views of the Edinburgh skyline from the 1820 rooftop bar.

Overnight in Edinburgh.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Edinburgh - Falkirk Wheel - Stirling Castle - Stirling

Today we travel to Stirling via the Falkirk Wheel and Stirling Castle.

The Falkirk Wheel boat lift is an exceptional feat of modern engineering that connects the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals. This unique and elegant mechanical marvel lifts boats by a height of 35 metres to bridge the gap that was originally linked by a flight of 11 locks. At the end of the 20th century, it was decided to reconnect the 2 canals with the innovative wheel as an inspiring symbol for the new Millennium.

We'll enjoy the full experience of the Falkirk Wheel as we sail through the sky to join the Union Canal 35m above. After moving smoothly through the aqueduct and through the Roughcastle tunnel to the beginning of the Union Canawe then descend to the start point returning to the visitor centre.

We then head to the city of Stirling where we visit Stirling Castle, the largest in Scotland. The castle is well defended by cliffs on 3 sides, and became a military stronghold and seat of royalty and government. Stirling Castle rock has been used as a fortress for centuries, probably since Roman times. The earliest buildings upon it mentioned in surviving records are the castle and the chapel dedicated by Alexander I in 1120. From the 12th Century it became one of the principal royal strongholds in Scotland. Destroyed or rebuilt several times in the 13th and

14th centuries, it was close to great battles against the English during the Wars of Independence.

Overnight in Stirling.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Stirling - St Andrews - Aberdeen

Today we leave Stirling and head for St Andrews, a quaint town located on the east coast of Fife. St Andrews is home to the oldest university in Scotland, University of St Andrews, one of the best universities in the United Kingdom. St Andrews is also known globally as the "home of golf" mainly due to it being home to the iconic The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, dating back to the mid-18th century.

We enjoy a guided walking tour of St Andrews, seeing some of the town's most iconic sights. We start with a visit to St Andrews Cathedral, Scotland's largest and most magnificent medieval church. Here, we visit the museum and the visitor centre (please note that St Rule's tower is currently closed). Next, we see the outside of St Andrews Castle, a ruined fort which sits overlooking Castle Sands Beach. There has been a castle of some type here since the 12th century.

Next we see The Old Course, home of the Open Championship golf tournament, before seeing University of St Andrews, where the future heir to the British throne, William Prince of Wales, first met Katherine, Princess of Wales. We end our visit at St Salvator's Chapel, a beautiful example of late gothic architecture dating back to the mid-15th century.

Later we travel to the city of Dundee, the City of Discovery, where we have free time for lunch and a walk along the beautiful waterfront before continuing our journey to Aberdeen.

Aberdeen's architecture is known for its principal use of granite during the Victorian era, which has led to its local nickname of the Granite City, or more romantically, the less commonly used "Silver City," since the quartz in the stone sparkles in the sun. The city's architecture is a reminder of its heritage and rich history, but Aberdeen also has a cosmopolitan buzz and is very much a city on the rise.

Overnight in Aberdeen.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Aberdeen - Highland Cattle - Whisky Distillery - Grantown-on-Spey

Today in Aberdeenshire we meet a herd of Pedigree Highland Cattle up close and learn about the history of the native breed and how they are farmed. Following our tour we'll have an included lunch featuring traditional Scottish Highland beef stovies, oatcakes, and beetroot (vegetarian options available).

Later we'll have a private tour of Royal Lochnagar Distillery, located near Balmoral Castle in Royal Deeside dating back to 1845. The distillery holds a Royal Warrant after a visit from Prince Albert in 1848. Today, we will be led through the distillery to learn about the distilling process. The tour will end with a tasting of two drams of Royal Lochnagar whisky.

We end our day in Grantown-on-Spey, near to Aveimore in the heart of Scotland's Highlands. The town's traditional Highland hospitality and ideal location as a gateway to exploring the stunning Scottish Highlands, make it an attractive base for two days of touring in the region.

Overnight in Grantown-on-Spey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 6 Loch Ness Folklore & Nature

Today we have a full-day tour to discover the folklore, nature, and history surrounding the famous Loch Ness.

We head first to Loch Ness itself and enjoying a drive along the famous shoreline to visit Urquhart Castle, one of Scotland's most popular

attractions. Situated on the north-western shore of Loch Ness, it offers visitors fascinating insights into its dramatic history and spectacular views over the world famous Loch.

Next we travel to Fort Augustus, a lovely village situated at the south end of Loch Ness and the start of the Caledonian Canal. We have free time here to explore and have lunch (at own expense).

In the afternoon we will travel to the Dundreggan Rewilding Centre, north of Loch Ness. The centre celebrates rewilding and the region's rich Gaelic culture and offers a gateway for visitors to explore the 10,000-acre Dundreggan estate. Conservation charity, Trees for Life, has been rewilding Dundreggan since 2008 to restore the Caledonian forest and its wildlife. The estate is now home to more than 4,000 species of plants and animals, including many rare and protected species, and the charity's tree nursery where around 90,000 trees are grown every year.

We explore Dundreggan with a knowledgeable member of staff and find out more about this fascinating place, and why and how Trees for Life are rewilding the estate. We return to our hotel via the lesser-travelled south shores of Loch Ness, stopping at the beautiful Falls of Foyers on the way.

Overnight in Grantown-on-Spey.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Highland Safari

Today we'll embark on an exciting and scenic Land Rover "safari" experience! This exclusive, tailored safari with our very own safari ranger, will provide a personalised adventure in the Scottish Highlands.

Along the way we may be lucky enough to see majestic red deer, grouse, mountain hare, or the soaring golden eagle as we travel through forests, mountains, and moors on private hill tracks, exploring the magnificent natural wilderness.

Included in our excursion -- tea, coffee, local Kenmore shortbread, and a dram of Dewars Whisky (of course). This will be served to you in a traditional mountain bothy surrounded by the inspiring mountain views.

We return to our hotel with the balance of the day to enjoy some well-deserved down-time.

Overnight in Grantown-on-Spey (dinner on your own this evening).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 8 Grantown-on-Spey - Scone Palace - Loch Lomond - Glasgow

Today we head for Glasgow with a stop at Scone Palace, offering a captivating journey through Scottish history and set against the stunning backdrop of its picturesque grounds. Here we explore the regal rooms that once hosted Scottish kings and queens, immersing themselves in the opulence of the palace's architecture and décor. The surrounding gardens, with their vibrant flora and serene landscapes, provide a tranquil escape.

Next we'll venture out beyond stately homes and the magnificent Ben Lomond, Scotland's most southerly Munro, to Inchmurrin Island, the largest inland island in Great Britain and home to the ruins of the 12th century Lennox Castle.

Our final destination is Glasgow, a city famous for its contributions to architectural styles, with the Glasgow School of Art being the most notable example. The wealth of the city's merchants in the 18th century saw a shift towards neoclassical architecture with simple lines and grand imposing stately buildings. Glasgow's friendly residents, diverse culinary experiences, and abundance of green spaces, make it a welcoming and unforgettable destination for experiencing Scotland's unique charm.

Overnight in Glasgow.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Discovering Glasgow

Glasgow is home to an array of remarkable museums, visitor attractions, and galleries, and today we'll have the chance to discover some of the best Glasgow has to offer.

We start the day at Glasgow Cathedral, a Medieval cathedral thought to have been built on the site of St Kentigern's tomb, the birthplace of the city of Glasgow. One of Scotland's most magnificent medieval buildings, Glasgow Cathedral is the only one on the Scottish mainland to survive the Reformation of 1560 intact. After a tour of the interior we will step outside to visit the Glasgow Necropolis.

The Necropolis is a Victorian garden cemetery of of wonderful architecture, sculpture, and fascinating stories. Adjacent to Glasgow Cathedral, the Necropolis was modeled on Père-Lachaise in Paris; it is estimated that something in the order of 50,000 burials have taken place here, with around 3,500 tombs. Today we will be treated to a special guided tour of the cemetery by a friendly local volunteer whose passion for the cemetery shines through.

We will then enjoy a panoramic tour of the city, with a stop at St George's Square, the iconic central square of the city which showcases an important collection of statues and monuments, including those dedicated to famous Scots such as Robert Burns, James Watt, Sir Robert Peel, and Sir Walter Scott. We stop in the centre and enjoy some free time for lunch before continuing to explore the city.

Finally we cross the river to reach the world-renowned Burrell Collection. Here we have a VIP tour of the museum for a rare opportunity to go behind the scenes and see some of the thousands of objects not on display to the general public. Finally, take some time to explore the main galleries and visit the shop before our visit ends and we prepare for our farewell dinner.

Overnight in Glasgow.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Departure

Departure from Glasgow.

SAFE TRAVELS!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast