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4th Edition

Barry Shelby



Scotland FOR DUMMIES®

4TH EDITION

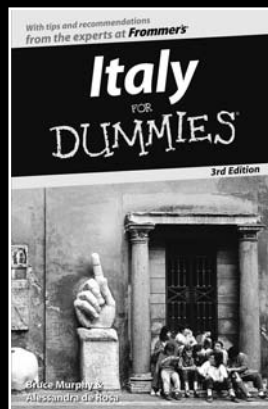
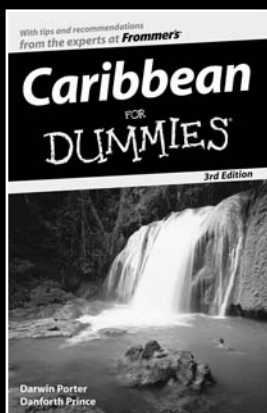
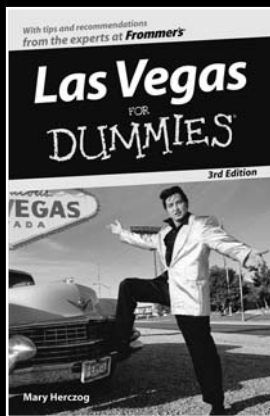
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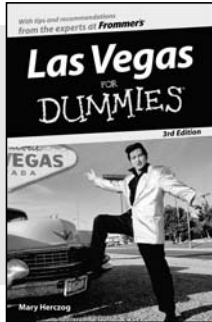
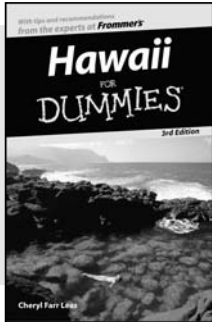




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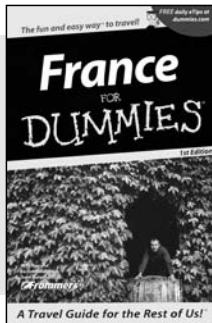
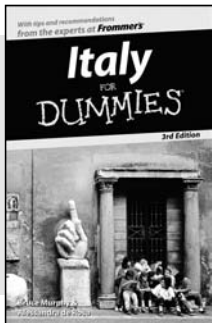
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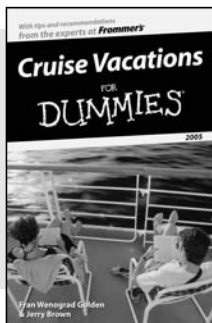
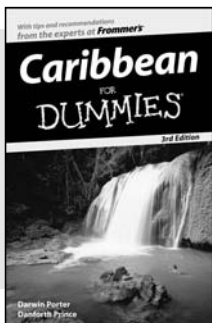
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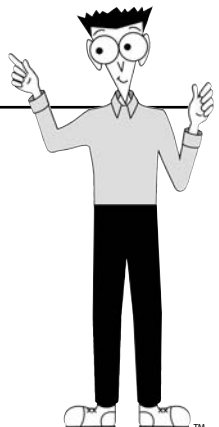
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FOR
DUMMIES®
4TH EDITION

by Barry Shelby



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Contents at a Glance

Introduction	1
Part I: Introducing Scotland	7
Chapter 1: Discovering the Best of Scotland	9
Chapter 2: Digging Deeper into Scotland	21
Chapter 3: Deciding Where and When to Go	35
Chapter 4: Following an Itinerary: Five Fine Options	51
Part II: Planning Your Trip to Scotland	61
Chapter 5: Managing Your Money	63
Chapter 6: Getting to Scotland	78
Chapter 7: Getting Around Scotland	85
Chapter 8: Booking Your Accommodations	94
Chapter 9: Catering to Special Travel Needs or Interests	101
Chapter 10: Taking Care of the Remaining Details	107
Part III: Edinburgh and Glasgow	117
Chapter 11: Edinburgh	119
Chapter 12: Glasgow	186
Chapter 13: Going Beyond Edinburgh and Glasgow: Day Trips	254
Part IV: The Major Regions	265
Chapter 14: Southern Scotland	267
Chapter 15: Ayrshire and Argyll	283
Chapter 16: Fife to the Trossachs	307
Chapter 17: Tayside and the Northeast	332
Chapter 18: The Highlands	345
Chapter 19: Hebridean Islands	368
Chapter 20: Orkney and Shetland Islands	389
Part V: The Part of Tens	401
Chapter 21: Ten Outstanding Golf Courses	403
Chapter 22: Ten Can't-Miss Castles and Historic Sites	406
Chapter 23: Ten Distinctive Distilleries	409
Chapter 24: Ten Stunning Natural Attractions	412
Appendix: Quick Concierge	415
Index	421

Maps at a Glance

Edinburgh Orientation	126
Edinburgh Accommodations	130
Edinburgh Dining	140
Edinburgh Attractions	156
Glasgow Orientation.....	195
Glasgow Accommodations	198
Glasgow Dining	206
Glasgow Attractions	220
Day Trips from Edinburgh	255
Day Trips from Glasgow.....	257
Southern Scotland	269
Ayrshire	285
Argyll	287
Oban	289
Fife	309
St. Andrews	319
Around Stirling and the Trossachs.....	321
Stirling	323
Tayside and the Northeast	335
The Highlands	347
Inverness	357
Hebridean Islands.....	371
The Isle of Skye	373
The Shetland Islands	391
The Orkney Islands	393

Table of Contents



***Introduction* 1**

About This Book.....	1
Conventions Used in This Book	2
Foolish Assumptions	3
How This Book Is Organized.....	4
Part I: Introducing Scotland.....	4
Part II: Planning Your Trip to Scotland.....	4
Part III: Edinburgh and Glasgow.....	4
Part IV: The Major Regions	4
Part V: The Part of Tens	4
Icons Used in This Book.....	5
Where to Go from Here.....	5

***Part 1: Introducing Scotland* 7**

Chapter 1: Discovering the Best of Scotland9

The Best Travel Experiences	9
The Best Accommodations in Edinburgh and Glasgow	10
Edinburgh	10
Glasgow	11
The Best Small and Country House Hotels.....	11
The Best Dining in Edinburgh and Glasgow	12
Edinburgh	12
Glasgow	13
The Best Rural Restaurants	13
The Best Castles	14
The Best Cathedrals, Churches, and Abbeys	15
The Best Art Galleries	15
The Best Museums and Historic Attractions	16
The Best Historic Houses and Gardens.....	17
The Best Small Towns	18
The Best Distilleries.....	19
The Best Golf Courses	19
The Best Pubs and Bars	20

Chapter 2: Digging Deeper into Scotland21

Scotland 101: The Main Events	21
Early history	22
The Dark and Middle Ages.....	22
The Reformation	23

Union and the Jacobites.....	23
The Scottish Enlightenment and economic growth	24
The 20th and 21st centuries	25
Taste of Scotland: Not just Haggis or Haddock	25
Braving the Burr: Scottish English.....	27
Gaelic and Scots	28
Pub Life in Scotland	29
Join 'em for a pint of beer	29
Whisky galore	30
Other cocktail concoctions	30
Tuning Your Ear to Scottish Music	30
Visiting Golf's Hallowed Ground	31
Exploring Scotland's Great Outdoors	31
Background Check: Recommended	
Movies and Books	32
Films	32
Books	33

Chapter 3: Deciding Where and When to Go35

Going Everywhere You Want to Be	35
Edinburgh and Glasgow	36
Southern Scotland	37
Ayrshire and Argyll.....	37
Fife and the Trossachs	38
Tayside and Northeast Scotland.....	38
The Highlands	39
The Hebridean Islands	39
Shetland and Orkney islands.....	39
Scheduling Your Time.....	40
Mild weather thanks to the Gulf Stream	40
Here comes the sun	41
Revealing the Secrets of the Seasons	41
Summer	41
Fall	42
Winter	43
Spring	44
Perusing a Calendar of Events.....	45
January.....	45
February.....	45
March	46
April.....	46
May	46
June.....	47
July.....	48
August	48

September.....	49
October.....	49
November.....	50
December.....	50

Chapter 4: Following an Itinerary:

Five Fine Options.....51

Seeing Many Highlights in One Week.....	52
Day 1.....	52
Day 2.....	52
Day 3.....	52
Day 4.....	52
Day 5.....	53
Day 6.....	53
Day 7.....	53
Touring the Best of Scotland in Two Weeks.....	53
Days 1, 2, and 3.....	53
Day 4.....	54
Day 5.....	54
Days 6 and 7.....	54
Day 8.....	54
Day 9.....	54
Day 10.....	54
Day 11.....	55
Day 12.....	55
Day 13.....	55
Day 14.....	55
Discovering Scotland with Kids.....	55
Touring Scotland's Great Highlands.....	56
Touring the Western Highlands and Islands.....	57
Planning Your Trip: Mileage Chart.....	58

Part II: Planning Your Trip to Scotland..... 61

Chapter 5: Managing Your Money.....63

Planning Your Budget.....	64
Transportation.....	64
Lodging.....	64
Dining.....	65
Sightseeing.....	65
Shopping.....	65
Nightlife.....	66
Cutting Costs without Cutting the Fun.....	66
Handling Money.....	70
The local currency: What it's worth to you.....	71
Using ATMs and carrying cash.....	73

Charging ahead with credit cards.....	74
Toting traveler's checks.....	74
Taking Taxes into Account.....	75
Protecting Yourself and Your Money.....	76
Chapter 6: Getting to Scotland	78
Flying to Scotland.....	78
Identifying your airline options	78
Getting the best deal on your airfare	79
Booking your flight online	80
Taking the Train	80
Joining an Escorted Tour	82
Choosing a Package Tour.....	83
Chapter 7: Getting Around Scotland	85
Getting Around by Car.....	86
Safety tips to know before you get behind the wheel.....	88
Renting a Car	88
Taking the Train	91
Seeing Scotland by Bus	92
Finally, by Ferry.....	93
Chapter 8: Booking Your Accommodations	94
Getting to Know Your Options	94
Knowing What You'll Pay	95
Determining Your Accommodations Needs.....	96
Hotels	96
Bed-and-breakfasts (B&Bs).....	97
Self-catering cottages	97
Hostels.....	98
Finding the Best Room at the Best Rate.....	99
Surfing the Web for hotel deals.....	100
Chapter 9: Catering to Special Travel Needs or Interests.....	101
Traveling with the Brood: Advice for Families.....	101
Getting to Scotland and exploring with kids	102
Finding a family-friendly hotel	103
Making Age Work for You: Advice for Seniors	103
Accessing Scotland: Advice for Travelers	
with Disabilities	104
Travel agencies and organizations	104
Transportation.....	105
Following the Rainbow: Advice for Gay and Lesbian Travelers	105
Uncovering Your Scottish Roots	106

Chapter 10: Taking Care of the Remaining

Details 107

- Getting a Passport.....107
 - Applying for a U.S. passport.....107
 - Applying for other passports108
- Playing It Safe with Travel and Medical Insurance109
 - Trip-cancellation insurance.....109
 - Medical insurance.....109
 - Lost luggage insurance110
- Staying Healthy When You Travel.....110
- Staying Connected by Cellphone or E-mail.....111
 - Using a cellphone outside the U.S.111
 - Accessing the Internet112
- Scotland Unplugged: Getting Your Electric
 - Stuff to Work113
- Keeping Up with Airline Security Measures114

Part III: Edinburgh and Glasgow..... 117

Chapter 11: Edinburgh..... 119

- Getting to Edinburgh120
 - By air120
 - By train.....121
 - By bus.....121
 - By car122
- Orienting Yourself in Edinburgh.....122
 - Introducing the neighborhoods123
 - Finding information after you arrive125
- Getting Around Edinburgh125
 - By bus.....125
 - By taxi.....128
 - By car128
 - By bicycle.....129
 - On foot.....129
- Staying in Style129
 - The top hotels132
 - Runner-up hotels and B&Bs137
- Dining Out138
 - Prices139
 - Tipping139
 - Smoking.....142
 - The top restaurants and cafes142
- Exploring Edinburgh.....153
 - The top attractions.....154
 - More cool things to see and do.....162

Guided tours.....	167
Suggested one-, two-, and three-day itineraries.....	169
Taking a walking tour.....	170
Shopping in Edinburgh.....	173
Best shopping areas.....	174
Shopping complexes.....	174
What to look for and where to find it.....	174
Living It Up After Dark.....	178
The performing arts.....	178
Bars and pubs.....	182
Going to the cinema.....	183
Fast Facts: Edinburgh.....	183
Chapter 12: Glasgow.....	186
Getting to Glasgow.....	187
By air.....	187
By train.....	188
By bus.....	189
By car.....	189
Orienting Yourself in Glasgow.....	190
Introducing the neighborhoods.....	191
Finding information after you arrive.....	194
Getting Around Glasgow.....	194
By subway.....	194
By bus.....	196
By taxi.....	196
By car.....	196
By bicycle.....	197
On foot.....	197
Staying in Style.....	197
The top hotels and B&Bs.....	200
Runner-up hotels and B&Bs.....	204
Dining in Glasgow.....	205
Prices.....	208
Tipping.....	208
Smoking.....	208
The top restaurants and cafes.....	209
Exploring Glasgow.....	219
The top attractions.....	222
More cool things to do and see.....	229
Guided tours.....	232
Suggested one-, two-, and three-day itineraries.....	233
Walking tour: The West End.....	235

Shopping in Glasgow	239
Best shopping areas	239
Shopping complexes	240
What to look for and where to find it	240
Living It Up After Dark	244
The performing arts	245
Comedy	246
Dance clubs	247
Folk music	247
Rock, pop, and jazz	247
Some top bars and pubs	248
Going to the movies.....	251
Fast Facts: Glasgow.....	252

**Chapter 13: Going Beyond Edinburgh
and Glasgow: Day Trips254**

East Lothian	254
Getting there.....	256
Orienting yourself	256
Seeing the sights	256
Dining locally	259
West Lothian	260
Getting there.....	260
Orienting yourself	260
Seeing the sights	261
Dining locally	262
The Clyde Valley	262
Getting there.....	263
Seeing the sights	263
West of Glasgow	263

Part IV: The Major Regions.....265

Chapter 14: Southern Scotland267

Getting There	267
Spending the Night.....	268
Dining Locally	272
Exploring Southern Scotland.....	273
The top attractions.....	274
More cool things to see and do.....	279
Shopping for Local Treasures.....	280
Hitting the Local Pubs	281
Fast Facts: Southern Scotland	281

Chapter 15: Ayrshire and Argyll	283
Getting There.....	284
Spending the Night.....	286
Dining Locally	293
Exploring Ayrshire and Argyll	296
The top attractions.....	297
Golfing heavens: Troon and Turnberry	301
Other cool things to see and do	303
Shopping for Local Treasures.....	305
Doing the Pub Crawl	305
Fast Facts: Ayrshire and Argyll.....	306
Chapter 16: Fife to the Trossachs.....	307
Getting to Fife and the Trossachs	308
Spending the Night.....	308
Dining Locally	313
Exploring Fife to the Trossachs.....	317
The top attractions.....	318
More cool things to see and do.....	328
Shopping for Local Treasures.....	329
Doing the Pub Crawl	330
Fast Facts: Fife and the Central Highlands.....	331
Chapter 17: Tayside and the Northeast.....	332
Getting There.....	333
Spending the Night.....	333
Dining Locally	337
Exploring Tayside and the Northeast	338
The top attractions.....	339
Other cool things to see and do	342
Shopping for Local Treasures.....	343
Doing the Pub Crawl	343
Fast Facts: Tayside to the Northeast	344
Chapter 18: The Highlands	345
Getting There.....	346
Spending the Night.....	346
Dining Locally	353
Exploring the Highlands	355
Guided tours.....	356
The top attractions.....	356
Other cool things to see and do	365
Shopping in the Highlands	366
Doing the Pub Crawl	366
Fast Facts: The Highlands	367

Chapter 19: Hebridean Islands368

Getting to the Islands369
 Spending the Night.....370
 Dining Locally377
 Exploring the Hebrides.....379
 The top attractions380
 Other cool things to see and do386
 Shopping the Hebridean Islands387
 Doing the Pub Crawl388
 Fast Facts: The Hebridean Islands388

Chapter 20: Orkney and Shetland Islands389

Getting There390
 Spending the Night and Dining Locally391
 Exploring Orkney and Shetland394
 Joining a guided tour.....395
 The top attractions.....395
 Other Cool Things to See and Do398
 Fast Facts: Orkney and Shetland.....398

Part V: The Part of Tens401

Chapter 21: Ten Outstanding Golf Courses.....403

Carnoustie.....403
 Gairloch Golf Club.....403
 Muirfield404
 Prestwick.....404
 Royal Dornoch Course404
 Royal Troon404
 St. Andrews404
 Traigh.....405
 Turnberry.....405
 Western Gailes405

**Chapter 22: Ten Can't-Miss Castles
 and Historic Sites.....406**

Bannockburn406
 Calanais Standing Stones406
 Castle Tioram407
 Culloden Moor Battlefield.....407
 Culzean Castle407
 Doune Castle.....407
 Eilean Donan Castle407
 Glasgow Cathedral408
 Melrose Abbey.....408
 Skara Brae408

Chapter 23: Ten Distinctive Distilleries	409
Caol Ila	409
Dalwhinnie	409
Edradour	410
Glenfiddich.....	410
Glen Grant	410
Glenlivet	410
The Glenturret	410
Laphroaig	411
Strathisla	411
Talisker	411
Chapter 24: Ten Stunning Natural Attractions	412
Ardnamurchan Peninsula.....	412
Arthur's Seat and Holyrood Park	412
Cuillin Hills	413
Fingal's Cave	413
Glen Coe	413
Inverewe Garden	413
Loch Lomond.....	414
Loch Ness	414
Sands of Morar	414
Sandwood Bay	414
Appendix: Quick Concierge	415
Fast Facts	415
Toll-Free Numbers and Web Sites	418
Where to Get More Information	420
Index	421

Introduction

This guide is a departure from conventional travel guidebooks. Rather than just throwing out dizzying reams of information for you to sift through until you're too tired to distinguish Edinburgh from Inverness, *Scotland For Dummies*, 4th Edition, separates the old wheat from the chaff (so you don't have to).

This book walks you through the whole process of putting together your trip to Scotland, from the ins and outs of a manageable itinerary to advice on choosing the right places to stay or how much time to allot for attractions and activities. My recommendations may not be perfect for everyone, of course. The goal here is to help you see what may interest you (whether it's castles, museums, pubs, or open countryside) and what probably will not. Your time is valuable, so this book strives to get right to the point. *Scotland For Dummies*, 4th Edition, is designed to give you a clear picture of what you need to know and what your options are, so that you can make informed decisions easily and efficiently about traveling in Scotland.

About This Book

Some parts of Scotland are bound to interest you more than others, so don't feel as if you have to read this book cover to cover. If you want to focus on the metropolitan life, for example, then simply concentrate on Part III's chapters devoted to Edinburgh and Glasgow. If the lore of the Loch Ness monster, or the lure of the Hebridean islands, intrigues you, then you can find valuable information in Part VI. And if you're drawn to picturesque settings that are less touristy than the famous attractions, then *Scotland For Dummies*, 4th Edition, can point you in the right direction as well.

Although the information is laid out in the logical order of a step-by-step manual, you don't need to read the book in order from front to back. You're also not expected to remember everything you read — you can just look up and revisit specific information as you need it. Each section and chapter is as self-contained as possible, a feature that allows you to concentrate on what's important to you (and skip the rest).

Of course this guide has up-to-date information on the best hotels and restaurants in Scotland's major cities and regions. But it also has information on shopping and nightlife, attractions, walking tours, helpful historical asides, and details on those things that make Scotland unique, too — whether that's golf courses or the tallest mountains and most pristine seas in the entire United Kingdom.

Dummies Post-it® Flags

As you're reading this book, you'll come across information that you may want to reference as you plan or enjoy your trip — whether it be a new hotel, a must-see attraction, or a must-try walking tour. Use the handy Post-it® Flags included in this book to mark particular pages and make your trip planning easier!

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time — and this is especially true of prices. It never hurts to check the Internet or write or call ahead for confirmation of the “current” situation when making your travel plans. The author, editors, and publisher can't be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

Conventions Used in This Book

The goal of *Scotland For Dummies*, 4th Edition, is to be a quick read in any order that you desire, so the listings for hotels, restaurants, and sights are consistently standardized throughout the chapters. Each listing offers you an idea of what the place is like and then gives you details about specific addresses, prices, and hours of operation.

Other conventions include:

- ✓ Abbreviations for commonly accepted credit cards used throughout this book.
 - AE: American Express
 - DC: Diners Club
 - MC: MasterCard
 - V: Visa
- ✓ An alphabetical listing of hotels, restaurants, and attractions in each chapter.
- ✓ Page references for maps, given whenever possible, to help you locate hotels, restaurants, attractions, and the like. If a hotel, restaurant, or attraction is in an out-of-the-way area, however, it may not appear on a map. In chapters on the major cities, information about bus routes, and, in Glasgow, subway stops, is given as well.

- ✔ Prices listed in British pounds sterling (£), with the dollar equivalent given in parentheses. The conversion rate (always changing in the real world, of course) used to make these calculations is £1 equals \$1.85.

Price is normally a factor when choosing hotels and restaurants. The relative costs of accommodations and meals are indicated with dollar signs. Specific prices are given, too, but the dollar signs are a quick way for you to see if a place is in your price category before reading any more information. My scale for accommodations and restaurants ranges from one dollar sign (\$) to four (\$\$\$\$). Most hotel prices are per night for double rooms (rather than per person per night). The cost of a meal generally means dinner with at least two courses and a drink per person. The following table helps you decipher what the dollar signs mean.

Cost	Hotel	Restaurant
\$	Less than £55 (\$100)	About £10 (\$19)
\$\$	£55–£120 (\$100–\$225)	£10–£25 (\$19–\$48)
\$\$\$	£121–£175 (\$226–\$330)	£26–£35 (\$50–\$70)
\$\$\$\$	More than £176 (\$332)	More than £35 (\$70)

The hotels in Chapters 11 and 12 are divided into two categories — favorites and those that don't quite make my preferred list, but still get my seal of approval. Don't hesitate to consider the “runner-up” hotels — the amenities and the services they offer make them all reasonable choices as you decide where to rest your head at night.

Foolish Assumptions

This book makes some assumptions about you and what your needs may be as a traveler. Here's what I've assumed about you.

- ✔ You're an experienced traveler who hasn't had much time to explore Scotland but wants expert advice when you finally do get a chance to enjoy any part of the region.
- ✔ You're an inexperienced traveler looking for guidance when determining whether to take a trip to Scotland and how to plan for it.
- ✔ You're not looking for a book that provides all the information available about Scotland or that lists every hotel, restaurant, or attraction available to you. Instead, you want a book that focuses on the places that will give you the best or most unique experience in Scotland.

If you fit any of these criteria, then *Scotland For Dummies*, 4th Edition, is the book for you.

How This Book Is Organized

Scotland For Dummies, 4th Edition, consists of five parts. The chapters within each part cover specific components in detail.

Part I: Introducing Scotland

This part introduces you to the very best of Scotland and touches on issues you need to consider before actually getting down to the nitty-gritty of trip planning. It includes a brief history of Scotland as well as recommended reading, when and where to go, and detailed itineraries to consider.

Part II: Planning Your Trip to Scotland

This part gets down to the nuts and bolts of travel planning, including information on managing your money, how best to get to Scotland, getting around the country, and reserving hotel rooms. It also addresses special considerations for families, seniors, travelers with disabilities, and students, as well as gay and lesbian travelers.

Part III: Edinburgh and Glasgow

You may only have time to see the two major cities in Scotland, and so I've devoted an entire chapter to each, with details on hotels, restaurants, top attractions, shopping, walking tours, and nightlife. Plus, you can find information on how to get around, how much time you need to see things, suggested itineraries, and recommended side trips.

Part IV: The Major Regions

This part offers chapters on Scotland's major regions: from Southern Scotland to the Highlands, from Ayrshire and Argyll to the Hebridean Islands. Each chapter has suggestions on accommodations, places to dine out, and attractions, not to mention some useful information on shopping and nightlife. For a more thorough overview of Scotland, including a brief description of these regions, flip to Chapter 3.

Part V: The Part of Tens

Every *For Dummies* book has a Part of Tens. These more breezy chapters have quick and handy lists that highlight the best golf courses, castles, natural attractions, and more in Scotland.

In the back of this book, I've included an *appendix* — your Quick Concierge — containing lots of handy information you may need when traveling in Scotland, such as phone numbers and addresses of emergency personnel or area hospitals and pharmacies, lists of local newspapers and magazines, protocol for sending mail or finding taxis, and more. Check out this appendix when you're faced with the little questions that may come up as you travel. The Quick Concierge is easy to find because it's printed on yellow paper.

Icons Used in This Book

You can't miss the icons (little pictures) sprinkled throughout the margins of this book. Think of them as signposts that highlight special tips, draw your attention to things you don't want to miss, and give you a heads-up on a variety of topics.



Keep an eye out for the Bargain Alert icon as you seek out money-saving tips and/or great deals.



Best of the Best icons highlight the best each destination has to offer in all categories — hotels, restaurants, attractions, activities, shopping, and nightlife.



Watch for the Heads Up icon to identify annoying or potentially dangerous situations such as tourist traps, unsafe neighborhoods, budgetary rip-offs, and other things to beware.



This icon points to useful advice on things to do and ways to schedule your time.



Look to the Kid Friendly icon for attractions, hotels, restaurants, and activities that are particularly hospitable to children or people traveling with kids.



This icon points out secret little finds or useful resources that are worth the extra bit of effort to get to or find.

Where to Go from Here

This travel guide isn't designed to be read from beginning to end (although you're certainly welcome to do so). Instead, it provides detailed and well-organized information on loads of topics — from getting your passport to finding the best restaurants. So, choose your own adventure and look for the topics or destinations you want to explore by using the Table of Contents or the Index.

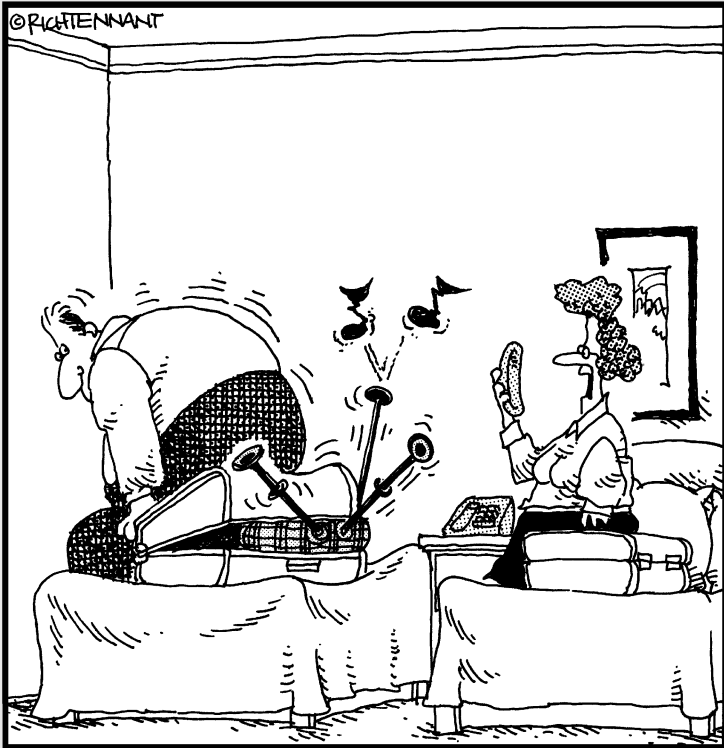
As you start to prepare for your visit to Scotland, remember this: The planning is half the fun. Don't make choosing your destinations and solidifying the details feel like a chore. Make the homebound part of the process a voyage of discovery, and you'll end up with a vacation that's much more rewarding and enriching. See you in Scotland!

Part I

Introducing Scotland

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"It's the room next door. They suggest you deflate your souvenir bagpipes before trying to pack them in your luggage."

In this part . . .

Scotland — with its rich, evocative past — has much to offer the traveler. But visitors don't come here just for the history: The country's vibrant cities, natural beauty, indigenous culture, and friendly people are all additional draws.

This part suggests Scotland's best, from hotels and restaurants to castles and art galleries. You'll find useful itineraries to help you decide what to see if your time is limited. This part also contains a condensed history, a glossary of the Scots language, a list of suggested books and films to help get you in the mood, and lots more. When's the best season to visit? Are discounts available for seniors or children? What, for heaven's sake, is haggis? Look no further; the answers are here.

Chapter 1

Discovering the Best of Scotland

In This Chapter

- ▶ Staying in the top hotels and dining in the best restaurants
 - ▶ Discovering the best castles and museums
 - ▶ Drinking in the best pubs and bars
-

To start things off, I begin with some of the highlights: the best that Scotland has to offer visitors, from memorable travel experiences, excellent hotels, or top-rated restaurants to first-class castles, museums, golf courses, pubs, and more. (Each entry is listed not by preference, however, but in alphabetical order under each main heading.) Many of these are highlighted by those alluring “Best of the Best” icons when they appear elsewhere in this book: So keep your eyes peeled.

The Best Travel Experiences

- ✔ **Ardnamurchan Peninsula:** One of the more easily reached but seemingly remote areas of the Highlands, the peninsula is the most westerly point in the entire British mainland. See Chapter 18.
- ✔ **Butt of Lewis:** On the Isle of Lewis, these beautiful high cliffs over the ocean have views that are worth the drive to the tip of the island. You can see seabirds, seals, and spectacular windblown waves crashing against the rocks. See Chapter 19.
- ✔ **Edinburgh Old Town:** This area is probably the most visited location in Scotland and not without good reason. Running along the spine of a hill and extending from the castle to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, Old Town is a delight to wander through. Make sure you take time to explore the alleyways. See Chapter 11.
- ✔ **Glasgow City Centre:** This area shows off the thriving heart of a modern European city, with some of the finest examples of Victorian architecture in all the world. It’s set out on a grid, so you don’t need to worry about getting lost. See Chapter 12.

- ✔ **Glen Coe:** With a visitor center near Glencoe village, Glen Coe is such a beautiful valley that it's hard to reconcile the natural beauty with the bloody historical event that took place there. See Chapter 18.
- ✔ **The Hebrides:** If you like unspoiled scenery, windswept sands, quiet country lanes, craggy shorelines, and the occasional ferry ride, then you must go to see some of the islands off of Scotland's west coast. See Chapter 19.
- ✔ **Loch Lomond:** Located quite near Glasgow, this loch is the largest inland body of water in all of Great Britain. It's only about a 30- to 45-minute drive or train ride from the Glasgow city limits. When you reach the loch, you can hike, canoe, or just relax. See Chapter 16.
- ✔ **Loch Ness:** This loch is mysterious and legendary — if somewhat overrated. In addition to looking for the elusive monster, you should seek out other local attractions, such as Urquhart Castle. See Chapter 18.
- ✔ **Sands of Morar:** Near Mallaig, the Sands of Morar offer beautiful bleached beaches set against postcard-pretty seas. You can see the Hebridean islands Rhum and Eigg from here. See Chapter 18.
- ✔ **Sandwood Bay:** This area near Blairmore has a beach that, by most accounts, is the most beautiful and unsullied in all of Great Britain's mainland. See Chapter 18.

The Best Accommodations in Edinburgh and Glasgow

Edinburgh

- ✔ **Best Boutique Hotel: The Bonham.** In an upscale, western New Town neighborhood, The Bonham offers some of the most alluring accommodations in a city filled with fine hotels. See Chapter 11.
- ✔ **Best Traditional Hotel: Balmoral.** With a Michelin-star restaurant, doormen in kilts, and a romantic pile to rival any others, Balmoral is legendary, and its location is smack in the heart of the capital. See Chapter 11.
- ✔ **Best Rooms near the Castle: The Witchery by the Castle.** As its list of celebrity guests testifies, the Witchery offers opulence and individuality in a manner not seen anywhere else in the Old Town. See Chapter 11.
- ✔ **Best Hotel in Leith: Malmaison.** At the port of Leith, Malmaison is about a 15-minute ride north of Edinburgh's center. Named after Joséphine's mansion outside Paris, the hotel celebrates the Auld Alliance of France and Scotland and occupies a Victorian building built in 1900. See Chapter 11.

- ✔ **Best Hotel Health Spa: Sheraton Grand.** Near the city's conference center, the Sheraton Grand has wonderful facilities in an adjoining building. Especially noteworthy is the roof-top indoor/outdoor pool. See Chapter 11.

Glasgow

- ✔ **Best Boutique Hotel: One Devonshire Gardens.** In a West End neighborhood filled with similar sandstone-fronted town houses, One Devonshire Gardens still stands out. It's a re-creation of a high-bourgeois, very proper Scottish home from the early 1900s, boasting antique furnishings and discreetly concealed modern comforts. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Best Hip Hotel: Brunswick Hotel.** With only 18 rooms, the Brunswick Hotel exudes cool in the city's Merchant City. The design is modern and minimalist but is executed with character and class. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Best in the Commercial Centre: Malmaison.** Linked to the hotel with the same name in Edinburgh (see listing in previous section), this Malmaison is in a building that dates from the 1800s. It welcomes visitors with Scottish hospitality and houses them with quite a bit of style. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Best Moderately Priced Hotel: The Town House.** Near One Devonshire Gardens, it may lack that hotel's posh quotient, but this small guest house is very comfortable and pretty classy, too. See Chapter 12.

The Best Small and Country House Hotels

- ✔ **An Lochan, Tighnabruaich, Argyll:** Formerly the Royal, this hotel dates to the mid-19th century, but today it is fully modernized inside, with plush rooms that overlook the sea and the hotel's own moorings. Great fish and seafood, too. See Chapter 15.
- ✔ **Ardanaiseig, Kilchrenan, Argyll:** This stone Scottish baronial pile built in the 1830s offers a bit of luxury in an out-of-the-way corner. See Chapter 15.
- ✔ **Argyll Hotel, Iona, the Hebrides:** This charming traditional hotel in the village of Iona is comfortable and environmentally conscious, with its own organic garden and an ethos of not disturbing the fragile island ecology. See Chapter 19.
- ✔ **Ballachulish House, Ballachulish, the Highlands:** This 17th-century laird's house includes a history said to be the inspiration for key passages in Robert Louis Stevenson's masterpiece, *Kidnapped*. See Chapter 18.

- ✓ **Darroch Learg**, Ballater, the Northeast: This hotel is one of the more highly regarded hotels in the Royal Deeside region near the Queen's estate at Balmoral. See Chapter 17.
- ✓ **Glenapp Castle**, Ballantrae, South Ayrshire: Glenapp is a beautifully decorated pile close to Stranraer, with Victorian baronial splendor and antiques, oil paintings, and elegant touches. See Chapter 14.
- ✓ **Glengarry Castle Hotel**, Invergarry, the Highlands: The 26-room Victorian mansion, with its own castle ruins (the real Glengarry Castle), is on extensive wooded grounds with nice views of Loch Oich. See Chapter 18.
- ✓ **Knockinaam Lodge**, near Portpatrick, Dumfries, and Galloway: With a Michelin-star restaurant, Knockinaam combines exquisite meals with a secluded seaside setting on the Rhinns of Galloway. See Chapter 14.
- ✓ **Prestonfield**, Edinburgh: Although in the city, this hotel rises in Jacobean splendor amid gardens, pastures, and woodlands below Arthur's Seat on the south side of the Scottish capital. See Chapter 11.

The Best Dining in Edinburgh and Glasgow

Edinburgh

- ✓ **Best French Restaurant: Restaurant Martin Wishart.** With one of the city's precious Michelin stars and its most talented chef/owner, Restaurant Martin Wishart is where the leading out-of-town chefs dine when they visit Edinburgh. See Chapter 11.
- ✓ **Best Cafe: Spoon.** In the heart of Old Town, Spoon forks out some the best salads and sandwiches in Edinburgh — and the freshly made soups are even better. See Chapter 11.
- ✓ **Best Italian Restaurant: Santini.** Although many of the more established Italian restaurants in town don't like hearing it, Santini continually gets rave reviews and sets the highest standards. See Chapter 11.
- ✓ **Best Modern Scottish Restaurant: Atrium.** Owned by Andrew and Lisa Radford, Atrium offers dishes prepared with flair and imagination but not excessive amounts of fuss or over-fancy presentation. See Chapter 11.
- ✓ **Best Restaurant Views: Oloroso or Forth Floor.** This category is a dead heat between Oloroso and Forth Floor at Harvey Nichols. Both offer wonderful preparation of fresh Scottish produce to go with those scenic vistas. See Chapter 11.

Glasgow

- ✔ **Best Fine Dining Restaurant: Michael Caines @ ABode.** A fairly new arrival, but the eponymous owner/chef has two Michelin stars to his name. The staff he has hired for this branch in Glasgow has aspirations for stars of their own. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Best Indian Restaurant: The Dhabba.** Glasgow loves its Indian cuisine, but this restaurant offers something a bit better than most, favoring dishes from the northern part of the subcontinent. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Best Modern Scottish Restaurant: The Wild Bergamot.** In the northwestern suburbs of the city, this tiny restaurant offers some of the most ambitious cooking in greater Glasgow, using mostly local and seasonal ingredients. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Best Cafe: Cafe Gandolfi.** Perhaps more of a bistro than cafe, Café Gandolfi offers straightforward and delicious dishes, whether you choose a bowl of Cullen skink (smoked haddock chowder) or a sirloin steak sandwich. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Best Pub Food: Stravaigin.** With an award-winning restaurant in the basement, the ground floor pub Stravaigin offers similarly top-notch quality food — at a fraction of the restaurant price. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Best on a Budget: Wee Curry Shop.** A brief stroll from the shopping precincts of Sauchiehall Street, the Wee Curry Shop is a tiny gem of a restaurant, serving freshly prepared Indian cuisine at bargain prices. See Chapter 12.

The Best Rural Restaurants

- ✔ **Andrew Fairlie at Gleneagles,** Auchterarder, near Stirling: It may be the finest dining experience in the country, and Fairlie is arguably the most talented chef in Scotland at present. See Chapter 16.
- ✔ **Applecross Inn,** Applecross, the Western Highlands: The inn may not be the easiest place in Scotland to reach, but many visitors agree that the twists and turns of the road to Applecross are well worth the journey for a meal here. See Chapter 18.
- ✔ **Braidwoods,** Dalry, North Ayrshire: One of the standout restaurants in Ayrshire and holder of a Michelin star and other accolades, Braidwoods is expensive but worth the price. See Chapter 15.
- ✔ **Creagan House,** Strathyre, the Trossachs: Run by Cherry and Gordon Gunn, the restaurant is part of a charming inn in a 17th-century farm house. See Chapter 16.
- ✔ **Seafood Cabin,** Skipness, Argyll: I love this place on a sunny summer day, when you can nosh on fresh seafood and shellfish on

the picnic benches with a view of a castle and isle of Arran. See Chapter 15.

- ✔ **Three Chimneys Restaurant**, Colbost, Isle of Skye: Probably the most popular restaurant on Skye, the Three Chimneys serves superb Scottish cuisine paired with produce from Skye, its island home. See Chapter 19.

The Best Castles

- ✔ **Blair Castle**, Blair, Perthshire: Blair's chock-full o' stuff: art, armor, flags, stag horns, and more goodies not typically found on the standard furniture-and-portrait castle tour. See Chapter 17.
- ✔ **Caerlaverock Castle**, Dumfries and Galloway: Long a target of English armies, Caerlaverock remains one of Scotland's more classic Medieval castles. See Chapter 14.
- ✔ **Castle Tioram**, Blair, Ardnamurchan: This classic medieval fortress now in ruins sits along the picturesque shores of Loch Moidart. You can enjoy some good hiking trails near the castle, too. See Chapter 18.
- ✔ **Cawdor Castle**, Cawdor, the Highlands: Cawdor is one of my favorites, largely because the room-by-room self-guided tour cards are well written and humorous. See Chapter 18.
- ✔ **Doone Castle**, near Stirling: Fans of the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* may recognize Doone. Thanks to its limited restoration, visitors get a good idea of what living here in the 14th century was like. See Chapter 16.
- ✔ **Duart Castle**, Craignure, Isle of Mull: Duart was abandoned in 1751, but thanks to the efforts of Fitzroy Maclean, it was restored from ruins in 1911. Making your way up the narrow, twisting stairs is worth it because you can walk outside on the parapet at the top of the castle. See Chapter 19.
- ✔ **Eilean Donan**, Dornie, the Highlands: This is probably the most photographed stone pile in Scotland (after Edinburgh Castle, that is). On an islet in Loch Duich, Eilean Donan is a quintessential castle. See Chapter 18.
- ✔ **Stirling Castle**, Stirling: This castle was the residence of Mary Queen of Scots, her son James VI of Scotland (and later James I of England), and other Stuart monarchs. Recently restored, the Great Hall stands out for miles thanks to the creamy, almost yellow exterior that apparently replicates its original color. See Chapter 16.
- ✔ **Threave Castle**, Castle Douglas, Dumfries and Galloway: Threave is a massive 14th-century tower house on an island in the middle of the River Dee (a boatman ferries visitors across). See Chapter 14.

The Best Cathedrals, Churches, and Abbeys

- ✔ **Dunfermline Abbey and Palace**, Dunfermline, Fife: This abbey is on the site of a Celtic church and an 11th-century house of worship dedicated to the Holy Trinity; traces of this history are visible beneath gratings in the floor of the old nave. See Chapter 16.
- ✔ **Glasgow Cathedral**, Glasgow: This cathedral is also known as the cathedral of St. Kentigern or St. Mungo's, and it dates to the 13th century. The edifice is mainland Scotland's only complete medieval cathedral. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **High Kirk of St. Giles**, Edinburgh: Just a brief walk downhill from Edinburgh Castle, this church — and its steeple, in particular — is one of the most important architectural landmarks along the Royal Mile. See Chapter 11.
- ✔ **Iona Abbey and Nunnery**, Iona, the Hebrides: This spiritual landmark is a significant shrine to the earliest days of Christianity in Scotland. See Chapter 19.
- ✔ **Jedburgh Abbey**, Jedburgh, the Borders: This abbey is one of four Borders abbeys commissioned by Scots King David I in the 12th century. See Chapter 14.
- ✔ **Melrose Abbey**, Melrose, the Borders: The heart of Scots King Robert the Bruce is rumored to be buried somewhere on the grounds of this abbey, which sits amidst somewhat spectacular ruins. See Chapter 14.
- ✔ **St. Vincent Street Church**, Glasgow: This church offers limited access to visitors, but it's the most visible landmark attributed to the city's great architect, Alexander "Greek" Thomson. See Chapter 12.

The Best Art Galleries

- ✔ **The Burrell Collection**, Glasgow: This gallery houses the treasures left to Glasgow by Sir William Burrell, a wealthy ship owner and industrialist who had a lifelong passion for art. He started collecting at age 14 and only ceased when he died at the age of 96 in 1958. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA)**, Glasgow: This gallery is housed in the former Royal Exchange. The permanent collection has works by Stanley Spencer and John Bellany as well as art from the "new Glasgow boys." See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Hunterian Art Gallery**, Glasgow: The Hunterian holds the artistic estate of James McNeill Whistler, with some 60 of his paintings as well as some by the Scottish Colourists. It also boasts a collection of Charles Rennie Mackintosh–designed furnishings. See Chapter 12.

- ✔ **Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum**, Glasgow: This is the remarkable flagship of the city's well-regarded municipal art collection, housed in the recently restored masterpiece of Victorian architecture. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Gallery**, Kirkcaldy, Fife: I have a particular soft spot for this modest provincial gallery and museum because I think it has one of the single best collections of Scottish Colourist paintings and other Scottish works from the 19th and 20th centuries. See Chapter 16.
- ✔ **National Gallery of Scotland**, Edinburgh: The National Gallery offers a collection that has been chosen with great care and expanded by bequests, gifts, loans, and purchases. See Chapter 11.
- ✔ **Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art**, Edinburgh: This gallery houses Scotland's national collection of 20th-century art in a converted 1828 school set on 4.8 hectares (12 acres) of grounds. See Chapter 11.
- ✔ **Scottish National Portrait Gallery**, Edinburgh: Designed by Rowand Anderson, the gallery gives you a chance to stand before the faces of many famous people from Scottish history. See Chapter 11.

The Best Museums and Historic Attractions

- ✔ **Bannockburn**, near Stirling: Bannockburn is believed to be the famous battlefield site where King Robert the Bruce's soldiers vanquished the English troops of Edward II. The heritage center offers an excellent audiovisual presentation of the site's unique history. See Chapter 16.
- ✔ **Burns Cottage and Museum**, Alloway, Ayrshire: This attraction may be basic, but it remains a must-see for even casual fans of Scots poet Robert Burns. See Chapter 15.
- ✔ **Calanais Standing Stones**, Lewis, the Hebrides: This ancient cross-shaped formation of large stones is best known as the "Scottish Stonehenge." See Chapter 19.
- ✔ **Calton Hill**, Edinburgh: This landmark mound of rock and earth rises about 105m (350 ft.) above the city and is crowned with monuments. It's mainly responsible for Edinburgh's being called the "Athens of the North." See Chapter 11.
- ✔ **Culloden Moor Battlefield**, near Inverness, the Highlands: This battlefield is where the hopes of Bonnie Prince Charlie's Jacobite uprising of 1745 (begun at Glenfinnan) ended in complete defeat in 1746. See Chapter 18.
- ✔ **Gladstone's Land**, Edinburgh: This 17th-century merchant's house, looking suitably weathered and aged, is decorated in period-style

furnishings, features colorful paintings of flowers and fruit, and has a sensitively restored timber ceiling. See Chapter 11.

- ✔ **Glasgow School of Art**, Glasgow: This building was designed by Scotland's great architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh, whose global reputation rests in large part on this magnificent building on Garnethill above Sauchiehall Street. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Glenfinnan Monument**, Glenfinnan, the Highlands: This monument marks the hopeful start of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, led by Bonnie Prince Charlie, who was trying to reclaim the English and Scottish crowns for his Stuart family lineage. See Chapter 18.
- ✔ **Kilmartin House Museum**, Kilmartin: This museum traces Scotland's earliest civilizations, history, and culture. See Chapter 15.
- ✔ **Museum of Scotland**, Edinburgh: A most impressive modern sandstone building not far from the Royal Mile, the museum is home to exhibits that follow the story of Scotland, including archaeology, technology, and science, the decorative arts, royalty, and geology. See Chapter 11.
- ✔ **The Palace of Holyroodhouse**, Edinburgh: The palace was built in the 16th century adjacent to an Augustinian abbey that David I established in the 12th century. Today, the royal family stays here whenever they visit Edinburgh. When they're not in residence, which is most of the time, the palace is open to visitors. See Chapter 11.
- ✔ **Skara Brae**, Orkney: This is the best-preserved prehistoric beachside village in northern Europe. For an idea of what you'll see here, think Pompeii-meets-the-Neolithic. See Chapter 20.

The Best Historic Houses and Gardens

- ✔ **Abbotsford**, near Galashiels, the Borders: Abbotsford is the mansion that Scotland's best known novelist Sir Walter Scott built and lived in from 1817 until his death. You can visit extensive gardens and grounds on the property, plus the private chapel added after Scott's death. See Chapter 14.
- ✔ **Culzean Castle**, South Ayrshire: This castle overlooking the Firth of Clyde is a fine example of Robert Adam's "castellated" style (built with turrets and ramparts). It replaced an earlier castle kept as the family seat of the powerful Kennedy clan. See Chapter 15.
- ✔ **Hill House**, Helensburgh, West Dumbartonshire: The design of this house was inspired by Scottish Baronial style, but it's still pure Charles Rennie Mackintosh, from the asymmetrical juxtaposition of windows and clean lines that blend sharp geometry and gentle curves to the sumptuous but uncluttered interior. See Chapter 13.

- ✓ **Holmwood House**, Glasgow: This 1858 villa designed by Alexander “Greek” Thomson is probably the best example of his innovative style as applied to stately Victorian homes. See Chapter 12.
- ✓ **Inverewe Garden**, Poolewe: On the south-facing shores of Loch Ewe, Inverewe has the most impressive collection of plants, set out in its sprawling garden, in the Highlands. See Chapter 18.
- ✓ **Little Sparta**, Dunsyre: This garden was devised by one of Scotland’s most intriguing artists of the 20th and 21st centuries, Ian Hamilton Finlay. See Chapter 14.
- ✓ **Logan Botanic Garden**, Port Logan: This garden has palms, tree ferns, and other exotic plants that you wouldn’t expect to see in Scotland, such as towering flowering columns of echium pininanas native to the Canary Islands. See Chapter 14.
- ✓ **Mount Stuart**, Isle of Bute: This mansion belongs to the Marquess of Bute’s family, but it’s open to the public for much of the year. See Chapter 15.
- ✓ **Royal Botanic Garden**, Edinburgh: Royal Botanic, with its acres of land to explore, is one of the grandest gardens in all of Great Britain, which is certainly saying something. See Chapter 11.
- ✓ **Traquair House**, Innerleithen: This house dates to the 10th century and is perhaps Scotland’s most romantic house, rich in its association with Mary Queen of Scots and the Jacobite uprisings. See Chapter 14.

The Best Small Towns

- ✓ **Culross**: Thanks largely to the National Trust for Scotland, Culross, in Fife, shows what a Scottish village from the 16th to 18th centuries was like, with its cobbled streets lined by stout cottages featuring crow-stepped gables. See Chapter 16.
- ✓ **Dirleton**: Midway between North Berwick and Gullane and east of Edinburgh, Dirleton is cited by many as the prettiest village in Scotland. It’s picture-postcard perfect, not like a real town at all, but rather one that appears to have been created for a movie set. See Chapter 13.
- ✓ **Kirkcudbright**: On the southern coast of the Scottish mainland, near the Solway Firth, this quaint village of charming cottages, many with colorful pastel paint jobs, was once a leading artists’ colony. See Chapter 14.
- ✓ **Plockton**: Located not far from Eilean Donan castle, Plockton is probably the prettiest village in the Highlands. It sits on the shores of Loch Carron and you’ll be amazed to find palm trees. See Chapter 18.

- ✔ **Portpatrick:** A small holiday resort on the Rhinns of Galloway, Portpatrick is most certainly one of the most picturesque towns in southwest Scotland. See Chapter 14.
- ✔ **Ullapool:** This town is the busiest fishing port in the northwest of Scotland, and it's also a popular resort — the last outpost before the sparsely populated north. See Chapter 18.

The Best Distilleries

- ✔ **Edradour Distillery,** Pitlochry, Perthshire: Visitors get a good primer on the whisky-making process at this mini-distillery. See Chapter 17.
- ✔ **Glenfiddich Distillery,** Dufftown, the Northeast: In contrast to Edradour, this is one of Scotland's largest whisky factories, set amid the rolling wooded hills of the famous Speyside region. See Chapter 17.
- ✔ **Laphroaig Distillery,** Islay, Argyll: Islay, with more than a half-dozen distilleries, is Scotland's whisky island. Laphroaig has a distinctive peaty flavor with a whiff of sea air (some say they can even taste a little seaweed). See Chapter 15.

The Best Golf Courses

- ✔ **Muirfield Golf Course,** Gullane, East Lothian: Muirfield is ranked among the world's great golf courses. It's the home course of the Honorable Company of Edinburgh Golfers — the world's oldest club. See Chapter 13.
- ✔ **Royal Troon,** South Ayrshire: The city and its environs offer several sandy links courses, most prominently the Royal Troon Golf Club. But try the municipal courses for a bargain round as well. See Chapter 15.
- ✔ **St. Andrews,** Fife: Surely Scotland's most famous golf mecca, St. Andrews offers five 18-hole courses as well as one 9-hole course for beginners and children, all owned by a trust and open to the public. See Chapter 16.
- ✔ **Turnberry Hotel Golf Courses,** South Ayrshire: Like the Royal Troon, Turnberry has been the scene of Open tournaments and other professional golfing events over the years. Guests of the Westin Turnberry hotel get priority here. See Chapter 15.

The Best Pubs and Bars

- ✔ **Café Royal Circle Bar**, Edinburgh: This New Town pub stands out as a longtime favorite, boasting lots of atmosphere and Victorian trappings. It attracts a sea of drinkers, with locals as well as visitors. See Chapter 11.
- ✔ **Claichaig Inn**, Glencoe, the Highlands: This hotel has a rustic pub with a wood-burning stove, although it's really the staff's sunny dispositions that warm the woody lounge and bar. Claichaig Inn is especially popular with hikers. See Chapter 18.
- ✔ **Drover's Inn**, Inverarnan, Loch Lomond: This hotel has an atmospheric pub with an open fire burning, barmen in kilts, and plenty of travelers by foot and car nursing their drinks at the north end of Loch Lomond. See Chapter 16.
- ✔ **The Horse Shoe**, Glasgow: With its long, horseshoe-shaped bar and central location, this pub is a throwback to the days of so-called Palace Pubs in Scotland. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Mishnish**, Tobermory, Isle of Mull: This pub on the Isle of Mull is a rather big quayside bar for such a diminutive town. See Chapter 19.
- ✔ **The Pot Still**, Glasgow: This pub gets the nod because of its selection of single malts that numbers easily into the hundreds. See Chapter 12.
- ✔ **Prince of Wales**, Aberdeen: With the longest bar in town and a convivial atmosphere, this pub is possibly the best place to grab a pint in Aberdeen. See Chapter 17.
- ✔ **The Shore**, Edinburgh: This pub in Leith fits seamlessly into its seaside port surroundings without resorting to a lot of the usual decorations of cork and netting. It has excellent food, too. See Chapter 11.
- ✔ **Whistlebinkies**, Stirling: The name may make Whistlebinkies sound like a place for kids, but adults will appreciate the comfortable booths and selection of good beers and whiskies. The building dates to 1595 and originally housed Stirling Castle's blacksmith. See Chapter 16.

Chapter 2

Digging Deeper into Scotland

In This Chapter

- ▶ Brushing up (briefly) on Scottish history
 - ▶ Talking (a wee bit) like a Scot
 - ▶ Understanding what's best to eat and drink
 - ▶ Getting a grip on key books and movies about Scotland
-

In this chapter, I give you a concise bit of history to elevate your knowledge of a country whose national origins are among the oldest in Europe. I also show you how to tackle the language. Yes, it's English but not the same English you're used to. I also cover the basics of Scottish food, which is often as misunderstood as the natives' accents. Interested in the Scottish folk music scene? You can find some basic info here, plus check out my suggested list of must-see films about — or at least set in — Scotland and books about the country and its people.

Scotland 101: The Main Events

Geographically, Scotland is tiny compared to the United States or Australia and small by most European standards, too: The country occupies the northern one-third of Great Britain, covering about 78,725 sq. km (30,410 sq. miles), which is a bit bigger than the size of Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire combined — or not quite the size of Austria. It is about 440km (275 miles) long and 248km (154 miles) wide at its widest point. Few parts of Scotland are more than about 64km (40 miles) from the sea and Scotland has more than 750 islands, although only about 10 percent of them are inhabited. Scotland's population has been about 5 million for the past 50 years, so while the country may be small, neither is it very densely populated. A majority of its residents live in the central area in and around Glasgow and Edinburgh, the country's two largest cities, which have a combined population of just over 1 million.

Is that a chip I spy?

Scots are often mistaken to be English by foreigners. Any visitors should avoid that faux pas. Scotland's union with England in 1707 effectively relegated Scotland to little more than an administrative region within Great Britain. Even though Edinburgh — called the Athens of the North — has long been an intellectual center and Glasgow was the “Second City” of the British Empire, many written histories of “Britain” tend to ignore developments in Scotland. Even worse, in some cases, Scotland is treated with condescension, which, in part, explains why Scots sometimes act as if they have terrible chips on their shoulders.

The key to comprehending — and, in part, enjoying — Scotland is to know at least a bit of the country's long and sometimes complex history. For much of its existence, Scotland had full (if disputed) autonomy from England, its larger, more populous, and sometimes pushy neighbor to the south. Although the Scottish and English crowns were joined (1603) and the countries were unified into Great Britain (1707), they remain distinct nations.

Early history

Standing stones, *brochs* (circular stone towers), and burial chambers are the best remaining signs of Scotland's earliest residents, but little is known about these first tribes that were living in parts of the country hundreds, indeed thousands, of years before Romans arrived. When the Romans invaded in about A.D. 82, much of the land was occupied by a people they called the **Picts** (the Painted Ones). Despite some spectacular bloodletting, the Romans never really conquered the indigenous people in Scotland, and the building of Hadrian's Wall (well south of the current border with England) effectively marked the northern limits of Rome's influence. Sometime before A.D. 500, however, the Irish Celtic tribes, called (however confusingly) “Scots,” began to successfully colonize the land, beginning with western coastal areas nearest Northern Ireland, creating the kingdom **Dalriada**.

The Dark and Middle Ages

The Celtic Scots and the Picts were united around 843, while pressures of invasion from the south and Scandinavia helped mold Scotland into a relatively cohesive unit. Under Malcolm II (1005–1034), tribes who occupied the southwest and southeast parts of the Scottish mainland were merged with the Scots and the Picts.

However small, Scotland's terrain is full of lochs (not lakes; see “Braving the Burr: Scottish English” for more local terminology) and mountains, and they divide the territory very effectively. It can take a long time to cover a small distance on foot or even horseback. The country was often preoccupied with the territorial battles of clan allegiances.

Some of Scotland's most legendary heroes lived during the 13th century, particularly **William Wallace** (1270–1305), who drove the English out of Perth and Stirling. Later **Robert the Bruce** (1274–1329) beat English forces at Bannockburn. Crowned at Scone in 1306, he decisively defeated Edward II of England in 1314.

In 1320, after decades of war against English invaders and occupiers, barons loyal to Scottish King Robert the Bruce put their names on a letter to the Pope, the **Declaration of Arbroath**. The letter not only clearly affirmed the country's independence but also addressed notions of freedom and liberty — abstract ideals that most nations didn't contemplate for hundreds of years. In the 15th and 16th centuries, the royal **Stuart** line was established, providing a succession of kings (and one notable queen).

The Reformation

The passions of the Protestant Reformation arrived on an already turbulent Scottish scene in the 16th century. The main protagonist was undoubtedly **John Knox**, a devoted disciple of the Geneva firebrand John Calvin. Knox had a peculiar mixture of piety, conservatism, strict morality, and intellectual independence that many see as a pronounced feature of the Scottish character today.

Knox helped shape the democratic form of the Scottish Church: Primary among his tenets were provisions for a self-governing congregation, including schools. Thus, Knox effectively encouraged literacy.

Knox vehemently opposed the reign of one of Scotland's most famous (and tragic) monarchs: **Mary Queen of Scots** (1542–1587). When Mary eventually took up her rule, she was a Roman Catholic Scot of French upbringing trying to govern a land (about which she knew little) in the throes of the Reformation.

Following some disastrous political and romantic alliances, Mary fled Scotland to be imprisoned in England — her life eventually ended by the executioner's ax on orders of her cousin, Elizabeth I. Ironically, Mary's son — **James VI of Scotland** — succeeded the childless Elizabeth and became king of England (James I) in 1603.

Union and the Jacobites

In the 17th century, Scotland's sovereignty ebbed away as the Scottish royalty spent most of their time in London. In 1689, the final Stuart monarch, the staunchly Catholic James VII (and II of England) fled to France, ending the rule of Scottish kings. In 1707, Scotland had little choice but to merge with England in a constitutionally united Great Britain. This union abolished the Scottish Parliament, and those loyal to the Stuarts (known as the "Jacobites" from the Latin for James) could only vainly attempt to restore the Stuart line of royalty. But despite defeat in 1715, the Jacobites didn't give up.

A few famous Scots

- ✓ Robert Burns (1759–1796): Scotland’s plowman poet, known in many languages and countries
- ✓ Sir Alexander Fleming (1881–1955): Nobel Prize winner who discovered penicillin
- ✓ David Hume (1711–1776): Laid the foundation for intellectual and philosophical pursuits using the concept of secular morality
- ✓ David Livingstone (1813–1873): Medical missionary and African explorer who named Victoria Falls on the Zambezi River
- ✓ Flora Macdonald (1725–1790): Key person in rescuing Bonnie Prince Charlie from British troops after his defeat at Culloden
- ✓ John Muir (1834–1914): Pioneering conservationist who discovered California’s Yosemite Valley and founded the Sierra Club
- ✓ Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832): Romantic novelist and poet who occupies a position of preeminence in English literature
- ✓ Adam Smith (1723–1790): Author of the book *The Wealth of Nations*, which underpins the modern science of economics

Thirty years later, Charles Edward Stuart (the Young Pretender), better known as **Bonnie Prince Charlie**, picked up the gauntlet. He was the central figure in a 1745 revolt that nearly worked. Initially successful, starting from the Highlands, Stuart and his supporters easily reached Derby, only 125 miles from London. The British capital was reportedly in a panic. But Charlie and the Jacobites made an ill-conceived tactical retreat to Scotland, where they were eventually crushed at the **Battle of Culloden**, near Inverness.

The Scottish Enlightenment and economic growth

During the 18th century, rapid progress in the emerging industrial age produced prominent Scots who made broad and sweeping contributions to practically all fields of endeavor. The Scottish Enlightenment brought forward important philosophers, such as **David Hume** and **Adam Smith**. Many industrial inventions that altered the history of the developing world — such as the steam engine — were either invented or perfected by Scottish genius and industry.

Scotland’s union with England and Wales began to reap dividends, and the Scottish economy underwent a radical transformation. As trade with British overseas colonies increased, the port of Glasgow, in particular, flourished. Its merchants grew rich on the tobacco trade with Virginia and the Carolinas.

The infamous **Highland Clearances** (1750–1850) expelled small farmers, or *crofters*, from their ancestral lands to make way for sheep grazing. Similarly, people in the Scottish Lowlands were forcibly moved. Increased industrialization and migration into urban centers changed the national demographic forever, while a massive wave of emigration created a global **Scottish Diaspora**.

Edinburgh's **New Town** was begun in the mid-1700s and today is a World Heritage Site recognized by the United Nations. Later, Victorian builders turned Glasgow into a showcase of 19th-century architecture.

The 20th and 21st centuries

By the 1960s and 1970s, Scotland found that its industrial plants couldn't compete with the emerging industrial powerhouses of Asia and elsewhere. A glimmer of light appeared on the Scottish economic horizon in the 1970s: The discovery of **North Sea oil** lifted the British economy considerably.

In 1997, under a newly elected Labour government in London, the Scottish electorate voted on **devolution** — a fancy word for limited sovereignty. The referendum passed, allowing Scotland to have its own legislature for the first time since the 1707 union with England. The **Scottish Parliament**, centered at Edinburgh, has limited taxing powers and can enact laws regarding health, education, transportation, and public housing — but it has no authority over matters of finance, defense, immigration, and foreign policy.

Taste of Scotland: Not just Haggis or Haddock

For too many years, restaurants in Scotland were known for boiled meats and watery, overcooked vegetables. But in the past 20 years or so, independent restaurants have displayed significant improvements in culinary Scotland, where the best ingredients that the country produces have been married with other styles and influences.

Let's begin with traditional Scottish cooking, which is hearty. Staples include **fish** (such as haddock and often smoked), **potatoes** (called *tattie*), **turnips** (called *neeps*), **oatcakes**, **porridge** **oats**, and local game such as **grouse** or **venison**. And **haggis**, which remains Scotland's national dish — though it's perhaps more symbolic than gustatory.

But modern Scottish cuisine is more diverse and innovative, borrowing from French and even Far Eastern techniques, using local produce such as scallops or lamb. One of Scotland's best-known food exports is **Aberdeen Angus** beef, but equally fine is free-range Scottish **lamb**, known for its tender, tasty meat. Fish, in this land of seas, rivers, and lochs, is a mainstay, from wild halibut to the herring that's transformed into the elegant **kipper** (see the sidebar "Culinary lingo"). Scottish smoked salmon is, of course, a delicacy known around the globe.

Scottish shellfish is world-class, whether oysters and crabs or lobsters and their smaller or delicate relative, **langoustines**, which have become a hit in posh Manhattan restaurants. Ranging from pheasant and grouse to rabbit and venison, game also has a key spot in the Scottish natural larder.

Scotland timeline

- 6000 B.C.: The earliest known residents of Scotland establish settlements on the Argyll peninsulas.
- A.D. 90: Romans abandon the hope of conquering Scotland, retreating to England and the relative safety of Hadrian's Wall.
- 400–600: Celtic Scots from Ireland bring Christianity and establish the Dalriadic kingdom in Western Scotland.
- 1270: William Wallace, key patriot in deflecting the forces of Edward I of England, who wishes to conquer Scotland, is born.
- 1306–1328: Robert the Bruce leads an open rebellion against English hegemony, and England eventually recognizes Scotland's sovereignty.
- 1424: James I is crowned, establishing the Stuart royal line and succession when his son is made king in 1437.
- 1587: Mary, Queen of Scots, is executed on orders of her cousin, Queen Elizabeth.
- 1603: Mary's son, James VI of Scotland, accedes to the throne of England as James I — thus unifying the crown.
- 1707: The union of England and Scotland takes place and the Scottish Parliament is dissolved.
- 1750–1850: Britain experiences rapid industrialization. The Clearances strip many crofters of their farms, creating epic bitterness and forcing new patterns of Scottish migration.
- Late–19th century: Astonishing success in the sciences propels Scotland into the role of arbiter of industrial know-how around the globe.
- Mid–20th century: The decline of traditional industries, especially shipbuilding, painfully redefines the nature of Scottish industry.
- 1970: The discovery of oil deposits in the North Sea brings new vitality to Scotland.
- 1997: Scotland passes a referendum on “devolution” within Great Britain.
- 1999: Elections for the Scottish Parliament are held, and, soon after, Queen Elizabeth opens the first Scottish Parliament in almost 300 years.
- 2004: The controversially expensive and much delayed Parliament building opens in Edinburgh.

Culinary lingo

Here are a few foods that you're likely to come across in Scotland.

- ✔ **black pudding:** savory sausage of oats, blood, and spices
- ✔ **bridie:** meat and potato pie
- ✔ **cullen skink:** creamy smoked haddock chowder
- ✔ **haggis:** plump sausage of finely diced sheep offal (heart, liver, lungs, and so on), oatmeal, and spices
- ✔ **kippers:** smoked herrings
- ✔ **neep:** turnip
- ✔ **tattie:** potato
- ✔ **toastie:** toasted sandwich

Scottish **raspberries** are among the finest in the world. You definitely need to try some of Scotland's excellent **cheeses** as well. One of the best is Criffel, from the south of the country: a creamy and rich semi-soft cheese made from the milk of Shorthorn cows that graze only in organic pastures. Delicious.

At your hotel or B&B, one meal you're sure to enjoy is a Scottish breakfast or the **full fry-up**, as the locals may call it. Expect most or all of the following: **eggs, bacon and sausage, black pudding or haggis, grilled tomatoes and mushrooms, fried bread or potato scones, toast, marmalade or jam, juice, and coffee or tea.** A feast this size can often keep you going right through the afternoon.

These days, the word "eclectic" describes Scotland's metropolitan **restaurant scene**, particularly in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Indian restaurants abound, as do French, Italian, and Thai options. In the rural areas, the selection can be hit or miss, though stick to my recommendations and you should do just fine. Scots today can eat better than ever before, although much of population still seems to subsist on take-away fish and chips or, as the locals prefer to call them, **fish suppers**.

Braving the Burr: Scottish English

Yes, English is spoken in Scotland, but between the local expressions, heavy accents, and thick burr (trilling of the letter "r"), it can occasionally sound like a foreign language. Don't worry; at times even Scots from one region don't know what someone from another area is saying.

The standard joke about England and Scotland is “two countries divided by a common language.” Differences of Scottish English include: r’s being rolled, “ch” taking a hard throaty sound, and the “g” often being dropped in words ending in “ing.”

Gaelic and Scots

In early history, the prevailing tongue across western and northern Scotland was a Celtic language, **Gaelic**. Northumbrian English was introduced from the south, and the language known as Lowland Scottish, or **Scots**, then developed; Scots borrowed from Gaelic, Scandinavian dialects, Dutch, and French.

After the royal court moved to England in 1603, Scottish people who didn’t still speak Gaelic mostly spoke a vernacular English, the language of their beloved Bible. Meanwhile, the Scots language was looked upon as a rather awkward, coarse tongue. In the 18th century, English also became the language of university instruction. By the end of the 20th century, TV and radio had begun to even out some of the more pronounced burrs and lilt of the Scottish accent. However, the dialect and speech patterns of the people in Scotland remain rich.

Gaelic, while not widely spoken, is certainly far from dead — particularly in places like the Western Isles, where at least 60 percent of the population still speaks Gaelic. Even public-affairs TV in Scotland airs a few programs in the language (with subtitles for those of us completely befuddled by Gaelic).



In Glasgow, Glaswegians (which the residents are called) tend to be very friendly toward tourists. There’s no need to feel intimidated by their heavy accents and colorful local expressions. Be patient and ask those you don’t understand to repeat themselves or to slow down. And if someone says to you, “Hi, how ye dae’in?” Reply with, “I canna complain.” You just may be mistaken for a local — for a minute, anyway.

To save you from having to maintain one of those polite but puzzled smiles on your face while talking to locals, review this handy glossary of some common words from both Gaelic and Scots as well as some standard British English substitutions for North American English.

auld	old	cheers	thanks
aye	yes	dinnae	don’t or didn’t
bonnie	pretty	glen	valley
boot	car trunk	hen	woman
burn	creek	howff	meeting place or pub
cairn	stone landmark	ken	know or known
ceilidh	social dance	lad	boy

lassie	girl	stramash	disturbance
lift	elevator	stushie	fuss
loch	freshwater lake or large sea inlet	take-away	to-go
pavement	sidewalk	till	cash register
petrol	gasoline	tins	canned goods
messages	groceries or the shopping	torch	flashlight
quid	pound sterling	wee	little

Pub Life in Scotland

Much socializing in Scotland centers on the local pub. The pub's more than a watering hole. It can be the gathering place for an entire community, the key place where the locals go to share news and exchange gossip. At certain pubs, pickup sessions of traditional and folk music are common.

Even if you're not a big drinker, going out for a pint of lager, a dram of whisky, or even just a bite to eat at a Scottish *howff* can be a memorable part of your trip, since you're almost guaranteed to meet real Scots.



Don't tip the bar staff: You'll immediately be sussed out as an outsider, and it won't get you a free round of drinks for your troubles, either. On the issue of rounds, it's quite common for individuals in groups to buy a round during any session of drinking. You shouldn't pass on your turn — it's considered bad manners.

Join 'em for a pint of beer

The most widely available, mass produced Scottish beers are Tennents lager and McEwens ale, but from region to region, you may find a number of local breweries, making anything from light-colored lagers to dark ales. Among them, Deuchars IPA and Orkney's Dark Island are standouts. The most popular stout remains Guinness, from neighboring Ireland, while the potent Stella Artois, from the Continent, is the best-selling premium lager.



Traditionally, the strength of Scottish ale (as distinct from lager) is labeled by shillings (for example, Belhaven 80/-). The higher the number, the stronger the beer. Today, with cask-conditioned ales, the bar can tell you the alcohol content, ABV: four is standard, six is strong.



Remember, practically all beer in Scotland has higher alcohol content than any sold in North America. And that even goes for familiar American brands such as Budweiser. So, take it easy.

A bit of whisky terminology

Scotland's home to a host of whisky experts, and in case you meet some, here are a few helpful terms to keep in mind.

- ✔ **dram:** A shot of spirits (usually whisky), roughly 35 milliliters or about an ounce
- ✔ **neat:** Whisky served without ice or water
- ✔ **nip:** A whisky chaser to a pint of beer
- ✔ **usige beatha** (ooshka bay): Water of life; the Gaelic for the word whisky

Whisky galore

If you're in Scotland (or almost anywhere in Europe), you don't need to identify it as **Scotch whisky**. Most connoisseurs prefer varieties of single malt Scotch, the taste of which depends largely on where it's distilled: sweet Lowland, peaty Island, or smooth and balanced Highland. Single malts are seen as sipping whiskies and should never be served with ice or diluted with any thing other than a few drops of tap water. If you want a cocktail made with whisky, expect it to be a well-known blend, such as Famous Grouse or Bell's, and not single malt, such as Glemorangie or Laphroaig. If you want a North American bourbon, rye, or sour-mash whiskey, you need to name the brand: for example, Jack Daniels or Makers Mark.



If you're ordering whisky, simply ask for a "wee dram" and the bartender may think you've been drinking in Scotland your whole life. Again, the established way to drink the spirit is neat — that is, nothing added. But some say a few drops of tap water bring out the aroma and flavor.



Other cocktail concoctions

If you order a mixed drink (such as a gin and tonic), don't be surprised if the barkeep hands you a glass with a little ice and the alcohol, and, to the side, a small bottle of mixer. That's just how it's done. Also, the expression "fresh orange" usually means bottled orange juice. Don't ask me why.

Tuning Your Ear to Scottish Music

Scottish music is considerably more than "Scotland the Brave" played on bagpipes, although you may well hear that during your stay as well.

The Gaelic-influenced songs and sounds of the Hebridean Islands and the Highlands have been around for centuries. The fiddle, accordion, flute, and Celtic drum are all part of the musical tradition. The best

chance to hear the real deal is at a jam session in a pub or at a more formal (but still fun) social dance called a *ceilidh* (pronounced *kay-lee*). Bagpipes and the rousing, indeed ear-shattering, sounds they can create are entrenched in the national identity and culture of Scotland.

Every summer, Glasgow hosts an international piping competition that draws thousands of pipers (many of whom also perform as part of Edinburgh's Military Tattoo, a show featuring music, marching, and military exercises). But a lone piper may pop up anytime, anywhere. Once on a misty late-summer's day at the Highland Monument to Bonnie Prince Charlie in Glenfinnan, one suddenly popped up on a nearby hillside and began playing. No kidding.

Visiting Golf's Hallowed Ground

Golf may have originated in mainland Europe (or China, according to some accounts), but Scotland at least gets the full credit for developing the sport and codifying its rules. Golf has been played here for more than 500 years. In places such as eastern Fife or North Ayrshire, you're as likely to see someone golfing around a park as you are to see kids playing basketball in a Los Angeles playground.

If you need a caddy, don't be surprised if he isn't young — the average age of a golf caddy here is about 50. Don't expect courses to provide motorized carts (although they're popping up more and more). Finally, please *do not* play a championship course if you're a beginner or even an intermediate.

Visitors (men and women) can play on all public and most private-members courses (Chapter 21 lists ten of the best). But at the exclusive clubs, members receive priority for tee times. Many courses have dress codes, so play it safe and wear a shirt with a collar as well as proper golf shoes if you're heading to the links.

Exploring Scotland's Great Outdoors

Scotland has long had world-class fishing, while its sailing, hill-walking and hiking are first rate, too. If you're an angler, Scotland doesn't require a national license to fish. Instead, you buy permits locally at bait and tackle shops or request permission from landowners. Local tourism offices can provide you with more information.

The hiking in Scotland can take you through wooded glens, beach dunes, or windswept mountains.



If you're walking in the Highlands, you must take all the precautions that you would if you were climbing in much higher Alpine conditions. The weather can change dramatically in a short period of time.

As for the wildlife, in the right seasons, the marshes of Scotland teem with migratory birds, the seas offer whale-watching, and the Highlands boast eagle-nesting sights. This side of the tourism business is just beginning to catch on, as is “Green Tourism.”

Background Check: Recommended Movies and Books

If you're looking to find out more about Scotland than just what's in this book, you have a variety of films and books at your disposal. The following sections list some suggestions.

Films

The ten films listed below are among the best and most popular made about Scotland and its people.

- ✓ ***Braveheart*** (1995): This movie — hardly historically accurate but moving nonetheless — probably did more to stir overseas interest in Scotland than any promotional campaign ever cooked up by the tourist board. Mel Gibson stars as the 13th-century patriot William Wallace in this sweeping Academy Award-winning epic.
- ✓ ***Gregory's Girl*** (1981): A simple comedy about an awkward high school student (played by gawky John Gordon-Sinclair) in a modern (and mostly hideous) 20th-century New Town near Glasgow. Quirky but loveable.
- ✓ ***I Know Where I'm Going!*** (1945): This is a charming, funny WWII-era black and white film from the great British team of Powell and Pressburger. It takes a young English fiancée on a suspenseful, romantic adventure to the Isle of Mull.
- ✓ ***Local Hero*** (1983): In this sweetly eclectic comedy, villagers on a gorgeous stretch of Scottish coastline (filmed near Mallaig) expect to cash in big time because of Texan oil-industry interest. But events conspire against greed.
- ✓ ***My Name is Joe*** (1998): Although not entirely lacking humor and romance, this film paints a rather grim, if accurate, picture of Glaswegians struggling with their addictions and inner demons.
- ✓ ***Orphans*** (1997): Actor Peter Mullan (star of *My Name is Joe*) wrote and directed this outlandish and very, very dark comedy with lots of foul language about the day the Flynn family in Glasgow tried to bury their recently deceased mother.
- ✓ ***The 39 Steps*** (1935): Director Alfred Hitchcock and scriptwriter Charles Bennett almost completely reset John Buchan's tale of spies and intrigue. Instead of sticking to the Borders, the film transports the hero to the Highlands. Good idea.

- ✔ ***Trainspotting*** (1996): Based on one of the most popular contemporary books by Scottish author Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* is the gritty and often hilarious account of a group of unrepentant drug-addled characters in Edinburgh in the 1980s.
- ✔ ***Whisky Galore!*** (1949): Retitled *Tight Little Island* in America, this classic movie is based on a true story. The residents of a small Scottish isle get an intoxicating windfall when a ship carrying 50,000 cases of whisky crashes off their coast during WWII.
- ✔ ***The Wicker Man*** (1973): A cult classic of cinema about a strange New Age community on a picturesque Scottish island — and the secrets they keep from a mainland constable.

Books

There are too many books about Scotland to mention, so I've chosen to highlight my favorites in three main categories: biography, fiction, and history.

Biography

- ✔ ***Bonnie Prince Charlie*** by Fitzroy Maclean (Canongate, 1989) tells the tale of one of the most romantic royal characters in Scottish history.
- ✔ ***The Life of Robert Burns*** by Catherine Carswell (Canongate Classics, 1998) is the groundbreaking look at the life of Scotland's national poet. First published in the 1930s, Carswell's assessment was so frank — particularly regarding the poet's romantic and sexual liaisons — that many took offense.
- ✔ ***Robert Louis Stevenson: A Biography*** by Claire Harman (Harper-Collins, 2005) follows the trail of the frail adventurer and world-famous author, from his Edinburgh birthplace to Europe and finally his last home in the South Pacific.
- ✔ ***The Sound of Sleat: A Painter's Life*** by Jon Schueler (Picador, 1999) is a remarkable autobiography by American-born abstract impressionist Schueler, who found his muse in the land and especially the sky of Scotland. He even made a second home near the Western Highland port of Mallaig.

Fiction

- ✔ ***The Heart of Midlothian*** by Sir Walter Scott (Penguin Classics) was declared a masterpiece in 1818 and remains Scott's seminal piece of fiction, influencing the later works of authors such as Balzac, Hawthorne, and Dickens.
- ✔ ***Kidnapped*** by Robert Louis Stevenson (Penguin Classics) follows the adventures of young David Balfour after he's spirited out of Edinburgh and ends up on the wrong side of the law in the Western

Highlands. The story is as entertaining today as it was upon publication in 1886.

- ✓ ***Lanark: A Life in Four Books*** by Alasdair Gray (Pub Group West, 2003) is perhaps the most important contemporary novel to be published in Scotland in the last 100 years. Gray is an eccentric of the first order, but this work of fiction (first published in 1981 and illustrated by the author, too), despite some fantastical detours, gets to the core of urban Scotland.
- ✓ ***The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*** by Muriel Spark (Perennial Classics, 1999) and ***Trainspotting*** by Irvine Welsh (W. W. Norton & Company, 1996) are both better known for their cinematic adaptations, but in their own very different ways, both novels manage to capture elements of Edinburgh life.

History

- ✓ ***Scotland: A New History*** by Michael Lynch (Pimlico, 1992) is a good take on Scottish history from ancient times up to the 1990s.
- ✓ ***The Scottish Enlightenment: The Scot's Invention of the Modern World*** by American historian Arthur Herman (Crown, 2001) offers a clear and extremely readable explanation of the impact that Scottish thinkers had on the world.
- ✓ ***The Scottish Nation: 1700–2000*** by academic Tom Devine (Penguin, 2001) is a good, recently published historical overview of Scotland. Devine is one of the few historians to examine how people were driven from the Scottish Lowlands, as well as more famous and lamentable clearances from the Highlands.
- ✓ ***Stone Voices: The Search for Scotland*** by Neal Ascherson (Hill & Wang, 2003) is a quest for the national character of Scotland. In a series of anecdotes and reflections, journalist Ascherson helps readers understand the worthy sentiments behind Scottish independence and begins to redress the imbalance of Scottish histories so often written by the English.

Chapter 3

Deciding Where and When to Go

In This Chapter

- ▶ Looking at Scotland's terrain, main cities, and major regions
 - ▶ Evaluating when to go, season by season
 - ▶ Anticipating Scotland's changeable weather
 - ▶ Planning for festivals and events
-

The next time you meet people who've recently been to Scotland, ask them what the place is like, and they may well give you a wistful, far-away look. That's because the region has the potential for magic. With the vitality and culture of Edinburgh and Glasgow, the Highlands' sometimes breathtakingly raw scenery, and some of the friendliest English-speaking people in the world, Scotland is bound to leave fond memories. From urban chic to ancient castles, from misty glens to craggy coastlines, Scotland is a dream (as well as dreamy) destination.

The success of a Scottish vacation can depend on where and when you go, however. This chapter starts with a geographic breakdown of the country, giving you a better idea of what the various regions have to offer and how long you may want to stay in each spot — especially given your particular interests and travel budget. Good planning ensures that certain factors — short winter days, too many tourists, being stuck in one place for too long, or not giving yourself enough time to see the big attractions — don't distract from a great trip.

This chapter also has advice and insight on when to travel — from details about the weather to a calendar of events — so that you can more easily determine the best way to spend your Scottish vacation.

Going Everywhere You Want to Be

The first thing to understand about Scotland is this: It may be a small country, but it's one divided by mountains, rivers, and lochs, especially up north. Most roads don't travel in straight lines. So, although the

mileage may seem short, your travels across the country can — and possibly will — take longer than expected. But slow down and enjoy the ride.

The country's biggest topographical feature is the Highland. Its boundary runs roughly diagonally across the country, from the southwest to the northeast. If you draw a straight line, west to east (say from the Isle of Mull to the River Tay), you will go from rocky islands and distinctive mountain terrain to gentle moorland and rolling hills of the upper Lowlands.

Finally, any division of Scotland is bound to be a bit arbitrary: There's often no clean line to divide one region from another, but I've done my very best to present the regions accurately and logically. But sometimes that means that my geographic breakdown of the country doesn't exactly match that done by the Scottish tourist board. For example, I put the Isle of Mull with the other islands of the Hebrides (in Chapter 19), while the Scottish Tourist Board lumps it into a broad region stretching across the country. I will highlight where there are similar discrepancies and possible confusion.



For more information on the country's cities and regions, check out Part III, which discusses Scotland's two major cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow; Part IV has the lowdown on major regions in Scotland. The mainland areas are introduced from south to north, starting with the Borders and southwest regions and finishing with the Highlands. Finally come the chapters on Scotland's western and northern islands.

Edinburgh and Glasgow

Let's face it: Many and, possibly, most visitors to Scotland never get any farther than the country's two principal cities. And that's okay. They're excellent destinations in their own right, and from them travelers can take side trips to experience Scotland's other charms (see Chapter 13).

Although only a 50-minute train ride apart, **Edinburgh** (see Chapter 11) and **Glasgow** (see Chapter 12) are exceptionally different but equally fascinating and culturally rich. Think of them as the McCartney and Lennon of Scotland, making their own unique contributions and creating a dynamic duo.

Edinburgh (pronounced *eddin-burra*, with a short “e” as in “Edward”) is the capital of Scotland. It has a historic Old Town as well as a so-called New Town that is actually slightly older than the United States! As the second most popular tourist destination in the U.K. (London's the first), Edinburgh and its charms are internationally recognized, as is the city's annual summer Festival. In addition, it boasts a striking cityscape — a castle on a hill being just one of several noteworthy landmarks — as well as the royal Palace of Holyroodhouse.

Glasgow (pronounced *glazz-go*) is older than Edinburgh but appears more modern these days. Traditionally viewed as a working-class industrial metropolis, Glasgow thrived as the “Second City” of the British Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries, and today it offers the best concentration of Victorian architecture in the U.K. After an economic decline in the 20th century and a reputation (deserving or not) of crime, grime, and gangsters, Glasgow emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as the cultural hot spot of Scotland, boasting leading artists and best-selling indie rock bands.

Southern Scotland

The southernmost regions of Scotland are 1) the **Borders**, aptly named because it borders Northumberland in northern England, and 2) **Dumfries** and **Galloway**, which stretch southwest along the Solway Firth (which clearly divides England and Scotland) to the Mull of Galloway. These regions certainly have their own allure and attractions, whether Abbotsford, the Sir Walter Scott’s mansion, or the Logan Botanic Gardens, with its almost tropical plants. The town of Dumfries (*dum-freece*) was the final home of the national poet Robert Burns, and around the village of Melrose, the ruins of several ancient abbeys commissioned by King David I in the 12th century can be found. If you have time for an extended stay, both regions merit a day or two of exploring. Alternatively, they can be side-trips from either Edinburgh or Glasgow. (See Chapter 14 for more information on both the Borders and Dumfries and Galloway.)

Ayrshire and Argyll

Ayrshire (*air-shyer*) is the long and primarily coastal region southwest of Glasgow, best known for “Burns Country,” where most of the landmarks and attractions associated with the great plowman poet are located. But Ayrshire is also home to some of the best links-style golf courses in Scotland and perhaps the world. **Argyll** (*ar-guille*) encompasses the central West Coast of Scotland, its remote peninsulas, and the southernmost islands, such as **Gigha** or **Islay**, where much of the country’s famous whisky is made. This is the heart of the ancient Kingdom of Dalriada, where the first Celtic people settled in the 5th century and also a region where Norse colonies were established until the 13th century.

If you have time, the scenic **Kintyre Peninsula** and the isle of **Arran** (sometimes described as Scotland in miniature) can be worth including, as well as the port of **Oban** (*oh-bin*), the gateway to the Hebrides, and **Inveraray** on the shores of Loch Fyne. But even if you don’t have time to explore the region fully, you would be remiss to skip places such as **Culzean Castle**, which is close enough to make a good day trip from Glasgow. (See Chapter 15 for more information on both Ayrshire and Argyll.)

Glossary of place names

Picture this: You're passing through a quaint Highland town with an even quainter name, such as Altnacraig or Invercharan. Wonder what it means? Many towns incorporate Gaelic words for geographical and topographical features. Use this glossary to mix and match parts of names to get closer to their meanings.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| ✓ alt: stream | ✓ firth: estuary or long narrow bay |
| ✓ ben: mountain | ✓ glen: valley |
| ✓ brae: hill | ✓ inver: river mouth |
| ✓ craig: rock | ✓ loch: fresh-water lake or large salt-water inlet |
| ✓ drum: ridge | ✓ mor: great |
| ✓ dun: hill fort | ✓ ness: cape |
| ✓ eilean: island | |

Fife and the Trossachs

North of Edinburgh, across the Firth of Forth, is the ancient Kingdom of **Fife**; moving west across the country takes in the historic city of **Stirling** and the **Trossach** mountains — rather like the Highlands only smaller, less dramatic, and more wooded. Fife is a reasonably compact area and is perhaps best known for the town of **St. Andrews**. Golfers make the pilgrimage here from all over the world, but it is also a pretty great little east coast college town with Scotland's first university (and third oldest in the U.K.). Another golf mecca lies inland: the famous Gleneagles resort with its first-class hotel and perhaps the best restaurant in Scotland, Andrew Fairlie at Gleneagles.

History buffs will enjoy a visit to the town of Stirling, with its castle, Old Town wall, and picturesque monument to William Wallace (of *Braveheart* fame). The **Trossachs** are the old stomping grounds of the legendary Rob Roy and provided the setting for Walter Scott's romantic poetry. Like some landmarks in Ayrshire, highlights of Fife, Stirling, and the Trossachs — including **Loch Lomond** — can be covered in day trips from Edinburgh and Glasgow. (All of this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 16.)

Tayside and Northeast Scotland

North of Fife and east of the Highlands are the **River Tay** and the city of **Dundee**. Farther north are the **Grampian Mountains**, **Royal Deeside** (home of the monarchy's retreat at Balmoral castle), and the now oil-rich city of **Aberdeen**. I have put them all together in my chapter on

Tayside and the **Northeast**. The region offers castles, whisky distilleries, and handsome countryside. (For details on this area, flip to Chapter 17.)

The Highlands

The Scottish **Highlands** represent a huge and justifiable tourist draw. For better or worse, however, the area's best-known attraction is still a mythical creature swimming in the waters of **Loch Ness**. Yes, the loch is a big, dark, and brooding body of water. But it's not the best thing about the Highlands. You're not likely to see any monster and may feel that the place has elements of a tourist trap, so see it if you must, but then move on. The unofficial capital of the Highlands, **Inverness**, although not particularly exciting, provides a good jumping off spot for exploring the Black Isle or other parts of the Highlands nearby.

The craggy **Western Highlands** are perhaps the proverbial soul of Scotland. Although steeped in proud lore and sad tragedy, from the Jacobite uprising to the massacre of **Glencoe**, the scenery is what will leave an indelible mark on your memory. The mountains are ancient and rise from the sea with utter majesty; the beach sands on the "Road to the Isles" west of Fort William near Mallaig are brilliantly white and unspoiled. Villages such as **Plockton** look like picture postcards, set near the sea in the shadow of nearby peaks. North of the port of **Ullapool**, the country is beautifully desolate and sparsely populated, and **Cape Wrath** feels like the end of the earth. (The Highlands are discussed at length in Chapter 18.)

The Hebridean Islands

If you have time to conquer part of the Highlands, you should also make a point to visit at least one of the country's many, many islands. The **Hebrides** (pronounced *heb-rid-eez*) encircle the western and northwestern coasts of Scotland. The archipelago includes a few large inhabited islands and several smaller ones (see Chapter 19). The **Isle of Skye** is the biggest, most accessible, and *arguably* the most scenic.

Worth the ferry trips — and possibly an overnight stay or two — are other islands, such as **Mull** and its little sister **Iona**, an ancient landmark of Celtic Christianity in Scotland. Feeling a little more adventurous? Head to the wind-swept Outer Hebrides, such as **Lewis** or **Uist**. Day-trippers may just go to **Eigg** from the tiny port village of **Arisaig**. (Turn to Chapter 19 for more details on the Hebrides.)

Shetland and Orkney islands

The far northern island chains of **Shetland** and **Orkney** are remote and rural. Unless you have the time and inclination, they may not be worth the trouble to visit. On the other hand, they feature some unparalleled archeological sites dating to prehistory, while their very remoteness makes them a welcome reprieve from the more trodden tourist trail. (They're discussed briefly in Chapter 20.)



Not quite ready for prime time

This book doesn't cover every part of Scotland. The northernmost areas of the mainland, and towns such as Tongue, Wick, and Scrabster, aren't addressed at all. My apologies for that, especially to any surfers among the readership: The north coast is a mecca for those seeking new breakers. Most of the Scottish islands are uninhabited, and only 60 are larger than about 3 square miles. I don't have space to deal with isles such as Jura or Tiree in any detail. Sorry. I've also kept the chapter on Shetland and Orkney concise, and don't go into too many specifics about Aberdeenshire and Moray. I intend no offense but generally feel that these are destinations for long-term visitors — or for travelers with specific interests. If you want to visit an uninhabited island or spend time in a location not adequately dealt with in *Scotland For Dummies*, please visit a tourist information center.

Scheduling Your Time

Many visitors are tempted to try and see everything — especially the curious and ambitious ones. But in the frantic effort to “do it all,” they can miss as much as they see. Plus, they'll just be exhausted at the end of it all.

This book covers most of the country and gives you itineraries that take you from one side of Scotland to the other and back again. But if your time is limited, you should consider simply staying in Edinburgh and Glasgow, which have plenty to offer, and using them as bases for any excursions. Chapter 13 and the first chapters of Part IV are full of attractions within striking distance of the region's two biggest cities.

Of course, the Highlands are spectacular. But if you don't fancy the idea of sleeping in a different bed every night, find a location that offers a variety of sights to see and things to do in the vicinity of other places you want to visit. For example, from the pretty seaside village of Arisaig, you can easily get to Skye, see Glenfinnan and Fort William to the east, or go south to Movern and Ardnamurchan.

If you don't see it all in one go, then you'll just have to plan a return trip — or use this book to vicariously experience the bits you missed.

Mild weather thanks to the Gulf Stream

No matter what time of year you choose to visit Scotland, chances are slim that you'll make it back home without some Scottish raindrops falling on your head. Always have a waterproof coat handy.

Certain places in Scotland get more rain than others. For example, the Isle of Mull in the west is notoriously prone to precipitation, while the Moray coast in the northeast is probably the most consistently sunny spot.

As far as temperature goes, Scotland is reasonably cool year-round (see Table 3-1). However, climate change is causing average temperatures to rise. While a few summer weeks can see temperatures rise above 80°F, it is usually in the 60s°F. In the colder months, there is not much risk of getting frostbite, except on mountaintops and during occasional cold snaps.

Table 3-1 Average Monthly Temperatures in Scotland

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
°F	33–42	34–43	35–48	39–52	42–58	49–63	52–67	51–67	47–61	42–55	35–48	34–43
°C	1–6	2–7	3–8	4–12	6–14	9–18	12–20	11–20	8–17	6–13	3–8	2–7

Here comes the sun

The amount of daylight varies greatly in Scotland's northern latitudes. The price paid for long, languid days during the summer is short, dark ones during winter. If you depend upon natural light to see the sights that you're most interested in, visiting from May through September allows you to take advantage of the longer days.

Before you leave home, get up-to-date weather forecasts on the Internet. The Web site www.meteo.gov.uk/weather/europe/uk/swscotland.html — run by the U.K. Meteorological Office — is a good source for Scottish weather forecasts and information.

Revealing the Secrets of the Seasons

You've probably heard about Scottish weather. The Scots like to joke about getting "four seasons in one day." But weather isn't the only consideration to keep in mind when planning your trip to Scotland. The high season brings crowds, and the low season carries the possibility of some attractions and hotels being closed. No matter when you travel to Scotland, however, each season boasts certain advantages and drawbacks, which I share in this section.

Summer

The most popular and probably the best time to tour Scotland is summer, when the country is geared to receive tourists and the weather's usually (though not always) warmer than other times of the year. For the unsure traveler, traveling in the summer is your best bet; you have lots of company and plenty of leads to follow.

The upside

In the summer, all attractions, hotels, and restaurants — no matter how remote — are open for visitors and business. All tourist information

centers are open, too — some seven days a week and well into the evening hours.

Summer's the busiest tourist season, but crowds aren't always a bad thing. Streets teeming with people may actually enhance your trip. Scotland's a friendly place, so throwing a ton of visitors into the mix can create a spirited atmosphere. Plus, the Edinburgh Festival in August is quite possibly the biggest annual cultural event in all of Europe.

The days are long during this time of year. In fact, if you're in the far north, the sun never really appears to set. Even down in Edinburgh, sunlight lasts well into the evening, and on the west coast, you can discern a glimmer of fading light as late as 11 p.m. Of course, the sun rises about 4:30 in the morning, too.

The weather? Well, if you've got your heart set on fine and dry weather; if you're allergic (either physically or emotionally) to drizzle, fog, or rain; or if it's your tan you want to work on, then don't go to Scotland. The place is rarely balmy. Instead, summer conditions can be comfortably warm and breezy during the day and drop to light-sweater temperature at night. You may get caught in some rain, especially on the islands, in June, July, or August.

The downside

During the summer, tourists can overwhelm many popular attractions and towns. The influx of visitors, especially in Edinburgh from late July to early September, may mean that hotels don't have any available rooms. Plus, normally quiet villages such as Pitlochry or Plockton start to resemble Fifth Avenue, with crowds pouring off tour buses. If you're craving a break from the masses, summer may not be the time to come to Scotland, unless you plan to travel to the country's very extremities.

Seasonal rates are another downside to visiting in the summer: Accommodations can be significantly more expensive in summer than in other seasons.

For many travelers, the worst thing about summer in the Western Highlands and islands are the *midges* — blood-sucking no-see-um bugs that can drive you to serious distraction and leave a plethora of tiny but extremely itchy bites on your body. Make sure you have netting and some effective bug spray if you're coming to these parts in the summer.



Summers on the western islands can be quite rainy because they take the brunt of the prevailing trade winds. The best times to visit this region are usually May or September, when dry periods are more prevalent, although it may be a tad cooler.

Fall

Fall, which Scots know only as autumn, is probably the most underrated time to visit Scotland. The weather can be quite good, with a strong

possibility of sunny, dry stretches. Even when it's stormy, the weather fronts often move through quickly. The prospect of mild days without too much rain and daylight extending to at least 8 p.m. (until the clocks go back) is great for marathon sightseeing.

The upside

Beginning in mid-September, the high season has run its course and prices begin to fall. Everything is less crowded. The pubs and restaurants "belong" to the locals again as they reclaim their turf from the tourist hordes. In autumn, you're more likely to find bars filled with locals rather than tourists.

Days are still reasonably long, and if you're traveling in the West, the midges usually get knocked back by the first cool nights (what a relief). In rural areas, trees may begin to change color towards the end of fall, and with the sun lower in the sky, the natural light can be magical.

The downside

A few of the more seasonal and far flung attractions, as well as some tourist offices, start to shut down or at least restrict their hours in the fall. Winterlike weather can set in quickly at the end of autumn.



Autumn may mean fewer tourists, but plenty of people still travel this time of year. Autumn nights in Scotland can start to be surprisingly cool, and some of the guesthouses don't have central heating, so you may end up buried in blankets or layering more clothes over your pajamas. In the Highlands, you may even experience a light frost or snow flurry.

Winter

Conditions are less than ideal, but Scottish winters are quite a bit less severe than you may assume. Anyone visiting from Iowa or Illinois will find them quite mild, in fact. From November through March, the main cities function as normal, and golf along the southwest coast remains a lure. Days can be very short, however, and tourist attractions as well as some inns in the countryside will be closed until springtime.

The upside

Prices are at their lowest all across the country in the winter, and you're likely to find the cheapest airfares of the year. Because it's the least popular time to travel, more special rates and package deals are offered.



The exceptions to winter travel deals are the weeks of Christmas and New Year's, when rates pop up to equal those of the high summer season.

If you dislike crowds, winter's the best time for you to visit Scotland. It's also a good time to visit museums, galleries, and year-round attractions. And the landscape is almost as beautiful as during the full swing of summer.

For snowboarding and skiing, a few resorts offer adequate facilities in the Highlands. If golf is your bag, then head for the links courses in Ayrshire. They're sandy and drain well, allowing play through the winter.

The downside

The winter weather can be *driech* (Scottish slang for gloomy and wet). It's predictably cold, rainy, and windy from January through March. The temperature rarely dips to extreme lows and snowfalls aren't as heavy as they used to be, but blizzards can still hit. The sun usually doesn't rise until 9:30 a.m., and then it's gone by 4 p.m.

Attractions can be shuttered every winter, and lots of places have shorter hours during the winter months. Many rural hotels, B&Bs, and restaurants close for the season as well. This reduced activity is all because tourism slows to a crawl. You still can find plenty of things to do, but your tour will offer fewer highlights than the one you get in the other seasons.

Spring

Spring can be slow to start in Scotland, and even in May, the weather can still feel rather wintry at times. But the days quickly lengthen, and some people consider this to be the ideal time to travel in Scotland.

The upside

Warmer temperatures and longer days combine to make for wonderful springtime conditions for touring the countryside. The ground is carpeted in spring greenery, and the plants are beginning their displays (the rhododendrons, in particular, are breathtaking). Rain showers are often isolated and last only part of the day.

By the time spring rolls around, tourist industry folks have had their breaks and are ready to resume playing host. Country inns and travel information offices reopen, but because the high season hasn't hit yet, crowds are manageable.

The downside

Scotland can remain pretty rainy from March through June, and a snow flurry or two isn't unusual in March or April. Nights remain cool even if days are warming up, so packing for the weather can be a chore.

Easter traditionally marks the beginning of the high season, so prices start to go up at that point. But these days, foreign visitors start flooding in (especially to Edinburgh) before that magic date, so it looks as if the tourist season is stretching beyond its normal boundaries.

Perusing a Calendar of Events

Scotland certainly has its share of annual festivals and special events throughout the year, with the centerpiece being August's Edinburgh Festival — which is really several festivals in one. Highland games are held in most regions from summer to early autumn. Log on to www.visitscotland.com for information on the events highlighted below and more.

January

The **Loony Dook** is one of those crazy New Year's Day events where people jump into the Firth of Forth at South Queensferry, west of Edinburgh. Wetsuits are forbidden, although many don silly costumes (☎ 0131-331-2555). January 1.

The best attended annual festival in Glasgow and the largest of its kind in the world, **Celtic Connections** kicks off the year every January. The two main venues for performances are the Royal Concert Hall, which produces the event, and the recently renovated City Halls. Performers include traditional acts of folk music and dance as well as contemporary artists. For details, call Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, Sauchiehall Street (☎ 0141-353-8080; www.celticconnections.com). Mid-January to the end of January.

On **Burns Night**, the anniversary of poet Robert Burns's birth, special suppers are held across the country — and particularly in Ayrshire. It's an evening of storytelling, whisky, and traditional Scottish dishes, such as haggis. January 25.

In Shetland's capital, Lerwick, **Up Helly Aa** is a fire festival with a torch-lit parade that celebrates the Nordic and Viking influences in this remote part of Scotland. For details, call the local tourist board (☎ 08701-999-440). January 31.

February

New Territories is Glasgow's annual international festival of cutting-edge performance art, dance, and drama. Log on to www.newmoves.co.uk for more details. Early February to mid-March.

For the better part of two weeks, the **Mountain Film Festival** brings international cinema devoted to the great outdoors to the town of Fort William in the Western Highlands. The event also includes lectures and workshops (☎ 01397-700-001; www.mountainfilmfestival.co.uk). Mid-February to early March.

In the Highlands' capital, the annual **Inverness Music Festival** is a competition of amateur artists from across the country, including solo singers, choirs, and ensembles of musical instrument players. There are also classes conducted throughout the festival. For details, contact the

Festival Office (☎ **01463-716-616**; www.invernessmusicfestival.org). Mid-February to early March.

March

In Lanark, south of Glasgow, the **Whuppity Scourie Festival** aims to beat the winter blahs. The town sponsors dancing, singing, music, and storytelling activities. March 1.

The **Glasgow Comedy Festival** was inaugurated in 2003, bringing a diverse range of funny men and women to stages around the city. Call ☎ **0141-552-2070**. Mid-March to the end of the month.

A showcase of traditional Scottish arts — whether song, storytelling, or dance — is featured at the **Ceilidh Culture** in Edinburgh. Events are held in 30 venues across the city. For details contact ☎ **0131-228-1155**. Late March to mid-April.

April

For two weeks during the **Edinburgh International Science Festival**, adults and kids can enjoy some 250 shows, workshops, exhibitions, and lectures that are lots of fun and quite interesting. For details, call ☎ **0131-557-5588** or visit www.sciencefestival.co.uk. Early April.

Under a big-top tent in Glasgow's George Square, art galleries from across the U.K. set up stalls and sell the work of artists they represent during the **Glasgow Art Fair** on the first weekend in April. That four-day event is followed by a more contemporary art festival, **Glasgow International**, with exhibits at a host of local galleries. Go to www.glasgowinternational.org for details. Last two weeks of April.

The **Melrose Sevens**, held in Melrose, south of Edinburgh, is a world-famous international rugby event that features seven high-octane players on each side. Call ☎ **01896-822-993** or log on to www.melroserugby.bordernet.co.uk. Mid-April.

Live contemporary and avant-garde music events at various venues in three cities — Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Glasgow — are the hooks of the annual **Triptych** festival. Log on to www.triptychfestival.com. Last weekend of April.

The **Beltane Fire Festival** in Edinburgh celebrates paganism and the alleged arrival of summer on Calton Hill with primal drums and dancing. A bit of nudity is almost guaranteed. Call the Beltane Fire Society at ☎ **131-228-5353** or visit www.beltane.org. April 30.

May

For some 30 years, Shetland has hosted the annual **Shetland Folk Festival** with concerts and spontaneous “sessions” where local and visiting musicians get together and jam. Go to www.shetlandfolkfestival.com or

telephone the Shetland Folk Festival Society for details ☎ **01595-694-757**. Early May.

Football fans flock to Glasgow for the **Scottish Cup Final**. This game is the deciding match after months of a single-elimination soccer tournament, where teams from the lower semi-professional and amateur divisions of Scottish football get a chance to compete with the giants of the sport. Hamden Park. Early May.

Big Big Country is a festival of “Americana” with country, folk, roots, and bluegrass music from U.S. and U.K. artists all coming together at various Glasgow music halls. Mid-May.

In Ayr, south of Glasgow, **Burns and A’ That** celebrates the life of Robert Burns with contemporary artists and performers — mainly in music. For details, call ☎ **01292-290-300** or visit www.burnsfestival.com. May 23 through May 28.

The **Perth Festival of the Arts**, the city’s annual festival of music, art, and drama, features local and international artists. Call ☎ **01738-475-295** or visit www.perthfestival.co.uk for more information. End of May.

Not to be outdone by Shetland, its northern island neighbors, Orkney has its own **Orkney Folk Festival**. Celebrating 25 years in 2007, it brings in musicians from the mainland and Scandinavia for a set of concerts over four days. Call ☎ **01856-851-331** or log on to www.orkneyfolkfestival.com. Last weekend in May.

June

During the **Common Riding Festivals**, hundreds of horse riders parade around Selkirk, Hawick, and other towns in the Scottish Borders, commemorating the ancient practice of marking a town’s territory. Throughout June.

Pride is Scotland’s annual celebration of gay life and culture, which alternates between Edinburgh and Glasgow. You’ll see a quirky, boisterous parade through the heart of Glasgow or along Princes Street in Edinburgh. Mid-June.

Glasgow’s **West End Festival** is the city’s most vibrant event in its most happening neighborhood. The party includes live music concerts, a street parade, and other events. Throughout most of June.

The **St. Magnus Festival** on Orkney showcases new singing, composing, and acting talents, mixing modern and classical sounds with drama and dance. It culminates on the longest day of the year, which, in Orkney, means almost 24 hours of daylight. Log on to www.stmagnusfestival.com for information. Third week in June.

The **Royal Highland Show** in Ingliston, near Edinburgh, is Scotland's premier agriculture and food fair with pedigreed livestock, flowers, show jumping, crafts, and more. For information, call ☎ **0131-335-6200** or visit www.royalhighlandshow.org. Third weekend in June.

At the **Glasgow International Jazz Festival**, jazz musicians from all over the world come together to perform at various venues around the city. Call ☎ **0141-552-3552** or visit www.jazzfest.co.uk for information. End of June.

July

T in the Park, in Balado, is Scotland's annual two-day outdoor pop and rock festival. Many major (and a few minor) bands from the U.S. and the U.K. play on multiple stages. For more information, visit www.tinthe-park.com. Second weekend in July.

The **Scottish Open** at Loch Lomond, northwest of Glasgow, is held traditionally on the weekend before the open tournament in Britain, drawing many of the stars of international golf. Mid-July.

Recently inaugurated, the **Glasgow River Festival** is a two-day event with exhibitions, sailings, and other festivities on the River Clyde. Mid-July.

The longest-running jazz festival in the U.K. is the **Edinburgh International Jazz & Blues Festival**. During the festival, the whole city opens its doors to host the best jazz and blues performances. For more information, call ☎ **0131-667-7776** or point your browser to www.jazzmusic.co.uk. Last week of July and into August.

August

The cultural highlight of Edinburgh's year comes every August during the **Edinburgh Festival**, which is actually many festivals occurring at the same time. Since it began in 1947, the **International Festival** has attracted artists and performance companies of the highest caliber in classical music, opera, ballet, or theater. Running simultaneously is the **Edinburgh Fringe**, and it alone encompasses some 1,800 performances in a cultural bonanza, drawing major talent — especially comics — from around the world. As if that wasn't enough, Edinburgh also hosts the **Edinburgh International Book Festival**, the **Edinburgh International Film Festival**, the **Jazz Festival** (see events listing for June), and the **Edinburgh International Television Festival**. For information on all the Edinburgh festivals, visit www.edinburghfestivals.co.uk. Throughout August.

One of the season's most popular traditional spectacles is the **Military Tattoo**, featuring music, marching, and military exercises on the floodlit esplanade of Edinburgh Castle every evening. For more details, call ☎ **08707-555-118**. Throughout August.

Piping Live! brings bagpipe players and ensembles from around the world to Glasgow. The weeklong festival culminates with the **World Pipe Championships**, pitting some 200 bands from around the world for the highest honors in piping. Call ☎ **0141-241-4400** for details. Second week of August.

The largest Highland games is the **Cowal Highland Gathering** on the Cowal peninsular town of Dunoon, west of Glasgow. The events usually attract up to 3,000 or more competitors from as far as British Columbia and New Zealand. Call ☎ **01369-703-206** or log on to www.cowalgathering.com. End of August.

September

The **Braemar Gathering** is the best-known annual Highland gathering, and games are regularly attended by members of the Royal family, whose Balmoral Castle is nearby. Spectators take in piping, dancing, and strength competitions. Call ☎ **01339-755-377** for details or log on to www.braemargathering.org. First weekend in September.

For a couple of weekends every September, the **Doors Open Days** event arranges for the doors at buildings normally closed to the public to be opened. Thus, visitors have rare opportunities to see the interiors of historic and architecturally significant edifices all over Scotland. For more information, visit www.scottishcivictrust.org.uk/doors.htm. Throughout September.

The **Taste of Mull & Iona Food Festival** is a weeklong celebration of local produce, from wild seafood to farmed oysters to homemade cheeses. It includes farm tours, wildlife walks, boat trips, and special feasts. Go to www.mi-food.co.uk for details. Mid-September.

Literary types should consider the **Scottish Book Town Festival** where the southern village of Wigtown, with its numerous secondhand and antiquary bookshops, hosts readings and other events. The event's Web site has all the details at www.wigtownbookfestival.com. End of September.

October

A weeklong architectural festival organized by the Scotland center for architecture and design in Glasgow, the Lighthouse, is called **BLOCK**. It features exhibits, walks, and talks. Call ☎ **0141-204-4400**. First week of October.

The **Darvel Music Festival**, in the village of Darvel in Ayrshire, south of Glasgow, is a recent addition to the Strathclyde cultural calendar with an eclectic array of musicians, focusing on folk and up-and-coming talent. First week of October.

Scotland's largest celebration of Gaelic language and music, the **Royal National Mod** moves from one city to the next every year. In 2006, for

example, it was held in Dunoon. If the Gaels' culture interests you, check to see whether the festival fits on your itinerary. For information, call ☎ **01463-709-705** or visit www.the-mod.co.uk. Mid-October.

Glasgay! brings one of the U.K.'s largest festivals of gay, lesbian, and bi-gender culture, with club nights, music, and performance art to Glasgow. Mid-October through mid-November.

In Edinburgh, the **International Story Telling Festival** offers events at various venues in the capital, which help to celebrate the oral tradition of Scotland and other nations. Call ☎ **0131-556-9579**. Last two weeks in October.

November

The capital gets an early start on the holiday season with **Edinburgh Christmas**, featuring outdoors markets and fairground rides. Log on to www.edinburghschristmas.com for a list of events. From late November to Christmas Eve.

Glasgow on Ice brings an outdoor ice-skating rink to the heart of the city in George Square — along with carnival rides and gift booths. Details can be found at www.glasgow-on-ice.co.uk. From late November to Christmas Eve.

St. Andrew's Day celebrates Scotland's patron saint, and events surrounding November 30th include exhibits, concerts, and fireworks — particularly in St. Andrews, where there are weeklong celebrations, as well as other locations. Some Scots would like to see St. Andrew's Day be as big a celebration as the Irish St. Patrick's Day. End of November.

December

In Scotland, New Year's Eve is called **Hogmanay** and events take place across the country. But Edinburgh marks the holiday with a weeklong extravaganza of events (many free), culminating with a December 31st street party, rock concert, and fireworks display. Glasgow has celebrations on Hogmanay that include outdoor concerts. For the scoop on Edinburgh's Hogmanay, call ☎ **0131-529-3914** or log on to www.edinburghshogmanay.org; for Glasgow information, visit www.glasgowshogmanay.co.uk. Last week in December.

Finally, if you're in the country and looking for something different on New Year's Eve, perhaps the **Stonehaven Fireball Festival** is just the ticket for you. In this northeastern port town, locals parade down the main street literally swinging huge fireballs to ward off darkness and welcome the new year. For details, log onto www.stonehavenfireballs.co.uk. December 31.

Chapter 4

Following an Itinerary: Five Fine Options

In This Chapter

- ▶ Following a one-week tour of Scotland's principal cities
 - ▶ Taking your time on a two-week tour of the country
 - ▶ Finding places that should please the children
 - ▶ Discovering Scotland's great outdoors in the Highlands and Western Islands
-

However willing we are to leave a few things to chance, most of us want to have a bit of structure when we travel. With that in mind, this chapter suggests a clutch of practical itineraries. The first two are appropriate if you have one or two weeks to explore Scotland. Then I suggest a seven-day route designed particularly for traveling families. Finally, if you want to focus on the outdoors, I've put together a pair of different one-week itineraries that focus on the wonderful Highlands and Scottish islands. These are just some suggestions, and alas they leave out a few areas, such as the Kintyre peninsula or the Isle of Islay, which you might think deserve a visit.

In each itinerary, I direct you to the proper chapters to find in-depth information on the sights and attractions listed. Alternatively, you can look up specific attractions in the Index at the back of the book, which directs you to the appropriate city and region chapters in Parts III and IV.



You may be planning to rent a car for your stay in Scotland. If you want to see just Edinburgh and Glasgow, however, you're probably better off without one.

You may find that some side trips are more difficult to make without an automobile, but regions such as Fife and Ayrshire (and cities such as Stirling) can be visited by train or by bus. Even the shores of Loch Lomond can be reached by train, so don't feel obliged to use a smog-spewing gas guzzler unless you need the utter freedom to explore and take all sorts of back roads.

Seeing Many Highlights in One Week

If you have seven days to explore, you're not going to see everything that Scotland has to offer. Worry not: With a bit of enterprise, you can see quite a lot despite the time restrictions of your vacation.

With only a week to spend, I strongly suggest that you principally visit Edinburgh and Glasgow, using them as bases for excursions into the countryside. The one-week itinerary in this section offers the option of one overnight stay on the fringes of the Highlands or south of the principal cities. You may prefer to try and cover more of the country by staying in different places every night. If that's the case, then you may want to combine part of this section with parts of the next section on a two-week trip in Scotland.

Day 1

Start in the capital, **Edinburgh**. In your inaugural 24 hours, familiarize yourself with the city by taking one of the hop-on hop-off, open-top **tour buses**. Then stick to the city's **Old Town** and stroll the **Royal Mile**, taking in the attractions, such as **Edinburgh Castle**, **Gladstone's Land**, **St. Giles Cathedral**, and the **Palace of Holyroodhouse**. Later **pop into a pub** for a drink and dine at one of the city's fine restaurants. You can find complete information on Old Town and its major attractions, pubs, and restaurants in Chapter 11.

Day 2

Your priority today is Edinburgh's museums and galleries. If you're a history buff, the **Museum of Scotland** should top your list. For art, hit as many national galleries as possible, whether the main collection on **the Mound**, more recent works at the **Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art**, or luminaries depicted in the **National Portrait Gallery**. For details on all these (and more), see Chapter 11.

Day 3

Take your first day trip outside the city today. I offer three choices here not because I can't make up my mind, but because I want you to know your options. Pick between the **Kingdom of Fife**, which is just across the Forth River from Edinburgh (see Chapter 16); the ancient city and castle of **Stirling** (see Chapter 16); or **East Lothian** and the **Borders** (see Chapters 13 and 14). Each choice provides a break from the city and exposes you to the readily available countryside.

Day 4

It's a travel day, but you're only going some 45 miles west to Scotland's biggest city, **Glasgow**. As in Edinburgh, I advise one of the hop-on hop-off **tour bus** rides that leave frequently from George Square in the heart of the city. Return to the commercial center after your tour and explore

some of the city's **free museums**, visit the medieval **Glasgow Cathedral**, or follow my walking tour (in Chapter 12) to admire the famous **Victorian architecture** or the work of **Charles Rennie Mackintosh**. Flip to Chapter 12 for more information on Glasgow, including hints on the city's top pubs and restaurants.

Day 5

Return to explore the leafy environs of Glasgow's most desirable district, the **West End**, which is home to the city's 500-plus year-old university and an excellent municipal art collection in the recently refurbished **Kelvingrove Art Museum and Gallery**. Shop, drink, and dine on the West End's main street: **Byres Road**. Another of today's art-influenced priorities is the **Burrell Collection**, which requires a trip to the Pollok Country Park on the city's south side. You can find more information on all Glasgow has to offer in Chapter 12, where you can also take note of my suggested one-, two-, and three-day or more itineraries for Glasgow.

Day 6

Time is running short, so why not make another day trip, with the option of an overnight stay? Go west to Wemyss Bay and take the ferry to the **Isle of Bute** to get a taste of island life. Or perhaps head towards the Highlands, stopping along the bonnie banks of **Loch Lomond**. You can make it back to Glasgow, but you may prefer to stay in the country this evening. See Chapters 15 or 16 for details.

Day 7

Unbelievably, your time is almost up. You may want to go south of Glasgow to **Burns Country** in Ayrshire, an excursion that can include visits to the poet's birthplace as well as stops at golfing hotspots, such as **Turnberry**, and a tour of historic properties such as **Culzean Castle**, with its magnificent seaside prospect, gardens, and parkland. (See Chapter 15 for more information on these and other attractions in the area.) If you passed on Stirling earlier in your visit, you can get there just as easily from Glasgow. Chapter 16 has all the details.

Touring the Best of Scotland in Two Weeks

In two weeks, you can see all the major regions of Scotland and a fair number of the major attractions, too.

Days 1, 2, and 3

Obviously, I don't want to exclude Edinburgh and Glasgow from this itinerary, so you can spend your first two days in Edinburgh, following the itinerary outlined in the previous section. But give the capital an extra 24 hours so that, on the third day, you can pick up some additional quality time in this fabulous city or take an additional day trip as outlined

above. (After a detour south, this itinerary takes you to Glasgow, too, on Days 6 and 7.)

Day 4

Now's your chance to see some of **Southern Scotland**. Head for **Melrose** and its historic abbey and see **Abbotsford**, the home of Sir Walter Scott. Then, journey west to Dumfries and Galloway. Dumfries is a pleasant southern town, sometimes referred to as the "Queen of the South," with poet Robert Burns's final home, which is now a museum. If you have the inclination, head to the lovely harbor town of **Portpatrick** on the Rhinns of Galloway, a picturesque coastal settlement boasting a natural harbor with excellent seaside views. See Chapter 14.

Day 5

Travel north toward Glasgow, stopping to take in Culzean Castle and Burns Country, which are outlined in Day 7 of "Seeing Many Highlights in One Week."

Days 6 and 7

These are your days to spend in Glasgow. Just follow my earlier suggestions for what to see and do in "Seeing Many Highlights in One Week."

Day 8

Head north of the city toward the **Highlands**, via **Loch Lomond**. Depending on your ambitions, this journey can include a detour to Loch Fyne and Loch Awe, but I suggest it's probably best to head for **Oban** (see Chapter 15) and then on to **Mull**.

Day 9

Spend today touring the isles of **Mull** and the ancient Christian settlement of **Iona**. To get to these places, catch the ferry from Oban or join a guided tour. If you want to spend the night, you may wish to consider the wee, historic Isle of Iona or some place in **Tobermory**. See Chapter 19 for more information on the islands.

Day 10

From the port of Tobermory you can take a ferry (in season) to the remote peninsula of **Ardnamurchan**. Along the way, you can stop to take in **Castle Tioram**, **Arisaig**, **Sands of Morar**, and **Mallaig**. From Mallaig, another ferry departs to the **Isle of Skye**. The ferry will also take you to the mainland where you can travel north and link up with the "Road to the Isles." See Chapters 18 and 19 for details on these areas and attractions.

Day 11

As you near the end of your tour, visit the **Cuillin Hills** of Skye and stop at **Portree** before heading back to the mainland via the bridge at the **Kyle of Lochalsh**. If you're making good time, stop at **Eilean Donan** castle and the picturesque town of **Plockton** before you start the long but lovely drive to **Inverness** and the northern shores of **Loch Ness**. For details on the area, flip to Chapters 18 and 19.

Day 12

Here's your chance to see Nessie, the Loch Ness Monster. Don't spend too much time at Loch Ness, however, because you need to get across the mountains to Royal Deeside. Here, it's worth your time to have a gander at a few castles, such as **Braemar** or **Blair Atholl**, and perhaps make a stop at a whisky distillery. See Chapter 17 for more on the area.

Day 13

As you head back toward the center of Scotland, take in **Perth** as well as the golfing mecca and ancient settlement of **St. Andrews** (see Chapter 16).

Day 14

On the last day of your tour, visit Stirling if you haven't already done so, or alternatively, tour Fife on your way back to Edinburgh, where this itinerary began a fortnight ago.

Discovering Scotland with Kids

Touring history-heavy castles or art-laden museums with children in tow doesn't have to be a big headache or a battle of patience and wills. Plenty of attractions appeal to all ages. If you're traveling with little ones, following the loose itinerary in this section can be the path of least resistance. When you're following this tour through Edinburgh and Glasgow, you don't need a car; public transportation and an occasional taxi should suffice. However, upon leaving those two cities, a car becomes necessary to complete this tour.



As you follow the cross-references in this section and jump to other chapters in this book, look for the Kid Friendly icon, which points out the best attractions, restaurants, and so on to visit with children.

Begin in **Edinburgh**, and make sure to visit **Edinburgh Castle**. The self-guided audio tour may confuse little kids, but the castle is interesting and fun to explore even without any commentary. Nearby, the **Camera Obscura** usually fascinates children. You can make a trip to the **Edinburgh Zoo** to see the penguin parade, and while in town, visit the toy-filled **Museum of Childhood**. See Chapter 11 for more information on Edinburgh's attractions.

Next it's on to **Glasgow**, where you can break up your other sightseeing with kiddie favorites such as the aforementioned Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum or the **Museum of Transport**; interactive exhibits at the **Science Centre**; and the fun, hands-on **People's Palace**. For a breath of fresh air (and to burn off any excess energy), take a romp around **Glasgow Green**.

A couple of side trips from Glasgow can take two entire days. You can head south along the coast, where the kids can comb beaches, see the cottage where poet Robert Burns was born, and romp about the adventure playground at **Culzean Castle**. In the other direction is Stirling, with a bit of history and education at **Bannockburn**, good exploring in **Stirling Castle**, and some entertainment (and frights) in the tour of Stirling's **Old Town Jail**.

From Glasgow, you may want to head north through spectacular **Glen Coe** and perhaps spend a day exploring the area around Fort William, hiking or mountain biking around **Ben Nevis**, the highest peak in Great Britain. Next comes the **Loch Ness** region, which is generally a load of fun for children. Check out one of the Loch Ness exhibitions and one of the sonar-scoping monster-hunting cruises.

On the road back to Edinburgh, you can stop at **J.M. Barrie's Birthplace** (he wrote *Peter Pan*) in Kirriemuir and visit **Deep Sea World**, just north of Edinburgh in North Queensferry.

Touring Scotland's Great Highlands

Scotland has no shortage of things to see, and most regions have their own unique attractions. But among the best regions is the wild terrain of the Highlands. Why not try to get all the way to the top of Scotland (and the U.K., too, for that matter) and see some of the wide-open spaces? For this seven-day itinerary (I didn't break it down into exact days, so you can adjust the plans as you like), you can take the train from anywhere up to Inverness and rent a car there. For more details on the attractions and for lists of accommodations and restaurants in this area, see Chapter 18.

From **Inverness**, head north across the Black Isle, through **Tain**, and across the Dornoch Firth. Make a brief stop to see the cathedral in **Dornoch**, and then head up through Lairg to the northern shore.

At Tongue, you may want to stop to see the Highland cattle that roam the beaches here, and then go west to **Durness**, a settlement that John Lennon visited as a child (which is why a small monument stands in his memory). One natural curiosity is **Smoo Cave**, although what's really spectacular is the craggy shoreline, which leads to remote **Cape Wrath**. For some excellent crafts, visit **Balnakeil** — an artists' colony that's a throwback to the 1960s if there ever was one.



Beware of the midge

I love the western extremities of Scotland, but for many, the region is home to the nastiest beast in the nation. The *midge* (pronounced midgy) is a tiny flying insect that leaves a terrifically itchy bite. If you can't resist the call of the west, arm yourself with some effective bug spray.

From Durness, you head south along more beautiful, unspoiled shoreline towards **Scourie**. But before you get there, you really must detour out to Blairmore, park the car, and hike into the most unspoiled beach in Great Britain, at **Sandwood Bay**. You can also hike to Cape Wrath from Sandwood, if you're ambitious.

To appreciate just how wild, beautiful, and unpopulated the Western Highlands region of Scotland truly is, detour at Kylesku to the peninsula with the stone monument known as the **Old Man of Stoer** or simply carry on to the active fishing port of **Ullapool**. It's hardly a big town, but it seems like the height of civilization after you've spent time further north.

Inverewe Garden is the next highlight, although your drive south provides ample opportunities to stop and sightsee, like at **Gruinard Bay**, where you may just see some sea otters splashing in the surf.

The road south twists and turns past Gairloch, Loch Torridon, and the road to **Applecross** (where the inn serves famously delicious meals) before arriving in perhaps the most picturesque village in the Highlands: **Plockton**. Kick back, relax, and toast your Highland excursion on your final night of this tour.

Finally, drive to Loch Duich and see **Eilean Donan**, the most photographed castle in the Highlands. Then hit the road through Invermoriston to **Loch Ness**, where you can take a brief cruise and see if Nessie raises her knurled head, before you return to Inverness.

Touring the Western Highlands and Islands

If you don't want to cover the hundreds of miles necessary to get to places such as Durness, Sandwood Bay, and Inverewe Garden, then the itinerary in this section is the one for you. It's less strenuous but still brings you into the Highlands and includes a taste of the islands, too. For more details on the places mentioned in this section, see Chapters 16, 18, and 19.

From Glasgow, where you should rent a car for this tour after you've seen the city, head northwest along the bonnie banks of **Loch Lomond**,

stop for refreshment at the **Drovers Inn**, carry on to Crianlarich, and enter the Highlands via the gorgeously desolate **Rannoch Moor** and verdant **Glen Coe**.

The region south of Fort William is a great place to spend the night. You can choose from inexpensive B&Bs as well as posher lodges, such as **Ballachulish House**. In **Fort William**, satisfy your shopping urges, and then get on the “Road to the Isles,” which takes you to the **Glenfinnan Monument** at the tip of Loch Shiel.

Get off the beaten track and explore a bit of Moidart and **Ardnamurchan**, which has the most westerly peninsula in the British mainland. Take time to see **Castle Tioram** before backtracking to Lochailort and resuming the trek north to **Arisaig**.

From Arisaig, with its pleasant little harbor, you can take a cruise to one of the small islands, **Eigg**. The trip often includes some whale sightings. Just past Arisaig, golfers may want to try the tricky (if short) **Traigh** course, before everyone enjoys the lovely **Sands of Morar**.

Next on this tour is **Mallaig** and the ferry to Armadale on the Isle of **Skye**, which is the largest island of the Hebrides. Just north of the ferry terminal is the **Clan Donald** visitor center. You have time to visit the center and drive up to **Portree**, Skye’s main port, before heading back to the mainland via the bridge at the **Kyle of Lochalsh**.

From Skye, head back to the mainland, where area highlights include the attractions of lovely **Plockton** on Loch Carron and **Eilean Donan** castle. Take the scenic drive to **Invergarry**, where you may want to spend the night at the **Glengarry Castle Hotel**.

On your final day, head back to Fort William, where you may have time to explore the **Ben Nevis** region, before retracing your steps through Glen Coe and Rannoch Moor. But this time around, stop at the touristy shops in **Tyndrum** for some souvenirs before hitting the shores of Loch Lomond and the busy highway back to Glasgow.

Planning Your Trip: Mileage Chart

Use Table 4-1 to help you plan your travel itinerary in Scotland, but remember: Roads can be narrow and winding, so allot more time than would be ordinarily necessary to get from point A to point B.

Table 4-1 Distances (in Miles) between Some of Scotland's Towns and Cities

Aberdeen									
179	Ayr								
129	79	Edinburgh							
157	141	131	Fort William						
146	33	45	116	Glasgow					
105	207	154	64	175	Inverness				
84	95	45	106	62	117	Perth			
119	64	36	96	27	143	35	Stirling		
158	258	208	109	222	56	165	193	Ullapool	



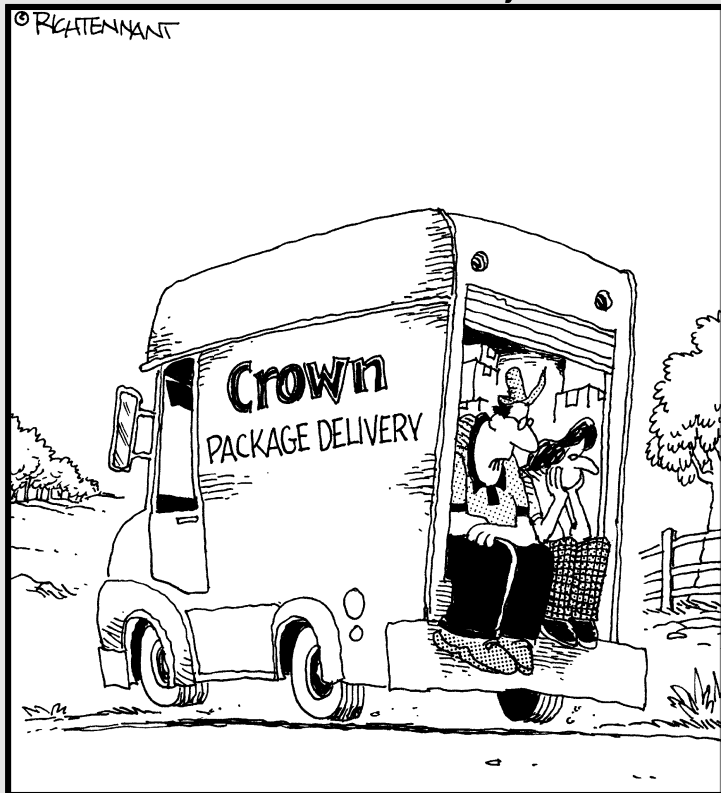
It's important to be realistic about the amount of time you'll spend in the car or bus burning up precious daylight hours. If you try to hit Ullapool and Inverness in one full (and tiring) day, then you spend most of your day driving the distance between the two cities and see only a few big sights. Try to get up and out early — that means breakfast at 8:30 a.m. instead of 11 a.m. And don't try to cram too much into each day. If you're constantly rushing from one place to the next, then you won't enjoy anything you see.

Part II

Planning Your Trip to Scotland

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"They said they offered a very inexpensive package tour."

In this part . . .

The chapters in Part II are designed to get down to the nitty-gritty of planning your trip: I offer advice and guidance on how much your trip to Scotland may cost and making a sensible budget; finding out which airlines go where (and finding the smartest value in airfares); deciding the best ways to get around Scotland once you're there; figuring out how to drive on Scotland's roads; finding the right accommodations for your needs; and managing passports. That's not all.

In this part, you can find advice on what to do if you get sick in Scotland and whether you should invest in travel insurance. If you're a traveler with special needs and interests, issues important to you are covered here, as well. In short, the following pages are filled with all the info you need to plan your trip to Scotland.

Chapter 5

Managing Your Money

In This Chapter

- ▶ Creating a realistic budget for your trip to Scotland
- ▶ Reviewing money-saving tips
- ▶ Understanding the local currency and how best to get it
- ▶ Carrying money conveniently and safely

An important consideration for any vacation is your budget, of course. How much will the trip cost and where will the money be best spent? You don't want to waste good money, but you probably don't want to be tied down to a bare-bones budget that restricts you from seeing the highlights of Scotland.

The smartest way to travel is to plan your spending in advance: In large part, this means understanding ahead of time what things will cost. But keep in mind that sometimes you get what you pay for.

This chapter covers what you can expect to pay for transportation, accommodation, dining, and sightseeing while in Scotland. Plus, I include some money-saving tips. As a hands-on bonus, the Dummies budget worksheet (Table 5-2) will help you to plot out your expenses.

Keep in mind that **exchange rates** are constantly fluctuating. And lately, they're bouncing around quite a lot. Because of this, it is impossible to give you a precise conversion.

First: Scotland, like the rest of the United Kingdom, doesn't use the euro. Second: In general, the British pound sterling is worth somewhere between 50 to 100 percent more than the U.S. dollar. Throughout this book, I've calculated the exchange rate at one U.S. dollar being equal to one British pound and eighty-five pence ($\$1 = \pounds 1.85$) — generally rounding up. Third: If you want to be very conservative, essentially double all pound amounts and that will give you a generous dollar equivalent. Fourth (and finally): As the pound has been staying strong in comparison to the dollar (in other words, more dollars are now needed to buy pounds), goods and services may well seem more expensive than what you're often used to at home.



Goods in Scotland often carry the same price in pounds as they would in dollars back home. For example, a digital camera that costs \$350 in New York might be priced £350 in Edinburgh, too. But, of course, that means it's quite a bit more expensive in Scotland: at least \$300 more costly (using my conversion rate).

I suspect that you want to enjoy your stay and don't want to be constantly converting pounds to dollars before making every purchase. But if your desire is to keep costs down, be wary and make sure you're getting a bargain or at least spending your money wisely.

By the way, all dollar references in this chapter are to the U.S. currency.

Planning Your Budget

As far as destinations go, Scotland is neither the cheapest nor the most expensive place to visit. Can you do Scotland on \$10 a day? No, quite honestly — unless you sleep at the roadside and mainly eat cans of baked beans. On \$50 a day? Possibly, if you don't mind camping or bunking in a youth hostel and very basic dinners. Being realistic, however, you can bet on a figure more like \$125 to \$175 per person per day — more if you factor in full-time car rental and gasoline (petrol) costs. And that figure doesn't include the cost of actually getting to Scotland.

But sometimes you do get what you pay for. In this case, Scotland usually compensates for the proverbial price of admission.

Transportation

Car rental (or *car hire* per the local vernacular) isn't especially exorbitant, but visitors will likely find the cost of gasoline to be staggeringly high. Remember, here it's called *petrol* and is priced in liters, not gallons. It costs about 3.5 times more than the average in the United States. On the plus side, however, your rental car will probably get exceptional miles per liter (which is how it's measured here), and the driving distances across Scotland are miniscule compared to cross-country travel in the United States, Canada, or Australia. Usually the car rental rates include unlimited mileage. Check with your auto insurance company to see if you need to buy extra coverage for when you're in Scotland. (I discuss insurance coverage for travelers in Chapter 10.)



Although it may limit your mobility, using public transportation can cut your costs. If you're only planning to visit Edinburgh, Glasgow, and some side-trip destinations, you don't really need to rent a car.

Lodging

Hotel rooms in Scotland aren't cheap. If, however, you do your homework and scour accommodation Web sites, you *will* find rates considerably lower than the standard "tariff" that's quoted by each hotel. If you

want luxury or a spectacular view, however, you will have to pay a premium. If you just need a leak-proof roof over your head, a place to wash, and a clean bed, then you can easily save money on your accommodations.

Generally speaking, a double room runs about \$170 to \$250 per night; those on the low end are around \$100 to \$120, and on the high end you'll be spending \$300 or quite a bit more. Self-catering cottages rented by the week (\$450–\$1,200 per week) and country B&Bs are almost always less expensive (\$50 per person). Places that remain open year round often charge less during the low season, October through March.

Dining

American visitors with their calculators at the ready will find out that most food is typically more expensive in Scotland than in the U.S. But you can cut your dining expenses by not choosing the ritziest restaurant in town every night of the week. Keep an eye out for lunch specials and pre-theater menus — they offer considerable savings. On the Web, investigate www.5pm.co.uk, which offers reductions on early evening dining options, particularly in Edinburgh and Glasgow. If you stay in self-catering accommodations, you'll spend less on food by cooking it at your rental cabin or apartment. Some groceries, particularly premium items such as organic chicken, cost about the same as in the U.S. metropolitan market.

A good per-person allowance for lunch is at least \$20, and for dinner between \$30 and \$60. Many hotels and lodges include breakfast in the room rate, so at least you don't have to figure that meal into your daily food budget.

Sightseeing

The price of admission to many tourist attractions in Scotland is slightly more modest than what you may expect to find in other Western European countries. In Edinburgh, the permanent exhibitions of the Scottish national galleries are priced just right: absolutely free. And similarly, in Glasgow, the city-run museums don't cost a pence to enter. All the natural beauty of the countryside, from the Ayrshire coastline to the Highlands, doesn't cost you a thing and is indeed priceless.

Even if you see two or three attractions each day, a fair amount to budget for sights is \$20 per person per day.

Shopping

Jump back up to the introduction to this chapter and recall what I have already said about consumer retail goods and their U.K. prices. A pair of Calvin Kleins may have the same sticker price as its counterpart in the U.S., but they will actually cost nearly twice as much given the exchange rate. Still, you can find "home-grown" commodities in Scotland that are

less expensive when purchased here: woolen goods or cashmere, local crafts and arts, and more. Be selective in your purchases and your bank balance will be better off.

Nightlife

Here, as with sightseeing, you may find that things are cheaper than you anticipated, particularly the theater, dance, and even opera. In pubs and bars, prices of alcohol are at the higher end but not ridiculously so. In general, expect the equivalent of big city (Toronto, San Francisco, or Melbourne) prices for nightlife in Scotland. A pint of lager or ale will cost between \$3.30–\$5. A dram of whisky is sometimes as little as \$3, but cocktails are at least \$6 and typically more.

In Table 5-1, I take the daily estimates laid out in this section and add them up for a projection of how much it typically costs to accommodate and entertain one person for one week in Scotland.

Table 5-1 Per Person Expenses for a Typical Week in Scotland

<i>Expense</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Airfare (round-trip New York City to London to Glasgow/Edinburgh)	\$500–\$700
Rental car	\$200–\$400
Two to three tanks of gas	\$125–\$175
Seven nights in modest hotels (\$75 per person)	\$525
Seven lunches (\$15 each average)	\$105
Seven dinners (\$28 each average)	\$196
Sightseeing admissions (\$20 per day average)	\$140
Souvenirs and miscellaneous (\$10 per day average)	\$70
TOTAL	\$1,861–\$2,311

Cutting Costs without Cutting the Fun

If worries about travel costs mean you're hesitant to go to Scotland, you have two options: Simply stay home and miss out — or get over it. Sure, Scotland isn't the cheapest European country to visit, but nor is it the costliest, and it *can* be made more affordable. Make sensible decisions, look for those bargains that don't cheapen the experience, and you should be fine.

Better too much than not enough

Make sure you have access to emergency money in case you need it. If you golf, add up greens fees and the price of renting clubs (assuming you're not lugging your own around the country). Do you plan to buy clothes, jewelry, crystal, and antiques, or just pick up a few postcards, a snow globe, and a couple of cheap souvenirs? A modest piece of crystal can set you back \$80; a nice Edinburgh sweatshirt, about \$50. So gauge your impulse-buying tendencies and factor that into your budget as well.



Some tourists demand to be pampered in five-star hotels, but those places are exceptionally expensive in Scotland. If you're flexible when it comes to the pampering, you should seek out the smaller lodges and guesthouses that are priced to fit tighter travel budgets. A nice perk of most Scottish accommodations is that breakfast is included in the price of the room. Sometimes it's even hearty enough to keep you full until dinner.

Also, some visitor attractions are free. Even if you stick to seeing things that cost nothing (although you shouldn't skip the other sights just because of the cost), you'll still experience a vast amount of the country.

You can find plenty of ways, some little and some big, to cut down on costs. Here are some smart ways to save on your trip to Scotland.

- ✔ **Go in mid-season or off-season.** Traveling between mid-September and mid-April should save you money on your airfare and accommodations. The days leading up to and just after Christmas, New Year's Eve, and Easter are the exceptions, and prices jump up during those periods. (See Chapter 3 for more info on Scotland's seasons.)
- ✔ **Travel midweek.** Most everybody wants to travel on the weekends, but those willing to travel on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday can usually find cheaper flights. When inquiring about airfares, ask if you get a cheaper rate if you fly on a different day. Also remember that staying over a Saturday night can occasionally cut airfares by half.
- ✔ **Remember that group rates can save money.** And you don't necessarily have to be one of a busload to get them. Sometimes a party as small as three people qualifies for group rates.
- ✔ **Get the Explorer Pass.** Historic Scotland, which operates 75 different historic attractions across Scotland, offers an Explorer Pass that allows multiple entries to all of their sites from Iona Abbey to St. Andrews Cathedral to Edinburgh Castle. The pass is sold at most of the sites run by the organization. For more information, call ☎ **0131-668-8600** or visit www.historic-scotland.gov.uk.

- ✔ **Try a package deal.** Many people believe that planning a trip entirely on their own is less expensive, but they're not necessarily correct. Travel packages can save not only money but also time. A single phone call to a travel agent or package tour operator can take care of your flight, accommodations, transportation within the country, and sightseeing arrangements. Even if you're not up for a complete package — if you'd prefer to pay for your plane tickets with frequent-flier miles, say, or if you don't like some of the things the package tour operators offer — you can book room-car deals (which include a free rental car) or other combo packages directly through many hotels. Chapter 6 contains more details on package deals.
- ✔ **Always ask about discounts.** Membership in AAA, frequent-flier plans, trade unions, AARP, university alumni associations, or other groups often qualifies you for discounted rates on plane tickets, hotel rooms, and (mainly with U.S.-based companies) car rentals. Some car-rental companies give discounts to employees of companies that have corporate accounts. With valid identification, students, teachers, youths, and seniors may be entitled to discounts. Many attractions have discounted family prices. Ask about everything — you may be pleasantly surprised.
- ✔ **Book your rental car at weekly rates, when possible.** Weekly rentals are most often offered at a discounted rate.
- ✔ **Know where to buy petrol.** The United Kingdom has some of the highest gasoline prices in Europe, and parts of rural Scotland have the highest prices in the U.K. One way to ease the burden of these exorbitant rates is to fill your tank in cities and larger towns. For the most part, the smaller the town, the higher the price of gas. Also, you may find lower gas prices at petrol stations at large supermarkets, such as Tesco or Asda.
- ✔ **Don't rent a gas guzzler.** Renting a smaller car is cheaper, and you save money on gas to boot. Unless you're traveling with kids and need lots of space, don't go beyond the economy size. For more on car rentals, see Chapter 7.
- ✔ **Walk.** All cities in the country are easy to explore on foot, even Glasgow and Edinburgh. Hoofing it can save you a few extra pounds (and even burn off a few from your waistline). As a bonus, you'll get to know your destination more intimately as you explore at a slower pace.
- ✔ **Skimp on souvenirs.** As a general rule, souvenirs specially created for the tourist market are poorly made and over-priced. If you're concerned about money, you can definitely do without the T-shirts, key chains, and other trinkets.
- ✔ **Use ATMs to get money.** The exchange rate of most banks' ATM machines — or *cash points* — is surprisingly competitive. Yes, your bank back home may charge a small fee, but it won't charge a

percentage commission on the money you withdraw. And yes, don't be silly, it comes out in the local currency, not dollars.

- ✔ **Use libraries for Internet access.** Because of Western tourists' growing use of the Internet, online access is popping up all over Scotland. Most town libraries have access, and they usually don't charge or require you to be a member. This policy may change in the coming years, but for now, libraries are a good, cheap option for surfing the Web.
- ✔ **Pick up free, coupon-packed visitor pamphlets and magazines.** Detailed maps, feature articles, dining and shopping directories, and discount and freebie coupons make these pocket-size giveaways a smart pickup. You'll find these types of materials in tourist board offices and, perhaps, in the lobby of your hotel.
- ✔ **Skip the fantabulous hotel room views.** Rooms with great views are the most expensive in any hotel. Unless you're planning to hang out in your room all day, why hand over the extra dough?
- ✔ **Get out of town.** In many places, hotels located just outside popular tourist areas may be a great bargain and require only a little more driving — and they may even offer free parking. Sure, you may not get all the fancy amenities, and you'll probably have to carry your own bags, but the rooms may be just as comfortable and a whole lot cheaper.
- ✔ **Ask whether your children can stay in your room for free.** Although many accommodations in Scotland charge by the head, some may allow your little ones to stay for free. Even if you have to pay \$10 or \$15 for a rollaway bed, in the long run you'll save hundreds by not having to pay for two rooms.
- ✔ **Avoid making phone calls from a hotel room.** The inflated fees that hotels charge for phone calls are scandalous. Walk to the nearest coin- or card-operated phone to make calls within and out of the country.
- ✔ **Consider rooms that aren't *en-suite*.** Rooms without a bathroom are cheaper, although they're increasingly hard to find. Sharing a bathroom may be a small sacrifice when it comes to saving money, and it doesn't really detract from your trip. Group hostel rooms are even cheaper if you're willing to rough it a bit more.
- ✔ **Check out accommodations with kitchens.** By renting self-catering apartments or cottages for a week or more, you can save money overall on accommodations (especially if you're traveling with a group) and on food, because you can prepare your own meals in the kitchen. By avoiding big-ticket restaurant meals, you'll save a heck of a lot of money.
- ✔ **Have the same meal for less money.** If you enjoy a late lunch (or an early evening meal) at a nice restaurant and settle for a snack later, your wallet will thank you. Lunch and pre-theater menus often



offer the same food as dinner menus, but the prices are much less expensive.

- ✓ **Before you leave home, check prices on items you think you may want to buy.** This way, you'll know whether you're really getting a bargain by buying items abroad. Spending a little time surfing the Web is an easy way to find the information you need.
- ✓ **Look before you tip.** Some restaurants include a service fee or gratuity on the bill, especially if you're with a group. Study your bill: You could be paying a double tip by mistake. And don't tip bartenders for drinks — they don't expect it.

Table 5-2 **Your Scotland Budget Worksheet**

<i>Expense</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Airfare (multiplied by number of people traveling)	
Car rental (if you expect to rent one)	
Gas (expect to need one tank, at about \$60, for every four to five days of driving)	
Lodging (multiplied by the number of nights you'll be in the country)	
Breakfast (your room rate likely includes it)	
Lunch (multiplied by the number of days in the country)	
Dinner (multiplied by the number of days in the country)	
Attractions (admission charges to museums, gardens, tours, theaters, nightclubs, and so on)	
Souvenirs (T-shirts, postcards, and that antique you just gotta have)	
Tips (think 10– percent to 15 percent of your meal total plus \$1 a bag every time a bellhop moves your luggage)	
Incidentals (whisky, snacks, and so on)	
Getting from your hometown to the airport, plus long-term parking (if applicable)	
Grand Total	

Handling Money

After you settle on a budget for your trip, you can start figuring out the nuts and bolts of carrying money abroad. How much money do you want

to bring along? Do you want to carry cold, hard cash, credit cards, traveler's checks, or all three? How can you get more money after you're in Scotland? What's the best way to exchange dollars for pounds? And how can you ensure that your money will be safe and secure while you're vacationing?

You're the best judge of how much cash you feel comfortable carrying or what currency alternative is your favorite. That's not going to change much just because you're on vacation. True, you'll probably be moving around more and incurring more expenses than you generally do (unless you happen to eat out every meal when you're at home), and you may let your mind slip into vacation mode and not be as vigilant about your safety as when you're in work mode. But, those factors aside, the only type of payment that won't be available to you away from home is your personal checkbook. In Scotland, they don't even spell it the same way. There, it is a *chequebook*. This section offers just about everything you need to know about money matters in Scotland.

The local currency: What it's worth to you

The currency in Scotland, *British pence* and *pounds sterling*, is quite similar to American cents and dollars. The denominations of your loose change (though not the sizes) are almost the same: The few anomalies include 2-pence coins, the 20-pence coin (there's no equivalent to the U.S. quarter), and the 1- and 2-pound coins. Pence are often just referred to as "p," such as in "Do you have 30p for the pay phone?" A pound is also known colloquially as a "quid." Some people may refer to a "bob" — this is equivalent to 5p, which used to be known as a "shilling" before the decimal system was imposed in 1971.

Although the U.K.'s official central bank, called the Bank of England, controls monetary matters across Great Britain and Northern Ireland, a couple of banks in Scotland, such as the Clydesdale Bank, have permission to print Scottish bills in 5-, 10-, and 20-pound denominations. They feature Scottish historical figures such as Sir Walter Scott or William Wallace (rather than the queen). There's no value difference between these pound notes and those printed in England, and both are accepted throughout Scotland.



Be careful if you travel to England with Scottish bank notes. Although they're perfectly legal tender in England, they aren't always accepted by shops and restaurants, where employees are unaccustomed to seeing Scottish bank names on the folding money. Err on the side of caution and go to a bank and exchange any Scottish bills for Bank of England notes before heading south of the border.

As I've said throughout this chapter, goods and services are often more expensive in Scotland than they would be in the U.S. or in other English-speaking countries. Many items sold in Scotland are priced with the same numerical amount as they would be in the U.S. — for instance, if a soda costs a dollar in the U.S., it's often priced at a pound (about \$1.85)

in Scotland. But because you get less than 60 pence for every dollar you exchange, things cost between 50 percent and 100 percent more in Scotland. This increase isn't true of all items, but it gives you a general idea of how far your new cash and weighty coins will go.

The exchange rate fluctuates daily (by small amounts). The best source for up-to-date currency exchange information is online at www.xe.com/ucc. The average rates are shown in Table 5-3.

Table 5-3 Typical Currency Exchange Rates

<i>One Dollar</i>	<i>Equals</i>
\$1 U.S.	51p–54p
\$1 Canadian	About 45p
\$1 Australian	About 42p
\$1 New Zealand	About 38p
<i>One British Pound</i>	<i>Equals</i>
£1	\$1.85–\$1.96 U.S.
£1	About \$2.23 Canadian
£1	About \$2.40 Australian
£1	About \$2.64 New Zealand

What's up with the euro?

Europe's common currency, the *euro*, isn't used in Scotland. Why not? Well, a huge debate once raged among U.K. politicians and people over trading the pound for the euro. After the Labour Party government was elected in 1997, it waffled politically and only confused the issue by introducing some spurious economic hurdles. The party's main opposition, the Conservatives, have opposed dumping the pound for over 25 years. Increasingly many people doubt that the euro will ever be used officially. An independent Scotland would probably accept the euro more quickly than the U.K. as a whole, but nobody expects full Scottish autonomy anytime soon.

You may see euro equivalents calculated on some money transactions, but that's only designed to get consumers familiar with the new money. A few euro-friendly businesses in Scotland do accept the euro — otherwise it's about as useful as a dollar.



You can exchange money anywhere you see the **Bureau de Change** sign. You will often see it at travel agencies, banks, post offices, and tourist information offices. Generally, you'll get the best rates at banks; the local tourist office can tell you the location of the bank branch nearest you.

Using ATMs and carrying cash

The easiest and arguably the best way to get cash away from home is from an ATM (automated teller machine), or *cash point*, as they are commonly called in Scotland. The **Cirrus** (☎ 800-424-7787; www.mastercard.com) and **PLUS** (☎ 800-843-7587; www.visa.com) networks span the globe; look at the back of your bank card to see which network you're on, then call or check online for ATM locations at your destination. For example, the PLUS ATM locator (www.visa.via.infonow.net) indicates that there are 100 machines in and around Glasgow. Even up north in Inverness, it lists 84.

Be sure that you know your personal identification number (PIN) and your daily withdrawal limit, which of course you will need to convert to pounds, before you leave home. Also keep in mind that many banks impose a fee every time your card is used at a different bank's ATM, and that fee can be higher for international transactions (up to \$5 or more) than for domestic ones (where the fee's rarely more than \$1.50). On top of this charge, the bank from which you withdraw cash may charge its own fee, although that's rare in Scotland. For international withdrawal fees, contact your bank.

Despite the withdrawal charges, however, the expansion and integration of ATMs have made obtaining cash a cinch in Scotland's cities. Slip in your card, type in your PIN, and withdraw money in pounds sterling from your bank at home. The exchange rates are usually as good as you'll get anywhere else.

Not all ATMs in Scotland are connected to the global banking networks. This is especially true in rural areas and in small banks. It's best to not depend solely on ATMs for cash when you're traveling. Also, the security risks are the same here as at home. If someone steals your card and knows your personal identification number (PIN), the crook will try to drain your bank account. Recently, machines have been rigged to "swallow" cards, which are later extracted and used illegally. All this is rare in Scotland, but, nevertheless, you should exercise caution and avoid using ATMs late at night or in poorly lit urban areas.



Be sure to check your daily withdrawal limit with your bank before you set off on your trip. Remember, if your limit is \$250, you'll be able to withdraw only about £135.



If you lose your ATM card, contact your bank at home and report the loss immediately. You don't want your bank account depleted in the event that the card (and, in a worst-case scenario, personal identification number) falls into the wrong hands.

Charging ahead with credit cards

Credit cards are invaluable when traveling. They're a safe way to carry money, they provide a convenient record of all your expenses, and they generally offer relatively good exchange rates. You can also withdraw cash advances from your credit cards at banks or ATMs, provided you know your PIN. If you've forgotten yours or didn't even know you had one, call the number on the back of your credit card and ask the bank to send it to you. Do this in advance of your trip because the number usually takes five to seven business days to arrive, although some banks will provide the number over the phone if you tell them your mother's maiden name or some other personal information that verifies your identity.

Keep in mind that when you use your credit card abroad, banks may assess a 2 percent fee above the 1 percent fee charged by Visa, MasterCard, or American Express for currency conversion on credit charges. But credit cards still can be the smartest way to go when you factor in things such as exorbitant ATM fees and high traveler's check exchange rates (and service fees).

Visa and MasterCard are both widely used in Scotland. American Express is accepted by most major businesses, but Diner's Club is less frequently accepted.



Some credit card companies recommend that you notify them of any impending trip abroad so that they don't become suspicious when the card is used numerous times in a foreign destination and consequently block your charges. Even if you don't call your credit card company in advance, you can always call the card's toll-free emergency number if a charge is refused — a good reason to carry the phone number with you. But perhaps the most important lesson here is to carry more than one card with you on your trip; a card may not work for any number of reasons, so having a backup is the smart way to go. Also, make certain you have the credit card companies' toll free or collect call numbers to phone them from Scotland. You may want to keep multiple copies of these numbers, in case your card (with the number on the back) is lost or stolen.



If you're an **American Express** card member, bring a single blank personal check and keep it in a separate place from your card. If the card is lost or stolen, you can use that check to draw a cash advance against your account. Just bring it, unsigned, into any AmEx office, and it'll be cashed on the spot.

Toting traveler's checks

These days, traveler's checks are less necessary because most cities have 24-hour ATMs that allow you to withdraw small amounts of cash as needed. However, keep in mind that you're likely to be charged an ATM withdrawal fee if the bank isn't your own, so if you're withdrawing

money every day, you may be better off with traveler's checks — provided that you don't mind showing identification every time you want to cash one.

You can get traveler's checks at almost any bank. **American Express** (with city center offices in both Edinburgh and Glasgow) offers denominations of \$20, \$50, \$100, \$500, and (for cardholders only) \$1,000. You'll pay a service charge ranging from 1 percent to 4 percent. You can also get American Express traveler's checks over the phone by calling ☎ **800-221-7282**; AmEx gold and platinum cardholders who use this number are exempt from the 1 percent fee.

Visa offers traveler's checks at Citibank locations nationwide, as well as at several other banks. The service charge ranges between 1.5 percent and 2 percent; checks come in denominations of \$20, \$50, \$100, \$500, and \$1,000. Call ☎ **800-732-1322** for information. AAA members can obtain Visa checks without a fee at most AAA offices or by calling ☎ **866-339-3378**. **MasterCard** also offers traveler's checks; call ☎ **800-223-9920** for a location near you.



If you choose to carry traveler's checks, be sure to keep a record of their serial numbers separate from your checks in the event that they're stolen or lost. You'll get a refund faster if you know the numbers.

Taking Taxes into Account

All goods and services in Scotland have a tax or tariff similar to the local sales taxes in the U.S. It's called a value-added tax (VAT) and is a rather whopping 17.5 percent. The good news is that any tourist who lives outside of the European Union is entitled to get a refund on any VAT paid for goods that they take out of the European Union — as long as they make those purchases at shops that are part of the Retail Export Scheme (look for signs saying "Tax Free Shopping"). The tax-back scheme is great for tourists who spend large sums of money on books, jewelry, gifts, clothes — you name it (except, alas, for services such as hotels, restaurants, or car rental).

But many tourists come to Scotland, spend lots of money, and never find out how to get their VAT back or don't bother because they don't fully understand how it works. To ensure that you don't make the same mistake, here's your quick guide to the VAT.

When you make your purchase, show your passport and ask for a tax refund form. Fill out the form and keep any receipts. When you leave the U.K., submit the form to Customs for approval. Once Customs has stamped it, there are a variety of ways to recover the tax. You can mail the form back to the shop and arrange repayment by post. Some shops are part of networks run by a commercial refund companies, who you later contact for a refund, although an administration fee may be

charged. Some London airport terminals may have refund booths where immediate repayments can be received.

If you are going to another E.U. country, the scheme doesn't work: You must be leaving the E.U. zone. Also, U.K. Customs advises that you should arrange the method of tax reimbursement with the retailer when you purchase the product. For more information, log on to www.visitbritain.com and do a site search for "VAT refunds." For more information on a commercial refund company, try logging on to www.globalrefund.com or www.premiertaxfree.com.



Remember not all VATs are refundable. Those added to services aren't refundable. Hotels, restaurants, and car rentals, for example, charge VAT that you can't get back.

Protecting Yourself and Your Money

Rest easy: You're going to a safe country. The occurrence of violent crime is reasonably low in Scotland, although it's higher in some city districts, of course. Handguns are banned across the entire U.K., and Scotland has so few pistols on the streets that police, as a rule, don't even carry them. In 2006, a report found that cops in the entire country had only shot firearms 34 times in seven years.

Theft is not a major problem — especially if you use common sense and guard yourself against it. Pickpockets look for people who seem to have the most money on them and know the least about where they are. Getting money from an ATM late at night on a deserted street in Glasgow or Edinburgh is probably not particularly wise. Also, don't leave large sums of money lying around your hotel in the city, unless it is one with good security.

Crime is a fact of modern city life. In many rural areas of Scotland, however, people don't even bother locking their house doors at night.

If your wallet is lost or stolen, don't panic. Contact all your credit card companies the minute you discover the loss. Most credit card companies have an emergency toll-free number to call if your card is lost or stolen; they may be able to wire you a cash advance immediately or deliver an emergency credit card in a day or two.

Contact the police by going to a station, stopping a passing cop, or dialing ☎ 999 on any telephone. In order to cancel charges or cover your loss, your credit card company or insurer may require a police report; plus, contacting the police ensures that any lost items can easily be returned to you if they're found.

Except for the cash, everything in your wallet is replaceable, and you probably can get emergency cash by contacting your bank. Most larger banks will accept collect calls. You may be able to get cash from your

checking account wired as a Moneygram and sent to a travel agent or perhaps to your hotel in Scotland. Fees will apply, but at least you won't starve. If you need emergency cash over the weekend, when all banks and American Express offices are closed, you can have money wired to you via **Western Union** (☎ 800-325-6000; www.westernunion.com).



“Chip and PIN” is the system in Scotland regarding credit card purchases. That means that all credit cards issued there have a computer chip in them and users must know their PIN numbers in order to make purchases. No signatures are required. Cards without chips can still be used, however.



Scottish merchants are careful about checking the signatures on receipts against credit cards, but a smart thief can master the fine art of forging your signature. Make sure your cards really are lost before reporting them gone, but after you're certain, make the calls. You're expected to phone immediately upon realizing your credit cards are gone.

The phone numbers to report lost or stolen credit cards while you're in Scotland are

- ✔ **Visa** (☎ 0800-891-725)
- ✔ **MasterCard** (☎ 0800-964-767)
- ✔ **American Express** (☎ 01273-696-933)
- ✔ **Diner's Club** (☎ 0870-190-0011)

For other credit cards, call the toll-free number directory at ☎ 800-555-1212.

Identity theft and fraud are potential complications, especially if you've lost your passport along with your cash and credit cards. If you lose your passport, contact the U.S. consulate general in Edinburgh by calling ☎ 0131-556-8315, although you will need to travel to London and appear in person at the full-blown American Embassy to replace it. It may be wise to notify the major credit-reporting bureaus, as placing a fraud alert on your records may protect you against liability for criminal activity. The three major U.S. credit-reporting agencies are **Equifax** (☎ 800-766-0008; www.equifax.com), **Experian** (☎ 888-397-3742; www.experian.com), and **TransUnion** (☎ 800-680-7289; www.transunion.com).

Chapter 6

Getting to Scotland

In This Chapter

- ▶ Flying directly to Scotland with the best airfares
 - ▶ Taking the train from England to Scotland
 - ▶ Weighing the pros and cons of escorted or package tours
-

Visiting castles, relaxing in local pubs, and exploring the Highlands are the easy parts of traveling to Scotland. The more difficult issue is making plans to get yourself there. Several resources, however, make planning your travel to Scotland virtually painless. This chapter discusses how to find those resources in addition to helpful hints on things from bargain airfares to the lowdown on love-'em-or-hate-'em package tours.

Flying to Scotland

Unless you fancy a long boat ride, you're most likely to fly into the United Kingdom, arriving in Scotland directly or via England or some other European hub, such as Dublin, Reykjavik, or Amsterdam.

Identifying your airline options

A few carriers fly directly from the U.S. (namely greater New York, Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Orlando) to Scotland. But often the service is seasonal (May–Sept) and seems to change every year. For example, in 2006, American Airlines announced it was terminating its Chicago to Glasgow service. Long-distance carriers don't yet appear convinced that the market is solid enough to make a commitment to direct flights to Scotland.

Still, almost every airline in the world seems to fly into one of London's airports, so getting north from there to Scotland will entail only a short flight (about one hour, unless you're headed to the Highlands) or a four- to five-hour train ride to get north across the border.



If you're traveling from down under, no airlines currently fly directly from Australia or New Zealand to Scotland. All flights on international airlines from these two countries go through London.

The major airlines listed below offer U.K. flights, including a few direct to Scotland. Be sure to call more than one airline to compare prices.

- ✓ **Air Canada** (☎ 888-247-2262; www.aircanada.ca)
- ✓ **American Airlines** (☎ 800-433-7300; www.aa.com)
- ✓ **British Airways** (☎ 800-247-9297; www.britishairways.com)
- ✓ **Continental Airlines** (☎ 800-231-0856; www.continental.com)
- ✓ **Delta Airlines** (☎ 800-241-4141; www.delta.com)
- ✓ **Northwest Airlines** (☎ 800-447-4747; www.nwa.com)
- ✓ **United Airlines** (☎ 800-538-2929; www.united.com)
- ✓ **US Airways** (☎ 800-428-4322; www.usairways.com)
- ✓ **Virgin Atlantic** (☎ 800-862-8621; www.virgin-atlantic.com)

If you travel via London, you can opt for a short flight to Scotland. British Airways (☎ 0870-850-9850; www.britishairways.com) has several per day. BMI (☎ 0870-607-0555; www.flybmi.com) offers internal U.K. flights. Flybe (☎ 0871-700-0535 or ☎ 44-1392-268-520 from outside the U.K.; www.flybe.com) is a discount airline that crisscrosses the U.K.

Regardless of whether you're coming to Scotland directly or from a transfer point, you'll most likely fly into Glasgow or Edinburgh. Both airports are easy to get in and out of and offer easy transportation into the cities. Because of the frequency of flights into these airports, you're more likely to find a cheap fare to them compared to flights to smaller Scottish cities, such as Inverness, Aberdeen, or Dundee. Both Edinburgh and Glasgow offer perfectly fine airports, and neither option outweighs the other in terms of proximity to a city.

Glasgow International Airport (☎ 0870-040-0008) is at Abbotsinch, near Paisley, only about 16km (10 miles) west of the city via M8. **Edinburgh International Airport** (☎ 0870-040-0007) is about 10km (6 miles) west of the city's center and has become a growing hub for flights both within the British Isles and to and from Continental Europe. South of Glasgow is **Prestwick International Airport** (☎ 0871-223-0700; www.gpia.co.uk), which is favored by some of the low-budget airlines such as **RyanAir**. Prestwick's on the railway line to Ayr, about a 45-minute ride from Glasgow's Central Station. (For pointers on planning your itinerary, and help on deciding your arrival and departure points, see Chapter 4; for details on getting to Edinburgh or Glasgow, see Chapters 11 and 12.)

Getting the best deal on your airfare

Competition among the major airlines is unlike that of any other industry. Every airline offers virtually the same product, yet prices can vary by hundreds of dollars.



If you can book your ticket far in advance, stay over Saturday night, and are willing to travel midweek (Tues–Thurs), you can qualify for the least expensive price — usually a fraction of the full fare. Obviously, planning ahead pays.

Several reliable consolidators operate worldwide and are available on the Web. **STA Travel** (☎ 800-781-4040; www.statravel.com), the world's leader in student-aimed travel, offers good fares for travelers of all ages. **ELTExpress** (☎ 800-TRAV-800; www.flights.com) started in Europe and has excellent fares worldwide, but particularly to that continent. **LowestFare.com** (☎ 800-FLY-CHEAP; www.1800flycheap.com) is owned by package-holiday megalith MyTravel and so has especially good fares to sunny destinations. **Air Tickets Direct** (☎ 800-778-3447; www.airticketsdirect.com) is based in Montreal and leverages the currently weak Canadian dollar for low fares.

Booking your flight online

The “big three” online travel agencies, **Expedia** (www.expedia.com), **Travelocity** (www.travelocity.com), and **Orbitz** (www.orbitz.com) sell most of the air travel tickets purchased via the Internet. (Canadian travelers should try www.expedia.ca and www.travelocity.ca; U.K. residents can go for www.expedia.co.uk and www.opodo.co.uk.) Each online agency has different arrangements with the airlines and may offer different fares on the same flights, so shopping around is wise. If you register for the service, Expedia and Travelocity will send you an **e-mail notification** when a cheap fare becomes available to your favorite destination. Of the smaller travel agency Web sites, **SideStep** (www.sidestep.com) receives good reviews from users. It's purports to “search 140 sites at once” and allows you to open a browser and purchase flights from the sites that they search.

If you're willing to give up some control over your flight details, use an *opaque fare service* such as **Priceline** (www.priceline.com) or **Hotwire** (www.hotwire.com). Both offer rock-bottom prices in exchange for travel on a “mystery airline” at a mysterious time of day, often with a mysterious change of planes en route. The airlines are all major, well-known carriers — and the possibility of being sent from Philadelphia to Scotland via Dallas is remote. But your chances of getting a 6 a.m. or 11 p.m. flight are pretty high. Hotwire tells you flight prices before you buy; Priceline usually has better deals than Hotwire, but you have to play their “name your price” game. **Note:** In 2004, Priceline added nonopaque service to its roster. You now have the option to pick exact flights, times, and airlines from a list of offers (at prices similar to other nonopaque Web sites) — or opt to bid on opaque fares as before.

Taking the Train

Taking a train to Scotland from London or from other cities with airports, such as Manchester, isn't as fast as flying, but you get to admire

the countryside, arrive at your destination right in the heart of town, and not contribute to damaging the environment. The four and a half to five and a half hours on the train to Edinburgh or Glasgow from London takes up precious time (when you could be sightseeing), so you may want to inquire about red-eye trips that let you sleep on the train (because you're traveling during the night).

The trains that link London to Edinburgh (via Newcastle) on the East Coast Main Line are reasonably fast, efficient, and generally relaxing, with restaurant and bar service as well as air-conditioning. Trains depart from London's King's Cross Station (call National Railway Enquiries ☎ **08457-48-49-50** for rail info; from outside the U.K. call ☎ **44-207-278-5240**) repeatedly throughout the day and arrive in Edinburgh at **Waverley Station** in the heart of the city. The trip generally takes four and a half hours. Off-peak fares bought in advance can range widely, from around £25 to £93 (\$46–\$172) and the government is examining whether they should be less variable. Off-peak first-class tickets purchased in advance also vary widely from about £30 to £100 (\$56–\$185), although the cheapest fares seem to be rarely available. A fully flexible “buy anytime, travel anytime” standard open single fare is upwards of £120 (\$222). The Caledonian Sleeper service for overnight travel can cost about £100 (\$185), but online bargains booked well in advance can mean the trip may cost as little as £19 (\$35). You can easily make taxi and bus connections at Waverley Station, which also serves Glasgow with a **First Scot-Rail** (www.firstgroup.com/scotrail) shuttle service every 15 minutes during the day and every 30 minutes in the evenings until about 11:30 p.m. The one-way fare during off-peak times (travel after 9:15 a.m. and not from 4:15–6:30 p.m.) is £8.80 (\$16).

Trains from London arrive in Glasgow at **Central Station** in the heart of the city (call National Railway Enquiries ☎ **08457-48-49-50** for rail info; from outside the U.K. call ☎ **44-207-278-5240**). The trains that directly link London and Glasgow (via Preston and Carlisle from London's Euston Station) on the West Coast Main Line don't have the reputation for efficiency of those going to Edinburgh. And they are generally little quicker than taking the train to Glasgow via Edinburgh. The trains (operated by Virgin; ☎ **08457-222-333**; www.virgin.com/trains) on the West Coast Main Line depart from London's Euston Station every hour or so and the trip to Glasgow generally takes five and a half hours these days. If you plan a trip on the West Coast Main Line, call and find out if any major “track works” are scheduled during your journey. If so, you can expect delays and the possibility of riding a bus for a portion of the trip. Virgin prices, similar to all the United Kingdom's train-operating companies, are diverse and complicated. In general, you might get a one-way ticket for as little as £35 (\$65) although the standard advance purchased ticket is more likely to be between £90 to £100 (\$167–\$185).

You may prefer to take a train from London's Kings Cross up the East Coast Main Line via Newcastle, Edinburgh, and across (via Motherwell) to Glasgow. The time it takes is about the same as the West Coast Line.

Glasgow's Central Station is also the terminus for trains arriving from the southwest of Scotland and a hub for numerous trains to city suburbs in most directions. A ten-minute walk away (or via shuttle bus 398) is **Queen Street Station**. From here, **First ScotRail** (www.firstgroup.com/scotrail) shuttle service is available to and from Edinburgh, as I said already.

Trains to and from points north of Edinburgh and Glasgow depart from both cities about three to five times daily, although frequency is reduced during the low season (from the end of Sept to about Easter).

Joining an Escorted Tour

You may be one of the many people who love escorted tours. The tour company takes care of all the details and tells you what to expect on each leg of your journey. You know your costs up front and, in the case of the tame ones, you don't get many surprises. A great thing about escorted tours is that they can take you to the maximum number of sights in the minimum amount of time with the least amount of hassle.



If you decide to go with an escorted tour, purchasing travel insurance is strongly recommended, especially if the tour operator asks to you pay your trip costs up front. But don't buy insurance from the tour operator! If the tour operator doesn't fulfill its obligation to provide you with the vacation you paid for, there's no reason to think that it will fulfill its insurance obligations either. Get travel insurance through an independent agency. (You can find out more about the ins and outs of travel insurance in Chapter 10.)

When choosing an escorted tour, along with finding out whether you have to put down a deposit and when final payment is due, ask a few simple questions before you buy:

- ✓ **What is the cancellation policy?** Can the operator cancel the trip if it doesn't get enough people? How late can you cancel if you're unable to go? Do you get a refund if you cancel? If the operator cancels?
- ✓ **How jam-packed is the schedule?** Does the tour schedule try to fit 25 hours worth of activity into a 24-hour day, or does it give you ample time to relax by the pool or shop? If getting up at 7 a.m. every day and not returning to your hotel until 6 or 7 p.m. sounds like a grind, certain escorted tours may not be for you.
- ✓ **How large is the group?** The smaller the group, the less time you spend waiting for people to get on and off the bus. A tour operator may give you an evasive answer to this question because they may not know the exact size of the group until everybody has made reservations, but they should be able to give you a rough estimate. Also, get an idea of the general age range of the group; whether the

tour's geared to seniors, students, families, or some other demographic may affect your decision to sign up.

- ✔ **Is there a minimum group size?** Some tours have a minimum group size and may cancel the tour if it doesn't book enough people. Find out if a quota exists and how close the operator is to reaching it. Again, tour operators may be evasive in their answers, but it may help you select a tour that's sure to happen.
- ✔ **What exactly is included?** Don't assume anything. You may have to pay to get yourself to and from the airport. A box lunch may be included in an excursion, but drinks may be extra. How much flexibility do you have? Can you opt out of certain activities, or does the bus leave once a day with no exceptions? Are all your meals planned in advance? Can you choose your entree at dinner?

Depending on your recreational passions, one of the following escorted tour companies may suit you:

- ✔ **CIE Tours International** (☎ 800-CIE-TOUR; www.cietours.com) does tours of the United Kingdom and offers a five-day, four-night escorted tour of Scotland, among other tours. The Web site features a helpful tour index with package prices, descriptions, and itineraries. Expect to pay around \$700 (not counting airfare) per person.
- ✔ **Globus** (☎ 866-755-8581; www.globusandcosmos.com) is a first-class, worldwide tour company. Globus has comprehensive 9- and 15-day tours of Scotland. You can book a whole package (including airfare, meals, hotels, and so on) or find your own cheap plane ticket (good for those travelers racking up frequent-flier miles) and book only the bus-tour part with Globus. Prices (including airfare) range from about \$1,775 to \$3,250 per person.
- ✔ **Scottish Tours** (☎ 0131-557-8008; www.scottishtours.co.uk) offers six mini-tours in air-conditioned buses departing from Edinburgh. The most elaborate is a three-day, two-night excursion that goes from the Scottish capital to Inverness on day one and then visits the northeastern tip of the country. Per person rates start at around £31 (\$57) for one-day trips and go up to £225 (\$416) for two nights (including breakfast and accommodation).
- ✔ **Cosmos** (☎ 800-276-1241; www.cosmosvacations.com) is the budget arm of Globus and offers scaled down versions of the Globus trips (although you don't see a great price difference), with a tour guide and motorcoach on hand at all times. Prices (including airfare) run from \$1,400 to \$1,900 per person.

Choosing a Package Tour

For many destinations, package tours can be a smart way to go. A package tour that includes airfare, hotel, and transportation to and from the

airport often costs less than the hotel alone on a tour you book yourself. That's because packages are sold in bulk to tour operators, who then resell them to the public.

Some packagers offer a better class of hotels than others; others provide the same hotels for lower prices. Some book flights on scheduled airlines; others sell charter flights. In some packages, your choice of accommodations and travel days may be limited. Some let you choose between escorted vacations and independent vacations, and others allow you to add on just a few excursions or escorted day trips (also at discounted prices) without booking an entirely escorted tour.

To find package tours, check out the travel section of your local Sunday newspaper or the ads in the back of national travel magazines such as *Travel + Leisure*, *National Geographic Traveler*, and *Condé Nast Traveler*. Another good source of package deals is the airlines themselves. Most major airlines offer air/land packages, including **American Airlines Vacations** (☎ 800-321-2121; www.aavacations.com), **Delta Vacations** (☎ 800-221-6666; www.deltavacations.com), **Continental Airlines Vacations** (☎ 800-301-3800; www.covacations.com), and **United Vacations** (☎ 888-854-3899; www.unitedvacations.com). Several big **online travel agencies** — Expedia, Travelocity, Orbitz, Site59, and Lastminute.com — also do a brisk business in travel packages.

Depending on your interests, one of the following packaged tour companies may suit you.

- ✓ **CIE Tours International** (☎ 800-CIE-TOUR; www.cietours.com): Details can be found in the section “Joining an Escorted Tour” earlier in this chapter.
- ✓ **Brian Moore International Tours** (☎ 800-982-2299; www.bmit.com) offers “Air Inclusive” vacations to Edinburgh from around \$500 during the low season.
- ✓ **Freedom Scotland Holidays** (☎ 0132-487-8617; www.freedomscotland.com) is slightly different than other package tour operators in that they ask what interests you and then set up an itinerary and accommodations based on your interests and what you wish to pay. Fees vary.
- ✓ **Thistle Golf (Scotland) Limited** (☎ 0141-248-4554; www.thistlegolf.co.uk) offers various golfing tours, such as one that covers both Ayrshire in the southwest and St. Andrews northeast of Edinburgh. Prices depend on the touring region and the length of your stay, so contact the company for details.

Chapter 7

Getting Around Scotland

In This Chapter

- ▶ Renting cars and navigating one-lane highways in Scotland
- ▶ Catching the breathtaking views by train or bus
- ▶ Getting to the beautiful islands by ferry

You do have choices when it comes to getting around Scotland: **train, car, bus, ferry, bicycle, or on foot.** Some visitors to Scotland rent cars for the duration of their visits because automobiles provide a sense of mobility that travelers appreciate — and are accustomed to. Certainly, in remote areas such as the Highlands, some form of personal transportation is almost essential because towns and villages are few and far between, plus public transportation can be limited.

Still, if your budget, length of stay, or specific destinations don't make driving mandatory, a variety of public transportation options can get you where you need to go. I have been from Glasgow to the isles of Mull and Iona, depending solely on trains, buses, and ferries (plus my own two feet and a rented bicycle). It imposed some limitations, for sure, but it also liberated me from the burden of driving, either in traffic or on bendy, one-lane roads. If your trip is primarily to Edinburgh and/or Glasgow, you don't really need a car at all.

But I have also toured the very northern parts of the country in a rented camper-van, taking my time, stopping frequently to have a better look at the majestic scenery, and taking detours whenever I liked. Just remember, if you are traveling throughout Scotland by road, the country is a virtual archipelago, settlements are separated by deep valleys, ragged mountains, and especially long lochs; you may have to travel 100 miles to cover 50 miles as the proverbial crow would fly. Plus, remote areas often only have single lane roads, which will keep your speed down.

This all means that some journeys, which don't seem far on the map, may take longer than anticipated, as narrow roads wind up and over mountains — or snake around the shores of lochs.

Getting Around by Car

For certain, seeing Scotland by car has its advantages, most notably the lack of timetables to keep in mind and greater control over where you want to go and when you want to go there. But you need to be aware of some driving-related issues that you will encounter while exploring Scotland by car.

To drive a car in Scotland for a limited period (up to 12 months), be certain that you have a valid driver's license issued by local authorities where you live permanently; you don't need any special license.

Getting along with fewer road signs

One of the biggest complaints that tourists have about driving around Scotland is the relative paucity of road signs. Most major attractions are well marked, but the motorways around cities can be confusing, and country roads often seem to lack the necessary signage. Having a good map close at hand (as well as a navigator who can read it) to help track your progress is always helpful. When in doubt, however, simply stop and ask for directions.

Keeping up with street name switches

You're in a city, you're driving along such-and-such road, then suddenly it has a new name, and two minutes later it changes again. This curious phenomenon will come up often as you ply city streets. It's actually common for street names in Scotland to change. For example, the famous Royal Mile in Edinburgh between the castle and Holyrood actually takes four different names along the way, from Castlehill to Canongate. Now that's royally confusing. Again, keep a map handy and refer to it often.

Driving on the left, roundabouts, and other differences

If you're used to driving on the right-hand side of the road, driving on the left-hand side is a shock initially. Perhaps what feels the strangest is the fact that the driver's seat and wheel is on the right-hand side of the car while the gearshift is on the left (although the relative positions of the clutch, brake pedal, and accelerator are the same). **Note:** Like the rest of Europe, most cars in Scotland have manual transmissions and stick shifts. If you need an automatic, make sure to request one specifically when reserving your rental car or van.

You merge to the right to get on highways, and you pass cars on the right while slower traffic stays in the left lanes. Don't pass cars (*overtake* in local parlance) by using left-hand lanes designed for slower traffic. I know you may do it all the time at home, but it's rarely seen here. Overtake slower traffic only by using right-hand lanes meant for faster traffic. And after you've safely passed someone, the courtesy to other drivers who may want to pass you is to return to a center or left lane.

Roundabouts (traffic circles) can be slightly tricky, but you'll quickly get the hang of them. First, traffic moves in a counterclockwise direction through roundabouts. As you near one, remember that any traffic approaching you from the right in the roundabout has the right of way. Only when traffic approaching from the right clears, should you drive into the roundabout. Once in, use your left turn signal to indicate which exit you intend to take from a roundabout. If you find yourself driving in a right-hand lane towards the core of a roundabout and can't get safely to your desired exit (on the left), don't barge across. Simply go around the circle again and prepare to exit the next time you approach your exit.

Staying safe on "single-track" roads

When you're driving through the rural countryside or in small villages, it's quite common to find only one lane, or *single-track*, roads carrying two-way traffic. Don't panic. These roads will always have passing places, often marked with a black and white striped pole or sign. If you see a vehicle approaching in the opposite direction, pull into the passing place if it's on your left, giving the other person room to pass. You can confirm your intentions by putting on your left turn signal (and you may find that some drivers will flash their headlights in recognition).



If, however, the passing place is to the right on the single-track road, *do not* pull into it. Stop where you are and just stay put (put on your left turn signal if you like) and allow the oncoming vehicle to use the pull-over space so that you may slide by.

In general, the driver who gets to a passing place first is meant to use it, but don't get involved in games of "chicken" to see who pulls off first. Play it safe and be the one to give way. Also, on hills, the vehicle going uphill has the right of way, as it is safer to reverse up a slope than down one.



It's a simple courtesy to acknowledge the other driver (who's passing you or whom you're passing) with a small wave, sometimes as simple as a raised finger (not the middle one) from the steering wheel.

Planning your gasoline expenditures

Gas, called *petrol* in Scotland, is costly. Like everywhere, the cost of gasoline in Scotland has risen this decade. Remember that the prices posted here are per *liter*, not per gallon. You may find yourself paying almost \$2 for a liter — and there are nearly four of them in a gallon. (Does public transportation sound a bit more appealing now?) Obviously, to get the best gas mileage, rent the smallest vehicle you can. A small car also helps you more easily navigate narrow roads.

Laying down the law on parking

In cities and towns, you will find some parking garages and outdoor car lots. Street parking is also fine, but don't assume that the absence of American-style meters means that parking on the street is free. Check

the signs. You may have to buy a ticket from a nearby machine that indicates how long you can stay. Purchase a ticket and use the sticky backing paper to affix it to your window. This system is used in some parking lots, too. Some residential neighborhoods in the cities are very restrictive and allow only local residents to park in available places. Also, you can never park where there is a double yellow line running along the curb, nor where you see a zigzag white line.

Safety tips to know before you get behind the wheel

Here are some important traffic rules and laws to help you get around safely and legally.

- ✓ At intersections marked with an inverted triangle (with the point facing you) or at roundabouts, yield to traffic coming from your right.
- ✓ You should not make left-hand turns (the equivalent of right-hand turns in America) when the traffic light is red.
- ✓ The general speed limit on the open road is 60 mph (96 kmph) unless otherwise posted. Standard 60 mph signs bear only a black circle with a slash mark through it. When the speed limit is other than 60 mph, you see a sign with a red circle and the limit written inside in black. You often see these signs when entering small towns, where you should reduce your speed to 30 mph, which is also the limit in cities unless otherwise marked. On motorways, the speed limit is generally 70 mph, although plenty of drivers go faster.
- ✓ A flashing yellow light means yield to pedestrian traffic but proceed with caution when clear.
- ✓ A sign with a red circle and a red “X” through the middle means no stopping or parking during posted hours. A zigzag white line along the curb also means no parking or stopping unless it’s due to traffic signals or congestion.
- ✓ Drivers and front-seat passengers must wear seat belts. If your car has back-seat belts, passengers seated there must wear them also.

Renting a Car

Rates for car rental (or car *hire*, as the Scots say) can vary. The price depends on the size of the car, the length of time you keep it, where and when you pick it up and drop it off, where you take it, and other factors. Asking a few key questions may save you money.

- ✓ Some companies may assess a drop-off charge if you don’t return the car to the same rental location.
- ✓ Ask if the rate is cheaper if you pick up the car at a location in town rather than at the airport.

- ✔ Find out whether age is an issue. Some car rental companies add on a fee for drivers under 25 — and some don't rent to them at all.
- ✔ If you see an advertised price, be sure to ask for that specific rate; otherwise you may be charged the standard (higher) rate. Don't forget to mention membership in AAA, AARP, trade unions, and other associations such as university alumni groups when making a reservation. These memberships may entitle you to discounts.
- ✔ Check your frequent-flier accounts for special deals.
- ✔ Weekend rates may be lower than weekday rates. If you're keeping the car five or more days, a weekly rate may be cheaper than the daily rate. Ask if the rate is the same for pickup on Friday morning as it is on Thursday night.
- ✔ As with other aspects of planning your trip, using the Internet can make comparison shopping for a car rental much easier. You can check rates at most of the major rental agencies' Web sites. Plus, all the major travel sites — **Travelocity** (www.travelocity.com), **Expedia** (www.expedia.com), **Orbitz** (www.orbitz.com), and **Smarter Living** (www.smarterliving.com), for example — have search engines that can dig up discounted car-rental rates. Just enter the car size you want and the pickup and return dates and locations, and the server returns a price. You can even make the reservation through any of these sites.

In addition to the standard rental prices, some optional charges might apply to car rentals (and some not-so-optional charges, such as taxes). In Scotland, you can pay a bit more to reduce the amount you would be obligated to shell out if you have an accident. For example, a \$40 fee for a weekly rental will reduce your deductible (or *excess* in the U.K.) considerably. Regardless, the car is fully insured against damage you incur to your vehicle or someone else's.

Some U.S. companies offer *refueling packages*, in which you pay for your initial full tank of gas up front and can then return the car with an empty gas tank. The refueling package prices can be competitive with local gas prices, but you don't get credit for any gas remaining in the tank when you return the car. I have not seen this in Scotland, but some companies have a habit of giving you a vehicle with a partially full tank and you must return it with just that amount. If it is less, they will charge you a premium to get it back to the right level. Make sure you are clear how much is in the tank before you leave with your rental.



Because the driver's side is the right-hand front seat in Scotland, your left arm, not your right, controls the stick shift. Rental companies have few vehicles with automatic transmissions, so request one specifically if you don't know how to operate a manual transmission — or don't think your left arm is up to it. Minivans, or *people movers*, are more likely to offer the option of automatic transmissions.

As for the class of car available, you can expect a variety of levels: **budget** or **small** (generally two-door run-arounds), **compact** (small but might have four doors), **medium** or **mid-size** (four doors, more head room, and larger trunk), and **large** or **family** (bigger still). Companies often offer upgrades. You may think you want a larger vehicle, but keep in mind that roads can be narrow. Get the smallest car you can, taking into consideration your driving comfort, the comfort of your fellow travelers, and the amount of luggage you're carrying. **Air-conditioning** and **unlimited mileage** are standard, but always confirm that there are no mileage charges.

The following are a couple of issues you need to address when arranging for your rental car.

- ✔ **Where and when to pick up the car:** If you fly into Edinburgh or Glasgow and plan to stay in the city for two or more days, wait to get the car until you're just about to head out to the countryside. In the city, you don't need a car. Some companies have pick-up locations in or near the city. If you're planning to leave town immediately or early the next morning, however, getting the car upon arrival is a good idea. You can set out according to plan, and you save the time and hassle of having to go back to the airport or locate the rental agency the next day.
- ✔ **How to pay for the car:** Some companies require a deposit, generally on a credit card, when you make your reservation. If you book by phone, the clerk may ask for the card number then; otherwise you use your credit card at the rental desk.



If you're not sure how long you need a car (if, maybe, you're thinking about coming back to Glasgow early to see more city sights), book your rental for the shorter amount of time and extend it from the road with a simple phone call rather than bringing the car back early. If you've booked a car for a week but bring it back after only four days, for example, the company will post the refund to your credit card.

Rental-car companies in Scotland

All the major rental agencies are represented at the country's two primary airports. In addition, in Glasgow, you can find

- ✔ **Avis Rent-a-Car:** 70 Lancefield St. (☎ 0870-608-6339; www.avis.co.uk)
- ✔ **Budget Rent-a-Car:** 101 Waterloo St. (☎ 0800-212-636; www.budget.co.uk)
- ✔ **Arnold Clark:** multiple locations (☎ 0845-607-4500; www.arnoldclarkrental.com)

Does your boot go in your luggage or your luggage in your boot?

To spare you the confusion of car-related words and phrases in Scotland, here's a list of the most commonly used (and most commonly confused) terms you may come across.

- ✓ **boot:** trunk
- ✓ **bonnet:** hood
- ✓ **motorways:** freeways
- ✓ **pavement:** sidewalk
- ✓ **petrol:** gasoline
- ✓ **roundabouts:** traffic circles (or "rotaries" if you're a New Englander); make sure you go left and yield to the right

In Edinburgh city, try

- ✓ **Avis:** 5 West Park Place (☎ 0870-153-9103)
- ✓ **Hertz:** 10 Picardy Place (☎ 0870-846-0013; www.hertz.co.uk)
- ✓ **Thrifty:** 42 Haymarket Terrace (☎ 0131-337-1319; www.thrifty.co.uk)

Taking the Train

First ScotRail runs the trains in Scotland. It's not a publicly owned company, but rather a state-subsidized private firm that has a contract to operate the trains. To confuse matters, the railway lines are owned by a different, pseudo-private company called Network Rail (formerly Railtrack). Privatization of the railways has proved to be a poor decision for most of Great Britain, a country that once led the way in the development of the railroad.

The advantage of train travel is that you can generally sit back, relax, and enjoy the scenery in a way that is often difficult when traveling by road. With some exceptions, the trains in Scotland are reasonably efficient and comfortable. On the downside, trains are more expensive than in most European countries, and they travel to fewer destinations than would be ideal. Nevertheless, when they run on time, train travel is a good way to get from one part of the country to another.

Edinburgh Waverley has trains going southeast toward Berwick, west to Glasgow, northwest towards Stirling, and north through Fife, Tayside, and the Northeast. Glasgow's Central Station is the terminus for trains going southwest through Ayrshire and west to Greenock. Glasgow's Queen Street Station offers service to the west (Helenburgh, for example), northwest into Argyll and the Highlands, and north through Stirling and on into Tayside and Northeast. For journey planning, contact Traveline Scotland on ☎ **0870-608-2-608** or log on to www.traveline.scotland.com.

Generally speaking, you should have no problem buying **tickets** a half-hour before departure, but during the high season, it never hurts to call the day before to confirm availability. For 24-hour rail and fare information, call National Rail Enquiries ☎ **08457-48-49-50** or log on to www.firstscotrail.com. For general inquiries, call First ScotRail at ☎ **0845-601-5929**.

Seeing Scotland by Bus

Buses are an adequate way to see Scotland. They make more stops than the trains and are thus slower. But they cost less. The usual downsides apply to bus travel: Unlike when you have a rental car, you're not free to stop wherever and whenever you want — you're stuck with the same people for hours at a time, and there's not much space to move. Regardless, the seating is comfortable, and the bus is a good way to meet people. For journey planning, contact Traveline Scotland on ☎ **0870-608-2-608** or log on to www.travelinescotland.com.

Scottish Citylink is Scotland's largest cross-country bus company. It offers services to 200 towns and cities across Scotland, including Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Stirling, Perth, Inverness, Aviemore, Thurso, Ullapool, Oban, Campbeltown, Lochgilphead, Fort William, Portree, Glencoe, Dunfermline, and Dumfries. Information, prices, times, and routes can be obtained by calling ☎ **0870-550-5050** or by visiting www.citylink.co.uk. **Stagecoach** is another major operator, running buses to northeast Scotland, the Highlands, as well as through central and southern areas. The company can be reached by calling ☎ **01292-613-500** or by visiting www.stagecoachbus.com.

Sightseeing bus tours can give a taste of the often-stunning countryside on one-, two-, and three-day excursions. If this is your kind of travel, consider the following tour companies:

- ✓ **Scottish Tours** (☎ **0871-200-800** or, in the U.S., call ☎ **1-800-890-7375**; www.scottishtours.co.uk) offers one-day to five-day sightseeing tours of the country in air-conditioned buses. The most elaborate is the "Highland Explorer" package, which departs from either Edinburgh or Glasgow, taking passengers to Inverness, the jumping off point for minibus excursions with a local guide to the

Isle of Skye, John O'Groats, and more. Prices start at around £31 (\$57) for one-day trips and go up to £560 (\$1,036) for a single tourist on the five-day tour (including breakfast and hotel accommodation).

- ✔ **Timberbush Tours** (☎ 0131-226-6066; www.timberbush-tours.co.uk) use minibuses to take small groups to various locations, from Edinburgh (from half-day to three-day) and Glasgow (one-day only). One half-day tour is called “Kings, Queens, & Heroes,” and operates off season, stopping at Linlithgow, Bannockburn, and Stirling. Prices for the three-day tour to Skye, the Highlands, and Loch Ness range from £90 (\$167) in low season to £103 (\$191) at the height of summer. Prices only cover transportation and guide.
- ✔ **Heart of Scotland Tours** (☎ 0131-558-8855; www.heartofscotlandtours.co.uk) offers one-day minibus tours of that depart from Edinburgh's Waterloo Place near Calton Hill at 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. in the morning, returning to Edinburgh between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. Prices range from £26 to £32 (\$48–\$59).
- ✔ **MacBackpackers** (☎ 0131-558-9900; www.macbackpackers.com), a company that runs youth hostels, offers a “hop-on, hop-off” bus service for more intrepid adventurers. This bus does a circuit of Scotland, stopping at Pitlochry, Inverness, Kyle of Lochalsh, Fort William, Oban, and Glasgow. The basic price is £75 (\$139). The company also runs tours, such as the seven-day grand tour at £175 (\$324). Accommodation is not included, but it is guaranteed at hostels, which average about £12 (\$22) per night.

Finally, by Ferry

The preferable way to get from one island to the next in the Hebrides (see Chapter 19) is by ferry. Few trips are more sublime than those that include a boat ride in Scotland's picturesque seas. One company, **Caledonian MacBrayne**, or **CalMac** for short, runs the major routes between islands. You can take your car on most of the ferries, but a few are vehicle-free and want to stay that way. Remember to call the day before you hope to go out, because heavy seas can cancel ferry travel.



If you plan to see more than one island, you might look into CalMac's “Island Hopscotch” fares, which offer island-hopping tickets to selected destinations and are valid for one month. For example you can rove from the mainland ferry terminal at Mallaig to Skye, Skye to Harris, Harris to Uist, and Uist back to the mainland port of Oban.

- ✔ **Caledonian MacBrayne** (☎ 01475-650-100; www.calmac.co.uk), or CalMac, as it's more colloquially known, serves 22 islands and 4 peninsulas over the western coast of Scotland.
- ✔ **Northlink Ferries** (☎ 0845-600-0449; www.northlinkferries.co.uk) sail to Shetland and Orkney.

Chapter 8

Booking Your Accommodations

In This Chapter

- ▶ Knowing what to expect in the way of accommodations
 - ▶ Estimating how much you'll pay to stay
 - ▶ Determining your lodging needs
 - ▶ Finding the best rates and reserving the best rooms
-

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the types of accommodations available in Scotland, helping you choose what feels right in terms of style, comfort, and budget. Individual accommodation listings appear in each city and regional chapter later in this book (Part III and Part IV).

Getting to Know Your Options

The **Scottish Tourist Board** or, as it prefers to be called in the computer age, **VisitScotland.com**, has instituted a **grading system** that ranks all types of accommodations on the basis of their available amenities as well as more subjective criteria such as hospitality, ambience, food, and the condition of the property. This ranking system can be useful, but it can also be misleading. The ranking may be lower than the place actually deserves simply because a room lacks a telephone or an accommodation doesn't include a television. Decide if certain amenities such as a minibar or trouser press in your room are important to you, and then find out what's being offered by hotels or B&Bs.



Accommodations involved in the grading system display a blue plaque or sticker (usually on or by the door) showing the number of stars earned. If you don't see the plaque and the lodging isn't in the grading system, it's not necessarily a bad place to stay, but if you have a bad experience, the tourist board has no authority to reprimand the establishment.

The tourist board's grading system doesn't rate the size, location, or price of the place. It also only rates those establishments that pay to join the tourist board and its scheme (which can put off some more frugal or independently minded operators).

Knowing What You'll Pay

I've tried to include some options for the budget-minded, but you should anticipate that accommodations will be a good chunk of your traveling expenses. In all my listings, the cost of a **double room** — one room for you and a guest to stay in together — is given for each accommodation. The figures may indicate a range of prices for a double room: that might reflect different sizes of rooms, those with views compared to those with none, or the off-season rate compared to the high season rate. Most places offer a **full breakfast** — or at least a light Continental breakfast — as part of the rate.

Each hotel listing is prefaced with a number of dollar signs ranging from one (\$) to four (\$\$\$\$), corresponding to price. Use Table 8-1 as a pricing scale for quick reference; it shows you what you can expect in terms of room size and standard amenities in each of these price categories.

Table 8-1: Key to Hotel Dollar Signs

<i>Dollar Sign(s)</i>	<i>Price Range</i>	<i>What to Expect</i>
\$	Less than £55 (\$102)	These accommodations are relatively simple and inexpensive. Rooms will likely be small, and televisions are not necessarily provided. Parking is likely not provided, and you're on your own to find a spot on the street.
\$\$	£55–£120 (\$102–\$222)	A bit classier, these midrange accommodations offer more room, more extras, and a more convenient location than the preceding category. Parking is not necessarily provided.
\$\$\$	£121–£175 (\$224–\$324)	Higher-class still, these accommodations begin to look plush. Think chocolates on your pillow, a restaurant, underground parking garages, maybe even views of the water.
\$\$\$\$	£176 (\$326) and up	These top-rated accommodations come with luxury amenities such as valet parking, on-premise spas, and in-room hot tubs and CD players — but you pay through the nose for 'em.

Determining Your Accommodations Needs

Unless you are going to focus exclusively on one region, you probably won't be staying in a rented castle or a cottage during your trip to Scotland. Check the Internet or local tourism boards for just the right massive mansion or quaint cottage amid the heather for you.

It's much more likely that you'll be staying in the more common choices for accommodations in Scotland: **hotels**, **B&Bs**, and **guesthouses**. Wherever you stay, you can expect generally friendly service, clean rooms, and a decent breakfast. Smaller hotels with dining rooms, however, can be quite restrictive about when food is available.

The quality of food offered can vary from inn to inn. You may be frustrated to find that although you're staying in a hotel at the edge of a plentiful loch, the fish on the menu is frozen and deep-fried. If cuisine is important to you, do a bit of homework before you decide where you're going to stay, especially if dinners are included in the room price.

Other accommodation options include **self-catering properties**, which have kitchen facilities, and youth **hostels**.



You can find out much about the country's different types of accommodations and available package deals at the tourist board's Web site, www.visitscotland.com. The site lists a range of lodging choices, including hotels, guesthouses, bed-and-breakfasts, caravan and camping parks, and self-catering cottages.

Hotels

Most hotels will have tea- and instant coffee-making equipment (electric kettles and cups) in most rooms. Bellhops (porters) aren't so common, however, except in the posh places. And smaller hotels sometimes lock their front doors at certain (late) hours, so you may have to ring the bell or knock to be let in after hours. Conversely, in the more remote areas, they probably never lock the front door if staff are on the premises. As a practice and courtesy, though, try to let a member of hotel staff know if you plan to be out late.

Hotels are used to catering to tourists, and many will be helpful. You can expect the furnishings to be comfortable, and many of the larger and chain hotels have gyms, room service, and an in-house restaurant and pub. Because you're a resident, hotels are required to keep the bar open until you retire for the night (but don't abuse the privilege).

Hotel chains can be found in Scotland's cities and larger towns. In some cases, taverns or restaurants have overnight rooms, too. If you choose to take a room in a pub, just be certain you're not going to be troubled if the Saturday night karaoke goes on until midnight.

Hello? Is this Scotland?

If you want to book your room over the phone, or if the place you want to stay at doesn't have Internet booking abilities, you need to know **how to call Scotland**. To call Scotland from anywhere in the world, dial the international access code (for example, 011 from the U.S.), then the country code (44 for the U.K.), then the city or local code (for example, Glasgow is 141), and then the number. (**Note:** When you're calling from within Great Britain, you need to add a zero before the city code.)

For example, if you're in the States and you want to call a favorite watering hole in Glasgow, the Babbity Bowster, just to make sure they'll have enough wine ready when you get there, you dial:

Int'l		Country		City		Number
011	+	44	+	141	+	552-5055

Remember, Scotland is five hours ahead of Eastern Time in the U.S. (eight hours ahead of the West Coast). If it's 1 p.m. in Philadelphia, it's 6 p.m. in Peterhead. If you're trying to call a business in Scotland, call before noon EST to be safe (before 9 a.m. in San Francisco).

Bed-and-breakfasts (B&Bs)

Many Scottish B&Bs take their hospitality seriously. You usually get to know the owners (likely the same folks who cook and serve your breakfast) — and you may come away feeling that you've made a new friend or two. A *guesthouse* is, for the most part, the same thing as a B&B, although generally a little larger.

Some B&Bs offer just a spare and comfortable bedroom (usually with a bathroom attached) in someone's home. Some B&B rooms, however, aren't *en suite*, meaning each room doesn't have a private bathroom. If you're completely averse to sharing facilities with the folks down the hall, make sure you ask for a room with its own bathroom (which may cost a bit more).

Bed-and-breakfasts aren't large — most are lucky to have four guest rooms. The better-known B&Bs tend to fill up quickly during the high season, so make your reservations as early as possible. Many B&Bs don't accept credit cards, so be prepared to pay in cash.

One advantage of choosing B&Bs over hotels is the price: They can be much less expensive, but you don't get the amenities of a hotel.



Self-catering cottages

Properties offered as *self-catering* run the gamut from modern apartments to rooms within castles to country cottages. I have listed a few

but not many. Taking a self-catering accommodation is essentially similar to renting a condo. They're a place to settle into and do things like you might at home. At self-catering properties, you can cook your own meals and make your own beds (or not).



Be certain you know what is provided in a self-catering facility — for example, the provision of towels and bed linens can incur extra costs.



With self-catering properties, the price isn't calculated per person and is generally set for the week (although some also rent by the weekend, for two to three days). When you take into account the amount of money you would pay for hotels and B&Bs, staying in a self-catering lodging can cut costs considerably. Food costs also decrease when you're buying your own and cooking it yourself. If you're budget-minded, self-catering is an option worth checking out.

A good place to begin researching self-catering properties is the **Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers** (www.assc.co.uk), whose members include owners and operators of a wide range of self-catering properties, from cottages to chalets to lodges to castles.

Hostels

Hostels have a reputation of being the accommodation of choice for students and frugal travelers. If the image you have of hostels is a place full of young, perky travelers who can go for long stretches without showers or food, you're partly correct (though only partly). Hostels are for independent travelers who cherish flexibility and want to stick to an accommodations budget. And although these accommodations are called "youth hostels," they take guests of any age, although most of the people you encounter are in their early 20s. They're also usually really great places to meet fellow travelers.



Hostels sometimes don't allow guests to remain in the building during the day. You may have to get out and about from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., whether you like it or not.

Hostels across Scotland vary in quality and services. Some offer communal kitchens for you to bring in and cook your own food. Some even have private rooms with en-suite bathrooms. Families can also stay in hostels, renting a room with four bunks. The majority of hostels, though, are places where people sleep dorm-style — anywhere from four to dozens of people to a room, usually in bunk beds.



Hostels provide a blanket and pillow and sometimes sheets, but to be safe, you should bring your own sleeping bag or sleep sack (or expect to rent sheets from the hostel).

As for the bathrooms: Think of high school gym restrooms or your college dorm — tiles, a row of sinks, toilet cubicles, and shower stalls,

sometimes spotlessly immaculate, sometimes appallingly grimy. You may not love it, but it gets the job done.



You can usually get a warm hostel bed for £10 (\$19) a night and will rarely pay more than £20 (\$37).

One general resource to check out is www.hostels.com. And if you know you'll be taking the backpacking route through Scotland, you may want to contact the Scottish Youth Hostel Association (☎ **0870-155-3255** for reservations or ☎ **01786-891-400** for general inquiries; www.syha.org.uk).



Security isn't a major problem in Scotland's hostels, but it's something to consider. Any time you're sleeping in a room full of strangers, take precautions to ensure the safety of yourself and your personal belongings. If your hostel doesn't provide lockers, lock your luggage, if it seems appropriate, or make your bags as difficult to get into as possible. Also, bring your wallet, passport, purse, and any other valuables into bed with you for safekeeping.

Finding the Best Room at the Best Rate

The *rack rate* is the standard rate a hotel charges for a room. It's the rate you get if you walk in off the street and ask for a room for the night — and thus it represents in most cases the highest rate.

Hotels are happy to charge you the rack rate, but you can almost always do better. In all but the smallest accommodations, the rate you pay for a room depends on many factors.



Reserving a room through the hotel's toll-free number may result in a lower rate than calling the hotel directly. On the other hand, the central reservations number may not know about discount rates available at specific locations. Your best bet is to call both the local number and toll-free number and see which one gives you a better deal.

Room rates (even rack rates) change with the season, as occupancy rates rise and fall. But even within a given season, room prices are subject to change without notice, so the rates quoted in this book may be different from the actual rate you receive when you make your reservation.



Remember, in Scotland, accommodation rates fall from about the beginning of October until Christmas and New Years (when they jump up to high season prices for a couple of weeks), and then they stay more affordable until mid-March or Easter time. Some of the nicer country house hotels close entirely in January. See Chapter 3 for a discussion of Scotland's high and low travel seasons. If you think you want a package tour that includes accommodation, flip to Chapter 6.

Surfing the Web for hotel deals

Independent Internet hotel booking agencies representing hotels and guesthouses in Scotland have multiplied in mind-boggling numbers of late, and it's the best way to get a reduced price for a room. Such competitiveness can be a boon to consumers who have the patience and time to shop and compare the online sites for good deals — but shop you must, for prices can vary considerably from site to site. And keep in mind that hotels at the top of a site's listing may be there for no other reason than that they paid money to get the placement.

Of the “big three” sites, **Expedia** offers a long list of special deals and “virtual tours” or photos of available rooms that allow you to see what you're paying for. **Travelocity** posts unvarnished customer reviews and ranks its properties according to the AAA rating system. Also reliable are **Hotels.com** and **Quikbook.com**. An excellent free program, **TravelAxe** (www.travelaxe.net), helps you search multiple hotel sites at once, and conveniently lists the total price of the room, including the taxes and service charges. It's a good idea to get a confirmation number and make a printout of any online booking transaction you make.

In the opaque Web site category, **Priceline** and **Hotwire** are even better for hotels than for airfares; with both, you're allowed to pick the neighborhood and quality level of the hotel you want before offering up your money. (However, as with all opaque Web sites, the name of the hotel is not revealed until you pay.) Priceline is much better at getting five-star lodging for three-star prices than at finding anything at the bottom of the scale. On the downside, many hotels stick Priceline guests in their least desirable rooms. Be sure to go to the **BiddingforTravel** Web site (www.biddingfortravel.com) before bidding; it features a fairly up-to-date list of hotels that Priceline uses in major cities. For both Priceline and Hotwire, you pay up front and the fee is nonrefundable. **Note:** Some hotels don't provide loyalty program credits or points or other frequent-stay amenities when you book a room through opaque online services.

For online hotel reservations services in Scotland, try www.visit-scotland.com or www.hotelreviewscotland.com. If you're looking for something more unusual, you may want to consider a farm stay; you can find information at www.scotfarmhols.co.uk.

Chapter 9

Catering to Special Travel Needs or Interests

In This Chapter

- ▶ Traveling with the family
 - ▶ Enjoying the perks of senior citizen status
 - ▶ Easing the way if you're traveling with a disability
 - ▶ Finding resources for gay and lesbian travelers
 - ▶ Searching for your Scottish roots
-

Scotland's population is generally a friendly one that welcomes visitors of all stripes. No matter where you are, however, some aspects of travel can be challenging for people with special needs. This chapter provides basic advice to help make your trip successful for everyone involved.

Traveling with the Brood: Advice for Families

Scotland may not top the list of countries that ease the burden of traveling with children, but it *is* getting better. Some posh country house hotels actually discourage families with children and/or prohibit toddlers from the dining room at night. Throughout this book, I've flagged (with the kid-friendly icon) those spots that are particularly appealing prospects for families.

You can find good family-oriented vacation advice on the Internet at

- ✔ **Family Travel Files** (www.thefamilytravelfiles.com): A site that offers an online magazine and a directory of off-the-beaten-path tours and tour operators for families
- ✔ **Family Travel Forum** (www.familytravelforum.com): A comprehensive site that offers customized trip planning

- ✓ **Family Travel Network** (www.familytravelnetwork.com): An award-winning site that offers travel features, deals, and tips
- ✓ **Traveling Internationally with Your Kids** (www.travelwithyourkids.com): A comprehensive site that offers customized trip planning

Familyhostel (☎ 800-733-9753; www.learn.unh.edu/familyhostel) takes the whole family, including kids ages 8 to 15, on moderately priced domestic and international learning vacations. A team of academics leads lectures, field trips, and sightseeing excursions.

To help ensure a peaceful trip with children in tow, take care of a few preliminaries before lift-off.

- ✓ Check what your children have packed. You want to make sure that they have the clothes necessary for any changes in the weather and make sure they haven't over-packed.
- ✓ Bring a few toys for younger children, but nothing that can't be replaced if it's lost along the way.
- ✓ Music and even books on tape or CD are great diversions. Small games work well for those times when the scenery isn't sufficiently engaging. Having a deck of cards handy is a good idea for restaurant visits.



Getting to Scotland and exploring with kids



Remember, each child, regardless of age, is expected to have a passport. Some airlines offer child-companion fares and have a children's menu upon request.

Car-rental companies in Scotland will provide necessary car seats, and all vehicles have rear seatbelts. The law requires that children be buckled in no matter whether they're in the front or back seats.



Keep in mind that most attractions and some public transportation options offer reduced prices for children. And most attractions, even places that don't seem particularly family-oriented, offer family group prices (usually for two adults and two or three children).



For the female traveler

Scotland very well could be, in general, a safer place than most for people traveling alone — especially women — but be careful not to be lulled into a false sense of security. To find out more about safety for women travelers, pick up a copy of *Safety and Security for Women Who Travel*, by Sheila Swan Laufer and Peter Laufer (Travelers' Tales Guides), which caters to the concerns of the female traveler.

Finding a family-friendly hotel

Contact your hotel, guesthouse, or B&B before you go to find out about potential cost-cutting accommodations for families with children. Many times, an extra cot for a child is just a small additional cost — a welcome exception to the per-person pricing standard in Scotland. Also, some places have a baby-sitter list in case you opt for a grown-ups' night out.

Making Age Work for You: Advice for Seniors

Most of the paid attractions in Scotland offer discounts (tickets called concessions) to senior citizens (“pensioners” or “OAPs” — which stands for *old age pensioners* — in local lingo). Most public transportation is less costly for older people, too, although local service may require a special ID that’s too much of a bother to obtain if you’re only in town for a day or two. People older than age 60 usually qualify for reduced admission to theaters, museums, and other attractions as well as discounted fares on public transportation. Hotels may offer discounts for seniors.

Members of **AARP** (formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons), 601 E St. NW, Washington, DC 20049 (☎ **888-687-2277** or 202-434-2277; www.aarp.org), are eligible for discounts on hotels, airfares, and car rentals.

Elderhostel (☎ **877-426-8056**; www.elderhostel.org) arranges study programs in more than 80 countries around the world for those ages 55 and older (and a companion of any age). Most courses last for two to four weeks abroad, and many include airfare, modest accommodations, meals, and tuition.

Recommended publications offering travel resources and discounts for seniors include: the quarterly magazine **Travel 50 & Beyond** (www.travel50andbeyond.com); **Travel Unlimited: Uncommon Adventures for the Mature Traveler** (Avalon); **101 Tips for Mature Travelers**, available from Grand Circle Travel (☎ **800-221-2610** or 617-350-7500; www.gct.com); **The 50+ Traveler’s Guidebook** (St. Martin’s Press); and **Unbelievably Good Deals and Great Adventures That You Absolutely Can’t Get Unless You’re Over 50**, by Joann Rattner Heilman (McGraw-Hill).



Many senior-targeted tours of Scotland are of the tour-bus variety, with free trips thrown in for those who organize groups of 20 or more. If you’re seeking more independent travel, you should probably consult a regular travel agent to make your travel plans (see Chapter 6).

Accessing Scotland: Advice for Travelers with Disabilities

Most disabilities shouldn't stop anyone from traveling. Scotland's cities are reasonably well equipped to accommodate those with disabilities. However, not everything in Scotland will be easy. Many train stations are decidedly inaccessible and historical attractions, such as castles, by their very nature, with cobblestone stairs, are difficult for even some able-bodied visitors to navigate. Some B&Bs and small hotels with lots of stairs and no elevators aren't suitable, either. Recently, Scotland toughened its rules on access for those with disabilities, so matters are improving.



You can call ahead to attractions and B&Bs to check their facilities, but you can feel fairly confident that newer restaurants and modern hotels will be entirely accessible.



The “Information for Visitors with Disabilities” guide, published by the National Trust of Scotland, is available at most tourist offices. It lists attractions in Scotland and details the accessibility of each portion of the attraction (for example, the castle may be accessible but the gardens and toilets may not be). The publication even details access points and views that are accessible from a wheelchair.

Travel agencies and organizations

Many travel agencies offer customized tours and itineraries for travelers with disabilities.

- ✓ **Access-Able Travel Source** (☎ 303-232-2979; www.access-able.com) offers extensive information on accessibility and advice for traveling around the world with disabilities.
- ✓ **Accessible Journeys** (☎ 800-846-4537 or 610-521-0339; www.disabilitytravel.com) offers travel planning and information for mature travelers, slow walkers, wheelchair travelers, and their families and friends.
- ✓ **Flying Wheels Travel** (☎ 507-451-5005; www.flyingwheelstravel.com) offers escorted tours and cruises that emphasize sports and private tours in minivans with lifts.

Organizations that offer assistance to travelers with disabilities include

- ✓ **American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)** (☎ 800-232-5463; www.afb.org): A referral resource for the blind or visually impaired that includes information on traveling with Seeing Eye dogs.
- ✓ **MossRehab ResourceNet** (www.mossresourcenet.org): Provides a library of accessible-travel resources online.

- ✓ **Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality (SATH; ☎ 212-447-7284; www.sath.org):** Offers a wealth of travel resources for people with all types of disabilities and recommendations on destinations, access guides, travel agents, tour operators, vehicle rentals, and companion services. Annual membership costs are \$45 for adults and \$30 for seniors and students.

For more information specifically targeted to travelers with disabilities, the community Web site **iCan** (www.icanonline.net) has destination guides and several regular columns on accessible travel. Also, check out **Twin Peaks Press** (☎ 360-694-2462), offering travel-related books for people with special needs, and **Open World Magazine**, published by SATH (subscription is \$13 per year, \$21 outside the U.S.).

Transportation

Avis Rent a Car has a program called “Avis Access” (☎ 888-879-4273; www.avis.com) that offers special car features such as swivel seats, spinner knobs, and hand controls.

Following the Rainbow: Advice for Gay and Lesbian Travelers

Although not considered the most liberally-minded country in Europe, Scotland is safe for gay and lesbian travelers. Glasgow and Edinburgh are progressive cities that are home to substantial (though perhaps subdued, depending on what you’re used to) gay populations. Smaller towns and villages may be less tolerant, and open displays of affection may be frowned upon. Hotels should not discriminate against same sex couples.



For more information and support, contact the **Gay and Lesbian Switchboard** (☎ 0141-847-0447) in Glasgow, which also operates the LGBT Centre (☎ 0141-221-7203). The line offers health advice, workshops, and cultural events in the community. On the Web, visit www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/societies/blogs, which is run by Edinburgh University’s Bisexual, Lesbian, Gay, or Transgendered Society.

The International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA; ☎ 800-448-8550 or 954-776-2626; www.iglta.org) offers an online directory of gay- and lesbian-friendly travel businesses; on the organization’s Web site, click “Members” for a detailed list.

Many agencies offer tours and travel itineraries developed specifically for gay and lesbian travelers.

- ✓ **Above and Beyond Tours** (☎ 800-397-2681; www.abovebeyondtours.com) is the exclusive gay and lesbian tour operator for United Airlines.

- ✓ **Now, Voyager** (☎ 800-255-6951; www.nowvoyager.com) is a well-known San Francisco-based gay-owned and -operated travel service.

The following travel guides are available at most travel bookstores and gay and lesbian bookstores, or you can order them from **Giovanni's Room Bookstore** (☎ 215-923-2960; www.giovannisroom.com):

- ✓ The **Damron** guides (www.damron.com) include annual books for gay men and lesbians.
- ✓ **Frommer's Gay & Lesbian Europe** (www.frommers.com) is an excellent travel resource.
- ✓ **Gay Travel A to Z: The World of Gay & Lesbian Travel Options at Your Fingertips** by Marianne Ferrari (Ferrari International; Box 35575, Phoenix, AZ 85069) is a very good gay and lesbian guidebook series.
- ✓ **Out and About** (☎ 800-929-2268 or 415-644-8044; www.outandabout.com) offers guidebooks and a newsletter (\$20 per year; ten issues) packed with solid information on the global gay and lesbian scene.
- ✓ **Spartacus International Gay Guide** (Bruno Gmünder Verlag; www.spartacusworld.com/gayguide) and **Odysseus** are both good, annual English-language guidebooks focused on gay men.

Uncovering Your Scottish Roots

If you have a surname beginning with Mac (which simply means “son of”) or one of the common lowland Scottish monikers from Burns to Armstrong, you're probably a descendant of Scots and may have ties to a clan — a group of kinsmen with common ancestry.

Clans and clan societies maintain their own museums throughout Scotland, and local tourist offices can give you details about where to locate them. Bookstores here also sell clan histories and maps.

Genealogical records are kept at the **General Register Office for Scotland**, New Register House, 3 W. Register St., Edinburgh (☎ 0131-334-0380; www.gro-scotland.gov.uk), where you can search for a fee. The system is strictly self-service, and the office gets very crowded in summer.

The official government source for genealogical data has also been added to the Web. Log on to www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk. A basic search through the computerized archive costs £6 (about \$11). The Web site's census data goes back more than 100 years.

Chapter 10

Taking Care of the Remaining Details

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting your passport
 - ▶ Investigating insurance needs
 - ▶ Staying healthy
 - ▶ Getting in touch by cellphone or e-mail
 - ▶ Keeping up with airport security measures
-

Before heading off to Scotland, you need to take care of some important business. The information I provide in this chapter should help you get all your ducks in a row.

Getting a Passport

A valid passport is the only legal form of identification accepted around the world. You can't cross an international border without one. Getting a passport is fairly easy, but the process takes some time, so you need to plan ahead. For an up-to-date country-by-country listing of passport requirements around the world, go to <http://travel.state.gov/travel/foreignentryreqs.html>, which is maintained by the U.S. Department of State.

Applying for a U.S. passport

If you're applying for a first-time passport, follow these steps.

1. Complete a passport application in person at a U.S. passport office; a federal, state, or probate court; or a major post office. Whether you're applying in person or by mail, you can download passport applications from the **U.S. Department of State** Web site at <http://travel.state.gov>. To find your regional passport office, either check the Department of State Web site or call the **National Passport Information Center** (☎ 877-487-2778) for automated information.

2. Present a certified birth certificate as proof of citizenship. (Bringing along your driver's license, state or military ID, or social security card is also a good idea.)
3. Submit two identical passport-sized photos, measuring 2 x 2 inches in size. A variety of businesses, including pharmacies and major post offices, take these photos.
4. Pay a fee. For people 16 and older, a passport is valid for ten years and costs \$85. For those 15 and younger, a passport is valid for five years and costs \$70.



Allow plenty of time before your trip to apply for a passport; processing normally takes three weeks but can take longer during busy periods (especially spring).

If you have a passport in your current name that was issued within the past 15 years (and you were older than age 16 when it was issued), you can renew the passport by mail for \$55. Whether you're applying in person or by mail, you can download passport applications from the U.S. Department of State Web site at <http://travel.state.gov/passport/index.html>. For general information, call the **National Passport Agency** (☎ 202-647-0518).

Applying for other passports

The following list contains passport information for citizens of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom.

- ✓ Australians can visit a local post office or passport office, call the **Australia Passport Information Service** (☎ 131-232 toll-free from Australia), or log on to www.passports.gov.au for details on how and where to apply.
- ✓ Canadians can pick up applications at travel agencies throughout Canada or from the central **Passport Office, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade**, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G3 (☎ 800-567-6868; www.ppt.gc.ca). Applications must be accompanied by two identical passport-sized photographs and proof of Canadian citizenship. Processing takes five to ten days if you apply in person or three weeks by mail.
- ✓ New Zealanders can pick up a passport application at any New Zealand Passports Office or download it from the main office's Web site, www.passports.govt.nz. For information, contact **Passports Office** at ☎ 0800-225-050 or visit the Web site.

Playing It Safe with Travel and Medical Insurance

Three kinds of travel insurance are available to you: trip-cancellation insurance, medical insurance, and lost luggage insurance. The cost of travel insurance varies widely depending on the cost and length of your trip, your age and health, and the type of trip you're taking, but expect to pay between 5 percent and 8 percent of the cost of the vacation itself.

For more information on travel insurance, contact one of the following insurers: **Access America** (☎ 866-807-3982; www.accessamerica.com) or **Travelx Insurance Services** (☎ 888-457-4602; www.travelx-insurance.com).

Trip-cancellation insurance

Trip-cancellation insurance helps you get your money back if you have to back out of a trip, if you have to go home early, or if your travel supplier goes bankrupt. Permissible reasons for cancellation can range from sickness to natural disasters to the department of state declaring your destination unsafe for travel.

A good resource for information on trip-cancellation and travel-related scams is **Travel Guard Alerts**, a list of companies considered high-risk by Travel Guard International (www.travelguard.com). Protect yourself further by paying for trip-cancellation insurance with a credit card — by law, a consumer can get his money back on goods and services not received if he paid with a credit card and reports the loss within 60 days after the charge is listed on his credit card statement.



Many tour operators include insurance in the cost of the trip or can arrange insurance policies through a partnering provider, a convenient and often cost-effective way for the traveler to obtain insurance. Make sure the tour company is a reputable one, however: Some experts suggest you avoid buying insurance from the tour or cruise company you're traveling with, saying it's better to buy from a third-party insurer than to put all your money in one place.

Medical insurance

For travel overseas, most health plans (including Medicare and Medicaid) don't provide coverage; those that do often require you to pay for services up front and will only reimburse you after you've returned home and filed the necessary paperwork. In Scotland, health care is nationalized and free to residents. The hospital's emergency rooms will treat anyone at no cost, regardless of whether you're a local or a tourist. For stays in the hospital and follow-up care, however, they will seek payment. As a safety net, you may want to buy travel medical insurance. If you require additional

medical insurance, try **MEDEX Assistance** (☎ 410-453-6300; www.medexassist.com) or **Travel Assistance International** (☎ 800-821-2828; www.travelassistance.com).

Lost luggage insurance

On international flights (including U.S. portions of international trips), baggage coverage is limited to approximately \$9.07 per pound, up to approximately \$635 per checked bag. If you plan to check items more valuable than what's covered by the standard liability, see if your homeowner's policy covers your valuables, get baggage insurance as part of your comprehensive travel-insurance package, or buy Travel Guard's "BagTrak" product. I would not suggest buying insurance at the airport — it's usually overpriced.



Be sure to take any valuables or irreplaceable items with you in your carry-on luggage, because many valuables (including books, money, and electronics) aren't covered by airline policies.

If your luggage is lost, immediately file a lost-luggage claim at the airport, detailing the luggage contents. For most airlines, you must report delayed, damaged, or lost baggage within four hours of arrival. Airlines are required to deliver found luggage directly to your house or destination free of charge.

Staying Healthy When You Travel

You don't need any special inoculations or shots to travel in Scotland. The threat of bird flu will continue to be debated, but any risks to you from either live poultry or wild bird populations will be miniscule.

If you have a serious and/or chronic illness, talk to your doctor before leaving on a trip. For conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, or heart problems, wear a **MedicAlert identification tag** (☎ 888-633-4298; www.medicalert.org), which immediately alerts doctors to your condition and gives them access to your records through MedicAlert's 24-hour hotline. Contact the **International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT)**; ☎ 716-754-4883 or, in Canada, 416-652-0137; www.iamat.org) for tips on travel and health concerns in Scotland and lists of local doctors. Also, the United States **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (☎ 800-311-3435; www.cdc.gov) provides up-to-date information on health hazards by region or country and offers tips on food safety. The Web site www.tripprep.com, sponsored by a consortium of travel medicine practitioners, may also offer helpful advice on traveling abroad. You can find listings of reliable clinics overseas at the **International Society of Travel Medicine** (www.istm.org).

In Scotland, health care is nationalized and free. Hospital emergency rooms will treat anyone, regardless of whether they're local residents or tourists.

Avoiding “economy-class syndrome”

Deep vein thrombosis (or, as it’s known in the world of flying, “economy-class syndrome”) is a blood clot that develops in a deep vein. It’s a potentially deadly condition that can be caused by sitting in cramped conditions — such as an airplane cabin — for too long. During a flight (especially a long one), get up, walk around, and stretch your legs every 60 to 90 minutes. Other things you can do to prevent deep vein thrombosis include frequent flexing of the legs while sitting, drinking lots of water, and avoiding alcohol and sleeping pills. If you have a history of deep vein thrombosis, heart disease, or another condition that puts you at high risk for deep vein thrombosis, some experts recommend wearing compression stockings or taking anticoagulants when you fly; always ask your physician about the best course of action for you. Symptoms of deep vein thrombosis include leg pain or swelling, or even shortness of breath.

Staying Connected by Cellphone or E-mail

Staying in touch while traveling is easier than ever, thanks to cellphones and the Internet. Of course, if what you’re interested in is an escape, you may want to skip the section below. Otherwise, read on.

Using a cellphone outside the U.S.

First of all, they’re called “mobiles” (*moe*-biles) in Scotland. The three letters that define much of the world’s wireless capabilities are GSM (Global System for Mobiles), a big, seamless network that makes for easy cross-border cellphone use throughout Europe and dozens of other countries worldwide. In the U.S., T-Mobile, AT&T Wireless, and Cingular use this quasi-universal system; in Canada, Microcell, and some Rogers customers are GSM, and all Europeans and most Australians use GSM.



If your cellphone is on a GSM system and you have a world-capable multiband phone such as many Sony Ericsson, Motorola, or Samsung models, you can make and receive calls across much of the globe, from Andorra to Uganda. Just call your wireless operator and ask for international roaming to be activated on your account. Unfortunately, per-minute charges on the network can be high.

If you have an unlocked phone — one that allows you to install removable computer memory phone chips (called SIM cards) — you can switch over to a cheap, prepaid SIM card (found at a local retailer) in Scotland. (Show your phone to the salesperson when you go to buy a SIM card; not all phones work on all networks.) With the new card, you get a local phone number and much, much lower calling rates. If your phone is locked, you may be able to have it unlocked. Just call your cellular operator and say you’ll be going abroad and want to use the phone with a local provider.

If you don't have a cellphone, or if your phone is locked, then renting a phone is another possibility. Although you can rent a phone from any number of overseas sites, including kiosks at airports and at car-rental agencies, I suggest renting the phone before you leave home. That way you can give loved ones and business associates your new number, make sure the phone works, and take the phone wherever you go. Getting the phone before you leave is especially helpful if you're planning to visit Scotland and then go overseas through several other countries, where local phone-rental agencies often bill in local currency and may not let you take the phone to another country.

Phone rental isn't cheap. You'll usually pay \$40 to \$50 per week, plus airtime fees of at least \$1 per minute. If you're traveling to the U.K. or Europe, though, local rental companies often offer free incoming calls within their home country, which can save you big bucks. Shop around.

Two good wireless rental companies in the States are **InTouch Global** (☎ 800-872-7626; www.intouchglobal.com) and **RoadPost** (☎ 888-290-1606 or 905-272-5665; www.roadpost.com). Give the company your itinerary, and someone will tell you what wireless products you need. For no charge, InTouch also advises you on whether your existing phone will work overseas; simply call ☎ 703-222-7161 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. EST, or go to <http://intouchglobal.com/travel.htm>.

In the U.K., you can rent (or "hire") phones from

- ✓ **Cellhire UK** (☎ 0800-610-610 within the U.K., ☎ 44-1904-610-610 outside the U.K., or ☎ 1-866-246-6546 within the U.S.; www.cellhire.co.uk)
- ✓ **Adam Phones** (☎ 0800-123-000 within the U.K.; ☎ 44-20-8742-0101 outside the U.K., or ☎ 1-866-GSM-HIRE within the U.S.; www.adamphones.com)

Accessing the Internet

Travelers have any number of ways to check e-mail and access the Internet on the road. Of course, using your own laptop — or even a PDA (personal digital assistant) or electronic organizer with a modem — provides the most flexibility. But even if you don't have a computer, you can access e-mail and even your office computer from cybercafes.

It's hard nowadays to find a city that *doesn't* have a few cybercafes. Although no definitive directory for cybercafes exists — these are independent businesses, after all — two places to start looking are at www.cybercaptive.com and www.cybercafe.com. In Scotland, cybercafes pop up near universities more than anywhere else.



Aside from cybercafes, most youth hostels and an increasing number of hotels and B&Bs have at least one computer you can use to access the Internet. Many **public libraries** in Scotland offer Internet access free or for a small charge. Most major airports have Internet kiosks scattered

throughout their terminals, too. These give you Web access for a per-minute fee that's usually higher than cybercafe prices. Avoid hotel business centers unless you're willing to pay exorbitant rates.

If you need to access files on your office computer while you're away, look into a service called **GoToMyPC** (www.gotomypc.com). The service provides a Web-based interface for you to access and manipulate a distant PC from anywhere — even a cybercafe — provided your “target” PC is on and has an always-on connection to the Internet (such as with digital cable).

Using your own computer

If you're bringing your own computer with you, more and more hotels, cafes, and retailers are signing on as Wi-Fi (wireless fidelity) “hotspots.” Mac owners have their own networking technology: Apple AirPort.

Boingo (www.boingo.com) and **Wayport** (www.wayport.com) have set up networks in airports and high-class hotel lobbies. IPass providers also give you access to a few hundred wireless hotel lobby setups. To locate other hotspots that provide free wireless networks in cities around the world, go to www.personaltelco.net/index.cgi/WirelessCommunities.

For dial-up access, most business-class hotels throughout the world offer dataports for laptop modems. In addition, major Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have **local access numbers** around the world, allowing you to go online by placing a local call. The **iPass** network also has dial-up numbers around the world. You'll have to sign up with an iPass provider, who will then tell you how to set up your computer for your destination(s). For a list of iPass providers, go to www.ipass.com and click on “Individuals Buy Now.” One solid provider is **i2roam** (www.i2roam.com; ☎ **866-811-6209** or 920-235-0475).



Wherever you go, bring a **connection kit** of the right power and phone adapters, a spare phone cord, and a spare Ethernet network cable — or find out whether your hotel supplies them to guests.

Scotland Unplugged: Getting Your Electric Stuff to Work

The plugs in Scotland are different than in the U.S. and Canada. You can buy a cheap adapter, but it won't address the problem of different voltages. In the U.S. and Canada, the current is 120 volts. In Scotland, it's officially 230 volts, although 240 volts are common. If you plug in your hair dryer, even with an adapter, you're likely to blow a fuse or burn out the appliance. You can buy a voltage transformer (check out www.walkabouttravelgear.com), but they can be expensive and not worth the cost if you're planning a short stay.

Some travel appliances, such as shavers and irons, have a nice feature called dual voltage that adapts to the change, but unless your appliance gives a voltage range (such as 110v–220v), don't chance it. Bring a battery-operated alarm clock (for when you can't get a wake-up call) and shaver (if you're averse to disposables) as well as a battery-powered personal stereo (if you can't bear to be without your tunes). And don't forget extra batteries.

Keeping Up with Airline Security Measures

Generally, arriving at the airport three hours before an international flight remains the best advice given the heightened security these days. At the U.K. end, security at Heathrow is very tight, while in Scotland it at least appears more relaxed.

In 2003, gate check-in was phased out at all U.S. airports. And e-tickets have made paper tickets nearly obsolete. With an e-ticket, you can beat the ticket-counter lines by using airport electronic kiosks or even online check-in from your home computer.

If you're using a kiosk at the airport, bring the credit card you used to book the flight or your frequent-flier card. (You may not be able to print out your boarding pass without the credit card used for purchase, and you want to make sure your frequent-flier miles are credited.) Print out your boarding pass from the kiosk and proceed to the security check-point with your pass and photo ID. If you're checking bags or looking to get an exit-row seat, you can do so using most airline kiosks.

You can speed up security by not wearing or carrying dense metal objects, such as big belt buckles. If you've got metallic body parts, a doctor's note can prevent a long chat with the security screeners.

Federal rules dictate what you can carry on a plane and what you can't. The broad rule is that all sharp objects are out, even nail clippers. And in 2006, foods and liquids were essentially banned as well, unless within small containers and carried in clear plastic bags — or purchased at shops within the secured zone.

Travelers in the U.S. are allowed one carry-on bag (check for current size restrictions), plus a personal item. It has become much more difficult for those carry-on hoarders to stuff all sorts of things into an oversized bag in order to avoid checking luggage. While I once would have advised you to chance it, I now think that it is probably best to store everything — except for what is essential during the flight — into your checked luggage. Check the U.S. Transportation Security Administration Web site (www.tsa.gov) for details and updates.

Airport screeners may decide that your checked luggage needs to be searched by hand. You can now purchase luggage locks that allow screeners to open and relock a checked bag if hand-searching is necessary. Look for Travel Sentry certified locks at luggage or travel shops and Brookstone stores (you can buy them online at www.brookstone.com). These locks, approved by the TSA, can be opened by luggage inspectors with a special code or key. For more information on the locks, visit www.travelsentry.org. If you use something other than TSA-approved locks, your lock may be cut off your suitcase if a TSA agent needs to hand-search your luggage.

Part III

Edinburgh and Glasgow

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"We were in Edinburgh this summer. I loved the New Town section, but Edward preferred the medieval feel of Old Town."

In this part . . .

You find out about the charms and attractions of Scotland's two major cities, Edinburgh and Glasgow, and about some of the sights that are within easy striking distance of each or both of the cities. Though noticeably different from one another, each city is worth a visit, and you'll find plenty of suggestions here of what to do and see. Edinburgh, Scotland's capital, is most famous for its castle and picturesque setting, while Glasgow, once one of the greatest ship-building centers of the world, is a more modern and bustling big city (though not too big).

The chapters in Part III offer everything from advice on getting there to getting around — as well as hints on how to discover the best places to stay and dine. You also get the lowdown on the cities' finest sights and attractions, insider tips on quintessential Scottish pubs and cafes, and a walking tour in each city.

Chapter 11

Edinburgh

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting around Edinburgh
 - ▶ Discovering the best places to stay and eat
 - ▶ Exploring the city's sights and attractions
 - ▶ Shopping for quintessential Scottish souvenirs
 - ▶ Finding the best spots for pints, music, and pub grub
-

Edinburgh has been called one of Europe's fairest cities and the "Athens of the North." And what many experienced travelers to the U.K. say is true: If you can visit only two cities in all Great Britain, it's London first and Edinburgh second. Built on extinct volcanoes near an inlet from the North Sea (the Firth of Forth) and enveloped by rolling hills, lakes, and forests, the Scottish capital began as a small, fortified settlement on a craggy hill. Indeed, because of its defensive attributes, Edinburgh (remember "burgh" is always pronounced *burra* in Scotland) became an important, protected place for the country's rulers. Somewhat ironically, the city today represents the virtual crossroads of Scotland for many visitors: the spot that they are most likely to stop in or pass through while in Scotland.

Edinburgh is filled with historic, intellectual, and literary associations. Names such as Mary Queen of Scots and her nemesis, the Protestant reformer John Knox; pioneer economist Adam Smith and philosopher David Hume; authors Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; as well as inventor Alexander Graham Bell: They are all part of Edinburgh's past.

Today the city is famous for its annual world-class cultural event: the Edinburgh Festival. It is actually several festivals at once: films, books, comedy, drama, classical music, dance, and more. But this ancient seat of Scottish royalty has year-round attractions: When the festival-goers have returned home, the city's pace is more relaxed, its prices are lower, and the inhabitants — though not celebrated for their bonhomie — are under less pressure and offer a hospitable welcome.

Edinburgh is a city that lends itself to walking. Its **Old Town** and **New Town** are full of moody cobbled alleys, elegant streetscapes, handsome

squares, and placid parks. From several hilltops, panoramic views can be enjoyed.

Beyond being Scotland's political center, Edinburgh was also its cultural capital, even if that particular crown — in terms of contemporary culture — has perhaps been lost to Glasgow (see Chapter 12) over the last few decades. Nevertheless, the Scottish capital is still lively. It is home to the country's several **national galleries**. And its location provides the perfect point for excursions. Notable nearby attractions include Linlithgow, where Mary Queen of Scots was born, and attractive seaside villages, such as North Berwick, east of Edinburgh. (Turn to Chapter 13 for more information on day-trip options.) Any visit to Scotland should try to give Edinburgh at least two days — and, if you have the time, you won't regret staying longer.

Getting to Edinburgh

Although there are a few direct flights to Edinburgh from North America, a stopover in London's Heathrow airport (or some other European hub) is probably more common. If you're coming north from London, your options include taking the train. If you're coming from elsewhere in Scotland, major bus and railway routes serve Edinburgh. Having a car within the city of Edinburgh isn't strictly necessary (nor indeed even preferable). But the city is easily reached via freeways and highways, if you choose to drive.

By air

Edinburgh is only about an hour's flying time from London, which is 633km (393 miles) south. **Edinburgh International Airport** (☎ **0131-333-1000**) is about 10km (6 miles) west of the city's center, and has become a growing hub for flights both within the British Isles and to and from Continental Europe.

Remember, however, that Glasgow International Airport is only about 90km (55 miles) away and shouldn't be discounted if you're coming to Edinburgh, because it traditionally greets more long-haul flights, especially from North America. For information on arriving in Glasgow by air, see Chapter 12.

Orienting yourself

Edinburgh's airport is small (about the length of two football fields) and contained in one terminal, so there's little possibility of getting lost. Immigration control and customs agents are vigilant, but the scene is quite a bit more relaxed than at a giant air terminal such as London's Heathrow. Usually you find just one line (or *queue*, in local parlance) for visitors from outside the European Union. Before heading into town, you may want to stop at the airport's **VisitScotland information and**

accommodation desk (☎ **0131-473-3800**), which is generally open Monday through Saturday from 6:15 a.m. to 7:45 p.m. and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Getting into town

From Edinburgh airport, the Airlink bus makes the trip to the city center about every ten minutes during peak times, terminating at Waverley Bridge near the central railway station. The fare is £3 (\$5.55) one-way or £5 (\$9.25) round-trip. The trip from the airport into town takes about 25 minutes (sometimes longer during rush hour). Overnight service is provided by the Night Bus: N22. Visit www.flybybus.com for details of Airlink bus service.

A taxi into the city costs about £12 (\$22) or more, depending on traffic, and the ride takes about the same amount of time as the bus. Look for the taxi stand when exiting the airport.

By train

The trains that link London to Edinburgh (via Newcastle) on the so-called East Coast Main Line are reasonably fast, efficient, and generally relaxing, with a restaurant and bar service as well as air-conditioning. Trains depart from London's King's Cross Station (contact National Railway Enquiries at ☎ **0845-748-4950** for rail info; www.nationalrail.co.uk) every hour or so and arrive in Edinburgh at **Waverley Station** in the heart of the city. The trip generally takes four and a half hours.

Off-peak fares bought in advance can range widely, from around £25 to £93 (\$46–\$172) and the government is examining whether they should be less variable. Off-peak first-class tickets purchased in advance also range widely, from about £30–£100 (\$56–\$185), although the cheapest fares seem to be rarely available. A fully flexible “buy anytime, travel anytime” standard open single fare is upwards of £120 (\$222). The Caledonian Sleeper service for overnight travel can cost about £100 (\$185), but online bargains booked well in advance can mean the trip may cost as little as £19 (\$35). Taxi and bus connections are easily made at Waverley Station, which also serves Glasgow with a **shuttle service** every 15 minutes during the day and every 30 minutes in the evening until about 11:30 p.m. The one-way fare during off-peak times (for travel after 9:15 a.m. and not from 4:15 a.m.–6:30 p.m.) is £8.80 (\$16).

By bus

The journey from London to Edinburgh by bus can take up to ten hours. Nevertheless, it gets you there for only about £40 (\$74) round-trip. Scottish CityLink coaches depart from London's Victoria Coach Station and deliver you to Edinburgh's **Bus Station** near St. Andrew Square (☎ **0870-550-5050** for information).

By car

Edinburgh is 74km (46 miles) east of Glasgow and 169km (105 miles) north of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in England. No express motorway links London directly to Edinburgh. The M1 from London takes you most of the way north, but you have to come into Edinburgh via secondary roads — either the coastal A1 or inland A68. Alternatively, you can travel the well-used motorways in the west of the U.K. From London, take the M1 to the M6 (near Coventry), which links to the M74 at Carlisle. Then travel to the M8 southeast of Glasgow, which takes you Edinburgh's ring road or beltway. Allow 8 hours or more for the drive north from London.

Orienting Yourself in Edinburgh

Central Edinburgh is divided into two historic districts: the **Old Town** and a larger **New Town**. Old Town, once called “Auld Reekie” because of its smoky atmosphere, is today chock-a-block with tourist attractions and shops, its sidewalks often full of out-of-town visitors from Easter until autumn. New Town represents a golden age of Edinburgh, displaying mid-to-late-18th-century modernism in town planning, as well as reflecting the age of enlightenment.

The **Royal Mile** is the main thoroughfare in Old Town, running from Edinburgh Castle in the west to the Palace of Holyroodhouse in the east. Both British **royalty** and Scotland's **Parliament** (revived in 1999) are based in the Old Town, as is municipal government and the country's legal elite. Another more infamous street at the southern base of the castle is the **Grassmarket**, both a street and a district, where convicted criminals were once hanged on the gallows. Today it's home to restaurants, pubs, and hotels.

New Town is actually fairly old. North of Old Town, across what is today Princes Street Gardens, it was first settled in the 18th century. By the beginning of the 19th century, classic squares, streets, and town houses were complete, and the original district was soon expanded with more Georgian designs. **Princes Street** is the area's primary shopping precinct, with broad sidewalks and a park running its entire length — all with panoramic views of Old Town and Edinburgh Castle.

North of and running parallel to Princes Street is New Town's second great boulevard, **George Street**. It begins at St. Andrew Square and runs west to Charlotte Square. Directly north of George Street is another impressive thoroughfare, **Queen Street**, which opens onto Queen Street Gardens on its north side and features views of the Firth of Forth. You may also hear a lot about **Rose Street**, between Princes Street and George Street, and its many pubs, shops, and restaurants.

Edinburgh's **Southside** and **West End** are primarily residential. The Southside is home to both the well-regarded Edinburgh University (which makes parts of the area quite lively) and a sprawling park known

as the Meadows. The West End includes the last of the New Town developments begun at the beginning of the 19th century. It has theaters, several small B&Bs, and swank boutique hotels as well as the city's most exclusive central neighborhoods.

Leith is Edinburgh's historic port where the Water of Leith meets the Firth of Forth. It briefly served as the Scottish capital in the middle of the 16th century, and its strategic location was so strong that Oliver Cromwell's invading forces built a citadel there. Leith remained an independent burgh until the 20th century. Fans of Irvine Welsh (author of *Trainspotting*) probably know that the area has a rough and tumble reputation. But today, most of its shipping and the sailors have gone, and lots of luxury apartments are being built instead. Still, Leith carries reminders of evocative maritime past and offers a good selection of seafood restaurants and nautical-themed pubs. It's also now the home of the royal yacht *Britannia*.



Despite the hills, Edinburgh is a very walkable city. Many little alleys (*wynd*s) and passageways (*close*s) are accessible only by foot. So bring a pair of comfortable shoes and start walking — you'll get a great feel for what the city has to offer.

Introducing the neighborhoods

Edinburgh has a host of districts, some of which appear to include only a few streets and many that can be folded into the broader areas of the Old and New Towns.

Old Town

Old Town is where Edinburgh began. Its spine is the **Royal Mile**, a medieval thoroughfare stretching for about 1.6km (1 mile) from Edinburgh Castle downhill to the Palace of Holyroodhouse. The Royal Mile is one boulevard with four segments bearing different names: Castlehill, Lawnmarket, High Street, and Canongate. English author Daniel Defoe wrote of the Royal Mile, "This is perhaps the largest, longest, and finest street for buildings and number of inhabitants in the world." Old Town also includes the areas of Grassmarket and Cowgate.

New Town

Lying predominantly north of Old Town, the first New Town bloomed between 1766 and 1840 as one of the largest Georgian developments in the world. It grew to encompass the northern half of the heart of the city. New Town is the largest historic conservation area in Britain and has at least 25,000 residents. It is made up of a network of squares, streets, terraces, and circuses, reaching from Haymarket in the west almost to Leith Walk in the east. The neighborhood also extends from Canonmills in the north to Princes Street, its most famous artery, in the south.

Stockbridge

Today part of the New Town area, Stockbridge is a one-time village that still feels rather like a small town because of its tightly-knit community.

Northwest of the castle and straddling the Water of Leigh, it's a good place for visitors to the city to relax, especially in the friendly cafes, pubs, restaurants, and shops.

Haymarket and Dalry

West of the city center by about 1.5km (1 mile), these two districts may be off the beaten path for most visitors. Haymarket centers on the Haymarket railway station (an alternative to Waverley for travelers to and from Glasgow and the west or places much further north). Just a bit farther out of town is Murrayfield, the Scottish national rugby stadium. Dalry is slowly opening some interesting though largely neighborhood-oriented restaurants.

Tollcross and West End

Edinburgh's theater district and Conference Center are in the area west of the castle. The West End neighborhoods near Shandwick Place are rather exclusive. Although the district of Tollcross appears a bit rough, it's rapidly changing and becoming more visitor-friendly.

Southside: Marchmont and Bruntsfield

About 1.5km (1 mile) south of High Street, Marchmont was constructed between 1869 and 1914 to offer new housing to people who could no longer afford to live in New Town. Its northern border is the Meadows. Sometimes visitors go south to this neighborhood, seeking an affordable B&B in one of the little homes that receive guests.

Bruntsfield is west of the Meadows and is named for Bruntsfield Links (a short-hole public golf course). Now a largely residential district, the area was the ground on which James IV apparently gathered the Scottish army that he marched to defeat at Flodden in 1513. You can find many low-cost B&Bs in this vicinity.

Calton

Encompassing Calton Hill with its Regent and Royal terraces (streets), this district borders the so-called Pink Triangle, Edinburgh's version of a gay-friendly district. Edinburgh has a lively gay population, which focuses socially on an area from the top of Leith Walk to Broughton Street. The area is not, however, a dedicated gay district like San Francisco's Castro or Christopher Street in Manhattan's Greenwich Village. It's just part and parcel of lively Calton with its bars, nightclubs, and restaurants.

Leith Walk and the Port of Leith

Leith Walk isn't technically a neighborhood but is instead the main artery that connects Edinburgh's city center to Leith. Off of it are Easter Road (home of Hibernian football club) and the districts of Pilrig and South Leith. A foray down Leith Walk presents you with a true cross section of Edinburgh.

The **Port of Leith** lies only a few kilometers north of Princes Street and is the city's major harbor, opening onto the Firth of Forth. In terms of maritime might, the port isn't what it used to be; its glory days were back when stevedores unloaded cargos by hand. The area is currently experiencing urban renewal, however, and visitors come here for the pubs and restaurants, many of which specialize in seafood.

Finding information after you arrive

Edinburgh Information Centre, atop the Princes Mall near Waverley Station (**VisitScotland**; ☎ **0131-473-3800** or 0845-225-5121; fax: 0131-473-3881; www.edinburgh.org; Bus: 22, 25, 3, 31, or 8), can give you sightseeing information and also arrange lodgings. The center sells bus tours, theater tickets, and souvenirs of Edinburgh. It also has racks and racks of free brochures. It's open year-round; typically the hours are Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., though it is open later during the Festival and closes earlier in the winter months.

Getting Around Edinburgh

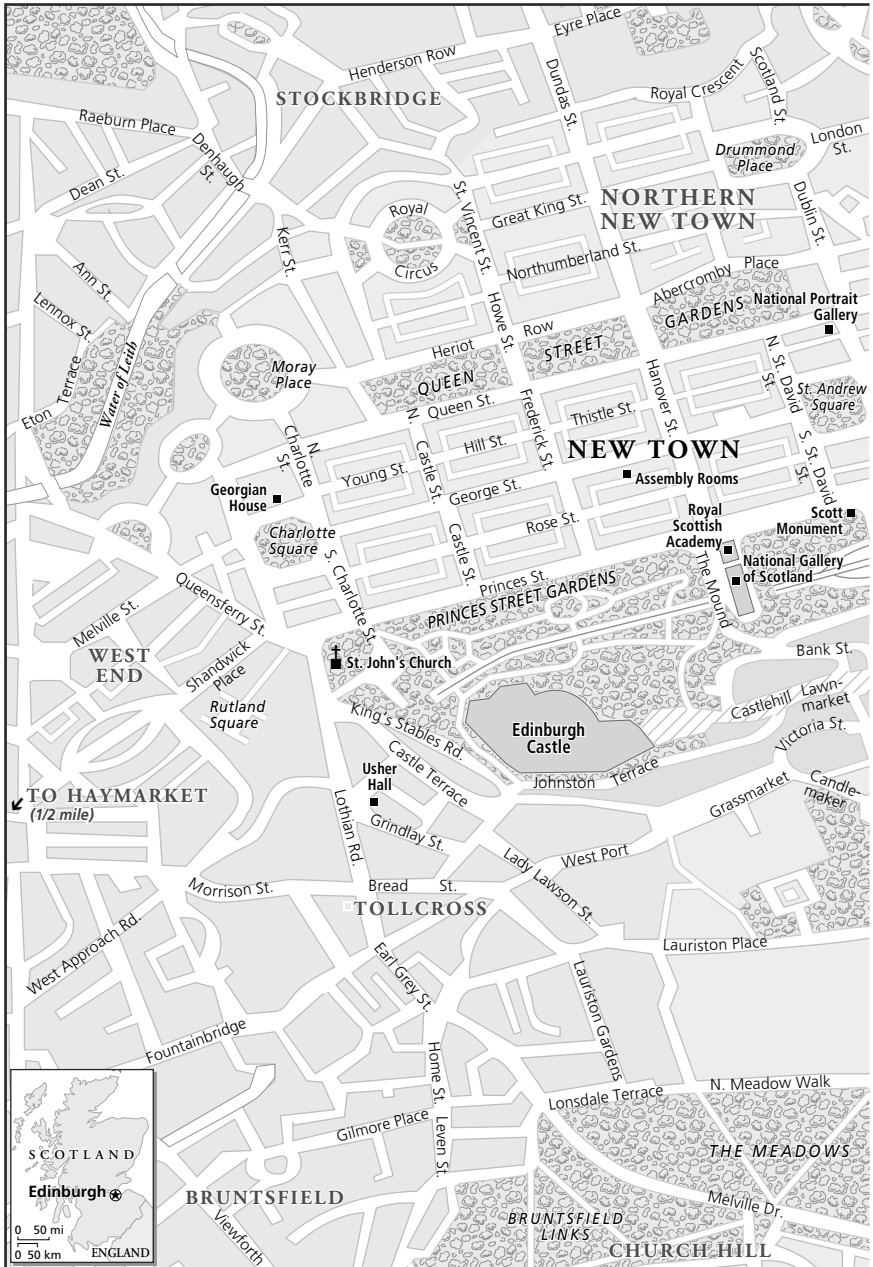
Because of its narrow lanes, wynds, and closes, you can only honestly explore the Old Town in any depth on foot. Edinburgh is fairly convenient for the visitor who likes to walk (see the section "Taking a walking tour," later in this chapter), because most of the major attractions are located along the Royal Mile, Princes Street, or one of the major streets of New Town. The city doesn't have a subway system, although there has been discussion about reintroducing a tramway.

By bus

As there is no underground or subway in Edinburgh and only limited commuter train service, the city's rather numerous buses provide the chief method of public transportation. There are lots of them, and most seem to go down Princes Street as some point on their route.

Fares depend on the distance traveled, with the adult one-way (single) **minimum fare** £1 (\$1.85) covering the central Edinburgh districts. If you plan multiple trips in one day, purchase a **Dayticket** that allows unlimited travel on city buses for one day at a cost of £2.30 (\$4.25) adults. Children between 5 and 15 years old are charged a flat rate of 60p (\$1.10), but kids ages 13 to 15 are expected to carry a **teen card** (available in bus Travelshops — covered later) as proof of age. Child Daytickets cost £2 (\$3.70). Bus drivers, by the way, will not make change, so carry the correct amount in coins or expect to pay more. Children ages four and younger ride free. At Travelshops, one-week **RideaCard** passes, which allow unlimited travel on buses, can be purchased for £13 (\$24) adult; £11 (\$20) student; and £9 (\$17) juniors.

Edinburgh Orientation





Also the tourist buses that terminate at Waverley Bridge offer hop-on, hop-off service at any of their stops on the set circuit of primarily Old and New towns. Tickets — £9 (\$17) for adults; £3 (\$5.55) for children — can be used for 24 hours (although the buses' last journeys are made in the early evening).

You can get advance tickets and further information in the city center at the **Waverley Bridge Travelshop**, Waverley Bridge, open Monday to Saturday 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., or at 27 Hanover Street Travelshop, open Monday to Saturday 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. For details on fares and timetables, call ☎ **0131-555-6363** or log on to www.lothianbuses.co.uk.

By taxi

One way to get around the city is to either hail a taxi or pick one up at a taxi stand. Meters begin at £2 (\$3.70) and a typical trek across town may cost about £6 (\$11). Taxi ranks (stands) are at High Street near South Bridge, Waverley and Haymarket stations, Hanover Street, North St. Andrew Street, and Lauriston Place. Fares are displayed on the front of the taxi, and charges are posted, including extra fees for night drivers or destinations outside the city limits. You can also call a taxi ahead of time. Try **City Cabs** at ☎ **0131-228-1211** or **Central Radio Taxis** at ☎ **0131-229-2468**.

By car

Unless you absolutely can't avoid it, I would strongly advise that you simply don't drive in Edinburgh — it's a tricky and frustrating business, even for natives. Speed bumps, one-way streets, and dedicated bus lanes are all good reasons to forego the automobile. Parking is expensive and also can be difficult to find. Metered parking is available, but you need the right change and have to watch out for traffic wardens who issue tickets. Some zones are marked PERMIT HOLDERS ONLY — and they mean it. Your vehicle will likely be towed if you don't have a permit. A double yellow line along the curb indicates no parking at any time. A single yellow line along the curb may allow you to park; check for posted restrictions or you may incur a ticket there as well. Major parking lots (car parks) are at Castle Terrace (near Edinburgh Castle), Waverley Station, and St James Centre (close to the east end of Princes Street).

You may want a rental car for touring the countryside or heading onward. Many agencies grant discounts to those who reserve cars in advance (see Chapter 7 for more information). Most rental agencies will accept your foreign driver's license, provided you've held it for more than a year and are older than age 21. Most of the major car-rental companies maintain offices at the Edinburgh airport in case you want to rent a car on the spot. In the city, try **Avis** on West Park Place (☎ **0870-153-9103**), **Hertz** on Picardy Place (☎ **0870-864-0013**), or **Thrifty** on Haymarket Terrace (☎ **0131-337-1319**).

Famous Edinburghers

Famous Edinburgh residents include *Harry Potter* author J.K. Rowling, who has become one of the best-selling writers in history and wrote her first book in one of the city's coffee shops. David Hume lived at James Court in Old Town in the 18th century. James Boswell, Robert Louis Stevenson, Sir Walter Scott, and Flora MacDonald also made their homes here. One of the city's most famous former residents, Sean Connery, grew up in the Fenton Bridge tenements, and Queen Elizabeth knighted him in 2000 at the Palace of Holyroodhouse. The actor, most widely known for his many James Bond films, had previously dismissed the idea of knighthood as long as Scotland was denied independent rule. (See Chapter 2 for more on the political history of Scotland.)

By bicycle

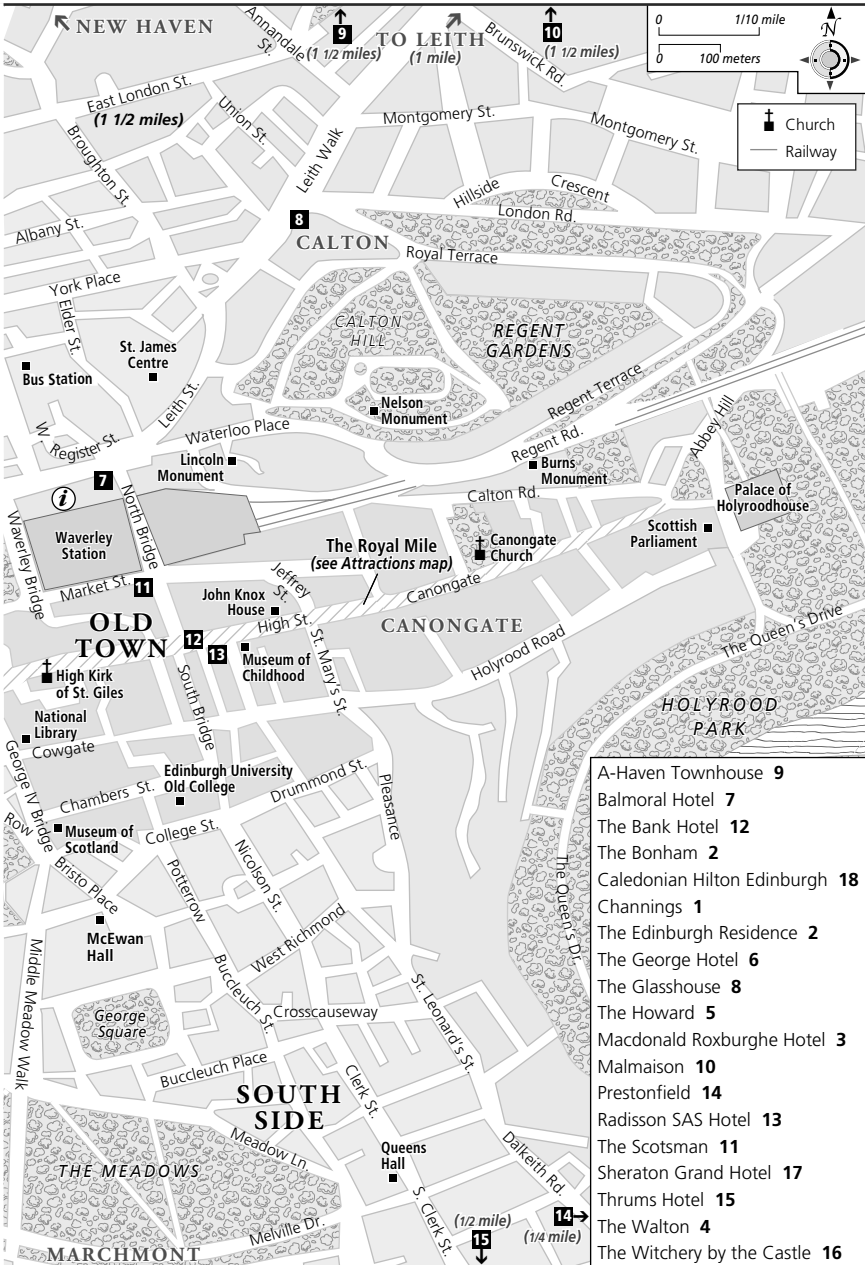
Bicycles are a more common mode of transportation in Edinburgh than in Glasgow. Nevertheless, biking is probably a good idea only for visitors in good shape, given that the city's set on a series of ridges and the streets are often cobbled. If you're determined to bike your way through Edinburgh, try **Rent-a-Bike Edinburgh**, 29 Blackfriars St., near the High Street (☎ 0131-556-5560; www.cyclescotland.co.uk; Bus: 35). Depending on the type of bike you rent, charges average around £15 (\$28) per day or £70 (\$130) for the week, but partial-day hires are also possible. A credit card imprint will be taken as security. The same company that operates Rent-a-Bike Edinburgh also runs **Scottish Cycle Safaris**, which organizes tours in the city and across Scotland. They can equip you for excursions, and because they have branches in places such as Oban, Inverness, and Skye, you can drop off your bike and equipment there at the end of your trip if it's more convenient.

On foot

Walking Edinburgh is definitely the best way to see the city center and most of the town. (But I also recommend using buses or taxis if the distances seem too great.)

Staying in Style

Edinburgh offers many options for accommodations, from the super-posh and fabulously pricey five-star hotels to down-and-dirty bunkhouses and youth hostels. It is a city that anticipates bundles of tourists and travelers, whether seasonal backpackers, school groups, and families — or professional types in the Scottish capital on commercial and governmental matters.



- A-Haven Townhouse **9**
- Balmoral Hotel **7**
- The Bank Hotel **12**
- The Bonham **2**
- Caledonian Hilton Edinburgh **18**
- Channings **1**
- The Edinburgh Residence **2**
- The George Hotel **6**
- The Glasshouse **8**
- The Howard **5**
- Macdonald Roxburghe Hotel **3**
- Malmaison **10**
- Prestonfield **14**
- Radisson SAS Hotel **13**
- The Scotsman **11**
- Sheraton Grand Hotel **17**
- Thrum's Hotel **15**
- The Walton **4**
- The Witchery by the Castle **16**



Be warned, however. During the month-long period of the Edinburgh Festival every August, the hotels, guesthouses, and B&Bs fill up. If you're planning a visit at that time, be sure to reserve your accommodation as far in advance as possible. Otherwise you may end up in a town or village as many as 40km (55 miles) from the city center. And don't be surprised if the standard rates for accommodation in Edinburgh are higher — in isolated cases twice as high — during August, particularly at smaller hotels.

The **Edinburgh Information Centre** is near Waverley Station, atop the Princes Mall shopping center, at 3 Princes St. (☎ **0131-473-3800, 0845-225-5121**, or from overseas dial ☎ **44-1506-832-121**; fax: 0131-473-3881; www.edinburgh.org; Bus: 3, 8, 22, 25, or 31).

The Information Centre, in conjunction with the Scottish tourist board, compiles a lengthy list of small hotels, guesthouses, and private homes providing B&B-type lodging for as little as £25 (\$46) per person. A £3 (\$5.55) booking fee is charged and a 10 percent deposit is expected if you book through the center. For the best availability, make your reservation about four weeks in advance, especially during summer. The center is open year-round; typically the hours are Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., although it's open later during the Festival and closes earlier in the winter months.

The Scottish tourist board also provides ratings of accommodations, which are based largely on amenities. Due to the ratings system, the stars can be limited for smaller operations that may not offer all the modern conveniences but are still perfectly good places to stay. References to stars in the information below are those bestowed by VisitScotland.



The Internet can be a treasure trove of discounted rates if you have the time and inclination to dig around a bit. In some cases, bargains are only available when you use Web-based booking services. Some of these special prices and promotions are noted below. See Chapter 8 for more details on booking your hotel.

If you have an early flight out and need a hotel that's convenient to the airport, consider the 244-unit **Edinburgh Marriott**, 111 Glasgow Rd. (☎ **0131-334-9191**), off A8 on Edinburgh's western outskirts. It offers doubles from about £150 (\$278), including breakfast. Facilities include an indoor pool, gym, sauna, and restaurant.

The top hotels

Here's a list of my recommended places to stay in Edinburgh. Rack rates are the standard full prices that a hotel charges for a room. You may not have to pay the full amount of the published rates, however, except in high season, and even then there may be reductions. Unless otherwise indicated, the rates I give include breakfast.

Balmoral Hotel
\$\$\$\$ New Town

When it first opened in 1902 as the North British Hotel, it was then — and remains today — one of the grandest hotels in Britain. Known as the Balmoral since the early '90s, the rooms received a £7-million (\$13-million) refurbishment not long ago. Almost directly above the Waverley Rail Station, the building features a soaring clock tower that is one of the city's landmarks, famously set five minutes fast for the benefit of those on the way to the train. Kilted doormen supply the Scottish atmosphere from the start. Sumptuously furnished, the best of the units — such as room 520, the Dee Suite — can be distinguished and large, with an ample sitting room and huge, well-appointed bathroom, not to mention fabulous views towards the castle. There is a spa, pool, and 24-hour room service, while dining options include the elegant and Michelin-star-earning Number One and the more casual Hadrian's Brasserie. Afternoon tea is served in the high-ceilinged Palm Court. In addition to the standard rates, the hotel's Web site offers "Simply Balmoral" seasonal discounts among other package deals.

See map p. 130. 1 Princes St. ☎ **800-223-6800** in the U.S., or ☎ 0131-556-2414. Fax: 0131-557-3747. www.thebalmoralhotel.com. Bus: 3, 8, 22, 25, 30. Rack rates: £225–£290 (\$416–\$537) double; £245–£310 (\$453–\$574) superior double; from £465 (\$860) suite. AE, DC, MC, V.

The Bonham
\$\$\$\$ New Town

One of Edinburgh's most stylish hotels, the Bonham is actually three connected West End town houses that functioned in the 19th century as a nursing home and more recently as dorms for the university. In 1998, all that changed when a team of entrepreneurs poured millions of pounds into its refurbishment, pumped up the design, and outfitted each high-ceilinged guest room in a hip blend of old and new. Perhaps the jewel in the crown of the Townhouse group of hotels in Edinburgh, the Bonham's rooms each have an individual theme and plush upholsteries. Bathrooms are state of the art, with expensive toiletries. The Restaurant at the Bonham provides elegant yet modern dining rooms. In addition to the standard rates, mid- and off-season special discounts, including breakfast, are available for two people staying at least two nights.

See map p. 130. 35 Drumsheugh Gardens. ☎ **0131-226-6050**. Fax: 0131-226-6080. www.thebonham.com. Bus: 19, 37. Rack rates: £195–£240 (\$361–\$444) standard double; £340 (\$629) suite. AE, DC, MC, V.

Caledonian Hilton Edinburgh
\$\$\$\$ New Town

This hotel remains one of the city's landmarks and offers commanding views towards the nearby Edinburgh Castle and over Princes Street Gardens. The public rooms are reminiscent of Edwardian splendor, and the guest rooms (some of which are exceptionally spacious and others

quite small) are rather conservatively styled with reproduction furniture. Bathrooms come with combination tub/showers. Fine-dining meals are served in the Pompadour Restaurant. A traditional tea is featured in the high-ceilinged lounge. On the Internet, advance booking reaps dividends.

See map p. 130. Princes St. ☎ **0131-222-8888**. Fax: 0131-222-8889. www.caledonian.hilton.com. Bus: 33. Rack rates: £180–£380 (\$333–\$703) double; from £340 (\$629) suite. Children ages 15 and younger stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V.

Channings

\$\$\$ Near New Town

Five Edwardian terrace houses were combined to create this hotel, located near Stockbridge in a tranquil residential area. Channings maintains the atmosphere of a Scottish country house, with oak paneling, ornate fireplaces, molded ceilings, and antiques. The guest rooms are outfitted in a modern style; the front units get the views, but the rear ones offer more seclusion. The most desirable rooms are the “Executives,” most of which have bay windows and wingback chairs. Even if you're not a guest, consider a meal here; Channings Restaurant offers fine fare.

See map p. 130. 15 South Learmonth Gardens. ☎ **0131-623-9302**. Fax: 0131-332-9631. www.channings.co.uk. Bus: 37. Rack rates: £120–£185 (\$222–\$342) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

The Edinburgh Residence

\$\$\$\$ West End

Part of the Townhouse group (which includes the Bonham, Howard, and Channings), this is one of the finest luxury hotels in Scotland, a series of elegant suites installed in a trio of architecturally beautiful and sensitively restored Georgian buildings in the West End. As you enter, grand staircases and classic wood paneling greet you, but the units have all the modern conveniences that befit five-star accommodation. The rooms are the ultimate in comfort, with a trio of suites having their own private entrances. All units are spacious. Again, if you are traveling off season, it is worth inquiring about “short break” promotions that offer savings.

See map p. 130. 7 Rothesay Terrace. ☎ **0131-226-3380**. Fax: 0131-226-3381. www.theedinburghresidence.com. Bus: 36. Rack rates: £150–£265 (\$278–\$490) suite. AE, MC, V.

The Howard

\$\$\$\$ New Town

Dubbed one of the most exclusive five-star hotels in the city, this lovely hotel is made up of a set of linked Georgian terraced houses in the Northern New Town, just down the hill from the Queen Street Gardens. Some of the aura of a private home remains. Accommodations are midsize to spacious; units are individually and rather elegantly decorated, with some of the best bathrooms in town — featuring power and double showers and, in some,

Jacuzzis. The décor is traditional and modern, incorporating both antiques and reproductions. Service is a hallmark of The Howard, with a dedicated butler who can tend to your individual needs — even unpacking your luggage, should you so desire.

See map p. 130. 34 Great King St. ☎ **0131-557-3500**. Fax: 0131-557-6515. www.thehoward.com. Bus: 23, 27. Rack rates: £180–£275 (\$333–\$509) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Malmaison

\$\$\$ Leith

This is Leith's stylish boutique hotel, located in the old harbor district, only a few steps from the Water of Leith. Malmaison was converted from an 1883 seamen's mission/dorm and is capped by a stately stone clock tower. Overall, it's a hip, unpretentious place with a minimalist décor. Rooms are average in size but well equipped. The leisure facilities are limited to an exercise room, but you'll find the brasserie and wine bar favored by locals. Even during summertime, at least before the Festival begins, Malmaison's online reservation offers good discounts.

See map p. 130. 1 Tower Place. ☎ **0131-468-5000**. Fax: 0131-468-5002. www.malmaison.com. Bus: 16, 35. Rack rates: £135–£195 (\$250–\$361) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Prestonfield

\$\$\$\$ Southside

Prestonfield, rising in Jacobean splendor amid 5.3 hectares (13 acres) of gardens, pastures, and woodlands below Arthur's Seat, underwent a \$3-million (\$5.5-million) refurbishment in 2003 and is now in the hands of James Thomson, who owns The Witchery (see listing later in this section). The pile was built in the 17th century, serving first as the home of the city's Lord Provost (mayor), and has entertained a varied group of luminaries over the years from David Hume and Benjamin Franklin to pop stars and actors such as Sean Connery and Minnie Driver. Guests appreciate the traditional atmosphere and 1680s architecture as well as the peacocks and Highland cattle that strut and stroll across the grounds. The spacious bedrooms (bestowed five-stars by the tourist board) hide all mod conveniences (such as Bose sound systems, DVD players, and plasma, flat-screen TVs) behind velvet-lined walls. The restaurant, **Rhubarb**, is as theatrical as they come, with plush furnishings and décor to match the mansion. Reduced midweek rates are sometimes available.

See map p. 130. Priestfield Rd. ☎ **0131-225-7800**. Fax: 0131-668-3976. www.prestonfield.com. Bus: 2, 14, 30. Rack rates: £195–£225 (\$361–\$416) double. AE, MC, V.

The Scotsman

\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$ Old Town

Only minutes from the Royal Mile or Princes Street, this is one of the brightest and most stylish hotels to open in Edinburgh recently. Its name

honors the newspaper that was published here for nearly a century before relocating to modern facilities near Holyroodhouse. Traditional styling and cutting-edge design are harmoniously wed in the 1904 baronial limestone pile, a city landmark since it was first constructed. The 68 units, from the Study Room to the Baron Suite, vary in size (from 300 sq. ft. to a whopping 1,110 sq. ft.) and aspect, such as views of the castle or towards Calton Hill and Firth of Forth. They include state-of-the-art bathrooms and such extras as two-way service closets, which means your laundry can be picked up virtually unnoticed. The two-floor penthouse suite is in a category of its own, with a private elevator and balcony with barbecue. The in-house dining options include the smart North Bridge Brasserie & Bar as well as the more exclusive fine-dining option in the basement, Vermilion. In addition to standard rates, there are weekend break promotions.

See map p. 130. 20 N. Bridge St. ☎ **0131-556-5565**. Fax: 0131-652-3652. www.scotsmanhotels.com. Bus: 3, 8, 14, 29. Rack rates: £200–£350 (\$370–\$648) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Sheraton Grand Hotel

\$\$\$\$ West End

On the grounds of a former railway siding near Edinburgh's Usher Hall, Traverse, and Royal Lyceum theatres, this six-story postmodern structure houses a glamorous hotel and office complex. The Sheraton is elegant, with soaring public rooms and rich carpeting. Boasting a good location in the proverbial shadow of Edinburgh Castle — as well as state-of-the-art spa and leisure facilities (including a roof-top indoor/outdoor pool) — the hotel pretty much has it all. The spacious, well-furnished units have double-glazed windows, and glamorous suites are available as are rooms for travelers with disabilities. The castlevue rooms on the top floors are best (and most expensive). The main restaurant, with views of the Festival Square, presents well-prepared meals and a lavish Sunday buffet, while an annex houses the Italian restaurant Santini (see "Dining out") below the spa.

See map p. 130. 1 Festival Sq. ☎ **800-325-3535** in the U.S. and Canada, or ☎ **0131-229-9131**. Fax: 0131-228-4510. www.sheraton.com. Bus: 10, 22, 30. Rack rates: £150–£360 (\$278–\$666) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

The Walton

\$\$-\$\$\$ New Town

A real discovery, this ten-room guesthouse sits right at the heart of Edinburgh's northern New Town in a well-restored 200-year-old town house. A complete refurbishment and renovation has maintained the essential Georgian character and elegant features, but also revitalized and modernized the entire hotel. Bedrooms are midsize, cozy, comfortable, and tranquil. In the morning you're served a superior breakfast. The location is only a short walk up the hill to the heart of New Town. A sister hotel, the Glenora, offers alternative accommodation on Rosebery Crescent near the Haymarket railway station.

See map p. 130. 79 Dundas St. ☎ **0131-556-1137**. Fax: 0131-557-8367. www.waltonhotel.com Bus: 23, 27. Rack rates: £80–£165 (\$148–\$305) double. MC, V.

The Witchery by the Castle **\$\$\$\$ Old Town**

Part of the famous Edinburgh restaurant (see “Dining out”), the overnight accommodations in the Witchery offer romantic, sumptuous, and theatrically decorated rooms with Gothic antiques and elaborate tapestries. Most of the hype about the suites is true: “the perfect lust-den,” “Scotland’s most romantic hotel,” or “a jewel-box setting.” *Cosmopolitan* and others have hailed this place as one of the world’s “most wonderful” places to stay. Each lavishly decorated suite (named the Library, Vestry, Armoury, and the like) features splendid furnishings — “fit for a lord and his lady” — and such extras as books, chocolates, a Bose sound system, and a complimentary bottle of champagne. Each suite has its own individual character. The latest is called Sempill, featuring an oak four-poster bed in a red-velvet-lined bedroom. The buildings near the castle date to the 17th century, filled with open fires, opulent beds, and luxurious sitting areas. The list of celebrity guests includes Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta Jones, Simpsons creator Matt Groening, and Jack Nicholson.

See map p. 130. Castlehill, The Royal Mile. ☎ **0131-225-5613**. Fax: 0131-220-4392. www.thewitchery.com. Bus: 28. Rack rates: from £295 (\$546) suite. AE, DC, MC, V.

Runner-up hotels and B&Bs



A-Haven Townhouse

\$ Leith Guest rooms here vary in size and are outfitted with traditional furnishings and shower-only bathrooms. Some rooms are large enough to accommodate families if cots are used. Recently a two-unit “lodge” was added to the rear of the property and owner David Kay extends a Scottish welcome in this family-type place. See map p. 130. 180 Ferry Rd. ☎ **0131-554-6559**. www.a-haven.co.uk.

The Bank Hotel

\$\$ Old Town This hotel offers better value than many of its competitors in this busy part of the Royal Mile. From the 1920s to the 1990s, it was a branch of the Bank of Scotland, and the past is still evident in its Greek-influenced architecture. Inside you’ll discover high ceilings, well-chosen furnishings, and king-size beds. See map p. 130. 1 S. Bridge St. ☎ **0131-622-6800**. www.festival-inns.co.uk.

The George Hotel

\$\$\$ New Town The buildings that house this inn were first erected in the 1780s, transformed with alterations of Corinthian and neo-Renaissance style during the next 150 years or so before becoming the posh George Hotel in 1950. In the summer of 2006, a whopping £12-million (\$22-million) renovation was completed. A stylish new restaurant and bar, **Tempus**, is

now part of the package. *See map p. 130. 19–21 George St.* ☎ 800-327-0200 in the U.S. www.edinburgh.intercontinental.com.

The Glasshouse

\$\$\$ **New Town (Calton)** A recently developed property, this hotel is not only one of the most modern but also among the top so-called boutique hotels of Edinburgh. It combines the old and the new, and many of the well-furnished bedrooms offer panoramic views of the city. *See map p. 130. 2 Greenside Place.* ☎ 0131-525-8200. www.theetoncollection.com/hotels/glasshouse.

Macdonald Roxburghe Hotel

\$\$\$ **New Town** The Roxburghe provides classy atmosphere reflected in the elegant drawing room with its ornate ceiling and woodwork, antique furnishings, and tall arched windows. Reopened in 2000 after a multimillion-dollar redevelopment, the hotel was enlarged into two neighboring buildings, tripling the original number of guest rooms, which vary in size. *See map p. 130. 38 Charlotte St. (at George St.).* ☎ 0131-240-5500. www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk.

Radisson SAS Hotel

\$\$\$ **Old Town** Formerly the “Crowne Plaza,” this baronial-style building lies midway along the Royal Mile. The hotel is thoroughly modernized and offers first-class facilities, although it lacks the old-world charm of some of Edinburgh’s grand dame hotels. Most of the bedrooms are spacious and well-decorated; bathrooms have heated floors for those chilly Scottish mornings. **Carrubbers** restaurant specializes in steak, while the less formal **Itchycoo Bar and Kitchen** offers tapas-style eating. *See map p. 130. 80 High St.* ☎ 0131-473-6590. www.radisson.com.



Thrum's Hotel

\$–\$\$ **Southside** In the Newington district southwest of the Meadows, Thrum's is a pair of connected Georgian buildings. The hotel contains high-ceilinged guest rooms with period Georgian furnishings. Children are particularly welcome here, and some accommodations are set aside as family rooms, while the garden offers an outdoor play area. *See map p. 130. 14–15 Minto St.* ☎ 0131-667-5545. www.thrumshotel.com.

Dining Out

Food in Scotland is perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of the country. Too many people think that cuisine here begins and ends with haggis, the stuffed sheep’s stomach, but there’s a lot more to the country’s cuisine.

Scotland’s reputation for excellent fresh produce is growing. Look out for the following delights in season: shellfish such as oysters, mussels, or scallops; locally landed finned fish (such as bream or sea bass); and

spring lamb or Aberdeen Angus beef. Fresh vegetables include asparagus, peas, and, of course, potatoes — some claim that the spuds grown in Ayrshire's sandy soils are unparalleled for their fluffy texture and rich taste.

The city of Edinburgh boasts many of the best restaurants in Scotland, indeed a few of the best in the U.K., and the choices the capital has to offer are more diverse today than ever before. You will find an array of contemporary Scottish and modern British restaurants as well as French, fish, and brasserie-style eateries along with cuisines from around the world, particularly Indian and Thai. Plus, several restaurants exclusively cater to vegetarians.



The majority of restaurants close in the afternoon, so if you're looking for lunch, don't leave it for too late in the day. The hours I provide in the listings that follow reflect when food may be ordered, but bars on the premises may keep longer hours. Many restaurants also close for business on either Sunday or Monday — and sometimes both. But during the annual Edinburgh Festival from late July to the end of August, many restaurants also offer extended hours. Given the crowds during this time, you should always reserve a table in advance.



For more ideas on dining options, buy *The List* magazine's annual **Eating & Drinking Guide**, a publication that reviews hundreds of restaurants, bars, and cafes in Edinburgh (and Glasgow).



Scotland is getting better at welcoming families, but it's still a far cry from the family-friendliness of, say, Italy or France. That said, give the local restaurants a try, and resist the temptation to resort to well-known international chains or fast-food outlets.

Prices

Given the strength of the British currency, prices will seem expensive if you convert the cost of meals into dollars. Still, you can find a range of choices for most budgets. The prices I list here already include the 17.5 percent VAT, so you won't see any hidden surprises when the bill comes. If you're looking for bargains, inquire about pre-theater special menus, which can be as much as half the price of the regular dinner menu. If you have Internet access, log onto www.5pm.co.uk for a list of restaurants offering early evening dining discounts.

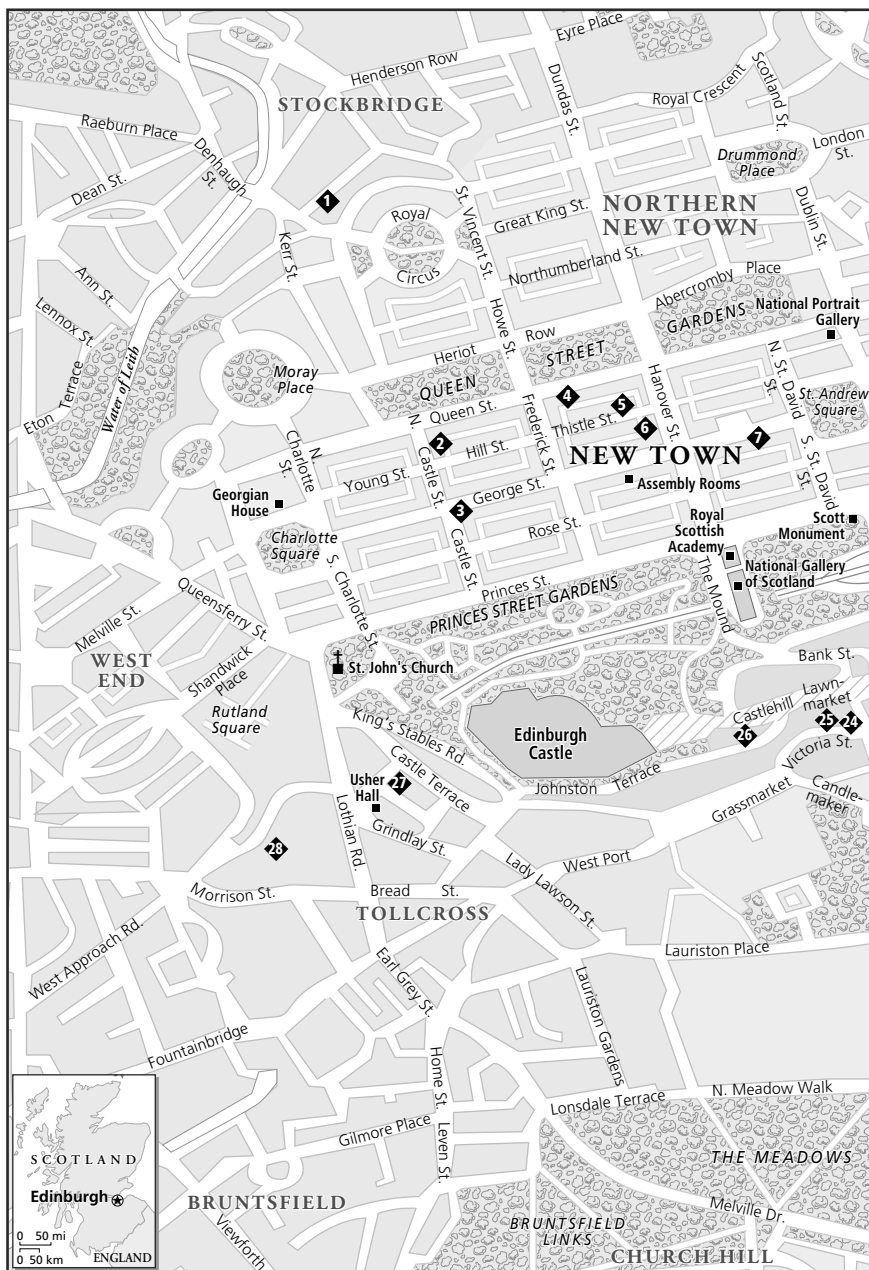


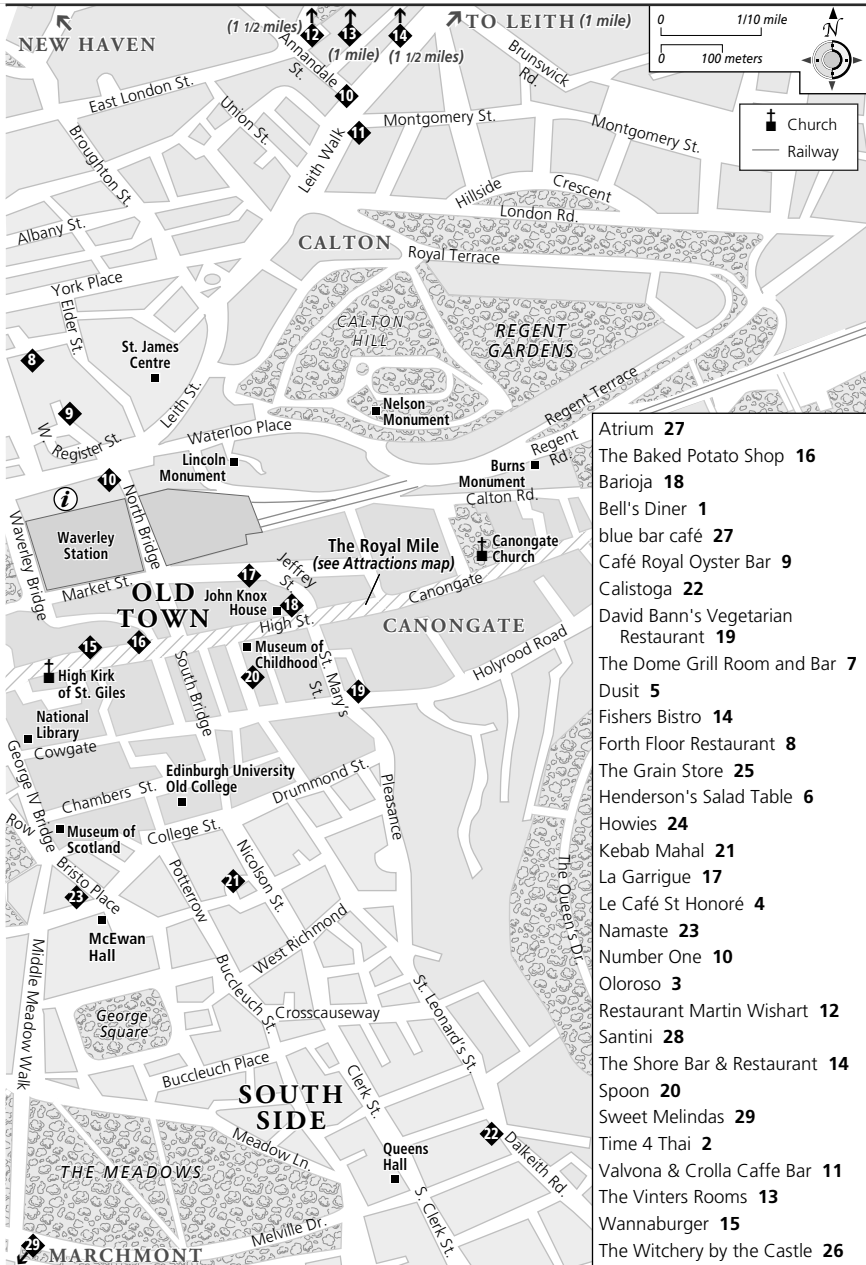
Lunch and pre-theater menus in Edinburgh often offer the same food as the full dinner menus but at a much better price. If you're trying to save money on your food bills, have a big late lunch or early evening meal.

Tipping

A 10 percent gratuity is standard for service, although you shouldn't hesitate to leave nothing if you were badly treated. On the other hand, if you were truly impressed, consider leaving 15 percent to 20 percent. In a

Edinburgh Dining





- Atrium 27
- The Baked Potato Shop 16
- Barioja 18
- Bell's Diner 1
- blue bar café 27
- Café Royal Oyster Bar 9
- Calistoga 22
- David Bann's Vegetarian Restaurant 19
- The Dome Grill Room and Bar 7
- Dusit 5
- Fishers Bistro 14
- Forth Floor Restaurant 8
- The Grain Store 25
- Henderson's Salad Table 6
- Howies 24
- Kebab Mahal 21
- La Garrigue 17
- Le Café St Honoré 4
- Namaste 23
- Number One 10
- Oloroso 3
- Restaurant Martin Wishart 12
- Santini 28
- The Shore Bar & Restaurant 14
- Spoon 20
- Sweet Melindas 29
- Time 4 Thai 2
- Valvona & Crolla Caffè Bar 11
- The Vinters Rooms 13
- Wannaburger 15
- The Witchery by the Castle 26

few restaurants, 10 percent service charge is included in the bill automatically, but it can be deleted if the service was genuinely dreadful.

Smoking

In 2006, Scotland adopted a complete ban on smoking in all enclosed public spaces, including bars and restaurants, some of which have set up outdoor smoking areas.

The top restaurants and cafes

Atrium

\$\$\$ West End MODERN SCOTTISH/INTERNATIONAL

Since 1993, this has been one of the most acclaimed and stylish restaurants in Edinburgh. Meals are prepared using lots of local and some organic ingredients, displaying flair but not excessive amounts of fuss or fancy presentation. Favorites include dishes such as a plate of roasted sea bass, served with Dauphinois potatoes, baby spinach, charcoal-grilled eggplant, and baby fennel. Yum. Or how about seared scallops served with chiles and garlic on lemon linguini? The desserts are equally superb. The wine list is excellent but not cheap, with most bottles costing in excess of £20 (\$37). Those on a tighter budget should try the blue bar café in the same premises (see later).

See map p. 140 10 Cambridge St. (adjacent to the Traverse Theatre, about a 5-min. walk from Princes Street). ☎ 0131-228-8882. www.atriumrestaurant.co.uk. Reservations recommended, especially on weekends. Bus: 1, 10, 15, or 24. Fixed-price 2-course lunch: £14 (\$26); main courses dinner: £17–£22 (\$32–\$41). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri noon–2 p.m. and 6–10 p.m.; Sat 6–10 p.m. Closed Sun and for 1 week at Christmas.

Barioja

\$–\$\$ Old Town SPANISH

Just off the Royal Mile (near the World's End Close) with views north to Calton Hill and the Royal High School, I prefer this casual tapas bar to its partner next door, the fine-food Spanish restaurant Iggs. Relaxed and staffed by natives of Spanish-speaking nations, Barioja is fun, friendly, and often lively. The kitchen's tapas come in reasonably substantial portions: whether tender fried squid, garlicky king prawns, or spicy chorizo sausages. Desserts are posted on the blackboard.

See map p. 140. 19 Jeffrey St. ☎ 0131-557-3622. Bus: 36. Fixed-price lunch: £7 (\$13), main courses: £4–£10 (\$7.40–\$19). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat 11 a.m.–11 p.m. Closed Sun.



Bell's Diner

\$–\$\$ Stockbridge AMERICAN

If you're desperate for a char-grilled patty of real ground beef, please resist any urge to visit the ubiquitous international fast-food chains. You can

Picnic fare

The Edinburgh weather doesn't always lend itself to outdoor dining on an expanse of lawn, but there are certainly days when the sun shines warmly enough to enjoy a picnic at Princes Street Gardens, the Meadows, Holyrood Park, along the Water of Leith, or in the Botanic Gardens.

If you're in the central area of town, the best place to pick up some deli goods is undoubtedly **Valvonna & Crolla**, 19 Elm Row (at the top of Leith Walk; ☎ 0131-556-6066). This Italian shop has an excellent reputation across the U.K. and offers a wonderful range of cheeses, cured meats, and fresh fruit and vegetables, plus baked goods from rolls to sourdough loaves, all the condiments you may need, and wine. Another option in New Town is the food hall at the top of **Harvey Nichols** department store, 30–34 St. Andrew Sq. (☎ 0131-524-8388). Freshly prepared salads, lots of dried goods, and fresh fruit and vegetables are all stocked here.

In Stockbridge, **IJ Mellis Cheesemongers**, on Bakers Place (☎ 0131-225-6566), sells award-winning British and Irish cheeses. The Mellis staff really know their stuff, and you can find the shop in Old Town on Victoria Street and south of the city center on Morningside Road as well.

If you're on the south side of the city near the Meadows, **Peckham's**, on Bruntsfield Place (☎ 0131-229-7054), is a solid choice for filling a picnic basket. But if you like Mexican food — Monterrey Jack cheese, real tortillas, and the like — visit **Lupe Pintos** in Tollcross, at 24 Leven St. (near the King's Theatre; ☎ 0131-228-6241). The shop also stocks some American goods, such as beef jerky, dill pickles, and peanut butter.

Heading toward the Botanic Gardens on the other side of town in Canonmills, at the roundabout, is a nice Spanish deli called **Dionika** (☎ 0131-652-3993). In the port of Leith, **Relish** at 6 Commercial St. (☎ 0131-476-1920) is a modern delicatessen offering a broad selection from its reasonably small shop.

patronize them at home. Instead, seek out wee Bell's Diner in Stockbridge. Open for over 30 years, the diner's burgers are cooked to order with a variety of toppings (from cheese to garlic butter) and are served with fries, salad, and a full array of condiments. The only drawback of Bell's, aside from its small space, is its limited hours of operation: only open in the evenings, except on Saturdays when Bell's is open for both lunch and dinner.

See map p. 140. 17 St. Stephen St. ☎ 0131-225-8116. Reservations recommended. Bus: 24, 29, 42. Main courses: £6.50–£9 (\$12–\$17). Open: Sun–Fri 6–10:30 p.m., Sat noon–10:30 p.m.

blue bar café

\$\$ West End INTERNATIONAL/BRITISH

In the building containing the Traverse Theatre in the West End, this attractive bistro is the less-expensive sibling of Atrium (see earlier). You'll find a minimalist décor with touches of azure hues and a cheerful staff.

The menu has dishes that can either serve as starters or a light main meal and a list of more substantial choices. Solid options include sausages with mash and onion gravy or goat-cheese tarts with red-onion jam.

See map p. 140. 10 Cambridge St. ☎ 0131-221-1222. www.bluebarcafe.com. Reservations recommended. Bus: 1, 10, 15, or 24. Fixed-price 2-course lunch: £9.95 (\$19); main courses: £10–£15 (\$19–\$28). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat noon–3 p.m. and 6–10:30 p.m.

Café Royal Oyster Bar \$\$–\$\$\$ New Town FISH/SEAFOOD

The Café Royal has been here for some 140 years, and thankfully, its many splendid Victorian touches remain intact. The main menu offers more than just oysters: Salmon, venison, langoustines, lobster, beef, and rabbit are often featured menu selections. The restaurant closes after lunch and reopens for dinner, but the ground-level Circle Bar is open throughout the day. The menu there is more limited but also less pricey. A highlight of this stylish room is the tile pictures of notable inventors. Upstairs, a second drinking hole, the Bistro Bar, has an ornate ceiling but a less classy atmosphere.

See map p. 140. 17a West Register St. ☎ 0131-556-4124. Bus: 8 or 29. Fixed-price 2-course lunch: £15 (\$28); main courses dinner: £15–£20 (\$28–\$37). AE, MC, V. Main restaurant open: Mon–Sun noon–2 p.m. and 7–10 p.m.; Circle and Bistro bars open: Mon–Wed 11 a.m.–11 p.m., Thurs 11 a.m.–midnight, Fri–Sat 11 a.m.–1 a.m.

Calistoga \$\$ Southside AMERICAN

Unique in Scotland, this restaurant attempts to recreate California cuisine here on the capital's less touristy side of town. In truth, they focus on Pacific Rim–style recipes, which can mean dishes as diverse as curried gazpacho, ginger and scallion roasted monkfish, or a seven peppered rib-eye steak. The wine list, however, is devoted to California vintages (plus two from Oregon) priced only £5 (\$9.50) over retail — including Napa Valley chardonnays and Russian River pinot noirs. The atmosphere is casual and relaxed, with a West Coast radio station playing in the background. It's almost like being in L.A. Closed for lunch Tuesday to Thursday.

See map p. 140. 93 St. Leonard St. ☎ 0131-668-4207. www.calistoga.co.uk. Bus: 14, 30, or 33. Main courses £13–£15 (\$24–\$28). AE, MC, V. Open: Fri–Mon 12:30–2:30 p.m.; daily 6–10 p.m. (11 p.m. Fri and Sat).

David Bann's Vegetarian Restaurant \$\$ Old Town VEGETARIAN

Chef David Bann has been at the forefront of meat-free cooking in Edinburgh for more than a decade. He comes from the school of thought that vegetarian meals can be healthy *and* tasty. The menu at his eponymous restaurant (located just a short stroll south of Royal Mile) is eclectic: Dishes have

international influences, from Mexico to Thailand. The dining room is as stylish as the cooking, and to top it off, the prices are very reasonable.

See map p. 140. 56–58 St. Mary's St. ☎ **0131-556-5888**. www.davidbann.com. Reservations recommended. Bus: 36. Main courses lunch: £7.50 (\$14); main courses dinner: £7.50–£10 (\$14–\$19). AE, MC, V. Open: daily 11 a.m.–10 p.m.

The Dome Grill Room and Bar

\$\$–\$\$\$ New Town INTERNATIONAL

Thanks to its restored Victorian-era Royal Bank of Scotland premises on posh George Street, with Corinthian columns, intricate mosaic tile flooring, marble-topped bar, potted palms, and towering flower arrangements — all under an elaborate domed ceiling — it is only honest to say that most people come here for the look of the Dome Grill Room and Bar. It oozes class and elegance. Alas, the last time we visited they rather ruined the ambience with a loud, modern pop/R&B soundtrack that belonged at the All Bar One branch across the street. The selection of food includes smoked salmon starters, bowls of mussels, or breast of duck. At the rear of the building is the garden cafe, which backs onto Rose Street.

See map p. 140. 14 George St. ☎ **0131-624-8624**. www.thedomeedinburgh.com. Reservations recommended. Bus: 45. Main courses lunch: £9–£16 (\$17–\$30); main courses dinner: £10–£22 (\$19–\$41). AE, DC, MC, V. Open: restaurant Sun–Thurs noon–10:15 p.m. and Fri–Sat noon–10:45 p.m.; bar Mon–Thurs 10 a.m.–11 p.m., Fri–Sat 10 a.m.–1 a.m., Sun noon–11 p.m.

Dusit

\$\$–\$\$\$ New Town THAI

Thistle Street, although little more than a slender lane with narrow sidewalks, has become a hotbed for dining out, and this unassuming restaurant has quickly developed a reputation for being one of the best in the city for Thai cuisine. The menu is not typical and has a tendency towards modern dishes with occasionally prosaic translations, such as “A Pretty Duck” which is pretty delicious: char-grilled with nuts, mango, and shallots. Some of the main courses incorporate Scottish produce, such as venison, and the seafood options are plentiful.

See map p. 140. 49a Thistle St. ☎ **0131-220-6846**. www.dusit.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Bus: 24, 29, or 42. Main courses: £10–£16 (\$19–\$30). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat noon–3 p.m. and 6–11 p.m., Sun 3–6 p.m.

Fishers Bistro

\$\$–\$\$\$ Leith FISH/SEAFOOD

Seeing as how you've come down to the shore, you might as well have some fish. This place is a favorite for its seafood and view of the harbor at Leith. Naturally, a nautical theme prevails with fish nets, pictures of the sea, and various marine memorabilia. The Miller family founded the restaurant in the early 1990s, and their chefs offer such enticing dishes as fresh Loch Fyne oysters, acclaimed as among Britain's finest, mussels in white

wine sauce, or breaded and crispy fish cakes. Of course the fresh fish depends on what's been landed: it might be shark, trout, or turbot. If you can't make it to Leith, you can also find a branch of the restaurant in New Town on Thistle Street (☎ 0131-225-5109).

See map p. 140. 1 The Shore. ☎ 0131-554-5666. www.fishersbistro.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Bus: 16, 22, 35, or 36. Main courses: £12–£18 (\$22–\$33). AE, MC, V. Open: daily noon–10:30 p.m.

Forth Floor Restaurant

\$\$\$ New Town MODERN SCOTTISH

No that's not a misspelling of the name: This restaurant at the top of the Harvey Nichols boutique department store has excellent views of the Firth of Forth from the fourth floor of the building. It combines excellent contemporary Scottish cooking with those commanding vistas. While you do feel like you're dining in a department store annex (despite the slick, minimalist décor), the food can be phenomenal, whether a succulent and robust braised ox tail or a light salad with endive and seasonal truffles. The produce used by the kitchen is notably fresh. The brasserie menu, while less extensive than the restaurant's selections, offers good value with a fixed-price £14 (\$26) lunch and serves an "afternoon menu" between lunch and dinner. A recently added bar mixes some wonderful cocktails.

See map p. 140. Harvey Nichols, 30–34 St. Andrew Sq. ☎ 0131-524-8350. www.harveynichols.com. Reservations recommended. Bus: 8, 10, 12, or 45. Fixed-price lunch: £25 (\$46); main courses dinner: £12–£20 (\$22–\$37). AE, DC, MC, V. Open: daily noon–10 p.m.

The Grain Store

\$\$\$ Old Town SCOTTISH/MODERN BRITISH

With its dining room up some unassuming stairs, and wooden tables set amid raw stone walls, the Grain Store capably captures some Old Town essence and atmosphere. The cooking of owner Carlo Coxon is ambitious and innovative: For example, the menu might include dishes such as a saddle of Scottish venison with a beet-root fondant or a medley of sea bass and scallops, served with fennel, olives, and tomato. While the evening a la carte menu is not cheap, the fixed-price options are moderately priced.

See map p. 140. 30 Victoria St. ☎ 0131-225-7635. www.grainstore-restaurant.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Bus: 2, 41, or 42. Fixed-price 2-course lunch: £10 (\$19); fixed-price 2-course dinner: £18 (\$33); dinner main courses: £17–£25 (\$31–\$46). AE, MC, V. Open: Daily noon–2 p.m. and 6–10 p.m.



Henderson's Salad Table

\$ New Town VEGETARIAN

Right in the heart of the New Town, Henderson's Salad Table (and Henderson's Bistro around the corner) is a longtime stalwart of healthy, inexpensive meat-free cuisine in Edinburgh. During the day, the Salad Table half of the operation offers counter service only. In the evening, however,

the menu is expanded a bit and staff wait on your table. Dishes, such as vegetable stroganoff or Greek moussaka, complement what you might expect from the name: a wide array of salads. Wines include organic options.

See map p. 140. 94 Hanover St. ☎ 0131-225-2131. www.hendersonofedinburgh.co.uk. Bus: 13, 23, or 27. Fixed-price 2-course lunch: £8 (\$15); main courses dinner: £6–£8 (\$11–\$15). MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat 8 a.m.–10:30 p.m. Closed Sun.

Howies

\$\$ Old Town SCOTTISH/CONTINENTAL

David Howie Scott opened his first restaurant with modest ambitions (for example, guests brought their own wine), and then he created a minor empire in Edinburgh, with a couple branches elsewhere in Scotland as well. In the capital city, there are four. The one on Victoria Street in Old Town is probably the most convenient. The minichain's motto is "fine food without the faff" — and we might add "sold at reasonable prices," as well. Typical dishes include pan-seared supreme of chicken, honey-cured Scottish salmon, or gnocchi with fresh basil pesto. You can still bring your own bottle, but the wine list at Howies is as reasonably priced as its menu.

See map p. 140. 10–14 Victoria St. ☎ 0131-225-1721. www.howies.uk.com. Reservations recommended. Bus: 2, 41, or 42. Fixed-price 2-course lunch: £8.95 (\$17); fixed-price 2-course dinner: £17 (\$31). AE, MC, V. Open: daily noon–2:30 p.m. and 6–10 p.m.



Kebab Mahal

\$ Southside INDIAN

The kebab is usually a late-night meal wolfed down by students standing in the streets after they have danced their heads off in the club. And while the late weekend hours of this simple diner means they attract that trade, too, Kebab Mahal is much more. Drawing a cross-section of the city, whether dusty construction workers on a break or tweed-clad professors grading papers, this basic Indian restaurant — where you may have to share your table with others — has become a landmark. Although the counter is full of hot food, most of the main courses are prepared separately in a kitchen to the rear. True to its Islamic owner's faith, Kebab Mahal doesn't have a license to serve alcohol, and doesn't allow diners to bring their own, either. It also closes every Friday from 1 to 2 p.m. for prayers.

See map p. 140. 7 Nicolson Sq. ☎ 0131-667-5214. Bus: 3, 8, 29. Main courses lunch and dinner: £4–£6 (\$7.40–\$11). No credit cards accepted. Open: Sun–Thurs noon–midnight, Fri–Sat noon–2 a.m.

La Garrigue

\$\$–\$\$\$ Old Town FRENCH

The chef and proprietor of La Garrigue, Jean Michel Gauffre, hails from the southern French region of Languedoc and he attempts to re-create the fresh and rustic cooking of his home here in Edinburgh. The feeling of the dining room is casual but smart, with some stylish handmade furniture



Family-friendly fare

The Baked Potato Shop (56 Cockburn St. ☎ 0131-225-7572): Children generally delight in being taken to this favorite lunch spot, just off the High Street in Old Town, where they can order fluffy baked potatoes with a choice of half a dozen hot fillings along with all sorts of other dishes, including chili and a variety of salads. It's cheap, too.

Valvonna & Crolla Caffè Bar (19 Elm Row; ☎ 0131-556-6066): Also at the top of Leith Walk, this place is best known as one of the U.K.'s finest Italian delis. But if you can get past the tempting salamis, cheeses, and other delicacies, V&C offers a café that welcomes children in that way that Italians seem to do best.

and almost naïve paintings on the wall. The menu might feature a hearty roast or cassoulet (stew) with beans and meat as well as a more delicate pan-fried filet of bream. The wines are from southern France, too. Often, Chef Gauffre will come in the dining room to see how things are going and have a friendly chat. He knows the small touches can go a long way.

See map p. 140. 31 Jeffrey St. ☎ 0131-557-3032. www.lagarrigue.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Bus: 36. Fixed-price 2-course lunch: £13 (\$24); fixed-price 2-course dinner: £20 (\$37). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat noon–2:30 p.m. and 6:30–10:30 p.m. Closed Sun.

Le Café St Honoré

\$\$ New Town FRENCH BISTRO

This brasserie with a classic black-and-white checkered floor is a deliberately rapid-paced place at lunchtime and then becomes a much more relaxed and sedate affair at dinner (ideal for romantic couples). The menu is revised daily while an upbeat and usually enthusiastic staff serves cuisine that may include baked oysters with smoked salmon, venison with juniper berries and wild mushrooms, local pheasant in wine and garlic sauce, or baked cod with asparagus.

See map p. 140. 34 NW Thistle Street Lane. ☎ 0131-226-2211. www.cafesthonoré.com. Reservations recommended. Bus: 24, 29, or 42. Main courses lunch: £8–£12 (\$15–\$22); main courses dinner: £16–£20 (\$30–\$37). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat noon–2:15 p.m. and 6–10 p.m. Closed Sun.

Namaste

\$\$ Old Town INDIAN

In 2004, this unassuming restaurant, which features cuisine from the region of India's North Frontier, moved to this more central location near the Museum of Scotland. But that's about all that has changed. The feeling is still relaxed, and the cooking excellent. Unlike so many Indian restaurants, Namaste doesn't have a menu with 200-plus dishes. Instead it concentrates

on a select number, whether the succulent tandoori fish starter or a spicy lamb jalfrezi. The vegetarian options are numerous as well, with the black lentil stew (Dhal Mahkni) particularly recommended. Casual and cozy. Open for lunches in the summer Monday to Friday.

See map p. 140. 15 Bristo Place. ☎ **0131-225-2000**. Reservations recommended. Bus: 2, 41, 42. Main courses dinner: £6.25–£10 (\$12–\$19). MC, V. Open: daily 5:30–11 p.m.; for lunch in summer.

Number One

\$\$\$\$ New Town SCOTTISH/CONTINENTAL

This is the premier restaurant in the city's premier central hotel, with a well-earned star for superior cuisine and service from the widely respected Michelin Guide. You can sample the likes of pan-seared Scottish monkfish with saffron mussel broth, or perhaps venison loin with juniper jus, red cabbage, and black truffle mash. Dessert brings some rather exotic choices, such as mulled wine parfait with a cinnamon sauce, and a variety of sorbets or mature cheeses. Wines are excellent if pricey, but then so is the meal — a special treat while you're in Edinburgh.

See map p. 140. Balmoral Hotel, 1 Princes St. ☎ **0131-557-6727**. www.thebalmoralehotel.com. Reservations recommended. Bus: 3, 8, 19, 30. Fixed-price lunch: £24 (\$44); fixed-price 3-course dinner: £55 (\$102); fixed-price 6-course dinner: £65 (\$120). AE, DC, MC, V. Open: daily 7–10 p.m.; Mon–Fri noon–2 p.m.

Oloroso

\$\$\$ New Town SCOTTISH/INTERNATIONAL

Oloroso's chef and owner, Tony Singh, is a Scottish-born Sikh with an imaginative approach to cooking Scottish produce. Here in his rooftop restaurant, with an ample veranda and excellent panoramic views, the feeling is contemporary and swanky. Intentionally, there is little decoration, as the vistas provide enough interest. The frequently changing menus include dishes such as pan-seared marlin with stir-fried vegetables or chump of roast lamb with fondant potatoes and braised cabbage. There is also a grill menu with a variety of cuts of aged Highland beef. The bar, which mixes some mean cocktails, is usually open until 1 a.m. To sample Singh's take on Indian cuisine, try his more recently launched **Roti** on the lane behind Oloroso.

See map p. 140. 33 Castle St. ☎ **0131-226-7614**. www.oloroso.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Bus: 24, 29, or 42. Main courses: £15–£22 (\$28–\$41). MC, V. Open: daily noon–2:30 p.m. and 7–10 p.m.



Restaurant Martin Wishart

\$\$\$\$ Leith MODERN FRENCH

Despite a vaunted Michelin star and local awards, chef/owner Martin Wishart is the antithesis of the high-profile prima donna or loud-mouthed TV chef. One of Scotland's leading kitchen chiefs, he takes his accolades in stride and strives to improve the quality of his high-price establishment

Tea for two?

If you're looking for a bit of a break while sightseeing in Old Town, try **Plaisir du Chocolat**, 251–253 Canongate (☎ 0131-556-9524). The cafe is a modern representative of the Auld Alliance between Scotland and France — when England was the nemesis of both countries. You can find more than 100 types of tea here, but if you need a boost of energy, go for one of the cafe's specialties: hot chocolate. It's as effective as coffee, believe me. Open daily 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

A more traditional choice is **Clarinda's Tearoom**, 69 Canongate (☎ 0131-557-1888), for the classically British experience of afternoon tea: lace tablecloths, china, and Wedgwood plates on the walls. If you want a more formal teatime experience, try the Palm Court at the **Balmoral Hotel**, Princes Street (☎ 0131-556-2414).

in this now fashionable part of the Leith docklands. The décor is minimalist, featuring modern art. The menu, which changes frequently, is kept short and sweet, taking advantage of the best of the season. For example, John Dory with leeks, salsify, mussel and almond gratin. If you're not on a budget, push the boat out — as the Scots say — and go for the tasting menu. Ask the sommelier to open a different wine to match with each course. It costs a month's wages, but it is heavenly.

See map p. 140. 54 The Shore. ☎ 0131-553-3557. www.martin-wishart.co.uk. Reservations required. Bus: 22 or 36. Fixed-price lunch: £21 (\$39); main courses dinner: £20–£25 (\$37–\$46); tasting menu (6 courses): £60 (\$111). AE, MC, V. Open: Tues–Fri noon–2 p.m. and 6:45–10 p.m., Sat 6:45–10 p.m. Closed Sun and Mon.

Santini

\$\$\$ West End ITALIAN

This modern restaurant in a building adjacent to the Sheraton Grand Hotel in the West End offers some of the capital's classiest Italian cooking. This small international chain, with other branches in Milan and London, serves dishes such as fish antipasti with seared whitefish and char-grilled prawns or venison and pork belly. If you're in the mood for only pasta dishes or pizza, then opt for Santini Bis, the more casual option under the same roof.

See map p. 8. Conference St. ☎ 0131-221-7788. Bus: 1, 2, 10, 24, or 34. Fixed-price 2-course lunch: £21 (\$39); main courses dinner: £15–£22 (\$28–41). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri noon–2:30 p.m. and 6:30–10:30 p.m., Sat 6:30–10:30 p.m. Closed Sun.

The Shore Bar & Restaurant

\$\$ Leith FISH/SEAFOOD

Whether you eat in the unassuming pub or in the only slightly more formal dining room to one side, you will appreciate the simplicity and ease of this operation, which is dedicated to fresh fish and seafood. The menu changes

daily, offering unfussy dishes such as mussels with white wine, garlic, and onions or salmon filet with herby oil and balsamic vinegar reduction. And when food is not being served, the bar is still one of the best in Leith. It often has live music in the evenings, good ale on tap, and an unforced and sincere seaport ambience all the time.

See map p. 140. 3 Shore. ☎ **0131-553-5080**. Bus: 16, 22, 35, or 36. Fixed-price lunch: £17 (\$32); main courses dinner: £12–£18 (\$22–\$33). AE, MC, V. Open: daily noon–2:30 p.m. and 6:30–10 p.m.



Spoon \$ Old Town CAFE

This particular spoon is far from greasy. Instead, the contemporary cafe just off the High Street combines a relaxed ambience, first-rate espresso-based coffees, and the assured hand of a classically trained chef. The soups are superb, whether meat-free options — such as lentil and red onion or a roast pepper and eggplant — or Italian ham and pea soup. Sandwiches are prepared freshly, using quality ingredients, such as free-range chicken breast with tarragon on a toasted Italian roll. Alternatively, you can simply drop in for a piece of homemade cake: moist carrot or rich chocolate. Yum. (The same people now run the new cafe within the renovated Scottish Storytelling Centre, just round the corner on the Royal Mile.)

See map p. 140. 15 Blackfriars St. ☎ **0131-556-6922**. Bus: 35. Soups from £2.80 (\$5.20); sandwiches and salads from £4.50 (\$8.35). MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat 8 a.m.–6 p.m. Closed Sun.



Sweet Melindas \$\$ Marchmont (Southside) SCOTTISH/FISH

The capital's Marchmont neighborhood, although just south of the Meadows, is far enough from the well-trod traveler's trail to seem miles away from touristy Edinburgh. This locally owned and operated restaurant is a neighborhood favorite and merits a visit from those outsiders who admire simple and amiable surroundings. The cooking tends to emphasize fish (which the chefs purchase from the shop next door) in dishes such as crispy squid salad or roast cod with a sesame and ginger sauce. But the menu is not limited to the fruits of the sea. Often there is seasonal game, whether wood pigeon or venison, and a reasonable selection of vegetarian options as well.

See map p. 140. 11 Roseneath St. ☎ **0131-229-7953**. Reservations recommended. Bus: 24 or 41. Main courses lunch: £7–£10 (\$13–\$19); main courses dinner: £10–£15 (\$19–\$28). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon 6–10 p.m., Tues–Sat noon–2 p.m. and 6–10 p.m. Closed Sun.

Time 4 Thai \$\$–\$\$\$ New Town THAI

There has been an extraordinary boom in Thai restaurants in Edinburgh over the past few years. Just when you think the market is saturated, another one seems to open. Why? Who knows, although it makes for a

welcomed alternative to the Chinese eateries, with their proclivity to offer only bland Westernized meals (unless you can speak or read Chinese). This stylish New Town restaurant is relatively new, offering well-made and attractively presented curries and other Thai specialties. Everything is served with the accustomed grace and courtesy that Thai restaurants generally excel in.

See map p. 140. 45 N. Castle St. ☎ **0131-225-8822**. Bus: 24, 29, or 42. Fixed-price lunch: £9 (\$17); dinner main courses: £8–£16 (\$15–\$30). AE, MC, V. Open: daily noon–2:30 p.m. 5–11 p.m.; Fri–Sun 2:30–5 p.m.

The Vintners Rooms

\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$ Leith FRENCH

This impressive stone building was constructed in the 17th century as a warehouse for the barrels and barrels of Bordeaux (claret) and port wine that came to Scotland from France. And that Auld Alliance carries on with this restaurant, one of the most romantic in Edinburgh. After a change in management a few years ago, its reputation has never been higher. The French-born chef uses Scottish produce in a host of confidently Gallic dishes. The menu might feature roast stuffed fig with goat's cheese and Parma ham, steamed halibut with a classic artichoke Barigoule, or roast cote de boeuf (for two) with sauce Bearnaise. Wines are specially selected by Raeburn Fine Wines.

See map p. 140. The Vaults, 87 Giles St. ☎ **0131-554-6767**. www.thevintnersrooms.com. Bus: 22 or 36. Reservations recommended. Fixed-price lunch: £16 (\$30); dinner main courses: £18–£23 (\$33–\$43). AE, MC, V. Open: Tues–Sat noon–2 p.m. and 7–10:30 p.m.; Sun noon–2:30 p.m.

Wannaburger

\$ Old Town AMERICAN

Previously called Relish, Wannaburger is a modern diner in the heart of Old Town serving what it says on the label: burgers. They come with a variety of toppings, presented on thick sesame seed buns that can make eating them a challenge. Best of all, the chefs here don't seem to be afraid to cook them medium rare on the char-grill (whereas the norm at too many places is to serve beef burgers well-done). The meat is advertised as 100 percent Scottish, and there are chicken and veggie options. Decent shakes as well. Good for a fast meal on the Royal Mile.

See map p. 140. 217 High St. ☎ **0131-225-8770**. www.wannaburger.com. Bus: 35. Burgers from £5.50 (\$10). MC, V. Open: daily noon–9 p.m. (until 10 p.m. Fri and Sat).

The Witchery by the Castle

\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$ Old Town SCOTTISH

The restaurant, so named because of historical connections to medieval executions nearby and lingering ghosts, serves classy Scottish food in classy surroundings, with dishes that feature ingredients such as Angus beef, Scottish lobster, or Loch Fyne oysters. Well-prepared, old-time British

favorites, such as an omelet Arnold Bennett (made with cream and smoked fish), contrast with specials such as pan-roasted monkfish with a thyme and lemon risotto. Atmospheric and good for special occasions, it is also ideal for a sumptuous late meal. In addition to the dining room nearest the street, there is also the “Secret Garden” further down the narrow close.

See map p. 140. Boswell Court, Castlehill, Royal Mile. ☎ 0131-225-5613. www.thewitchery.com. Reservations required. Bus: 28. Fixed-price 2-course lunch or pre/post-theatre dinner: £10 (\$19); main courses dinner: £18–£25 (\$33–\$46). AE, DC, MC, V. Open: daily noon–4 p.m. and 5:30–11:30 p.m.

Exploring Edinburgh

Edinburgh’s reputation is enormous, and the city essentially lives up to all the hype. The second most popular destination after London for visitors to Great Britain, the Scottish capital is one of the most picturesque cities in Europe. Built on a set of hills, it’s unarguably dramatic.

Edinburgh’s **Old Town** is at the city’s heart, featuring the dramatic Edinburgh Castle at the top end of the **Royal Mile**, a street which follows the spine of a hill down to the Palace of Holyroodhouse. For many visitors, this *is* Edinburgh, with its mews, closes, and alleyways.

But across the valley to the north, a valley now filled by the verdant Princes Street Gardens, is the city’s **New Town**, which dates to the 1770s. Here you can find tidy streets and broad avenues, with shops, squares, and attractions such as the **National Portrait Gallery**. New Town reaches out to the villagelike setting of Stockbridge, from which one can walk along the city’s narrow meandering river, the Water of Leith, to Dean Village (another district that feels almost rural in nature), home of the **National Gallery of Modern Art** and its sister art venue, the **Dean Gallery**.

South of Old Town is the sprawling **Meadows**, with its acres of grass, the precincts of Edinburgh University, and suburbs such as Marchmont. To the north are the port of **Leith** and the Firth of Forth, which empties into the North Sea.



The only problem with Edinburgh’s many attractions is deciding what you have time to see. You would need at least a few days to visit every place listed in this section, so you need to make some decisions depending on how long you’re planning to be in the city. If you have children in tow, fewer galleries and more family attractions would probably be best; if you like art, more museums and fewer wanders may be in store.

Edinburgh’s world famous annual cultural celebration — the **Edinburgh Festival** — brings in tourists and lovers of all forms of art from around the world. But if you prefer a bit more space and smaller crowds, avoid the month of August in Edinburgh.



During the Edinburgh Festival, many museums that are normally closed on Sunday are open, and hours are generally extended. Some museums that open only in summer are also open on public holidays.

The top attractions

Calton Hill

New Town

Rising some 106m (350 ft.) above sea level, this bluff full of monuments is partially responsible for Edinburgh's being called the "Athens of the North." People scale the hill not only to see the landmarks up close but also to enjoy the panoramic views of the Firth of Forth and the city. The Parthenon-like structure at the summit, the **National Monument**, was meant to honor the Scottish soldiers killed during the Napoleonic wars. However, money for the project ran out in 1829, and the William H. Playfair–designed structure (once referred to as "Edinburgh Disgrace") was never finished.

The **Nelson Monument**, containing relics of the hero of Trafalgar, dates from 1815 and rises more than 30m (100 ft.) above the hill. A time ball at the top of the monument falls at 1 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and historically, it helped sailors in Leith set their timepieces. The monument is open from April through September, Monday from 1 to 6 p.m. and Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; from October through March, it's open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission is £3 (\$5.55).

The old **City Observatory** along the western summit of Calton Hill was designed in 1818 by Playfair, whose uncle happened to be the president of the Astronomical Institute, for which it was built. Nearby, the circular **Dougal Stewart's Monument** of 1831 (by Playfair as well) is not dissimilar to colonnades of the 1830 **Burns Monument** designed by Thomas Hamilton on the southern slopes of Calton Hill. It replicates the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates in Athens, which was also the inspiration for his earlier monument to honor the poet in Alloway (see my chapter on "Ayrshire and Argyll").

Down the hill towards Princes Street, the Old Calton Burial Grounds offers a curiosity of special interest to visitors from the United States. The **Emancipation** or **Lincoln Monument**, erected in 1893, was dedicated to soldiers of Scottish descent who lost their lives in America's Civil War. It has a statue of President Abraham Lincoln with a freed slave at his feet. Some famous Scots are buried in this cemetery, too, with elaborate tombs honoring their memory (notably the Robert Adam–designed tomb for philosopher David Hume).

See map p. 156. Walk up Calton Hill from the north end of Princes Street or from Leith Street. You can also drive up and park. Admission: Free. Open: Year-round dawn to dusk.

Edinburgh Castle **Old Town**

Few places in Scotland can equal the lore associated with Edinburgh Castle. The very early history is somewhat vague, but in the 11th century, Malcolm III and his Saxon queen, later venerated as St. Margaret, founded a castle on this spot. The only fragment left of their original pile — in fact, the oldest structure in Edinburgh — is St. Margaret's Chapel. Built in the Norman style, the oblong structure dates principally from the 12th century. After centuries of destruction, demolitions, and upheavals, the buildings that stand today are basically those that resulted from the castle's role as a military garrison in the past 300 years or so. It still barracks soldiers. And much of the displays are devoted to military history, which might limit the place's appeal for some. The castle vaults served as prisons for foreign soldiers in the 18th century, and these great storerooms housed hundreds of Napoleonic soldiers in the early 19th century. Some prisoners made wall carvings still seen today. Among the batteries of armaments that protected the castle is the medieval siege cannon, known as Mons Meg, which weighs more than 5 tons.

However, it is not all about war and visitors can see where Mary Queen of Scots gave birth to James VI of Scotland (later James I of England). Scottish Parliaments used to convene in the Great Hall. Another highlight is the Scottish Crown Jewels, used at the coronations, along with the scepter and sword of state of Scotland and the infamous Stone of Scone. Note that last entry is 45 minutes before closing.

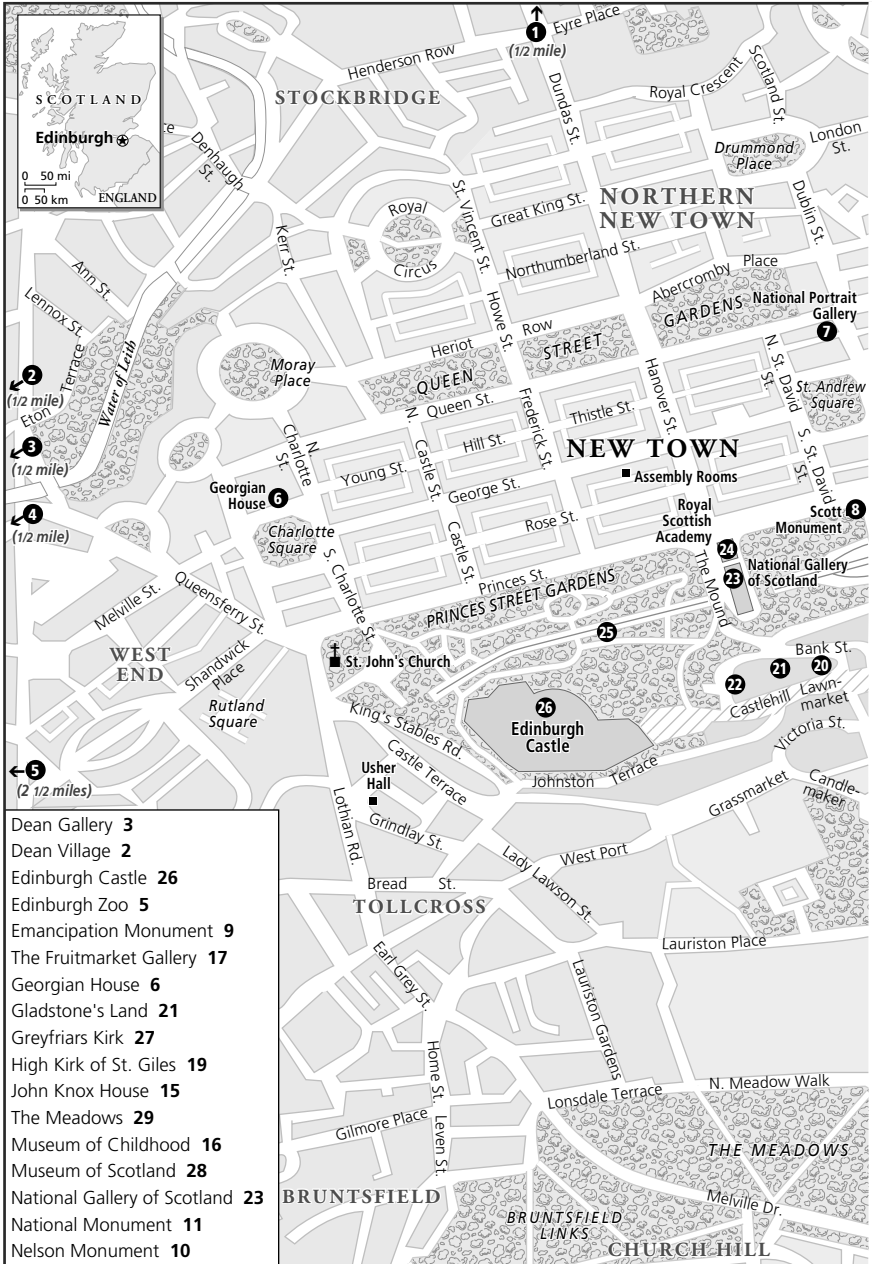
See map p. 156. Castlehill. ☎ 0131-225-9846. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Bus: 23 or 41. Admission: £10 (\$19) adults, £8.50 (\$16) seniors and students, £4.50 (\$8.35) children. Open: daily Apr–Sept 9:30 a.m.–6 p.m.; Oct–Mar daily 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m.

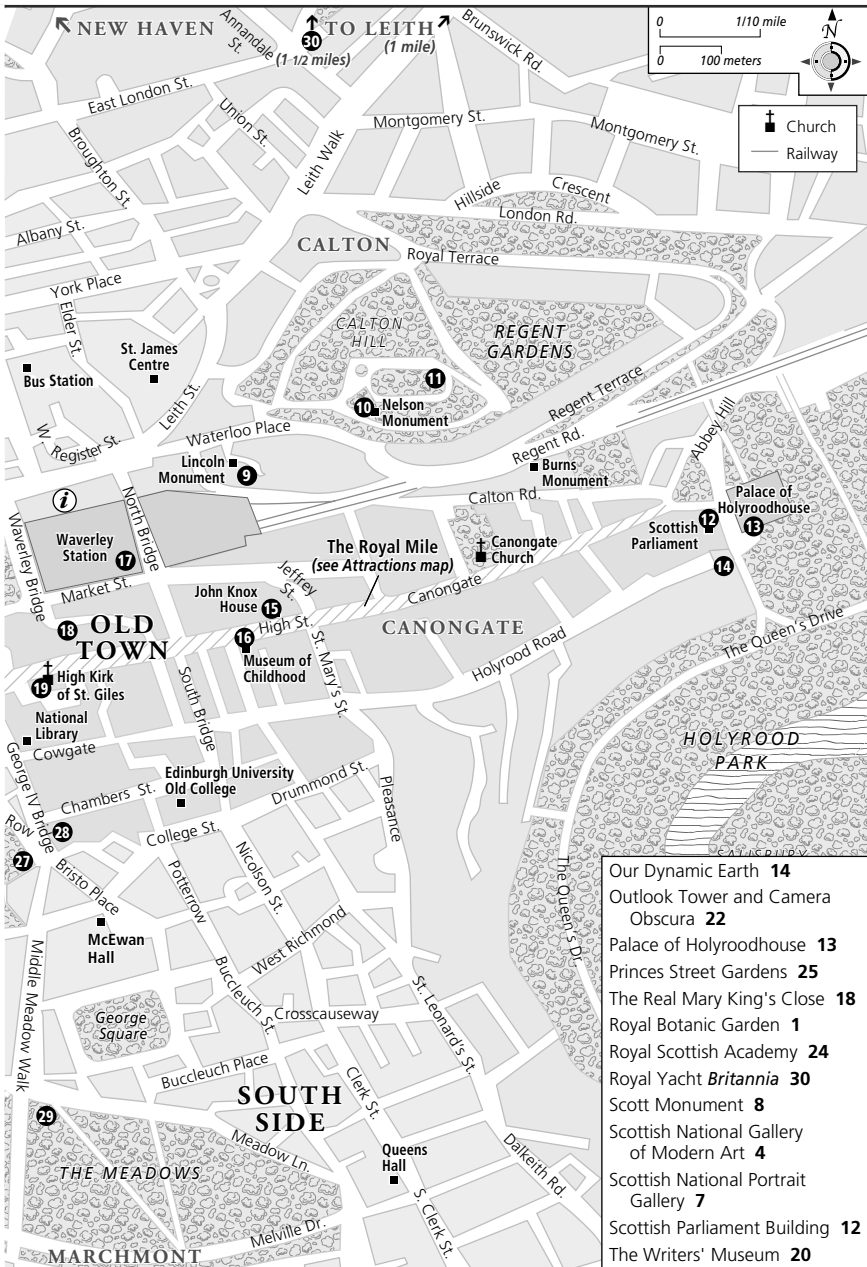
Gladstone's Land **Old Town**

Now run by the National Trust for Scotland, which rescued the property from demolition in the 1930s, this 17th-century merchant's house is decorated in period-style furnishings. It's not very large, though, and is perhaps worth a visit if only to get an impression of how confining living conditions were some 400 years ago, even for the reasonably well-off. Note as well how small the doorways are — just don't bump your head. The merchant Gladstone (then spelled Gledstane) expanded the original 16th-century structure he purchased in 1617 both upwards and toward the street. In the front room, added to the second floor, you can see the original facade with its classical friezes of columns and arches. I particularly admire the sensitively restored timber ceiling, looking suitably weathered and aged, but with colorful paintings of flowers and fruit.

See map p. 156. 477B Lawnmarket. ☎ 0131-226-5856. www.nts.org.uk. Bus: 23 or 41. Admission: £5 (\$9.25) adults; £4 (\$7.40) seniors, students, and children; £14 (\$26) family. Open: Apr 1–June 30 and Sept 1–Oct 31 daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; July 1–Aug 31 daily 10 a.m.–7 p.m.

Edinburgh Attractions





For fans of Mr. Hyde

Not far from Gladstone's Land is **Brodie's Close**, a stone-floored alley off the Lawnmarket. It was named after the well-respected cabinet-making father of the notorious William Brodie, who was a respectable councilor and deacon of trades by day — but a notorious thief and ne'er-do-well by night. Brodie's apparent split personality (actually he was simply calculating and devious) was likely the inspiration for Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Brodie was finally caught and hanged for his crimes in 1788. In a final irony, the mechanism used in the hangman's scaffold was perfected by none other than Brodie himself — and he tried to defy its action by secretly wearing a steel collar under his shirt. It didn't work. Across the street from Brodie's Close is one of the more famous pubs along the Royal Mile: **Deacon Brodie's Tavern**, 435 Lawnmarket (☎ 0131-225-6531).



Museum of Scotland Old Town

Opened in 1998, this impressive modern sandstone building not far from the Royal Mile offers exhibits that follow the story of Scotland, including archaeology, technology, science, the decorative arts, royalty, and geology. Hundreds of millions of years of Scottish history are distilled on each of the museum's floors. There's a total of some 12,000 items, ranging from 2.9-billion-year-old rocks found on the island of South Uist to a cute Hillman Imp, one of the last of 500 automobiles manufactured in Scotland. One gallery is devoted to Scotland's centuries as an independent nation before it merged with England and Wales to form Great Britain in the first decade of the 18th century. Another gallery, devoted to industry and empire from 1707 to 1914, includes exhibits on shipbuilding, whisky distilling, railways, and such textiles as the tartan and paisley. The roof garden has excellent views, the **Tower Restaurant** offers superb lunches (☎ 0131-225-3003), and adjacent to the Museum of Scotland is the **Royal Museum**, with its well-preserved and airy Victorian-era Main Hall and some 36 more galleries.

See map p. 156. Chambers St. ☎ 0131-247-4422. www.nms.ac.uk.. Bus: 2, 7, 23, 31, 35, 41, or 42. Admission: free. Open: daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

National Gallery of Scotland New Town

Although the collection held by Scotland may seem small by the standards of larger countries, it has been chosen with great care and expanded by bequests, gifts, loans, and purchases. These galleries have only enough space to display part of the entire body of work. One recent major acquisition was Botticelli's *The Virgin adoring the Sleeping Christ Child*. The duke of Sutherland has lent the museum two Raphaels, Titian's two Diana canvases, and *Venus Rising from the Sea*. The gallery also has works by El

Greco and Velázquez and Dutch art by Rembrandt and Van Dyck. Impressionism and post-Impressionism are represented by Cézanne, Degas, van Gogh, Monet, Renoir, Gauguin, and Seurat. In the basement wing (opened in 1978), Scottish art is highlighted. Henry Raeburn is at his best in the whimsical *Rev. Robert Walker Skating on Duddingston Loch*, while the late-19th-century Glasgow School is represented by artists such as Sir James Guthrie.

Next door on the Mound is the **Royal Scottish Academy** (☎ 0131-624-6200), connected by the modern designed Weston Link. The RSA was renovated and now hosts blockbuster exhibitions, such as paintings by Monet or Titian.



A convenient way to see the Scottish National Galleries is by catching the courtesy gallery bus that stops at each branch.

See map p. 156. 2 *The Mound*. ☎ 0131-624-6200. www.nationalgalleries.org. Bus: 23, 27, 41, 42, 45, or National Galleries shuttle. Admission: free to permanent collections, admission prices vary for special exhibitions. Open: Fri–Wed 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Thurs 10 a.m.–7 p.m. Closed Dec 25–26.

The Palace of Holyroodhouse Old Town

King James IV established this palace at the beginning of the 16th century, and it lies adjacent to an abbey that King David I had founded in the 1128. What you see today was mostly built for Charles II in the 1670s. The nave of the abbey church, now in ruins, still stands, though the north tower is the earliest bit of the palace that remains intact. This wing was the scene of Holyroodhouse's most dramatic incident when Mary Queen of Scots's Italian secretary, David Rizzio, was stabbed repeatedly by her jealous husband, Lord Darnley, and his accomplices. A plaque marks the spot where he died on March 9, 1566. And one of the more curious exhibits is a piece of needlework done by Mary depicting a cat-and-mouse scene. (Her cousin, Elizabeth I, is the cat.)

The palace suffered long periods of neglect, but it basked in brief glory during a ball thrown by Bonnie Prince Charlie in the mid-18th century, during the peak of his feverish (and doomed) rebellion to restore the Stuart line to monarchy. And later Holyrood's fortunes were revived — as were other royal holdings in Scotland — by Queen Victoria. Today the royal family stays here whenever they visit Edinburgh. When they're not in residence, the palace is open to visitors.

Highlights include the oldest surviving section, King James Tower, where Mary Queen of Scots lived on the second floor, with Lord Darnley's rooms below. Some of the rich tapestries, paneling, massive fireplaces, and antiques from the 1700s are still in place. The Picture Gallery boasts many portraits of Scottish monarchs. More recently, the **Queen's Gallery** (separate admission) opened to display works from the royal collection, whether Mughal art or Dutch paintings.

Behind Holyroodhouse is **Holyrood Park**, Edinburgh's largest. With rocky crags, a loch, sweeping meadows, and the ruins of a chapel, it's a wee bit

of the Scottish countryside in the city, and a great place for a picnic. If you climb up Holyrood Park, you'll come to 250m-high (823-ft.) **Arthur's Seat**, from which the panorama is breathtaking. The name doesn't refer to King Arthur, as many people assume, but perhaps is a reference to Prince Arthur of Strathclyde or a corruption of *Ard Thor*, Gaelic for "height of Thor."

See map p. 156. *Canongate, at the eastern end of the Royal Mile.* ☎ **0131-556-5100.** www.royal.gov.uk. *Bus: 35, open-top tours. Admission (includes audio tour): £8.80 (\$16) adults, £7.80 (\$14) seniors and students, £4.80 (\$8.90) children ages 17 and younger, £23 (\$43) families (up to 2 adults and 3 children). Open: daily Apr–Oct 9:30 a.m.–6 p.m.; Nov–Mar 9:30 a.m.–3:45 p.m. Closed when Royal Family in residence, often 2 weeks in mid-May and late June and at Christmas.*

Princes Street Gardens New Town

A drained loch to the north of Old Town is now filled by the Princes Street Gardens, the most-used outdoor public space in the city. With Edinburgh Castle above, this is one of the most picturesque parks in Europe. If you want a little exercise, climb the 287 steps to the top of the 200-foot **Scott Monument** (admission charged) in the East Gardens for a great view of the castle. Resembling a church spire on a continental European cathedral, the Gothic-inspired monument is one of Edinburgh's most recognizable landmarks. In the center of the tall spire is a large seated statue of Sir Walter Scott and his dog, Maida, with Scott's heroes carved as small figures in the monument.

See map p. 156. *Princes Street.* ☎ **0131-529-4068.** www.cac.org.uk. *Bus: 3, 10, 12, 17, 25, or 44. Admission: garden is free; Scott monument: £3 (\$5.55). Open: gardens daily dawn to dusk; monument: Apr–Sept Mon–Sat 9 a.m.–6 p.m., Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.; Oct–Mar Mon–Sat 9 a.m.–3 p.m., Sun 10 a.m.–3 p.m.*



Royal Botanic Garden New Town

This is one of the grandest gardens in all of Great Britain, which is certainly saying something. Sprawling across 28 hectares (70 acres), it dates from the late 17th century, when it was originally used for medical studies. In spring, the various rhododendrons, from ground cover to gigantic shrubs, are almost reason alone to visit, but the planting in various areas assures year-round interest, whether in the rock garden or along the deep "herbaceous" borders elsewhere. When it comes to research, only Kew Gardens in London does more. The grounds include numerous glass houses, the Palm House (Britain's tallest) being foremost among them. Inverleith House is a venue for art exhibitions and has the **Terrace Cafe**, too.

See map p. 156. *Inverleith Row.* ☎ **0131-552-7171.** www.rbge.org.uk. *Bus: 8, 17, 23, or 27. Admission: by voluntary donation. Open: daily Apr–Sep 10 a.m.–7 p.m.; Mar and Oct–Dec 10 a.m.–6 p.m.; Jan–Feb 10 a.m.–4 p.m.*

Hume in Nor' Loch

When the area of Princes Street Gardens was still a bog, the distinguished philosopher and renowned agnostic David Hume fell in, couldn't get out, and called for help from a passing woman. She recognized him, denounced his lack of faith, and refused to offer her umbrella to pull him out of the mire until he recited the Lord's Prayer. Presumably, he obliged.

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art New Town/West End

Scotland's national collection of 20th-century art occupies a gallery converted from an 1828 school set on 4.8 hectares (12 acres) of grounds, about a 20-minute walk from the Haymarket railway station. The collection is international in scope and high quality despite its modest size, with works ranging from Matisse, Braque, Miró, and Picasso to Balthus, Lichtenstein, and Hockney. Recently the grounds in front of the museum were dramatically landscaped, with grassy terraces and a pond, into a piece of art itself called "Landform" by Baltimore-born Charles Jencks. A cafe sells light refreshments and salads.

See map p. 156. 75 Belford Rd. ☎ 0131-624-6200. www.nationalgalleries.org.
Bus: 13 or National Galleries shuttle. Admission: free, except for some temporary exhibits. Open: daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Dec 25–26.

Scottish National Portrait Gallery New Town

Housed in a red-stone Victorian neo-Gothic pile designed by Robert Rowand Anderson at the east end of Queen Street, the country's portrait gallery gives you a chance to see many famous Scots. The portraits by Rodin, Kokoschka, Ramsay, and Raeburn, among others, include everybody from Mary Queen of Scots and Flora Macdonald to early golfers, authors, and enlightenment thinkers. But it's not all historical characters, as modern portraits include Sean Connery and Billy Connolly. In addition to paintings, sculptures, miniatures, and the National Photographic Collection are on display (although the latter is destined to have a home of its own).

See map p. 156. 1 Queen St. ☎ 0131-624-6200. www.nationalgalleries.org.
Bus: 4, 10, 12, 16, 26, or National Galleries shuttle. Admission: free, except for some temporary exhibits. Open: Fri–Wed 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Thurs 10 a.m.–7 p.m. Closed Dec 25–26.

Scottish Parliament Building Old Town

After much controversy over its cost — the better part of £500 million (\$925 million) — and the time it took to construct, the new Scottish

Parliament finally opened in autumn of 2004. Designed by the late Barcelona-based architect Enric Miralles, it's a remarkable bit of modern design and perhaps worth the expense and delays. The abstract motif repeated on the facade was apparently inspired by Raeburn's painting *The Rev. Robert Walker Skating on Duddingston Loch*, which hangs in the National Gallery of Scotland (see listing earlier). Visitors can take a free, self-guided tour or pay to be led by a guide.

See map p. 156. Holyrood Rd. ☎ **0131-348-5000**. www.scottish.parliament.uk. Bus: 35. Admission: guided tour £3.50 (\$6.50) adult; £1.75 (\$3.25) seniors, students, and children older than age 5. Open: business days (when Parliament is in session) Tues–Thurs 9 a.m.–7 p.m.; all non-business days (when Parliament is in recess and all Mon and Fri) Apr–Oct 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Nov–Mar 10 a.m.–4 p.m.; year-round Sat–Sun 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Last admission 45 minutes before closing. Closed Dec 25–26 and Jan 1–2.

More cool things to see and do

Dean Gallery New Town/West End

Opening in 1999 across the way from the Scottish Gallery of Modern Art, the Dean Gallery provides a home for surrealist art and includes a replication of the studio of Leith-born pop art pioneer Eduardo Paolozzi. He gave an extensive body of his private collection to the National Galleries of Scotland, including prints, drawings, plaster maquettes, and molds. The artist's mammoth composition of the robotic Vulcan dominates the entrance hall. Elsewhere works by Salvador Dalí, Max Ernst, and Joan Miró are displayed, while the Dean also hosts traveling and special exhibitions of modern art.

See map p. 156. 73 Belford Rd. ☎ **0131-624-6200**. www.nationalgalleries.org. Bus 13 or National Galleries shuttle. Admission: free to permanent collection; prices vary for special exhibitions. Open: daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Dec 25–26.



Edinburgh Zoo Corstorphine, west of Murrayfield

Scotland's largest animal collection is 4.5km (3 miles) west of Edinburgh's city center on 32 hectares (80 acres) of hillside parkland offering unrivaled views from the Pentlands to the Firth of Forth. Run by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, the zoo emphasizes its role in the conservation of wildlife and contains more than 1,500 animals, including endangered species: snow leopards, white rhinos, pygmy hippos, and others. The zoo boasts the largest penguin colony in Europe housed in the world's largest penguin enclosure. From April to September, a penguin parade is held daily at 2:15 p.m.

See map p. 156. 134 Corstorphine Rd. ☎ **0131-334-9171**. www.edinburghzoo.org.uk. Bus: 12, 26, 31, or Airport Express. Admission: £10 (\$19) adults, £7 (\$13) children, £32 (\$59) families. Open: daily Apr–Sept 9 a.m.–6 p.m.; Oct and Mar 9 a.m.–5 p.m.; Nov–Feb 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

The Fruitmarket Gallery**New Town**

Near Waverley Station, this is the city's leading independent, contemporary art gallery, housed in an old covered market dramatically updated and modernized by architect Richard Murphy in the early 1990s. It hosts exhibits of internationally renowned modern and conceptual artists, including Louise Bourgeois, Cindy Sherman, and Yoko Ono — and local champions, such as Chad McCail and Nathan Coley. The Fruitmarket's bookshop and cafe are equally appealing. Across the street is the less innovative but still worthy city-run Edinburgh **City Art Centre** (2 Market St.; ☎ 0131-529-3993).

See map p. 156. 45 Market St. ☎ 0131-225-2383. www.fruitmarket.co.uk. Bus: 36. Admission: free. Open: Mon–Sat 11 a.m.–6 p.m., Sun noon–5 p.m. Closed Dec 22–27.

Georgian House**New Town**

Charlotte Square, designed by the great Robert Adam, was the final piece of the city's first New Town development. The National Trust for Scotland has two bits of property here: No. 28 on the south side of the square (its headquarters with a small gallery) and, on the northern side, this town house, which has been refurbished and opened to the public. The furniture is mainly Hepplewhite, Chippendale, and Sheraton, all from the 18th century. A sturdy old four-poster bed with an original 18th-century canopy occupies a ground-floor bedroom. The nearby dining room has a table set with fine Wedgwood china as well as the piss pot that was passed around after the women folk had retired.

See map p. 156. 7 Charlotte Sq. ☎ 0131-226-3318. www.nts.org.uk. Bus: 36. Admission: £5 (\$9.25) adults; £4 (\$7.40) children, students, and seniors; £14 (\$26) family. Open: daily July–Aug 10 a.m.–7 p.m.; daily Apr–June and Sept–Oct 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Nov and Mar daily 11 a.m.–3 p.m. Closed Dec–Feb.

Greyfriars Kirk**Old Town**

Although the churches of Scotland are not generally on the same scale as the cathedrals of the Continent, they do have their own slightly austere allure. Dedicated in 1620, this kirk was the first “reformed” church in Edinburgh and became the center of a good bit of history. It was built amid a cemetery that Queen Mary proposed in 1562 because there was no more burial space at St. Giles Cathedral on the Royal Mile. In 1638, the National Covenant, favoring Scottish Presbyterianism to the English Episcopacy, was signed here and an original copy is displayed. Among the many restorations, one in the 1930s brought in California redwood to create the current ceiling. The kirkyard's collection of 17th-century monuments and gravestones is impressive. The most celebrated grave, however, contains a 19th-century policeman whose faithful dog, Bobby, reputedly stood

watch for years. The tenacious terrier's first portrait (painted in 1867) hangs here while a statue of wee dog — made famous by Hollywood — is nearby at the top of Candlemaker Row, just outside the pub named in his honor.

See map p. 156. Greyfriars Place. ☎ 0131-226-5429. www.greyfriarskirk.com. Bus: 2, 23, 27, 41, 42, or 45. Admission: free. Open: Apr–Oct Mon–Fri 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Sat 10:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.; Nov–Mar Thurs 1:30–3:30 p.m.

High Kirk of St. Giles **Old Town**

A brief walk downhill from Edinburgh Castle, this church — and its steeple in particular — is one of the most important architectural landmarks along the Royal Mile. Here is where Scotland's Martin Luther, John Knox, preached his sermons on the Reformation. Often called St. Giles Cathedral, the building combines a dark and brooding stone exterior (the result of a Victorian-era restoration) with surprisingly graceful buttresses. Only the tower represents the medieval era of the church. One of its outstanding features is Thistle Chapel, housing beautiful stalls and notable heraldic stained-glass windows.

See map p. 156. High St. ☎ 0131-225-9442. Bus: 23 or 41. Admission: free, but £2 (\$3.70) donation suggested. Open: May–Sept Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–7 p.m., Sat 9 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun 1–5 p.m.; Oct–Apr Mon–Sat 9 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun 1–5 p.m.

John Knox House **Old Town**

John Knox is acknowledged as the father of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Protestant tenets of which he established in 1560. While some regard him as a prototypical Puritan, he actually proposed progressive changes in the ruling of the church and in education; as well as being quite renowned for sharp wit and sarcasm. Knox was also a writer/historian, perhaps best known for the inflammatory treatise, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, written in exile and inspired by his loathing of the reign of three Roman Catholic queens in Scotland, France, and England.

Even if you're not interested in the fire-brand reformer (who probably never lived here anyway), you may still want to visit this late-15th-century house. It's characteristic of the "lands" that used to flank the Royal Mile, and the house is noteworthy for its painted ceiling as well as its Knox history. Following three years of renovations, the house reopened in 2006 and is now integrated into the completely modernized **Scottish Storytelling Centre**.

See map p. 156. 43–45 High St. ☎ 0131-556-9579. Bus: 35 or 36. Admission: £2.25 (\$4.38) adults, £0.75 (\$1.46) children. Open: Mon–Sat 10 a.m.–6 p.m. (July–Aug also open Sun noon–4:30 p.m.)

The Meadows **Southside**

South of Old Town, this expansive public park separates the city center from the suburbs and leafy neighborhoods that popped up in the 18th and 19th centuries. The park dates to the 1700s, when a loch on the location was drained. Tree-lined paths crisscross the soccer, rugby, and cricket playing fields, but you can find plenty of additional space for having a picnic or flying a kite. At the far western end of the Meadows is Bruntsfield Links, a short-hole course which played a role in golf history and can still be played during the summer.

See map p. 156. Melville Dr. Bus: 24 or 41.



Museum of Childhood **Old Town**

Allegedly the world's first museum devoted solely to the history of childhood, this popular and free museum is just past the intersection of High and Blackfriars streets. The contents of its four floors range from antique toys to games to exhibits on health, education, and costumes, plus video presentations and an activity area. Not surprisingly, this is often the noisiest museum in town, although some argue that adults enjoy it more than kids do.

See map p. 156. 42 High St. ☎ 0131-529-4142. Bus: 35. Admission: free. Open: Mon–Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sun noon–5 p.m.



Our Dynamic Earth **Old Town**

Under a futuristic tent-like canopy near the new Scottish Parliament, Our Dynamic Earth celebrates the evolution and diversity of the planet, with emphasis on the seismological and biological processes that led from the Big Bang to the world we know today. The presentation has been called “physical evolution as interpreted by Disney” — audio and video clips, buttons you can push to simulate earthquakes, meteor showers, and views of outer space. There is the slimy green primordial soup where life began and a series of specialized aquariums, some with replicas of early life forms, others with actual living sharks, dolphins, and coral. A simulated tropical rainforest has skies darken at 15-minute intervals, offering torrents of rainfall and creepy-crawlies underfoot. On the premises are a restaurant, a cafe, a children's play area, and a gift shop. Last entry is 1 hour and 10 minutes before closing.

See map p. 156. Holyrood Rd. ☎ 0131-550-7800. www.dynamicearth.co.uk. Bus 35 or 36. Admission: £8.95 (\$17) adults, £5.45 (\$10) seniors and children ages 5–15, £1.50 (\$2.80) children younger than 5. Open: July–Aug daily 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Apr–June and Sept–Oct daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Nov–Mar Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–5 p.m.



Outlook Tower and Camera Obscura **Old Town**

The 150-year-old periscopelike lens at the top of the Outlook Tower throws an image of nearby streets and buildings onto a circular table, which can be almost magically magnified with just a bit of cardboard. Guides reveal this trick and help to identify landmarks and discuss highlights of Edinburgh's history. In addition, the observation deck offers free telescopes, and there are several exhibits in the "World of Illusions" with an optical theme that will keep some children occupied. I think it's disappointing, however, that there is not more to celebrate the man responsible for the Camera Obscura, Sir Patrick Geddes, a polymath who worked tirelessly to improve the fortunes of the Old Town in the 19th and 20th centuries and kept it from being torn down. The last camera presentation begins one hour before closing.

See map p. 156. Castlehill. ☎ **0131-226-3709**. Bus: 23 or 41. Admission: £6.45 (\$12) adults, £5.15 (\$9.55) seniors and students, £4.15 (\$7.70) children. Open: daily July–Aug 9:30 a.m.–7:30 p.m.; Apr–June and Sept–Oct 9:30 a.m.–6 p.m.; Nov–Mar 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

The Real Mary King's Close **Old Town**

Beneath the municipal City Hall on the Royal Mile lies a warren of hidden streets where people lived and worked for centuries. When the Royal Exchange (now the City Chambers) was constructed in 1753, the top floors of the existing buildings were torn down and the lower sections were left standing to be used as the foundations. This left a number of dark, mysterious passages largely intact. These underground "closes," originally very narrow walkways with houses on either side, date back centuries. In 2003, groups led by guides dressed up as characters from the past began to visit these dwellings for the first time in perhaps 250 years. During the tours, visitors return to the turbulent and plague-ridden days of the 17th century. Dim lighting and an audio track are intended to add to the experience.

See map p. 156. 2 Warriston Close, High St. ☎ **0870-243-0160**. Bus: 23 or 41. Admission: £8 (\$15) adults, £6 (\$11) students and children ages 5–15 (younger than 5 not allowed). Reservations recommended. Open: Apr–Oct daily 10 a.m.–9 p.m.; Nov–Mar Sun–Fri 10 a.m.–4 p.m. and Sat 10 a.m.–9 p.m. Closed Dec 25.

Royal Yacht Britannia **Leith**

The royal yacht *Britannia* launched on April 16, 1953, and traveled more than one million miles before it was decommissioned in December 1997. Several cities competed to permanently harbor the ship as a tourist attraction. The port of Leith won, and today the ship is moored next to the Ocean Terminal shopping mall some 3km (2 miles) from Edinburgh's center. Once you're aboard, a 90-minute audio tour will guide you about the vessel. You can see where Prince Charles and Princess Diana strolled the deck on their honeymoon; visit the drawing room and the Royal apartments; and explore

the engine room, galleys, and captain's cabin. Tickets should be booked as far in advance as possible.

See map p. 156. *Ocean Terminal, Ocean Drive, Leith.* ☎ **0131-555-5566**. www.royalyachtbritannia.co.uk. Bus: 22, 34, 35, or *Majestic Tour Bus*. Admission: £9 (\$17) adults, £7 (\$13) seniors, £5 (\$9.25) children ages 5–17, free for children ages 4 and younger, £25 (\$46) family ticket. Open: Apr–Oct first tour beginning at 9.30 a.m. and the last tour at 4:30 p.m.; Nov–Mar daily 10 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Closed Dec 25 and Jan 1.



The Writers' Museum Old Town

This remnant of a 17th-century house contains a trove of portraits, relics, and manuscripts relating to Scotland's greatest men of letters: Robert Burns (1759–96), Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832), and Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–94). The Writers' Museum is often a surprisingly uncrowded space. The basement is perhaps best, with a good deal of items from the life of Stevenson (including his fishing rod and riding boots), as well as a gallery of black-and-white photographs taken when he lived in the South Pacific. The main floor is devoted to Scott with his dining room table from 39 Castle St., his pipe, chess set, and original manuscripts. Another set of rooms gives details of Burns's life (note his page-one death notice in a copy of London's Herald, dated 27 July, 1796) along with his writing desk, rare manuscripts, portraits, and other items. The premises, Lady Stair's House, with its narrow passages and low clearances were originally built in 1622 for Edinburgh merchant Sir William Gray.

See map p. 156. In *Lady Stair's House, off Lawnmarket.* ☎ **0131-529-4901**. Admission: free. Bus: 23 or 41. Open: Mon–Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m. (in Aug also Sun noon–5 p.m.)

Guided tours

For an entertaining, one-hour overview and introduction to the principal attractions of Edinburgh, consider the **Edinburgh Bus Tours** that leave every 20 minutes or so from Waverley Bridge from April to late October. You can see most of the major sights along the Royal Mile, the Grassmarket, Princes Street, George Street, and more from the double-decker open-top motor coaches. Three tours — Edinburgh Tour (green buses), City Sightseeing (red buses), and Mac Tours (vintage buses) — all cover roughly the same ground in Old Town and New Town. The Majestic Tour buses, however, make short work of the city center as they go down to Leith as well. Tickets are valid for 24 hours, and you can hop on and hop off the bus at designated stops as you choose. The first tour is at 9:30 a.m., and the last is usually around 5:40 p.m. (slightly later from July through Sept). For more information on Edinburgh Bus Tours call ☎ **0131-220-0770** (www.edinburghstour.com). Tickets are £9 (\$17) adults, £8 (\$15) seniors and students, £3 (\$5.55) children ages 5 to 15 (younger than 5 ride free), and £20 (\$37) for a family of two adults and up to three children.

The **Literary Pub Tour** traces the footsteps of such literary greats as Robert Burns, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Sir Walter Scott, going into

The father of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) was a restless character. Raised in Edinburgh, he found the place unsuitable for his frail constitution. This, combined with his wanderlust, meant that he spent much of his life traveling and living outside his native Scotland. The author has been alternately hailed as Scotland’s greatest writer and dismissed as nothing more than the creator of tall tales for children, though surely the former is more accurate.

He was the son of Margaret and Thomas Stevenson, born into a family famed for its Scottish civil engineering projects, especially lighthouses. RLS was a sickly child and, as a young adult, something of disappointment to his father. After he allowed his son to bow out of engineering and the lucrative family business, Thomas made Robert attend law school, vowing that “the devious and barren paths of literature” were not suitable. RLS, undaunted, became a writer and a bit of rogue. One of his favorite bars still stands today: Rutherford’s on Drummond Street near South Bridge Street.

Determined to roam (“I shall be a nomad”) and write, he went to France where he met and later married an American, Fanny Osborne, with whom he traveled to California. Following the success of *The Sea-Cook* (1881), which became the ever-popular *Treasure Island*, Stevenson produced *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, an instant bestseller and his most famous work — thanks in no small part to later Hollywood adaptations. That was quickly followed by the classic *Kidnapped* (1886), his most evocative book. It reflects the troubled political times in Scotland after the failed 1745 rebellion of Bonnie Prince Charlie and the book takes its 16-year-old hero on an adventure across the Western Highlands.

Eventually RLS and Fanny settled in Samoa, hoping to find a climate that would suit his scarred lungs. While here, Stevenson worked on the unfinished classic, *Weir of Hermiston* (published posthumously in 1896). On December 3, 1894, only 43 years old, he collapsed and died.

the city’s taverns and highlighting the tales of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* or the erotic love poetry of Burns. They leave nightly at 7:30 p.m. from the Beehive Inn, a popular pub on the Grassmarket, from June to September; Thursday to Sunday in April, May, and October; and just on Friday from November to March. For more information, call ☎ **0131-226-6665** (www.edinburghliterarypubtour.co.uk). Reservations are recommended for groups during the high season. You can purchase tickets at the Beehive; prices are £7 (\$13).

Edinburgh’s history is filled with tales of ghosts, gore, and witchcraft, and the **Witchery Tours** are enlivened by characters who leap out of seemingly nowhere when you least expect it. Two tours — the 1½-hour “Ghost & Gore” and the 1¼-hour “Murder & Mystery” — overlap in parts. Scenes of horrific torture, murder, and supernatural occurrence in the Old Town are visited under the cloak of darkness. The ghost tour (which

runs May–Aug) departs nightly at 7 and 7:30 p.m., with the murder tour (runs year-round) leaving at 9 and 9:30 p.m. All tours depart from the outside of The Witchery Restaurant on Castlehill. For tickets — £7.50 (\$14) — visit the tour office at 84 West Bow (☎ **0131-225-6745**; www.witcherytours.com). Reservations are required.

Mercat Tours is a well-established company that conducts popular walking tours of the city that cover a range of interests from “Secrets of the Royal Mile” to “Ghosts & Ghouls,” which only take place in the evenings. The tours leave from the Mercat Cross, outside of St. Giles Cathedral on the Royal Mile. Contact Mercat Tours (☎ **0131-557-6464**; www.mercat-tours.co.uk) for reservations. Tickets cost £7 (\$13).

Suggested one-, two-, and three-day itineraries

You may just want to wander around Edinburgh, which is easy enough — it’s a small place and many of the tourist attractions are within the central part of the city. However, if your time in the capital is limited to a few days, here are some suggested itineraries that highlight some of the very best things to do and see.

If you have one day

If you’re unfortunate enough to only have one day in Edinburgh, I suggest that you stick to the city’s famous Royal Mile and Old Town. It is every bit a day’s worth of activity, with plenty of history and attractions from Edinburgh Castle to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, shops, restaurants, and pubs. Wander down some of the alleys off the Royal Mile, too.

If you have two days

Follow my one-day itinerary for your first day, and on your second day, take the hop-on, hop-off bus tour that emphasizes the New Town. Your ticket is good for 24 hours (although the buses stop running in the late afternoon/early evening). Get off on Calton Hill for the views, which Robert Louis Stevenson said were the best in the city. Amble down Princes Street for a bit of shopping and afterwards take a break in Princes Street Gardens. Admire some of art at one of the branches of the National Gallery.

If you have three days

Days 1 and 2 should be filled with the activities I suggest in the previous two sections. On Day 3, take in **Leith**, Edinburgh’s once rough-and-tumble port. A seaside village that is now part of Edinburgh, Leith has a rich history of its own. Today it also offers some good restaurants and lively pubs. On your way back into the city center, also worth a visit, is the Botanic Gardens. It’s one of the best in Britain — and that’s saying a lot. If you have any time to spare, visit Stockbridge or the Meadows, which have an off-the-main-tourist-tracks feel to them.

If you (are lucky and) have four days or more

Start with my recommendations from the previous sections and then on Day 4 climb Arthur's Seat for views of the city and the sea, or if you have children, take the family to the **Edinburgh Zoo**. Explore the regions around the city, heading east to the coast near North Berwick or west to nearby historic Linlithgow.

Taking a walking tour

Given that Edinburgh is a relatively compact city, walking is one of the best ways to see it. This fact is especially true in the Old Town, where passages and alleys — or “closes” (pronounced *cloz-es*) and “vennels,” as the locals prefer — run off both sides of the main street like ribs from a spine. You really owe it to yourself to wander down a few of them to appreciate the medieval core of the Scottish capital.

If you want to leave the tourist trail, however, I have devised the following walk south of the Royal Mile, which will give you a notion of what “real” Edinburgh is like — as well as takes you past some historical and

Edinburgh's big summer events

The cultural highlight of Edinburgh's year comes every August during the **Edinburgh International Festival** and **Festival Fringe**. Since 1947, the International Festival has attracted artists and companies of the highest standards, whether in classical music, opera, ballet, or theater. Running almost simultaneously is the Fringe, an opportunity for anybody — professionals or nonprofessionals, individuals, groups of friends, or a whole company — to put on a show wherever they can find an empty stage or street corner. For many people today, the Fringe is *the* festival thanks to its late-night revues, contemporary drama, university theater presentations, and even full-length opera. Over the years, the Fringe has become increasingly established (and sponsored) though hardly less experimental and unexpected.

As if the International Festival and the Fringe weren't enough, Edinburgh also hosts, at about the same time, a variety of other festivals. In Charlotte Square, the **Book Festival** has become a huge annual event, drawing authors such as J.K. Rowling and Toni Morrison. You may also stumble upon the international **Film Festival**, a **Jazz Festival**, and a **Television Festival**. One of the season's more popular spectacles is the **Military Tattoo** on the floodlit esplanade of Edinburgh Castle. The show features precision marching of not only Scottish regiments but also soldiers and performers (including bands, drill teams, and gymnasts) from dozens of countries.

Ticket prices for festivals, the Fringe, and other shows or events vary from £1 (\$1.85) to £50 (\$93). The headquarters for the International Festival is The Hub, Castle Hill (☎ 0131-473-2000). The Fringe is based at 180 High St. (☎ 0131-226-0000). General information on festivals and most events can be found on the Web at www.edinburghfestivals.co.uk.

architectural highlights. The route's only about 1.2km (2 miles) long and shouldn't take you more than an hour or so to complete (if you don't go into buildings or get distracted, that is).

Start the walk at:

1. West Bow

Initially this street zigzagged right up the steep slope from the Grassmarket to Castlehill. With the 19th-century addition of Victoria Street, however, West Bow links more easily with the Royal Mile via George IV Bridge. The combination of Victoria Street and West Bow create a charming and winding road of unpretentious shops, bars, and restaurants. At the base of the street is the West Bow Well, which was built in 1674. To the west is the Grassmarket.

Go southeast from Cowgate. Head up Candlemaker Row to:

2. Greyfriars Kirk

This isn't the church you see while ascending Candlemaker Row, but instead lies to the right at the top. Greyfriars Kirk was completed in 1620 (for some history, flip back to the church's listing in the section "More cool things to see and do," earlier in this chapter).

Cross George IV Bridge to Chambers Street and the:

3. Museum of Scotland

Directly in front of you as you leave Greyfriars is the impressive and modern Museum of Scotland. It was designed by architects Benson and Forsyth and constructed mostly with sandstone from the northeast of Scotland. (Next door on Chambers Street is the Royal Museum, a bonus if you have free time.) Chambers Street is named after a 19th-century lord provost (the equivalent of a mayor) whose statue stands in front of the museum's Victorian Great Hall. Further down off Chambers Street on what is today Guthrie Street, you can find Sir Walter Scott's birthplace.

Continue east on Chambers Street to South Bridge, turning right (south). At this corner is the:

4. Old College

The 1781 exteriors of the University of Edinburgh Old College have been called the greatest public work of Robert Adam. The university was first established in 1583 by James VI (and later James I of England), and this "Old College" actually replaced an earlier campus. In the southwest corner is the entrance to the Talbot Rice gallery (www.trg.ed.ac.uk), which displays contemporary art. One of Robert Louis Stevenson's favorite saloons — the Rutherford Bar — is on nearby Drummond Street and a plaque commemorating his admiration for it is posted. The neighborhood also offers more recent literary history. A cafe here is reputedly where J.K. Rowling began

writing the Harry Potter series. More recently, the establishment became a Chinese restaurant.

At Drummond Street, South Bridge becomes Nicolson Street. Continue south on it to:

5. Nicolson Square

The impressive building you passed on the left (across from the modern Festival Theatre) before arriving at this square was the Surgeons' Hall, designed by William Playfair in the 1830s. Nicolson Square dates to 1756, and the buildings along its north fringe apparently were the first to be built here. In the square's park you can see the Brassfounders' Column created by James Gowans in 1886.

Leave the square at the west on Marshall Street, turn left (south) onto Potterrow, and turn right (west) at the parking lot entrance and Crichton Street to:

6. George Square

Almost entirely redeveloped by the University of Edinburgh in the 20th century, George Square originally had uniform if less than startling mid-18th century town houses. The square predates the city's New Town developments, and some of the early buildings are still standing on the western side of the square. The park provides a quiet daytime retreat. Sir Walter Scott played in this park as a child. (A little trivia: The square was named after the brother of the designer James Brown and not a king.)

Exit the square at the southwest corner, turning right (west) into:

7. The Meadows

This sweeping park separates central Edinburgh from the southern suburbs, such as Marchmont, which were largely developed in the 19th century. At the Western end is Bruntsfield Links, which some speculate entertained golfers in the 17th century and still has a short course with many holes available for play today.

Turn right a short distance later (at the black cycle network marker) and follow the bike/pedestrian path, Meadow Walk, north to:

8. Teviot Place

The triangle of land formed by Teviot Place, Forrest Road, and Bristo Place is a hotbed of university life today, with its cafes and bars. To the right (east) is the Medical School. To the left (west) on Lauriston Place is the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. George Watson's Hospital on the grounds dates to the 1740s, but Scots baronial (a type of architecture) buildings superseded it in the 19th century, adopting the open-plan dictates of Florence Nightingale.

Hogmanay

Hogmanay is what the Scots call New Year's Eve, and Edinburgh now hosts one of the biggest New Year's Eve parties on the planet. In Scotland, the festivities traditionally don't really even begin until the clock strikes midnight and then they continue until daybreak or later. In 1993, the Edinburgh City Council began a three-day Hogmanay festival featuring rock bands, street theater, and a lively procession. By 1997, the event had become so big that participation is now reserved for ticket holders. For information, visit www.edinburghshogmanay.org.

Walk west on Lauriston Place to:

9. George Heriot's School

Heriot was nicknamed "the Jinglin' Geordie," and as jeweler to James VI, he exemplified the courtiers and royal hangers-on who left Scotland and made their fortunes in London after the unification of the crowns at the beginning of the 17th century. Heriot, at least, decided to pay Edinburgh back by leaving more than \$20,000 (\$37,000) to build a facility for disadvantaged boys. Of the 200-odd windows in the Renaissance pile, only two are exactly alike. Today, the building is a private school for both boys and girls.

Continue on Lauriston Place to the edge of the campus and turn right on Heriot Place. Continue down the step and a path called the Vennel to the:

10. Grassmarket

Located just at the top of the steep steps of the Vennel is another piece of the Flodden Wall, the southwest bastion, indicating how the Grassmarket was enclosed in the city by the 16th century. Now home to loads of bars and restaurants, the Grassmarket — in the shadow of the castle — hosted a weekly market for more than 400 years. Until the 1780s, the Grassmarket also was the site of public gallows and a place where zealous Protestants — known as the Covenantors — were hung, as was Maggie Dickson, who, according to legend, came back to life. She at least has a pub named after her today. At the nearby White Hart Inn, both Burns and Wordsworth are said to have lodged.

Shopping in Edinburgh

Edinburgh may lack all of the shopping options available in Glasgow, but it has a combination of newfangled boutiques, souvenir shops, and traditional department stores, such as the classic John Lewis. With the addition a few years ago of the fashionista's favorite, Harvey Nichols, Edinburgh is certainly challenging the more style-conscious city to the west.

Goods are not inexpensive, however. Many items carry the same numerical price in pounds as they would in American dollars. So, a pair of hiking shoes that cost \$100 in New York might well be priced £100 (\$185) in Edinburgh, making them nearly 100 percent more expensive.

Best shopping areas

New Town's **Princes Street** is a primary shopping artery in the Scottish capital; it's home to leading department stores including the homegrown Jenners and the British staple Marks & Spencer. But for the posher shops, such as Cruise or Laura Ashley, **George Street** tops the lot. In between is **Rose Street**, a narrow pedestrian lane that's best known for its pubs but is actually full of more shops.

For tourists on the hunt for more traditional souvenirs, the **Royal Mile** in Old Town presents the Mother Lode, whether it's tartan or trinkets you seek. For small boutiques, try **William Street** in the West End.

Shopping hours in Edinburgh are generally only from 9 or 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Wednesday and on Friday and Saturday. Thursday is the so-called late shopping day, with many shops opening at 9 or 10 a.m. and remaining open to 7 or 8 p.m. Shops open Sundays from 11 a.m. or noon and close at around 5 p.m., although smaller operations may remain closed on Sunday.

Shopping complexes

In addition to the primary shopping districts in New Town and Old Town, a few shopping malls with a concentration of shops are scattered around. The newest is in Leith: **Ocean Terminal** (☎ 0131-555-8888; www.oceanterminal.com). Debenhams, French Connection, Gap, and other stores have set out their stalls in this retail cathedral, which gets a lot of footfall from tourists because the royal yacht *Britannia* is moored here as well.

Above Waverley train station and beneath the city's main tourist information center, **Princes Mall** (☎ 0131-557-3759; www.princesmall-edinburgh.co.uk) appears to have something for everyone — except a leading department store. About 80 shops sell fashions, accessories, gifts, books, jewelry, and beauty products, and a food court offers the typical fast-food outlets.

St James Centre (☎ 0131-557-0050; www.stjamesshopping.com) is slightly more upscale than Princes Mall. At the top of Leith Walk near Calton Hill, this shopping center is anchored by John Lewis's department store, giving the place a nice touch of respectability.

What to look for and where to find it

If your shopping intentions are less of the browsing variety, here are some of Edinburgh's specialized shopping options.

Books

- ✔ **Blackwell's** is the new name for the once venerable James Thin bookstore, Edinburgh's most respected seller. Despite the new corporate owners, the shop has at least maintained a knowledgeable staff and a wide-ranging stock of fiction and nonfiction. 53 S. Bridge St. (☎ 0131-622-8222; www.blackwells.co.uk).
- ✔ **McNaughtan's Bookshop** is one of the city's best antiquarian and secondhand book purveyors. Consider it a must-stop for book lovers. 3a–4a Haddington Place at the top of Leith Walk near Gayfield Sq. (☎ 0131-556-5897; www.mcnaughtansbookshop.com).
- ✔ **Waterstone's** is a giant Barnes and Noble–like operation with plenty of stock and a lot of soft seats. It's the most prominent book retailer in the city center and has a good Scottish section on the ground floor. Other branches in New Town are at the western end of Princes Street and on George Street. 128 Princes St. (☎ 0131-226-2666).

Clothing/Fashion

- ✔ **Arkangel** is in the city's affluent West End, which offers a host of boutique shops. This one specializes in women's designers and sells brands that no other store in Scotland does. U.K. designer duds sold here include Clara Collins and Ginka. 4 William St., West End (☎ 0131-226-4466).
- ✔ **Corniche** is one of the more sophisticated boutiques in Edinburgh; if it's the latest in Scottish fashion, expect to find it here. Offerings have included “Anglomania kilts” created by that controversial lady of clothing design, Vivienne Westwood, as well as fashions by Gautier, Katherine Hamnett, and Yamamoto. 2 Jeffrey St., near the Royal Mile (☎ 0131-556-3707).
- ✔ **Cruise** is commonly associated with Glasgow, but this home-grown fashion outlet began in Edinburgh's Old Town — not generally considered fertile ground for the avant-garde. You can still find a shop off the Royal Mile, but this New Town outlet is the focus for couture. 94 George St. (☎ 0131-226-3524).
- ✔ **Walker Slater** is a handsome shop full of well-made and contemporary (if understated) men's clothes, which are usually made of cotton and dyed in rich, earthy hues. It also carries Mackintosh overcoats and accessories for the smart gentleman about town. 20 Victoria St. (☎ 0131-220-2636).

Crafts and jewelry

- ✔ **Alistir Wood Tait** is a jewelry store with a reputation for Scottish gems and precious metals such as agates, Scottish gold, garnets, and sapphires. Ask to see the artful depictions of Luckenbooths — two entwined hearts capped by a royal crest, usually fashioned as pendants. 116A Rose St. (☎ 0131-225-4105; www.alistirtaitgem.co.uk).

- ✓ **Hamilton & Inches** has sold gold and silver jewelry, porcelain and silver, and gift items including quaichs since 1866. Folkloric *quaichs* (drinking vessels now mostly used to give as gifts) originated in the West Highlands as whisky measures crafted from wood or horn. They were later gentrified into something resembling silver chafing dishes, each with a pair of lugs (ears) fashioned into Celtic or thistle patterns. 87 George St. (☎ 0131-225-4898; www.hamiltonandinches.com).
- ✓ **Ness Clothing** is filled with whimsical accessories scoured from around the country — from the Orkney Islands to the Borders. Ness offers hand-loomed cardigans and tasteful scarves, amid much more. 336 Lawnmarket. (☎ 0131-225-8155).

Department stores

- ✓ **Harvey Nichols** opened in 2002 with much celebration but was a tad slow to catch on. Perhaps traditional shoppers were not quite prepared for floors of expensive labels and designers such as Jimmy Choo or Alexander McQueen. But they're learning. 30–34 St. Andrew Sq. (☎ 0131-524-8388; www.harveynichols.com).
- ✓ **Jenners** opened in 1838, and the shop's neo-Gothic facade is almost as much an Edinburgh landmark as the Scott Monument just across Princes Street. Although controversially sold in 2005 to House of Fraser, the store's array of local and international merchandise hasn't changed much. It also has a food hall with a wide array of gift-oriented Scottish products, including heather honey, Dundee marmalade, and a vast selection of shortbreads. 48 Princes St. (☎ 0870-607-2841).
- ✓ **John Lewis** is the largest department store in Scotland, and this branch is many people's first choice when it comes to shopping for clothes, appliances, furniture, toys, and more. St James Centre near Picardy Place at the top of Leith Walk (☎ 0131-556-9121).

Edibles

See the sidebar “Picnic fare” earlier in this chapter for select food markets with Scottish specialties.

Gifts

- ✓ **Geraldine's of Edinburgh** is also known as the “Doll Hospital.” Each of the heirloom-quality dolls here requires days of labor to create and has a hand-painted porcelain head and sometimes an elaborate coiffure. Also available are fully jointed, all-mohair teddy bears. 133–135 Cannongate (☎ 0131-556-4295).
- ✓ **Tartan Gift Shops** has a chart indicating the place of origin (in Scotland) of family names, accompanied by a bewildering array of hunt and dress tartans for men and women, all sold by the yard. The shop also carries a line of lambswool and cashmere sweaters. 54 High St. (☎ 0131-558-3187).

Hats, knits, and woolens

- ✔ **Bill Baber** is a workshop/store that turns out artfully modernized adaptations of traditional Scottish patterns for both men and women. Expect to find traditional knits spiced up with strands of Caribbean-inspired turquoise or aqua or rugged-looking blazers or sweaters suitable for treks or bike rides through the moors. 66 Grassmarket (☎ 0131-225-3249; www.billbaber.com).
- ✔ **Edinburgh Woollen Mill Shop** is one of several in the capital and of about 280 outlet shops throughout the United Kingdom that sell practical Scottish woolens, knitwear, skirts, gifts, and travel rugs. **Note:** Whatever the name of the shop, most of the merchandise is made in England. 139 Princes St. (☎ 0131-226-3840; www.ewm.co.uk).
- ✔ **Fabhatrix** has hundreds of handmade felt hats and caps, many practical as well as attractive and some downright frivolous but extremely fun. Remember: Keep your head warm and your whole body stays warm. 13 Cowgatehead, near Grassmarket (☎ 0131-225-9222).
- ✔ **Ragamuffin** sells what's termed "wearable art," created by some 150 designers from all over the U.K. The apparel here is one-of-a-kind unique. Well, not exactly — Ragamuffin also has a shop way up north on the Isle of Skye. 276 Canongate, Royal Mile (☎ 0131-557-6007; www.ragamuffinonline.co.uk).

Music

- ✔ **Avalanche** usually has a bunch of harmless goth kids hanging out in front of it. You can find this branch of the excellent CD shop where the steep steps of the Fleshmarket Close meet Cockburn Street. It's best for new releases of indie bands. Another Avalanche shop is on West Nicolson Street. 60 Cockburn St., near the Royal Mile (☎ 0131-225-3939).
- ✔ **Fopp** offers books and rock, pop, jazz, and dance CDs. Fopp's Rose Street branch even has a bar selling beer, so you can swill while you sample at a listening station. Another branch is located on Cockburn Street. 7–15 Rose St. (☎ 0131-220-0310).
- ✔ **Virgin Megastore** is where you find one of the biggest selections of records, CDs, videos, and tapes in Scotland. The shop has traditional and Scottish music as well as the mainstream offerings. 125 Princes St. (☎ 0131-220-2230).

Tartans and kilts

- ✔ **Anta** sells some of the most stylish tartans. Woolen blankets with hand-purled fringe are woven here on old-style looms. Crocket's Land, 91–93 West Bow (☎ 0131-225-4616).
- ✔ **Geoffrey (Tailor) Kiltmakers** has a list of customers that includes Sean Connery, Charlton Heston, Dr. Ruth Westheimer, members of

Scotland's rugby teams, and Mel Gibson. It stocks 200 of Scotland's best-known tartan patterns and is revolutionizing the kilt by establishing a subsidiary called 21st Century Kilts, which makes them in fabrics ranging from denim to leather. 57–59 High St. (☎ 0131-557-0256).

- ✓ **Hector Russell**, a well-known kiltmakers shop on the Royal Mile, creates bespoke — that's made-to-order — clothes made from tartans. Another branch is located on Princes Street. 137–141 High St. (☎ 0131-558-1254).
- ✓ **James Pringle Weavers** produces a large variety of wool items, including cashmere sweaters, tartan and tweed ties, travel rugs, tweed hats, and tam o' shanters. In addition, it boasts a clan ancestry center with a database containing more than 50,000 family names. 70–74 Bangor Rd., Leith (☎ 0131-553-5161).

Whisky

- ✓ **Royal Mile Whiskies** stock some 1,000 different whiskies from Scotland and other nations. Prices range from around £20 (\$37) to £900 (\$1,665). Staff know their stuff, so tell them what you prefer (for example, smoky, peaty, sweet, and so on) and they'll find a bottle to please you. 379 High St. (☎ 0131-622-6255).

Living It Up After Dark

Every summer, Edinburgh becomes the cultural capital of Europe and the envy of every other tourist board in the U.K. when it hosts the **International Festival, Festival Fringe, Book Festival, Film Festival, and Jazz Festival**. All totaled, these festivals bring in thousands of visitors to see hundreds of world-class acts — whether in drama, dance, music, comedy, or more. In August, the Scottish capital becomes a proverbial “city that never sleeps.”

Although the yearly festivals (www.edinburghfestivals.co.uk) are no doubt the peak of Edinburgh's social calendar, the city offers a pretty good selection of entertainment choices throughout the year. Visitors can busy themselves with the cinema, clubs, theater, opera, ballet, and other diversions such as a night at the pub.



For a complete rundown of what's happening in Edinburgh, pick up a copy of *The List*, a biweekly magazine available at all major newsstands and bookshops. It previews, reviews, and gives the full details of arts events here — and in Glasgow.

The performing arts

The West End is the cradle of theater and music, home to the legendary and innovative **Traverse Theatre** as well as the **Royal Lyceum Theatre** and the classic **Usher Hall** for concerts.

- ✔ **Edinburgh Festival Theatre** reopened in 1994 after serious renovations in time for the Edinburgh Festival (hence the name). Located on the south side of the city about a ten-minute walk from the Royal Mile and right near the University of Edinburgh's Old Campus, the 1,900-seat theater hosts the national opera and ballet, touring companies, and orchestras. Tickets are £5–£45 (\$9.25–\$83). 13–29 Nicolson St. (☎ **0131-529-6000** box office; 0131-662-1112 administration; www.eft.co.uk; Bus: 5, 7, 8, or 29).
- ✔ **Edinburgh Playhouse** is best known for hosting popular plays or musicals and other mainstream acts when they come to town, whether it's *Miss Saigon* or *Lord of the Dance*. Formerly a cinema, the playhouse is the largest theater in Great Britain, with more than 3,000 seats. Tickets are £8–£35 (\$15–\$65). 18–22 Greenside Place (☎ **0131-524-3333**; www.edinburgh-playhouse.co.uk; Bus: 5 or 22).
- ✔ **Kings Theatre** is a 1,300-seat late Victorian era venue with a dome ceiling and rather Glasgow-style stained glass doors and red-stone frontage. Located on the edge of Tollcross southwest of the castle, it offers a wide repertoire, especially traveling West End productions, productions of the Scottish National Theatre, other classical entertainment, ballet, and opera. During December and January, it's the premier theater for popular pantomime productions in Edinburgh. Tickets range from £5–£20 (\$9.25–\$37). 2 Leven St. (☎ **0131-529-6000**; www.eft.co.uk; Bus: 11, 15, or 17).
- ✔ **Royal Lyceum Theatre** (built in 1883) has a most enviable reputation with presentations that range from the most famous works of Shakespeare to new Scottish playwrights. It's home to the leading theater production company in the city, often hiring the best Scottish actors such as Brian Cox, Billy (*Lord of the Rings*) Boyd, and Siobhan Redmond — when they're not preoccupied with Hollywood, that is. Grindlay Street (☎ **0131-248-4848** box office; 0131-238-4800 general inquiries; www.lyceum.org; Bus: 1, 10, 15, or 34).
- ✔ **Traverse Theatre** is just around the corner from the Royal Lyceum and is something of a local legend. Beginning in the 1960s as an experimental theater company that doubled as a bohemian social club, it still produces the height of contemporary drama in Scotland. This custom-made subterranean complex actually contains two theaters, seating 100 and 250, respectively, on the benches. Upstairs, the Traverse Bar is where you find the hippest dramatists, actors, and their courtiers. Tickets are £4–£14 (\$7.40–\$26). 10 Cambridge St. (☎ **0131-228-1404**; www.traverse.co.uk; Bus: 11 or 15).
- ✔ **Usher Hall** is unbeatable when it comes to concerts. Built thanks to the bequest of distiller Andrew Usher in the 1890s, this beaux-arts building is Edinburgh's equivalent of Carnegie Hall. During the International Festival, it hosts such ensembles as the Cleveland or London Philharmonic orchestras. But Usher Hall isn't only a venue for classical music: Top touring jazz, world music, and pop acts play here throughout the year. Lothian Road (☎ **0131-228-1155**; www.usherhall.co.uk; Bus: 1, 10, 15, or 34).



Comedy

Given the importance of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, where the vaunted Perrier Award for comedy can launch a career, the stand-up comedian is . . . err, taken very seriously in the Scottish capital.

- ✓ **Jongleurs Comedy Club** is a corporate-owned entity from down south with more than a dozen venues across the U.K. Jongleurs came to Scotland a few years back, dragging along its own cadre of house funny-men (and funnywomen) as well as some touring comedians from overseas. Tickets are £4–£15 (\$7.40–\$28). Omni Centre, Greenside Place (☎ 0870-787-0707; www.jongleurs.com; Bus: 7 or 22).
- ✓ **The Stand**, just down the hill from St. Andrew Square, is the premier local comedy venue. Big acts are reserved for weekend nights, while local talent tries their jokes and tales during the week. On Sundays, no admission is charged for brunch performances. Tickets range from £1–£8 (\$1.85–\$15). 5 York Place (☎ 0131-558-7272; www.thestand.co.uk; Bus: 8 or 17).

Dance clubs

Clubbing isn't quite as popular now as it was in the 1980s and 1990s, but it probably still draws more people than the folk, jazz, and classical music scenes combined. In this section, I've listed just a sampling of the clubs in Edinburgh.

- ✓ **Bongo Club** offers a varied music policy throughout the week — funk, dub, and experimental. This venue has more reasonably priced drinks than many others. The cover charge can be up to £8 (\$15). The club's open daily from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m. Moray House, 37 Holyrood Rd. (☎ 0131-558-7604; www.outoftheblue.org; Bus: 35).
- ✓ **The Honeycomb** goes for techno and electro, drum and bass, funk, and house. This is a stylish club off the Cowgate that also books some of the big-name DJs in the U.K., such as crossover celebrity Goldie. The cover may be up to £15 (\$28). 15–17 Niddry St. (☎ 0131-530-5540; Bus: 35).
- ✓ **Po Na Na** is a branch of a successful chain of clubs in Britain. The theme is a Moroccan Casbah with décor to match thanks to wall mosaics, brass lanterns, and artifacts shipped in from Marrakech. The dance mix varies from hip hop and funk to disco and sounds of the '80s. The cover can be up to £5 (\$9.25). Po Na Na's open daily until 3 a.m. 43B Frederick St. (☎ 0131-226-2224; www.ponana.co.uk; Bus: 80).

Folk music

Although touring folk acts — performers such as American Gillian Welch are pretty huge in Scotland — get booked into the larger music halls, the

Late-night eats

Okay, it's Friday or Saturday night. You've been out to a play, the pub, or a dance club and now you're utterly starving. But it's sometime between 11 p.m. and 2 a.m. (you're not exactly sure because your watch seems to be keeping Australian time at the moment). Food will help you get back on track. If you're in the West End, Lothian Road is your best bet. Try **Lazio**, 95 Lothian Rd. (☎ 0131-229-7788), for a bit of pizza or pasta. It's open until midnight during the week and until 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights (technically, that's Saturday and Sunday mornings). In Old Town, another Italian eatery caters to night owls: **Gordon's Trattoria** on the High Street (☎ 0131-225-7992) is open until 3 a.m. on the weekends (until midnight Sun–Thurs). For something a bit more modern and trendy, **Favorit** is a NYC-style diner on Teviot Place (☎ 0131-220-6880) that stays open until 3 a.m. daily.

day-to-day folk scene in Edinburgh takes place in unassuming public houses.

- ✔ **The Royal Oak** is where Old Town meets the Southside, just a few minutes' walk from the Royal Mile off South Bridge. The pub is the home of live Scottish folk music. On Sundays from 8:30 p.m. on, various guests play at the "Wee Folk Club." Tickets are £3 (\$5.55). The Royal Oak is open daily until 2 a.m. 1 Infirmiry St. (☎ 0131-557-2967; Bus: 3, 5, 8, or 29).
- ✔ **Sandy Bell's** offers live folk or traditional music virtually every night from about 9 p.m. and all day Saturday and Sunday. This small pub near the Museum of Scotland is a landmark for Scottish and Gaelic culture. Sandy Bell's is open Monday through Saturday from 11:30 a.m. to 1 a.m. and Sunday from 12:30 to 11 p.m. 25 Forrest Rd. (☎ 0131-225-2751; Bus: 2 or 42).

Rock, pop, and jazz

Although it's not listed here, the very big acts — whether Bob Dylan, REM, or the Rolling Stones, for example — are likely to play outdoors at the national rugby facility, **Murrayfield Stadium**.

- ✔ **Corn Exchange** is a bit of a haul out of the city center. But this venue was meant to compete with the likes of Glasgow's infamous Barrowland ballroom, where touring groups absolutely love to appear. The comparison isn't really fair, but the Corn Exchange isn't a bad medium-to-small size hall (capacity 3,000) to see rock acts. 11 New Market Rd. (☎ 0131-477-3500; www.ece.uk.com; Bus: 4 or 28).

- ✓ **The Liquid Room** has space for less than 1,000 people. This is Edinburgh's best venue for catching the sweat off the brows of groups. Mostly booked by local bands, such as Mull Historical Society, and visiting indie acts such as the Datsuns; it's also a busy dance club when not hosting such groups. 9c Victoria St. (☎ 0131-225-2564; www.liquidroom.com; Bus: 35).

Bars and pubs

The most active areas for pubs and clubs are the **Cowgate** and **Grassmarket** in the Old Town and **Broughton Street** in New Town, although the university precincts on the Southside are lively, as are the pubs near **The Shore** in the Port of Leith. Unless otherwise noted, the bars and pubs listed below are generally open Sunday through Thursday from 11 a.m. or noon until 11 p.m. or midnight, often closing at 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights.

- ✓ **The Abbotsford's** bartenders have been pouring pints since around 1900. (Not the same bartenders, mind you.) The gaslight era is still alive here thanks to the preservation of the dark paneling and ornate plaster ceiling. The ales on tap change about once a week, and you can find a good selection of single malt whiskies, too. Platters of food are dispensed from the bar Monday through Saturday from noon to 3 p.m. and 5:30 to 10 p.m. 3 Rose St. (☎ 0131-225-5276; Bus: 3, 28, or 45).
- ✓ **Black Bo's** is a stone's throw from the Royal Mile. Many visitors may find its dark walls and mix-and-match furniture downright plain, but I think it has a rather enforced hipness. And due to its proximity to the hostels of Blackfriars Street, Black Bo's often hosts chatty groups of young foreigners enjoying a pint or two. DJs play from Wednesday to Saturday; downstairs is a pool room with a juke box. The bar doesn't serve food, but its mostly vegetarian restaurant next door does. 57 Blackfriars St. (☎ 0131-557-6136; Bus: 35).
- ✓ **Bow Bar**, located just below Edinburgh Castle, is a classic Edinburgh pub that appears little changed by time or tampered with by foolish trends. Surprise: It's only a few more than a dozen years old. Never mind that, though. The pub looks the part of a classic and features some eight cask-conditioned ales, which change regularly. The Scottish brewed options may include the dark and smooth Lia Fail (Gaelic for "Stone of Destiny," the rock on which Scottish kings were enthroned) from the Perthshire-based Inveralmond Brewery. No food served. 80 West Bow (☎ 0131-226-7667; Bus: 2 or 35).
- ✓ **Café Royal Circle Bar** is a well-preserved Victorian-era pub. Spacious booths combined with plenty of room around the island bar create a comfortable and stylish place to drink. Above-average food from the same kitchen as the neighboring oyster bar/restaurant is served daily. 17 W. Register St. (☎ 0131-556-1884; Bus: 8 or 13).

- ✔ **Opal Lounge**, in New Town, is an excellent example of the so-called modern style bar. After opening in 2001, it became the haunt of Prince William when the handsome heir to the British throne attended St. Andrew's University. Opal Lounge draws a predominantly young, well-dressed, and affluent crowd, combining a long list of cocktails with a cavernous underground space. Drinks are served daily from noon to 3 a.m.; food of an Asian-fusion nature is served daily from noon to 10 p.m. 51a George St. (☎ **0131-226-2275**; Bus: 24, 29, or 42).
- ✔ **The Outhouse** is one of the more contemporary outfits on or near busy Broughton Street. The bar was renovated in 2003 with rich brown hues. During good weather spells, a beer garden out back offers an excellent open-air retreat and some outdoor heaters help take the chill off the night. 14 Broughton St. Ln. (☎ **0131-557-6688**; Bus: 8 or 17).
- ✔ **The Shore**, down in Leith, fits seamlessly into the seaside port ambience without resorting to a lot of the usual decorations of cork and netting. The place is small, but on nice days they put a few seats out front to soak in the afternoon sun. On three nights of the week, you can find live folk and jazz music. Food is served from noon to 2:30 p.m. and 6:30 to 10 p.m. 3–4 The Shore (☎ **0131-553-5080**; Bus: 16 or 36).

Going to the cinema

- ✔ **The Filmhouse**, the capital's most important cinema, is the focus of the Edinburgh Film Festival — one of the oldest annual film festivals in the world. The movies shown here are foreign and art house, classic and experimental, documentary and shorts. Plus, the Filmhouse hosts discussions and lectures with directors during the Festival and at other points throughout the year. The cafe/bar does drinks, serves light meals, and remains open late. Consider this a must-stop for any visiting film buffs. Tickets range from £1.20–£5.50 (\$2.20–\$10). 88 Lothian Rd. (☎ **0131-228-2688**; www.filmhousecinema.com; Bus: 10, 22, or 30).
- ✔ **Vue Edinburgh** is a big glass-fronted multiplex below Calton Hill at the roundabout near the top of Leith Walk. It offers first-run, big commercial releases. Tickets are £3.30–£5.60 (\$6.10–\$10). Omni Centre, Greenside Place (☎ **0871-224-0240**; www.myvue.com; Bus: 7 or 22).

Fast Facts: Edinburgh

American Express

The office is at 69 George St., at Frederick Street (☎ 0131-718-2501; Bus: 13, 19, or 41). It's open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and

Friday from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. On Wednesdays, the hours are 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and on Saturdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Business Hours

In Edinburgh, banks are usually open Monday through Friday from 9 or 9:30 a.m. to 4 or 5 p.m., with some branches sometimes shutting early one day a week and opening late on another. Shops are generally open Monday through Saturday from 9 or 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; on Thursdays, retail stores are open late, usually until about 8 p.m. Many shops are now open on Sundays as well. In general, business hours are Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., although some offices will close early on Fridays. Food supermarkets generally keep later hours.

Currency Exchange

Many banks in the Old and New Towns exchange currency. Post offices run *bureaux de change* as does the Edinburgh Information Office (☎ 0131-473-3800). Major hotels also exchange currency but charge a premium for the service. ATM machines in the city center are linked to major banking systems such as Cirrus and Plus, so you'll almost definitely be able to draw money directly from your bank account at home.

Dentists

If you have a dental emergency, go to the Edinburgh Dental Institute, 39 Lauriston Place (☎ 0131-536-4900; Bus: 35), open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Alternatively, call the National Health Service Helpline (☎ 0800-224-488).

Doctors

You can seek help from the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, 1 Lauriston Place (☎ 0131-536-1000; Bus: 35). The emergency department is open 24 hours.

Emergencies

Call ☎ 999 in an emergency to summon the police, an ambulance, or firefighters. This is a free call.

Hot Lines

Edinburgh and Lothian Woman's Aid is available by calling ☎ 0131-229-1419. Lothian Gay and Lesbian Switchboard (☎ 0131-556-4049) offers advice from 7:30 to 10 p.m. daily; the Lesbian Line is ☎ 0131-557-0751. You can reach the Rape Crisis Centre at ☎ 0141-331-1990.

Internet Access

EasyEverything, at 58 Rose St., between Frederick and Hanover streets (www.easyeverything.com; Bus: 42), is open daily from 7:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. It has 448 terminals. You can get online here for as little as 50p (95¢), although some shops require £1 coins.

Laundry/Dry Cleaning

For your dry-cleaning needs, the most central service is probably at Johnson's Cleaners, 23 Frederick St. (☎ 0131-225-8095; Bus: 13, 19, or 42), which is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Luggage Storage/Lockers

Given the tenor of the times, left luggage can prove problematic if an alert is in place. Generally speaking, you can store luggage in lockers at Waverley Station or with your hotel.

Newspapers

Published since 1817, the *Scotsman* is a quality daily newspaper with a national and international perspective, while its sister publication, the *Evening News*, concentrates more on local affairs. For comprehensive arts and entertainment listings and reviews of local shows, buy *The List* magazine, which is published every other Thursday and weekly during the Festival. *Metro*, a free daily (Mon–Fri) available on buses and in train stations, also gives listings of daily events.

Pharmacies

There are no 24-hour drugstores (called *chemists*) in Edinburgh. The one with probably the longest hours is the branch of Boots at 48 Shandwick Place, west of Princes Street (☎ 0131-225-6757; Bus: 12 or 25). It's open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Post Office

The Edinburgh Branch Post Office, St. James Centre, is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For general postal information and customer service, call ☎ 0845-722-3344.

Restrooms

These are found at rail stations, terminals, restaurants, hotels, pubs, and department stores. A system of public toilets, often

marked *wc*, is in place at strategic corners and squares throughout the city. They're safe and clean but likely to be closed late in the evening.

Safety

Edinburgh is generally one of Europe's safest capitals. But that doesn't mean crimes, especially muggings, don't occur at all. They do, largely because of Edinburgh's problems with drug abuse.

Weather

For weather forecasts of the day and 24 hours in advance, and for severe road-condition warnings, call the Met Office at ☎ 0870-900-0100. An advisor offers forecasts for the entire region and beyond. For online weather forecasts, check www.weather.com.

Chapter 12

Glasgow

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting into town and getting around the city
 - ▶ Discovering the best places to stay and eat
 - ▶ Exploring Glasgow, from Merchant City to the West End
 - ▶ Visiting art treasures at the Kelvingrove and Burrell galleries
 - ▶ Following the Mackintosh architecture trail
-

Glasgow is only about 74km (46 miles) west of Scotland's capital, Edinburgh, but there's a noticeable contrast between the two cities. Glasgow (pronounced *glaz-go* by natives) doesn't offer the fairytale setting of the Scottish capital, but compensates with a lively culture, big-city feel, andregarious locals.

Glasgow's origins are actually quite ancient, making Edinburgh seem comparatively young. Archeologists have uncovered evidence of Roman settlements in the city. In the 6th century, St. Kentigern (or St. Mungo) is believed to have begun a monastery at the site of **Glasgow Cathedral**, on a hillside along a burn (creek) that feeds into the River Clyde. The site's a logical one for settlement because it allows convenient access to ford the mighty River Clyde before it widens on its way to the sea some 32km (20 miles) away to the west.

However, aside from the Cathedral itself, practically none of this medieval ecclesiastical center (which included a university) remains, and much of Glasgow's historical records (kept at the Cathedral) were lost during the Protestant Reformation. The city, however, once less key than others in the west of Scotland, became the country's economic powerhouse in the 18th century. Glasgow quickly grew into the country's largest city (it is the fourth most populous in the entire U.K.). The boom began in earnest with the tobacco trade to the New World, in which Glasgow outpaced rivals such as London and Bristol largely due to faster sailing times to the New World.

The city then became famous worldwide for shipbuilding with docks that produced the *Queen Mary*, *Queen Elizabeth*, and other fabled ocean liners. It was, for a while, the Second City of the Empire. But post-industrial decline gave Glasgow a poor reputation as a city of slums, particularly in contrast to the enduring charms of Edinburgh. Internationally, the city

may even now struggle to convince those who may have seen Glasgow in the 1970s that it's a safe, vibrant, and cosmopolitan city today.

In the 1980s, Glasgow reversed its fortune by becoming Scotland's contemporary cultural capital, drawing talent from across the U.K., whether in visual art or rock 'n' roll. Decades of grime were sandblasted away from its monumental Victorian buildings and visitors began to recognize that the city had one of Europe's best municipally-owned collections of art in the Burrell Collection and recently renovated Kelvingrove Art Gallery. In 1990, the city was deemed the European Capital of Culture (a prestigious honor awarded by the European Council of Ministers), thus certifying the changes that occurred.

Glasgow's not a city without flaws, however. Serious pockets of poverty remain in its peripheral housing projects (called *estates* or *schemes*). A major motorway cuts a scar through the center of town, and although the splendor of what critics hailed as "the greatest surviving example of a Victorian city" is evident, Glasgow still prefers to knock buildings down and erect new structures.

Glasgow is a good gateway for exploring Burns Country in Ayrshire to the southwest. From the city, you can also tour Loch Lomond and see some of the Highlands, and you're less than an hour away from Stirling and the Trossach mountains. Also on Glasgow's doorstep is the scenic estuary of the Firth of Clyde, with islands only a short ferry ride away. For details on those regions within striking distance from Glasgow, please see the chapters in Part IV, "the Major Regions."

Getting to Glasgow

Most flights into Glasgow Airport from North America connect via London, but some airlines offer direct service from the U.S. and Canada. If you're traveling up from London, you can easily take the train to Glasgow's Central Station or fly to Glasgow Airport. If you're coming from elsewhere in Scotland, highway, train, and bus routes service the city in all directions. The city's central bus station is a couple of blocks from George Square, in the heart of the town, and the two main train stations are both within walking distance, too. Figuring out the best way to come into Glasgow is easy — it all depends on the time you have and the flexibility you desire.

By air

Glasgow International Airport (☎ 0870-040-0008 or 0141-887-1111) is located at Abbotsinch, near Paisley, only about 16km (10 miles) west of the city via M8. Monday through Friday, British Airways runs an almost hourly shuttle service between London's Heathrow Airport and Glasgow. The first flight departs London at 7:15 a.m. and the last flight leaves at 9:15 p.m.; service is reduced on weekends, depending on volume. For

flight schedules and fares, call British Airways in London at ☎ **0870-551-1155** or log onto www.ba.com, which offers a slight discount on ticket prices.

The schedule of direct flights from North America to Glasgow is subject to change. In recent years, **American Airlines** (☎ **800-433-7300** or 0845-778-9789; www.aa.com) has offered a daily nonstop flight to Glasgow from Chicago between mid-May and October, but announced in 2006 that it might terminate the route. **Continental** has offered similar direct service out of Newark International, while **US Airways** has operated flights between Glasgow and Philadelphia.

BMI (formerly British Midland; ☎ **0870-607-0555**; www.flybmi.com) offers internal U.K. flights and flights to European hubs. **Aer Lingus** (☎ **800-223-6537** or ☎ 0845-084-4444 at Dublin Airport; www.aerlingus.ie) flies daily from Dublin to Glasgow.

South of Glasgow is **Prestwick International Airport** (☎ **0871-223-0700**), which is favored by some of the low-budget airlines, such as **RyanAir**. Prestwick's on the railway line to Ayr, about a 45-minute ride from Glasgow's Central Station. Remember, as well, that **Edinburgh International Airport** is less than 74km (46 miles) away.

Orienting yourself

Glasgow airport is fairly small and therefore presents scant opportunities for getting lost. Immigration control and customs agents are vigilant, but the scene is quite a bit more relaxed than at giant air terminals such as London's Heathrow. Usually there is just one line (called a *queue*) for visitors from outside the European Union. Arrivals with E.U. passports can generally breeze right through.

Getting into town from the airport

Regular Glasgow **CityLink** bus service runs between the airport and the city center, terminating at the Buchanan Street Bus Station. The ride takes only about 20 minutes (though it can be much longer during rush hour) and costs £5 (\$9.25) for a round-trip ticket. A taxi to the city center costs about £17 (\$31).

By train

Trains from London arrive in Glasgow at **Central Station** in the heart of the city (call National Rail Enquiries; ☎ **08457-48-49-50** for rail and fare info). The trains that directly link London and Glasgow (via Preston and Carlisle) on the so-called West Coast Main Line don't have the same reputation for timeliness and efficiency as those going to Edinburgh. However, the semi-privatized company responsible for railway maintenance, Network Rail, is spending literally billions to upgrade the line and create a faster service.

But work has been slow, and while it's ongoing, travel is subject to delays. The trains (operated by Virgin; ☎ 08457-222-333; www.virgin.com/trains) on the West Coast Main Line depart from London's Euston Station every hour or so and the trip to Glasgow generally takes 5½ hours these days. If you plan a trip on the West Coast Main Line, however, call and find out if any major "track works" are scheduled during your journey. If so, you can expect delays and the possibility of riding on a bus for a portion of the trip. Virgin prices, similar to all the U.K.'s train-operating companies, are diverse and complicated. In general, you might get a one-way ticket for as little as £35 (\$65) although the standard advance purchased ticket is more likely to be between £90–£100 (\$167–\$185).

You may prefer trains run by operators GNER (www.gner.co.uk) from London's Kings Cross station up the East Coast Main Line via Newcastle, Edinburgh, and across (via Motherwell) to Glasgow. The trip takes about the same amount of time as one on the West Coast Main Line. Glasgow's Central Station is also the terminus for trains from the southwest of Scotland and a hub for numerous trains to city suburbs in most directions. A ten-minute walk away (or via shuttle bus 398) is **Queen Street Station**. From here, a **shuttle service** to and from Edinburgh runs every 15 minutes during the day and every 30 minutes in the evenings until about 11:30 p.m. The round-trip fare during off-peak times (travel from 9:15 a.m.–4:30 p.m. and after 6:30 p.m.) is £8.80 (\$16), and the trip takes just under an hour.

Trains to the north (Stirling, Aberdeen, and such Highland destinations as Oban, Inverness, and Fort William) as well as to Glasgow's suburbs also run frequently through Queen Street Station. By the way, Glasgow has the biggest commuter rail network in Britain after London.

By bus

The journey from London to Glasgow by bus can take at least 8 hours. **National Express** (☎ 0870-580-8080; www.nationalexpress.com) runs buses daily (typically at 9 a.m., noon, and 10:30 p.m. for direct service) from London's Victoria Coach Station to Glasgow's **Buchanan Street Bus Station** (☎ 0870-608-2608), about 2 blocks north of the Queen Street Station on North Hanover Street. The round-trip fare is £37 (\$68), although it's cheaper if you book more than seven days in advance. **Scottish CityLink** (☎ 0870-550-5050; www.citylink.co.uk) also has frequent bus service to and from Edinburgh, with a one-way ticket costing £3 to £5 (\$5.55–\$9.25).

By car

Glasgow is 74km (46 miles) west of Edinburgh, 356km (221 miles) north of Manchester, and some 625km (388 miles) north of London. From England and the south, you reach Glasgow by the M1 or M5 to the M6 in the Midlands, which becomes the M74 at Carlisle. The M74 runs north to the southeastern conurbation of greater Glasgow, where drivers can link

with the M8, which runs right through the city's center before heading west. The M8 also links Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Other routes into the city are the M8 from Edinburgh, the M77 from Ayr, and A8 from the west. A82 comes in from the northwest (the Western Highlands) on the north bank of the Clyde, and A80 also goes into the city. (This route is the southwestern section of M80 and M9 from Stirling.)

Orienting Yourself in Glasgow

The monumental heart of Glasgow lies north of the **River Clyde**. The area is divided between the larger and mostly Victorian **Commercial Centre** and the more compact district now designated the **Merchant City** (in honor of the tobacco and cotton “lords” who lived and ran businesses there from the 1700s). Glasgow is a vibrant modern city with art galleries, theaters, multiplex cinemas, music halls — not to mention hundreds of bars and restaurants. The Merchant City roughly is to Glasgow as SoHo is to Manhattan: full of warehouses converted to condos, stylish bars, and trendy restaurants. The City Centre offers loads of shopping opportunities on the pedestrian stretches of Argyle, Buchanan, and Sauchiehall streets. If the river creates a southern boundary for “downtown” Glasgow, then the M8 motorway creates both its western and northern limits. The eastern boundary is set by the **High Street**, which while now on the fringes of the city center was historically the core of Glasgow.

Virtually all evidence of Glasgow's medieval existence was demolished by the well-meaning, if history-destroying, urban renewal schemes of late Georgian and Victorian Glasgow. Practically nothing remains to give any idea of how the city looked before the 18th-century boom, which is a particular shame because, by some accounts, it was once one of Europe's most attractive medieval burghs. Still standing on the hill at the top of the High Street, however, is **Glasgow Cathedral**, an excellent example of pre-Reformation Gothic architecture that dates to the early 13th century. Across the square is Provand's Lordship, the city's oldest surviving house, built in the 1470s. Down the High Street you find the Tolbooth Steeple (circa 1626) at Glasgow Cross, and nearer the River Clyde is **Glasgow Green**, one of Britain's first large-scale public parks. Glasgow reputedly has more green spaces per resident than any other European city.

The city's salubrious and leafy **West End**, home to the University of Glasgow, is just a short journey from the city center, on the other side of the M8. The terraces of Woodlands Hill, rising to Park Circus, afford excellent views. Across Kelvingrove Park is a red sandstone palace, the city's **Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum** (refurbished and re-opened to mass popular appeal in 2006). Nearby, the tower of Glasgow University dominates Gilmorehill. **Byres Road**, the social and entertainment destination in the West End, is a street full of restaurants, cafes, bars, and shops.

The city's **Southside** sprawls from the River Clyde and is largely residential. A little more than 5km (3 miles) southwest of Glasgow's center in wooded **Pollok Country Park** is the vaunted **Burrell Collection**. This museum of antiquity and art has become one of the city's top tourist attractions. The commercial heart of the Southside is **Shawlands**, which offers an increasing number of good restaurants, and nearby **Queens Park** is a hilly classic of Victorian planning.

Glasgow's **East End** is only slowly redeveloping after its industrial heyday when tons and tons of steel were manufactured. It's the least affluent district in Glasgow and, according to surveys, is one of the poorest and least healthy areas in all of Europe. But statistics don't tell the entire story. Visitors to the East End's **Gallowgate** on the weekend should see the flea market stalls of the **Barras**. And East End neighborhoods such as **Dennistoun** are gradually drawing young, creative types who can no longer afford apartments in the West End or the Southside — a renaissance is simmering.

Introducing the neighborhoods

Glasgow is composed of a variety of neighborhoods and districts, from the compact urban area of the Merchant City to the inner-suburban and University of Glasgow-dominated area called Hillhead.

City Centre

Cathedral (Townhead)

St. Mungo apparently arrived here in A.D. 543 and built his little church in what's now the northeastern part of the city's center. **Glasgow Cathedral** (aka **St. Kentigern's** or **St. Mungo's**) was at one time surrounded by a variety of buildings: prebendal manses and the long-destroyed Bishops Castle, which stood between the cathedral's west facade and the Provand's Lordship, which still exists in largely its original form. East of the Cathedral is one of Britain's largest Victorian cemeteries, Glasgow's Central Necropolis.

Merchant City

The city's first New Town development lies southeast of the city's modern core. The so-called Merchant City extends from Trongate and Argyle Street in the south to George Street in the north. Because the medieval closes off the High Street were regarded as festering sores, the affluent moved to newly developed areas to the west. Now, Merchant City is one of few inner-city areas of Glasgow in which people reside.

Gallowgate

One of the streets that prosperous city businessmen once strolled, the Gallowgate is today the beginning of the city's East End. The Saracen's Head Inn stood here and took in such distinguished guests as Dr. Samuel Johnson and James Boswell in 1774 after the duo's famous tour of the

Hebrides. Today, the Gallowgate is best known for the Barras market and Barrowland, a one-time ballroom that's now a popular live-music venue.

Saltmarket

The first settlements in Glasgow were on the hill by the Cathedral, but existing almost as early were dwellings in this area at the opposite end of the High Street, along the banks of the Clyde. The Saltmarket served as the trading post where the river could be forded. The street named the Bridgegate (pronounced *brig-it*) leads to the first crossing erected over the Clyde. Today Victoria Bridge crosses the river at the same spot. Constructed in the 1850s, it is the oldest bridge in Glasgow.

Commercial Centre

The biggest of the central districts of Glasgow, the city's Commercial Centre includes areas of 19th-century development, such as **Blythswood** and **Charing Cross** (although the latter was severed from the city by the M8 freeway). This area offers Victorian architecture at its finest. Luckily, even though the city had a mind to tear it all to the ground in the middle to late 1960s, city leaders realized that it had something of real international interest and preserved the area instead.

Broomielaw

It has been said that "the Clyde made Glasgow." From docks here in Broomielaw, Glasgow imported tobacco, cotton, and rum and shipped its manufactured goods around the world. After becoming a rather lost and neglected part of the city, Broomielaw today is targeted for renewal, with luxury flats planned along the riverbank.

Garnethill

Up the steep slopes north of Sauchiehall Street, this neighborhood is best known for the Charles Rennie Mackintosh–designed Glasgow School of Art. Developed in the late 1800s, Garnethill offers good views of the city and is also home to the first proper synagogue built in Scotland.

West End

Woodlands

Centering on Park Circus at the crown of Woodlands Hill, this neighborhood is the first one just west of the M8 freeway. It is a mix of residential tenements and retail stretches, particularly on Woodland and Great Western roads. South to the river lies the district of **Finnieston**, and its most visible landmark is the old shipbuilding crane that stands like some giant dinosaur. Along the Clyde is the Scottish Exhibition Centre. West of Woodlands is **Kelvingrove**, with its Art Gallery, Museum, and impressive park.

Hillhead

With the Gilmorehill campus of the University of Glasgow, Hillhead is rather dominated by academia. Its main boulevard is Byres Road, which is the High Street of the West End. In addition to the university, two other major institutions reside in Hillhead: BBC Scotland on Queen Margaret Drive and NHS Western Infirmary next to the University.

Partick

The railway station at Partick is one of the few in the city to translate the stop's name into Gaelic: *Partaig*. Indeed, the neighborhood has a bit of Highland pride, although there's no particular evidence that Highland people have settled here in great masses. Partick is one of the less pretentious districts of the central West End. To the north are leafy and affluent **Hyndland** and **Dowanhill**.

Southside

Gorbals

If one area seems to represent the slums of early 20th-century Glasgow, it is this one. This neighborhood, just across the Clyde from the city's center, developed a rather notorious reputation for mean streets and unsanitary tenements. As such, the city demolished Gorbals in the early 1960s and erected sets of modern high apartment towers, which in turn developed a reputation for unsavory and unpleasant conditions. I personally wish that some of the old Gorbals still stood. Today, the towers are coming down and the New Gorbals has been developed on a more human scale, although the fabric of the place still seems torn and frayed. One good thing is that it's home to the Citizens' Theatre, one of the most innovative and democratic in the U.K.

Govan

Govan was settled as early as the 10th century, making it another ecclesiastical focal point along with the medieval cathedral north of the river. Until 1912, it was an independent burgh and was one of the key shipbuilding districts on the south banks of the Clyde. One of the first major shipyards in the neighborhood, Mackie & Thomson, opened in 1840. But with the demise of shipbuilding, the fortunes of Govan fell, too. Today, the Science Centre and other developments in the area (such as a planned new Transport Museum) are hoped to revive Govan's fortunes.

Pollokshaws

Along with **Pollokshields** and **Crosshill**, these neighborhoods form the heart of the city's more modern Southside suburbs. Pollok Park and the Burrell Collection are the key tourist attractions. Queens Park is perhaps better and more verdant than Kelvingrove Park, even if it lacks the monuments and statues of its West End counterpart.

Finding information after you arrive

The **Greater Glasgow and Clyde Valley Tourist Board**, 11 George Sq. (☎ 0141-204-4400; Underground: Buchanan St.), is possibly the country's most helpful office. In addition to piles of brochures, you can find a small bookshop, *bureau de change*, and a hotel reservation service that charges a booking fee of £3 (\$5.55) for local accommodations. During peak season, the office is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Hours are more limited during winter months.



Information about travel can be a bit more frustrating. Start with Traveline (☎ 0870-608-26078), which offers timetable information and advice on routes, but can't quote ticket prices. It will give out the telephone numbers of privatized bus companies or rail operators, and you will then have to call them for information on ticket prices.

Getting Around Glasgow

One of the best ways to explore Glasgow is on foot, but then I like walking. The center of town is laid out on a grid, which makes map reading relatively easy. However, some of the city's significant attractions, such as the Burrell Collection, are in surrounding districts and to visit those you'll need to rely on public transportation or a car.

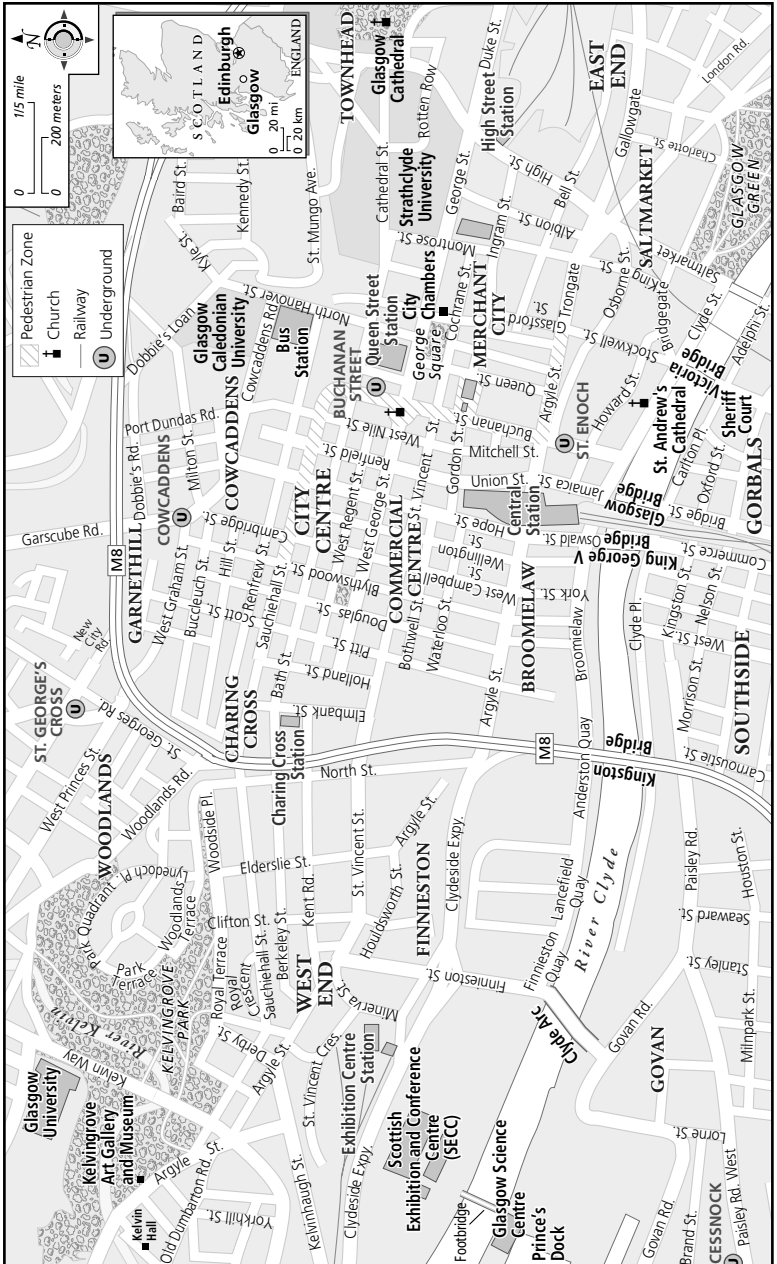
By subway

The underground, affectionately called the "Clockwork Orange" (due to the vivid hues of the trains, which travel in a virtual circle), offers a 15-stop system linking the City Centre, West End, and a bit of the Southside. Generally, the wait for trains is no more than five to eight minutes, but trains run at longer intervals on Sunday and at night. The one-way fare is £1 (\$1.85), or you can buy a 20-trip ticket for £15 (\$28). The underground runs Monday through Saturday from 6:30 a.m. to about 11:30 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to about 6 p.m.

The **Transcentre** (local ticket sales only) at St. Enoch subway station, 2 blocks from the Central Station, is generally open Monday through Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., but it closes early on Wednesday. On Sunday, the hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Glasgow and the surrounding region have the largest train network in Great Britain after London, and these suburban trains are useful for visitors. Like the subway, the system is operated by **Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT)**, and service runs to both Central and Queen Street stations. During the day, trains run as frequently as every ten minutes or so to destinations in the West End and on the Southside. Service is less frequent after the evening rush hour and terminates around midnight. The trains aren't cheap by European standards: A typical round-trip (return) fare is £2 to £3 (\$3.70–\$5.55).

Glasgow Orientation





For families on an excursion, the **Daytripper** ticket is an excellent value. For £15 (\$28), two adults and up to four children (5–15 years old) can travel anywhere in the system (including broad swaths of Ayrshire) by suburban train, the underground, most buses, and even a few ferries. For one adult and two children the fare is £8.50 (\$16).

For information on SPT tickets only, call ☎ **0141-332-6811** Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., or log on to www.spt.co.uk.

By bus

Glasgow has an extensive (though somewhat confusing) bus service run primarily by the privately owned **First Group** company. Routes tend to run between east and west or north and south points, with almost all buses coming through the center of Glasgow. Service should be frequent during the day, although irritatingly buses seem to arrive at the same time. After 11 p.m. service is curtailed on most routes, but some (for example the 9, 12, 40, and 62) run all night (at least on weekends). Typically, one-way (single) fares cost no more than £1.15 (\$2.15).



For about £2.50 (\$4.65), you can ask First Group bus drivers for an all-day ticket, good for buses all day long (after 9:30 a.m.) with a few restrictions. You might see blue double-deckers called the **Magic Bus**. They are cheaper, but, annoyingly, tickets are not transferable between the private bus operators. A weeklong ticket costs £12 (\$22). The city bus station is the **Buchanan Street Bus Station**. The Traveline number (☎ **0870-608-2608**) gives timetable information (but not fares). You can also log on to www.firstgroup.com for more detailed information about bus service within Glasgow.

By taxi

Metered taxis are the same excellent ones as found in Edinburgh or London — the so-called Fast Black, which you can hail or pick up at taxi ranks in the central city. Alternatively, you can call **TOA Taxis** at ☎ **0141-429-7070**. No matter the company, fares are displayed on a meter next to the driver. When a taxi is available on the street, a sign on the roof is lit. Most taxi trips within the city cost £5 to £15 (\$9.25–\$28). A surcharge is imposed for late-night/early morning runs. **Private Hire** cars run by various companies are also available, but they can't be hailed. Call ☎ **0141-774-3000**.

By car

You're better off using public transportation (especially at rush hour) than driving, but Glasgow goes a long way toward accommodating car use by offering several multistory parking lots. Metered parking is available but expensive, and you need plenty of coins to feed the meter, which issues a ticket that you must then affix to your windshield. Some zones in residential areas are marked **PERMIT HOLDERS ONLY** — your vehicle may be towed if you lack a permit. A double yellow line along the curb

indicates no parking at any time. A single yellow line along the curb indicates restrictions, too, so be sure to read the signs on what the limitations are for a particular area before choosing a spot.

If you want to rent a car, it's best to arrange the rental in advance. But if you want to rent a car locally, most companies will accept your foreign driver's license. All the major rental agencies are represented at the airport. In addition, in the city try **Avis Rent-a-Car** at 70 Lancefield St. (☎ 0870-608-6339), **Budget Rent-a-Car** at 101 Waterloo St. (☎ 0800-212-636), or **Arnold Clark** at multiple locations (☎ 0845-607-4500).

By bicycle

Although bikes aren't as widely used in Glasgow as in Edinburgh, most parts of the city are tolerable for biking. For what the Scots call "cycle hire," go to a well-recommended shop about a kilometer (a half mile) west of the town center, just off Byres Road: **West End Cycles**, 16–18 Chancellor St. (☎ 0141-357-1344; Underground: Hillhead or Kelvinhall or Bus: 9 or 18). The shop is close to the National Cycle Trail that leads to Loch Lomond, and it rents bikes well suited to the hilly terrain of Glasgow and surrounding areas. Bikes cost about £15 (\$28) per day and a cash deposit or the imprint of a valid credit card will be necessary as security. Closer to the city center, **Alpine Bikes** in the TISO Outdoor Centre, 50 Couper St. ☎ 0141-552-8575, near Buchanan Bus Station offers limited cycle rental. Prices start at £8 (\$15).

On foot

As I say, walking Glasgow is the best way to see the city center and most of the town (but using trains, buses, or taxis if the distances seem too great is perfectly okay, too). Some boulevards (such as Buchanan or Sauchiehall streets) have even been made into pedestrian malls.

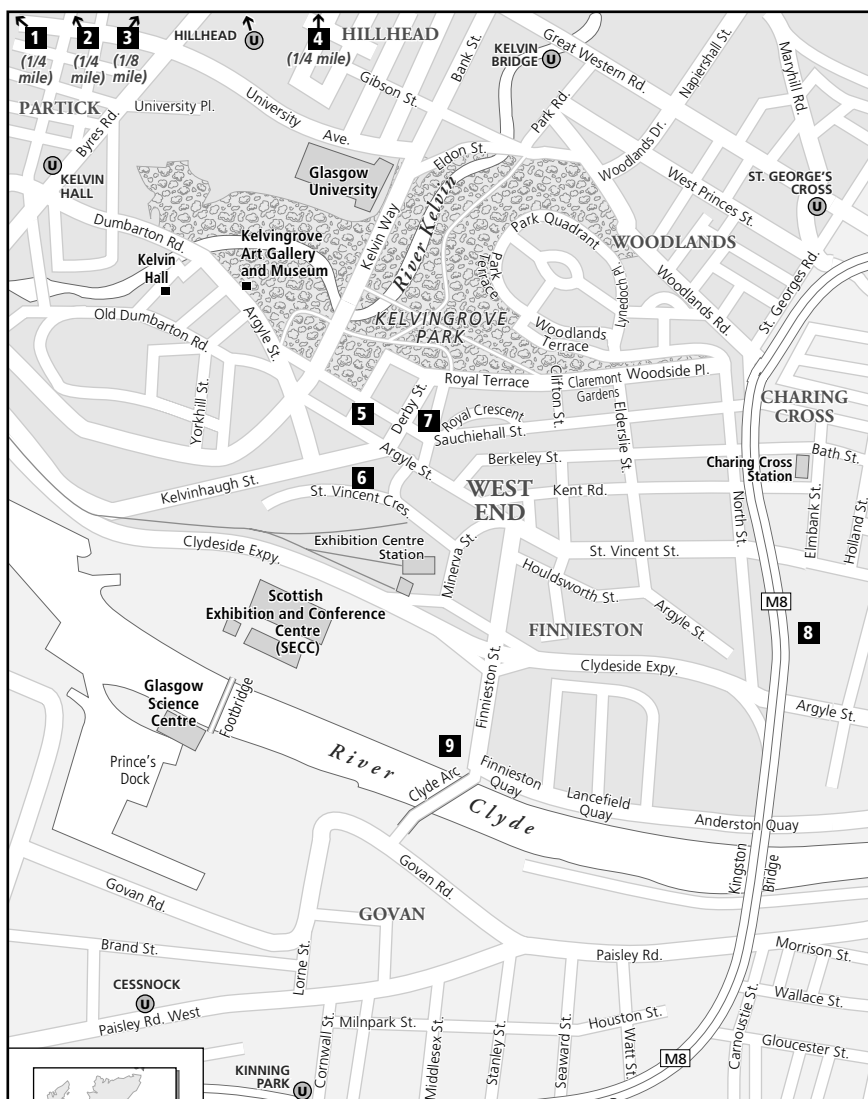


But as in any bustling metropolis that's now rather over-dependent on the use of cars, pedestrians should always exercise caution at intersections and other crossing points. Glasgow drivers (including those behind the wheels of city buses) can be a tad aggressive at times. Remember: Cars drive on the left, so when you cross a street, make certain to look both ways.

Staying in Style

The tourist trade in Glasgow is less seasonal than in Edinburgh, with fewer visitors in general coming to Scotland's largest city. However, Glasgow is a popular spot for business conferences, and the increase in budget-airline flights from the European continent has clearly increased the overall number of visitors. So if, for example, an international association of dentists is in town, finding accommodations may be difficult.

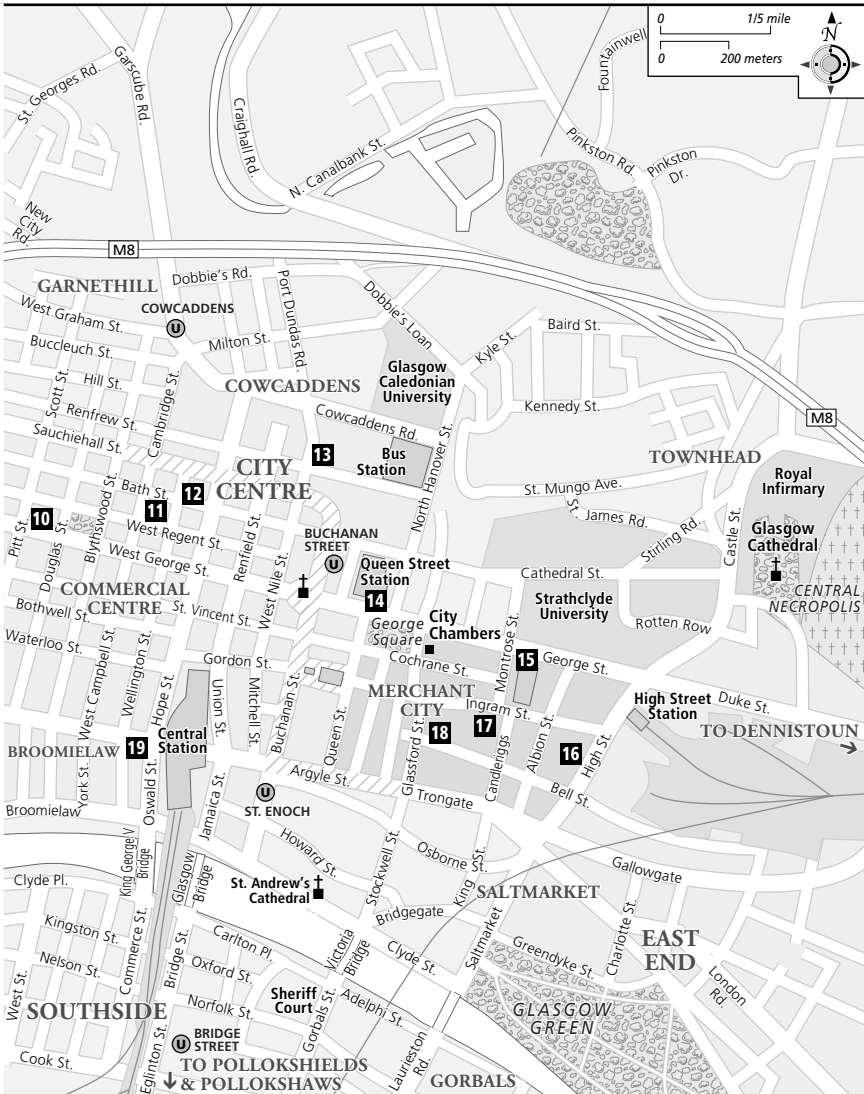
Glasgow Accommodations



- ABoDe **11**
- Ambassador Hotel **4**
- Argyll Hotel **5**
- Babbity Bowster **16**
- Bewley's Hotel **12**

- Brunswick Hotel **17**
- City Inn **9**
- Hilton Glasgow Hotel **8**
- Kelvingrove Hotel **7**
- Kirkland House **6**





- Kirklee Hotel **3**
- Langs **13**
- Malmaison **10**
- Millennium Hotel Glasgow **14**
- One Devonshire Gardens **2**

- Rab Ha's **18**
- Radisson SAS **19**
- Town House **1**
- Travel Inn **15**

Pedestrian Zone

Church

Railway

Underground

Whenever you decide to visit, I recommend that you reserve a room in advance. Some rates are predictably high (especially so if the pound remains strong), but many business-oriented hotels offer bargains on weekends, and the number of budget options is increasing. Plus, the Internet can be a real treasure trove of reduced room rates. The Glasgow and Clyde Valley Tourism Office (www.visitscotland.com) offers a **National Booking & Information Service** (☎ 0845-225-5121 from within the U.K. and ☎ 44-1506-832-121 from outside the U.K.). Lines are open (local time) Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (until 5:30 p.m. in the off season), Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Sunday (during the high season) from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The fee for this booking service is £3 (\$5.55).

The top hotels and B&Bs

Abode

\$\$\$ Commercial Centre

Formerly the Arthouse hotel, this handsome Edwardian building, only a few blocks from both Central and Queen Street train stations, was originally built to house school board offices. Today, it is a striking boutique hotel in the city center. Dramatic colors and textures blend in perfectly with the older structure while commissioned art and period pieces evoke some of the original splendor. The eponymous fine-dining restaurant, **Michael Caines @ Abode**, is under the direction of a Michelin-starred chef in England (see my entry later in this chapter), while a more casual cafe bistro is located in the basement, alongside the **Vibe Bar**.

See map p. 198. 129 Bath St. ☎ 0141-221-6789. Fax: 0141-221-6777. www.abodehotels.co.uk/glasgow. Underground: Buchanan St. Rack rates: from £125 (\$231) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Babbity Bowster

\$-\$\$ Merchant City

Housed in a reconstructed late-18th-century house, the Babbity Bowster is a small inn with fairly large character, due in part to the classic design by brothers James and Robert Adam; the rest comes courtesy of the acerbic wit of owner Fraser Laurie (he with the eye patch). The units are modest if reasonably well appointed. But the Babbity Bowster is for travelers who don't spend much time in their rooms. The location is convenient to the many local pubs and restaurants in the nightlife hotbed of the Merchant City — and you only have a five- to ten-minute walk to the heart of central Glasgow. The Babbity's ground-level pub is convivial and notably civilized, with a sheltered beer garden, excellent bar meals, and live acoustic Scottish folk sessions on Saturdays. The second-floor restaurant, Schottische, offers French-influenced cooking in the evenings only.

See map p. 198. 16–18 Blackfriars St. (off High Street). ☎ 0141-552-5055. Fax: 0141-552-7774. Underground: Buchanan St. Suburban train: High St. Rack rates: £45–£80 (\$83–\$148) double. AE, MC, V.

Brunswick Hotel
\$\$ Merchant City

In the Merchant City, the Brunswick Hotel is one of the hippest places to stay in Glasgow. The modern, minimalist design — from the popular cafe/bar Brutti Ma Buoni to the bedrooms with their sleek look — has aged well since the Brunswick's opening in the 1990s. The units may be on the small side but are soothing and inviting with neutral tones, comfortable mattresses, and adequate bathrooms (several with both tub and shower). For all its trendiness, however, the Brunswick is far from pretentiously run. The owners are fun-loving cosmopolitans. Indeed, the cafe's name literally means "ugly but good," which may accurately describe the misshapen pizzas that the kitchen churns out but actually says more about the place's sense of humor.

See map p. 198. 106–108 Brunswick St. ☎ **0141-552-0001**. Fax: 0141-552-1551. www.brunswickhotel.co.uk. Underground: Buchanan St. Rack rates: £55–£100 (\$102–\$185) double; £400 (\$740) penthouse suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V.

Hilton Glasgow Hotel
\$\$\$\$ Commercial Centre

Glasgow's first-class Hilton is centrally located but oddly situated over the stretch of M8 freeway that slashes through the city of Glasgow. Perhaps the caliber of guests ensures that they all take taxis or have private cars because actually trying to get to and from the place on foot can be a bit of a nightmare. Still, it is a dignified and modern hotel; one that has a good deal of class and shine. The numerous units — plush and conservative — in the 20-story building offer fine city views. Those staying on the executive floors enjoy the enhanced facilities of a semiprivate club. Dining options include a casual New York–deli-style buffet called Minsky's, as well as the posh Camerons with first-rate and expensive modern Scottish cuisine.

See map p. 198. 1 William St. ☎ **800-445-8667** in the U.S. and Canada, or ☎ **0141-204-5555**. Fax: 0141-204-5004. www.hilton.co.uk/glasgow. Suburban train: Charing Cross. Rack rates: £100–£180 (\$185–\$333) double; from £140 (\$259) suite. Weekend discounts often available. AE, DC, MC, V.

Kelvingrove Hotel
\$\$ West End

Three generations of women in the Somerville family have made a difference to this guest house since buying it in October 2002. They are welcoming hoteliers with 30 years experience running small lodges in Edinburgh, Inverness, and the isle of Arran. Usually Muriel, Valerie, or Mandy are on duty during the day, orienting new arrivals, answering questions, booking cabs, or just generally conversing with visitors. The rooms are comfortable with mainly modern furnishings, set within the converted flats on the ground and garden levels. Room 24 is a particularly bright and reasonably spacious family room with kitchenette.

See map p. 198. 944 Sauchiehall St. ☎ **0141-339-5011**. Fax: 0141-339-6566. www.kelvingrove-hotel.co.uk. *Underground: Kelvinhall. Bus: 18, 62, or city sightseeing bus. Rack rates: £60 (\$111) double. Rates include Scottish breakfast. MC, V.*

Langs

\$\$\$ Commercial Centre

This contemporary hotel close to Glasgow Royal Concert Hall calls itself an urban oasis. The main public space is Oshi, a Zen-influenced bar and restaurant with a 40-foot pool of water that runs between a waterfall and cauldron of fire. Very impressive, if just a little over the top. Bedrooms in various shapes, sizes, and configurations are available, and each room offers a certain flair. The smallest units are the studios, but guests can opt for a duplex, theme room, or a large suite. The beautiful bathrooms have power showers with body jets. Visitors also can be pampered at the hotel's own spa. In addition to Oshi's Asian fusion cuisine, **Aurora** offers excellent Scottish produce such as Aberdeen Angus or fresh fish.

See map p. 198. 2 Port Dundas Place. ☎ **0141-333-1500**. Fax: 0141-333-5700. www.langshotels.co.uk. *Underground: Buchanan St. Rack rates: £148 (\$274) double. AE, DC, MC, V.*

Malmaison

\$\$\$ Charing Cross Commercial Centre

Today there are hip and sophisticated Malmaisons across the U.K., but it began in Scotland. This converted church with its fine Greek-styled exterior (though not Greek Orthodox as Malmaison says but Episcopal) offers only a few of the original details on the inside — the decor is sleek and modern. In 1997, an annex designed to complement the architectural character of the facade was added to provide additional guest rooms. Units vary in size from quite cozy to average, but all are chic and well appointed with special extras such as CD players, some specially commissioned art, and top-of-the-line toiletries. In the vaulted spaces below reception is the popular brasserie and champagne bar.

See map p. 198. 278 W. George St. ☎ **0141-572-1000**. Fax: 0141-572-1002. www.malmaison-glasgow.com. *Suburban train: Charing Cross. Bus: 62. Rack rates: from £140 (\$259) double. AE, DC, MC, V.*

Millennium Hotel Glasgow

\$\$\$\$ George Square Commercial Centre

Following a \$5-million upgrade, this landmark hotel (once called the Copthorne and erected at the beginning of the 19th century) has been modernized with all the amenities and services you'd expect of any highly rated hotel. Just off the boundary of the Merchant City and adjacent to Queen Street Station, the hotel has a conservatory space for dining and drinks. It faces the city's central plaza, George Square, and offers views of

the opulent Glasgow city chambers. The best units are at the front of the building; those in the rear offer no views worth writing home about. The ground-floor restaurant, Brasserie on George Square, offers an elegant, neo-colonial — but not stuffy — dining experience, while the hotel's Georgics Bar has an excellent selection of wines, many served by the glass.

See map p. 198. *George Square.* ☎ **0141-332-6711.** Fax: 0141-332-4264. www.millenniumhotels.com. *Underground: Buchanan St. Suburban train: Queen St.* Rack rates: from £185 (\$342) double. AE, DC, MC, V.



One Devonshire Gardens **\$\$\$\$ West End**

This hotel has become the most glamorous the city has to offer: the place where the great and good traditionally stay, whether gorgeous George Clooney or Michael Jackson. The converted townhouses were built in 1880 and are, possibly, more elegant today than in their heyday. Of the units, number 29, the so-called luxury townhouse, is the most impressive. The suite — £495 (\$916) per night — includes a sitting room (with its own toilet); a separate dressing chamber; a master bedroom with a four-poster bed; and a full bathroom with spa, separate shower with computerized controls, and twin basins. In summer 2006, new owners, Hotel du Vin, took over.

See map p. 198. *1 Devonshire Gardens.* ☎ **0141-339-2001.** Fax: 0141-337-1663. www.onedevonshiregardens.com. *Underground: Hillhead.* Rack rates: £155 (\$287) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Radisson SAS **\$\$\$ Commercial Centre**

Still shiny and new since its November 2002 opening, the Radisson has set architectural standards for hotels in Glasgow. Its dramatic and curving facade is just a stone's throw from Central Station, but it's in a slightly risky location on the fringe of a portion of the City Centre that's still being redeveloped. Contemporary units with blonde wood details and Scandinavian cool have all the modern conveniences. The 13,935-sq.-m (15,000-sq.-ft.) club and fitness facility includes a 15m (49-ft.) pool and state of the art gym. Collage and TaPaell'ya offer two distinct dining options.

See map p. 198. *301 Argyle St.* ☎ **0141-204-3333.** Fax: 0141-204-3344. www.radissonsas.com. *Underground: St. Enoch.* Rack rates: from £105 (\$194) double. AE, DC, MC, V.



Town House **\$\$-\$\$\$ West End**

This remains one of the most charming of the city's B&Bs — a less expensive alternative to One Devonshire Gardens, which is just around the corner. The terraced stone Victorian house faces the rugby fields of

Hillhead sports grounds; the finely corniced entry hall and landing are decorated with original artwork. The sitting room features a coal fire, while the hotel provides a computer with high-speed Internet access. The only possible gripe about the individual units may be that several have box rooms that contain a shower, sink, and toilet in order to make all units en suite. Otherwise, the hospitality, comfort, and ambience are excellent.

See map p. 198. 4 Hughenden Terrace (near Great Western and Hyndland roads). ☎ 0141-357-0862. Fax: 0141-339-9605. www.thetownhouseglasgow.com. Underground: Hillhead. Rack rates: £72 (\$133) double. Rate includes full breakfast. MC, V.

Runner-up hotels and B&Bs



Ambassador Hotel

\$\$ West End Across from the Botanic Gardens, and overlooking the Kelvin River, this small hotel in an early-20th-century Edwardian town house is owned by the same people as the Albion. After a refurbishment in 2002, the hotel is looking quite stylish. Each of the individually decorated and attractively furnished bedrooms has a well-maintained bathroom with tub and/or shower. The hotel is well-situated for exploring the West End, with many good restaurants or brasseries nearby on Byres Road. Suites are spacious enough to accommodate five to seven guests. See map p. 198. 7 Kelvin Dr. ☎ 0141-946-1018. Fax: 0141-945-5377. www.glasgowhotelsandapartments.co.uk.



Argyll Hotel

\$\$ West End The Argyll lives up to its Scottish name: full of tartan and kilts. You almost expect this traditional feel to be part of a Highland lodge rather than an urban inn. The hotel has a clutch of spacious family rooms, and one double has a firm four-poster bed and corner-filling bathtub. See map p. 198. 969-973 Sauchiehall St. ☎ 0141-337-3313. Fax: 0141-337-3283. www.argyllhotelglasgow.co.uk.

Bewley's Hotel

\$\$-\$\$ Commercial Centre This inn was sold in 2006, so I cannot guarantee that it will still be called the Bewley's Hotel when you read this. The inn rises impressively from street-level, with oddly angled windows that appear to look down on the ground below. One basic room rate applies to all, even for the larger units that can accommodate families. See map p. 198. 110 Bath St. ☎ 0141-353-0800. Fax: 0141-353-0900. www.bewleyshotels.com.

City Inn

\$\$ West End This smart hotel, with its waterside terrace, isn't exactly in the heart of the action — but neither is it very far away. Part of a small chain with other hotels in London, Birmingham, Bristol, and Manchester, the City Inn is modern and contemporary with good facilities. See map p. 198. Finnieston Quay. ☎ 0141-240-1002. Fax: 0141-248-2754. www.cityinn.com.



Kirkland House

\$\$ West End The Kirkland is a well-maintained Victorian house (circa 1832). A mix of antiques and reproductions are used in the large units, where guests are served breakfast. **Note:** Credit cards are not accepted. *See map p. 198. 42 St. Vincent Crescent.* ☎ **0141-248-3458.** Fax: 0141-221-5174. www.kirkland.net43.co.uk.



Kirklee Hotel

\$\$ West End A red-sandstone Edwardian terraced house with elegant bay windows near the West End's diverse nightlife, the Kirklee is often recommended by locals. It's graced with a rose garden that has won several awards. Most of the high-ceilinged guest rooms are average size, but some are large enough to accommodate families. *See map p. 198. 11 Kensington Gate.* ☎ **0141-334-5555.** Fax: 0141-339-3828. www.kirkleehotel.co.uk.

Rab Ha's

\$\$ Merchant City This small boutique hotel has overnight rooms above a popular and urbane pub on the ground level as well as a modern restaurant in the basement. The units have dark slate flooring in the bathrooms, specially commissioned glass, photographic prints, and flat-screen televisions. *See map p. 198. 83 Hutcheson St.* ☎ **0141-572-0400.** Fax: 0141-572-0402. www.rabhass.com.

Travel Inn

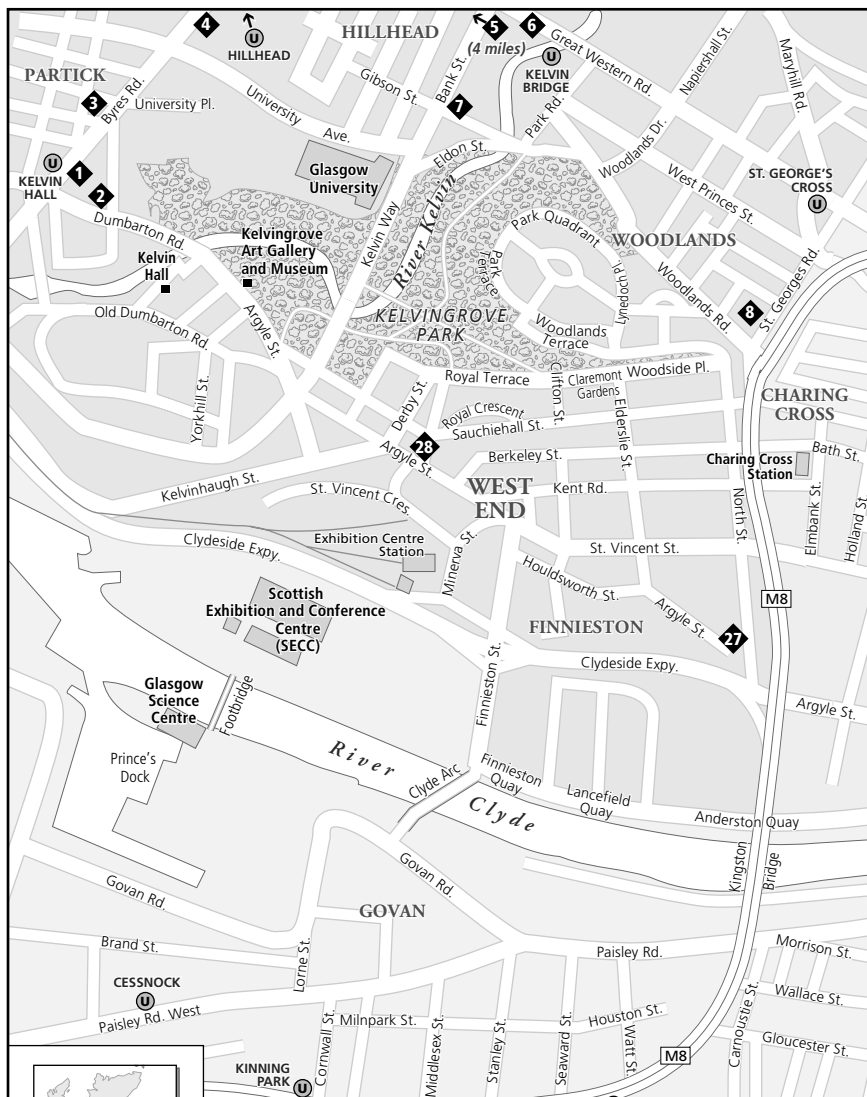
\$\$ Merchant City A branch of an inexpensively priced chain of hotels, this hotel is functional if not particularly full of character. A fair amount of new construction is going on in the area, so the neighborhood can be noisy during the day. Rooms that overlook the old kirkyard and cemetery are preferable to those facing busy George Street and the Strathclyde University parking lot across the road. *See map p. 198. 187 George St.* ☎ **0870-238-3320.** Fax: 0141-553-2719. www.travelinn.co.uk.

Dining in Glasgow

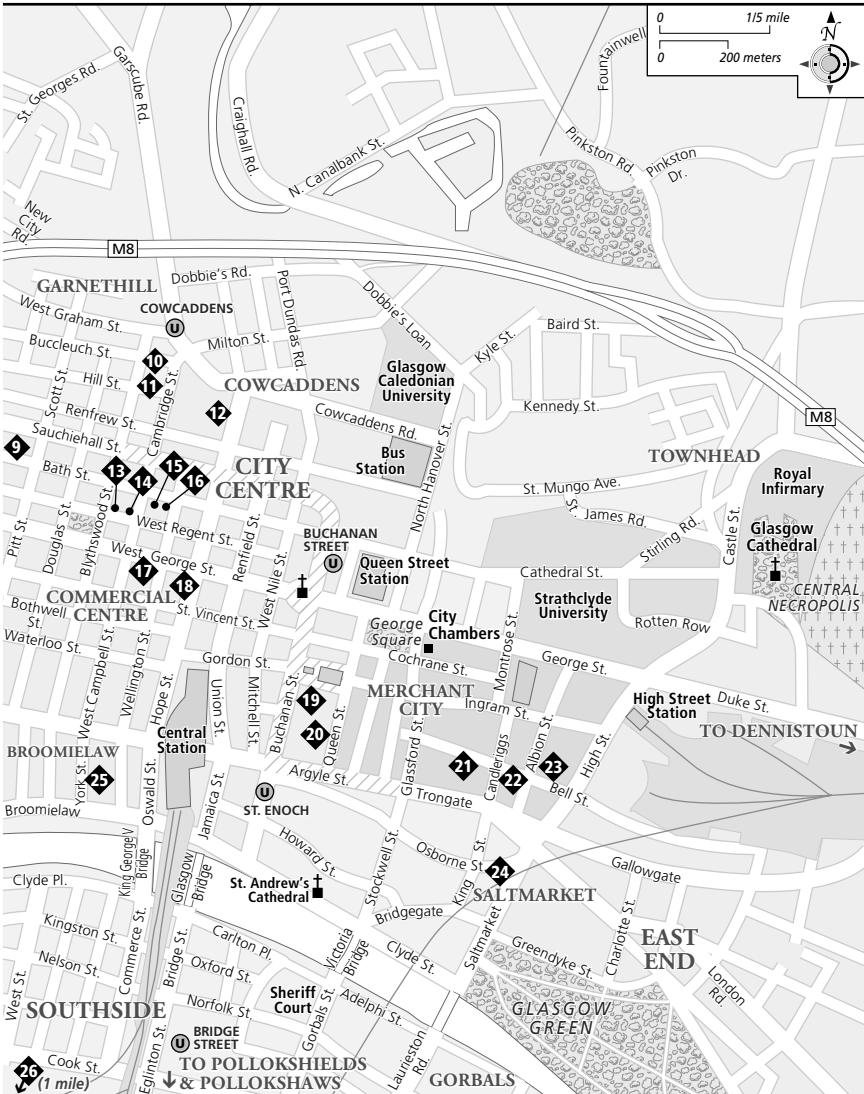
Glasgow has welcomed a growing number of restaurants since the mid-1990s, and your choices are diverse. Although the city may not boast the Michelin stars that a couple of Edinburgh restaurants have earned, Glasgow has some seriously stylish dining rooms, budget-minded bistros, and a mix of ethnic eateries.

Today, some of the best fresh Scottish produce is served up here, whether it's shellfish and seafood from the nearby West Coast sea lochs, Ayrshire meat such as pork and lamb, or Aberdeen Angus steaks. You can also find an ever-increasing number of ethnic restaurants. The immigrant groups who have most influenced cuisine in the city are Italians and families from the Asian subcontinent, mainly the Punjab region.

Glasgow Dining







- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Balbir's 2 | Café Mao 21 | Fratelli Sarti 16 |
| Bistro du Sud 11 | China Buffet King 9 | Gamba 17 |
| Brian Maule at Chardon d'Or 14 | The Dhabba 22 | Grassroots Café 8 |
| The Buttery 27 | Dragon-i 12 | Ho Wong 25 |
| Cafe Gandolfi 23 | étain 20 | La Parmigiana 6 |



Michael Caines
 @ ABode **15**
 Mono **24**
 Mother India **28**
 Mussel Inn **18**

1901 **26**
 No. Sixteen **1**
 Rogano **19**
 Stravaigin Café Bar **7**
 Ubiquitous Chip **4**

University Café **3**
 Wee Curry Shop **10**
 Where the Monkey
 Sleeps **13**
 The Wild Bergamot **5**

-  Pedestrian Zone
-  Church
-  Railway
-  Underground

There's a surfeit of Italian and Indian restaurants, as well as a decent choice of Chinese and Greek restaurants.



A lot of restaurants close on Sunday or Monday (sometimes both), and many lock up after lunch, reopening again for dinner at around 6 p.m. The hours listed here are for when food is served; bars on the premises may stay open longer.



For ideas on dining options, buy *The List* magazine's annual **Eating & Drinking Guide**, a comprehensive review of hundreds of eateries in Glasgow (and Edinburgh).



Scotland is getting better at welcoming families, but it's still a far cry from the Continental approach of, say, Italy or France. That said, give the local restaurants a try, and resist the temptation to resort to well-known international chains or fast-food outlets.

Prices

Prices in general will seem expensive if you're the type to immediately convert pounds back into dollars. Still, a range of restaurant choices is available for most budgets. The prices listed here include the 17.5 percent VAT (value-added tax), so you shouldn't see any hidden surprises when the bill comes. If you're looking for bargains, inquire about pre-theater special menus, which can be as much as half the price of regular dinner menus.



Lunch menus in Glasgow often offer the same food as the full dinner menu but at a much better price. If you're trying to save money on your food bills, have a big late lunch or early meal in the evening.



Log onto www.5pm.co.uk for a list of restaurants offering early dining deals.

Tipping

A gratuity of 10 percent is the norm for service, although leave nothing if you were badly treated. On the other hand, if you were truly impressed with the service you received, consider leaving 15 to 20 percent. In a few restaurants, service is included in the bill automatically, but this charge can be deleted if the service was dreadful.

Smoking

Generally speaking, when indoors, you can't. Following a pattern set by nearby Ireland, as well as California and New York City, smoking is prohibited by law from all enclosed public spaces in Scotland, which includes restaurants and bars. Some places, however, may provide outdoor seating where smoking is allowed.

The top restaurants and cafes

Balbir's

\$\$ West End INDIAN

After taking a break from running restaurants in Glasgow, Balbir Singh Sumal returned in 2005 to open this sprawling place, serving first-class curries and other Indian specialties. Dishes are lighter than the norm, as his chefs eschew ghee in favor of low-cholesterol rapeseed oil. The tandoori oven is used to good effect with dishes, especially a starter of barbecued salmon, served with freshly-made chutney.

See map p. 206. 7 Church St. ☎ 0141-339-7711. Underground: Kelvinhall. Main courses: £6–£12 (\$11–\$22). AE, MC, V. Open: daily 5–10 p.m.

Brian Maule at Chardon d'Or

\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$ Commercial Centre FRENCH/SCOTTISH

Chef Brian Maule was born in Ayrshire near Glasgow, but he trained with some of the best chefs in France and became part of the team working with the highly respected Roux brothers in London. After rising in rank to head chef at their vaunted Michelin-star winning Gavroche restaurant, he decided to go north and return to Scotland with his young family, opening his own restaurant in Glasgow in 2001. His place is considered among the finest in the city, with excellent ingredients and an ambience that's classy but not at all stuffy. Fresh fish and lamb dishes come highly recommended. Smoking is not permitted in the dining room.

See map p. 206. 176 West Regent St. ☎ 0141-248-3801. www.brianmaule.com. Reservations recommended. Underground: Buchanan St. Main courses: £20–£24 (\$37–\$44). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri noon–2:30 p.m. and 6–10 p.m., Sat 6–10 p.m. Closed Sun (and bank holidays).

The Buttery

\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$ Commercial Centre SCOTTISH/FRENCH

One of the best-known and longest established restaurants in Glasgow, the Buttery exudes old world charm — from its rich, sumptuous bar and lounge to the wood-paneled dining room with white linens. This restaurant and its Victorian tenement home have been standing here since 1870 or so. The Buttery seems out of the way only because it's on “the wrong side” of the M8 freeway that bisects the city. Although the setting is traditional, the cooking is progressive: rabbit served with roasted coriander seed sauce or halibut with a pea puree.

See map p. 206. 652 Argyle St. ☎ 0141-221-8188. www.eatbuttery.com. Reservations recommended. Suburban train: Anderston. Fixed-price lunch: £16 (\$30); fixed-price dinner: £34 (\$63). AE, DC, MC, V. Open: Tues–Fri noon–2 p.m. and 6–9:30 p.m., Sat 6–9:30 p.m. Closed Sun–Mon.

Cafe Gandolfi**\$\$ Merchant City SCOTTISH/CONTINENTAL**

Many local foodies will tell you that this popular place in Merchant City is among their favorite dining-out spots: It offers solid cooking and a friendly ambience at the right price. Owner Seumas MacInnes comes from a Highland/Hebrecian family, and so the black pudding comes down from Stornoway while the haggis hails from Dingwall. Particularly recommended is the black pudding (a savory sausage made of pigs' blood and oats), Gandolfi's creamy Cullen skink (smoked haddock chowder), or one of the light pasta dishes. If you're really hungry, go for the steak sandwich. The ground floor room has original, organic, and comfortable wooden furniture created by the Tim Stead workshop in Scotland. A recent addition to the premises is **Bar Gandolfi**, up the steel staircase in the attic space. With a ceiling skylight, however, it's anything but dark and dank.

See map p. 206. 64 Albion St. ☎ **0141-552-6813**. www.cafegandolfi.com.
Underground: Buchanan St. Main courses: £6–£12 (\$11–\$22). MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat 9 a.m.–11:30 p.m., Sun noon–11:30 p.m.

Café Mao**\$\$ Merchant City ASIAN**

This restaurant's a lively place for a meal, situated just north of the Trongate in the Merchant City district. With the big Andy Warhol–style portraits of Chairman Mao prominently displayed in the window-filled corner location, you can't really miss the place. Part of a small chain of Asian eateries curiously based in Ireland, Café Mao offers the casual setting of a spacious, modern, and stylish bistro. The place can be quiet during lunchtime, but it's almost always hopping at night, with a buzz you would expect more at a popular bar. Dishes include starters such as spring rolls stuffed with pumpkin and main courses such as Indonesian nasi goreng (fried rice) and Vietnamese beef and noodles, all prepared in the open kitchen where you can see flames licking at the chefs' bibs.

See map p. 206. 84 Brunswick St. ☎ **0141-564-5161**. www.cafemao.com.
Reservations recommended. Underground: St. Enoch. Fixed-price lunch: £9.50 (\$18);
main courses: £8.50–£12 (\$16–\$22). AE, MC, V. Open: daily noon–11 p.m.

The Dhabba**\$\$–\$\$\$ Merchant City INDIAN**

Glaswegians love their Indian food, as visitors can tell from the sheer number of Indian restaurants in the city. However, the Dhabba, which opened in late 2002, isn't your typical Glasgow curry house; it's a bit more refined, slightly more expensive, and considerably more stylish than the norm. In an attempt to be more authentic, the restaurant specializes in north Indian dishes and foregoes the bright food coloring that so many other restaurants use. In addition to spicy dishes featuring lamb, chicken, and prawns, the menu also features an excellent selection of vegetarian dishes, which are noticeably less costly than the meat options. Up the

Picnic fare

According to some translations, Glasgow, or *glascau*, means “dear green place.” And this “dear green place” has no shortage of spots for a picnic, whether in sprawling Glasgow Green or along the Clyde near the city center, Kelvingrove Park or the Botanic Gardens in the West End, not to mention Pollok Country Park or Queens Park on the Southside.

If you're in the city center, gravitate towards **Pekhams** in the Merchant City near George Square, 61 Glassford St. (☎ **0141-553-0666**), which has a full delicatessen with fresh bread and a wine shop.

In the West End, the options include the wonderful **Heart Buchanan Fine Food and Wine**, near the Botanic Gardens at 380 Byres Rd. (☎ **0141-334-7626**); **Delizique**, 66 Hyndland St. (☎ **0141-339-2000**); another branch of **Pekhams**, 124 Byres Rd. (☎ **0141-357-1454**); and, new in 2004, **Kember & Jones Fine Food Emporium**, 134 Byres Rd. (☎ **0141-337-3851**).

Next door to Kember & Jones is **Patisserie Française**, good for French-style pastries and breads. For some of the best cheese in the U.K., visit the **IJ Mellis Cheesemonger** branch in Glasgow at 492 Great Western Rd. (☎ **0141-339-8998**). Towards the City Centre area is the Glasgow branch of **Lupe Pintos** at 313 Great Western Rd. (☎ **0141-334-5444**), the perfect stop for Mexican and American foodstuffs. On the Southside in the Shawlands district near Queens Park, the **1901 Deli** (11 Skirving St.; ☎ **0141-632-1630**) has a good supply of goodies for any outdoor feast.

street is Dhabba's sister restaurant, **Dakhin**, which specializes in lighter south Indian food.

See map p. 206. 44 Candleriggs. ☎ **0141-553-1249**. www.thedhabba.com. Reservations recommended. Underground: St Enoch. Main courses: £8–£15 (\$15–\$28). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri noon–2 p.m. and 5–11 p.m., Sat–Sun 2–11 p.m.

Dragon-i

\$\$–\$\$\$ Commercial Centre CHINESE/FAR EAST

Although its location is particularly convenient for the Theatre Royal, this contemporary Chinese/Far Eastern restaurant would be a bigger hit if it was on a slightly more central street. But as it's only a few minutes walk from Sauchiehall Street, it is hardly way out of the way. Expect the unexpected at the elegant Dragon-i, with cuisine that never falls into the bland or typical chow mein or sweet-and-sour standards. Instead, the menu has dishes such as tiger prawns with asparagus in a garlic chardonnay sauce or chicken with sautéed apples and pineapples. The wine list is also excellent.

See map p. 206. 313 Hope St. ☎ **0141-332-7728**. www.dragon-i.co.uk. Underground: Cowcaddens. Reservations recommended. Fixed-price lunch: £10 (\$19); dinner main courses: £11–£16 (\$20–\$30). AE, MC, V. Open: daily 5–10 p.m.; Mon–Sat noon–2 p.m.



Family-friendly fare

Just off Sauchiehall Street, **Bistro du Sud**, 97 Cambridge St (☎ 0141-332-2666), is a small, locally-owned cafe/bistro that loves to have children in its midst. Instead of being lulled by the familiar multinational chain operations, try something tasty at this modern Italian/French eatery open daily from 8:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. (from noon on Sun).

Just like in Edinburgh, the all you can eat buffet-only Chinese restaurant has taken Glasgow by storm. **China Buffet King**, 349 Sauchiehall St. (☎ 0141-333-1788), is centrally located, with a good variety of Chinese food and some European dishes, at discount prices for children. Open daily from noon to 11 p.m.

A “Knickerbocker Glory” is an extremely elaborate ice-cream sundae (with fruit, jelly, and more) and few places do it better than the **University Café**, 87 Byres Rd (☎ 0141-339-5217). This Art Deco landmark has all its original features, from booths to counter. Open Wednesday through Monday from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. or so.

étain

\$\$\$ Commercial Centre SCOTTISH/FRENCH

Adjacent to a branch of Zinc Bar & Grill, *étain* (French for *pewter*) offers fine dining at the top of the Princes Square shopping center. You enter the restaurant either through the mall and via Zinc, or by using a dedicated glass elevator from a rear ally accessed by Queen Street. However you arrive, the food will feature contemporary French cooking using Scottish produce: whether lobster, lamb, scallops, crab, or venison. Memorable little touches include handmade truffles served after dinner. Service is generally excellent although perhaps a bit sniffy on occasion.

See map p. 206. *The Glass House, Springfield Court.* ☎ 0141-225-5630. Reservations recommended. Underground: Buchanan St. Fixed-price lunch: £16 (\$30); main courses dinner: £14–£20 (\$26–\$37). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri noon–2:30 p.m. and 7–11 p.m., Sat 6–11 p.m., Sun noon–3 p.m.



Fratelli Sarti

\$–\$\$ Commercial Centre ITALIAN

Owned by the Sarti brothers, this dual restaurant and cafe feels like a family-run cafe/bistro crossed with a delicatessen. Indeed, you can still buy dried goods and wines here, although they stopped carrying deli meats and cheeses a couple of years ago. The pizzas are excellent, with thin, crispy crusts and modest amounts of sauce, cheese, and toppings, which prevent them from becoming a sloppy mess. Pasta dishes, such as “al forno” with penne, sausage, and spinach, are filling. Come here even if you just want a real Italian espresso and pastry. If you want a slightly more formal setting, try the Fratelli Sarti on 21 Renfield St. (☎ 0141-572-7000).

See map p. 206. 133 Wellington St. ☎ 0141-204-0440. www.fratellisarti.com. Underground: Buchanan St. Reservations recommended. Main courses: £6–£10 (\$11–\$19). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri 8 a.m.–10:30 p.m., Sat 8 a.m.–11 p.m., Sun noon–10:30 p.m.

Gamba

\$\$\$\$ Commercial Centre FISH/SEAFOOD

This basement venture is modern and stylish without feeling excessively fancy. Diners often begin with a cocktail or glass of champagne in the small bar where they can look at the menu and order before moving through to the dining room. Starters include a signature fish soup or a sashimi dish with succulent slices of salmon and scallops. Main courses may include whole lemon sole in browned butter or delicate pan-seared sea bream. And desserts aren't an afterthought, whether smooth panna cotta or ice cream infused with Scotch whisky. Nothing here is cheap, but it feels like value nonetheless. If you're on a tight budget, try the lunch or pre-theater fixed-price menu.

See map p. 206. 225a West George St. ☎ 0141-572-0899. www.gamba.co.uk. Reservations required. Underground: Buchanan St. Fixed-price lunch: £16 (\$30); main courses dinner: £19–£26 (\$35–\$48). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat noon–2:30 p.m. and 5–10:30 p.m. Closed Sun.



Grassroots Café

\$ West End VEGETARIAN

Tied to the whole-foods shop located just around the corner, Grassroots is the city's leading vegetarian restaurant. The feel is casual and relaxed, with sofas at the front of the dining space and booths separated by gauzy curtains along one wall. A good selection of nonalcoholic fruit drinks and organic bottled beers from Britain complement a menu that has international influences. Cakes of risotto-style rice with goat cheese and pine nuts, tempura-battered vegetables, and a Middle Eastern tagine with couscous are delicious examples of what you'll find here.

See map p. 206. 93–97 St. Georges Rd. (parallel to the M8 freeway). ☎ 0141-333-0534. Underground: St. George's Cross. Main courses: £5–£8 (\$9.25–\$15). MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri 10 a.m.–10 p.m., Sat–Sun 10 a.m.–3:45 p.m. and 5–10 p.m.

Ho Wong

\$\$\$ Broomielaw/Commercial Centre CHINESE

One of the city's fanciest Chinese restaurants, this classy establishment is on a rather inauspicious block between the river and Argyle Street, just southwest of Glasgow's Central Station. The ambience is refined and even a bit romantic. There are traditionally at least eight duck dishes on the menu, along with a few types of fresh lobster, plenty of fish options, and some sizzling platters as well. If you have trouble deciding, the banquet option makes life a bit easier.

See map p. 206. 82 York St. ☎ **0141-221-3550**. www.ho-wong.com. Reservations recommended. Underground: St. Enoch. Fixed-price lunch: £9.50 (\$18); main courses: £12–£20 (\$22–\$37); fixed-price banquet (5-courses): £27 (\$50). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat noon–2:30 p.m. and 5:30–11:30 p.m., Sun 5:30–11:30 p.m.

La Parmigiana **\$\$\$ West End ITALIAN**

This remains the favorite fine-dining Italian restaurant in Glasgow, providing a cosmopolitan and Continental atmosphere. A well-established, quarter-of-a-century old business of the Giovanazzi family, Parmigiana is often recommended for its fish and meat dishes, whether grilled salmon with honey roasted vegetables, pan-fried pork cutlet with caramelized apples, or roast breast of guinea fowl stuffed with porcini mushrooms. A highlight of the pasta options is lobster ravioli with basil cream sauce. The house wine is excellent, but the list affords the opportunity to sample some fine vintages at corresponding costs. Service by waiters in smart black vests is usually impeccable.

See map p. 206. 447 Great Western Rd. ☎ **0141-334-0686**. www.laparmigiana.co.uk. Reservations required. Underground: Kelvinbridge. Fixed-price lunch: £12 (\$22); main courses dinner: £15–£20 (\$28–\$37). AE, DC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat noon–2:30 p.m. and 5:30–10:30 p.m. Closed Sun.

Michael Caines @ ABode **\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$ Commercial Centre FRENCH**

Opened in 2005, this restaurant has ambitions to be the best in the city. Chef/owner Michael Caines has already earned Michelin stars in England and the staff he hired for this fine-dining operation at the ABode Hotel (formerly the Arthouse; see hotel entry earlier in this chapter) has similar aspirations. It is hard to find fault with cooking and presentation, such as seared red mullet with slivers of zucchini, dabs of tomato sauce, and some eggplant puree rounded off with a frothy fennel cream. The dining room is modern and stylish, as you would expect in a boutique hotel such as ABode. In addition to fine dining restaurant, there is a cafe bar in the basement.

See map p. 206. 129 Bath St. ☎ **0141-572-6011**. www.abodehotels.co.uk. Underground: Buchanan St. Reservations recommended. Fixed-price lunch: £14 (\$26); main courses £18–£25 (\$33–\$46); tasting menu £60 (\$111). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat noon–2:30 p.m. and 7–10 p.m.



Mono **\$ Saltmarket VEGAN**

Technically just south of the Merchant City, Mono is my choice for a basic meat-free meal in this part of town. Not just a bar and a cafe/restaurant, Mono also houses a store selling free-trade goods and a CD shop with the latest in indie rock and alternative music. The restaurant's completely vegan (that means no dairy products, either), which makes Mono unique

in Scotland, let alone Glasgow. If this all sounds a tad too “politically correct,” relax: It’s a welcoming and casual place with a mixed and varied clientele. Live music is featured some nights, and thus the kitchen may shut early.

See map p. 206. 12 Kings Ct. ☎ 0141-553-2400. www.gomono.com. Underground: St. Enoch. Main courses: £5–£7 (\$9.25–\$13). AE, MC, V. Open: daily noon–9 p.m.

Mother India

\$\$–\$\$\$ West End INDIAN

After more than a decade in business, Mother India has established itself as the most respected Indian restaurant in Glasgow. Others have been open longer and certainly have their own loyal followings, but Mother India is the one place that people in the know most often recommend. Unlike the norm for Indian restaurants, the menu here isn’t overloaded with hundreds of different dishes. Oven-baked fish, which comes wrapped in foil, is seasoned with aromatic spices, while chicken and zucchini squash are served with a sauce that includes pan-roasted cumin and cardamom. Whether seated on the ground floor or in the dining room above, diners are likely to find the staff courteous and attentive. Recently a third dining space, the **Cellar**, was added to the premises.



Down the road toward the Kelvingrove Gallery another branch of Mother India with less expensive, small thali-style dishes is worth a stop if you’re on a budget: **Mother India’s Café** (☎ 0141-339-9145).

See map p. 206. 28 Westminster Terrace (Sauchiehall Street at Kelvingrove Street). ☎ 0141-221-1663. www.motherindia.co.uk. Reservations required. Underground: Kelvinhall. Main courses: £7.50–£12 (\$14–\$22). Open: Mon–Tues 5:30–10:30 p.m., Wed–Thurs noon–2 p.m. and 5:30–10:30 p.m., Fri noon–2:30 p.m. and 5:30–11 p.m., Sat 1–11 p.m., Sun 4:30–10 p.m.

Mussel Inn

\$\$–\$\$\$ Commercial Centre FISH/SEAFOOD

Sister restaurant to the original on Rose Street in Edinburgh, the Mussel Inn has the distinction of being owned by shellfish farmers in the West of Scotland. The kilo pot of mussels you eat here on any given evening may have been harvested only earlier the same day. The feel at the Glasgow branch is casual, with an open kitchen, light wood tables, and high ceilings, re-creating the feel you may find if it were located right at the seashore. In addition to the house specialty of steamed mussels served with a choice of broths (from spicy to white wine with garlic), the queen scallop salad is tasty and refreshing, creamy chowders are hearty and filling, and the menu always features a fresh catch of the day.

See map p. 206. 157 Hope St. ☎ 0141-572-1405. www.mussel-inn.com. Reservations recommended for weekend nights. Underground: St. Enoch. Main courses: £8–£14 (\$15–\$26). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri noon–2:30 p.m. and 5:30–10 p.m., Sat noon–10 p.m., Sun 5–10 p.m.

1901

\$\$ Southside FRENCH/CONTINENTAL

Not too far from the Burrell Collection, 1901 is perhaps your best choice for a meal after a visit to Pollok Park. The owner once ran a French restaurant in the city, and the décor of the dining room, which is back behind the traditional pub, nods to this background with its use of blue, white, and red. The menu offers a range of French-influenced and Continental food, almost all served in large portions. Dishes include lamb shanks with garlic and thyme, pasta with chicken, or the classic steak frites.

See map p. 206. 1534 Pollokshaws Rd. ☎ 0141-632-0161. Reservations recommended. Fixed-price lunch: £7.50 (\$14); main courses: £11–£15 (\$20–\$28). MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri noon–2:30 p.m. and 5–9:30 p.m., Sat–Sun noon–9:30 p.m.

No. Sixteen

\$\$-\$\$\$ West End SCOTTISH

No. Sixteen has a neighborhood feel to it, small and slightly cramped with dining on the ground floor and a tiny mezzanine above. But its appeal extends far beyond those who happen to live nearby. The story's been told of a couple visiting Glasgow, who came here on their first night in town for dinner and returned every subsequent night because they were so pleased with the food. Near the base of Byres Road, this Scottish bistro offers inventive cooking of local ingredients: braised pig cheek with purple endive or pan-fried filet of mackerel with olive-crushed potatoes, for example, on daily changing menus. The pre-theater menu offers excellent value.

See map p. 206. 16 Byres Rd. ☎ 0141-339-2544. Reservations recommended. Underground: Kelvinhall. Fixed-price lunch: £12 (\$22); main courses: £12–£20 (\$22–\$37). AE, MC, V. Open: daily noon–2:30 p.m. and 5:30–9:30 p.m.

Rogano

\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ Commercial Centre FISH/SEAFOOD

Sold to new owners in 2006, Rogano boasts a well-preserved Art Deco interior patterned after the *Queen Mary* ocean liner that dates back to the opening of the oyster bar here in 1935. Since then, the space has expanded, and Rogano has hosted virtually every visiting celebrity to the city. You can enjoy dinner amid etched mirrors, ceiling fans, semicircular banquettes, and potted palms. Service is attentive and informed. The menu emphasizes seafood, such as halibut in champagne-and-oyster sauce or lobster Thermidor. While these are traditional if possibly old-fashioned recipes, they have their fans. A less expensive menu is offered downstairs in **Cafe Rogano**, which serves food straight through the day and where the prices of main courses hover around the £12 (\$22) mark.

See map p. 206. 11 Exchange Place. ☎ 0141-248-4055. www.rogano.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Underground: Buchanan St. Fixed-price lunch: £18 (\$33); main courses dinner: £17–£34 (\$31–\$63). AE, DC, MC, V. Open: daily noon–2:30 p.m. and 6:30–10:30 p.m.

Stravaigin Café Bar**\$\$ West End SCOTTISH/GLOBAL**

The motto of Stravaigin (which roughly translates from the Scottish vernacular to “wanderin” in English), is “think global, eat local.” Although the fine-dining restaurant in the basement has won awards, I tend to prefer the less expensive but still memorable food served at the ground level pub/café, which serves food all day long. Scottish produce gets international twists: cheese and herb fritters with sweet chili sauce or roast lamb served with coriander couscous. But you also find staples such as hearty fish and chips. The atmosphere is always cordial, and prices are lower still during the busy pre-theater seating. In the downstairs restaurant, expect concoctions such as Vietnamese-inspired marinated quail served on a candy smoked eggplant concasse or mullet served on a bed of Thai noodles with bits of mussels and mushrooms. If you like Stravaigin, you may consider visiting its sister bistro near Byres Road, called, appropriately enough, **Stravaigin 2**, Ruthven Lane (☎ **0141-334-7156**).

See map p. 206. 28 Gibson St. ☎ **0141-334-2665**. www.stravaigin.com.
Underground: Kelvinbridge. Main courses: £6–£10 (\$11–\$19). AE, MC, V. Open: daily 11 a.m.–10:30 p.m.

Ubiquitous Chip**\$\$\$\$ West End SCOTTISH**

Quite possibly no other restaurant has been more responsible for the culinary renaissance in Scotland than the Ubiquitous Chip. Opening the Chip in 1971, chef/owner Ronnie Clydesdale was ahead of the curve, bringing the best Scottish ingredients into his kitchen — and then to the attention of diners. To this day, the menus state the provenance of the produce, a practice now commonplace in better restaurants. Inside the walls of a former stable, the recently renovated dining room has a roomy interior courtyard with a fountain and masses of climbing vines. The menu can feature free-range chicken, Aberdeen Angus beef, shellfish with crispy seaweed snaps, or wild rabbit. Upstairs, there’s a friendly pub and small brasserie (**Upstairs at the Chip**), which serves similar quality fare at a fraction of the price.

See map p. 206. 12 Ashton Lane, off Byres Road. ☎ **0141-334-5007**. www.ubiquitouschip.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Underground: Hillhead. Restaurant fixed-price lunch: £23 (\$43); fixed-price dinner: £34 (\$63); brasserie main courses: £12–£15 (\$22–28). AE, DC, MC, V. Open: restaurant daily noon–2:30 p.m. and 5:30–11 p.m.; brasserie daily noon–11 p.m.

**Wee Curry Shop****\$ Commercial Centre INDIAN**

This tiny place is hardly big enough to swing a cat in, but the aptly named Wee Curry Shop offers the best low-cost Indian dishes in the city. Just about five tables are crammed between the front door and the open

Tea for two?

For tea and a snack, join the rest of the tourists in Glasgow and try to secure a table at the landmark **Willow Tea Rooms**, 217 Sauchiehall St. (☎ **0141-332-0521**; Underground: Cowcaddens). When the famed Mrs. Cranston opened the Willow Tea Rooms in 1904, it was something of a sensation due to its unique Charles Rennie Mackintosh design. The building's white facade still stands out from the crowd more than 100 years later. The dining room (one floor above street level) is open Monday to Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. A second branch on Buchanan Street is similarly appointed if less authentic.

For a more contemporary experience, in the West End overlooking the River Kelvin, **Tchai Ovna**, 42 Otago St. (☎ **0141-357-4524**), has a selection of some 80 teas served in fairly eccentric and bohemian surroundings. In the evenings, you may find live music, poetry, or comedy. Tchai Ovna is open daily from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.

kitchen where the chefs prepare everything to order. The menu is concise, with a clutch of opening courses, such as fried pakora, and a half dozen or so main courses, such as spicy chile garlic chicken. Despite the cheap prices, portions are large. Although it may feel off the beaten track, the Wee Curry Shop is actually only a short walk from the shopping precincts of Sauchiehall Street.

See map p. 206. 7 Buccleuch St. (near Cambridge Street). ☎ 0141-353-0777. Reservations recommended. Underground: Cowcaddens. Fixed-price lunch: £4.75 (\$8.90); main courses: £5–£7 (\$9.25–\$13). Open: Mon–Sat noon–2 p.m. and 5:30–10:30 p.m. Sun 5–7 p.m.

Where the Monkey Sleeps

\$ Commercial Centre CAFE

Near Blythswood Square, this singular basement cafe-cum-gallery is one of the best places for cappuccinos, soups, and sandwiches in the Commercial Centre area of Glasgow. You know you've found it when you see all the waiting messenger bikes, the riders of which seem to live here when they're not on the streets delivering special letters and business packages. As the name indicates, Where the Monkey Sleeps is no ordinary cafe; it's owned and operated by artistic types (including two graduates from the nearby Art School) who learned their barista skills at Starbucks but wanted to be free of corporate constraints.

See map p. 206. 182 West Regent St. ☎ 0141-226-3406. www.wherethemonkeysleeps.com. Underground: Buchanan St. Soups: £3 (\$5.55). Sandwiches: up to £4 (\$7.40). Open: Mon–Fri 8 a.m.–5 p.m., Sat 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Closed Sun.



The Wild Bergamot

\$\$\$ Milngavie (Near West End) SCOTTISH

Chef and proprietor Alan Burns took over this tiny restaurant, formerly known as Gingerhill, in the northwestern suburbs of Glasgow and has put it on the culinary map. The cooking is assured and innovative, with emphasis placed on seasonal Scottish ingredients. A small lounge serves canapés and takes dinner orders before guests move to the cozy dining room. Dishes change regularly and can include almond-crusted halibut with braised oxtail or roast rump and lavender braised shoulder of Scottish lamb. Intermediate courses add a special touch. It's worth finding your way to Milngavie to eat here.

See map p. 206. 1 Hillhead St., Milngavie. Near Milngavie railway station; off the A81, about 9km (6 miles) northwest of Glasgow city center. ☎ 0141-956-6515. www.thewildbergamot.co.uk. Reservations required. Fixed price lunch £15 (\$28); fixed-price dinner £30 (\$56); tasting menu £45 (\$83). MC, V. Wed–Sun 7–9:30 p.m.; Fri–Sat noon–2 p.m. Closed Mon–Tues.

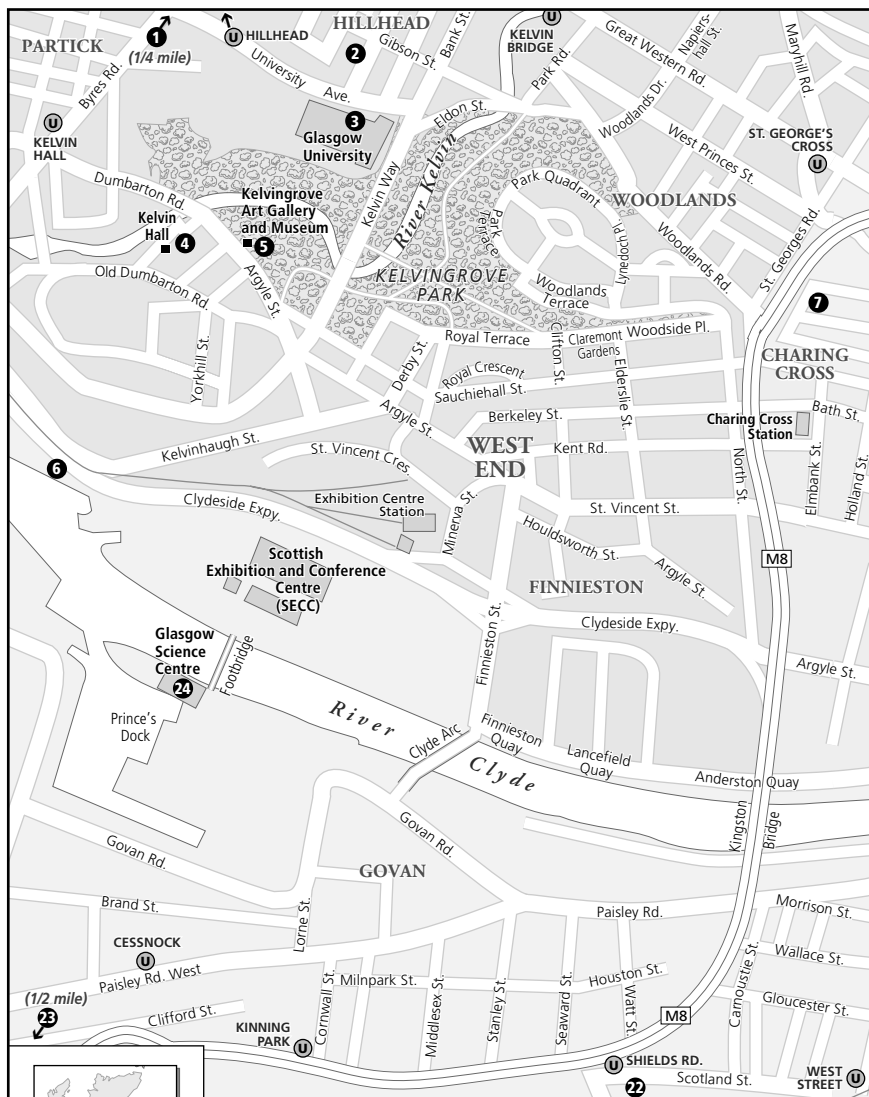
Exploring Glasgow

Glasgow is a compact city that's roughly the size of San Francisco. The part that many visitors may describe as “downtown,” Glasgow's city center is laid out on a grid, so the commercial heart of the metropolis is user-friendly. Most visits begin here, amid the rich **Victorian architecture**, whether 19th-century banks (many of which have been converted to other uses such as restaurants and bars), office buildings, warehouses, or churches. Culturally, the choices in the heart of Glasgow include the **Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA)**, the **Lighthouse** (devoted to design and architecture), and the **Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA)**. These are all within a fairly short walking distance of one another. Three main boulevards — Argyle, Buchanan, and Sauchiehall streets — form a Z-shape and have been made into predominantly car-free pedestrian zones that offer a wealth of shopping opportunities.

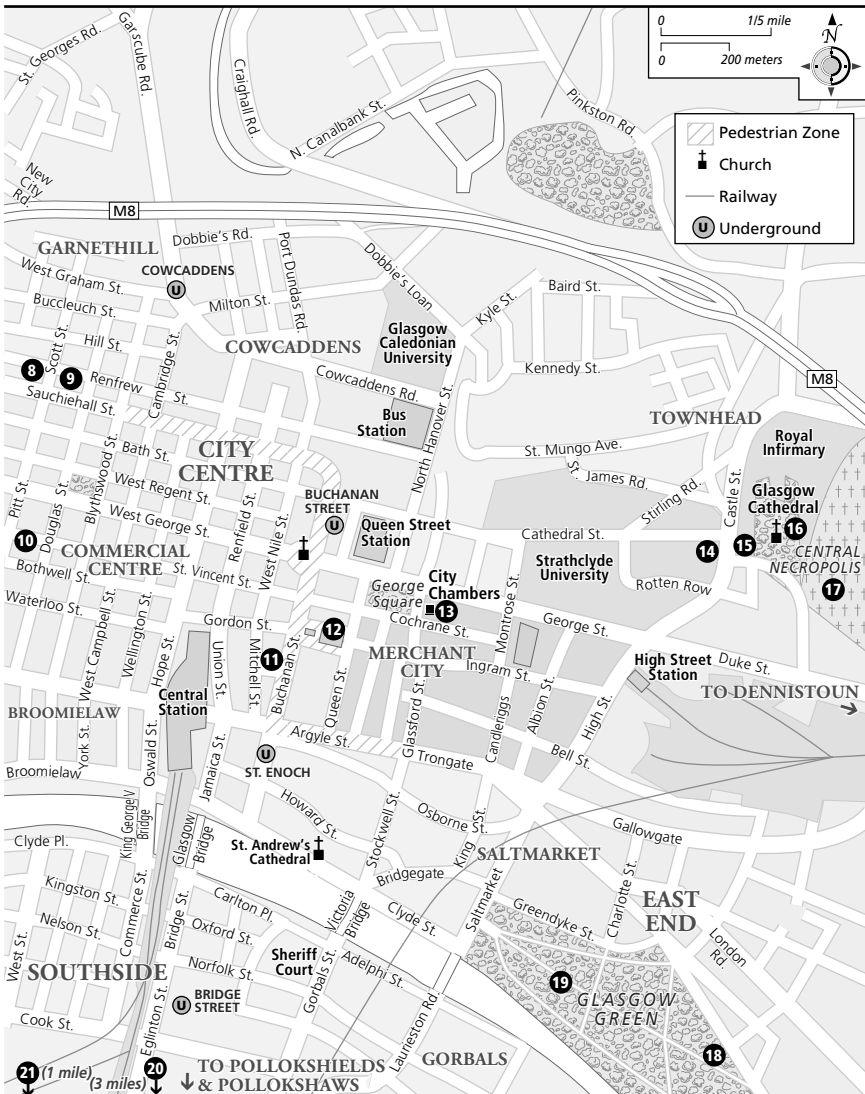
Adjacent to the Commercial Centre is the **Merchant City**, where loft conversions over the past 20 years have created a hip, happening quarter with many lively bars and restaurants. This district skirts the historic heart of Glasgow, but little if anything remains of the medieval city — most of it has been knocked down over the years in various urban renewal schemes. But at either end of the historic High Street, you can see two of the city's more ancient landmarks: **Glasgow Cathedral**, which dates to the 13th century, and the Renaissance **Tolbooth** steeple.

The affluent and urbane **West End** has the city's top university and the Scottish headquarters (until a planned move south of the river takes place) of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The presence of these institutions ensures that this area is trendy and lively, with some of the city's best restaurants and nightlife. Leafy and attractive, with the **Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum** fabulously refurbished and

Glasgow Attractions



- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Botanic Gardens 1 | Gallery of Modern Art 12 |
| The Burrell Collection 21 | Glasgow Cathedral 16 |
| Central Necropolis 17 | Glasgow Green 19 |
| Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) 8 | Glasgow School of Art 9 |
| City Chambers 13 | Holmwood House 20 |
| | House for an Art Lover 23 |



- Hunterian Art Gallery **2**
- Hunterian Museum **3**
- Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum **5**
- The Lighthouse **11**
- Museum of Transport **4**

- People's Palace **18**
- Pollok Country Park **21**
- Provand's Lordship **14**
- St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art **15**
- St. Vincent Street Church **10**

- Science Centre **24**
- Scotland Street School Museum **22**
- The Tall Ship at Glasgow Harbour **6**
- Tenement House **7**

reopened in 2006, the West End is a favorite place for many visitors to explore.

Of course, a river runs through Glasgow, but the city has yet to capitalize fully on the real potential of the **Clyde**. The shipbuilding that made the river famous is long gone, yet there isn't even an active, attractive marina for leisure boats today. Concrete redevelopment of the waterfront done toward the end of the 20th century hasn't aged particularly well, although the riverbank, which has a national bicycle path, has a certain run-down urban charm.

On the other side of the River Clyde, the Southside spreads out with mostly residential neighborhoods. Some say this is the "real" Glasgow, and it's home to at least one major, arguably world-class attraction, the **Burrell Collection**, as well as several other destinations that merit excursions south of the River Clyde.



At all of Glasgow's city-run museums, from the Gallery of Modern Art to the Burrell Collection, seeing the permanent exhibitions costs you absolutely nothing.



You'd need at least a few days to visit every place listed in this section and you'd be more than exhausted by the end of your romp, so you'll have to make some decisions. If you have children in tow, fewer galleries and more family attractions would be best; if you like art, more museums and fewer wanders may be right up your alley.

The top attractions

Botanic Gardens West End

Glasgow's Botanic Gardens aren't as extensive or exemplary as the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. Nevertheless, they cover some 11 hectares (28 acres). An extensive collection of tropical plants lives in Kibble Palace, the Victorian cast iron glasshouse that was being restored in 2006. The plant collection includes some rather acclaimed orchids and begonias. The Botanic Gardens is a good place to unwind and wander, whether through the working vegetable plot or along the banks of the River Kelvin.

See map p. 220. Great Western Road. ☎ **0141-334-2422**. Admission: free. Underground: Hillhead. Bus: 20, 66, or 90. Open: gardens daily dawn–dusk; greenhouses daily 10 a.m.–4:45 p.m. (only until 4:15 p.m. in the winter).



The Burrell Collection Southside

This museum houses the treasures left to Glasgow by Sir William Burrell, a wealthy ship owner and industrialist who had a lifelong passion for art. He started collecting at age 14 and stopped only when he died at the age of 96 in 1958. His tastes were eclectic: Chinese ceramics, French paintings

from the 1800s, tapestries, stained-glass windows from churches, even stone doorways from the Middle Ages. You can see a vast aggregation of furniture, textiles, ceramics, stained glass, silver, art objects, and pictures in the dining room, hall, and drawing room reconstructed from Sir William's home, Hutton Castle at Berwick-upon-Tweed. Ancient artifacts, Asian art, and European decorative arts and paintings are all featured. There's a cafe on site, and you can also roam through the surrounding park.

Nearby **Pollok House** (☎ 0141-616-6521) dates to the 18th century. Now run by the National Trust for Scotland, it features interiors as they were in the Victorian/Edwardian era. Open daily with an admission charge of £8 (\$15) adults.

See map p. 220. Pollok Country Park, 2060 Pollokshaws Rd. ☎ 0141-287-2550. www.glasgowmuseums.com. Suburban train: Pollokshaws West. Bus: 45, 47, 48, or 57. Admission: free. Open: Mon–Thurs and Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Fri and Sun 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Jan 1 and Dec 25.

Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) Commercial Centre

The CCA is dedicated to the exhibition of cutting-edge art — usually of a conceptual nature — by both local artists, and those with international reputations. The main central and atriumlike space is actually given over to the CCA's cafe, but there are other exhibition rooms, plus a small theater, where art-house and foreign films coordinated by the Glasgow Film Theatre are screened. Housed in a restored building designed by Alexander “Greek” Thomson, the CCA annually hosts art by the nominees for the Beck Futures Awards, which has become one of the leading judges of young talent in Britain.

See map p. 220. 350 Sauchiehall St. ☎ 0141-352-4900. www.cca-glasgow.org. Underground: Cowcaddens. Suburban train: Charing Cross. Bus: 16, 18, 44, or 57. Admission: free. Open: Tues–Fri 11 a.m.–6 p.m., Sat 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Closed Sun–Mon and for 2 weeks during Christmas and New Years holidays.

Gallery of Modern Art Merchant City

GOMA, as it's better known, is housed in the former Royal Exchange at Royal Exchange Square, where Ingram Street terminates at Queen Street. The building was built as a mansion for an 18th-century tobacco magnate. It was later expanded by one of the city's busy 19th-century architects, David Hamilton, who added a dramatic portico to the front. The galleries on different floors are slightly pretentiously named after earth, fire, air, and water. The permanent collection has works by Stanley Spencer and John Bellany as well as art from the “new Glasgow boys” who emerged in the 1980s — Peter Howson, Ken Currie, and Steven Campbell. Before becoming a museum in the mid-1990s, the building was used as a public library and recently the basement was converted to serve that function again.

See map p. 220. Royal Exchange Square, Queen Street. ☎ 0141-229-1996. www.glasgowmuseums.com. Underground: Buchanan St. Bus: 12, 18, 40, 62, or 66.

Admission: free. Open: Mon–Wed and Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Thurs 10 a.m.–8 p.m., Fri and Sun 11 a.m.–5 p.m.

Glasgow Cathedral Townhead

Also known as the cathedral of St. Kentigern or St. Mungo's, this structure dates to the 13th century. The edifice is mainland Scotland's only complete medieval cathedral, making it (along with St. Magnus on Orkney) the most important ecclesiastical building of that era in the entire country. Unlike other cathedrals on the mainland, this one survived the Reformation practically intact, but 16th-century zeal purged it of all monuments of idolatry. Later, misguided "restoration" led to the demolition of its western towers, thus altering the cathedral's appearance. Gothic design reigns in the lower Church, which has an array of pointed arches and piers. Its vaulted crypt is said to be one of the finest in Europe and holds St. Mungo's tomb, where a light always burns. Other highlights of the interior include the Blackadder aisle and the 15th-century nave with a stone screen (unique in Scotland) showing the seven deadly sins.



For one of the best views of the cathedral — and the city, for that matter — I urge you to cross the ravine into the **Central Necropolis**. Built on a proud hill and dominated by a statue of John Knox, this graveyard (modeled in part after the famous Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris) was opened in the 1830s.

See map p. 220. Glasgow Cathedral, Cathedral Square, Castle Street. ☎ 0141-552-6891. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Underground: Buchanan St. Suburban train: High St. Bus: 11, 36, 37, 38, 42, or 89. Admission: free. Open: Apr–Sept Mon–Sat 9:30 a.m.–6 p.m., Sun 1–5 p.m.; Oct–Mar Mon–Sat 9:30 a.m.–4 p.m., Sun 1–4 p.m.



Glasgow School of Art Garnethill/Commercial Centre

Architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh's global reputation rests in large part on this magnificent building on Garnethill above Sauchiehall Street, a highlight of the Mackintosh trail that legions of his fans from across the world follow through the city. Completed in two stages (1899 and 1909), the building offers a mix of ideas promoted by the Arts and Crafts as well as the Art Nouveau movements. The building is even more amazing because Mackintosh was not yet 30 when he designed the place. It's still a working and much respected school of art. Guided tours are the only way to see the entire building, and a highlight of the tour is the library. If you just drop in, however, there's a good gift shop near the front doors, and the airy landing one flight up serves as the school's exhibition space: the Mackintosh Gallery.

See map p. 220. 167 Renfrew St. ☎ 0141-353-4526. www.gsa.ac.uk. Underground: Cowcaddens. Suburban train: Charing Cross. Bus: 16, 18, 44, or 57. Advance reservations recommended for tours. Admission: tours £6.50 (\$12). Open: tours Apr–Sept 6 daily from around 10:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.; Oct–March 2 tours Mon–Sat 11 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.; Mackintosh shop: Mon–Fri 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sat 10 a.m.–noon.

Unappreciated genius: Alexander “Greek” Thomson

Even though architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868–1928) is well known and his worldwide popularity has spurred a cottage industry of “mock-intosh” fakes from jewelry to stationery, a precursor of his was perhaps even more important and innovative. Alexander “Greek” Thomson (1817–1875) brought a vision to Victorian Glasgow that was unrivaled by his contemporaries. Although the influence of classical Greek structures — the so-called Greek Revival — was nothing new, Thomson didn’t so much replicate Grecian design as hone it to essentials and then mix in Egyptian, Assyrian, and other Eastern-influenced motifs. As with Mackintosh later, Thomson increasingly found himself out of step with fashion, which architecturally was moving toward Gothic Revival.

An unforgivable number of structures created by the reasonably prolific and successful Thomson have been lost to the wrecker’s ball, but some key works remain: terraced houses such as **Moray Place** (where he lived) in the city’s Southside and **Eton Terrace** in the West End, churches such as the derelict **Caledonian Road Church** and the still-used **St. Vincent Street Church**, detached homes such as the **Double Villa** and **Holmwood House**, and commercial structures such as the **Grecian Buildings** (which today houses the CCA) and **Egyptian Halls**. Just as a Mackintosh trail has been created so that fans can revisit his works, Thomson deserves no less and in time may receive his full due.



Holmwood House Southside

This villa, designed by Alexander “Greek” Thomson and built in 1858, is probably the best example of his innovative style as applied to stately Victorian homes. Holmwood House is magnificently original, and its restoration (which is ongoing) has revealed that the architect was concerned with almost every element of the house’s design, right down to the wallpaper and painted friezes. Visitors have access to most parts of the building and surrounding gardens. Most impressive is the overall exterior design as well as the home’s parlor with its circular bay window, the cupola over the staircase, and the detailed cornicing around the ceiling in the dining room.

See map p. 220. 61–63 Netherlee Rd., Cathcart, about 6km (4 miles) south of the city’s center. ☎ 0141-637-2129. www.nts.org.uk. Suburban train: Cathcart. Bus: 44 or 66. Admission: £5 (\$9.25) adult, £4 (\$7.40) children, £14 (\$26) families. Open: Apr–Oct daily noon–5 p.m. Closed Nov–Mar.

Hunterian Art Gallery Hillhead/West End

The University of Glasgow inherited the artistic estate of James McNeill Whistler, with some 60 of his paintings bestowed by his sister-in-law and

Ahead of his time: Charles Rennie Mackintosh

Although he's legendary today, architect, designer, and decorator Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868–1928) was largely forgotten in Scotland at the time of his death. His approach, poised between the Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau eras, had its fans, however, and history has compensated for any slights he received during his lifetime.

Mackintosh used forms of nature, especially plants, in his interior design motifs, which offered simplicity and harmony that was not the Victorian fashion. Nonetheless, in 1896, Mackintosh's design for the **Glasgow School of Art** won a prestigious competition. Other Mackintosh landmark buildings in the city include the exterior of the old Glasgow Herald building, now **The Lighthouse**, the **Willow Tea Rooms** on Sauchiehall Street, and the **Scotland Street School**. His West End home from 1906 to 1914 (with wife and collaborator Margaret Macdonald) was itself a work of art, eschewing the fussy clutter of the age for clean, elegant lines. Its interiors have been recreated by the University of Glasgow's Hunterian Gallery. Twenty-five miles west of Glasgow in Helensburgh is perhaps his greatest singular achievement: **Hill House**, designed for publisher Walter Blackie in 1902.

Later failures to win commissions locally led Mackintosh to move out of Glasgow, to the southern coast of England and later to Port Vendres in France. In both places, however, his artistic talents were not wasted. He painted watercolors of flowers and landscapes that are as distinctive as his architectural and interior design work.

many hanging in this gallery. The main space exhibits 17th- and 18th-century paintings (Rembrandt to Rubens) and 19th- and 20th-century Scottish works, including works by the so-called Glasgow Boys and the "Scottish Colourists," such as Cadell, Hunter, and Fergusson. Temporary exhibits, selected from Scotland's largest collection of prints, are presented in the print gallery. The Hunterian also boasts a collection of Charles Rennie Mackintosh furnishings, and one wing of the building has a re-creation of architect's Glasgow home from 1906 to 1914 — startling then and no less so today. The **Mackintosh House** covers three levels, decorated in the original style of the famed architect and his artist wife Margaret Macdonald. All salvageable fittings and fixtures were recovered from the original home before it was demolished in the mid-1960s. The re-creation mimics the original house; the sequence of the rooms is identical.

See map p. 220. University of Glasgow, 22 Hillhead St. ☎ 0141-330-5431. www.hunterian.gla.ac.uk. Underground: Hillhead. Bus: 44, 59, or city tour. Admission: gallery free; Mackintosh house: £3 (\$5.55). Open: Mon–Sat 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Sun and public holidays.



Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum West End

Although the Burrell Collection (see earlier) may be the star, the newly refurbished Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum presents the stirring soul of the city's collection, one of the best amassed by a municipality in Europe. Reopened in 2006 after a three-year and several million pound refurbishment, the Kelvingrove can boast that it is most visited gallery and museum in Scotland — the most popular in the U.K. outside of those in London. The space features French impressionists and 17th-century Dutch and Flemish paintings. One painting of particular note is *Christ of St. John the Cross* by Spanish surrealist Salvador Dalí. Purchased at great expense by the city, it has been returned to its original position in the hall after a stint at the city's St. Mungo Museum (see later in this chapter). Other highlights include paintings by the Scottish Colourists and the Glasgow Boys, a wing devoted to Mackintosh, as well as more recent art by Anne Redpath and Joan Eardley. But there is more than art, with exhibits on Scottish and Glasgow history, armory and war, as well as natural history and nature — often mixing all to good educational effect, such as showing how human armor copied the natural protection of some animals, such as the armadillo. There are plenty of interactive displays and touches of humor, too, like the creature that supposedly is responsible for the traditional dish, haggis. The building itself, built for the 1901 Glasgow International Exhibition, is magnificent as well. In the semi-basement is a new cafe/restaurant.

See map p. 220. Argyle Street ☎ 0141-276-9599. www.glasgowmuseums.com.
Underground: Kelvinhall. Bus: 9, 16, 42, or 62. Admission: free, except for some temporary exhibits. Mon–Thurs and Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Fri and Sun 11 a.m.–5 p.m.

People's Palace East End

This museum reveals the social history of Glasgow through exhibits on how “ordinary people” have lived in the city, especially since the industrial age. It also attempts to explain the Glasgow vernacular — speech patterns and expressions that even Scots from outside the city can have trouble deciphering. Further noteworthy are the murals painted by “new Glasgow boy” Ken Currie. In front of the museum is the recently restored Doulton Fountain, which was moved here from another spot on Glasgow Green. The spacious **Winter Gardens** to the rear of the building, in a restored Victorian glass house with cafe facility, offers a nice retreat.

See map p. 220. Glasgow Green. ☎ 0141-554-0223. www.glasgowmuseums.com.
Bus: 16, 18, 40, 61, 62, 64, or 263. Admission: free. Open: Mon–Thurs and Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Fri and Sun 11 a.m.–5 p.m.

St. Vincent Street Church Commercial Centre

This should be a three-star, must-see attraction. But, alas, public access is severely limited by the evangelical reformed Free Kirk of Scotland

congregation that worships here. Nevertheless, the church remains the most visible landmark attributed to the city's other great architect, Alexander "Greek" Thomson. Built originally for Presbyterians in 1859, the stone edifice offers two classic Greek porticos facing north and south, aside which a clock tower rises, decorated in all manner of exotic yet curiously sympathetic Egyptian, Assyrian, and even Indian-looking motifs and designs. The interior is surprisingly colorful.

See map p. 220. 265 St. Vincent St. www.greekthomsonchurch.com. Suburban train: Charing Cross. Bus: 62. Sunday services at 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Interiors open only during services.



Science Centre Govan/Southside

The Science Centre has been called Britain's most successful "millennium project," but with so many stinkers (notably London's Dome) constructed to commemorate the year 2000, that compliment can be read as faint praise. Indeed, a millennium jinx has hit even here.



The tall, slender tower topped by an observatory room was designed to give breathtaking views. But it closed shortly after the Science Centre opened in 2001. While reopening briefly, more problems were encountered and it remained off-limits in 2006.

Still, on the banks of the River Clyde and opposite the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, this futuristic-looking museum is a focal point of Glasgow's drive to redevelop the rundown former dock lands. The overall theme of the exhibitions is to document 21st-century challenges as well as Glasgow's contribution to science and technology in the past, present, and future. Families should enjoy the hands-on and interactive activities: whether taking a three-dimensional head scan or staring into their own digital video. The Science Centre also is home to a planetarium and the silver-skinned **IMAX Theater**, which uses a film with a frame size some ten times larger than the standard 35mm film. The planetarium and theater charge separate admission.

See map p. 220. 50 Pacific Quay. ☎ 0141-420-5010. www.glasgowsciencecentre.org. Underground: Cessnock. Suburban train: Exhibition Centre, then walk across the footbridge over the Clyde. Bus: 89 or 90. Admission: £6.95 (\$13) adults, £4.95 (\$9.15) students and seniors, £19 (\$35) family pass. Open: daily 10 a.m.–6 p.m.



Tenement House Garnethill/Commercial Centre

Tenements (or apartment buildings) are what many Glaswegians lived in from the middle of the 19th century. And many still do so today. Run by the National Trust for Scotland, this "museum" is a typical flat, preserved with all the fixtures and fittings from the early part of the 20th century: coal fires, box bed in the kitchen, and gas lamps. Indeed, the resident, Miss Agnes Toward, apparently never threw out anything from 1911 to 1965, so

there are displays of all sorts of memorabilia, from tickets stubs and letters to ration coupons and photographs from trips down the Clyde.

See map p. 220. 145 Buccleuch St., Garnet Hill. ☎ 0141-333-0183. www.nts.org.uk. Underground: Cowcaddens. Bus: 20 or 66. Admission: £5 (\$9.25) adults, £4 (\$7.40) children. Open: Mar–Oct daily 1–5 p.m. Closed Nov–Feb.

More cool things to do and see

City Chambers Merchant City

Located on George Square, Glasgow's city hall is even more impressive on the inside than on the outside. Even if you don't take the free tour, at least pop your head in to see the cruciform front hall (the only part open to visitors who don't take the tour). Ceiling-tile work and magnificent marble columns appear throughout the building. In fact, the palatial interior has been used in many films as a stand-in for both the Vatican and the Kremlin, as well as for an interior shot in *Dr. Zhivago*. The office of the city's Lord Provost (the honorary mayor) is here as well. Outside, Yanks might note a mini Statue of Liberty atop the facade, just below the flag.

See map p. 220. George Square. ☎ 0141-287-4018. www.glasgow.gov.uk Underground: Buchanan St. Admission: free. Open: tours offered Mon–Fri at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.



Glasgow Green East End

Glasgow Green is the city's oldest park, probably dating from medieval times. Running along the River Clyde southeast of the Commercial Centre and Merchant City, this huge stretch of green had paths laid and shrubs planted in the middle of the 18th century but didn't formally become a public park until some 100 years later. Its landmarks include the **People's Palace** (see listing earlier in this chapter) social history museum and adjoining Winter Garden, the Doulton Fountain, and Nelson's Monument. At one end of the green, the influence of the Doges' Palace in Venice can be seen in the colorful facade of the old Templeton Carpet Factory. Near here is a large children's play area. The southern side of Glasgow Green offers dulcet walks along the river.

See map p. 220. Greendyke Street (east of Saltmarket). ☎ 0141-287-5098. www.glasgow.gov.uk. Underground: St. Enoch. Bus: 16, 18, 40, 61, 62, or 64. Admission: free. Open: daily dawn–dusk.



House for an Art Lover Southside

This house, which opened in 1996, was simply based on — or rather inspired by — an incomplete 1901 competition entry of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Therefore, the building, however elegant its interiors, is really

just a modern architect's *interpretation* of what Mackintosh had in mind. The tour includes the main hall, the dining room, with its gesso panels, and the music room. Mackintosh devotees flock here, but to me it is not the same as the real thing. On the plus side, however, there is the popular **Art Lover's Cafe** as well as a gift shop, all surrounded by a parkland setting adjacent to Victorian walled gardens.

See map p. 220. Bellahouston Park, 10 Dumbreck Rd. ☎ 0141-353-4770. www.houseforanartlover.co.uk. Underground: Ibrox. Bus: 9 or 54. Admission: £3.50 (\$6) adults; £2.50 (\$4.65) children, students, and seniors. Open: Apr–Sept Mon–Wed 10 a.m.–4 p.m., Thurs–Sun 10 a.m.–1 p.m.; Oct–Mar Sat–Sun 10 a.m.–1 p.m. Cafe and shop open daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Hunterian Museum Hillhead/West End

First opened in 1807, this is Glasgow's oldest museum. It's named after William Hunter, its early benefactor, who donated his private collections in 1783. The original home was a handsome Greek revival building near the High Street across town on the Old College campus, none of which survives today. Now housed in the main Glasgow University buildings, the collection is wide-ranging: from dinosaur fossils to coins to relics of the Roman occupation and plunder by the Vikings. The story of Captain Cook's voyages is pieced together in ethnographic material from the South Seas.

See map p. 220. University of Glasgow, Gilbert-Scott Building. ☎ 0141-330-4221, ext. 4221. www.hunterian.gla.ac.uk. Underground: Hillhead. Bus: 44, 59, or city tour. Admission: free. Open: Mon–Sat 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Sun and public holidays.

The Lighthouse Commercial Centre

The Lighthouse (Scotland's Centre for Architecture, Design, and the City) opened in 1999, a year when the city hosted an international celebration of its architecture. It is housed in Charles Rennie Mackintosh's first public commission, home of the *Glasgow Herald* newspaper from 1895. Unoccupied for 15 years, the building is now a seven-story, state-of-the-art exhibition space devoted to architecture and design. The Mackintosh Interpretation Centre on the third level is the Lighthouse's only permanent exhibition, which provides an overview of Mackintosh's art, design, and architecture. Visitors can ride an elevator to a viewing platform that offers a unique panorama of the city. The facility includes a cafe: the **Doocot**.

See map p. 220. 11 Mitchell Lane. ☎ 0141-221-6362. www.thelighthouse.co.uk. Underground: St. Enoch. Bus: 40, 61, 62. Admission: £3 (\$5.55). Open: Mon and Wed–Sat 10:30 a.m.–5 p.m., Tues 11 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun noon–5 p.m.



Museum of Transport West End

This museum contains a collection of all forms of transportation and related technology. Displays include a simulated 1938 Glasgow street with

period shop-fronts, era-appropriate vehicles, and a reconstruction of one of the original Glasgow Underground stations. The superb and varied ship models in the Clyde Room reflect the significance of Glasgow and the River Clyde as one of the world's foremost areas of shipbuilding and engineering. By 2008, the museum should be in a new flashy building on the city's Southside along the River Clyde.

See map p. 220. 1 Bunhouse Rd., Kelvin Hall. ☎ 0141-287-2720. www.glasgowmuseums.com. Underground: Kelvinhall. Bus: 9, 16, 18, 42, or 62. Admission: free. Open: Mon–Thurs and Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun and Fri 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Jan 1 and Dec 25.

Pollok Country Park **Southside**

On the Southside, this large, hilly expanse of open space is the home to both the Burrell Collection and Pollok House but merits a visit for its own attributes. Rhododendrons, Japanese maples, and azaleas are part of the formal plantings created at the end of the 19th century by Sir John Stirling Maxwell, whose family were longtime residents of Pollok House. However, the park is best for its glens and pastures, which lend themselves to grazing Highland cattle.

See map p. 220. 2060 Pollokshaws Rd. ☎ 0141-632-9299. www.glasgow.gov.uk. Suburban train: Pollokshaws West. Bus: 45 or 57. Admission: free. Open: daily dawn–dusk.

Provand's Lordship **Townhead**

Glasgow's oldest house, built in the 1470s, and the only survivor from what would have been clusters of medieval homes and buildings in this area of the city near Glasgow Cathedral. It is named after a church canon who once resided here. Thanks to the 17th century furniture from the original collection of Sir William Burrell, it shows what the interiors would have been like around the date 1700.

See map p. 220. 3 Castle St. ☎ 0141-552-8819. www.glasgowmuseums.com. Suburban train: High St. Bus: 11, 36, 37, 38, 42, or 89. Admission: free. Open: Mon–Thurs and Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Fri and Sun 11 a.m.–5 p.m.

St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art **Townhead**

Opened in 1993, this eclectic museum of spirituality is next to Glasgow Cathedral on the site where the Bishop's Castle once stood. It embraces a collection that spans the centuries and highlights various religious groups. It has been hailed as rather unique in that Buddha, Ganesha, and Shiva, amongst other spiritual leaders, saints, and historic figures are treated equally. The grounds include a Zen garden of stone and gravel.

See map p. 220. 2 Castle St. ☎ 0141-552-2557. www.glasgowmuseums.com. Bus: 11, 36, 38, 42, or 89. Admission: free. Open: Mon–Thurs and Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Fri and Sun 11 a.m.–5 p.m.

Scotland Street School Museum Southside

Another of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's designs, this building, commissioned by the local school board near the beginning of the 20th century, celebrated its centenary in 2005. Given that it is surrounded by light-industrial parks and faces the M8 motorway, it seems an odd location for a school. But that's only because all of the surrounding apartment buildings were torn down, which is why the school had only about 90 pupils when it shut down in 1979. The museum that occupies this admittedly lesser work from the great architect is devoted to the history of education in Scotland, with reconstructed examples of classrooms from the Victorian, World War II, and 1960s eras. It also has displays of Mackintosh's design for the building.

See map p. 220. 225 Scotland St. ☎ 0141-287-0500. www.glasgowmuseums.com. Underground: Shields Rd. Bus: 89 or 90. Admission: free. Open: Mon–Thurs and Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun and Fri 11 a.m.–5 p.m.



The Tall Ship at Glasgow Harbour West End

Here you have a chance to board one of the last remaining Clydebuilt sailing ships, the *SV Glenlee*. Built in 1896, she circumnavigated Cape Horn 15 times. Restored in 1999, the vessel is one of only five sailing ships built on the River Clyde that remain afloat. You can explore the ship and take in an exhibition detailing *Glenlee*'s cargo-trading history while you're onboard. If maritime topics float your boat, also consider visiting the **Clydebuilt Scottish Maritime Museum** (☎ 0141-886-1013) in the Braehead Shopping Centre.

See map p. 220. 100 Stobcross Rd. ☎ 0141-222-2513. www.glenlee.co.uk. Suburban train: Exhibition Centre. Bus: City tour. Admission: £4.95 (\$9.15) adults, £3.75 (\$7) seniors and children. Open: Mar–Oct daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Nov–Feb daily 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

Guided tours

The **City Sightseeing Glasgow** tours circle the town in brightly colored and open-topped buses. They operate from April through October, departing from George Square about every 15 to 20 minutes between 9:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. You can hop on and off at some 22 designated stops such as Glasgow Green, Glasgow University, or the Royal Concert Hall. Passes are good for two consecutive days. The live commentary can be quite entertaining and informative, too. For more information, contact the office at 153 Queen St. at George Square (☎ 0141-204-0444; www.scotguide.com). Tickets are £9 (\$17) adult, £3 (\$5.55) children, £20 (\$37) family.



The “Old Firm”

Glasgow has Scotland’s two largest professional soccer teams — Celtic and Rangers — and they are collectively called the “Old Firm.” These clubs are among the biggest in Europe, and both have passionate if not to say fanatical followers. Alas, given the clubs’ histories, fans are also drawn into sectarian (religious/political) disputes that have little to do with modern politics or religion but can become violent. The best bet for visitors is to politely avoid discussions regarding the Old Firm, unless extremely well versed. A safe bet if pressed is to say you prefer Partick, Glasgow’s small West End club with no sectarian ties.

If you prefer to keep your feet on the ground and your focus is on the more ghoulish aspects of Glasgow, the guides from **Mercat Glasgow** walking tours are happy to oblige. In season (Easter–Oct), they depart every evening from the Tourist Information Centre at George Square at about 7:30 p.m. Guides re-create macabre Glasgow — a parade of goons including hangmen, ghosts, murderers, and body snatchers. The tours take about 1½ hours. The company also does Historic Glasgow tours on request. For information, contact Mercat at 25 Forth Rd., Bearsden (☎ **0141-586-5378**; www.mercat-glasgow.co.uk). Tickets are £7 (\$13).

Waverley Excursions (☎ **0141-221-8152** or 0845-130-4647; www.waverleyexcursions.co.uk). The *Waverley*, considered the world’s last “seagoing” paddle steamship, was built on the Clyde in 1947. During the summer and depending on weather conditions, it continues to ply the river. One-day trips beginning at the Glasgow Science Centre take passengers “doon the watter” to historic and scenic places along the Firth of Clyde, sometimes going as far as the Isle of Arran. As you sail along, you can take in what were once vast shipyards turning out more than half the earth’s tonnage of oceangoing liners. Boat tours cost £8.95 to £30 (\$17–\$56).

Suggested one-, two-, and three-day itineraries

If you feel a bit overwhelmed by all the options of things to do and see in Glasgow, you’re not alone. I’ve laid out a few itineraries in this section to help you focus on your interests and use your time most efficiently, while giving you a good sampling of what Glasgow has to offer. Remember, these are just my ideas — feel free to tailor these itineraries to suit your own schedule and taste.

If you have one day

From George Square (the city’s main plaza in front of Glasgow City Chambers and the Queen Street station), catch one of the open-topped Glasgow **tour buses**. Depending on your guide, the trip can be as entertaining as it is informative. The buses circumnavigate the city from

A festival all its own

There's no doubt that if history could be rewritten, Glasgow would love to be the host of the annual International Festival instead of Edinburgh. However, the city to the west is not bereft of its own annual happenings. **Celtic Connections** is the best attended annual festival in Glasgow and the largest of its kind (a folk festival plus more than that description implies) in the world. It kicks off the year every January. The main venue for performances is the Royal Concert Hall, which produces the event. Guests include folk musicians, dancers, and contemporary artists. For more information, contact ☎ **0141-353-8000** or visit www.grch.com.

historic **Glasgow Cathedral** and the sprawling riverside park, **Glasgow Green**, in the east to **Glasgow University** and trendy **Byres Road** in the West. These open tour buses are the best way for visitors to get oriented and understand the city's layout and topography. Tickets are valid for 24 hours, and you can get off and on as much as you desire. Visit at least one of the city-run museums (remember, they're free) and a bona-fide Glasgow pub, such as the **Horse Shoe**.

If you have two days

Spend your first day as I suggest in the one-day itinerary earlier. Then, try to take in a bit of real **Charles Rennie Mackintosh** architecture by way of an organized tour of the **Art School** on Garnethill or an unguided visit to the interiors of his family house reconstructed at Glasgow University's **Hunterian Art Gallery**. Spend more time in the **West End** and check out the recently renovated **Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum**. Or go south and visit the vaunted **Burrell Collection**. Its art and artifacts from ancient to modern are the pride of the city, housed in an attractive, contemporary building amid verdant Pollok Country Park.

If you have three days

Follow my one- and two-day itineraries earlier, and on your third day, architecture buffs should discover more about **Alexander "Greek" Thomson**, who preceded Mackintosh by two generations and was equally innovative and important. Try **Holmwood House** on the city's Southside. After London, Glasgow is the second best city for shopping in the entire U.K. But don't be content with the familiar department stores (House of Fraser or John Lewis); seek out the designer labels in Merchant City's **Italian Centre** or some funky shops off Byres Road in the **West End**. Don't miss a visit to the Cathedral, and if the weather's fine, hike around the nearby **Central Necropolis**. The city's main graveyard occupies a hill, so the views are grand, and the area has also become home to a family of deer.

If you (are lucky and) have four days or more

Having followed my earlier recommendations, on Day 4 those interested in social history may want to visit the **People's Palace** museum in **Glasgow Green**, while visitors attuned to contemporary arts have not only the **CCA** but also the **Arches** and **Tramway** to consider. On the weekends, lovers of flea markets owe the **Barras** stalls a visit. You can also take an excursion down the Clyde toward the sea or up the road to **Loch Lomond** and the beginnings of the Highlands. In most directions, it takes a drive of only about 15 to 25 minutes to find open countryside outside of Glasgow.

Walking tour: The West End

Because Glasgow is set on fairly gentle hills rising up from a basin created by the River Clyde, the city is amenable to walking. Most “perambulations” don’t involve the scaling of many steep streets, although in order to obtain good vistas, a climb is sometimes obligatory. This stroll takes about two hours (without going inside any buildings) and gives you a sense of Glasgow’s salubrious and trendy West End, while hitting some of its landmarks as well. The stroll begins in Charing Cross on Sauchiehall Street, but on the western side of the M8 motorway, which is set in a concrete canyon.

Begin at:

1. Cameron Fountain

From the rusty red stone fountain, built in 1896 and listing considerably eastward, one can stroll a few blocks south on North Street, which runs parallel to the freeway, to see the Mitchell Library, the largest public reference library in Europe. At the back of the building is the Mitchell Theatre, inscribed with the names of Raphael, Watt, Michelangelo, Newton, and more.

From the fountain, walk up Woodside Crescent (often abbreviated as “Cres”) to:

2. Woodside Terrace

This late Georgian row of homes (designed by George Smith in the 1830s) began an exemplary New Town development. Here you find Greek Doric porticos unlike any in the city. But most of the credit for the overall elegance and charm of Woodlands Hill goes to Charles Wilson, whose designs in the middle of the 19th century are mostly responsible for the terraces up the hillside to Park Circus.

Continue on Woodside Terrace, turning right (north) on Lynedoch Terrace to Lynedoch Street, and proceed left to:

3. Trinity College and Park Church Tower

The former Trinity College (now Trinity House) is a landmark whose three towers are visible from many approaches to the city.

Designed by Charles Wilson, it was constructed in 1857 as the Free Church College. Apparently most of the original interiors were lost when the complex was converted to condos in the 1980s. Across the broad triangular intersection is the cream-colored Park Church Tower. Part of JT Rothead's 1856 design, it is the other feature of the neighborhood that is recognizable from some distance. Alas, the church that went with the tower was razed in the late 1960s. Only a steeple remains.

From here, go left (south) and follow the gentle curve (west) of Woodlands Terrace, turning right (north) at Park Street South to:

4. Park Circus

This oval of handsome and uniform three-story buildings around a small central garden is the heart of Wilson's plans, designed in 1855. No. 22 (now the registration office and site of civil ceremonies) offers the most remarkable interiors, with Corinthian columns and an Art Nouveau billiard room. Attendants are not impressed when uninvited visitors just wander in, however. Luckily, the external door is impressive enough. At the western end of Park Circus is Park Gate, which leads to an entrance to Kelvingrove Park. This promontory offers excellent views towards the University and south to the Clyde.

Enter:

5. Kelvingrove Park

Originally West End Park, the development of this hilly and lush open space on the banks of the River Kelvin was commissioned to Sir Joseph Paxton in 1854, although construction apparently began a year before he produced his plans. At this elevated entrance is the statue of Lord Roberts on his steed. Down the hill to the left, the Gothic Stewart Memorial Fountain includes signs of the zodiac and scenes that depict the source of the city's main supply of water: Loch Katrine. Crossing the river below Park Gate at the Highland Light Infantry Memorial is the faded red sandstone Prince of Wales Bridge. Across the bridge looking back at you is the head of Thomas Carlyle emerging from the roughly hewn stone.

When facing the bridge at the infantry memorial, go right (north) and follow one of the two paths that run along the river and exit the park at:

6. Gibson Street

Leaving the park, turn left (west) and cross the short road bridge that brings you into the Hillhead district, which includes the main campus of the University of Glasgow on Gilmorehill and the Western Infirmary. Gibson Street today offers several eating and drinking options. If you're hungry, stop now.

Continue west on Gibson Street to Bank Street, go right (north) 1 block to Great George Street, then left (west) 1 block to Oakfield Avenue and:

7. Eton Terrace

Here, on the corner across from Hillhead High School, the unmistakable work of architect Alexander Thomson is evident in an impressive (if today poorly kept) terrace of eight houses completed in 1864 (following his similarly designed Moray Place). Two temple-like facades serve as bookends, both pushing slightly forward and rising one floor higher than the rest, and have double porches apparently fashioned after the Choragic Monument of Thrassylus in Athens. Ironically, for all his admiration of Eastern design, Thomson never traveled outside the U.K.

Return to the corner of Great George Street and follow Oakfield Avenue south, crossing Gibson Street to University Avenue; then turn right (west) up the hill to the:

8. University of Glasgow

Aficionados rightfully bemoan the loss of the original campus east of the High Street, which may have offered the best examples of 17th-century architecture in Scotland. The university moved to its current location in the 1860s, and the city could have done worse — a lot worse. The setting high above Kelvingrove Park is befitting of a center of learning. Englishman Sir George Gilbert Scott controversially won the design commission and his Gothic Revival is punctuated by a tower that rises from the double quadrangle — a virtual beacon on the horizon of the West End. Fragments of the original university can be seen, too, in the facade of Pearce Lodge as well as the salvaged Lion and Unicorn Stair at the chapel.

Cross University Avenue north to Hillhead Street and the:

9. Hunterian Art Gallery

Built in the 1980s next to the university library, this gallery houses the school's permanent collection, which includes 18th- and 19th-century Scottish art as well as many works by James McNeill Whistler. Scots-Italian contemporary artist Eduardo Paolozzi designed the chunky cast aluminum internal doors to the main exhibition space.

Incorporated into the building (past the gift shop) is:

10. Mackintosh House

Charles Rennie Mackintosh's and wife Margaret Macdonald's West End home (originally nearby and demolished by the university in the 1960s) is replicated here with furniture and interiors designed by the pair. Visitors enter from the side (the front door is actually several feet above the level of the plaza outside), and see the dining room, sitting room with study, and the couple's bedroom. At the top is a replication of a bedroom Mackintosh designed for a house in England, his final commission.

Return to University Avenue, exit Mackintosh House turning right to:

11. University Gardens

This street features a fine row of houses designed primarily by J.J. Burnet in the 1880s, but it's worth a stop especially to admire no. 12, done by J. Gaff Gillespie in 1900; that house exemplifies Glasgow style and the influences of Mackintosh and Art Nouveau.

Continue down University Gardens past Queen Margaret Union and other university buildings, going left down the stairs just past the Gregory Building. At the bottom of the stairs, follow the sidewalk and turn right onto:

12. Ashton Lane

This cobbled mews is the heart of West End nightlife, although it bustles right through the day, too, with a mix of University students, instructors, and staff, as well as local residents. The host of bars, cafes, and restaurants here includes the venerable Ubiquitous Chip, which can be credited for starting (in 1971) the ongoing renaissance of excellent cooking of fresh Scottish produce.

Go left past Ubiquitous Chip down the narrow lane to Byres Road. Just to the right, you can catch the underground (Hillhead station) back to the city center (Buchanan Street station). Or turn right on:

13. Byres Road

Ashton Lane's primary entrance is midway along the proverbial Main Street of this part of Glasgow: Byres Road, which is full of bars, cafes, restaurants, and shops. Rarely less than buzzing, the road exemplifies the West End for many people. If you aren't in a hurry, the streets running west from Byres Road, such as Athole or Huntly Gardens, merit a brief wander to see the proud townhouses.

Proceed north up Byres Road to:

14. Great Western Road

It took an act of Parliament in London in 1836 to create this street, and then a new turnpike road into the city. Today, its four lanes remain one of the main thoroughfares into and out of Glasgow. A stroll west for 5 or 6 blocks from this intersection (Byres and Great Western roads) reveals the opulent terraces (including one by Thomson) along Great Western's southern flank. Going in the opposite direction takes you to more retail and commercial shops.

Cross Great Western Road to the:

15. Botanic Gardens

Neither as extensive nor as grand as the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh, this hilly park is pleasant nonetheless. One main

attraction, Kibble Palace, is a giant domed cast iron and glass Victorian conservatory with exotic plants. Other greenhouses house orchid collections, while the outdoor planting includes a working vegetable plot, roses and rhododendrons, and beds with lots of flowering perennials.

Shopping in Glasgow

After London, the capital of Great Britain and a city at least ten times its size, Glasgow apparently has the second most retail space in all of the U.K. It is a shopping Mecca for everyone in the west of the country and apparently a reason for people to visit from northern England, too, as it is not as far away as the shops of London's Soho.

Among the few retail goods that are high quality *and* priced competitively are fine **wool knits**, particularly cashmere sweaters — or as the Scots prefer, “jumpers” — and scarves. Anything produced within the country (with the exception of whisky, which is taxed as heavily as all alcoholic products) should be less expensive than at home: from **smoked salmon** and **shortbread** to **Caithness glass**, used in those beguiling paper weights with swirling, colorful designs. Finally, given the number of artists in the country, getting an original piece of **art** to bring home might represent the most value for money.



For visitors from abroad, prices in the U.K. aren't a major selling point. In recent years, the British currency (the pound sterling) has been trading strongly against other major currencies, such as the U.S. dollar and the euro (which most of Britain's partners in the European Union now use). The good news is that prices for most products in Scotland have been stable since the mid-1990s, and in some cases (for example, clothes) prices have come down in real terms. Nevertheless, many items carry the same numerical price in pounds as they would in American dollars. For example, a digital camera that costs \$300 in New York may well be priced £300 (\$555) in Glasgow, making it 50 percent to 100 percent more expensive.

Best shopping areas

The main area for retail therapy is defined by the pedestrian malls of **Argyle Street**, **Buchanan Street**, and **Sauchiehall Street**, which join together and form a Z shape right in the heart of the city. But for more unique shops and fashions, it pays to venture to the **Merchant City** and the **West End**. And perhaps the city's most unique shopping experience is at the flea market-like stalls at the weekend **Barras** market, in the East End of Glasgow.



In general, shops in the city are open Monday to Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday from 9 a.m. or 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. And be warned, they tend to close sharply, regardless of the number of potential shoppers still out on the sidewalks. But in 2006, the city was considering later opening hours for city center stores in order to compete with the shopping developments on Glasgow's periphery, which are open daily until 8 p.m. Only on Thursday do the shops "in town" stay open late—until 8 p.m., at least. Most established stores are now open in the afternoon on Sunday, too.

Shopping complexes

Of course, any shopping city worth its salt these days must offer indoor malls. In Glasgow, **Princes Square** (Buchanan Street; ☎ 0141-204-1685; www.princessquare.co.uk) is the city's most stylish and up-market shopping center. Housed in a modernized and renovated Victorian building, the mall has many specialty stores, men's and women's fashion outlets, and restaurants, cafes, and bars.

Nearby, between Argyle Street and the River Clyde is the **St. Enoch Shopping Centre** (☎ 0141-204-3900), whose merchandise is less expensive and a lot less posh than what you find at Princes Square. St. Enoch's resembles a fairly conventional mall, with a couple of major department stores and a food court at one end.

If you're after a fancy watch or gold ring, go to the **Argyll Arcade**, the main entrance to which is at 30 Buchanan St. Even if the year of its construction (1827) weren't posted above the entrance, you'd still know that this collection of shops beneath a curved glass ceiling is historic. The L-shaped arcade contains one of the largest concentrations of retail **jewelers**, both antique and modern, in all of Europe. Purchasing a wedding band here is considered lucky.

The latest contribution to mall shopping in the city center is the **Buchanan Galleries** (☎ 0141-333-9898; www.buchanangalleries.co.uk), found at the top of Buchanan Street. Completed in 1999, this mammoth development is hardly groundbreaking, but it does include the rightfully respected **John Lewis** department store.

On the western outskirts of town, the **Braehead Shopping Centre** (☎ 0141-885-1441; www.braehead.co.uk) opened most recently and somewhat controversially because it appears to be taking people away from the city center. Braehead's major draw is a sprawling Ikea store.

What to look for and where to find it

If your shopping intentions are less of the browsing variety, here are some of Glasgow's specialized shopping options. Unless otherwise indicated, the shops below are in the Commercial Centre of Glasgow and are within walking distance of the Buchanan Street or St. Enoch underground stations.

Antiques

- ✓ **Victorian Village** offers a warren of shops and a pleasantly claustrophobic clutter of goods. Much of the merchandise isn't particularly noteworthy, but you can find some worthwhile pieces if you know what you're after and are willing to go hunting. 93 W. Regent St. (☎ 0141-332-0808).

Art

- ✓ **Compass Gallery** was opened by Cyril Gerber (see next bullet) to offer affordable pieces of contemporary art by local artists. You can find something special for as little as £20 (\$37) here, depending on the show. The pre-Christmas sale is particularly good. 178 W. Regent St. (☎ 0141-221-6370; www.compassgallery.co.uk).
- ✓ **Cyril Gerber Fine Art** is one of Glasgow's best small galleries and shops. It veers away from the avant-garde, specializing in British painting of the 19th and 20th centuries. It has good Scottish landscapes and cityscapes, especially works by Colourists and the Glasgow Boys. Gerber has been the city's most respected art authority for several decades, with lots of contacts in art circles throughout Britain. 148 W. Regent St. (☎ 0141-221-3095; www.cyrilgerberfineart.com).
- ✓ **Glasgow Print Studio** includes a shop that sells limited edition etchings, wood blocks, aquatints, and screen prints by members of the prestigious collective as well as other notable artists. Prices are good, and there's a framing facility on the premises. 25 King St. (☎ 0141-552-0704; www.gpsart.co.uk).

Books

- ✓ **Borders** offers a multistory shop at the back of Royal Exchange Square. You find a gratifying emphasis on the culture of Scotland and plenty of places to sit and read. Borders also has the best selection of international periodicals in Scotland. 98 Buchanan St. (☎ 0141-222-7700; www.borders.com).
- ✓ **Caledonia Books** is one of the few remaining secondhand and antiquarian shops in the city of Glasgow. Charming and well run, the stock here tends to favor quality over quantity. 483 Great Western Rd., West End (☎ 0141-334-9663; www.caledoniabooks.co.uk).
- ✓ **Waterstones** is a giant Barnes-and-Noble-like operation with plenty of stock, a cafe, and a lot of soft seats. The ground floor features a good Scottish section. 174 Sauchiehall St. (☎ 0141-248-4814; www.waterstones.co.uk).

Clothes

- ✓ **Cruise** has the best selection of designer togs in town — better bring your credit cards! Labels include Prada, Armani, D&G, Vivienne Westwood, and more. At the second branch nearby

(223 Ingram St.), the Oki-Ni shop within the shop offers limited edition Adidas and Levis. 180 Ingram St., Merchant City (☎ 0141-572-3232).

- ✓ **Dr. Jives** began as a vintage clothing shop for men in the late 1980s but has evolved into the hippest boutique in town for cutting-edge designer looks, especially for the skater crowds at the dance clubs. 111 Candleriggs, Merchant City (☎ 0141-552-4551).
- ✓ **Jigsaw** was recently relocated under the glorious dome of the Baroque-style former Savings Bank of Glasgow. This is the fashionable U.K. chain of clothes and accessories for women and juniors. Using its own design team in Kew, West London, Jigsaw opened its first shop in Hampstead some 30 years ago. 177 Ingram St., at Glassford Street (☎ 0141-552-7639).
- ✓ **Starry Starry Night** shows just how tiny those Victorians and Edwardians were — although they wore some pretty stunning gowns. This shop (with a branch in the Barras market) normally has a few items worth dusting off. It also stocks secondhand kilts and matching attire. 19 Downside Lane, West End; Underground: Hillhead (☎ 0141-337-1837).
- ✓ **Thomas Pink** is perhaps the closest thing to that temple of preppy sensibilities: Brooks Brothers. This is the place for the finest button-down Oxford shirts that a man could possibly hope for — and a silk tie to match. 1 Royal Bank (☎ 0141-248-9661).

Department stores

- ✓ **Debenhams** is a sturdy department store with midrange prices. St. Enoch Shopping Centre, 97 Argyle St. (☎ 0141-221-0088).
- ✓ **House of Fraser** is Glasgow's version of Harrods. A Victorian-era glass arcade rises up four stories, and on the various levels you find everything from clothing to Oriental rugs, from crystal to hand-made local artifacts of all kinds. 21–45 Buchanan St., at Argyle Street (☎ 0141-221-3880; www.houseoffraser.co.uk).
- ✓ **John Lewis** is a close equivalent to Macy's, with quality brand names, assured service, and a no-questions-asked return policy on damaged or faulty goods. Buchanan Galleries, 220 Buchanan St. (☎ 0141-353-6677).
- ✓ **Marks & Spencer** has had its share of problems with shareholders and in board rooms, as anyone who reads international finance pages will know. But the chain carries on with clothing and very good food halls. The two branches in Glasgow are on Argyle and Sauchiehall streets. 2–12 Argyle St. (☎ 0141-552-4546); 172 Sauchiehall St. (☎ 0141-332-6097).

Edibles

See the sidebar “Picnic fare,” earlier in this chapter, for a list of select food markets with Scottish specialties.

Gifts and design

- ✔ **Catherine Shaw** is named after the long-deceased matriarch of the family that runs the place today. It’s a somewhat cramped gift shop that has cups, mugs, postcards, jewelry, and souvenirs — a good place for easy-to-pack gifts. 24 Gordon St. (☎ 0141-204-4762). Look for another branch at 31 Argyll Arcade (☎ 0141-221-9038); entrances to the arcade are on both Argyll and Buchanan streets.
- ✔ **Felix & Oscar** is a wacky and fun shop for offbeat cards and toys, kitsch accessories, fuzzy bags, perfumes and toiletries, and a selection of T-shirts that you’re not likely to find anywhere else in Glasgow. (In addition to the flagship, there is another on Cresswell Lane.) 459 Great Western Rd., West End; Underground: Kelvin Bridge (☎ 0131-339-8585).
- ✔ **Mackintosh Shop** is a small gift shop in the Glasgow School of Art that prides itself on a stock of books, cards, stationery, mugs, glassware, and sterling-and-enamel jewelry created from or inspired by the original designs of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Glasgow School of Art, 167 Renfrew St. (☎ 0141-353-4500).
- ✔ **National Trust for Scotland Shop** offers “Glasgow-style” contemporary arts and crafts, pottery, furniture, and jewelry designed exclusively by local artists. Hutcheson Hall, 158 Ingram St. (☎ 0141-552-8391).

Kilts and tartan

- ✔ **Geoffrey (Tailor) Kiltmakers and Weavers** is both a retailer and a manufacturer of tartans, which means they have all the clans and have also created their own range of 21st-century-style kilts — for better or worse. 309 Sauchiehall St. (☎ 0141-331-2388; www.geoffreykilts.co.uk).
- ✔ **Hector Russell** was founded in 1881 and remains Scotland’s long-established kiltmaker. Crystal and gift items are sold on street level, but the real heart and soul of the place is below, where impeccably crafted and reasonably priced tweed jackets, tartan-patterned accessories, waistcoats, and sweaters of top-quality wool for men and women are displayed. 110 Buchanan St. (☎ 0141-221-0217).
- ✔ **James Pringle Weavers** has been in business since 1780. This shop is known for its traditional clothing that includes well-crafted, bulky wool sweaters and a tasteful selection of ties, kilts, and tartans. Some of the merchandise is unique to this shop. Ever slept in a tartan nightshirt? 130 Buchanan St. (☎ 0141-221-3434).

Music

- ✓ **Avalanche** is the indie music CD store to beat all others. It's small and cramped (near Queen Street Station) but is the best for the latest releases by everybody from the White Stripes to local stars Belle & Sebastian and up-and-comers. 34 Dundas St. (☎ 0141-332-2099).
- ✓ **Fopp** is Glasgow's largest independent outlet. It offers one of the best selections of CDs, ranging from classics to hottest hits and including music books and vinyl, too. Fopp also stocks a good number of re-releases priced at only \$5 (\$9.25). 358 Byres Rd., West End (☎ 0141-357-0774). In addition to the West End flagship, a larger, multistory branch is in the city center on Union Street (☎ 0141-222-2128).
- ✓ **Monorail** is located within the vegan restaurant and bar called Mono. This is the most individual of independent CD and record outlets in the city. Glasgow is alight with young musicians, and this shop specializes in new music from emerging local acts, as well as the best of cutting edge bands from elsewhere. 10 King St. (☎ 0141-553-2400).

Living It Up After Dark

Today, some say that Glasgow — and not Edinburgh — is the center of contemporary culture in Scotland. It's an arguable, not to say locally controversial, point of view, however. There's no doubt that Glasgow has seen the most progress since the middle of the 20th century, when the shipping and industrial boom began to go bust, creating an image of profound decline. It was reversed throughout the 1980s. Despite any periods of decline, however, Glasgow's local arts scene was always alive.

But ultimately, the truth is this: Both cities contribute mightily — and equally — to the cultural vibrancy of the nation. Their strength as a *pair* of lively cities is considerably more significant than debating which has the most to offer individually. With this idea in mind, the country would do well to improve the public transportation links between the two cities, especially in the wee small hours. Nightlife in both Edinburgh and Glasgow would benefit if officials made it easier to move between the two city centers after dark.

Although the Scottish capital to the east is home to the country's national art galleries and museums, Glasgow is where the national opera and ballet companies as well as the **Scottish National Orchestra** are based. It's also the city where young talent is nurtured at the **Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama**. Additionally, Glasgow is home to several theaters, including two that rank highly across the U.K. for staging groundbreaking drama: the **Citizens** and the **Tron**. Even more experimental performance can be seen at the **Arches** and **Tramway**.

The performing arts

Although hardly competition for a drama giant like London, Glasgow's theater scene is the equal of Edinburgh's. Young Scottish playwrights often make their debuts here, and among the classics, you're likely to see anything from Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* to *The Marriage of Figaro*.

- ✔ **The Arches** is located within the vaulted brick arches beneath the railway lines in and out of Central Station. The venue, which marked its 15th year in 2006, offers a range of inexpensive drama and performances — which includes edgy new plays as well as Shakespeare — by its own unit as well as visiting companies. But the Arches also has space for a fairly full schedule of live music of all description, regular dance clubs, and visual art exhibits. The cafe/bar at the Arches is, like at the Traverse in Edinburgh, a scene unto itself. Tickets are £4–£10 (\$7.40–\$19). 253 Argyle St. (☎ **0141-565-1023**; www.thearches.co.uk; Underground: St. Enoch).
- ✔ **Citizens Theatre** is perhaps the prime symbol of Glasgow's verve and democratic approach to theater. Located in Gorbals, just across the River Clyde from the Commercial Centre area of Glasgow, the “Citz” is home to a repertory company and has three performance spaces: a main auditorium and two smaller theaters. In 2004, new artistic director Jeremy Raison made his debut. Prices are always reasonable. Tickets are £5 to £15 (\$9.25–\$28). 119 Gorbals St. (☎ **0141-429-0022**; www.citz.co.uk; Bus: 5, 12, 20, or 66).
- ✔ **Glasgow Royal Concert Hall** is the home of the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra**, which plays its yearly winter/spring series and pops seasons in the main auditorium. Very little is subtle about this modern music hall, which is the most prestigious performance space in the city for everything from touring ballet companies to pop/rock acts such as Elvis Costello or Jackson Browne. The hall also produces the city's annual Celtic Connections festival every January. Tickets are £10 to £35 (\$19–\$65). 2 Sauchiehall St. (☎ **0141-353-8000**; www.grch.com; Underground: Buchanan St.).
- ✔ **The King's Theatre** celebrated its 100th birthday in 2004. This magnificent, red-sandstone hall is the place where famous touring Broadway and West End spectacles, such as *Miss Saigon*, are likely to appear — as well as locally produced popular and light entertainment, whether comedies, musicals, or family-oriented plays. During December and January, the King's is best noted for its over-the-top pantomime presentations, often starring well-known Scottish actors. Tickets are £6 to £26 (\$11–\$48). 297 Bath St. (☎ **0141-240-111**; www.theambassadors.com/kings; Suburban train: Charing Cross; Bus: 16 or 18).
- ✔ **Pavilion Theatre** is, compared to the King's Theatre, an equally historic if less architecturally distinguished venue. It specializes in family entertainment, variety shows, light drama, tribute acts, and bands, as well as comedy and occasional modern versions of

vaudeville (which, as they assure you around here, is still alive). The Pavilion is a prime location for pantomime around Christmas time. Tickets are £10 to £25 (\$19–\$46). 121 Renfield St. (☎ 0141-332-1846; www.paviliontheatre.co.uk; Underground: Buchanan St.; Bus: 21, 23, or 38).

- ✓ **Theatre Royal** is the home of the ambitious, well respected, but also financially beleaguered **Scottish Opera**, as well as the increasingly acclaimed **Scottish Ballet**. Called somewhat exaggeratedly by the *Daily Telegraph* “the most beautiful opera theatre in the kingdom,” the hall also hosts visiting companies from around the world. Tickets range from £3.50 (standby) to \$55 (\$6.50–\$102). 254 Hope St. (☎ 0141-332-9000; www.theatreroyalglasgow.com; Underground: Cowcaddens; Bus: 20, 40, or 41).
- ✓ **Tramway** is a post-industrial, huge hangar of an arts venue and one of the only places in Glasgow able to stage sprawling performance art and modern theater, such as Peter Brook’s *The Mahabharata*, which came here in the late 1980s. In 2004, however, the city, which owns Tramway, was controversially considering the option of renting it to the national ballet company as rehearsal space. In addition to drama, the former repair shop for the city’s trams houses art exhibits. Tickets range from £4 to £12 (\$7.40–\$22). 25 Albert Dr., Pollokshields, Southside (☎ 0141-330-3050; www.tramway.org; Bus: 38 or 45; Suburban train: Pollokshields East).
- ✓ **Tron Theatre** is housed in a part of the former Tron Church, which dates back to the 15th century. The venue offers one of Scotland’s leading stages for new and sometimes experimental dramatic performances. The stage is often the place where contemporary local companies, such as Cryptic or Vanishing Point, debut works. In addition to theater, the hall is used for music and dance. The Tron also has a modern bar/cafe as well as a beautifully restored Victorian bar/restaurant serving lunch and dinner, including vegetarian dishes, as well as a fine selection of beer and wine. Tickets are £3 to £20 (\$5.55–\$37). 63 Trongate (☎ 0141-552-4267; www.tron.co.uk; Underground: St. Enoch).



For a complete rundown of what’s happening in the city, pick up a copy of *The List*, a biweekly magazine available at all major newsstands and book shops. *The List* reviews, previews, and gives the details of arts and events in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Comedy

- ✓ **Jongleurs Comedy Club** is a corporate-owned entity from down south, with more than a dozen venues across the U.K. The cover charge is £12 (\$22). UGC Building, Renfield and Renfrew streets (☎ 0870-787-0707; Underground: Buchanan St.).
- ✓ **The Stand** opened a second venue in Glasgow after starting and thriving in Edinburgh. Its presence has helped to establish an

annual International Comedy Festival every spring in the city. Usually, Tuesday night, called “Red Raw,” is reserved for amateurs. The cover charge is £2 to £8 (\$3.70–\$15). 333 Woodlands Rd. (☎ 0870-600-6055; www.thestand.co.uk; Underground: Kelvinbridge).

Dance clubs

- ✓ **Bamboo** is a stylish basement club with three distinct rooms, one of which is a rather posh cocktail lounge. One room, the Disco Badger club of house and R&B music, gets good notices. Bamboo’s open daily from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m. The cover charge is £5 to £8 (\$9.25–\$15). 51 West Regent St. (☎ 0141-332-1067; Underground: Buchanan St.).
- ✓ **Fury Murry’s** draws a mostly younger crowd that’s looking for nothing more complicated than a good, sometimes rowdy, time listening to upbeat disco. It’s a short walk from the St. Enoch Shopping Centre and is open Thursday through Sunday from 10:30 p.m. to 3:30 a.m. The cover charge is £2 to £6 (\$3.70–\$11). 96 Maxwell St. (☎ 0141-221-6511; Underground: St. Enoch).

Folk music

- ✓ **Oran Mor** opened in the summer of 2004 as an ambitious center for the performing arts, and includes bars and restaurants as well as different spaces for live music. Byres and Great Western roads (☎ 0870-013-2652; Underground: Hillhead).
- ✓ **St. Andrew’s in the Square** is a sympathetically restored and converted 18th-century church that is now dedicated to folk and traditional Scottish music. The program includes concerts and ceilidhs (Scottish country dances) in the main hall upstairs. In the basement, **Café Source** serves wholesome Scottish nosh and hosts regular sessions of jazz and Scottish music, which may be rather reverentially enjoyed by the patrons. Tickets are £4 to £8 (\$7.40–\$15). 1 St. Andrew’s Sq. (☎ 0141-548-6020; www.standrewsinthesquare.com; Underground: St. Enoch).
- ✓ **Scotia Bar** is one beam in a triangle of pubs that frequently offer live music that includes, but is not solely, folk. The others pubs of this sort are nearby: **Clutha Vaults** and **Victoria**. No cover charge is required. 112 Stockwell St. (☎ 0141-552-8681).

Rock, pop, and jazz

- ✓ **Barrowland** has no seats and may stink of beer, but this former ballroom is the top place in the city to see visiting bands. The hall rocks, and groups generally rank it among the best venues in the U.K. in which to perform. With room for about 2,000, Barrowland

isn't exactly intimate, but if you can withstand the mosh pit, you'll feel the sweat of the performers. 244 Gallowgate (☎ 0141-552-4601; Underground: St. Enoch; Bus: 61, 62, or 24).

- ✔ **Carling Academy** is a 2,500-capacity ex-Bingo hall that opened as a live music venue in 2003. It's part of a chain that includes the legendary Brixton Academy in London, and thus has a booking strength with touring bands. Pity its corporate sponsor has to be so prominent in the name. 121 Eglinton Rd. (☎ 0141-418-3000; Underground: Bridge St.).
- ✔ **Grand Ole Opry**, a sprawling sandstone building 2.5km (1½ miles) south of the city center, is the largest club in Europe devoted to country and western music. (And they love their country and western music in Glasgow!) The Opry has a bar and dancing (Texas line-style) on two levels and a chuck-wagon eatery that serves affordable steaks and other such fare. Performers are usually from the U.K., but a handful of artists from the States turn up, too. The cover charge is £3 to £10 (\$5.55–\$19). 2–4 Govan Rd., Paisley Toll Road (☎ 0141-429-5396; Bus: 9 or 54).
- ✔ **King Tut's Wah-Wah Hut** is a crowded rock bar that has been in business for more than a decade. It's a good place to check out the Glasgow music and arts crowd as well as local bands and the occasional international act. Successful Scottish acts such as Teenage Fan Club got their starts here. The cover is usually about £5 (\$9.25). 272 St. Vincent St. (☎ 0141-221-5279; Bus: 9 or 62).
- ✔ **Nice 'n' Sleazy** books live acts to perform in the dark, basement space. The cover is quite reasonable, but it can get more expensive if you catch a more established act, such as ex-head Lemonhead Evan Dando. Holding some 200 patrons, it provides a rare opportunity to catch such musicians in an intimate setting. The cover charge is £5–£20 (\$9.25–\$37). 421 Sauchiehall St. (☎ 0141-333-9637; Bus: 18 or 44; Suburban train: Charing Cross).
- ✔ **The Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre**, which incorporates the slightly more intimate Clyde Auditorium (also called the "Armadillo" because of its exterior design), may be somewhat charmless, but it provides Scotland with the only indoor space large enough to host major touring acts, from Ozzy Osbourne to Justin Timberlake. Finnieston Quay (☎ 0141-275-6211; www.secc.co.uk).

Some top bars and pubs

Finally, you have the city's many pubs and bars to consider. Most are friendly places where the locals are likely to strike up a conversation with you. A fine night out trawling the city's many drinking holes is not only entertaining, but it can prove to be educational as well.

Late night eats

Famished at four minutes past midnight? The options in Glasgow are fairly well focused on Sauchiehall Street. Try **Canton Express**, 407 Sauchiehall St. (☎ 0141-332-0145), which looks as if it belongs on some side street in Hong Kong. You don't get anything fancy, but it *is* fast Chinese food, and the place is open daily until 4 a.m. Midway between the city center and the West End, **Insomnia Underground** (Lynedoch Street and Woodlands Road; ☎ 0141-564-1800) does a whopping full fry-up breakfast at all hours of the day and night through the weekend. Several Indian restaurants are open until 1 a.m., but **Spice Gardens**, on the southern bank of the River Clyde (Clyde Place near Bridge Street; ☎ 0141-429-4422), trumps the lot by staying open until 4 a.m. every night.

Pubs and bars are concentrated in the City Centre, Merchant City, and the West End. Hours vary, but most stay open to 11 p.m. or midnight on weeknights, and many have license to remain open until 1 a.m. on the weekends.

- ✔ **Babbity Bowster** is a civilized place for a pint, with no pounding soundtrack of mindless pop to distract you from conversation. The wine selection is good, and the food is worth sampling as well. Some outdoor seating (although it's rarely in full sun) is also available. Every Saturday from about 4 p.m. on, folk musicians arrive for spontaneous jamming. Drinks are served daily from noon to midnight, food until about 10 p.m. 16 Blackfriars St. (☎ 0141-552-5055; Underground: Buchanan St.).
- ✔ **Bar 10** is perhaps the granddaddy of the Glasgow-style bar, but since opening it has mellowed into a comfortable place for drinking. The groovy design is still apparent but more important is the good mix of folk and the convenient City Centre location just opposite the Lighthouse architecture center on tiny Mitchell Lane. Comfort food is served from noon to about 5 p.m. Drinks are served Monday through Saturday from noon to midnight and Sunday from 12:30 p.m. to midnight. The place gets even livelier when DJs spin on the weekends. 10 Mitchell Lane (☎ 0141-572-1448; Underground: St. Enoch).
- ✔ **Blackfriars** has a decent selection of rotating beers, including some from the Continent, even though real ales are less plentiful in Glasgow than in Edinburgh. Jazz is featured in Blackfriars' basement space on Saturdays and Sundays. Drinks are served Monday through Saturday from noon to midnight and Sunday from 12:30 p.m. to midnight. 36 Bell St. (☎ 0141-552-5924; Underground: St. Enoch).
- ✔ **Bon Accord** is an amiable pub that's the best in the city for hand-pulled cask-conditioned real ale. The pub boasts an array of hand-pumps — a dozen are devoted to real English and Scottish

ales, and the rest of the draft and bottled beers and stouts hail from the Czech Republic, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, and Holland. The pub is likely to satisfy your taste in malt whisky as well and offers affordable pub food. Bon Accord is open Monday through Saturday from noon to midnight and Sunday from noon to 11 p.m. 153 North St. (☎ 0141-248-4427; Bus: 6, 8, or 16; Suburban train: Charing Cross).

- ✔ **Brel** is possibly the best of the West End's trendy Ashton Lane's many pubs and bars. Brel has a Belgian theme, with beers and cuisine favoring that country, but it's not overplayed. The music policy is eclectic, with DJs and live acts adding atmosphere to the former stables. The bar is open daily from 10 a.m. to midnight. Food is served Monday through Friday from noon to 3 p.m. and from 5 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 10:30 p.m. 39–43 Ashton Lane (☎ 0141-342-4966; Underground: Hillhead).
- ✔ **Heraghty's Free House** on the city's Southside is the real McCoy among Glasgow's trendy Irish-themed pubs. It serves up perfect pints of Guinness and Irish *craic* (banter) in almost equal portions. No food, though. Heraghty's is open Monday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to midnight, and Sunday from 12:30 to 11 p.m. 708 Pollokshaws Rd. (☎ 0141-423-0380; Bus: 38, 45, or 56).
- ✔ **The Horse Shoe** is the pub you should hit if you can only visit one in Glasgow (and I'm hoping that's not the case). It's one of the last remaining "Palace Pubs" that opened around the turn of the century. The circular, island bar is one of the longest in Europe. Drinks are inexpensive and so is the food from the upstairs buffet. Karaoke draws crowds to the second floor lounge every night of the week, but conversation and football on the televisions provide the entertainment in the main bar. Drinks are served Monday through Saturday from noon to midnight and Sunday from 12:30 p.m. to midnight. The buffet is open daily until 7:30 p.m. except on Sunday when it closes down at 5 p.m. 17 Drury St. (☎ 0141-229-5711; Underground: St. Enoch).
- ✔ **Lismore Lounge** in Partick is tastefully decorated in a modern manner that still recognizes traditional Highland culture. The whisky selection is good, and at £1.50 (\$2.80) for a dram, the malt of the month is always a bargain. The lounge features live Scottish and Gaelic music Tuesday and Thursday nights. The bar is open Sunday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to midnight. No food is served. 206 Dumbarton Rd. (☎ 0141-576-0103; Underground: Kelvinhall).
- ✔ **Liquid Ship** is a fairly recent addition to the West End scene. Owned by the same people who run Stravaigin (see the listing in the section "The top restaurants and cafes," earlier in this chapter), Liquid Ship is unpretentious and smart but not precisely stylish, with the main bar up a few steps and a lounge in the basement.

Drinks are served Monday through Thursday from noon to 11 p.m., Friday and Saturday from noon to midnight, and Sunday from 12:30 to 11 p.m. Food, platters, and tasty sandwiches on toasted Italian bread are served daily from noon until about 8 p.m. 171 Great Western Rd. (☎ 0141-331-1901; Underground: St. George's Cross).

- ✔ **The Pot Still** is the best place for sampling malt whiskies. You can taste from a selection of hundreds and hundreds of them, in a variety of styles (peaty or sweet), strengths, and maturities (that is, years spent in casks). The Pot Still is open Monday through Thursday from noon to 11 p.m., Friday and Saturday from noon to midnight, and Sunday from 12:30 to 11 p.m. 154 Hope St. (☎ 0141-333-0980; Underground: Buchanan St.).
- ✔ **Vroni's Wine Bar** is for those who favor the grape over the grain, Bordeaux to brown ale, Sancerre over cider. The feeling of this small bar is Continental, with banquet seating and candlelit tables. It's open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to midnight and Sunday from 12:30 p.m. to midnight, and food is served Monday through Thursday from noon to 7 p.m. and until 3 p.m. on Friday. 47 W. Nile St. (☎ 0141-221-4677; Underground: Buchanan St.).

Going to the movies

- ✔ **Glasgow Film Theatre** has two screens for a well-programmed daily output of independent, foreign, repertory, and art-house films. The building was originally the Cosmo, an Art Deco cinema built in the late 1930s. Café Cosmo is good for a pre- or post-theater beverage. Tickets are £3 to £5 (\$5.55–\$9.25). 12 Rose St. (☎ 0141-332-8128; www.gft.org.uk; Underground: Buchanan St.). The GFT also schedules the films screened at the **Centre for Contemporary Art** (CCA), located at 350 Sauchiehall St.

Gay & lesbian Glasgow

Glasgow and its environs are said to have the largest concentration of gays and lesbians in the U.K. outside of London. But there's no identifiable district in the city where the gay and lesbian community is particularly concentrated, although part of the Merchant City has been dubbed the "gay triangle." The **Polo Lounge**, 84 Wilson St., offers a gay but hetero-friendly club often described as a cross between an urbane gentleman's club and a Highland country lodge. It's open daily from 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. (until 3 a.m. on Friday and Saturday). A £5 (\$9.25) cover is charged after 10 p.m. or so. Nearby, **Revolver Bar** on John Street is gay-owned and -operated. The bar has always tried to be a bit more grown-up and to dismiss some of the more cheesy and stereotypical elements of the gay scene. But that doesn't mean that it's not fun or popular. Conversation generally rules, but the jukebox is free. Drinks are served daily from noon to midnight.

✓ **The Grosvenor** in the West End was recently refurbished and restored. It has a bar and two downstairs screening rooms with comfy big leather chairs and sofas that you can rent. The cinema screens a mix of mainstream and independent movies. Tickets are £2.50 to £6.50 (\$4.65–\$12). Ashton Lane (☎ **0141-339-8444**; Underground: Hillhead).



✓ **UGC Renfrew Street** is the best multiplex in Glasgow. Tickets are £3.25 to £5.35 (\$6–\$9.90). 7 Renfrew St. (☎ **0871-200-2000**; www.ugccinemas.co.uk).

Fast Facts: Glasgow

American Express

The office is at 115 Hope St. (☎ 0141-222-1401; Underground: St. Enoch). It's open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (except Wednesday from 9.30 a.m.) and Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon.

Business Hours

Most offices are open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 or 5:30 p.m. Some companies close their doors at 4:30 p.m. on Fridays. Most banks are usually open Monday through Friday from 9 or 9:30 a.m. to 4 or 5 p.m., with some branches sometimes closing early on one day a week and opening late on another. Opening times can vary slightly from bank to bank. Shops are generally open Monday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. On Thursdays, many remain open until 8 p.m.

Currency Exchange

The tourist office at 11 George Sq. (☎ 0141-204-4400) and the American Express office (see listing earlier) exchange major foreign currencies. Thomas Cook operates a currency exchange at Central Station (generally open until 6 p.m.). Many banks in the city center operate *bureaux de change*, too, and nearly all banks cash traveler's checks if you have the proper ID. Most ATMs (*cash points*) in the city center can also draw money directly from your bank account at home.

Dentists

In an emergency, go to the Accident and Emergency Department of Glasgow Dental Hospital, 378 Sauchiehall St. (☎ 0141-211-9600). Its hours are Monday through Friday from 9:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. and Sunday and public holidays from 10:30 a.m. to noon. It's closed on Saturdays. For additional assistance or for emergencies when the Hospital is closed, call the National Health Service line (☎ 0800-224-488).

Emergencies

Call ☎ **999** in an emergency to summon the police, an ambulance, or firefighters. This is a free call.

Hospitals

The main hospital for emergency treatment (24 hours) in the city is the Royal Infirmary, 82–86 Castle St. (☎ 0141-211-4000). For additional assistance, call the National Health Service line (☎ 0800-224-488).

Hot lines

The Centre for Women's Health is at Sandyford Place, Sauchiehall Street (☎ 0141-211-6700). Gays and lesbians can call the Strathclyde Gay and Lesbian Switchboard at ☎ 0141-847-0447. The Rape Crisis Centre can be reached at ☎ 0141-331-1990.

Internet Access

You can send or receive e-mail and surf the Net at EasyEverything, 57–61 St. Vincent St. (www.easyeverything.com; Underground: Buchanan St.). This outlet offers more than 350 computers and good rates. It's open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Laundry/Dry Cleaning

The most central service is Garnethill Cleaners, 39 Dalhousie St. (☎ 0141-332-2387; Underground: Cowcaddens), which is open Monday through Saturday from about 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Sunday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Library

The Mitchell Library is on North Street at Kent Road (☎ 0141-287-2999; Suburban train: Charing Cross; Bus: 9 or 16). The 19th-century building is home to one of the largest libraries in Europe. Newspapers and books, as well as miles of microfilm, are available. The library's open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Newspapers and Magazines

Published since 1783, the *Herald* is the major newspaper with national, international, and financial news, sports, and cultural listings. The *Evening Times* offers local news, and the *Daily Record* is for tabloid enthusiasts only. For complete events listings, *The List* magazine is published every other week. On the buses and trains, pick up a free *Metro*, which also has event listings. For international newspapers, go to Borders at 98 Buchanan St. (☎ 0141-222-7700; Underground: Buchanan St.).

Pharmacies

Your best bet is Boots at 200 Sauchiehall St. (☎ 0141-332-1925), which is open Monday

through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. (until 7 p.m. on Thurs), and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Police

In a real emergency, call ☎ 999. This is a free call. For other inquiries, contact Strathclyde police headquarters on Pitt Street at ☎ 0141-532-2000.

Post Office

The main branch is at 47 St. Vincent's St. (☎ 0141-204-3689; Underground: Buchanan St.). It's open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. For general postal information, call (☎ 0845-722-3344).

Restrooms

Public toilets can be found at rail stations, bus stations, air terminals, restaurants, hotels, pubs, and department stores. Glasgow also has a system of public toilets, often marked "wc." Don't hesitate to use them, but they're likely to be closed late in the evening.

Safety

While Glasgow may be the most dangerous city in Scotland, it's relatively safe when compared to cities of its size in the United States. Muggings do occur, and often they're related to Glasgow's drug problem. The famed razor gangs of Calton, Bridgeton, and the Gorbals are no longer around to earn the city a reputation for violence, but you still should stay alert.

Weather

For weather forecasts of the day and 24 hours in advance, and for severe road-condition warnings, call the Met Office at ☎ 0870-900-0100. An advisor offers forecasts for the entire region and beyond. You can also check www.weather.com.

Chapter 13

Going Beyond Edinburgh and Glasgow: Day Trips

In This Chapter

- ▶ Discovering North Berwick and other East Lothian highlights
 - ▶ Exploring Linlithgow Palace and Hopetoun House
 - ▶ Seeing New Lanark's groundbreaking workers' village
 - ▶ Visiting the quintessential Mackintosh-designed house
-

I don't think that you'll get bored in either Edinburgh or Glasgow, but there are some worthwhile attractions located near both cities.

First Edinburgh: Although it has a full complement of attractions and plenty of activities to entertain visitors, you can find some other worthwhile destinations nearby, outside the city. The closest regions are **West and East Lothian**, located on either side of the city. The highlights in these areas include the impressive ruins of Linlithgow Palace, a favorite of the Stuart dynasty and the seaside town of North Berwick, with its views of Bass Rock.

From Glasgow, day-trippers can easily reach Helensburgh on the Firth of Clyde and visit one of architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh's remarkable achievements, Hill House. By going up river (that's south, by the way) into the Clyde Valley, day-trippers can also visit New Lanark.

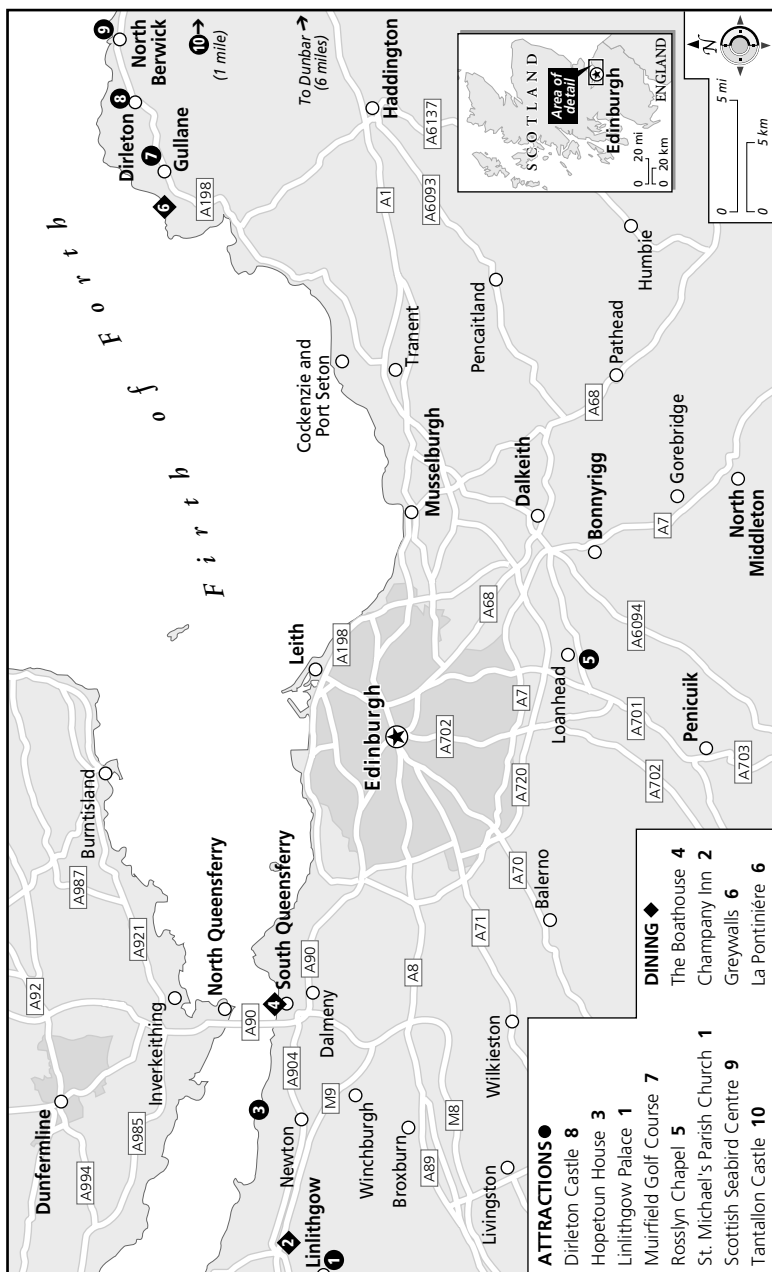


In addition to the places I mention here, you can see a good deal of the attractions in Chapters 14, 15, and 16 on day trips from Scotland's two major cities. So, if you're staying in one of the cities, your options are diverse.

East Lothian

As the largest town in the area, the royal burgh of **North Berwick** (the “w” is silent) — where the Firth of Forth meets the North Sea — is a good place to kick off a day trip. The town dates to the 14th century; in

Day Trips from Edinburgh



Dirleton: Prettiest village in Scotland?

Dirleton, midway between North Berwick and Gullane, is one of the prettiest villages in Scotland. It's as picture-perfect as a postcard. In fact, its quaintness and beauty makes it seem almost surreal. Undoubtedly high levels of home maintenance make each cottage here look as if it's waiting to be photographed. Because the main road bypasses the village, there's very little traffic. Even the railway station is closed — the last train ran through Dirleton in the mid-1950s! The biggest event for Dirleton occurred in the 1940s, when President Roosevelt and Sir Winston Churchill met here to plan D-Day landings.

the more modern Victorian and Edwardian times, it was rebuilt to serve as an up-market holiday resort, drawing visitors to its beaches, harbor, and golf courses.

Getting there

About 36km (21 miles) east of Edinburgh, North Berwick is on a direct rail line from Edinburgh; the trip takes about 30 minutes. Standard one-way fare is £4.50 (\$8.30). Bus service from Edinburgh takes a bit over an hour. An all-day ticket to North Berwick and the region around it costs £5.50 (\$10). Or you can hit the road on the bus service from Edinburgh, which takes 1¼ hours and leaves from Edinburgh Bus Station. If you're driving, take the coastal road east from Leith, or use the A1 (marked THE SOUTH and DUNBAR), to the A198 (via Gullane) to North Berwick.

Orienting yourself

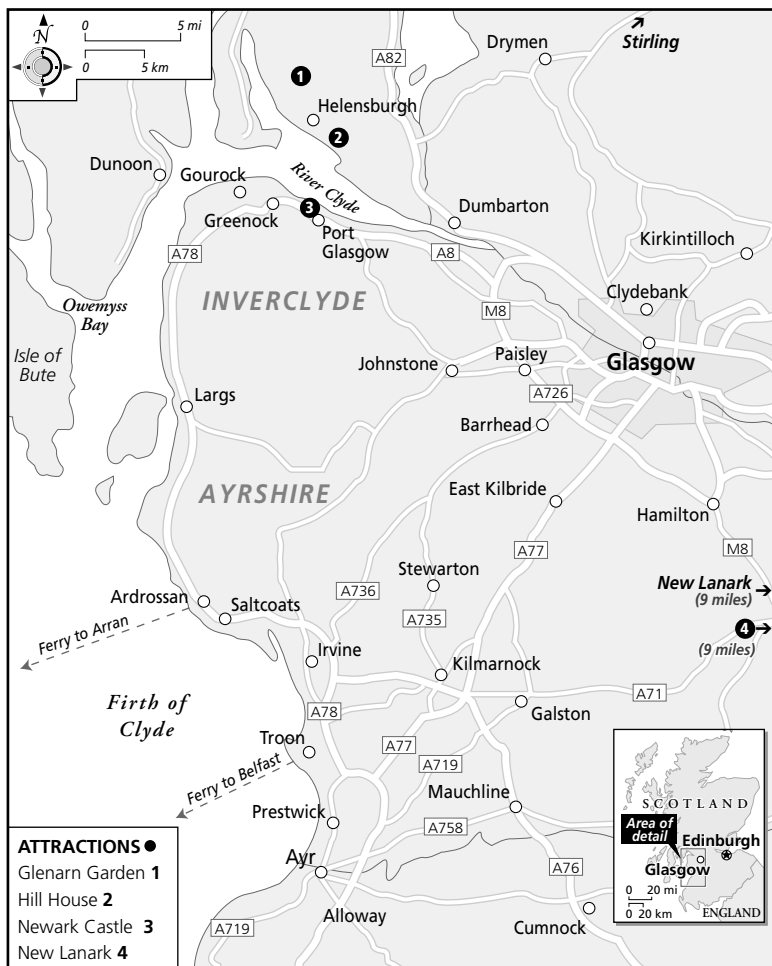
At North Berwick's tourist office on Quality Street (☎ 01620-892-197), you can get information on boat trips to offshore islands, including **Bass Rock**, a breeding ground inhabited by about 10,000 gannets (the second largest colony in Scotland) as well as puffins and other birds. You can see the rock from the harbor, but the viewing is even better at **Berwick Law**, an eroded, once volcanic lookout point that rises up behind the town.

Seeing the sights

Dirleton Castle Dirleton

Run by Historic Scotland, Dirleton Castle dates to the 13th century with surrounding gardens — for some, the main attraction — that are apparently just as ancient. Reputed to have been completely sacked in 1650 by Cromwell, another story holds that the building was only partially destroyed by his army but was further torn down by a local family. After building nearby Archerfield House, the owners desired a romantic ruin on

Day Trips from Glasgow



their land, a grand garden feature. Highlights include the imposing gate house, vaulted arcades, and a 16th-century dovecot that resembles a beehive. The grounds include a herbaceous border that Guinness ranks as longest in the world. Allow about one hour.

See map p. 255. On the A198, 5km (2 miles) west of North Berwick. ☎ 01620-850-330. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £4 (\$7.40) adults, £3 (\$5.55) seniors, £1.60 (\$2.95) children. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6 p.m.; Oct–Mar daily 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.



Scottish Seabird Centre North Berwick

From this popular attraction situated on a craggy outcropping in North Berwick, you can watch all the bird action out on Bass Rock, whether gannets and puffins, as well as guillemots on the island of Fidra or colonies of seals thanks to live video links — or in modern parlance: “Big Brother” cameras. The Seabird Centre also has a cafe/bistro and activities geared to the family. Allow about two hours here.

See map p. 255. *The Harbour, North Berwick.* ☎ **01620-890-202.** www.seabird.org. Admission: £6.95 (\$13) adults, £4.50 (\$8.30) seniors, £19 (\$35) family of four. Open: Apr–Oct daily 10 a.m.–6 p.m.; Nov–Jan Mon–Fri 10 a.m.–4 p.m. and Sat–Sun 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m.; Feb–Mar Mon–Fri 10 a.m.–5 p.m. and Sat–Sun 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

Tantallon Castle Tantallon

After its construction in the 14th century on a bluff right above the sea, this became the stronghold of the powerful and somewhat trouble-making Douglas family — the Earls of Angus, who tended to side with England in their wars and disputes with Scotland in the 15th and 16th centuries. Both Stuart kings James IV and James V dispatched troops to Tantallon. Like most castles in the region, it endured a fair number of seizures, but the troops of Oliver Cromwell well and truly sacked it in the mid-1600s. Nevertheless, the ruins remain formidable, with a square five-story central tower. Allow one hour.

See map p. 255. *On the A198, about 2 miles east of North Berwick.* ☎ **01620-892-727.** www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £3 (\$5.55) adults, £2.30 (\$4.25) seniors, £1 (\$1.85) children. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.; Oct–Dec Sat–Wed 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.; Jan–Mar Mon–Wed and Sat 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Thurs 9:30 a.m.–noon, Fri and Sun noon–4:30 p.m.

Dunbar: Birthplace of John Muir

The man who “discovered” the Yosemite Valley in California, founded the Sierra Club, and was single-handedly responsible for establishing the national park system in the United States was born in the humble harbor town of Dunbar about 15km (9 miles) southeast of North Berwick. Scots have been slow to capitalize on Muir’s international stature and celebrate the life of the explorer, naturalist, and ground-breaking conservationist. In Dunbar, you can visit his birthplace (126 High St.; ☎ **01368-865-899;** www.jmbt.org.uk) which now houses a museum about Muir, his travels, and his work. It is a modest, locally run museum, but if you’re a fan of John Muir and appreciate the environmental movement, then a visit here is merited.

Gullane and Muirfield Golf Course

Situated about 8km (5 miles) west of North Berwick and some 28km (16 miles) east of Edinburgh, Gullane (pronounced *gill*-in by many, *gull*-an by others) is another Scottish resort town with a fine beach and a famous golf course. On the edge of the village, **Gullane Hill** provides a nature reserve and bird sanctuary where over 100 species of birds have been spotted. You cross a small wood footbridge from the car park to enter the reserve. Gullane doesn't get any direct rail service, but the nearest station is only about 4km (2½ miles) south in Drem. Buses depart to Gullane from the Edinburgh bus terminal near St. Andrew's Square (☎ **0800-232-323** for information) and take about one hour.

Muirfield Golf Course (☎ **01620-842-123**) is ranked among the world's great golf courses, and as such, it has hosted the Open Championship in Great Britain. Muirfield is the home course of the Honorable Company of Edinburgh Golfers — the world's oldest golf club — which began at Leith Links in Edinburgh. Developed on a boggy piece of low-lying land in 1891, Muirfield was originally a 16-hole course designed by the legendary Old Tom Morris. Visitors with certified handicaps can play Muirfield on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Greens fees are £145 (\$268) for a single round and £180 (\$333) for the day. Peak times book quickly, but the course usually has availability from mid-October to the end of March.

Dining locally

Greywalls

\$\$\$ Gullane SCOTTISH/FRENCH

This elegant Edwardian country house was designed in 1901 by the most renowned architect of the day, Sir Edwin Lutyens, and the grounds were laid out by one of England's most respected gardeners, Gertrude Jekyll. The light, Scottish/French-style dishes (Scottish haute cuisine is often French in style) served in the elegant dining room, which overlooks the tenth tee of Muirfield (see the sidebar "Gullane and Muirfield Golf Course"), are almost as appealing to the eye as to the palate; specialties include fresh seafood such as seared filet of line-caught seabass with saffron risotto cake. If you decide to make a night of it, Greywalls also has guest rooms.

See map p. 255. *Duncur Road, Gullane.* ☎ **01620-842-144.** Fax: 01620-842-241. www.greywalls.co.uk. Fixed-price dinner: £45 (\$83). Reservations required. AE, DC, MC, V. Open: mid-Apr to mid-Oct daily 7:30–9 p.m.

La Potinière

\$\$\$ Gullane FRENCH

This rather legendary restaurant that once had a Michelin star closed briefly but found new owners, chefs Keith Marley and Mary Runciman, in

Rosslyn Chapel: the *Da Vinci Code* Connection

In no small thanks to the Dan Brown's blockbuster novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, and the Hollywood film, the elaborately carved Rosslyn Chapel south of Edinburgh is firmly on the trail of those who seek to retrace the historic and mythical path of the Knights Templar. Visitor numbers doubled in the run-up to the release of the movie, part of which was filmed here. The chapel was founded in 1446 by Sir William St. Clair, and it has been long noted for its architectural and design idiosyncrasies (though not all of those mentioned in Brown's tome). The attraction is in Midlothian and can be easily reached by the A701, which runs south from Edinburgh. For more information, opening hours and ticket prices call ☎ **0131-440-2159** or log on to www.rosslyn-chapel.com.

2003. The three-course lunches and four-course dinners offer dishes that are French-inspired, but the selection might also include a Thai-influenced soup, too. The menu is seasonal, and the produce is usually purchased locally, with everything freshly made on the premises.

See map p. 255. Main Street, Gullane. ☎ **01620-843-214**. www.la-potiniere.co.uk. Fixed-price lunch: £19 (\$35), fixed-price dinner: £37 (\$68). MC, V. Open: Wed–Sun noon–2 p.m. and 7–9 p.m. Closed Mon–Tues.

West Lothian

Linlithgow, where Mary Queen of Scots was born in 1542, is the principal town for tourists in West Lothian and its ancient palace is the main attraction. Falkirk is a central market town further west, while South Queensferry sits on the south banks of the Forth River.

Getting there

Linlithgow is only 26km (16 miles) west of Edinburgh. Trains depart frequently from Edinburgh Waverley Station for the 20-minute ride. A standard round-trip ticket costs about \$6.50 (\$12). If you're driving from Edinburgh, follow the M8 toward Glasgow, take exit 2 onto the M9, and follow the signs to Linlithgow.

Orienting yourself

The tourist information center is on the road that leads up to the palace. It's open daily from Easter through October.

Seeing the sights

Hopetoun House Near South Queensferry

On the margins of South Queensferry, amid beautifully landscaped grounds, Hopetoun House is one of Scotland's best examples of 18th-century palatial Georgian architecture, featuring design work by Sir William Bruce — and by no less than three members of the architecturally inclined Adam family. You can wander through splendid reception rooms filled with period furniture, Renaissance paintings, statuary, and other artworks. The views of the Firth of Forth are panoramic from the rooftop observation deck. After touring the house, visitors should try to take in the grounds, some 60 hectares (150 acres) of parkland with a walled garden, shorefront trail, and deer park. Last entry is one hour before closing. Allow two hours.

See map p. 255. Off the A904, near South Queensferry, 3km (2 miles) from the Forth Road Bridge. ☎ 0131-331-2451. www.hopetounhouse.com. Admission: £8 (\$15) adults, £7 (\$13) seniors, £4.25 (\$7.85) children, £22 (\$41) family of four. Open: mid-Apr to Sept daily 11 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Closed Oct to mid-Apr.

Linlithgow Palace Linlithgow

Birthplace of Mary Queen of Scots, this was a favorite residence of Scottish royalty, and it is now one of the Scotland's most poignant ruins, set on the shores of Linlithgow Loch. Enough of the royal rooms are still intact so that visitors can get an idea of how grand the palace once was. It is a landmark bit of architecture in the country—the first building to be called a palace—and a romantic touchstone of Scottish history and lore. The English king Edward I occupied the tower in the 14th century, but Scots who had hidden in a load of hay retook it in 1313. Most of the structure was built by Scotland's King James I from 1425 to 1437. In 1513, Queen Margaret (a Tudor by birth) waited in vain here for husband James IV to return from the battle of Flodden. When their son, James V, also born here, wed Mary of Guise, the palace fountain ran with wine. In 1746, fire gutted the building when government troops who routed Bonnie Prince Charlie at Culloden were barracked in Linlithgow. Last admission 45 minutes before closing. Allow two hours.

See map p. 255. On A706, on the south shore Linlithgow Loch, Linlithgow. ☎ 01506-842-896. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £4.50 (\$8.30) adults, £3.50 (\$6.50) seniors, £2 (\$3.70) children. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.; Oct–Mar daily 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.



St. Michael's Parish Church Linlithgow

Next to Linlithgow Palace stands the medieval kirk of St. Michael, site of worship for many a Scottish monarch after its consecration in 1242. The biggest pre-Reformation parish church in Scotland, it was mostly constructed in the 15th century. In St. Catherine's Aisle, just before the battle of Flodden, King

James IV apparently saw an apparition warning him against fighting the English. Perhaps he should have listened. Despite being ravaged by the disciples of John Knox (who chided followers for their “excesses”) and transformed into a stable by Cromwell’s forces, this remains one of Scotland’s best examples of a parish church. While providing a dramatic focal point on the landscape, the aluminum spears projecting from the tower were added in the 1960s. Allow one hour.

See map p. 255. Adjacent to Linlithgow Palace, Linlithgow. ☎ 01506-842-188. www.stmichaels-parish.org.uk. Admission: free. Open: May–Sept daily 10:30 a.m.–4 p.m.; Oct–Apr Mon–Fri 10:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

Dining locally

The Boathouse

\$\$ South Queensferry FISH/SEAFOOD

What a vista. This restaurant is down a few steps from the main street of South Queensferry, which puts diners that much closer to the sea and views of the marvelous Forth rail and suspension road bridges. Typical dishes, including grilled herring or monkfish roasted with rosemary, garlic, and olive oil, are innovative but not overcomplicated.

See map p. 255. 19b High St., South Queensferry. ☎ 0131-331-5429. Fixed-price lunch: £13 (\$24); main courses dinner: £12–£18 (\$22–\$33). MC, V. Open: Tues–Sat noon–2:30 p.m. and 5:30–10:30 p.m.; Sun 12:30–8 p.m. Closed Mon.

Champany Inn

\$\$\$ Champany Corner SCOTTISH

You find some of the best steaks in Britain in this converted mill. The restaurant also serves oysters, salmon, and lobsters, but beef is the main reason people dine here. The meat served here is properly hung before butchering, which adds greatly to its flavor and texture. Next to the main dining room is the Chop House, offering somewhat less expensive cuts in a more casual atmosphere within the establishment. The wine list — some 2,000 bottles long — has won an award for excellence from *Wine Spectator* magazine.

See map p. 255. On the A904, 3km (2 miles) northeast of Linlithgow at Champany Corner. ☎ 01506-834-532. www.champany.com. Reservations required. Fixed-price lunch: £17 (\$31); main courses dinner: £18–£33 (\$33–\$61). AE, DC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri 12:30–2 p.m. and 7–10 p.m.; Sat 7–10 p.m. Main restaurant closed Sun.

The Clyde Valley

From its headwaters well south of Glasgow, the River Clyde meanders north towards the city and then west to the sea. The Clyde Valley south of the city is best known locally for its garden nurseries and their sometimes-quiet tea shops. Near the town of **Lanark**, however, you can find a bona fide bit of history and an attraction that merits a day trip.

Getting there

You can take the train to Lanark from Central Station in Glasgow. Trains depart Glasgow Central Station twice an hour and the trip takes about one hour. Standard same-day round-trip fare is £8 (\$15). Buses for Lanark leave Buchanan Bus Station hourly and the journey takes about 1 hour and 15 minutes. The price of a round-trip ticket is £5 (\$9.25). By car, drive via the M74 motorway, following the signs from exit 9.

Seeing the sights



New Lanark Near Lanark

Founded first in 1784, by the early part of the 19th century, New Lanark was a progressive industrial mill and village under the guidance of Robert Owen, who decided that a contented work force was most likely to be a productive one. With that philosophy in mind, he set up free education for all employees and their children, a day-care center and social club, and a cooperative store along the banks of the River Clyde in the steep valley below the long-established market town of Lanark. Today, the New Lanark Conservation Trust runs the place (recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site) as a tourist attraction. Admission includes an educational chair-lift ride that tells the story of what life here was once like as well as self-guided tours of the principle buildings, such as the factory where cotton was spun and the old school house. A walk upstream brings visitors to the three-tiered Falls of Clyde, worth the hike if you like waterfalls and walking. Allow two hours.

See map p. 257. Braxfield Road, outside Lanark. ☎ 01555-661-345. www.newlanark.org. Admission £5.95 (\$11) adults, £4.95 (\$9.15) children and seniors, £18 (\$33) family of four. Open: daily 11 a.m.–5 p.m.

West of Glasgow

West of Glasgow, the Clyde widens as it empties into the sea. To get to places west, take the train that runs almost every half hour from Queen Street Station or head out on the M8 motorway, crossing the river at Erskine and following the northern shoreline. The area doesn't boast a host of attractions, but the drive can be very pretty, and in **Helensburgh**, the Mackintosh trail leads to the architect and designer's wonderful Hill House.

Glenarn Garden Rhu near Helensburgh

Nestled in a protective hollow, Glenarn is a private garden established by the Gibson family in the early decades of the 20th century. The rhododendron collection is superb, and in early spring the flowering magnolias

can be absolutely stunning. A large rock garden has also been built around a unused quarry. Allow one hour.

See map p. 257. *Glenarn Road, off the A814, Rhu.* ☎ **01436-820-493**. Admission: £3 (\$5.55). Open: mid-Mar to Sept dawn–dusk.



Hill House **Helensburgh**

Designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh for publisher Walter Blackie, this timeless house on the hill above the town of Helensburgh (about 48km/30 miles west of Glasgow) has been lovingly restored and opened to the public by the National Trust for Scotland. Inspired by the Scottish Baronial style, Hill House is still pure Mackintosh: from the asymmetrical juxtaposition of windows and clean lines that blend sharp geometry and gentle curves to the sumptuous but uncluttered interior with custom-made details (such as glass inlays, fireplace tiles and decorative panels) by both the architect and his artist wife Margaret Macdonald. Built at the beginning of the 20th century, practically the entire house is open to the public. The garden, overgrown when the National Trust took over the property in the early 1980s, has been restored to its original state thanks to photographs of the original garden taken in 1905 for a German design magazine. Allow two hours here.

See map p. 257. *Upper Colquhoun Street, off the B832, Helensburgh.* ☎ **01436-673-900**. www.nts.org.uk. Admission: £8 (\$15) adults, £5 (\$9.25) seniors, £20 (\$37) family. Open: Apr–Oct daily 1:30–5:30 p.m. Closed Nov–Mar.

Newark Castle **Port Glasgow**

One of the few castles still standing in this part of Scotland, Newark dates to the 15th century. Its most prominent resident was Patrick Maxwell, who made notable additions to the castle but went down in history as a bully who murdered a couple of neighbors and regularly beat his wife. Nice chap, eh? You can see a good deal of this well-preserved castle, from the tower house built in 1478 to a wood-paneled sleeping chamber and the high ceilings of the main hall, in addition to the old gate house. Allow one hour.

See map p. 257. *On the A8, Port Glasgow.* ☎ **01475-741-858**. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £3(\$5.55) adults, £2.30 (\$4.25) seniors and students, £1.30 (\$2.40) children. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m. Closed Nov–Mar.

Part IV

The Major Regions

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Looks like our trip into the town of Argyll will be delayed while we let one of the local farmers pass with his sheep."

In this part . . .

Some travelers just visit Edinburgh and Glasgow (discussed in Part III) and stop there. That's okay, but if you have more time, you really should get out and about and discover some of the rest of the "real" Scotland — whether the medieval abbeys of southern Scotland, the picturesque ports of Argyll and in the Hebrides, or the sweeping vistas and rugged countryside of the Highlands.

Part IV focuses in on the major regions of Scotland. In the chapters that follow, you can find out about each region's best attributes — from harbor towns, whiskey distilleries, and world-class golf to ancient castles, loch cruises, and largely unspoiled islands. Each chapter has invaluable suggestions on how to get there and get around, which attractions to see, and, of course, where to stay and dine.

Chapter 14

Southern Scotland

In This Chapter

- ▶ Finding the best places to stay and eat
- ▶ Discovering the home of Sir Walter Scott
- ▶ Seeing the famous Borders abbeys
- ▶ Visiting one of the most picturesque ports in Scotland

Richly historic southern Scotland is predominantly rural, with vast open spaces used for grazing livestock such as the famous black-face lamb. The area consists of two administrative districts: the Borders, aptly named as it borders England, and the combined regions of Dumfries (pronounced *dum-freese*) and Galloway in the southwest. Because most tourists enter Scotland by plane or train, arriving in either Glasgow or Edinburgh, many tend to travel *through* southern Scotland rather than journey *to* the region. But there are good reasons to visit here.

Sure, the area isn't as impressive as the Highlands (see Chapter 18) when it comes to natural beauty. Still, the southern part of the country offers attractions that make a trip here worthwhile: stately homes and the ruins of 12th-century abbeys, quaint towns, meandering rivers, and a ruggedly scenic peninsula that faces onto the Irish Sea.

Southern Scotland has no regional capital, *per se*, nor even a bona fide city. The main towns include Melrose, Jedburgh, and Galashiels in the Borders southeast of Edinburgh; Dumfries and Stranraer are the main hubs southeast and southwest of Glasgow, respectively.

Ideally, you could take two or three days to cover southern Scotland. But certain attractions are within striking distance for day trips from either Edinburgh or Glasgow, depending upon how long you allow your "day" to be. For example, the drive from Glasgow to the town of Kirkcudbright takes about two hours or so.

Getting There

Buses and (to a much lesser extent) trains run from Edinburgh to southern Scotland. Cutbacks in the 1960s eliminated rail service that used to penetrate the Borders interior, but one line is to be reopened this decade.

Until then, however, train service to the Borders is limited to the east coast main line that runs from the Scottish capital to Berwick on Tweed, just across the boundary in England.

Buses and trains from Glasgow head south into Dumfries and Galloway, with a western railway line terminating at the sea port Stranraer and the more central route continuing through Dumfries out of Scotland to Carlisle.

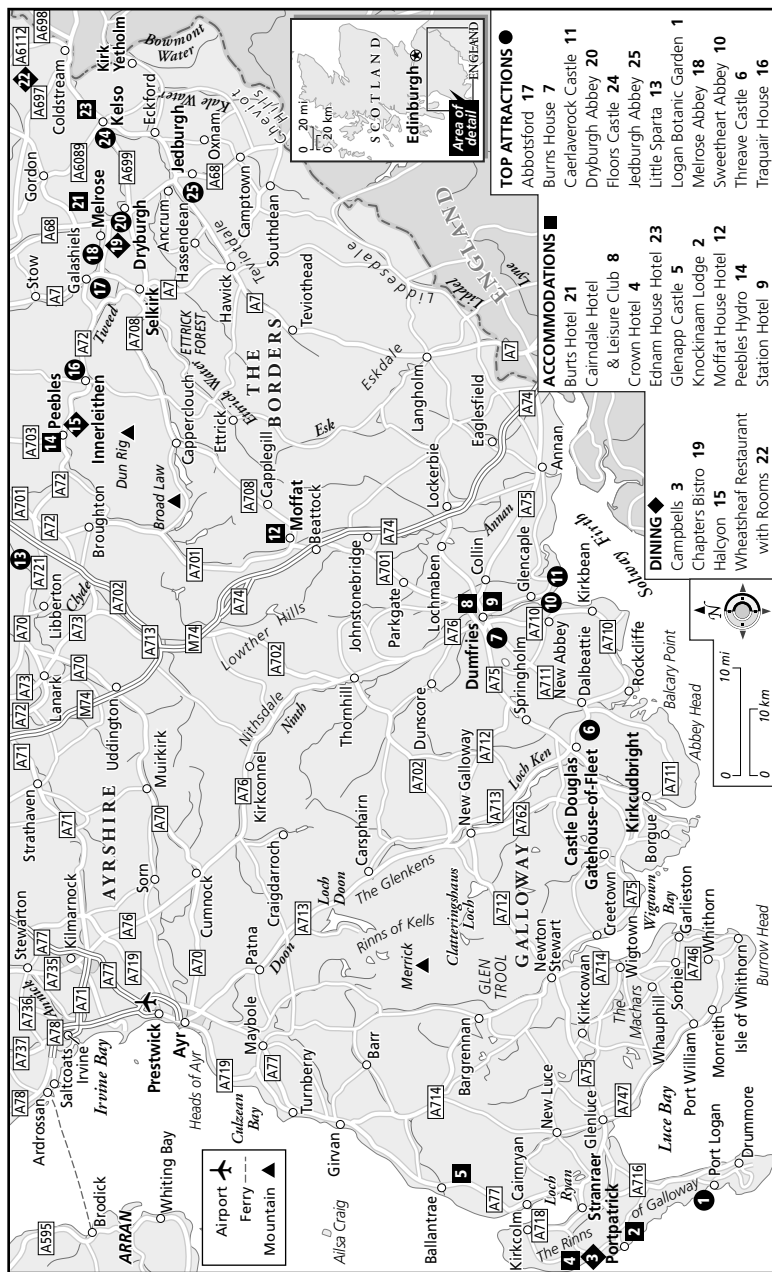
A car is probably the best mode of transportation to cover southern Scotland. To plan a trip by public transportation, call Traveline Scotland on ☎ **0870-608-2-608** or use its Web site www.travelinescotland.com.

- ✓ **By car:** From Edinburgh, take the A68 toward Jedburgh, the A1 along the east coast, or, further west, the A701 to the M74. From Glasgow, the M74 runs south to Moffat, where the A701 continues to the town of Dumfries. You can also get to Dumfries by taking the A76, via Cumnock. If your destination is Galloway, take the A77 south via Ayr and Girvan. If you want to experience the area from England, the M1 to Newcastle links to the A1 or the A68 (via the A69). Coming from northwest England and the Lake District, take the M6 north to the M74 in Carlisle. Cross-country roads from Stranraer to Galashiels are predominantly two-lane routes with a good bit of twists and turns.
- ✓ **By bus:** **Scottish Citylink** (☎ **0870-550-5050**; www.citylink.co.uk) routes cover some towns in the region. **National Express** (☎ **08705-808-080**; www.nationalexpress.com) and **Stagecoach** (☎ **01292-613-500**) also have buses that run into Southern Scotland. A standard one-way bus ticket from Edinburgh to Melrose costs about \$6.50 (\$12).
- ✓ **By train:** **First ScotRail** (☎ **08457-484-950**; www.firstscotrail.com) travels to towns in the region, including Berwick on Tweed, Dumfries, and Stranraer. A typical one-way fare from Glasgow to Stranraer is about £17 (\$31).
- ✓ **By ferry:** **Stena Line** (☎ **0870-1129-374**; www.stenaline ferries.org) runs ferry services between Stranraer harbor and Belfast port in Northern Ireland.

Spending the Night

The selections I list below offer some of the best accommodations in the region. All are moderate to expensive, which is typical for southern Scotland, and many have good food for dinner and full bars for a friendly pint or nightcap. Some have earned star ratings from the tourist board (see Chapter 8 for a description of the rating system). Rates include full breakfast unless otherwise stated. And remember: You may well get a better deal than the advertised “rack” rates.

Southern Scotland





A lot of accommodations in the region are small bed-and-breakfasts. For more details and rates, contact the **Dumfries & Galloway Tourist Board** (☎ 01387-253-862; www.visit-dumfries-and-galloway.co.uk), **Scottish Borders Tourist Board** (☎ 0870-608-0404; www.scot-borders.co.uk), or **VisitScotland** (☎ 0845-22-55-121 within the U.K., or ☎ 44-1506-832-121 from outside the U.K.).

Burts Hotel **\$\$ Melrose**

Within walking distance of Melrose Abbey, this family-run inn was built in 1722 to house a local dignitary. The traditional exterior offers a taste of small-town Scotland, although much of the interior décor is modern, with an airy and restful feel. All 20 guestrooms are well furnished and equipped with shower-only bathrooms. The restaurant menu offers main courses such as baked halibut with crab and pea risotto, and in addition to the more formal dining room, Burt's serves meals in the bistro/bar. Alternative accommodations are offered across the street at the Townhouse Hotel, with double rooms starting at £96 (\$178).

See map p. 269. Market Square, in the center of town. ☎ 01896-822-285. Fax: 01896-822-870. www.burtshotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £106 (\$196) double. AE, DC, MC, V.



Cairndale Hotel & Leisure Club **\$\$-\$\$\$ Dumfries**

This early 20th-century resort hotel with a stone facade is a wonderful place to go for a little R&R. The rooms are very comfortable, but the best features here are the spa and heated indoor pool. The hotel has some 91 units, with 22 suitable for family accommodations. An added conference facility is designed to appeal to a business clientele, but the Cairndale still knows how to treat vacationing guests right.

See map p. 269. 132–136 English St., just off High Street. ☎ 01387-254-111. Fax: 01387-250-555. www.cairndalehotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £109 (\$202) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Crown Hotel **\$\$ Portpatrick**

It doesn't offer the poshest accommodations in this quaint port town, but the popular and unpretentious Crown is right on the harbor, and the rooms, some of which have big old-fashioned bathtubs, overlook the sea. The hotel has a popular local pub, too, so you may prefer a room in the back to avoid any noise from the bar below.

See map p. 269. 9 North Crescent. ☎ 01766-810-261. Fax: 01766-810-551. www.crownportpatrick.com. Rack rates: £72–78 (\$133–\$144) double. AE, MC, V.

Ednam House Hotel**\$\$\$ Kelso**

The Ednam House Hotel occupies a great location overlooking the River Tweed. The Georgian mansion has a warming fire when it's cold and is awash in fishing mementos and other old furnishings and antiques. The 32 rooms and suites are individually decorated. If you have the time, take high tea in the garden and have a meal in the restaurant.

See map p. 269. Bridge Street, just off the town square, 1 block north of the Kelso Bridge. ☎ **01573-224-168**. Fax: 01573-226-319. www.ednamhouse.com. Rack rates: £97-£136 (\$179-\$252) double. MC, V.

Glenapp Castle**\$\$\$\$ Ballantrae**

This beautifully decorated pile close to the city of Stranraer offers Victorian baronial splendor with antiques, oil paintings, and elegant touches at every turn. The mansion was designed in the 1870s by David Bryce, a celebrated architect of his day, and it overlooks the Irish Sea. Lounges and dining rooms are elegant, and the spacious bedrooms and suites are individually furnished. Tall windows let in the afternoon and long summer evening light, making the rooms bright on many days. The hotel, open seasonally unless by special arrangement, stands on 12 hectares (30 acres) of lovely, secluded grounds that are home to many rare plants.

See map p. 269. Ballantrae, Ayrshire, some 32km (20 miles) south of Ayr. ☎ **01465-831-212**. Fax: 01465-831-000. www.glenappcastle.com. Rack rates: £365-£405 (\$675-\$749) double. Rates include dinner. Closed Nov-Mar. AE, V.

**Knockinaam Lodge****\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ Portpatrick**

This small, luxury hotel with well-manicured lawns and gardens, as well as its own private beach in a sheltered cove, is a few miles south of Portpatrick. There are only nine rooms in the country manor house tradition, with brass fittings on tubs and tiled fireplaces in some of the units. In this tranquil and remote setting, Churchill, Eisenhower, and their staff met in WWII. Meals are outstanding, the bar excels in its whisky selection, and the kitchen has earned a Michelin star.

See map p. 269. Portpatrick ☎ **01776-810-471**. Fax: 01776-810-435. www.knockinaam.lodge.com. Rack rates: £210-£380 (\$389-\$703) double. Rates include dinner. MC, V.

Moffat House Hotel**\$\$ Moffat**

This 18th-century mansion sits in the center of a garden in the heart of Moffat. The handsome stone building is hard to miss, and lovely trees grace the back. Each individually decorated room is well stocked with amenities, and the restaurant serves fine Scottish cuisine. A literary footnote: Poet

James MacPherson (thought by some to be the poet Ossian) is believed to have written his disputed works here.

See map p. 269. High Street. ☎ **01683-220-039**. Fax: 01683-221-288. www.moffat.house.co.uk. Rack rates: £100–£106 (\$185–\$196) double. AE, MC, V.



Peebles Hydro **\$\$\$ Peebles**

Once a Victorian hydropathic hotel that claimed to cure whatever ailed you with a hot spring and mineral waters, the hotel's main features today, as the name suggests, are hydrocentric: a pool for the kids and a whirlpool and sauna for the adults. The hotel has lots of hallways and 12 hectares (30 acres) of grounds for young ones to explore. Of the more than 125 units, 25 are geared toward families. Other activities at this chateau-style hotel include snooker, pitch-and-putt golf, and badminton.

See map p. 269. Innerleithen Road, on A72 just outside Peebles. ☎ **01721-720-602**. Fax: 01721-722-999. www.peebleshotelhydro.co.uk. Rack rates: £214–£260 (\$396–\$481) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Station Hotel **\$\$–\$\$\$ Dumfries**

The Station's Victorian sandstone building lies near Dumfries's railroad station and the center of town. Part of the Best Western group, the comfortable 100-year-old rooms here have been renovated but still maintain a certain rustic charm. Don't worry about being close to the rail lines; there aren't any late-night trains.

See map p. 269. 49 Lovers Walk, just across from the train station. ☎ **01387-254-316**. Fax: 01387-250-388. www.stationhotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £100–£140 (\$185–\$259) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Dining Locally

Campbells **\$\$ Portpatrick FISH/SEAFOOD**

Facing the crescent-shaped harbor of Portpatrick, this family-run restaurant is welcoming and relaxed. Almost old-fashioned in its unpretentious ways, the décor here mixes rustic seaport with modernity. Fresh fish is the main reason to eat here, and the dishes tend to be unfussy and straightforward in presentation.

See map p. 269. 1 South Crescent. ☎ **01776-810-314**. Reservations recommended. Main courses: £12–£20 (\$22–\$38). DC, MC, V. Open: Tues–Sun noon–2:30 p.m. and 6–10 p.m. Closed for 2 weeks in Feb.

Chapters Bistro**\$\$ Melrose SCOTTISH/GLOBAL**

Cross the footbridge over the River Tweed to reach this unassuming bistro near Melrose, run by Kevin and Nicki Winsland. The menu ranges from the house stroganoff to scallops St. Jacques, red snapper to venison with juniper berries. Unfortunately, it's only open for dinner five nights a week.

See map p. 269. Main St., Gattonside by Melrose. ☎ 01896-823-217. Main courses £10–£16 (\$19–\$30). MC, V. Open: Tues–Sat 6:30–10 p.m.

Halcyon**\$\$ Peebles MODERN SCOTTISH**

Stylish and contemporary in décor and cuisine, Halcyon is a Borders restaurant that has people talking. Local suppliers are responsible for the raw ingredients, which end up in dishes such as rabbit rillottes with a caper, parsley and shallot salad, rump of lamb with aubergine pickle, or dark chocolate brownies. Many of the fruits and vegetables are organic.

See map p. 269. 39 Eastgate, Peebles. ☎ 01721-725-100. www.halcyonrestaurant.com. Main courses dinner £11–£20 (\$20–\$37). MC, V. Open: Tues–Sat noon–2 p.m., 6–10 p.m.

Wheatsheaf Restaurant with Rooms**\$\$–\$\$\$ Swinton MODERN BRITISH**

Located between Melrose and Eyemouth, from whose harbor the kitchen secures fresh seafood, the Wheatsheaf is a restaurant that pops up on many “best of” lists. You can eat in the pub as well as in the dining room. In addition to fresh fish, Wheatsheaf’s menu often offers Borders lamb and organic pork from a local supplier. No children after 6 p.m.

See map p. 269. Main Street. ☎ 01890-860-257. www.wheatsheaf-swinton.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Main courses: £13–£18 (\$24–\$33). MC, V. Open: daily noon–2:30 p.m. and 6–9 p.m. Closed on Sun nights Dec–Jan.

Exploring Southern Scotland

Among the Borders’s primary attractions are its stately, historic homes and ancient abbeys. The rolling hills and dense forests of Galloway are attractive but don’t quite offer the kind of natural splendor found in the Highlands of Scotland, although the coastal areas are reasonably dramatic and picturesque. The government’s historic preservation society, Historic Scotland, runs quite a few of the attractions in southern Scotland. I list several below, but for more details, go to the agency’s Web site at www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Don’t feel as if you need to visit each and every abbey and castle in the area. Pick some representative ones, enjoy them, and move on.

The top attractions

Abbotsford Roxburghshire

Abbotsford is the mansion that Sir Walter Scott built and lived in from 1817 until his death. Designed in the Scots baronial style, Abbotsford was constructed on land he acquired in 1811. After his literary works, it is considered the author's most enduring monument. Scott was a souvenir hunter, scouring the land for artifacts associated with the historical characters he rendered into fiction. Hence, Abbotsford contains many relics and mementos — whether Rob Roy's sporran or a purse made by Flora Macdonald. One of his other proud possessions is a sword given to the duke of Montrose by Charles I for his cooperation (some say collaboration). The home itself has an entrance that mimics the porch at Linlithgow Palace and a door from Edinburgh's Tollbooth. Especially popular is Scott's small study, with writing desk and chair, where he penned some of his most famous works. There are also extensive gardens and grounds to visit, plus the private chapel, added after Scott's death. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 269. Near Galashiels, 3km (2 miles) west of Melrose; just off the A6091 (between the A7 and A68) on the B6360. ☎ 01896-752-043. www.scottsabbotsford.co.uk. Admission: £5 (\$9.25) adult, £2.50 (\$4.60) child. Open: Late Mar–Oct daily 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m. (closed Sun Mar–May and Oct); Nov–Mar group booking only Mon–Fri.

Burns House Dumfries

Most of the Robert Burns Heritage Trail is in Ayrshire (see Chapter 15), but the poet Burns lived the final years of his short life in this house, where he died at age 37 in 1796. Burns House has been preserved to look as it did when he resided there for the final few years of his short life, and it contains such articles as Burns's writing chair as well as some original manuscripts, letters, and printed editions. A highlight is the author's signature scratched into a windowpane. Allow about one hour.

See map p. 269. Burns Street, between Shakespeare and St. Michael's streets. ☎ 01387-255-297. Admission: free. Open: Apr–Sept Mon–Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun 2–5 p.m.; Oct–Mar Tues–Sat 10 a.m.–1 p.m. and 2–5 p.m.

Caerlaverock Castle Near Dumfries

A historic target of English armies, Caerlaverock is one of Scotland's classic Medieval castles, complete with moat and twin-towered gatehouse, as well as some pretty serious battlements. It lies in secured ruins today, but you can still get the sense of what defending this castle may have been like. An exhibit on siege warfare, a nature trail, and an "adventure" park, which kids might enjoy, are all on the premises. A cafe is open during the summer and on weekends throughout the winter. Allow about two hours.

Sir Walter Scott: Inventor of historic novels

Today it may be hard to imagine the fame that Walter Scott, poet and novelist, enjoyed as the best-selling author of his day. His works are no longer so widely read, but Scott (1771–1832) was thought to be a master storyteller and today is considered the inventor of the historic novel. Before his *Waverley* series was published in 1814, no modern English author had spun such tales from actual events, examining the lives of individuals who played a role in history — large and small. He created lively characters and realistic pictures of Scottish life in works such as *The Heart of Midlothian*.

Born into a Borders family who then settled in Edinburgh on August 14, 1771, Scott was permanently disabled due to polio he contracted as a child. All his life he was troubled by ill health and later by ailing finances as well. He spent his latter years writing to clear enormous debts incurred when his publishing house and printers collapsed in bankruptcy.

Scott made his country and its scenery fashionable with the English, and he played a key role in bringing George IV to visit Scotland. Although Scott became the most prominent literary figure in Edinburgh, his heart remained in the Borders, where he built his home. Starting with a modest farmhouse, he created Abbotsford, a mansion that became a key tourist destination (see the listing for Abbotsford in the section “The top attractions”).

See map p. 269. B725, about 13km (8 miles) southeast of Dumfries. ☎ 01387-770-224. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £4.50 (\$8.30) adults, £3.50 (\$6.50) seniors and students, £2 (\$3.70) children younger than 16. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.; Oct–Mar daily 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Dryburgh Abbey Near St. Boswells

It's no wonder Sir Walter Scott chose this spot to be buried. The abbey ruins, now run under the auspices of Historic Scotland, lie amid giant cedar trees on the banks of the River Tweed. Of the four famed Borders abbeys, Dryburgh was the largest, arguably the most beautiful, and possibly the most attacked by English troops, although it's reasonably well intact today. Dryburgh's pleasant green surroundings make a lovely spot for a picnic lunch. Scott was interred in the side chapel in 1832. Allow about one hour.

See map p. 269. Off the A68, 13km (8 miles) southeast of Melrose on the B6404 near St. Boswells. ☎ 01835-822-381. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £4 (\$7.40) adults, £3 (\$5.55) seniors and students, £2 (\$3.70) children younger than 16. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.; Oct–Mar daily 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.



Floors Castle Near Kelso

This mansion was built by William Adam for the first duke of Roxburghe in 1721, and it is today still home to the duke (the tenth) and duchess of Roxburghe. More sprawling country house than a proper castle, Floors Castle can still claim to be one of the few fully intact and the largest inhabited castle in all of Scotland. After viewing the impressive art collection indoors (including paintings by Matisse and Odilon Redon in the Needle Room), venture out and walk one of the nature trails through the woods or along the River Tweed. The walled garden also has an “adventure” playground for the kids. Allow about three hours.

See map p. 269. Hwy. A697, 3km (2 miles) northwest of Kelso. ☎ 01573-223-333. www.floorscastle.com. Admission: £6 (\$11) adults, £5 (\$9.25) seniors and students, £3.25 (\$6) children younger than 16, £18 (\$33) family. Open: mid-Apr to Oct 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Winter group visits by prior arrangement.

Jedburgh Abbey Jedburgh

This famous ruined abbey, founded by David I in 1138, is one of Scotland’s finest. Under the Augustinian canons from Beauvais, France, it achieved abbey status in 1152 and went on to witness much royal pageantry, such as the marriage of Alexander III to his second wife, Yolande de Dreux. In 1544 and 1545, the English sacked the abbey during the frequent wars of the period. After 1560, few efforts were made to repair the abbey. For about 300 years, a small section of it served as Jedburgh’s parish church, but in 1875 other premises were found for day-to-day worship. Teams of architects then set to work restoring the abbey to its original medieval design. The abbey is still roofless but otherwise fairly complete, with most of its exterior stonework still in place.

See map p. 269. In Jedburgh on the A68. ☎ 01835-863-925. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £4.50 (\$8.30) adults, £3.50 (\$6.50) seniors and students, £2 (\$3.70) children younger than 16. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.; Oct–Mar daily 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.



Little Sparta Near Dunsyre

Not highlighted by many guidebooks, this garden was devised by one of Scotland’s most intriguing artists, the late Ian Hamilton Finlay, who died on March 27, 2006. It is a surprisingly lush plot of land, given the harsh terrain of the Pentland Hills all around it. Dotted throughout the garden are stone sculptures (many with Finlay’s pithy sayings and poems) created in collaboration with master stonemasons and other artists. Little Sparta has been called the “only original garden” created in Great Britain since World War II and in the wake of Finlay’s death a trust has been established to ensure its survival. Allow about one hour.

Portpatrick

The site of a natural harbor that has been improved over the years, Portpatrick brought traders from Northern Ireland from the 17th century to the mid-19th century. Although a more sheltered port was established at Stranraer and ferries stopped coming here, Portpatrick remains one of the most picturesque towns in southwest Scotland. Trails lead away from the village, both up and down the coast. Just south of the town, the path leads to the ruins of 15th-century Dunskey Castle, perched on the edge of a cliff above the sea. In the small inlet below is a small beach that seems to capture no end of golf balls hit astray from seaside courses somewhere along the coast. From Portpatrick, the 200-plus mile long Southern Upland Way, one of the greatest long-distance footpaths in Scotland, heads northeast across Scotland from coast to coast. Also worth visiting are the Dunskey Gardens on the eastern outskirts of the town.

See map p. 269. Stonypath, Near Dunsyre, off the A702 (32km/20 miles southwest of Edinburgh). ☎ **01899-810-252**. www.littlesparta.co.uk. Admission: £10 (\$19). Open: June–Sept Fri–Sun only 2:30–5 p.m.



Logan Botanic Garden Rhinn of Galloway

Run by the Royal Botanic Garden responsible for the beautiful spread in Edinburgh (see Chapter 11), the gardens on the old Logan estate have charms of their very own. Because of its southwest exposure (which brings mild Gulf Stream air flows) and some protective planting, the gardens have a microclimate that allows the successful cultivation of palms, tree ferns, and other exotic plants such as towering, flowering columns of *echium pininana*, native to the Canary Islands. In addition to the more formal walled garden, Logan also has wilder plantings such as the *gunnera*, with its leaves larger than elephant's ears. Hand-held audio wands can be for used for self-guided tours, and there's an interpretative center with microscopes, too. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 269. B7065, 1.6km (1 mile) outside Port Logan. ☎ **01776-860-231**. Admission: £3.50 (\$6.50) adults, £3 (\$5.55) seniors and students, £1 (\$1.85) children younger than 16, £8 (\$15) family. Open: Apr–Sept daily 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Mar and Oct daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Nov–Feb.

Melrose Abbey Melrose

These lichen-covered ruins are all that's left of an ecclesiastical community established by Cistercian monks in the 12th century. While the soaring walls you see follow the lines of the original abbey, they were largely constructed in the 15th century. The Gothic design moved Sir Walter Scott to write in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, "If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright, go visit in the pale moonlight." The author was also instrumental in

ensuring that the decayed remains were preserved in the 19th century. You can still view its sandstone shell, filled with elongated windows and carved capitals, and the finely decorated masonry. It is believed that the heart of Robert the Bruce is interred in the abbey, per his wishes. Allow about 1½ hours.

See map p. 269. *Abbey Street, in Melrose.* ☎ **01896-822-562.** www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £4.50 (\$8.30) adults, £3.50 (\$6.50) seniors and students, £2 (\$3.70) children younger than 16. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.; Oct–Mar daily 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Sweetheart Abbey **New Abbey**

The impressive remains of Sweetheart Abbey are worth the short jaunt from Dumfries. An unusual story lies behind the red sandstone structure: Lady Devorgilla of Galloway founded the abbey in 1273 in memory of her husband. She carried his embalmed heart around with her for 22 years, and when she was buried here, in front of the altar, the heart went with her, thus the name Sweetheart Abbey. Allow about one hour.

See map p. 269. *Hwy. A710, New Abbey village, 11km (7 miles) south of Dumfries.* ☎ **01387-850-397.** www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £2.50 (\$4.60) adults, £2 (\$3.70) seniors and students, £1 (\$1.85) children younger than 16. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.; Oct–Mar Sat–Wed 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Threave Castle **The River Dee**

One of the best things about this massive 14th-century tower house (a ruined proper castle) is how you get here. Ring a bell to call a boatman, who ferries you to the island in the River Dee on which the castle sits. Threave Castle was built by Archibald the Grim, the third earl of Douglas. The castle was last used in the 19th century as a prison for Napoleonic War soldiers. Bird watchers enjoy an opportunity to get up close and personal with the swallows that nest in the ruins from April to September. **Note:** Leave your best shoes at home; the path from the parking area to the boat pickup can get muddy when it rains. And, unlike most Historic Scotland properties in southern Scotland, Threave is closed from October through March. Allow about one hour.

See map p. 269. *5 km (3 miles) west of Castle Douglas on A75 (follow signs from the roundabout).* ☎ **07711-223-101.** www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £3.50 (\$6.50) adults, £2.50 (\$3.50) seniors and students, £1.50 (\$2.75) children younger than 16. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m. Closed Oct–Mar.

Traquair House **Innerleithen**

Little changed since the beginning of the 18th century and dating in part to the 12th century, this is perhaps Scotland's most romantic house, rich in associations with ancient kings, Mary Queen of Scots, and the Jacobite

uprisings. The Stuarts of Traquair still live in the great mansion, making it, they say, the oldest continuously inhabited house in Scotland. One of the most poignant exhibits is in the King's Room: an ornately carved oak cradle, in which Mary rocked her infant son, who was to become James VI of Scotland and James I of England. Other treasures include embroideries, silver, manuscripts, and paintings. Of particular interest is the brewery, still in operation, producing very fine ales. On the grounds are craft workshops — such as wrought ironwork and woodturning — as well as a maze and woodland walks. There are three rather sumptuous overnight rooms, too, at £180 (\$333) including full breakfast. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 269. Innerleithen. ☎ **01896-830-323**. www.traquair.co.uk. Admission: £6 (\$11) adults, £5.60 (\$10) seniors, £3.30 (\$6) children, £18 (\$33) family of 5. Open: Apr–May and Sept daily noon–5 p.m.; June–Aug daily 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.; Oct daily 11 a.m.–4 p.m., Nov Sat–Sun noon–4 p.m. guided tours only. Closed Dec–Mar.

More cool things to see and do

- ✓ **Glen Trool**, 13km (8 miles) north of Newton Stewart (off the A714), is good place to a hike of a few hours on one of the best short walks in Dumfries and Galloway. The trail that circumnavigates Loch Trool is moderate to easy. On the southern banks, the army of Robert the Bruce is believed to have defeated a much stronger English force in 1307 and across the loch on a high point is Bruce's Stone, which commemorates the victory.
- ✓ **Mary Queen of Scots House**, Queen Street, Jedburgh (☎ **01835-863-331**). As the story goes, in 1566 Mary was on a trip to visit her betrothed, the Earl of Bothwell, when she became ill with fever. She allegedly stayed in this house to recover. Now the building is a visitor center that tells the tragic story of her life and features magnificent tapestries, oil paintings, antique furniture, coats of arms, armor, and some of the Queen's possessions.

Kirkcudbright: The Artists' Town

Kirkcudbright (pronounced kerr-*coo*-bree) became a thriving artists' colony in the late 19th and early 20th century, drawing many notable artists such as leading "Glasgow Boy" E.A. Hornel, genius graphic artist Jessie M. King, and "Scottish Colourist" S.J. Peploe. The appeal of this cute village remains, although the colony is more of a heritage spot these days, with galleries keeping the artistic history alive. The center of town is full of small, colorful cottages, many with charming wee lanes. From April through September, you can visit Hornel's home, Broughton House, a Georgian era mansion that the artist adapted and expanded to include a studio. The garden is special, too. Call ☎ **01557-330-437** or log on to the National Trust for Scotland's Web site: www.nts.org.

- ✓ **The Old Bridge House Museum**, Mill Road, Dumfries (☎ 01387-256-904). This museum is housed in the oldest building in Dumfries, a 1660 sandstone structure built into the Devorgilla Bridge. Today, the museum is devoted to Victorian life. A mid-19th century kitchen and antique dental tools are among the items on display.
- ✓ The **Robert Burns Centre**, Mill Road, Dumfries (☎ 01387-264-808) is commonly called simply the “RBC.” On display are many interesting items, such as a cast of Burns’s skull, a scale model of 1790s Dumfries, and a sentimental audiovisual presentation of the poet’s life. Also on display are original documents and relics belonging to Burns. The center has a cafe and bookshop as well. Allow about one hour.
- ✓ **The Trimontium Exhibition**, Market Square, Melrose (☎ 01896-822-651). This small museum is devoted to Trimontium, the legendary three-peaked Roman hill fort near Melrose. Among the collection of 1st- and 2nd-century artifacts are a Roman skull and facemask, tools, weapons, and pottery.
- ✓ **Wigtown** is Scotland’s official book town. Tucked down along the wide estuary of Wigtown Bay (10km/6 miles south of Newton Stewart on the A714), the village has virtually back-to-back used and antiquarian book shops, specializing often in Scottish titles. At Wigtown, there is also an infamous Covenanters Monument where one of the female followers of that 17th-century, diehard Presbyterian sect was tied to a stake on the shoreline and made to drown in the rising tide.

Shopping for Local Treasures

The main street in places such as Dumfries or Peebles will usually have small shops and clothing stores. Almost all of the attractions listed in this chapter have well-stocked gift shops.

The town of Kelso is the home of **Pettigrews** (☎ 01573-224-234; www.pettigrews.com), which produces a range of Scottish chutney and relish at its factory here. In the town of Moffat, you can visit the **Woollen Mill** (☎ 01683-220-134), which has weaving demonstrations and shops with tartan, whisky, and more for sale, seven days a week. If you enjoy books, set aside some time to visit **Wigtown**, of course, which is Scotland’s book town. But if art is more your bag, the seaside village of **Kirkcudbright** has developed into an artists community with galleries selling local works.

Here are a couple of other picks worth visiting.

- ✓ **Lighthouse Pottery**, south pier, Portpatrick (☎ 01776-810-284) is good place to pick up a gift or two, with a selection of jewelry, pottery, and other handmade local crafts. Open 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

- ✓ **Broughton Gallery**, Broughton Place, Broughton (☎ 01899-830-234; www.broughtongallery.co.uk). This little gallery (in a village near Biggar) exhibits contemporary art by Scottish and other British artists and include paintings, glassware, and ceramics. Open daily 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. during exhibits from April to December.
- ✓ **Selkirk Glass**, on the A7, Selkirk (☎ 01750-20954). This factory shop and showroom is a popular stop for coach tours. But bargain hunters may appreciate the factory prices for most of the glassware. You can watch skilled craftsmen work in the factory as well. Open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; closed holidays.

Hitting the Local Pubs

Almost every town in southern Scotland has one or two taverns, and whether unimpressive or not, they often can be a good place to meet the locals. Ask your hotel concierge or guesthouse host to recommend the nearest “local” to your accommodations — walking distance preferred.

Worth special note is the **Globe Inn**, 56 High St., Dumfries (☎ 01387-252-335; www.globeinndumfries.co.uk). Established at the beginning of the 17th century, the Globe was one of poet Robert Burns’ favorite haunts. You can even sit in Burns’ favorite seat, just to the left of the fireplace. Other good places for a pint and meal are the **Crown** in Portpatrick and **Burts** in Melrose (see listing information for both in the “Spending the Night” section, earlier in this chapter).

Fast Facts: Southern Scotland

Area Codes

For a small country with less than five million people, Scotland has a bewildering number of local area telephone codes. Those for some of the major towns in southern Scotland: Dumfries is **01387**; Castle Douglas is **01556**; Kelso is **01573**; Melrose is **01896**; Moffat is **01683**; Peebles is **01721**; Selkirk is **01750**; and Stranraer is **01776**. You need to dial the area code only if you’re calling from outside the town you want to reach.

ATM

All the major towns have ATMs at banks (smaller villages may have them in local shops), but these rural cash points may not be linked to international systems.

Emergencies

Dial ☎ 999 for police, fire, or ambulance.

Hospitals

The primary hospital for the region is Dumfries & Galloway Royal Infirmary, Bankend Road, Dumfries (☎ 01387-246-246). Just outside Melrose on the A6091, you’ll find Borders General Hospital (☎ 01896-826-000). Garrick Hospital (☎ 01776 703276) is in Stranraer.

Information

For general information on the region, contact Borders Tourist Information, Shepherd’s Mill, Selkirk (☎ 0870-608-0404; www.scot-borders.co.uk) or

Dumfries & Galloway Tourist Board, Dumfries (☎ 01387-253-862; www.visit-dumfries-and-galloway.co.uk). VisitScotland's main number (☎ 0845-22-55-121) will connect you to local offices, or log on to www.visitscotland.com for more specific information. Or, if you're calling from a country outside the United Kingdom, dial ☎ 44-1506-832-121.

Internet Access

A convenient and affordable place to jump on the Net is Dumfries Internet Centre, 26–28 Brewery St., next to the Whitesands, Dumfries (☎ 01387-259-400).

Mail

The main post office in Dumfries is at 34 St. Michael St. (☎ 01387-253-415).

Chapter 15

Ayrshire and Argyll

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting to and getting to know Ayrshire and Argyll
- ▶ Seeking out the best places to stay and eat
- ▶ Discovering the Burns Heritage Trail, Culzean Castle, and more
- ▶ Hittin' the links in Troon and Turnberry
- ▶ Exploring western peninsulas and islands

The region of Ayrshire stretches from the southern and western fringes of Glasgow south to southwest along the Firth of Clyde, bordering Galloway in the south. Argyll, one of my favorite parts of Scotland, covers the western peninsulas of central Scotland and adjacent islands, the heart of the ancient kingdom of Dalriada. While Ayrshire boundaries are fairly well marked, Argyll is a bit more amorphous, encompassing a region that historically stretches into the Highlands and the inner Hebridean islands.

One of Ayrshire's primary attractions is "Burns Country," because the region was the poet Robert Burns's birthplace as well as his predominant stomping grounds for most of his life. But Ayrshire also offers golfers some of the best links courses in the world. If you take the train from Glasgow to Ayr, the main town of Ayrshire, you can see one course after another in the sandy dunes along the shoreline.

Argyll, which means the "coast of the Gaels," encompasses islands such as Bute and Gigha as well as the remote Kintyre Peninsula, which is isolated enough that former-Beatle Paul McCartney has long owned a ranch there where he retreats from prying eyes. One of the principle cities in northern Argyll is the port of Oban (pronounced *oh-bin*), gateway to the Hebrides. Other interesting settlements include Inveraray, on the upper shores of Loch Fyne, and Tarbert midway down the Kintyre Peninsula.



I have included Islay (*eye-la*) in this chapter. While it is one of inner Hebridean islands, and might logically seem to belong in chapter 19, it is reached primarily from ports in Argyll, a region to which is it historically connected. Conversely, information the Isle of Mull, which geographically could have been included here, is found in chapter 19 with the other islands of the Hebrides.

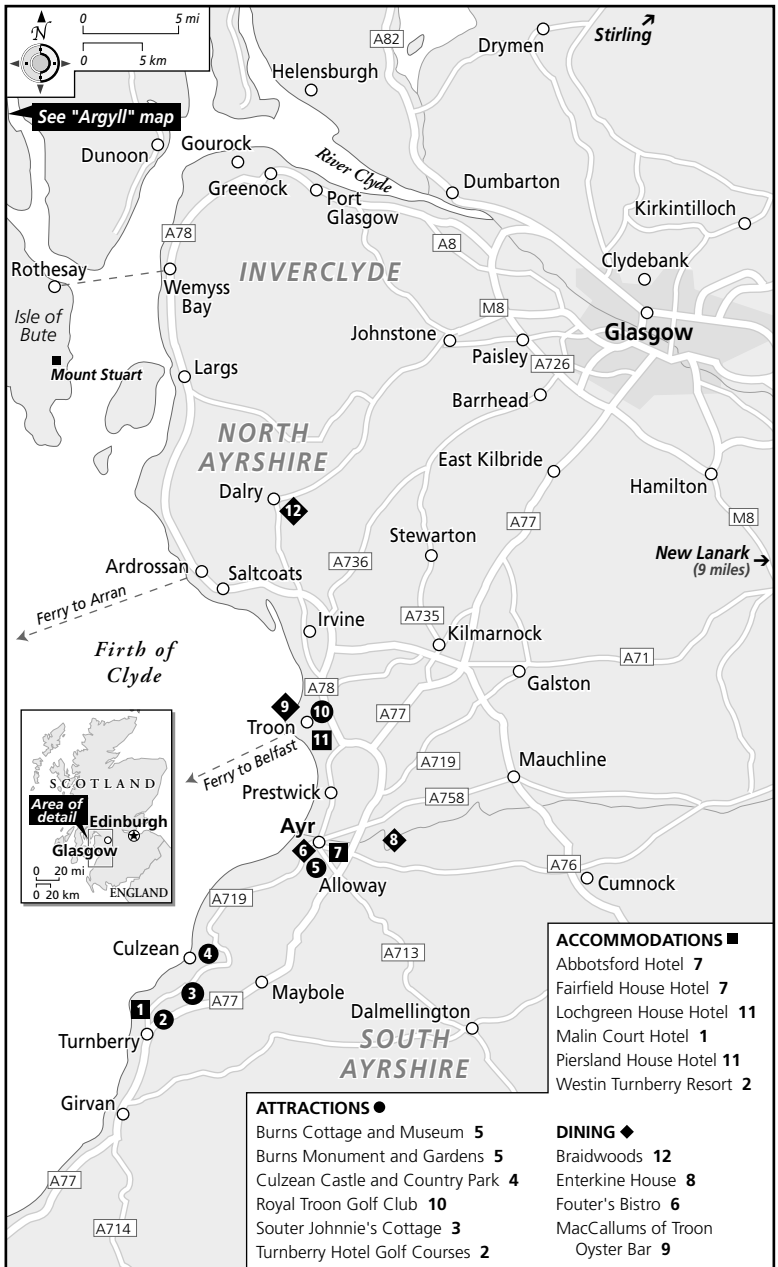
If you don't have the time or inclination to give Ayrshire and Argyll several days, remember that visits to places such as the mansion and grounds of Culzean Castle or the quiet roads and beaches on the Isle of Bute can be accomplished as day trips from Glasgow.

Getting There

Your options for getting in and out of the area include scheduled buses and trains that run from Glasgow to a variety of towns, such as Ayr in Ayrshire or Oban in Argyll. If you want to fully explore the Cowal or Kintyre peninsulas or the Clyde coastline, a car is necessary. Of course, ferry services provide the link to the islands (and even between the peninsulas of Cowal and Kintyre). There are also flights to airports near Cambeltown on the Kintyre peninsula and to the Isle of Islay.

- ✓ **By car:** From Glasgow, the main road to Ayrshire is the M77 (A77) from the city's Southside. It's the fastest route to towns such as Troon, Ayr, and points further south, such as Culzean. You can also drive west on the M8, along the Clyde to Greenock or Gourock, connecting to the A78, which goes south along the Firth of Clyde to ports such as Wemyss Bay or Ardrossan. To get to Argyll, take the A82 from the West End of Glasgow north toward Tarbet on the shores of Loch Lomond. From Tarbet, you can take the A83 to Inveraray and down the Kintyre Peninsula or from the A83 to the A815 down to Cowal. The fastest route to Oban is by using the A82 from Tarbet: Go north along Loch Lomond to Crianlarich and Tyndrum, where the A85 goes west to Oban.
- ✓ **By train:** **First ScotRail** (☎ 0845-748-4950; www.firstscotrail.com) service overlaps with the greater Glasgow rail service operated by **Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT)** (☎ 0141-333 3708; www.spt.co.uk). Between the two (and they're largely interchangeable, unless you're a dedicated trainspotter), you have reasonably frequent service from Glasgow to Ayrshire and more limited trains into Argyll. Remember, however, that trains going southwest towards Ayr — or to Wemyss Bay — depart from Central Station, while those going northwest towards Oban leave from Queen Street Station. A one-way journey to Ayr (55 minutes) costs around £6 (\$11), to Wemyss Bay (50 minutes) £5 (\$9.25), and to Oban (three hours) £17 (\$31).
- ✓ **By bus:** From Glasgow, **Scottish Citylink** (☎ 0141-332-9644 or 0870-550-5050; www.citylink.co.uk) runs buses to western Scotland, including towns such as Inverary and Cambeltown. A standard one-way ticket from Glasgow to Inverary is about £8 (\$15) and £15 (\$28) to Cambeltown. The trip to Inverary takes about two hours and to Cambeltown about five hours. **Stagecoach Express** (☎ 01292-613-500; www.stagecoachbus.com) also runs buses to Ayr from Glasgow's Buchanan Street bus terminal. The one-way fare to Ayr is £4.50 (\$8.35) and the trip, using the limited stop X77 service, takes about one hour.

Ayrshire



- ACCOMMODATIONS ■**
- Abbotsford Hotel 7
 - Fairfield House Hotel 7
 - Lochgreen House Hotel 11
 - Malin Court Hotel 1
 - Piersland House Hotel 11
 - Westin Turnberry Resort 2

- ATTRACTIONS ●**
- Burns Cottage and Museum 5
 - Burns Monument and Gardens 5
 - Culzean Castle and Country Park 4
 - Royal Troon Golf Club 10
 - Souter Johnnie's Cottage 3
 - Turnberry Hotel Golf Courses 2

- DINING ◆**
- Braidwoods 12
 - Enterkine House 8
 - Fouter's Bistro 6
 - MacCallums of Troon
 - Oyster Bar 9

- ✓ **By ferry: Caledonian MacBrayne** (☎ 08705-650-000 or 01475-650-100; www.calmac.co.uk) — or CalMac, as it's more colloquially known — serves 22 islands and 4 peninsulas over the West Coast of Scotland. From Gourock, you can reach Dunoon on the Cowal Peninsula (25-minute crossing). Ferries from Wemyss Bay go to Rothesay on the Isle of Bute (35 minutes). The boat for Brodick on Arran departs from Ardrossan (one-hour crossing). Connections between railway terminals and ferry service are fairly well organized.

There is a five-minute long crossing from northern Bute to Colintrave on the Cowal peninsula, and in summer you can also go from Lochranza on Arran to the Kintyre peninsula near Skipness. A ferry links the Cowal and Kintyre peninsulas from Portvadie to Tarbert (25 minutes). From the west coast of Kintyre, ferries to the Isle of Gigha leave from Tayinloan (20-minute crossing), while those to Islay depart from Kennacraig (2 hours and 20 minutes).



On a trip across Argyll, you can take advantage of CalMac's "Island Hopscotch" ticket. For example, you may go from Wemyss Bay to Rothesay on Bute, from Bute to the Cowal peninsula, and then from Cowal to the pretty fishing village of Tarbert on Kintyre. Tickets are around £7.50 (\$14) per passenger and £35 (\$65) for a car. It's fun and sidesteps the much longer, albeit scenic, road routes. Unless you love driving, take the ferries.

CalMac has some competition from another company, **Western Ferry** (☎ 01396-704-452; www.western-ferries.co.uk) which runs a route to Hunter's Quay in Dunoon from McInroy's Point in Gourock.

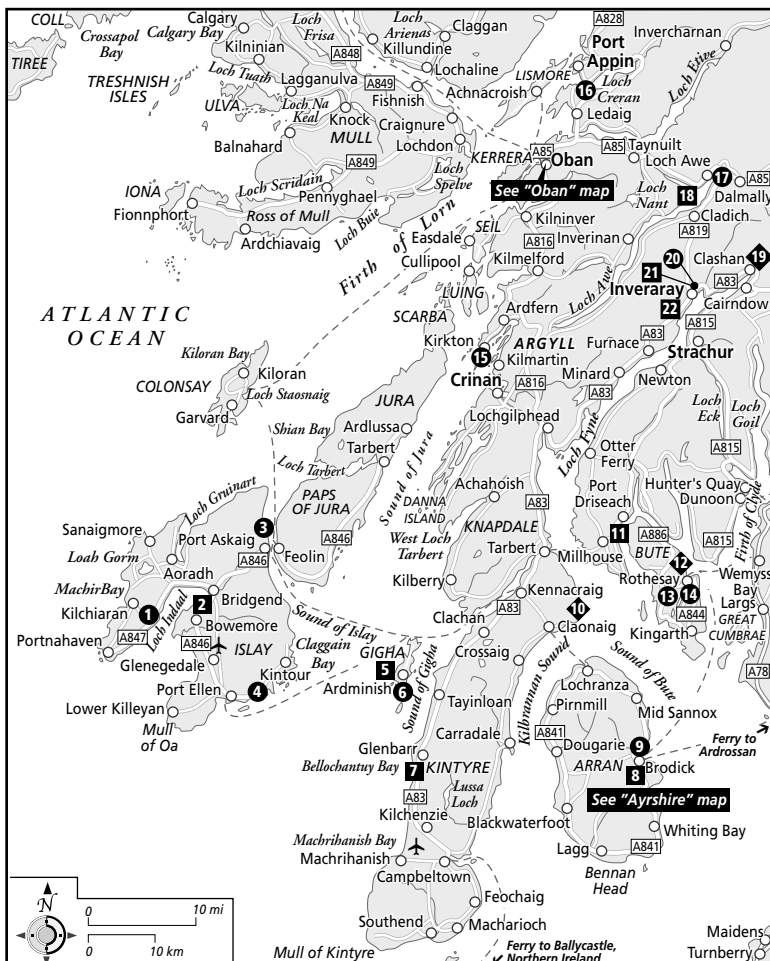
- ✓ **By air: British Airway** (☎ 0870-850-9850) coordinates direct flights from Glasgow airport to Cambeltown and Islay, but there are only one or two per day, operated by BA's local partner Loganair. Typically, they cost around £125 (\$231) and the travel time is 45 minutes.

Spending the Night

When it comes to overnight rooms, you have a variety of options, from luxury country house hotels to basic B&Bs and self-catering options. Some have received star ratings from the tourist board, aka VisitScotland, which I occasionally note (please see Chapter 8 for a description of the rating system). In the listings below, room rates generally include full breakfast, unless otherwise stated. And don't forget: You may well get a better deal than the standard "rack" rates that I quote.

Abbotsford Hotel \$\$ Ayr, Ayrshire

About a half-mile from the centre of Ayr, this small hotel with a popular, civilized pub is curiously named after Sir Walter Scott's mansion rather than associating itself with local Ayrshire hero Robert Burns. It is located



ACCOMMODATIONS ■

- An Lochan 11
- Ardanaisig 18
- The Argyll Hotel 10
- Gigha Hotel 5
- Harbour Inn 2
- Hunting Lodge Hotel 7
- Kilmichael Country House 8
- Loch Fyne Hotel 21

DINING ◆

- Loch Fyne Oyster Bar 19
- Russian Tavern at the Port Royal Hotel 12
- Seafood Cabin 10

ATTRACTIONS ●

- Achamore Gardens 6
- Brodick Castle 9
- Caol Ila Distillery 3
- Inveraray Castle 20
- Kilchurn Castle 17
- Kilmartin House Museum 15
- Laphroaig Distillery 4
- Mount Stuart 14
- Museum of Islay Life 1
- Rothsay Castle 13
- Scottish Sealife Sanctuary 16

in a quiet residential neighborhood, less than a ten-minute walk to the shoreline and convenient to the local golf courses, too. Most of the units are smart and comfortable, with flat-screen TVs and modern bathrooms. Family-run and friendly, the Abbotsford offers sound, moderately priced accommodations.

See map p. 285. 14 Corsehill Rd, Ayr KA7 2ST. ☎ 01292-261-506. Fax: 01292-261-606. www.abbotsfordhotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £85 (\$157) double. MC, V.



An Lochan **\$\$\$ Tighnabruaich, Argyll**

Formerly the Royal Hotel, this 11-bedroom, four-star inn overlooking the sea in Tighnabruaich offers plenty of comforts and some luxurious rooms, but not a hint of pretension or attitude from the McKie family owners or staff. The “superior sea view” rooms fit the bill, additionally offering huge super king-size beds and ample bathrooms (with tubs and showers), comfy leather-upholstered furnishings, and little goodies such as fresh fruit on arrival. Meals in either of the two conservatory dining rooms (see entry later in “Dining locally”) highlight fresh seafood and fish caught nearby (even the names of the scallop divers are given). The menu also offers Argyll-shire venison and beef. A treatment room offers facials and massages.

See map p. 287. Tighnabruaich, Argyll ☎ 01700-811-236. Fax: 01700-811-300 www.royalhotel.org.uk. Rack rates: £100–£180 double (\$185–\$333). AE, MC, V.



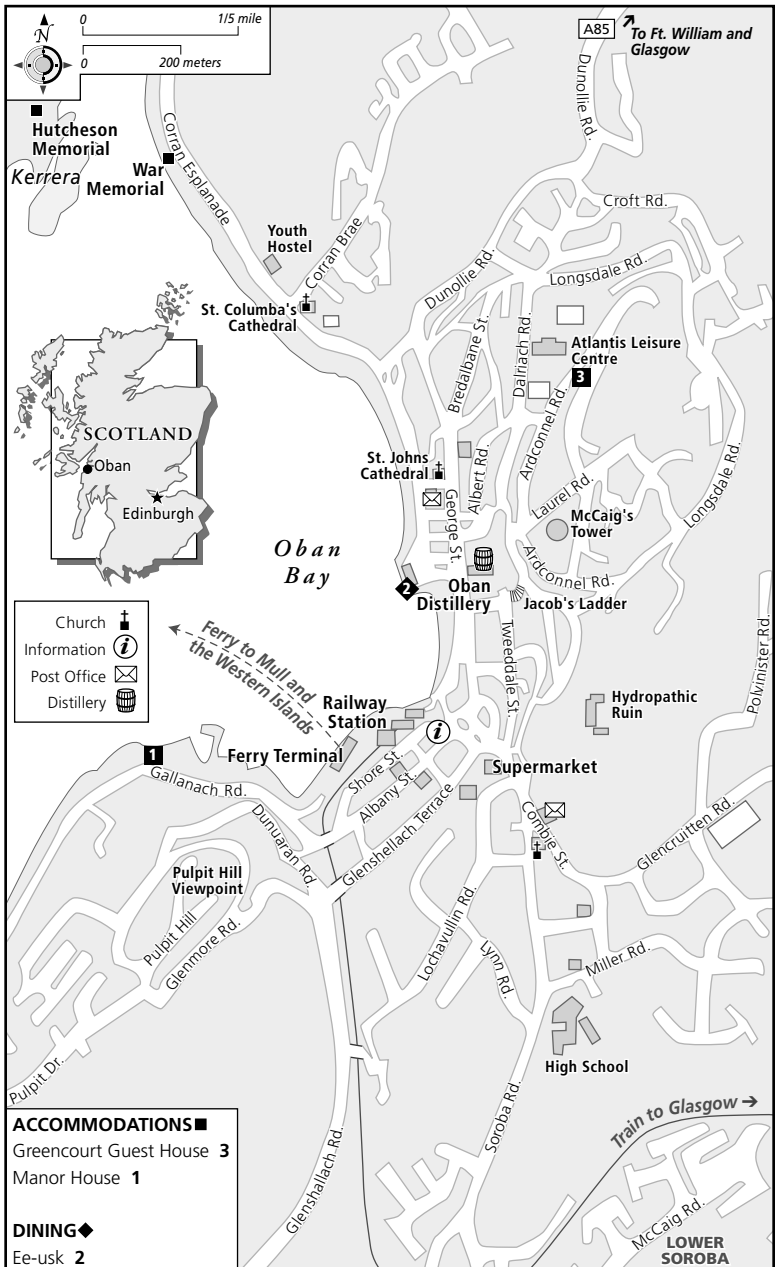
Ardanaiseig Hotel **\$\$\$ Kilchrenan, Argyll**

This hotel is arguably the poshest and least accessible place listed in this chapter, so if you seek a bit of luxury in an out-of-the-way corner, read on. The Ardanaiseig (pronounced *ard-na-sag*) hotel is a stone Scottish baronial pile built in the 1830s on the shores of Loch Awe; it sits at the end of a curvy single-track road through the woods some 24km (15 miles) from Taynuilt (off the main road to Oban). The gardens are especially colorful in spring when the rhododendrons are in bloom, but they have plenty of year-round interest as well. The public spaces include a large drawing room with views of the hotel’s own wee island in the loch. Evening meals, supervised by head chef Gary Goldie, are especially memorable, and every day brings a different four-course menu. The hotel, which prefers not to take small children, recently converted the loch-side boatshed into a luxury retreat.

See map p. 287. 5km (3 miles) north of Kilchrenan, off the B845 from Taynuilt. ☎ 01866-833-333. Fax: 01866-833-222. www.ardanaiseig.com. Rack rates: £100–£300 (\$185–\$555) double. AE, MC, V. Closed Jan to mid-Feb.

The Argyll Hotel **\$\$ Inveraray, Argyll**

Owned by the Best Western group, this waterfront hotel overlooks picturesque Loch Fyne. The attractive and stately white building, designed



by Robert Adam, was built over 250 years ago as a coach house to accommodate guests of the third duke of Argyll at nearby Inveraray Castle. Today, the hotel is still welcoming the castle's many tourist visitors, as well as other travelers in Argyll. Recently added to the public rooms was a conservatory facing the loch. If you can afford paying a bit more, book a room with a sea view for yourself. Advance reservations offer discounts on rack rates.

See map p. 287. *Front Street.* ☎ **01499-302-466.** Fax: 01499-302-389. www.the-argyll-hotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £112 (\$207) standard double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Fairfield House Hotel \$\$\$ Ayr, Ayrshire

On the seafront at the edge of Ayr's Low Green, this Victorian mansion/country home was restored and converted into a four-star hotel. The staff is attentive and, like the Abbotsford above, will help you arrange tee times at nearby golf courses. Rooms in the main building are decorated in a country-house style, while a newer wing offers more modern décor. The units are generally large and luxurious; some of the bathrooms have bidets. The hotel's **Martins Bar and Grill** was named best informal dining restaurant in 2006 by the Scottish hotel awards.

See map p. 285. *12 Fairfield Rd.* ☎ **01292-267-461.** Fax: 01292-261-456. www.fairfield-hotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £170 (\$315) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Gigha Hotel \$\$ Isle of Gigha, Argyll

There aren't many options on this lovely compact island just off the coast of Kintyre, but the Gigha Hotel offers the main accommodations, run by the community trust that now owns the isle. Rooms are fairly basic but clean and tidy. Up top, directly facing the sea, are rooms 1 and 2, which share a bathroom (and you might get a discount if requesting one of them). Otherwise, all units have en suite facilities. Room 7 is spacious, overlooking the rear garden with a bit of sea view. In addition, the hotel operates some self-catering cabins around the island. The restaurant specializes in local, fresh seafood dishes, while the pub is a popular gathering spot for the islanders.

See map p. 287. *Ardminish, 1km (½ mile) south of the ferry slip.* ☎ **01583-505-254.** Fax: 01583-505-244. www.gigha.org.uk. Rack rates: £130 (\$241) double including dinner and breakfast; £80 (\$148) double without dinner. MC, V.

Greencourt Guest House \$-\$\$ Oban, Argyll

Among the B&Bs in Oban, this four-star guesthouse stands out for the warm reception from owners Joanie and Michael Garvin and its westward views over the town's bowling green. The Greencourt is a short walk from the center of town, offering six comfortable units with en suite bathroom

facilities. Breakfasts feature local produce — such as free-range eggs from the nearby Isle of Seil — and homemade preserves and marmalades.

See map p. 289. *Benvoullin Road.* ☎ **01631-563-987.** Fax: 01631-571-276. www.greencourt-oban.co.uk. Rack rates: £50–£68 (\$93–\$126) double. MC, V. Closed Dec–Jan.

Harbour Inn

\$\$–\$\$\$ Isle of Islay, Argyll

Right at the heart of Islay's main town, Bowmore, and on the shores of Loch Indaal, the four-star Harbour Inn is your best bet for overnight accommodations on the Isle of Islay. It is well positioned for excursions south to Port Ellen and distilleries such as Laphroaig, or around the bay to picturesque towns, such as Portnahaven. I found room 5 a particularly spacious, L-shaped unit with a big bathtub (though no shower). The restaurant (see entry later in “Dining locally”) offers assured meals with plenty of local produce, such as scallops from Lagavulin Bay.

See map p. 287. *The Square, foot of Main Street, Bowmore* ☎ **01496-810-330.** Fax: 1496-810-990. www.harbour-inn.com. Rack rates: £105–£135 (\$194–\$250). MC, V.

Hunting Lodge Hotel

\$\$ Kintyre, Argyll

While the name led me to expect a 17th century inn, the Hunting Lodge's 20th-century renovations have, alas, have rather masked most of historic charms that this hotel on the road to Cambeltown once offered — at least from the outside. But forgive the design of dormers and balconies and just enjoy the views, especially the languid summer sunsets over the sea. Inside, the whisky bar (with some 300 single malts) offers the character that the hotel's name promises, and the meals (served daily from noon–2:30 p.m. and 6:30–9 p.m.) are excellent with plenty of local shellfish.

See map p. 287. *Just south of Bellchantuy on the A83.* ☎ **01583-421-323.** Fax: 01583-421-343. www.thehuntinglodgehotel.com. Rack rates: £60–£90 (\$111–\$167). MC, V.

Kilmichael Country House

\$\$\$ Isle of Arran

This 300-year-old country house offers some of the best accommodation on the Isle of Arran. The spacious rooms are furnished with antique wood furniture, fresh flowers, and pleasant pastel upholstery and drapes. The hotel has an interesting collection of Japanese ornaments — but the cuisine in the dining room is Scottish with dishes such as roasted chestnut soup or rack of lamb.

See map p. 287. *Glen Coy, near Brodick on a private road off the A841.* ☎ **01770-302-219.** Fax: 01770-302-068. www.kilmichael.com. Rack rates: £150–£190 (\$278–\$352) double. MC, V. Open Easter–Sept.

Loch Fyne Hotel**\$\$\$ Inveraray, Argyll**

Just north of town, this old stone house is perched on a lovely spot over the loch. It offers a friendly hotel staff and a spa with a large pool, sauna, steam room and outdoor hot tub (which certainly isn't that common in Scotland). The attractive rooms aren't fancy, but some have beautiful views of the water. Opt for the "executive size" units if you need more space. The food in the restaurant is satisfying and a good value, while the bar serves locally brewed real ales.

See map p. 287. On the A83, just outside Inveraray. ☎ **01499-302-148**. Fax: 01499-302-348. Rack rates: £125–£145 (\$231–\$268) double. MC, V.

Lochgreen House Hotel**\$\$\$ Troon, Ayrshire**

This lovely country-house hotel is set on 12 lush hectares (30 acres) of Ayrshire forest and landscaped gardens. The property opens onto views of the Firth of Clyde and the rocky outcropping island of Ailsa Craig. The interior evokes a more elegant bygone time, with detailed cornices, antique furnishings, and elegant oak and cherry paneling. Guests meet and mingle in two luxurious sitting rooms with log fires or take long walks on the well-landscaped grounds.

See map p. 285. Monktonhill Road. ☎ **01292-313-343**. Fax: 01292-318-661. www.costley-hotels.co.uk. Rack rates: £136 (\$252) double; £180 (\$333) with dinner included. AE, MC, V.

**Malin Court Hotel****\$\$ Maidens, Ayrshire**

On one of the most scenic strips of the Ayrshire coastline, this well-run hotel fronts the Firth of Clyde. It is not a great country house, however, but rather a serviceable, welcoming retreat offering a blend of informality and comfort. The 18 bedrooms are mostly medium in size and overlook the famous Turnberry golf course. Staff can arrange hunting, fishing, riding, sailing, as well as 18 holes on the links. The hotel offers a 20 percent discount for children younger than 16 staying in rooms separate from their parents. Children staying in the same room are only charged for meals.

See map p. 285. On the A719, off the A77, just north of Turnberry. ☎ **01655-331-457**. Fax: 01655-331-072. www.malincourt.co.uk. Rack rates: £104 (\$192) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

The Manor House Hotel**\$\$\$ Oban, Argyll**

At one time, the duke of Argyll owned this Georgian residence built in 1780. Despite its formal exterior, the house is warm and inviting inside. The 11 tasteful rooms have not been enlarged from their cozy 18th-century dimensions, but have views of the Oban harbor or the garden, fine antiques, and

floral linens. The Manor House is well-known for its fine restaurant. Please note that rooms reserved without dinner included in the price are limited from mid-April to mid-Oct.

See map p. 289. Gallanach Road. ☎ 01631-562-087. Fax: 01631-563-053. www.manorhouseoban.com. Rack rates: £94–£134 (\$174–\$248) double; £148–£188 (\$274–\$348) double including the 5-course dinner. AE, MC, V.

Piersland House Hotel

\$\$\$ Troon, Ayrshire

Opposite Royal Troon and designed by William Leiper in 1899, this hotel was originally occupied by Sir Alexander Walker of the Johnnie Walker whisky family and remained a private residence until 1956. The importation of some 17,000 tons of topsoil transformed the estate's marshy grounds into a lush 1.6-hectare (4-acre) garden. The moderately sized guest rooms have traditional country-house styling.

See map p. 285. 15 Craigend Rd. ☎ 01292-314-747. Fax 01292-315-613. www.piersland.co.uk. Rack rates: £136 (\$252) double; £180 (\$333) including dinner. AE, MC, V.

The Westin Turnberry Resort

\$\$\$\$ Turnberry, Ayrshire

The hotel at Turnberry, built in 1908, is a remarkable and well-known landmark. From afar, you can see the hotel's white facade, red-tile roof, and dozens of gables. The public rooms contain Waterford crystal chandeliers, Ionic columns, molded ceilings, and oak paneling. Each guest room is furnished in a unique, early 1900s style and has a marble-sheathed bathroom. The units, which vary in size, open onto views of the lawns, forests, and, of course, the golf course along the Scottish coastline. Spa and health facilities are exemplary.

See map p. 285. Maidens Road, off the A77. ☎ 01655-331-000. Fax: 01655-331-706. www.turnberry.co.uk. Rack rates: £300 (\$555) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Dining Locally

Ayrshire and Argyll are dominated by vast coastline, so some of the finest food you'll find in the region highlights locally landed fish and seafood. Below are what I think are some of the best dining options in the region.

An Lochan

\$\$-\$\$\$ Tighnabruaich FISH/SEAFOOD

At the former Royal Hotel, there are two restaurants. But whether you dine in the casual Deck or in the more formal Crustacean, you're always guaranteed a seaview and menus brimming with fresh fish, seafood, and meat dishes, with all the primary ingredients sourced locally. Heck, they even offer the names of the people who dive for the scallops and secure the venison. If you're up for it, there is a set-price evening menu, but the habit

here is not pretentious presentation but rather honest, straightforward cooking, allowing the natural flavors to set the tone.

See map p. 287. *Tighnabruaich, Argyll* ☎ **01700-811-236**. www.royalhotel.org.uk. Reservations recommended. Main courses: £18–£30 (\$28–\$56). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Sun noon–3pm and 6–9 p.m.



Braidwoods

\$\$\$ Dalry (Ayrshire) FRENCH/SCOTTISH

One of the standout restaurants in Scotland, Braidwoods is housed in a simple cottage (known as a “butt and ben”), which has been converted into a small, rather exclusive (though not over formal) dining space southwest of Glasgow. Keith and Nicola Braidwood share the cooking chores and the place gets very busy on weekends. Holder of a Michelin star and other accolades, Braidwoods is fairly expensive but worth the price for dishes such as roast quail with black pudding or baked turbot on a smoked salmon risotto.

See map p. 285. *Saltcoats Road, off the A737*. ☎ **01294-833-544**. www.braidwoods.co.uk. Reservations required. Fixed-price lunch: £18 (\$33); fixed-price dinner: £34 (\$63). AE, MC, V. Open: Tues 7–9 p.m., Wed–Sat noon–2 p.m. and 7–9 p.m., Sun noon–2 p.m. Sunday lunch Oct–May only.

Ee-usk

\$\$ Oban FISH/SEAFOOD

This modern restaurant’s name, the phonetic pronunciation of the Gaelic for “fish,” sums up the place quite well. It serves a host of simple fish and shellfish dishes, from the creamy delights of smoked haddock soup, Cullen skink, to lightly breaded white fish or fresh shellfish platters. Located at the recently renovated North Pier in Oban, on nice days, you can sit in the sun on the bayside deck. Ee-usk has a good wine list and some rare Scottish ales, too.

See map p. 289. *North Pier*. ☎ **01631-565-666**. www.eeusk.com. Main courses: £13–£17 (\$24–\$31). MC, V. Open: daily noon–2:30 p.m. and 6–9 p.m.

Enterkine House

\$\$\$ Annbank MODERN SCOTTISH

Dining at this highly rated, five-room country house hotel, done in Art Deco from the 1930s, can be a special treat. East of Ayr in the village of Annbank, Enterkine’s menus emphasize local ingredients, whether seasonal game or fish landed at nearby Troon. The fixed-price dinners are cheaper midweek. There are also some five-star quality overnight rooms, while the “bothy” offers a quirkier pine lodge on the woodland estate.

See map p. 285. *Coylton Road, Annbank near Ayr*. ☎ **01292-520-580**. www.enterkine.com. Reservations required. Fixed-price lunch: £19 (\$35); fixed-price dinner: £40 (\$74). AE, MC, V. Open: Sun–Fri noon–2:30 p.m. and 7–9 p.m., Sat 7–9 p.m.

Fouter's Bistro**\$\$ Ayr MODERN SCOTTISH**

In the heart of Ayr, Fouter's Bistro occupies the cellar of an old bank, retaining the original stone floor and a vaulted ceiling. The restaurant's name derives from the Scottish expression "foutering about," which is equivalent to fiddling about. But no one's goofing around here. Under new ownership in 2003, the restaurant has one of the best reputations in the region and emphasizes fresh local produce whenever possible.

See map p. 285. 2A Academy St. ☎ **01292-261-391**. www.fouters.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Main courses: £9–£16 (\$17–\$30). AE, MC, V. Open: Tues–Sat noon–2 p.m. and 6:30–9 p.m. (10 p.m. Fri–Sat).

Loch Fyne Restaurant and Oyster Bar**\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$ Cairndow FISH/SEAFOOD**

On the road to Inveraray near the head of Loch Fyne is the famous Loch Fyne Oyster Bar. The company that owns it farms both oysters and mussels in the clear cool waters of the loch. With a glass of dry white wine at this casual (although almost often busy) restaurant, there are few things finer than a platter of raw oysters or some cooked fish dishes. Be sure to browse the nice gift shop next door.

See map p. 287. At the head of Loch Fyne on the A83. ☎ **01499-600-263**. Reservations recommended and required at weekends. Main courses: £11–£16 (\$20–\$30). AE, MC, V. Open: daily 9 a.m.–8:30 p.m.

MacCallums of Troon Oyster Bar**\$\$ Troon FISH/SEAFOOD**

Near the ferry terminal at the harbor in Troon, this rustic seaside bistro is adjacent to a fresh fish market run by the same company. Oysters, whole sardines, grilled langoustines, sole, and combination platters are usually on the menu here. They also recently added a great little fish and chip shop, called the Wee Hurrie.

See map p. 285. The Harbour, Troon. ☎ **01292-319-339**. Main courses: £10–£16 (\$19–\$30). AE, MC, V. Open: Tues–Sat noon–2:30 p.m. and 7–9:30 p.m.; Sun noon–3:30 p.m. (and 7–9:30 p.m. May–Sept).

Russian Tavern at the Port Royal Hotel**\$\$ Isle of Bute RUSSIAN/SEAFOOD**

You're not likely find another place like this during your travels in Scotland. In the village of Port Bannatyne just 3km (2 miles) north of Rothesay on the Isle of Bute, the Port Royal is a family-run inn where the house specialties are Russian cuisine (for example blinis, spicy sausage, and pavlova). And not just that, but fresh fish and seafood are provided by a local fisherman, as well as some rarely found Scottish ales served from kegs atop the bar in the small cafe/pub they call the Russian Tavern. Overnight rooms, two with en suite bathrooms, are basic rather than luxurious.

See map p. 287. Main St, Port Banatyne, Isle of Bute. ☎ 01700-505-073. www.butehotel.com. Main courses: £16–£24 (\$30–\$44). Open: Wed–Mon 12:30–10:30p.m. Closed Nov–Mar.



Seafood Cabin

\$–\$\$ Kintyre FISH/SEAFOOD

Open during the day from June to September, this operation south of Tarbert (also called the Crab Shack) is worth a detour if you fancy seafood. Food is cooked in a converted 1950s-style minitrailer next to a stone house in the shadow of Skipness castle, and the meals feature langoustines, queen scallops, mussels, smoked salmon, and more. It is completely unassuming, with chickens and ducks freely wandering on the grass around the picnic tables. No better place on a sunny day to have an organic bottled ale and chow down fresh fruits of the sea. Cash only and closed on Saturday.

See map p. 287. B8001, Skipness, 20km (12 miles) south of Tarbert off the A83. ☎ 01880-760-207. Main courses: £6–£14 (\$11–\$26). Open: Sun–Fri 11 a.m.–6 p.m.

Exploring Ayrshire and Argyll

Just as Sir Walter Scott dominates Lothian and the Borders, the prominence of Robert Burns is felt southwest of Glasgow in Ayrshire. The heart of “Burns Country” is here, although it extends to Dumfries as well (see Chapter 14). Down the Clyde Coast is another popular tourist attraction: Culzean Castle. Pronounced “cul-lane,” it’s more of a mansion than a castle and became a favorite of General Eisenhower, who has a section of the building named after him. This region of Scotland is home to some of the world’s great links golf courses, including world-famous Royal Troon and Turnberry, with windswept coastal views and dunes.

At one time, the royal burgh of Ayr was the most popular resort on Scotland’s West Coast. On the reasonably picturesque Firth of Clyde, it’s only some 56km (35 miles) southwest of Glasgow — about an hour by train or by car. For many years it was a busy market town with a more important and indeed larger port than Glasgow’s until the 18th century. Ayr offers visitors some 4km (2½ miles) of beach.

Argyll is more remote and wilder, a land of peninsulas and islands with lots of seas surrounding it. It is a region with several archeological sites, because this part of Scotland appears to be the spot where the earliest humans inhabited the land. Although the heydays of resort towns such as Dunoon on the Cowal Peninsula or Rothesay on the Isle of Bute are past, they are experiencing a minirevival and remain pleasant places to visit. Argyll-shire landscape ranges from wooded glens to some rather craggy peaks, with plenty of shoreline never far away.

The Isle of Arran is sometimes called “Scotland in miniature” because it combines mountains with more pastoral landscapes. Bute and Gigha offer smaller island respites, with quiet country lanes and uncrowded

beaches. Islay is Scotland's whisky island, with several distilleries, but it is also just a fine place to explore. Parts of Argyll and its towns, such as Oban or Inveraray, can feel as if they have more in common with the Highlands and Western Islands. If you can't fully explore the open spaces in northern Scotland, Argyll can provide a decent substitute.

The top attractions

Achamore Gardens

Gigha

Towards the southern end of the Isle of Gigha, stately trees begin to dominate the skyline, creating a barrier from the harsher Atlantic sea elements and providing key protection to this memorable garden. Combining both walled and parkland plantings, it was started 1944 by Sir James Horlick, who then owned the entire island. The best time to visit is spring and early summer to see the exceptional display of the many different species of azalea, camellia, rhododendron, and other subtropical plants. But, honestly, there is never a bad time to stroll the many paths. Look out for the blue plumage of the resident peacocks. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 287. 2.5km (1½ miles) south of the ferry. Admission: donation £4 (\$7.40). Open daily 9:30 a.m.–dusk.



Brodick Castle

Isle of Arran

This impressive red-sandstone castle once belonged to the dukes of Hamilton. It sits by the bay, surrounded by acres of park and gardens, occupying the site of an old Viking fortress. The oldest parts of the building may date to the 13th century. The stately rooms hold an impressive collection of silver, porcelain, and paintings. Give yourself time to see the woodland gardens of exotic flowers. The castle also has an adventure playground, which should please the kids. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 287. Brodick, Isle of Arran, 0.6km (1 mile) north of the pier. ☎ 01770-302-202. Admission: £10 (\$19) adults; £7 (\$13) seniors, students, and children younger than 16; £25 (\$46) per family. Castle open: Apr–Oct daily 11 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Country park open: daily dawn–dusk.

Burns Cottage and Museum

Alloway

Although perennially underfunded and rather basic, this attraction remains a must visit for even the casual Burns fan. Visitors can take a self-guided tour of the cottage, built by William Burnes (as the family name was originally spelled) in 1757, and kept in the fashion of the poet's early childhood. An audio track explains the various uses for the rooms—one of which held both the family and their livestock. The museum, while rather modestly housed, is a treasure trove of Burns memorabilia, holding the best collection of the poet's manuscripts. The initial room has display

cases with first editions of his books, signed in some instances, as well as many letters that Burns wrote and received. Allow about 1½ hours.

See map p. 285. Alloway, 3km (2 miles) south of Ayr on B7024. ☎ 01292-443-700. www.burnsheritagepark.com. Admission: £4 (\$7.40) adults, £2.50 (\$4.60) children and seniors, £10 (\$19) per family. Open: Apr–Sept daily 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m.; Oct–Mar Mon–Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Culzean Castle and Country Park South Ayrshire

This is a fine example of Adam’s “castellated” style (that is, built with turrets and ramparts), which replaced an earlier castle keep as the family seat of the powerful Kennedy clan. After World War II, the castle was given to the National Trust for Scotland. Notwithstanding its architectural attributes — whether the celebrated round drawing room or the outstanding oval staircase — the pile is of special interest to many Americans because General Dwight D. Eisenhower was given an apartment for life here. Today, tourists can rent the six-room top-floor flat as holiday accommodations. Fans of the Scottish cult horror film, *The Wicker Man*, should know that scenes at the home of the devilish character played by Christopher Lee were filmed here as well. Last entry is one hour before closing. Allow about one hour.

See map p. 285. A719, west of Maybole. ☎ 01655-884-455. www.culzeanexperience.org. Admission (including entrance to the Country Park) £12 (\$22) adults, £8 (\$15) seniors and children, £30 (\$56) per family. Apr–Oct daily 10:30 a.m.–5 p.m.



The property surrounding the castle became Scotland’s first country park in 1969. The expansive grounds contain a formal walled garden, an aviary, a swan pond, a camellia house, an orangery, an adventure playground, and a newly restored 19th-century pagoda. Not to mention a deer park, kilometers and kilometers of woodland paths, and a beach, too. Unless you’re dead keen on historical houses, the country park is arguably the real highlight of a trip to Culzean on a fine Ayrshire day. The views over the sea to the southwest include the rounded rock of an island called Alisa Craig. Some 16km (10 miles) offshore, it’s a nesting ground and sanctuary for seabirds. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 285. On the land surrounding Culzean Castle. ☎ 01655-884-400. Admission: included in admission to Culzean Castle. Open: daily 9 a.m.–dusk.

Inveraray Castle Inveraray

This almost picture-perfect pile with fairy-tale spires sits near Loch Fyne, just outside the town of Inveraray. Belonging to the clan Campbell, the castle is still home to the 13th duke and the duchess of Argyll. Highlights in those wings that tourists can visit include the impressive armory hall, a fine collection of French tapestries, and the elaborately decorated state dining room. The grounds are particularly lovely in autumn when the leaves change color and in spring with the rhododendrons in flower. Allow at least one hour.

Burns: Humanitarian, poet, skirt chaser

Robert Burns (1759–96) continues to hold a sentimental spot in the national consciousness of Scotland. In recent years, Ayrshire has begun to host an annual music and cultural festival “Burns an’ a’ that” (www.burnsfestival.com) in the spring to celebrate his life. Born in Alloway on a night so gusty that part of the cottage came down, Burns was the son of a simple and pious gardener who encouraged the boy to read and seek an education. Burns was, by trade, a hard-working though largely unsuccessful farmer who switched to being a tax collector later in his life.

But the world knows him as the author of poetry, often set to song, such as *Auld Lang Syne*, or narrative masterpieces, such as *Tam O’Shanter*. Other works, such as *A Man’s a Man for a’ That*, show Burns’s humanitarian leanings. In his short life, he wrote hundreds of poems and songs. Burns was also a prodigious pursuer of women who fathered numerous children, legitimate and otherwise. He died at 37 of heart disease in the southern town of Dumfries, distinguished but destitute. Almost immediately, however, contributions to his widow and family were made from across Scotland. Burns was buried with some ceremony on the very day that his wife Jean delivered their ninth child.

See map p. 287. On the A83 Trunk Road, 1km (½ mile) northeast of Inveraray on Loch Fyne. ☎ 01499-302-203. www.inveraray-castle.com. Admission: £6 (\$11) adults, £6.50 (\$12) seniors and students, £4.25 (\$7.85) children younger than 16, £17 (\$31) family. Open: June–Sept Mon–Sat 10 a.m.–5:45 p.m., Sun 1–5:45 p.m.; Apr–May and Oct Mon–Thurs and Sat 10 a.m.–1 p.m. and 2–5:45 p.m., Sun 1–5 p.m. Closed Nov–Mar.

Kilmartin House Museum Kilmartin

Kilmartin House Museum is located in an area of impressive antiquity. Around here there are some 350 monuments, 150 of which are prehistoric. Settlements in this area of Argyll extend back more than 1,000 years and it is also noted for being the place where early Celtic people came in the 6th century. The museum is full of fine archeological artifacts, describing how the Kilmartin Glen has changed over thousands of years. The museum also offers workshops and organizes guided walks to the various local monuments. The museum cafe offers noteworthy food from local suppliers. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 287. Hwy. A816 between Lochgilphead and Oban, Kilmartin, Argyll. ☎ 01546-510-278. www.kilmartin.org. Admission: £4.50 (\$8.30) adults, £1.50 (\$2.80) children younger than 16, £10 (\$19) family. Open: daily 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

Laphroaig Distillery Islay

There are more than a half-dozen distilleries on Islay and Laphroaig (pronounced la-froig) produces one of Scotland’s quintessential island whisky:

Arran: Scotland in miniature

The Isle of Arran, in the Firth of Clyde off the coast of Ayrshire, is often called “Scotland in miniature” because it combines pasture-filled lowlands with mountainous highland scenery. Indeed, the so-called Highland Boundary Fault Line bisects the island diagonally, just as it does the Scottish mainland. In addition to the geographic and topographic mimicry, Arran offers a castle, half a dozen golf courses (including one with 12 holes), and a whisky distillery. It’s also a popular camping and cycling destination, with a growing reputation for producing excellent food, whether harvested from the sea or grown on the land. The various attractions and activities on Arran range from hiking and rock climbing to horse riding and sailing — plus good stretches of sandy, if windswept, beaches.

smoky, dry, and peaty. Most people either love or loathe it. You don’t have to be a fan of Scotch to enjoy a tour of the distillery. To visit and get a tour full of good anecdotes and information, you will need to make an appointment, however. Tours are usually at 10:15 a.m. or 2:15 p.m. Monday through Friday (and annual maintenance in July and Aug means there is less to see). Allow about 1½ hours.

See map p. 287. Near Port Ellen, on the road to Ardbeg. ☎ 01496-302-418. www.laphroaig.com. Admission: free. Open: by appointment only.

Mount Stuart Bute

This mansion belongs to the Marquess of Bute’s family, but it is open to the public for much of the year. Construction of the red sandstone pile began around the early 1880s for the third marquess and was still ongoing when he died at the turn of the century. The interiors display certain eccentricities and interests of the man, such as a ceiling in an upstairs room that is covered in stars and constellations to accommodate his interest in astrology. The garden dates back to early decades of the 18th century, when the second earl of Bute moved the family here from the port town of Rothesay. The grounds have a woodlands park, a huge walled area — the so-called wee garden — and a working vegetable plot, too. The garden is open from May to mid-October. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 287. A844 near Scoulag, 8km (5 miles) south of Rothesay. ☎ 01700-503-877. www.mountstuart.com. Admission: house and grounds £7.50 (\$14) adults, £3.50 (\$6.50) children. Open: house May–Sept Sun–Fri 11 a.m.–5 p.m., Sat 10 a.m.–2:30 p.m.; gardens daily 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Rothesay Castle Bute

Located in the heart of Rothesay, only a few minutes walk from the ferry terminal and harbor, this castle is unusual in Scotland for its circular plan. It dates to the beginnings of the 13th century, with a large moat dotted by resident swans still encircling the ramparts. Interestingly, the castle plays

up the connections that this part of Scotland had with Norse rulers, and King Hakon IV in particular. It is worth watching a brief video on the Scandinavian influences, Norse battles with native Scots and the latter's eventual victory over the troops from Norway in the 13th century. Although mostly a restored ruin, the castle has an impressive pigeon tower and chapel within the grassy courtyard. If you dare (and you're thin enough), you can descend from the Gatehouse into a small dungeon reserved for prisoners. Allow about one hour.

See map p. 287. *Rothesay, Isle of Bute* ☎ **01700-502-691**. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission £3.50 (\$6.50) adults, £2.50 (\$4.65) seniors, £1.50 (\$2.80) children. Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.; Oct–Mar Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–4 p.m.



Scottish Sealife Sanctuary Barcaldine

Formerly called the Oban Seal & Marine Centre, this place offers a hospital and rehab unit for stray, sick, and injured seals. But for human visitors, the marine center has tanks and aquarium emulating the natural habitats of sea creatures, from crabs to sharks. Other highlights include daily lectures and feedings, as well as a “stud farm” for seahorses as part of a unique breeding program and a sea otter sanctuary. The setting, among tall, shady pine trees by the water's edge, is reminiscent of northern California. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 287. *A828, north of Oban, on the shores of Loch Creran*. ☎ **01631-720-386**. Admission: £6.50 (\$12) adults, £5 (\$9.25) seniors and students, £4 (\$7.40) children younger than 16. Open: Mar–Oct daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; check with center for winter hours.

Golfing heavens: Troon and Turnberry

For links-style golf, which emphasizes sandy dunes and rolling golf courses, you can hardly do better than the Ayrshire coastline. While there are a host of options for the avid golfer, the two best-known courses are Troon and Turnberry.

Bute: The unexplored isle

Officially, Bute considers itself as Scotland's unexplored isle but it is perhaps better referred to as the country's underappreciated island. One of the easiest to reach from the mainland, Bute offers obvious attractions such as the Mount Stuart mansion and its great gardens or Rothesay Castle, the circular stronghold at the heart of the island's main port. But explore a bit and you will find the reasonably substantial ruins of an ancient Christian settlement at St. Blane's Church near the southern tip of the island. Walk out to the significantly more meager remains of a chapel dedicated to St. Ninian at St. Ninian's Point on the island's west coast, and you'll still be treated to the company of dozens of seabirds along the windswept shoreline. One thing you'll not have to worry about very much as you explore the rural roads, however, is the bother of many other tourists.

Gigha: The good isle

Pronounced *gee-a* with a hard “g” (as in gear), this small island off the Kintyre peninsula gets its name from the ancient Norse ruler King Hakon who once dominated this region of Scotland. It’s derived from a Scandinavian word that means the good isle. And good, indeed, it is. Tiny (only 10km/6 miles long by about 2km/1¼ mile wide) and placid, Gigha is best known for its Achamore Gardens (see earlier), with their exceptional springtime display of rhododendrons and azaleas. But as a quiet place to escape and relax, it is excellent as well. There are plenty of rural and coastal walks, such as one up the central road. Past an ancient standing stone, it takes you to the Twin Beaches on a narrow isthmus of dunes linking the island to Eilean Garbh, a bulbous peninsula with views across to the isles of Islay and Jura. Gigha is also particularly noteworthy because on March 15, 2002, the residents established a community trust (www.gigha.org.uk) and assumed ownership of the isle.

Troon

The resort town of **Troon**, 11km (7 miles) north of Ayr and 50km (31 miles) southwest of Glasgow, looks out across the Firth of Clyde toward the Isle of Arran. Troon takes its name from the curiously hook-shaped promontory jutting out into the sea: the “trone” or nose. From this port, a SeaCat ferry (☎ **08705-523-523**; www.steam-packet.com) sails daily to and from Belfast in Northern Ireland.



Troon and its environs offer several sandy links courses, most prominently the **Royal Troon Golf Club**, Craigends Road, Troon, Ayrshire KA10 6EP (☎ **01292-311-555**; www.royaltroon.co.uk). Royal Troon is a 7,150-yard seaside course that hosts the prestigious Open Championship, which was last played here in 2004. Hole 8, the famous “Postage Stamp,” may be only 123 yards in distance, but depending upon the wind, pros may need a long iron or wedge to reach the green. A second course, the 6,289-yard Portland is arguably even more challenging. Visitors, with certificate of handicap (20 for men and 30 for women), can play the course from May through October on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday. The one-day fee to play one round on the Old Course and one on Portland is £210 (\$389), which includes morning coffee and a buffet lunch. Two rounds on Portland are about half the cost.



A much less expensive but still gratifying alternative to Royal Troon is to play one of the municipal courses run by the South Ayrshire Council, such as Darnley or Lochgreen, which runs parallel to Royal Troon at spots. Fees during the weekend range from £16 to £28 (\$30–\$52). Another option is a six-round, seven-day golf pass from the council for £88 (\$163). Log onto www.golfsouthayrshire.com or call the South Ayrshire Golf hot line at ☎ **01292-616-255**.

Nongolfing visitors will find plenty of room to relax on Troon’s 3km (2 miles) of **sandy beaches** stretching along both sides of the harbor; the

broad sands and shallow waters make it a safe haven for beach bums. From here you can take boat trips to Arran or the narrow strait north of Bute known as the Kyles of Bute.

Trains from Glasgow's Central Station arrive at the Troon station several times daily (trip time about 40 minutes; £9.50 [\$18] for a standard one-day round-trip ticket).

Turnberry

The coastal settlement of Turnberry, 81km (50 miles) south of Glasgow on the A77, was once part of the Culzean Estate. It began to flourish early in the 20th century when rail service was developed, and a recognized golfing center with a first-class resort hotel was established. However, unlike Troon, which is a reasonably sized port town/village, there isn't much in Turnberry except for the luxury hotel and golf course.

From the original pair of 13-hole golf courses, the complex has developed into the two championship level courses, Ailsa and Kintyre, known worldwide as the **Turnberry Hotel Golf Courses**. Ailsa's 18 holes have been the scene of open tournaments and other professional golfing events. Guests of the Westin Turnberry hotel get priority access, especially on the Ailsa course. The fees to play vary. Hotel residents pay between £45 and £125 (\$83–\$231) depending on the course and the season. If you're not staying at Westin Turnberry, rates range from £60 to £190 (\$111–\$352). Log on to www.turnberry.co.uk, or call ☎ **01655-334-032** for details.

Other cool things to see and do

- ✓ **Benmore Botanic Garden**, 11km (7 miles) north of Dunoon on Cowal (☎ **01396-706-261**) is part of the national botanic gardens across Scotland. Rather than formal arrangements and flower beds, this one specializes in forest planting, including an impressive row of Pacific redwoods and a cluster of towering monkey puzzle trees. There is also a good selection of rhododendrons along the miles of interlacing pathways. Open daily March through October.
- ✓ **Burns Monument and Gardens**, in Alloway about 1km (½ mile) from the Burns Cottage, this Grecian-classical monument, which was replicated in Edinburgh on Calton Hill, was erected in 1823 in a ceremony attended by the poet's widow, Jean Armour. The gardens overlook the River Doon and its famous arching bridge.
- ✓ **Inveraray Jail**, Church Square, Inveraray (☎ **01499-302-381**). This is a somewhat implausibly eerie but entertaining museum that takes on the history of Scottish crime and punishment. Wax figures and recorded voices attempt to re-create life in the old jail cells. The murderers and madmen aren't real, but little ones may find the prison section more frightening than fun.

- ✓ **Kilchurn Castle**, A85 east of Loch Awe (☎ 01838-200-440). This castle offers well-maintained ruins that date to the 16th century. They're as much fun to get to as they are to explore — you can either walk up a steep path from the car park or hop on the steamboat ferry for the short ride from the Loch Awe pier.
- ✓ **McCaig's Tower**, between Duncraggan and Laurel roads in Oban, was commissioned by a local banker around 1900 in order to employ three stonemasons who were out of work. Though never completed, the arches were intended to house statues of his family. You're free to walk through the monument and enjoy the city's best view of the town.
- ✓ **Museum of Islay Life**, Port Charlotte, Islay (☎ 01496-850-358). This little museum is housed in an old church focuses on the history of the island and island life, as well as the whisky-making process. It may seem a bit thrown-together, but it will give context to your visit.
- ✓ **Caol Ila Distillery**, near Port Askaig, Islay (☎ 01496-302-760). You may not recognize the name (pronounced *cull-ee-la*), but this is one of the most distinguished distilleries on Islay, producing not only its own sublime brand but also the key component of the Johnnie Walker blend. The setting along the narrow straight between Islay and Jura is magical. Open April through October by appointment.
- ✓ **Souter Johnnie's Cottage**, in Kirkoswald about 19km (13 miles) south of Ayr, was the home of Burns's pal, the cobbler (or *souter*) named John Davidson. Davidson is name-checked in Burns's tale of Tam O'Shanter, who in real life was another friend named Douglas Graham. The cottage, which dates to 1785, contains Burnsiana, period furniture, and contemporary cobbler's tools. In the nearby kirkyard are the graves of Graham as well as Souter Johnnie and his wife, Ann. Open April through September.

Islay: Scotland's whisky island

Sometimes called the Queen of the Hebrides, Islay (pronounced *eye-la*) is truly Scotland's whisky island, with seven full-scale, world renowned distilleries, such as Ardbeg, Lagavulin, or Bunnahabhain, and also one boutique, microdistillery at Kilchoman. But there is much more than Scotch to lure you to Islay. Beaches, like the one at Machir Bay, are breathtaking. Villages such as Port Charlotte or Porthaven are charming and placid. You can take sea cruises and look for seals and whales, or shuck oysters from the farm at Loch Gruinart. On the mull of Oa, the American monument stands in tribute to the loss of more than 250 navel seamen torpedoed offshore in World War I. Both Kilchoman and Kildalton offer masterpieces of medieval stone carving on massive Celtic crosses, befitting the island historical significance at the center of the ancient Gaelic kingdom of Dalriada.

Shopping for Local Treasures

Ayr and Oban are historic market towns, while smaller villages, such as Tarbert, have some good craft shops. Many of the attractions listed above have gift shops. The Burns Museum in Alloway (see the detailed listing earlier in this chapter) is particularly good for souvenirs about the Scottish bard.

- ✔ **The Celtic House**, Shore St. Bowmore, Islay (☎ 01496-810-304). An excellent all-round shop with crafts, crystal, gifts, clothes, trinkets, and an excellent book selection, too. Open Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- ✔ **Crafty Kitchen**, Ardfern, midway between Oban and Lochgilhead (☎ 01852-500-303). Part craft shop and part cafe, the Crafty Kitchen features works by Scottish artists and craftspeople. The shop is open April through October, Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- ✔ **Earra Gale**, the Weighbridge, Tarbert (☎ 01880-820-428). This small, harbor-side shop specializes in arts and crafts from all corners of Argyll, from handmade knitwear to pottery. Open April through October, including Sunday in mid-Summer, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- ✔ **Islay Woolen Mill**, Bridgeend, Islay (☎ 01496-810-563). This is an artisanal woolen mill, using fine yarn and making many items that are a departure from the usual tartans, with rich and earthy colors. Open Monday through Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- ✔ **Mahailia Jewellery Design**, 150 Barmore Rd, Tarbert (☎ 01880-820-331). Mahailia Scott is a young jewelry designer with an eye for classy, timelessly modern gold and silver rings, earrings, bracelets, and more. Her shop is right at the harbor in Tarbert. Open Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Doing the Pub Crawl

Typically, you'll find no shortage of pubs, especially in the larger towns of Ayrshire and Argyll. In some of the smaller settlements, the local inn may be the only place to grab a dram of whisky or a pint. Several of the hotels (and a couple of the dining options) listed earlier in this chapter have public house licenses and welcome nonresidents. In addition, consider the following:

- ✔ **Brodick Bar**, Alma Road, Brodick, Arran, opposite the post office (☎ 01770-302-169). This all-wood pub pours delicious ale, such as the island's own, and has a reputation for serving excellent pub grub, using Arran lamb and beef or fresh fish. Open Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to midnight.

- ✓ **Oban Inn**, Stafford Street, Oban (☎ 01631-562-484). This classic whitewashed pub, near the water just off the town's main street, has a warm, old-fashioned elegance. The upstairs bar is a little quieter than downstairs, but the downstairs room, with flags and exposed wooden beams, is a better place to meet people. Open daily from 11 a.m. to 1 a.m.
- ✓ **Rabbie's Bar**, Burns Statue Square, Ayr (☎ 01292-262-112). The bar has walls covered with the pithy verses of Robert Burns and his portrait. However, don't come here expecting poetry readings in a quiet corner. The crowd, if not particularly literary, is talkative. Open Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 12:30 a.m.; on Sunday, it's open from noon to midnight.

Fast Facts: Ayrshire and Argyll

Area Codes

There are several area codes in Ayrshire and Argyll. Among the main ones, Arran is **01770**, Ayr is **01292**, Bute is **01700**, Campbelltown is **01586**, Gigha is **01583**, Inveraray is **01499**, Islay is **01496**, Oban is **01631**, and Tarbert is **01880**. You need to dial the prefix only if you're calling from outside the area you want to reach.

ATMs

Cash points at banks in bigger towns are common, but don't expect all to be linked internationally.

Emergencies

Dial ☎ **999** for police, fire, or ambulance.

Hospitals

In Ayrshire, the National Health Service's Ayr Hospital is on Dalmellington Rd. (☎ 01292-610-555). The major hospital for emergencies in Argyll is the Lorn and Islands District General Hospital, Glengallan Road, Oban (☎ 01631-567-500). Medical advice is available by calling NHS 24 ☎ 08454-242-424.

Information

For tourist information online, visit www.visitscotland.com. Ayr tourist office is at 22 Sandgate, Ayr (☎ 01292/678-100). It's

open from Easter to August, Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. (in July and Aug, it's also open Sun from 10 a.m.–5 p.m.) and September to Easter, Monday through Saturday from 9:15 a.m. to 5 p.m. In Oban, the tourist office is in the Old Church, Argyll Square, (☎ 01631-563-122). April to mid-June and mid-September to October, it's open Monday through Friday 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; mid-June through mid-September, hours are Monday to Saturday 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.; and November through March, it's open Monday to Saturday 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday noon to 4 p.m.

Internet Access

Cafe na Lusan, 9 Craighard Rd., Oban (☎ 01631-567-268), is open Tuesday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Sunday from noon to 7 p.m. The charge is £1 (\$1.85) for 15 minutes.

Post Office

The main post offices are Corran Esplanade, Oban (☎ 01631-562-430); Main Street South, Inveraray (☎ 01499-302-062); 65 Sandgate, Ayr (☎ 0845-722-334).

Chapter 16

Fife to the Trossachs

In This Chapter

- ▶ Easing your tired feet in cozy hotels
 - ▶ Dining on local cuisine
 - ▶ Visiting the stomping grounds of William Wallace and Robert the Bruce
 - ▶ Enjoying a pint at the best local pubs
-

The area of Central Scotland from Fife to the Trossachs teems with attractions — and many are within easy reach of Edinburgh and Glasgow. The region’s flagship settlements are the east coast port of St. Andrews in Fife and the historic city of Stirling in the heart of central Scotland. Other key settlements include Dunfermline, Dunblane, and Callander.

North of the Firth of Forth from Edinburgh, the region of Fife still likes to call itself a “kingdom,” a distinction dating to Pictish prehistoric times when Abernethy was Fife’s capital. Even today, the Kingdom of Fife evokes romantic episodes and the pageantry of Scottish kings. Indeed, some 14 of Scotland’s 66 royal burghs lay in this rather self-contained shire on a broad eastern peninsula between the Forth and Tay rivers. If you’re at all interested in golf, St. Andrews needs no introduction. Home to one of the oldest courses in the world — as well as the association that decides the rules for the sport — St. Andrews, also a college town with cobblestone streets, is the golf mecca of the world. There are host of other attractive coastal towns in Fife south and east of St. Andrews in an area known as East Neuk.

Stirling received royal burgh status from King David in 1124 and was for a spell the de facto capital of Scotland. Its castle and palace, all largely intact, became a favorite residence for Scottish royalty during the reign of the Stuarts. Many people come to see the historic sites of the surrounding area, which has seen its share of battles between Scottish and the English forces. Both William Wallace, who has a towering monument in Stirling, and King Robert the Bruce led their armies to decisive victories in and around Stirling.

Other things to see and do include visiting Dunfermline Abbey in Fife, where early Scottish royalty is buried, and the well-preserved ruins of Doune castle (which Monty Python used in their film *The Holy Grail*)

near Dunblane. For natural beauty, the Trossach Mountains begin to approach the majesty of the Highlands, the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park has plenty of wooded glens, and the banks of Loch Lomond are famously bonnie in both song and reality.

Getting to Fife and the Trossachs



You don't necessarily need a car if you're just going to St. Andrews or Stirling, because both places are navigable by foot. If your visit to the regions is a day trip from Edinburgh or Glasgow, for example, consider taking a train or the bus. Even if you want to see an attraction that lies outside of the towns, additional trains and buses are available for short jaunts.

✓ **By car:** To get to St. Andrews from Edinburgh, cross the Forth Bridge and catch the A92 to the A91. From Glasgow to St. Andrews, take the M80 north towards Stirling, then take the A91. The A91 connects Stirling and St. Andrews. To get to Stirling from Edinburgh, take the M9; from Glasgow, take the M80. To get to Callander and Trossachs, catch the A84 from Stirling. To get to Loch Lomond, follow the A82 out of Glasgow or the A811 from Stirling.

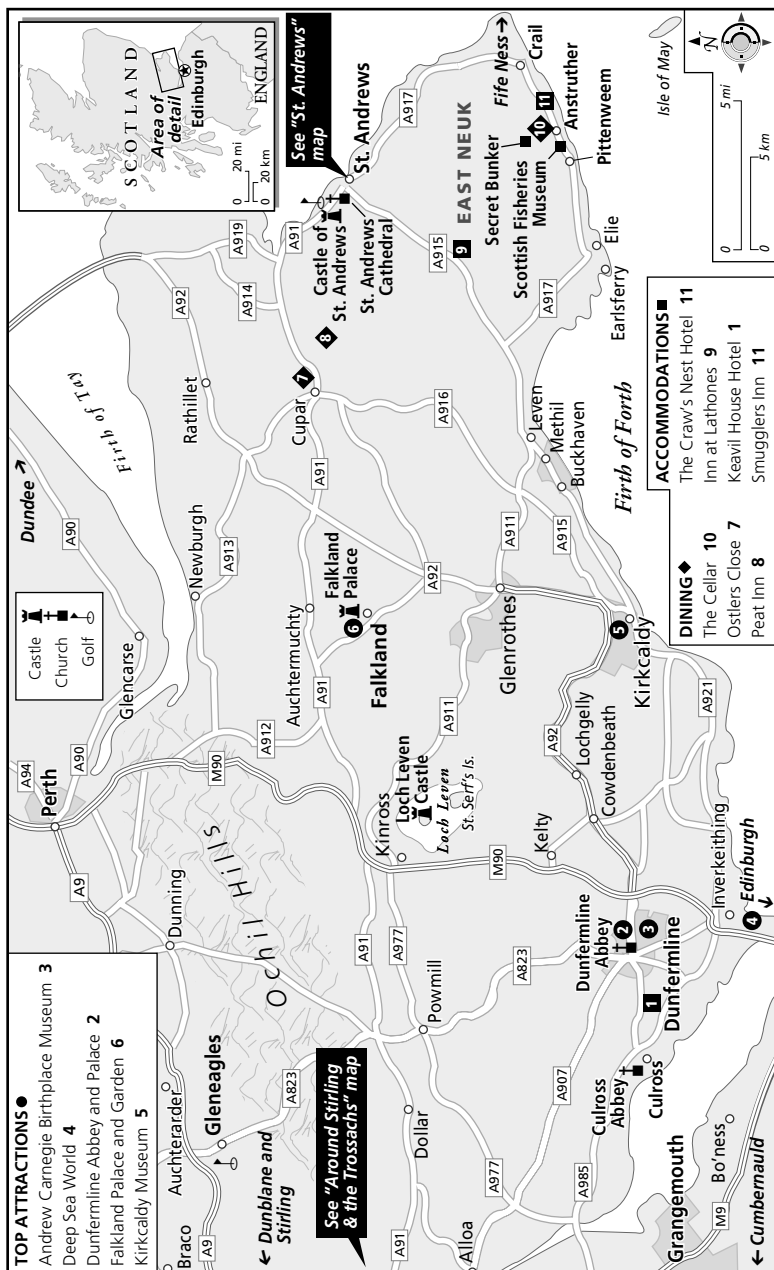
✓ **By train:** To get to Fife from Edinburgh, take the Fife loop, operated by **First ScotRail** (☎ 0845-748-4950; www.firstscotrail.com) from Haymarket Station. There is no direct train service to St. Andrews, but there's a stop some 13km (8 miles) away at the town of Leuchars. The trip from Edinburgh takes about one hour and costs around £17 (\$31). After you arrive at Leuchars, you can take a bus to St. Andrews.

To get to Stirling, trains depart from Edinburgh Waverley and Glasgow Queen Street stations. There are no railway lines into the Trossachs, per se, but you can take the train to Balloch, near Loch Lomond, from Glasgow.

✓ **By bus:** For bus travel schedules, call ☎ 0870-608-2-608. To get to St. Andrews from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, or Stirling, take **Scottish Fife** (☎ 01334-474-238). The bus ride from Edinburgh to St. Andrews takes about two hours and costs about £9 (\$17) for a round-trip ticket. **Citylink** (☎ 0990-505-050) buses travel to Stirling. A typical one-way ticket from Glasgow costs around £4.50 (\$8.30).

Spending the Night

Before you pick your accommodations, it's a good idea to decide what you want to see and in what order so you don't find yourself crisscrossing the area needlessly. For more accommodation choices than those listed below, such as smaller B&Bs, consult the tourism board for assistance (☎ 0845-22-55-121, or log on to visitscotland.com).



If you don't like what you see below, a few of my dining out recommendations — Creagan House, the Inn at Kippen, and Monachyle Mhor, for example — also have overnight rooms. Some of the hotels and inns I list have earned star ratings from the tourist board (see Chapter 8 for a description of the rating system). Rates below include full breakfast, unless otherwise stated. And remember: You may well get a better deal than the advertised “rack” rates.

The Crow's Nest Hotel
\$\$-\$\$\$ Anstruther, Fife

Once an old minister's house, the Nest traded holiness for hospitality when the building became a fine hotel. It offers a little something for everyone: A games room for the young and young at heart, four-poster beds for romantic couples. If you like to boogie, the hotel is also home to the largest dance floor in the region. If you enjoy a nice view, ask for a room in the wing overlooking the waters of the Forth and the Isle of May.

See map p. 309. Bankwell Road, off Pittenweem Road. ☎ **01333-310-691**. Fax: 01333-312-216. www.crownsnesthotel.co.uk. Rack rates: from £110 (\$204) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Cromlix House
\$\$\$\$ Kinbuck

This accommodation is a sportsman's dream, drawing fishermen and hunters with its 1,200 hectares (3,000 acres) of woodlands stretching to the Allan Water. But Cromlix House is very romantic as well. The three-story Victorian house is a restored pile that captures the elegance of affluence in the 19th century; the sitting rooms and guest rooms are decorated with fine art and period furniture, and common areas such as the library and conservatory have been restored.

See map p. 321. On the B8033 from the A9 north of Stirling. ☎ **01786-822-125**. Fax 01786-825-450. Rack rates: £240–£280 (\$444–\$518) double. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed Jan.

De Vere Cameron House
\$\$\$\$ Luss

Posh, plush, and perched on the shores of Loch Lomond, the five-star Cameron House hotel offers premier lodgings. The midrange deluxe rooms face the water, while the luxury suites are part of the original house and allow guests to have their meals in the sitting rooms. The fine dining option is the Georgian Room, which is not deemed suitable for children younger than 14, and gentlemen are expected to don jackets and ties. Smollets is the casual option.

See map p. 321. A82 north of Balloch, Dumbartonshire. ☎ **01389-755-565**. www.cameronhouse.co.uk. Rack rates: £255–£300 (\$472–\$555) double. AE, MC, V.

Drover's Inn**\$ Inverarnan**

The stuffed, snarling, and slightly worn animals near the entrance give a pretty good hint as to the nature of this rustic tavern with restaurant and overnight rooms. The atmospheric pub usually has an open fire going, barmen in kilts, and plenty of travelers nursing their drinks. There are 10 overnight units in the original house built in 1705 and another 16 rooms have been added in a new building.

See map p. 321. A82 at Inverarnan by Ardlui. ☎ 01301-704-234. www.droversinn.co.uk. Rack rates: £58 (\$107) double. MC, V.

Gleneagles**\$\$\$\$ Auchterarder**

Arguably Scotland's most famous hotel and golf resort, Gleneagles was purpose built as a swanky inn in 1924 in the style of a French chateau. Who needs Versailles, when you can have a "Riviera in the Highlands," as the initial acclaim raved? There are more than 250 rooms, the best of which are the specially decorated suites. The Whisky Suites, for example, have separate sitting rooms with dining spaces for sipping single malts or having a relaxed breakfast in your robe. The hotel has its own restaurant, but better still is the one on the premises run by Andrew Fairlie (see "Dining locally" later in this chapter).

See map p. 321. Auchterarder off the A823 (19km/12 miles northeast of Stirling). ☎ 01764-662-231, or from the U.S. 1-866-881-9525. Fax: 01764-662-134. www.gleneagles.com. Rack rates: £285–£500 (\$527–\$925) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

The Inn at Lathones**\$\$\$ Near Largoward, Fife**

The Inn at Lathones is set in a picturesque spot just 8km (5 miles) from St. Andrews. It may be 400 years old, but the inn is thoroughly modern, and the rooms are equipped with stereos and huge bathrooms. The bungalow-style inn has sidewalks that take you from one whitewashed building to the next. The main house, with a restaurant and front desk, is a comfortable area with fireplaces and sitting rooms. The bar normally stocks a good selection of Scottish ales and whiskies.

See map p. 309. Off the A915, (8km/5 miles south of St. Andrews on the A915). ☎ 01334-840-494. Fax: 01334-840-694. www.theinn.co.uk. Rack rates: £140 (\$259) double. AE, MC, V.

Keavil House Hotel**\$\$\$ Crossford near Dunfermline**

This tranquil country hotel, part of the Best Western chain, is set on a dozen acres of forested land and gardens. The guest rooms are generous in size and well appointed, each with a bathroom. Master bedrooms

contain four-poster beds. The hotel offers dining in its Cardoon Restaurant. Free parking is available for guests.

See map p. 309. *Main Street, Crossford (3km/2 miles west of Dunfermline).* ☎ **01383-736-258**. Fax: 01383-621-600. www.keavilhouse.co.uk. Rack rates: £115 (\$213) double. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed Dec 31–Jan 1.

Montague Guest House

\$\$-\$\$\$ St. Andrews

Nearly every building on Murray Park seems to be a guesthouse or B&B, but this one has been a standout. Each of the seven comfortable rooms is nicely appointed and creatively decorated. If you book your stay far enough in advance, you may be able to get the Ceol-na-Mara (Sound of the Sea) room, which has a bay window overlooking the water — be sure to ask if it's available. Montague House is well located between the old town area and the beaches.

See map p. 319. *21 Murray Park, just off North Street.* ☎ **01334-479-287**. www.montaguehouse.com. Rack rates: £70–£100 (\$130–\$185) double. MC, V.

Old Course Hotel

\$\$\$\$ St. Andrews

The Old Course Hotel overlooks the 17th fairway — the infamous “Road Hole” — of its namesake (to which the hotel has no formal connection). This is a world-class operation, with price tags to match. The hotel boasts full spa facilities (for an extra £20/\$37 per room), which include a pool with waterfall. The eating and drinking options encompass the contemporary Sands seafood bar and restaurant and fine dining at the Road Hole Grill, where gentlemen are encouraged to wear jackets to dinner, or the Jigger Inn, a whitewashed traditional pub that serves as the unofficial 19th hole for the adjacent golf course. Children younger than 12 can stay in parents' rooms at no extra charge.

See map p. 319. *Old Station Road, St. Andrews.* ☎ **01334-474-371**. Fax 01334-477-668. www.oldcoursehotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £220 (\$407) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

The Portcullis

\$\$ Stirling

This fun little hotel sits in the shadow of Stirling Castle. The rooms are comfortable but unpretentious, and the staff members are generally friendly. The Portcullis has been around for hundreds of years and has the rustic feel of an old coach inn and tavern. The downstairs bar is a plus or a minus, depending on your point of view — it's perfect for a nightcap, not so perfect if you want to be in bed before 10 p.m. An added touch is the flowers that grow in the lovely walled-in beer garden.

See map p. 323. *Next to Stirling Castle.* ☎ **01786-472-290**. Fax: 01786-446-103. www.theportcullishotel.com. Rack rates: £82–£87 (\$152–\$161) double. AE, MC, V.

Roman Camp **\$\$\$ Callander**

This country house hotel near Roman ruins is one of the more interesting places to stay in the area. Built in 1625 as a hunting lodge, it became a hotel in the 1930s, retaining charming low ceilings, creaking corridors, and snug furniture. The drawing room and conservatory have lovely period furniture and antiques. The River Teith runs through 8 beautiful acres (20 acres) of grounds; you're welcome to fish in the river, but steer clear of the grazing sheep and cows.

See map p. 321. Off Main Street from the A84. ☎ **01877-330-003**. Fax: 01877-331-533. www.romancamphotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £125–£185 (\$231–\$342) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Smugglers Inn **\$\$ Anstruther**

Back in the day (the building dates to the 14th century), this was apparently a popular watering hole for smugglers. Although the nine overnight rooms tend to be small and the floorboards uneven, the classic whitewashed structure with black trim is quite comfortable and homey. The nautical theme is a bit kitschy, but don't worry, matey, it doesn't extend into the guest rooms.

See map p. 309. High Street East. ☎ **01333-310-506**. Fax: 01333-312-706. www.foxinns.com. Rack rates: £60–£85 (\$111–\$157) double. AE, DC, MC, V.



Stirling Highland Hotel **\$\$\$ Stirling**

Ever fall asleep in class? Then you're familiar with the etherlike effect of school. At the Stirling Highland, an old converted Victorian high school, you can catch a good night's sleep or a much-needed nap in the classroom without facing detention. This well-managed accommodation is in easy hoofing distance of the castle and Stirling's Old Town. The leisure room is quite nice, featuring a pool, steam room, gym equipment, table tennis, and more. Some family rooms include an adjoining space with bunk beds and special offer for families includes admission to the castle and Blair Drummond Safari Park.

See map p. 323. Spittal Street. ☎ **01786-272-727**. Fax: 01786-272-829. www.paramount-hotels.co.uk. Rack rates: £150 (\$278) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Dining Locally

Your dining needs may be satisfied by your hotel, between a full breakfast in the morning and a meal in the dining room at night. But if you decide to step outside of your hotel for a bite, this section guides you toward some of the best options.



Andrew Fairlie at Gleneagles
\$\$\$\$ Auchterarder FRENCH

This may be the finest dining experience in the country. Fairlie is probably the most talented chef in Scotland: He not only has prowess in the kitchen, but he also knows how to bring together a talented team. Dinners here are seamless but not particularly stuffy affairs. If you have the money, go for the tasting or degustation menu — it's six courses of pure delight. Fairlie's signature dish is smoked lobster, but other highlights may include foie gras terrine with apricot and grapefruit chutney or "twice-cooked" Gressingham duck with oriental watercress salad. In 2006, he received two Michelin stars.

See map p. 321. *Gleneagles Hotel, Auchterarder.* ☎ **01764-694-267.** www.gleneagles.com. Reservations required. 3-course a la carte dinner: £60 (\$111); tasting menu: £80 (\$148). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat 7–10 p.m. Closed Sun.

Barnton Bar & Bistro
\$–\$\$ Stirling PUB FOOD

The city of Stirling isn't exactly rich in dining options, but this casual place is welcoming enough for a coffee, lunch, or an early evening meal. While there's nothing particularly outstanding on the menu, the Barnton is a friendly, welcoming, and relatively inexpensive place in the middle of Stirling and near the railway station. The premises are a converted pharmacy with a games room to the rear, usually populated with university students.

See map p. 323. *3 Barnton St.* ☎ **01786-461-698.** Main courses: £5–£10 (\$9.25–\$19). MC, V. Open: restaurant daily 10:30 a.m.–7:30 p.m.; bar Sun–Thurs noon–midnight, Fri–Sat noon–1 a.m.

The Cellar
\$\$\$ Anstruther SEAFOOD/SCOTTISH

The Cellar is among the best restaurants in the region. Located in an ancient fishing village and next door to a fisheries museum, the restaurant is a hot spot for delicacies from the sea. In addition to staples such as crab, scallops, and lobster, the mostly seafood menu includes dishes such as crayfish and mussel bisque and monkfish with herb and garlic sauce. The stone basement dining room is unassuming and comfortable, with candlelight and fireplaces.

See map p. 309. *24 E. Green, off the courtyard behind the Fisheries Museum.* ☎ **01333-310-378.** Reservations recommended. Fixed-price lunch: £11 (\$20), fixed-price dinner: from £29 (\$54). AE, DC, MC, V. Open: year-round Tues–Sat 7–9 p.m., also summer Tues–Sat 12:30–2 p.m.

Clive Ramsay Cafe and Restaurant
\$–\$\$ Bridge of Allan CAFE/BRASSERIE

Bridge of Allan is the pretty village and wealthy suburban enclave just outside of Stirling and this modern cafe and restaurant tends to be where the more discerning local diners go for lunch and dinner. Adjacent to its sister

deli and specializing in quality Scottish produce, Clive Ramsay Cafe and Restaurant offers anything from a simple tea and scone to main courses such as a beef pot-roast or top-notch fish and chips. If you're planning a picnic, the deli is the place to fill your hamper.

See map p. 321. 28 Henderson St. ☎ **01786-833-903**. Open: daily 8 a.m.–9 p.m. Main courses: £6–£10 (\$11–\$19). MC, V.

Creagan House

\$\$–\$\$\$ Strathyre SCOTTISH/FRENCH

Cherry and Gordon Gunn run this charming inn, well-situated for country walks, in a 17th-century farmhouse with a clutch of rooms. In the evenings, Gordon repairs to the kitchen where he cooks some sumptuous French-influenced meals using mostly local ingredients. Especially welcome are the vegetables, often grown just up the road, which he prepares to accompany the main courses, but these veggies are far from an afterthought. Don't be fooled by the baronial-style splendor of the dining room, however. It's a much, much more recent addition to the historic house, even though it looks historic itself. A clutch of rooms, including one that has a four-poster bed, start at £110 (\$204), including full breakfast.

See map p. 321. A84, north of Strathyre. ☎ **01877-384-638**. www.creaganhouse.co.uk. Reservations required. Fixed-price dinner: £22 (\$41). AE, MC, V. Open: one sitting 7:30–8:30 p.m. Closed Feb.

Hermann's

\$\$\$ Stirling AUSTRIAN/SCOTTISH

This simply decorated restaurant has a unique menu influenced by both Austria and Scotland. So, will it be jägerschnitzel or roast Barbary duck breast? The aproned staff is excellent and helpful in decoding the menu. And don't even think about skipping the wonderful Austrian desserts. You can't beat the location here, just down the road from Stirling Castle.

See map p. 323. 58 Broad St. ☎ **01786-450-632**. Reservations recommended. Main courses: £12–£17 (\$22–\$31). AE, DC, MC, V. Open: daily noon–2:30 p.m. and 6–10 p.m.

The Inn at Kippen

\$\$ Kippen SCOTTISH

About a ten-minute drive west of Stirling on the A811, Kippen is a typical country village in the rolling hills north of Glasgow. Run by the same folks who once owned the well-regarded Olivia's in Stirling, the Inn at Kippen is a modernized version of the country tavern and small hotel. The ground floor pub and restaurant specializes in Scottish fare with contemporary twists. The four overnight rooms, starting at £60 (\$111) are clean and basic.

See map p. 321. Fore Road, Kippen. ☎ **01786-871-010**. www.theinnatkippen.co.uk. Main courses: £8–£16 (\$15–\$30). AE, MC, V. Open: daily noon–2:30 p.m. and 6–9 p.m.



Monachyle Mhor

\$\$\$ Balquhidder MODERN SCOTTISH

Just up the highway from Creagan House, here is another gem serving lunch and dinner in an 18th-century farmhouse. This one overlooks Loch Voil, down a ramshackle one-lane road from the village of Balquhidder. The conservatory dining room is modern and so is the cooking. Roast chicken topped with foie gras, belly of pork served with sage and onion jus, or seared fish on a bed of shredded celeriac are just some of the typical options. Dinner is expensive (albeit worth it), though lunches are less costly. The adjoining lodge has 11 units with their own bathrooms, starting at £95 (\$176), which includes breakfast.

See map p. 321. Off the A84 at Balquhidder (right at Kingshouse Hotel and 9.5km/6 miles west). ☎ 01877-384-622. www.monachylemhor.com. Fixed-price dinner: £40 (\$74). AE, MC, V. Open: daily noon–1:45 p.m. and 7–8:45 p.m. Closed Jan to mid-Feb.

Ostlers Close

\$\$-\$\$\$ Cupar MODERN SCOTTISH

Fife has a host of good restaurants, and this charming one in a 17th-century building is one of the best. Located in the town of Cupar, west of St. Andrews, Ostlers Close emphasizes fresh and local produce. The daily changing menus can feature dishes such as seared Isle of Mull scallops, roast saddle of venison, or roast fillet of Pittenweem cod. Only open for lunch on Saturday, however.

See map p. 309. 25 Bonnygate, Cupar (11km/7 miles west of St. Andrews). ☎ 01334-655-574. Reservations recommended. Main courses: £10–£18 (\$19–\$33). AE, MC, V. Open: Tues–Fri 7–9:30 p.m., Sat 12:15–2 p.m. and 7–9:30 p.m. Closed 2 weeks mid-May.

Peat Inn

\$\$\$ Near Cupar MODERN SCOTTISH/FRENCH

The Peat Inn came under new ownership in 2006. Luckily, it was taken over by Chef Geoffrey Smeddle, who brought awards and accolades to his previous restaurant, *étain*, in Glasgow. The building dates to 1760, and refurbishment in 2007 was planned. Meals highlight local, seasonal ingredients in dishes such as seared scallops with fennel puree, roast fillet of beef with chanterelle mushrooms, or tayberry and elderflower tart. There are also eight overnight rooms from £165 (\$305).

See map p. 309. Cupar, at the junction of the B940 and B941. ☎ 01334-840-206. Fax 01334-840-530. www.thepeatinn.co.uk. Reservations required. Main courses: £16–£20 (\$30–37). Open: Tues–Sat 12:30–2 p.m. and 7–9:30 p.m.

The Seafood Restaurant

\$\$\$ St. Andrews FISH/SEAFOOD

A second branch for owner Tim Butler and his business partner, Chef Craig Millar, who began further down the coast in St. Monans. Here, the location on the seafront is spectacular, and given the restaurant is essentially

housed in a glass box, there is no missing the views. Dishes range from crab risotto to pan-seared scallops, with plenty of fancy accompaniments on the side.

See map p. 319. *The Scores, St. Andrews*. ☎ 01334-479-475. www.theseafoodrestaurant.com. Fixed-price lunch: £16 (\$30); fixed-price dinner: £30 (\$56). AE, MC, V. Open: daily noon–2:30 p.m. and 6–10 p.m.

Exploring Fife to the Trossachs

The highlight of Fife for golfers is St. Andrews, which many consider the most sacred spot of the sport. But the town, named after the country's patron saint, is also of ecclesiastical and scholarly importance. Closer to Edinburgh, Dunfermline was once the capital of Scotland; its abbey witnessed the births of royalty and contains the burial grounds of several royals, as well.

Northeast of Glasgow is historic Stirling, with its castle set dramatically on the hill above the town. During the reign of the Stuart family monarchs in the 16th century, royalty preferred Stirling over Edinburgh, so it became the de facto capital of the country. The coronation of Mary Queen of Scots, only a child at the time, took place in Stirling. High on another hill north of the city center stands the prominent Wallace Monument, which is open daily. Nearby, Stirling Bridge is believed to be the crucial site of a 13th-century battle between English invaders and the rag-tag band of Scots led by William Wallace (forever immortalized — if fictionalized, as well — in the movie *Braveheart*). Just outside of the city is another, more famous battleground: Bannockburn. Somewhere around these fields outside of Stirling in 1314, a well-armed English army was nevertheless routed by Scottish troops led by King Robert the Bruce.

More of a ruin than Stirling Castle, but perhaps more evocative, is Doune Castle near the town of Dunblane, which has its own attractive and historic cathedral. Further northwest of Stirling are the Trossachs, a mountain range distinct from the Highlands but appealing for its wooded forests. One key attraction here is Loch Katrine, popularized by Sir Walter Scott's poem *The Lady of the Lake*. Two villages that provide gateways to the more mountainous northern regions are Callander and Aberfoyle. They're often overrun by the bus tours in the high season because they offer places to rest, eat, and shop during the day.



Want to save a buck or two? At some attractions, you can pay a single discounted price for admission to more than one site: St. Andrews Castle and St. Andrews Cathedral, for example, or for Stirling Castle and Argyll's Lodging in Stirling.

The top attractions

Andrew Carnegie Birthplace Museum Dunfermline

In 1835, American industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie was born just down the hill from Dunfermline Abbey. This museum is comprised of the 18th-century cottage where he lived as a child and a memorial hall funded by his widow, Louise. Displays tell the story of the weaver's son, who emigrated to the United States and became one of the richest men in the world. A union-busting industrialist, Carnegie nevertheless gave away hundreds of millions of dollars before his death in 1919. Dunfermline received the first of the 2,811 free libraries he provided throughout Britain and America and the town was also bequeathed Pittencrieff Park and Glen. A statue in the park honors Carnegie, who once worked as a bobbin boy in a cotton factory. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 309. Moodie Street, Dunfermline. ☎ **01383-723-638**. www.carnegiebirthplace.com. Admission: £2 (\$3.70) adults, £1 (\$1.85) seniors, free for children younger than 15. Open: Apr–Oct Mon–Sat 11 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun 2–5 p.m. Closed Nov–Mar.

Argyll Forest Park Near Loch Lomond

Maintained by the Forestry Commission, the Argyll Forest Park offers some 24,000 hectares (60,000 acres) to explore from forest trails to the “Arrochar Alps.” If you want some reasonably challenging hill walking and a bit of a scramble to a rocky perch, try your chances by climbing the Cobbler, whose craggy peak is hard to miss. The trail begins at the head of Loch Long just north of the village of Arrochar on the A83. On a clear day, the view from the summit takes in a good portion of the west coast of Scotland. The area is home to acres of wildflowers, birds, and even seals in the sea lochs. For park information and trail maps, visit the Ardgartan Visitor Center (A83, Loch Long, ☎ **01301-702-432**) or log on to www.forestry.gov.uk. Allow two to five hours.

See map p. 321. Arrochar, off the A83. Admission: free. Open: daily dawn–dusk.

Argyll's Lodging Stirling

Sir William Alexander, the founder of Nova Scotia (or “New Scotland”), built this 17th-century town house, one of Scotland's finest surviving Renaissance homes. After being used as a youth hostel in the 20th century, the house is today decorated as it would have been in 1680, when the ninth earl of Argyll lived here. It has been furnished with accurate historic ornaments and period furniture, plus tapestries, paintings, and even clothing from the era. Allow about one hour.

See map p. 323. Castle Wynd. ☎ **01786-431-319**. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £4 (\$7.40) adults, £3 (\$5.55) seniors and students, £1.60 (\$3) children. Open: Apr–Oct daily 9:30 a.m.–6 p.m.; Nov–Mar daily 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m.

Bannockburn Heritage Centre Near Stirling

The boggy land along Bannock Burn near Stirling was the scene of King Robert the Bruce's victory over the English troops of Edward II in 1314. The decisive win helped to ensure that Scotland kept its independence from England. The center, run by the National Trust for Scotland, has exhibits and also screens an audiovisual presentation re-creating the battle and Bruce's story. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 321. *Glasgow Road, off M80.* ☎ **01786-812-664.** www.nts.org.uk. Admission: £5 (\$9.25) adults, £4 (\$7.40) seniors and children, £14 (\$26) family. Open: Mar–Oct daily 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m.



Deep Sea World North Queensferry

In the early 1990s, a group of entrepreneurs sealed the edges of an abandoned rock quarry under the Forth Rail Bridge, filled it with sea water, and positioned a 112m (370-ft.) acrylic tunnel on the bottom. Stocked with a menagerie of sea creatures, it is Scotland's most comprehensive aquarium. Now, compared to what you'll find in cities such as Baltimore or San Diego, this may seem amateurish. But, from the submerged tunnel, you view kelp forests; sandy flats that shelter bottom-dwelling schools of stingray, turbot, and sole; and murky caves favored by conger eels and small sharks. Curiously, the curvature of the tunnel's thick clear plastic makes everything seem about 30 percent smaller than it really is. For £145 (\$268), you can also arrange a "shark dive," however, and see them full size. Allow about two hours.

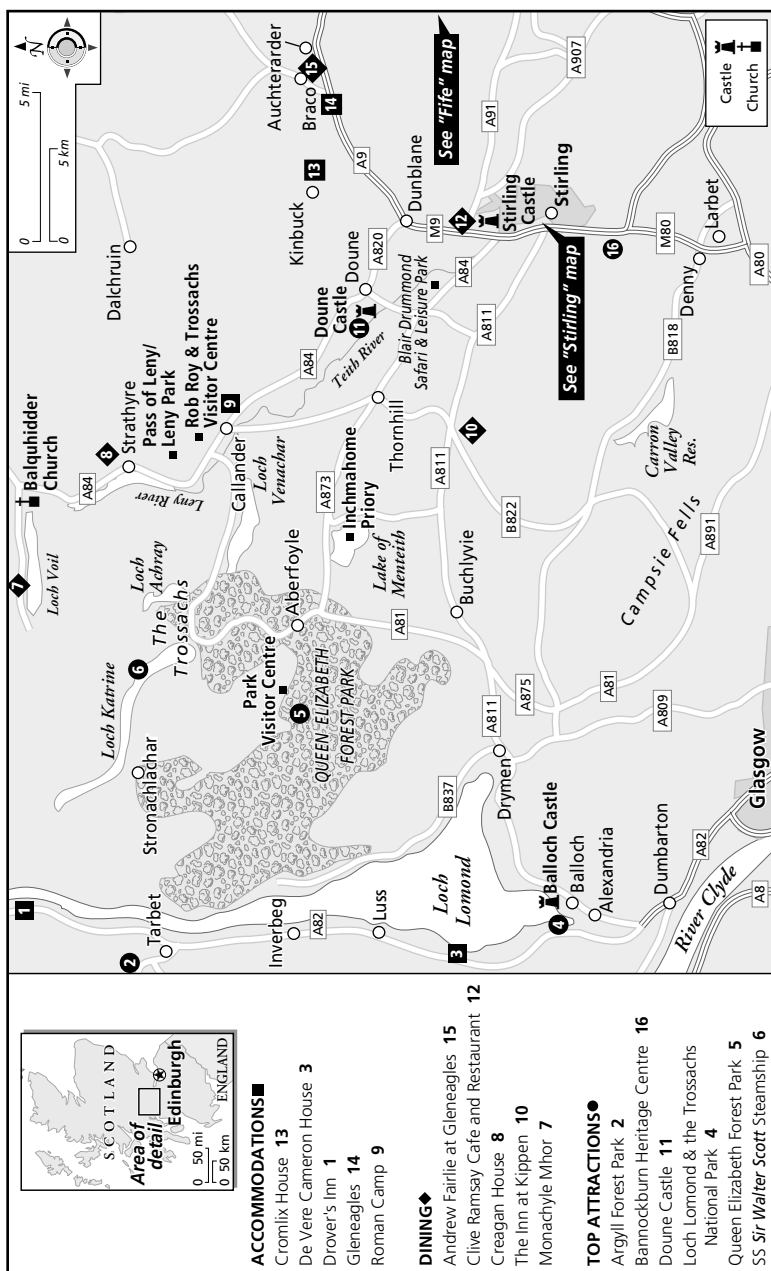
See map p. 309. *Battery Quarry, North Queensferry.* ☎ **01383-411-880.** www.deepseaworld.com. Admission: £8.55 (\$16) adults, £6.30 (\$12) children, £29 (\$54) family of 4. Open: Mon–Fri 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sat–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Doone Castle Doone

Fans of the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* may recognize the exterior of Doone Castle, seeing as it served as a location for several scenes in the movie. The castle's restoration by Historic Scotland has been mostly limited to making certain the stone structure doesn't fall down, so visitors (especially those with good imaginations) actually get a better idea of what living here in the 14th century may have been like. The castle's low doors, narrow spiral stairs, and overall feeling of damp really drive home the experience of medieval life. Allow about 1½ hours.

See map p. 321. *Off the A84 (6.5km/10 miles northwest of Stirling.)* ☎ **01786-841-742.** www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £3.50 (\$6.50) adult, £2.50 (\$4.60) seniors, £1.50 (\$2.80) children. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.; Oct–Mar daily 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Around Stirling and the Trossachs



Dunfermline Abbey and Palace **Dunfermline**

The ancient town of Dunfermline, 23km (14 miles) northwest of Edinburgh, was a place of royal residence as early as the 11th century. The last British monarch born in Scotland, Charles I, came into the world at Dunfermline. Its abbey was constructed on the site of a Celtic church and a priory church built under the auspices of Queen Margaret around 1070. Some 50 years later work began on a new priory, which can be visited as the Romanesque “Medieval Nave” today. Abbey status was bestowed in 1150, and thereafter a string of royalty, beginning with David I, was buried at the abbey, including Robert the Bruce. The newer sections of the abbey church were built in 1818, the pulpit was placed over the tomb and memorial to the Bruce. The remains of the royal palace are adjacent to the abbey. Only the south-west wall remains of this once-regal edifice. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 309. *St. Margaret's Street, off the M90.* ☎ **01383-739-026.** www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission £3 (\$5.55) adults, £2.30 (\$4.25) seniors, £1.30 (\$2.40) children. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6 p.m.; Oct–Mar daily 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.



Falkland Palace and Garden **Falkland**

A rather expensive National Trust attraction to visit, Falkland Palace in Fife was a royal hunting lodge and country home, constructed for the Stuart monarchs between 1450 and 1541. Among the rulers who resided in this impressive specimen of Renaissance architecture were a young Mary Queen of Scots and her father, James V. The highlights of the palace are the ornate Chapel Royal, King's Bedchamber, and Queen's Room. The gardens were devised after WWII. Also on the grounds is the royal tennis court, only one of two to survive since the 1500s. Allow about two hours.

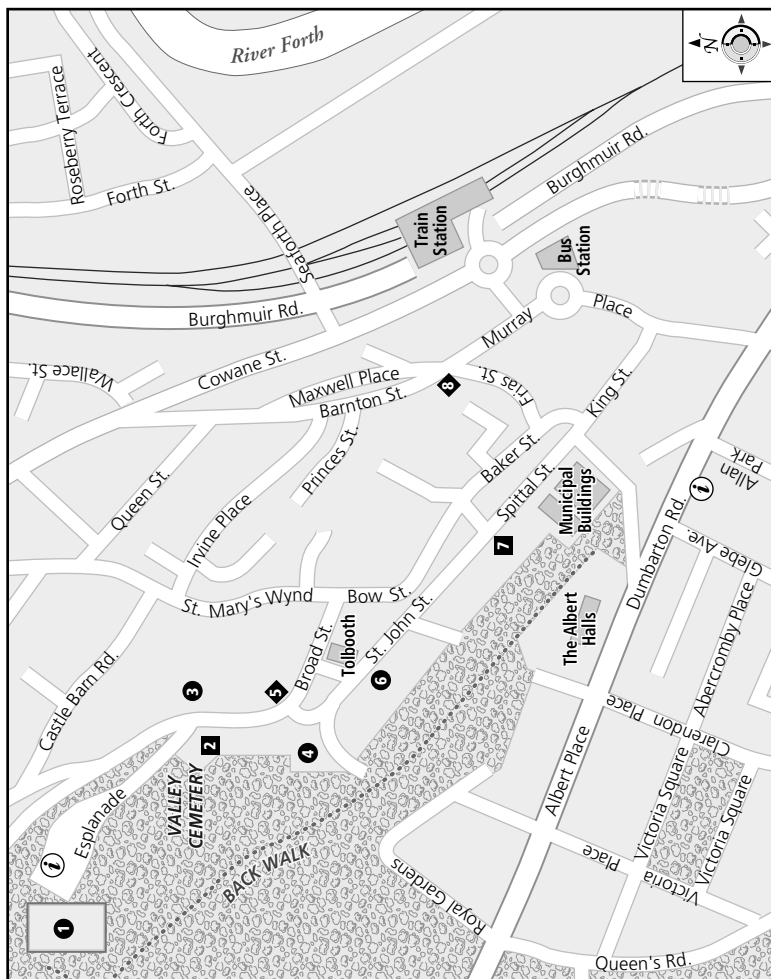
See map p. 309. *High Street, just off the M90, at Junction 8.* ☎ **01337-857-397.** Admission: £10 (\$19) adults; £7 (\$13) seniors, students, and children; £25 (\$46) family. Open: Mar–Oct Mon–Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun 1–5 p.m. Closed Nov–Mar.

Holy Rude Church **Stirling**

Among the many interesting aspects of this medieval church — Stirling's second oldest building after the nearby castle — are bullet holes made by Cromwell's troops in the 17th century. Dating in parts to the middle of the 1400s, the Church of the Holy Rude (or holy cross) is where protestant fire-brand John Knox preached at the crowing of the one-year-old James VI in 1567. The churchyard and cemetery are worth a walk about for the views and monuments, including a pyramid shaped one in memory of the Covenanters, who defended the Presbyterian faith. Allow about one hour.

See map p. 323. *St. John Street.* ☎ **01786-475-275.** Admission: donation requested. Open: Easter–Sept daily 11 a.m.–4 p.m. Closed Oct–Easter.

Stirling



ACCOMMODATIONS ■

- Portcullis **2**
- Stirling Highland Hotel **7**

DINING ◆

- Barnton Bar & Bistro **8**
- Hermann's **5**

TOP ATTRACTIONS ●

- Argyll's Lodging **3**
- Holy Rude Church **4**
- Stirling Castle **1**
- Stirling Old Town Jail **6**



Hitting the links in St. Andrews

The medieval royal burgh of **St. Andrews** in northeast Fife, about 80km (50 miles) from Edinburgh, was once filled with monasteries and ancient buildings, but only a few ruins of its early history survive. Once a revered place of Christian pilgrimage, today the historic town by the sea is best known for golf. It has been played here at least as early as the 1600s, though some believe much earlier. The rules of the sport are reviewed, revised, and clarified in St. Andrews by the Royal and Ancient Golf Club, while its Old Course is perhaps the most famous 18 holes in the world. Golfers consider this town to be hallowed ground.

St. Andrews has five 18-hole courses (www.standrews.org.uk) and one course with only 9 holes for beginners and children, all owned by a trust and open to the public. They are

- ✔ **Old Course:** Where the Open is frequently played and possibly dates to the 15th century
- ✔ **New Course:** Designed by Old Tom Morris in 1895
- ✔ **Jubilee Course:** Opened in 1897 in honor of Queen Victoria
- ✔ **Eden Course:** Opened in 1914
- ✔ **Strathtyrum Course:** The least difficult 18-holes, designed for those with high or no handicaps
- ✔ **Balgove:** The 9-hole course designed for beginners and hackers; turn up and play

For the 18-hole courses, except the Old Course, you should try to reserve your tee time at least one month in advance — except for play at Jubilee, Eden, or Strathtyrum, which can be reserved 24 hours ahead (if you're lucky). The reservation office is at ☎ **01334-466-666**. Online bookings for the New Course, Jubilee, Eden, and Strathtyrum can be made by logging on to www.linksnet.co.uk.

The Old Course, which hosted the Open in 2005, is a different kettle of fish: First you need a handicap of 24 for men and 36 for women. You apply in writing one year in advance and, even then, there are no guarantees. There is a daily ballot or lottery, which gives out about 50 percent of the tee times for the following day's play. Apply in person or by telephone before 2 p.m. on the day before play. By post, send applications to Reservations Office, Pilmour House, St. Andrews KY16 9SF, Scotland. Single golfers wishing to play the Old Course should contact the reservations department at reservations@standrews.org.uk.

Greens fees vary from course to course and depending on the time of year. Generally speaking, for the 18-hole courses, expect to pay between £16 (Strathtyrum in Mar) and £125 (Old Course in summer) (\$30–\$231). From November to March, it costs £61 (\$113) to play the Old Course, using mats that protect the fairways, and between £12 and £32 (\$22–\$59) for the other 18-hole courses.

Facilities for golfers in St. Andrews are legion. Virtually every hotel in town provides assistance to golfers. The **Royal and Ancient Golf Club**, founded in 1754, remains more

or less rigidly closed as a private-membership men's club, however. It does traditionally open the doors to the public on St. Andrews Day to view the trophy room. This usually falls on November 30.

If you're looking for more golf-related information, try the tourist office in St. Andrews at 70 Market St. (☎ **01334-472-021**). It's open year-round Monday through Saturday and on Sunday, too, during the high season. Call for hours.



Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Gallery **Kirkcaldy**

I think this place, while modest, is a real find. The art collection in the second floor galleries here is among the single best gathering of works by Scottish artists. An entire room is devoted to the brightly hued still-life paintings and landscapes by “Scottish Colourist” S.J. Peploe. There is more work by Hornel, Hunter, and Fergusson. Another highlight of the collection is a range of paintings by William McTaggart. In addition, you can compare the abstract beauty of, say, Joan Eardley’s “Breaking Wave” to a portrait by Scotland’s currently best-selling, if critically panned, contemporary painter, Jack Vettriano. No comparison. This unassuming and humble attraction is arguably the best small provincial art gallery in Great Britain. What’s more, all they request are donations from visitors. Allow about 1½ hours.

See map p. 309. War Memorial Gardens, next to the train station. ☎ **01592-412-860**. www.fifedirect.org.uk/museums. Admission: free. Open: Mon–Sat 10:30 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun 2–5 p.m.

Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park **West Dumbartonshire**

Loch Lomond, the largest inland body of water in all of Great Britain, is about a 45-minute drive or train ride from the Glasgow city limits. At the loch’s southern edge, near the otherwise unremarkable if pleasant town of Balloch, the Lomond Shores development (www.lochlomondshores.com) was opened in 2002. The complex includes an aquarium, shopping mall, and the National Park Gateway Centre, which offers information on the adjacent national park — Scotland’s first — that extends up the eastern shores of the loch, comprising some 1,865 sq. km. (720 sq. miles).

If you’re hiking, the trails up the eastern shoreline are preferable. This is the route that the West Highland Way (see below) follows. If you are a canoeing or kayaking enthusiast, the Lomond Shores’ visitor center has rentals (☎ **01389-602-576**; www.canyouexperience.com) for £15 (\$28) per hour. Up the western shores, before the notoriously winding road at Tarbet, where the train from Glasgow to Oban stops, visitors can take loch cruises. Golfers will likely be attracted to the Loch Lomond country club, which hosts the annual Scottish Open professional golf championship, near the pleasant resort village of Luss.

Hiking the West Highland Way

One of Scotland's best-known long-distance footpaths is the **West Highland Way**, established in the 1980s. The trail begins rather uneventfully northwest of Glasgow in the affluent suburb of Milngavie (pronounced mill-*guy*). But as the trail winds some 153km (95 miles) north along the eastern shore of Loch Lomond, through the desolate and almost prehistoric looking Rannoch Moor, along the breathtaking and historic Glen Coe, and ending finally in Fort William, it just gets better and better. At the northern terminus, you're at the foot of Ben Nevis, Scotland's highest mountain.

Trains run frequently throughout the day from the Queen's Street railway station in central Glasgow to Milngavie, the starting point of the walk. The 25-minute trip costs £2.35 (\$4.35) one-way. In Fort William, you can catch the First ScotRail train back to Glasgow. Hikers can backpack and camp along the way or stay at inns conveniently dotted along the trail. Tour companies are available to haul your luggage from stop to stop along the way. For details on the West Highland Way, contact the National Park Gateway Centre, ☎ **01389-722-199** — or log onto www.west-highland-way.co.uk.

See map p. 321. National Park Gateway Centre, Lomond Shores, Balloch. ☎ **01389-722-199**. Open: daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Queen Elizabeth Forest Park Stirlingshire

East of Loch Lomond, the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park has thousands of acres of unspoiled nature. Many trails wind through the woods and hills of the region, managed by the Forestry Commission. The visitor center (with information and maps) at the David Marshall Lodge near Aberfoyle is a good base for hiking excursions. If nature walks aren't your thing, however, there are good picnic spots — or you can motor through a part of the park on the scenic Achray Forest Drive (A821). Allow two to four hours.

See map p. 321. David Marshall Lodge, off the A821. ☎ **01877-382-258**. www.forestry.gov.uk. Admission: free. Open: park daily dawn–dusk; visitor center daily 11 a.m.–4 p.m.

St. Andrews Cathedral St. Andrews

Near the Celtic Church of Blessed Mary on the Rock, by the sea at the east end of town, is St. Andrews Cathedral. Once the largest church in Scotland, it was founded in 1161. The cathedral certified the town as the ecclesiastical capital of the country, but the ruins can only suggest its former beauty and importance. There's a collection of early Christian and medieval monuments, as well as artifacts discovered on the cathedral site. Admission allows entry to nearby **St. Andrews Castle**, where the medieval clergy lived. Allow about two hours.

Culross: Stepping back in time

Thanks largely to the National Trust for Scotland, this town near Dunfermline shows what a Scottish village from the 16th to 18th century was like. With its cobbled streets lined by stout cottages featuring crow-stepped gables, Culross may also have been the birthplace of St. Mungo, who went on to establish the Glasgow Cathedral. James IV made this port on the Firth of Forth a royal burgh in 1588. The National Trust runs a visitor center (☎ **01383-880-359**; www.nts.org.uk) that is open daily noon to 5 p.m. from Good Friday to the end of September, which provides access to the town's palace and other sites. Adult admission is £8 (\$15).

See map p. 319. A91, off Pends Road. ☎ 01334-472-563. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission cathedral and castle £6 (\$11) adults, £4.50 (\$8.30) seniors, £2.70 (\$5) children. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.; Oct–Mar daily 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

SS Sir Walter Scott Steamship Loch Katrine

For more than 100 years, this old-fashioned ship has taken passengers out on Loch Katrine to marvel at the beauty of the Trossachs. A bit of floating history, the ship is the last screw-driven steamship regularly sailing with passengers in Scotland. It runs between the Trossachs Pier and Stronachlachar and passes an eyeeful of stunning views along the way. The ship is named after the renowned author who made Loch Katrine famous in his poem *The Lady of the Lake*. Be warned, however: This popular trip can get overcrowded in the summer, so if you can, go on a weekday. Allow about four hours.

See map p. 321. Loch Katrine, Trossachs. ☎ 01877-376-316. Admission: £7.50 (\$14) adults, £4.50 (\$8.30) children. Departures: Apr–Oct (weather permitting) daily 10:30 a.m., 1:15, 2:30, and 5 p.m. (and 3:45 p.m. on selected weekdays). No sailings Tues–Wed in Oct. or between Nov–Mar.

Stirling Castle Stirling

Once the residence of Scotland's royalty, this striking Renaissance castle was home to Mary Queen of Scots, her son James VI of Scotland (and later James I of England), and other Stuart monarchs. A natural fortress, the castle on a hill was the region's strategic military point throughout much of the 13th and 14th centuries. Even if you don't bother taking a tour of the impressive castle (though you should), the ramparts and grounds surrounding the well-fortified landmark are worth a stroll — particularly the cemetery and the "Back Walk" along a wall that protected the Old Town from attack. In the castle proper, you can see both a palace built by James V and the Chapel Royal, which was remodeled by his grandson, James VI. Recently restored, the castle's Great Hall is visible for miles thanks to the

creamy, almost yellow exterior that apparently replicates its original color. Allow about three hours.

See map p. 323. Castle Wynd. ☎ 01786-450-000. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £8.50 (\$16) adults, £6.50 (\$12) seniors, £3.50 (\$6.50) children. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–5:15 p.m.; Oct–Mar daily 9:30 a.m.–4:15 p.m.



Stirling Old Town Jail Stirling

For some of the tours, guides donning period dress take groups through the paces of penal life here, while others role-play as wardens and inmates to help enact the history of the jail. This building is a Victorian replacement for the rather less humane cells in the old tollbooth across the street. Still, when you see the crank that inmates were made to turn as punishment, one wonders if prison existence had improved all that much. On the top of the building, an observation deck offers good views of the surrounding Old Town. Allow about 1½ hours.

See map p. 323. St. John Street. ☎ 01786-450-050. www.instirling.com/sight/jail.htm. Admission: £5 (\$9.25) adults; £3.75 (\$6.95) seniors, students, and children; £13 (\$24) family. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6 p.m.; Oct and Mar daily 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m.; Nov–Feb daily 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

University of St. Andrews St. Andrews

This is the oldest university in Scotland and the third oldest in Britain after Oxford and Cambridge. Of its famous students, the most recent graduate was Prince William, heir to the throne after Charles. At term time, you can see packs of students in their characteristic red gowns. The university spreads throughout the town today, but the original site was centered in the districts just west of the Cathedral. The gate tower of St. Salvador College on North Street dates to the 15th century.

See map p. 319. www.st-andrews.ac.uk.

More cool things to see and do

- ✓ **British Golf Museum**, Bruce Embankment, St. Andrews (☎ 01334-478-880; www.britishgolfmuseum.co.uk). This museum is devoted to the history and popularity of the game. Exhibits reveal the evolution of equipment and rules and remarkable facts and feats of the last 500 years.
- ✓ **Byre Theatre**, Abbey Street, St. Andrews (☎ 01334-475-000; www.byretheatre.com). This theater is the cultural center of St. Andrews; it features dramatic performances ranging from Shakespeare to musical comedies.
- ✓ **Holy Trinity Church**, off South Street, St. Andrews (☎ 01334-474-494; www.holytrinitystandrews.co.uk). This medieval church was re-created at the beginning of the 20th century around

the impressive tower, which does actually date to the 1400s. In the original church, John Knox advised the congregation in June 1559 to cleanse the temple and remove all the Catholic monuments to idolatry. In that single day, apparently, the reformation took root in this parish.

- ✔ **The National Wallace Monument**, Alloa Road, Abbey Craig, Stirling (☎ 01786-47-2140; www.nationalwallacemonument.com). If you travel anywhere near Stirling, you're likely to see this 66m (220-ft.) tower set on top of a hill overlooking the surrounding terrain. Built in the 1860s, the monument's popularity soared after the release of *Braveheart*, Mel Gibson's hit 1995 movie depicting William Wallace's life. A shuttle bus runs between a visitor center and the monument.
- ✔ **Rob Roy and the Trossachs Visitor Centre**, Callander (☎ 01877-330-342; www.robroyvisitorcentre.com). This museum in the Trossachs region, home of the Clan MacGregor, offers two versions of Rob Roy MacGregor: the tartan Robin Hood and legendary figure of Sir Walter Scott's novel or just cattle thief and blackmailer. Whatever the specifics, Rob Roy was certainly a hero to his people and an outlaw in defiance of the English.
- ✔ **Secret Bunker**, Troywood, south of St. Andrews (☎ 01333-310-301; www.secretbunker.co.uk). This bunker is the former underground nuclear command center where U.K. leaders would have found refuge in the event of a nuclear war. Kept from public knowledge for decades, the facility was declassified in the 1990s, and you can now see this Cold War relic.

Shopping for Local Treasures

Shopping in Stirling and St. Andrews is typical of provincial towns and cities around Scotland, with the former offering the dubious bonus of a shopping mall called the Thistle Centre (near the train station). This area also introduces tourists to another questionable shopping attraction in Scotland: Highland gateway towns. Both Aberfoyle and Callander fit this bill — one-street burghs cluttered with lots of tartan and woolen shops that attract coach tours, causing the sidewalks to occasionally overflow with tourists on summer days. The road that runs along Loch Lomond, the A82, has a few galleries with art. Remember, as I have said in previous chapters, most attractions have decent shops for gifts, souvenirs, and even local crafts, on occasion. Below are a few suggestions for shops that are a cut above.

- ✔ **Jim Farmer Golf Shop**, 1 St. Mary's Place, Market Street, St. Andrews (☎ 01334-476-796). Heads up, golfers. Need a new pitching wedge or just a fancy set of club warmers? This shop will take care of you and maybe even help trim a stroke or two off your handicap. Shirts, hats, T-shirts, shoes, and more are on hand. Call for hours.

- ✓ **The Fotheringham Gallery**, Henderson Street, Bridge of Allan (☎ **01786-832-861**; www.fotheringham-gallery.co.uk). This contemporary art gallery and shop has handmade designer jewelry, glass works, sculpture, and paintings — all by contemporary Scottish artists and craftsmen. Open Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- ✓ **The Green Gallery**, Main Street, Aberfoyle (☎ **01877-382-873**; www.greengallery.com) is a standout in this Highland gateway town because of its eclectic collection of contemporary arts and crafts on exhibit, and for sale, of course. Every month seems to focus on a new set of works. Open Thursday through Saturday and Tuesday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday noon to 5 p.m. Wednesday by appointment only.
- ✓ **The Scottish Wool Centre**, off Main Street, Aberfoyle (☎ **01877-382-850**), is an attraction as well as a shop; this is one store where the kids shouldn't get bored. Besides exhibits that show everything you want to know about Scottish wool and more, the Spinner's Cottage gives you a chance to make your own wool. There are sheepdog demonstrations and a children's farm (admission charged). Open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Doing the Pub Crawl

If you're staying in Stirling or St. Andrews, check out these two watering holes, which are a notch or two above the norm. Otherwise, practically every village and town in the region has a pub, or stick to the local hotels and inns.

- ✓ **Central Bar**, corner of Market and College streets, St. Andrews (☎ **01334-478-296**). If you're looking for a quintessential pub, this is a fine one, popular with students and offering a good selection of draft beers, including "guest" ales. Open Monday through Saturday 11 a.m. to 11:45 p.m., and Sunday from 12:30 p.m.
- ✓ **Whistlebinkies**, 73–75 St. Mary's Wynd, Stirling (☎ **01786-451-256**). The name sounds like a place for kids, and young patrons are indeed welcome here and even get their own kid's menu. But adults will appreciate the comfortable booths and selection of good beers and whiskies as well. The fireplace and stained-glass windows are nice touches. The building, just down the hill from the Castle, dates to 1595 and originally housed the castle's blacksmith. Open daily noon to midnight.

Fast Facts: Fife and the Central Highlands

Area Code

The area code for Stirling is **01786**; St. Andrews is **01334**; and Aberfoyle and Callander (in the Trossachs) are **01877**. You need to dial the area code only if you're calling from outside the city you want to reach.

Emergencies

Dial ☎ **999** for police, fire, or ambulance.

ATMs

ATMs are readily available at banks in Stirling and St. Andrews.

Hospitals

The hospitals in the area are Stirling Royal Infirmary, Livilands Road, south of the town center (☎ 01786-434-000) and St. Andrews Memorial Hospital, Abbey Walk, south of Abbey Street (☎ 01334-472-327).

Information

You can find tourist offices at 41 Dumbarton Rd., Stirling (☎ 01786-475-019) and 70 Market St., St. Andrews (☎ 01334-472-021). Offices open only in the summer are located on Main Street, Aberfoyle (☎ 01877-382-352), and next to the castle, Stirling (☎ 01786-47-9901).

Internet Access

The best place to surf the Web in this area is at CommsPort, 83 Market St., St. Andrews (☎ 01334-475-181; www.commsport.com). The shop's hours are Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. until 5:30 p.m., and Sunday from 10:30 a.m. until 6 p.m. The cost is £6 (\$11) per hour.

Mail

Post offices are at 127 South St., St. Andrews (☎ 01334-472-321), and 4 Broad St., Stirling (☎ 01786-474-537).

Chapter 17

Tayside and the Northeast

In This Chapter

- ▶ Finding the right place to stay and dine
 - ▶ Touring a castle or two
 - ▶ Enjoying a dram of whisky at a Speyside distillery
-

This chapter covers a fairly large chunk of northern Scotland: From Dundee and Perth on the River Tay up to the oil-boom city of Aberdeen, and the eastern Moray coast. Here you will find several castles on the eastern fringes of the Grampian Mountains — including Balmoral (the official royal family retreat) — and a host of whisky distilleries. Yes, the ride up the highway (A93) to Braemar can be pretty spectacular. But compared to the Highlands (see Chapter 18), which encroaches on this region from the west, I just can't get as excited about the countryside stretching from Tayside to the Northeast and port towns such as Fraserburgh or Peterhead.

I've kept this chapter succinct, and I suggest that if you head in this direction, you should concentrate briefly on a couple of towns, such as Perth or Pitlochry. You can trek through Royal Deeside, visit a few castles, and finally hit a distillery or two near the River Spey.

There are two bona fide cities in this region: Dundee and Aberdeen. The latter is known as the Granite City, because many of the city center buildings are made from the same sturdy if somewhat dull grey stone. Aberdeen is also Scotland's natural gas capital, the place where the oil industry, tapping petroleum reserves way out in the North Sea, has their mainland operations. The city has plenty of bars and restaurants but is rather short on attractions, if you ask me.

Perth is a rather attractive town situated on the River Tay between two large parks, North and South Inch. A royal burgh since the 1200s, Perth has a couple of fine restaurants and lies near one of Scotland's most historic attractions: Scone Palace. Pitlochry is one of the most visited inland resort towns in Scotland, mainly because it's on a main artery (the A9) leading up to Inverness and the Highlands.

Getting There

Getting to and around this part of Scotland isn't quite as easy as it is in other parts of the country. Trains run to Perth, Dundee, and Aberdeen, but the branch system isn't well developed. Bus service to the larger towns is reasonable, but in the end, you're likely to want a car to see the main attractions.



- ✓ **By car:** From Edinburgh, take the M90 north to Perth, where you have the option of using the A90 along the east coast to Aberdeen, the A9 inland through Pitlochry, or the narrower A93 via Braemar. From Glasgow, use the M80 (A80) to the M9 (A9), which takes you to Perth.

The scenic route is A93, which goes past Braemar, Ballater, and Banchory on its way to Aberdeen.

- ✓ **By bus: Scottish Citylink** (☎ 0870-550-5050; www.citylink.co.uk) routes cover the two cities and major towns. A typical bus round-trip bus fare from Edinburgh to Aberdeen is about £30 (\$56) and the journey takes about four hours. A trip from Glasgow to Perth costs around £12 (\$22) and takes approximately 1½ hours.

- ✓ **By train: First ScotRail** (☎ 08457-48-49-50; www.firstscotrail.com) travels to cities and major towns in the region, including Perth, Pitlochry, Dundee, Arbroath, and Aberdeen. You'll then have to rely on buses or local taxis to venture further after you arrive in these towns. ScotRail service dovetails with long-distance trains from England, which are run by **Great North Eastern Railway** (☎ 08457-225-225) and **Virgin Trains** (☎ 0870-789-1234). You can also call National Railway Enquiries at the First ScotRail phone number above for details. Just to give you an idea of prices: A standard round-trip ticket from Glasgow to Aberdeen costs around £60 (\$110). The trip takes at least 2½ hours.

- ✓ **By ferry: NorthLink Orkney & Shetland Ferries Ltd.** (☎ 01855-851-144) runs services between Aberdeen and Lerwick.

- ✓ **By plane:** The **Aberdeen Airport** (☎ 01224-722-331) is 9.5km (6 miles) north of town. Planes connect Aberdeen to Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, and the Shetland and Orkney Islands. A typical flight on British Airways from London to Aberdeen costs between £80 and £250 (\$148–\$463) for a round-trip ticket. The **Dundee Airport** (☎ 01382-643-242) is on Riverside Drive; it has service to Aberdeen and Edinburgh.

Spending the Night

Because it's a fairly large area, you should choose accommodations nearest to the attractions you want to see. Some of the hotels and guest-houses listed here have earned star ratings from the tourist board; see

Chapter 8 for a description of the rating system. Rates include full breakfast unless otherwise stated. And remember: You may well get a better deal than the advertised “rack” rates.

Braemar Lodge Hotel**\$\$ Braemar**

This homey, granite country house — a renovated Victorian hunting lodge — offers unpretentious, comfortable accommodations. If the hotel is small, the rooms are reasonably spacious and most have views of the mountains. At the oak-paneled bar, guests can sip a whisky nightcap in front of a log fire. If the Victorian shooting lodge isn’t down-home enough for you, log cabins with kitchens are also available for rent by the week.

See map p. 335. 6 Glenshee Rd. ☎ **013397-41627**. www.braemarlodge.co.uk. Rack rates: £70 (\$130) double. MC, V.

***Craigellachie Hotel*****\$\$\$ Speyside**

As it is close to a clutch of whisky distilleries, including the Glenfiddich, this charming and hospitable four-star hotel is perhaps best known for its Quaich Bar. It is virtually a library of single malt whiskies, with some 700 bottles lining the shelves around the entire room. Find the one you prefer and the bartender will pour you a dram. Since 1893, the hotel has served as a welcome retreat in the heart of rural Speyside. Bedrooms and public lounges are comfortable and well furnished, while the restaurant is accomplished, too. By the way, it is pronounced roughly kray-gell-ah-key.

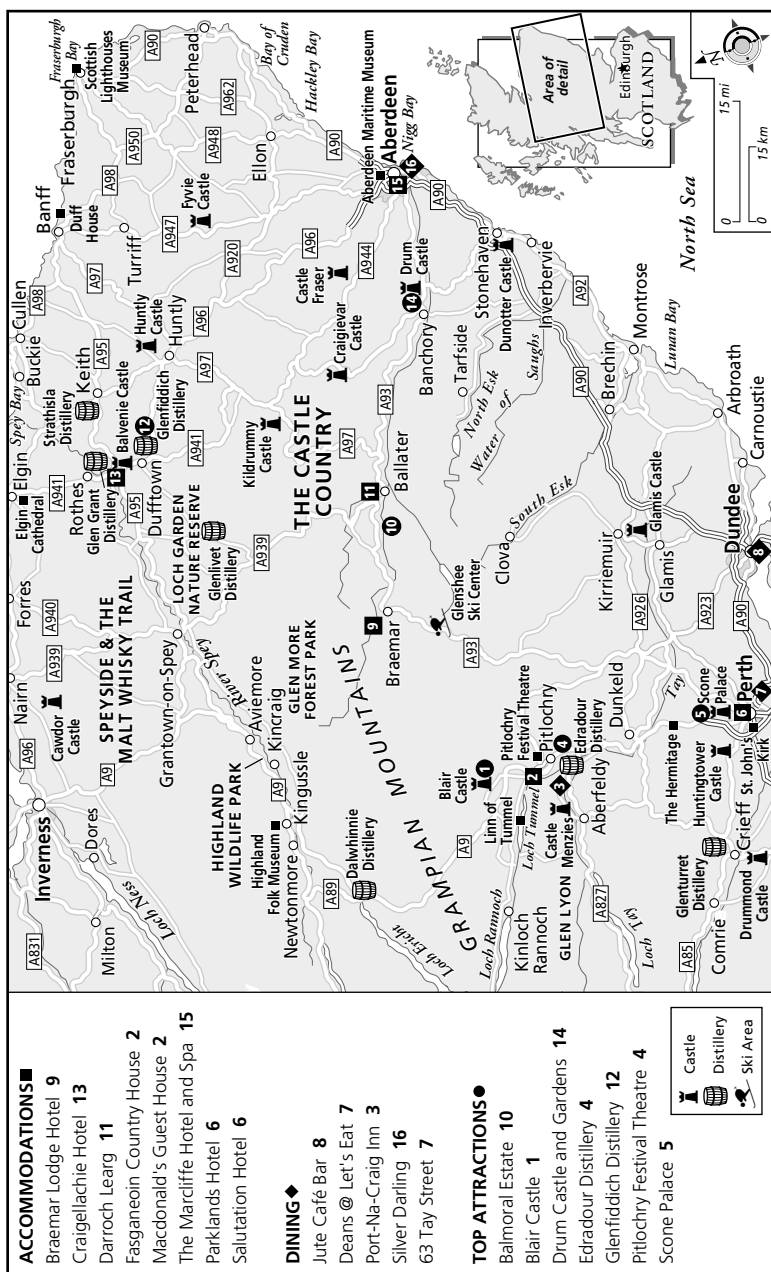
See map p. 335. Off the A93, Craigellachie (3km/2 miles northwest of Dufftown). ☎ **01340-881-204**. Fax: 01340-881-253. www.craigellachie.com. Rack rates: £135–£155 (\$250–\$287). AE, DC, MC, V.

Darroch Learg**\$\$\$ Ballater**

Set on a wooded hillside overlooking the road and the River Dee beyond, this is one of the more highly regarded hotels in the entire region. Stately but friendly, with an excellent reputation for food, Darroch Learg is my choice if you’re spending a night near the royal spread in Balmoral. A dozen overnight rooms in the main lodge are complemented with five more in a nearby annex. All are well appointed and comfortable.

See map p. 335. Braemar Road (off the A93) on western side of town. ☎ **013397-55443**. Fax: 013397-55252. www.darrochlearg.co.uk. Rack rates: £130–£160 (\$241–\$296) double. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed in Jan.

Tayside and the Northeast



ACCOMMODATIONS

- Braemar Lodge Hotel 9
- Craigellachie Hotel 13
- Darroch Learg 11
- Fasganoinn Country House 2
- Macdonald's Guest House 2
- The MacLiffe Hotel and Spa 15
- Parklands Hotel 6
- Salutation Hotel 6

DINING

- Jute Café Bar 8
- Deans @ Let's Eat 7
- Port-Na-Craig Inn 3
- Silver Darling 16
- 63 Tay Street 7

TOP ATTRACTIONS

- Balmoral Estate 10
- Blair Castle 1
- Drum Castle and Gardens 14
- Edradour Distillery 4
- Glenfiddich Distillery 12
- Piltchoy Festival Theatre 4
- Scone Palace 5

 Castle
 Distillery
 Ski Area

Fasganeoin Country House
\$\$ Pitlochry

Just off the main drag, this house hotel is a few minutes' walk from Pitlochry town center or a riverside stroll to the Festival Theatre. The rooms (not all en suite) are comfy and cute, featuring a flower and antique motif, and some rooms have cozy sunken floors. The peaceful grounds offer a lovely respite. For the price, it's hard to beat Fasganeoin (pronounced *faze-gan-non*, it means "place for the birds" in Gaelic).

See map p. 335. Perth Road, opposite the Blair Atholl Distillery. ☎ 01796-472-387. Fax: 01796-474-285. www.fasganeoincountryhouse.co.uk. Rack rates: £64–£76 (\$118–\$141) double with private bathroom. MC, V. Open mid-Mar to Oct.



Macdonald's Restaurant & Guest House
\$ Pitlochry

This popular inn and dining room on the main drag through Pitlochry has a loyal following. And why not? The rooms (refurb'ed in 2005) are nicely decorated and the hospitality is generous. But more importantly, you would be very hard-pressed to beat the price these days. In addition to the restaurant, the premises also have a well-regarded fish and chip cafe.

See map p. 335. 140 Atholl Rd. ☎ 01796-472-170. Fax: 01796-474-221. www.macdonalds-pitlochry.co.uk. Rack rates: £50 (\$93) double. AE, MC, V.

The Marcliffe Hotel and Spa
\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$ Aberdeen

This hotel, also known as Marcliffe at Pitfodels, is perhaps the best place to stay in Aberdeen. It's certainly often recommended, probably because the Marcliffe combines high-class five-star accommodation with intimate attention. The family-run, three-story hotel sits among trees and has a country feel despite its proximity to the city. All of the individually decorated rooms are comfortable and spacious, the beds huge, and the antique furniture in good taste. Mikhail Gorbachev officially opened the place as a guest in 1993, and if it's good enough for the father of *glasnost*, it should be good enough for you.

See map p. 335. North Deeside Road, off the A92. ☎ 01224-861-000. Fax: 01224-868-860. www.marcliffe.com. Rack rates: £155–£185 (\$287–\$342) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Parklands Hotel
\$\$–\$\$\$ Perth

This four-star small hotel occupies a stylish Georgian townhouse once owned by a lord provost (mayor). Overlooking the woods of South Inch Park and near the railroad station, the Parklands is a peaceful oasis in a bustling little town. The spacious rooms are nicely decorated and recently this became the first hotel in Perth to offer wireless broadband (Wi-Fi). There are two restaurants, either the **Acanthus** or the less formal **No. 1 the Bank**.

See map p. 335. 2 St. Leonard's Bank. ☎ **01738-622-451**. Fax: 01738-622-046. www.theparklandshotel.com. Rack rates: £100–£155 (\$190–\$287) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Salutation Hotel

\$\$ Perth

It's right on the main street of Perth, but the Salutation is a quiet haven of big beds and friendly service. After you've walked all over town and had your dinner, relax with a nightcap in the huge overstuffed couches by the fire in the lobby. It's no wonder the staff has its act together — the hotel has been welcoming guests since 1699, making it one of the oldest in Scotland.

See map p. 335. 34 South St., near the River Tay. ☎ **01738-630-066**. www.strathmorehotels.com. Rack rates: £80–£120 (\$148–\$222) double. AE, MC, V.

Dining Locally

Your best option in the area may be right in your own hotel, but here are a few other places to consider.

Jute

\$–\$\$ Dundee INTERNATIONAL

This pleasant cafe/bar is part of the Dundee Contemporary Arts complex in the so-called cultural quarter of the city, and it's one of the highlights of the city. After the restaurant closes for the night, it's a lively bar and one of the places to be seen in Dundee. The food here is as imaginative and as modern as the décor.

See map p. 335. 152 Nethergate. ☎ **01382-909-246**. www.dca.org.uk. Reservations not required. Main courses: £8–£15 (\$15–\$28). MC, V. Open: daily 10:30 a.m.–midnight (from noon on Sun).

Deans @ Let's Eat

\$\$–\$\$\$ Perth SCOTTISH/FRENCH

In 2005, chef Willie Deans took over ownership from Tony Heath and put his stamp on the restaurant formerly known as simply Let's Eat. Deans is a member of the Master Chefs of Great Britain, and his cooking usually has its share of flourishes. A typical menu will have two beef, two fish, and two poultry main courses and one vegetarian main course, with dishes such as free-range chicken supreme wrapped in parmesan pasta with a concasse of tomatoes and basil.

See map p. 335. 77–79 Kinnoull St. ☎ **01738-643-377**. Reservations recommended. Main courses: £11–£19 (\$20–\$35). MC, V. Open: Tues–Sat noon–2 p.m. and 6:30–9:45 p.m.

Port-Na-Craig Inn**\$\$-\$\$\$ Pitlochry SCOTTISH/SEAFOOD**

A few years back, this place captured the attention of the Michelin inspectors, who bestowed their award for good food at reasonable prices. Since then, those proprietors have sold up and moved on, but current management (who operate the Strathgarry restaurant in town) has ambitions to ensure this restaurant near the Festival Theatre remains the place to eat in Pitlochry. Typical dishes include loin of venison with pearl barley risotto or grilled organic salmon.

See map p. 335. Off Foss Road. ☎ 01796-472-777. www.portnacraig.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses: £8-£18 (\$15-\$33). MC, V. Open: Tues-Sat 12:30-2 p.m. and 6-9 p.m., Sun 1-2:30 p.m. Closed Dec 25 to mid-Mar.

Silver Darling**\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ Aberdeen SEAFOOD**

Getting to this restaurant at the water's edge is a bit of an odyssey, but it's worth it. In the dining room overlooking the entrance to the harbor, you find succulent dishes such as roast filet of turbot with nut crust or steamed halibut with a lobster and scallop mousse. The menu is pricey, but from the rooftop views overlooking the sea to some of the highest-quality food in the area, Silver Darling is worth the extra dough.

See map p. 335. Pocra Quay, North Pier. Follow the road from Aberdeen harbor along the water until you reach the beach, turn right. ☎ 01224-576-229. Reservations required. Main courses: £20 (\$38). AE, MC, V. Open: Mon-Fri noon-2 p.m., Mon-Sat 7-9:30 p.m.

63 Tay Street**\$\$-\$\$\$ Perth MODERN SCOTTISH**

This restaurant, run by Jeremy and Shona Wares, rivals the better-known Let's Eat (see listing above) for good eating in Perth. The bright, white-washed, and contemporary dining space overlooks the River Tay, and dishes include main courses such as milk-poached smoked Shetland haddock with caramelized spinach. Lunches are a good value for two courses at around £14 (\$27).

See map p. 335. 63 Tay St. ☎ 01738-441-451. www.63taystreet.com. Reservations recommended. Two courses prix fixe: £22 (\$43). AE, MC, V. Open: Tues-Sat noon-2 p.m. and 6:30-9 p.m.

Exploring Tayside and the Northeast

The territory from Tayside to the Northeast offers a host of scenic drives and historical castles and palaces. Tayside, carved out of the old counties of Perth and Angus, is named for its major river, the 192km-long (119-mile) Tay. The river's waters offer some of Europe's best salmon and trout fishing, although many say it's not as good as it used to be. As

your journey into Scotland's Northeast, you pass moorland and peaty lochs, wood glens and rushing rivers, granite-stone villages and ancient edifices.



A "Scotland's Treasures" joint ticket offers admission to Blair Castle, Scone Palace, Glamis Castle, and more at significantly reduced prices. Tickets are sold at Blair, Glamis, and Scone visitor centers.

The top attractions

Balmoral Estate Ballater

Welcome to the vacation home of Queen Elizabeth and the Windsors. Because Balmoral is a working residence for the royal family, visitor access is limited to the ballroom, garden, and grounds. On display are pictures of rooms as well as clothing and gifts belonging to the family. You're free to walk the extensive grounds and gardens. Because the castle is closed to tourists when the Queen is in town, it's a good idea to call in advance of your visit. Allow about 1½ hours.

See map p. 335. Balmoral, Ballater, off the A93 (13km/8 miles from Banchory). ☎ **01339-742-334**. www.balmoralcastle.com. Admission: £7 (\$13) adults, £6 (\$11) seniors and students, £3 (\$5.55) children younger than 16. Open: Apr–July daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Wed Nov to mid-Dec for guided tours. Closed Aug–Apr.



Blair Castle Blair Atholl

This fine, fairy-tale-white castle up the road from Pitlochry has much to see. It's chock-full o' stuff: art, armor, flags, stag horns, and more items not typically found on the standard furniture-and-portrait castle tour. Between the 30 rooms and the grounds (including a walled garden), the castle has something (such as pony trekking) for just about everyone. The most common theme in the Duke of Atholl's decorating is hunting. Deer antlers decorate the long hallway and ballroom, and the weaponry collection spans hundreds of years. Blair Castle's long history includes a couple of Jacobite sieges and a sleepover by Queen Victoria. But while the castle is the ancient seat of the dukes and earls of Atholl, and although Duncan Atholl was the king murdered in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the real Duncan didn't live here. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 335. Blair Atholl, off the A9 (10km/6 miles west of Pitlochry). ☎ **01796-481-207**. www.blair-castle.co.uk. Admission: £7.50 (\$14) adults, £6.50 (\$12) seniors, £5 (\$9.25) children younger than 16, £19 (\$35) family. Open: Apr–Oct daily 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.; Nov–Mar Tue and Sat 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Braemar Highland gathering

The average population of the village of Braemar is around 500 people. But when the village holds the Braemar Highland Games (☎ 01339-741-944) every September, the population jumps by 20,000 or more, and that includes Queen Elizabeth, who usually attends. This purely Scottish experience of feats of strength and traditional dance is a lot of fun for outsiders, as well. Plenty of crafts and food abound.

Drum Castle and Gardens Banchory

The family seat of the Irwins of Drum since the times of Robert the Bruce, this is the oldest intact building in the care of the National Trust for Scotland. Built at different times, it has a medieval tower, Jacobean mansion, and Victorian additions. Nothing in particular in the Irvine family collection is remarkable, but you're likely to enjoy the walk through the house, which includes an impressive vaulted library in the oldest section of the castle. Don't miss the grounds and gardens, a highlight of which is a collection of historic roses. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 335. Drumoak, off the A93 near Peterculter (16km/10 miles west of Aberdeen. ☎ 01330-811-204. www.drum-castle.org.uk. Admission: £8 (\$15) adults; £5.25 (\$9.70) seniors, students, and children younger than 16; £20 (\$38) family. Open: Easter–Sept daily except Tues and Fri noon–5 p.m. Closed Oct–Easter.

Edradour Distillery Pitlochry

You get a good primer on the whisky-making process at this distillery, one of Scotland's smallest, which produces only 12 casks of whisky a week that are matured for ten years before bottling. It's a cute site, too, with little white-washed buildings with red doors and friendly staff using the smallest size spirit stills that the law allows. Of course, it's quality, not quantity that counts. The tours and a wee dram of whisky are free. Allow about 1½ hours.

See map p. 335. Off the A924, just outside Pitlochry. ☎ 01796-472-095. www.edradour.co.uk. Admission: free. Open: Mar–Oct Mon–Sat 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun noon–4 p.m., Nov–Feb Mon–Sat 10 a.m.–4 p.m., Sun noon–4 p.m.

Glenfiddich Distillery Near Dufftown

In contrast to Edradour, Glenfiddich is one of the largest distilleries in Scotland, owned by William Grant & Sons, a family who has been making the national spirit since 1887. The tour starts with a video explaining the ins and outs of whisky-making, before seeing the mash-tuns and huge 5-m-tall (1.5-ft.) wash-backs made of Douglas fir, the expansive bonded warehouses,

and finally the bottling factory. In addition to the standard tour, the “Connoisseur’s Tour” is a 2½ hour exploration of the distillery that concludes with a tutored nosing and tasting session (£15/\$28). The shop sells a host of popular and extremely rare vintage single malts.

See map p. 335. Off the A941 (88km/55miles northeast of Aberdeen). ☎ 01340-820-373. <http://distillery.glenfiddich-whisky.co.uk>. Admission: Free. Open: Mon–Sat 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Sun noon–4:30 p.m.



If you are truly keen on whisky, you can follow **Scotland’s Malt Whisky Trail** throughout this region, visiting several distilleries, just as you might tour the chateaux of Bordeaux or wineries in the Napa Valley. For more information on itineraries, log on to www.maltwhiskytrail.com.

Pitlochry Festival Theatre **Pitlochry**

This arts center on the south side of the River Tummel is the jewel of Pitlochry. People come here from throughout the region for a bit of culture. In addition to new and classic dramatic performances or exhibitions at the center’s art gallery, the Festival Theatre also offers a busy schedule of folk concerts, literary talks, and even culinary events. It’s best to book tickets in advance.

See map p. 335. Across the river from Main Street. ☎ 01796-484-626. www.pitlochry.org.uk. Theater tickets: £15–£22 (\$28–\$41).

Scone Palace **Near Perth**

Scone (pronounced *scoon*) is the first established capital of a unified Scotland, the hallowed ground where most of the country’s early kings were enthroned and latter ones, up to Charles II, were crowned. For years it held the infamous Stone of Destiny or Stone of Scone (see story below). The castellated Scone Palace you will find today, however, only dates to the early 1800s, though parts of earlier buildings have been incorporated. Home to the earls of Mansfield, it is full of fine furniture, ivories, clocks, and needlework, and of particular note is the renowned porcelain collection. There is also a hall dedicated to the coronation of kings. The grounds are also quite nice. A replica Stone of Scone marks the location of its historical spot on Moot Hill by a little chapel. Allow two hours.

See map p. 335. Braemar Road, on the A93. ☎ 01738-552-300. www.scone-palace.net. Admission: palace and grounds £7.20 (\$13) adults, £6.20 (\$11) seniors and students, £4.20 (\$7.80) children younger than 16, £23 (\$43) family. Open: late Mar–Oct daily 9:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Closed Nov to mid-Mar.

The Stone of Scone: A long strange trip

Until just over 710 years ago, Scone Palace was the home of the Stone of Destiny, aka the Stone of Scone, on which important early rulers such as David I, Macbeth, and Robert the Bruce were enthroned. According to myth, the hunk of sandstone dates to Biblical times, serving as Jacob's pillow. It reputedly traveled through Egypt, Spain, and Italy before coming to Scotland with Celtic pilgrims in the 9th century. It was then deployed for the enthronement of Dalriadic kings in Argyll before being used by Scottish royalty at Scone. So powerful was the lure of the stone that in 1296 English King Edward I stole and then lodged it in Westminster Abbey, where English kings and queens hoped to get some of its magic during coronations. On Christmas Day, 1950, the stone was purloined by Scottish nationalists, who put it in Arbroath Abbey, where the 1320 Scottish declaration of sovereignty was signed. However, it was soon returned to London. In 1996, it was finally returned officially to Scotland with plenty of manufactured fanfare and is now on display in Edinburgh Castle. Presumably, this is where it stays.

Other cool things to see and do



- ✓ **Auchingarrich Wildlife Centre**, on the B827 near Comrie (☎ 01764-679-469; www.auchingarrich.co.uk), offers a host of wild and domesticated animals (from lambs to emus), a wild-bird hatchery, and hiking trails. Younger children can burn off some steam at the facilities "adventure" playground.
- ✓ **Barrie's Birthplace**, Brechin Road, Kirriemuir (☎ 01575-572-646). This museum is devoted to the creator of *Peter Pan*, J.M. Barrie, who was born here in 1860. Watch for the little fast-moving light that represents everyone's favorite fairy, Tinkerbell. The museum also contains manuscripts and artifacts from the writer's life.
- ✓ **Discovery Point**, Discovery Quay, Dundee (☎ 01382-201-245; www.rrsdiscovery.com). This is home to the famous RRS *Discovery*, the ship sailed by Captain Robert Scott to Antarctica. You can tour the vessel and get all the details of Scott's historic trip. By the way, RRS stands for "royal research ship."
- ✓ **Dunottar Castle**, near Stonehaven (☎ 01569-762-173), is best known for its breathtaking views. Much of the red sandstone structure, pitched above the cliffs and the North Sea, still stands. Often the object of sieges, in the 17th century it was used as a prison for nearly 200 recalcitrant Presbyterian Covenanters, and visitors can see the cellar where they were held.
- ✓ **Glamis Castle**, near Forfar (☎ 01307-840-393; www.glamis-castle.co.uk). This castle is notable for being the family home of the late Queen Mother, born Elizabeth Bowes Lyon, wife of King George VI and mother of Queen Elizabeth. A royal residence since 1372, it's actually more famous for being the (historically inaccurate) setting for Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.



If you want to visit more castles than I have given details for, then follow the official **Castle Trail** linking about a dozen historic piles in the Northeast. Log on to the Aberdeen and Grampian tourist board Web site www.agtb.org/scottish-castles.htm for more information.

- ✔ **Museum of Scottish Lighthouses**, Kinnaird Head, Fraserburgh (☎ 01346-511-022). This museum is a must-see for lighthouse buffs and is recommended if you have any interest in the towers of all shapes and sizes that have kept sailors safe at sea for more than 200 years.

Shopping for Local Treasures

With its cluster of tartan and woolens shops, such as Macnaughtons, Pitlochry offers the classic Highland gateway shopping experience, where you may just find the perfect wooly jumper to keep you warm. Both Dundee and Aberdeen offer a full range of shops these days, with many of the stores you would expect to find in provincial cities. As ever, tourist attractions invariably have visitor centers with gifts and souvenirs. Also consider visiting the shops below.

- ✔ **Baxter's Highland Village**, Fochabers, (☎ 01343-820-666; www.baxters.com). The HQ and retail outlet for Baxter's food products, which are primarily jams and soups. Besides the food shop, you can also stop in the store Coat & Swagger for clothing and gifts. Call to confirm seasonal opening hours.
- ✔ **Le Chocolatier**, 29 Scott St., Perth (☎ 01738-620-039). This heavenly shop offers lots of tasty handmade sweets, from butter fudges to chocolates for diabetics. Open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- ✔ **McEwan Gallery**, on A939, near Ballater (☎ 013397-55429). If you're looking for art, this gallery is a trove of 19th and 20th century Scottish artworks. They are nice high-end souvenirs. Call to confirm seasonal hours.

Doing the Pub Crawl

While you might happily settle for your hotel's bar — especially if you're at the Craiggellachie or Darroch Learg — or one of the many rural taverns dotted about the region, for a serious crawl Aberdeen has a range of classic pubs, stylish bars, and nightlife options. Here are a couple of the better traditional options.

- ✔ **Old Blackfriars**, 52 Castlegate (☎ 01224-581-922). This pub features cask-conditioned real Scottish ales and a host of honest pub grub served all day until about 7:30 p.m. Open Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to midnight and Sunday 12:30 p.m. to 11 p.m.

- ✓ **The Prince of Wales**, 7 St. Nicholas Lane (☎ 01224-640-597). Dating back to 1850, this is possibly the best place to grab a pint in Aberdeen. The Prince of Wales is an old-fashioned pub with cozy booths and an excellent spectrum of ales. The only problem is that it can get crowded, but that's the price of popularity. Open through Saturday 11 a.m. to midnight, and Sunday noon to midnight.

Fast Facts: Tayside to the Northeast

Area Code

The area codes for this region are: Perth **01738**, Aberfeldy **01887**, Pitlochry **01796**, Dundee **01382**, Aberdeen **01224**, Elgin **01343**, and finally the royally confusing six-digit prefix in the Royal Deeside region and Braemar **013397**. You need to dial the area code only if you're calling from outside the city you want to reach.

ATMs

Your best bets for banks with ATM machines are in Aberdeen, Dundee, and Perth.

Emergencies

Dial ☎ **999** for police, fire, or ambulance.

Hospitals

Hospitals in the area are Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Foresterhill, on the west end of Union Street (☎ 01224-681-818), and Perth Royal Infirmary (☎ 01738-623-311), Taymount Terrace, on the west side of town. Aberfeldy's cottage hospital (☎ 01887-820-3140) is on Old Crieff Road. Dundee Royal Infirmary (☎ 01382-434-664) is on Barrack Road.

Information

Tourist offices are located at: The Square, Aberfeldy (☎ 01887-820-276); 22 Atholl Rd., Pitlochry (☎ 01796-472-215); 4 City Sq., Dundee (☎ 01382-434-664; www.angusanddundee.co.uk); The Mews, Mars Road, Braemar (☎ 01339-741-600); Lower City Mills, West Mill Street, Perth (☎ 01738-627-958; www.perthshire.co.uk); Elgin (☎ 01343-542-666); and St. Nicholas House, Aberdeen (☎ 01224-288-828).

Internet Access

The best place for Internet access in the region is CommsPort, 31–33 Loch St., Aberdeen (☎ 01224-626-468; www.commsport.com). The shop is open Monday through Wednesday and Friday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursday from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Access to the Web costs £3 (\$5.55) per hour.

Mail

Post offices are located at 371 George St., Aberdeen (☎ 01224-632-904); 3 Main St., Perth (☎ 01738-624-637); and 92 Atholl Rd., Pitlochry (☎ 01796-472-965).

Chapter 18

The Highlands

In This Chapter

- ▶ Finding a bed for the night, both on and off the beaten path
 - ▶ Hunting (briefly) for the Loch Ness Monster
 - ▶ Exploring the highest mountains and deepest lochs in the country
 - ▶ Seeing the best of the rugged West Coast and its pristine beaches
-

After Edinburgh and Glasgow, the Highlands region is the most popular draw for visitors to Scotland — and for good reason. The tourist trail through the Highlands can include breathtaking Glen Coe and the beautifully desolate Rannoch Moor; the scenic “Road to the Isles” west of Fort William into Lochaber, where mountains meet the sea; remote western peninsulas such as Morvern, Ardnamurchan, or Knoydart; the Great Glen and, of course, the most famous body of water in Scotland, Loch Ness. But, honestly, that’s only the beginning.



It’s easy to be overwhelmed when you’re trying to visit an area this remote, divided by lochs and mountain ranges, connected only by winding highways and one-lane roads. Use a map to plot your course and mark off the things you want to see. Then figure out the best order in which to see them, whether coming or going.

The capital of the Highlands is Inverness and it is the region’s only bona fide city. The River Ness runs through the town center, which has shops, restaurants, bars, and accommodations (as well as a nice castle and museum, but few other attractions). I suggest that Inverness is best as a one-day stop or perhaps a comfortable base from which to explore parts of the Highlands.

Fort William lies at the foot of Ben Nevis (the highest mountain in Great Britain), at the far end of Loch Linnhe. This location, on the roads leading north through the Great Glen to Loch Ness and going west towards Glenfinnan, means that tourists regularly pass through Fort William, which has shops and restaurants to accommodate visitors.

I don’t really consider either Inverness or Fort William as highlights. West Coast villages and towns really worth seeing include Arisaig, Mallaig, Plockton, and Ullapool. In the east sit Tain and Dornoch, while Durness is in the far north. Durness features a small memorial in memory

of the late Beatle John Lennon, who often went there on vacations. If you're looking for truly wild and sparsely populated territory, I would suggest traveling north of the fishing port Ullapool, into the Assynt and Sutherland regions of the northwest Highlands.

Getting There

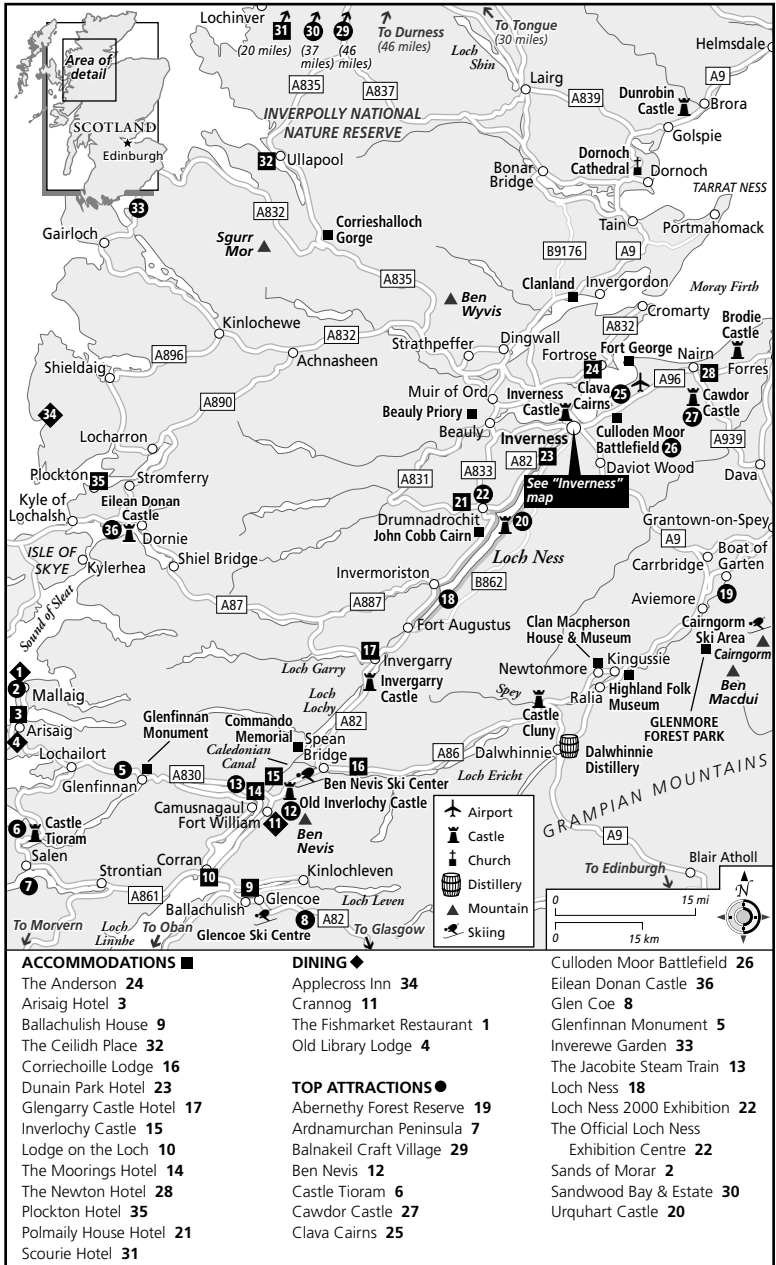
Inverness is well served by buses and trains. If you're making the big leap north from Glasgow or Edinburgh, you may want to consider taking public transportation to reach the capital of the Highlands. Then, after you arrive, you can rent a car. You can also take the train from Glasgow to Fort William and transfer there for another train up to Mallaig — possibly the most scenic train ride in the entire U.K. Local bus services crisscross the Highlands, but, for optimal mobility, a car is quite useful.

- ✓ **By car:** The A82 runs through a good portion of the Highlands from Loch Lomond and Crianlarich north to Fort William and then into Inverness. From the east, the A9 from Perth heads north to Inverness and then on to Tain, as well. Other key roads in the region include the A830 (the so-called Road to the Isles) from Fort William to Mallaig; the A87 from Invergarry to the Kyle of Lochalsh; the A835 from Inverness to Ullapool; and the A836 from Tain to Tongue and the far north coast.
- ✓ **By bus:** **Scottish Citylink** (☎ 0870-550-5050; www.citylink.co.uk) routes hit all the major Highland towns.
- ✓ **By train:** **First ScotRail** (☎ 0845-748-4950; www.firstscotrail.com) travels to major towns in the region, including Fort William and Mallaig on the West Highland Lines and Inverness, Tain, Kyle of Lochalsh, and even Thurso. You have to rely on buses or local taxis after you arrive by train, however. ScotRail service to Inverness dovetails with long-distance trains from England run by Great North Eastern Railway. You can also call National Railway Enquiries at the First ScotRail phone number above for details.
- ✓ **By plane:** **Inverness/Dalcross Airport** (☎ 01463-23-2471) is at Dalcross, 13km (8 miles) east of Inverness. The airport handles flights to and from Glasgow and Edinburgh.
- ✓ **By ferry:** **Caledonian MacBrayne** (☎ 01475-650-100; www.calmac.co.uk) — or CalMac, as it's more colloquially known — serves 22 islands and four peninsulas over the West Coast of Scotland. In the Highlands, this includes service from Mallaig to Skye and Ullapool to the Outer Hebrides.

Spending the Night

You may want to stay in tourist-friendly Inverness or Fort William, but the rest of the Highlands towns and villages hide some real treats, too.

The Highlands



Some accommodations have earned star ratings from the tourist board; see Chapter 8 for a description of the rating system and information on self-catering accommodations, of which there are quite a few in the Highlands. Rates listed here include full breakfast, unless otherwise stated. You may well get a better deal than the advertised “rack” rates.



In addition to the options listed below, also have a quick read through the “Dining Locally” section that follows. I’ve highlighted a few of the restaurants listed there that also have limited overnight accommodation.



The Anderson

\$\$ **The Black Isle**

Formerly known as the Royal Hotel in the handsome seaside village of Fortrose, the Anderson prides itself as a gastronomic oasis in the Highlands. Scottish ingredients get the international treatment, whether it’s a bowl Shetland mussels steamed in a red curry and coconut broth or plate of wild Scotch venison goulash. The pub’s no slouch either, boasting 160 single malt whiskies, real ales from Scotland and England, and some 60 Belgian beers. The nine overnight rooms combine antiques with modern conveniences in this historic building, while the welcome from owners Jim and Anne Anderson is always warm and accommodating.

See map p. 347. Union Street, Fortrose. ☎ 01381-620-236. www.theanderson.co.uk. Rack rates: £75–£85 (\$139–\$157) double. MC, V.



Arisaig Hotel

\$\$–\$\$\$ **Arisaig**

With views of the lovely bay at Arisaig, its small harbor, and the isles beyond, this hotel captures the essence of the Western Highlands and island experience without even trying. Rooms are tidy and well appointed, if not exceptionally large. The best ones face onto the sea. A restaurant and popular local pub (renovated in early 2007) as well as a playroom for children are on the premises.

See map p. 347. A830 at Arisaig harbor. ☎ 01687-450-210. Fax: 01687-450-310. www.arisaighotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £100 (\$185) double. MC, V.

Ballachulish House

\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$ **Ballachulish**

The small eight-room hotel between Glen Coe and Fort William is renowned for its meals, which have earned recognition from the pernickety Michelin guide. Dinner is a three- to five-course gourmet excursion using mostly local produce in dishes such as smoked duck with orange and elderberry sauce or seared scallops with chive creamed potatoes. Rooms are generally roomy and well-appointed, while the hotel’s public spaces include a drawing room, library, and walled garden. If that wasn’t enough, in 2001, the 9-hole Ballachulish House Golf Course was completed adjacent to the hotel.

See map p. 347. Off A82 on A825. ☎ **01855-811-266**. Fax: 01855-811-498. www.ballachulishhouse.com. Rack rates: £125–£188 (\$231–\$348) double. AE, MC, V.

Ballifeary House Hotel

\$\$ Inverness

This four-star guesthouse is in a quiet residential area along the River Ness and within easy walking distance of the Inverness city center. You won't find a closer accommodation — without hearing car horns and pedestrians — to the heart of the Highland capital. The Edwardian villa has lovely sitting rooms and six well-kept overnight units that exude comfort. Families take note, however: The minimum age for guests is 15.

See map p. 357. 10 Ballifeary Rd. ☎ **01463-235-572**. Fax: 01463-717-583. www.ballifearyhousehotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £60–£76 (\$111–\$141) double. MC, V.

The Ceilidh Place

\$\$–\$\$\$ Ullapool

How many hotels organize their rooms on the basis of the mini-library that each contains? Fair to say, not many. But here at the Ceilidh Place, which has its own acclaimed bookshop on the premises, each overnight unit features a set of books selected by a Scottish writer or luminary. Like the sound of the literature and pick the room. This charming if rather idiosyncratic hotel often hosts live traditional and folk music performances, as well as other cultural events.

See map p. 347. 14 West Argyle St. ☎ **01854-612-103**. Fax: 01854-613-773. www.theceilidhplace.com. Rack rates: £90–£130 (\$167–\$241) double. MC, V.

Corriechoille Lodge

\$\$ Near Spean Bridge

The sitting room of this stone guesthouse offers views of the nearby Nevis Range Mountains. An 18th-century stone fishing lodge about 19km (12 miles) northeast of Fort William was converted into this luxurious hide-away with all the trimmings. No children younger than seven are permitted, and the lodge is closed Monday and Tuesday nights. In addition to the lodge, there are two one-bedroom log cabins on the property.

See map p. 347. Just off the A82 (3km/2 miles east of Spean Bridge). ☎ **01397-712-002**. www.corriechoille.com. Rack rates: £56–£70 (\$104–\$130) double. MC, V. Closed Nov–Mar.

Dunain Park Hotel

\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$ Dunain near Inverness

In a tourist-strategic position between Loch Ness and Inverness, the Dunain is a wonderful, old Georgian country-house hotel surrounded by gardens and the woods beyond. Some of the well-dressed rooms have

four-poster beds, and others are in separate quaint cottages. With only 11 overnight units, booking ahead is wise.

See map p. 347. Fort William Road, on the A82 (3km/2 miles south of Inverness). ☎ **01463-230-512**. Fax: 01463-224-532. www.dunainparkhotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £140–£200 (\$259–\$370) double (including dinner in low season). MC, V.

Glengarry Castle Hotel \$\$-\$\$\$ Invergarry

You'd be hard pressed to find a prettier spot for such highly regarded country inn lodgings. This 26-room Victorian mansion is on extensive wooded grounds with its own castle ruins (the real Glengarry Castle) and nice views of Loch Oich. Some of the warmly decorated rooms have four-poster beds and exposed ceiling beams. The four-star hotel also has tennis courts and rowboats for guest use, while afternoon high tea is served for those in the mood for less robust activities.

See map p. 347. Off the A82 (1.5km/1 mile south of the intersection with the A87 in Invergarry). ☎ **01809-501-254**. Fax: 01809-501-207. www.glengarry.net. Rack rates: £86–£160 (\$159–\$296) double. MC, V. Closed mid-Nov to mid-Mar.

Glen Mhor Hotel \$\$-\$\$\$ Inverness

This 43-bedroom Victorian hotel overlooks the banks of the River Ness just below Inverness castle. The lobbies and the restaurants, including Nico's Bistro (see listing in the section "Dining Locally"), are lovely spots with overstuffed chairs, tartan upholstery, and oak paneling. The rooms are large and the beds generally firm.

See map p. 357. 9–12 Ness Bank. ☎ **01463-234-308**. Fax: 01463-713-170. www.glen-mhor.com. Rack rates: £120 (\$222) double. AE, MC, V.

Inverlochy Castle \$\$\$\$ Fort William

Fort William's most highly rated accommodations, and one of the best luxury hotels in Scotland, Inverlochy Castle hotel is beautifully situated in the foothills of Ben Nevis. Staying here can be literally an experience fit for royalty: Queen Victoria visited for a week in 1873 and wrote in her diary, "I never saw a lovelier or more romantic spot." That sentiment still rings true today. The sitting rooms and dining area are inspiring — flawlessly decorated and illuminated by chandeliers. The attention to fine detail and maximum comfort extends to the guest rooms as well, which have lovely views. The food is gourmet, and after you've had your fill of rich food and posh surroundings, you can tour the 200-hectare (500-acre) grounds.

See map p. 347. Torlundy (5km/3 miles north of Fort William on the A82). ☎ **01397-702-177**. Fax: 01397-702-953. www.inverlochycastlelehotel.com. Rack rates: £300–£500 (\$555–\$925) double. AE, MC, V. Closed Jan–Feb.

Lodge on the Loch**\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ Onich**

A stay at the Lodge on the Loch should leave an indelible memory of your visit to the Highlands. With some of the finest vistas in the country, this serene family-run retreat overlooks Loch Linnhe 8km (5 miles) or so west of Glencoe. The house was built in 1870 as a country home, and today the cozy rooms — each individually named — are decorated in Art Nouveau and Shaker styles. Take time to explore the grounds to the shore or through the gardens. Targeting couples, it discourages children younger than 16.

See map p. 347. On A82 (16km/10 miles south of Fort William). ☎ **01855-821-237**. Fax: 01855-821-190. www.lodgeontheloch.com. Rack rates: £180–£260 (\$333–\$481) double including 4-course dinner. MC, V.

The Moorings Hotel**\$\$-\$\$\$ Near Fort William**

On a quiet residential stretch outside Fort William's town center, this labyrinthine hotel is bigger than it looks. The large, comfortable rooms stretch back to the Caledonian Canal; some units have views of the locks (aka Neptune's Staircase) and the boats going through. The staff is helpful, the beds are comfortable, and all rooms have satellite television. Superior rooms have better views, living areas, and king-size beds.

See map p. 347. Banavie, just off the A830 toward Mallaig, next to Caledonian Canal. ☎ **01397-772-797**. Fax: 01397-772-441. www.moorings-fortwilliam.co.uk. Rack rates: £90–£134 (\$167–\$248) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Moyness House**\$\$ Inverness**

Moyness House is arguably the finest guesthouse in Inverness (the other contender being Ballifeary House, whose review appears earlier in this section). This quaint, white-washed Victorian villa is located in a quiet residential district within easy strolling distance of the Inverness city center. Each one of the seven homey overnight units is individually decorated and comfortably done up, with modern en suite bathrooms.

See map p. 357. 6 Bruce Gardens, just off A82. ☎ **01463-233-836**. Fax: 01463-233-836. www.moyness.co.uk. Rack rates: £70–£76 (\$130–\$141) double. MC, V.

The Newton Hotel**\$\$\$ Nairn**

Just before you enter the little coastal town of Nairn from the west, you should spot this castlelike hotel located in parkland and overlooking the Nairn Championship Golf Course. It could be just the thing you need after a busy day of sightseeing. The overnight rooms are quite large, and the comfortable public rooms are decorated with antique furniture. In addition to the usual room facilities, other nice touches include heated bathroom

floors. As a guest at this four-star hotel, you have free use of the gym, pool, and sauna, and steam room at its nearby sister hotel, the Golf View.

See map p. 347. *Inverness Road, on A96.* ☎ **01667-453-144.** Fax: 01667-454-026. www.morton-hotels.com/newton/index.html. Rack rates: £114–£196 (\$211–\$363) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Plockton Hotel

\$\$ Plockton

The village of Plockton (see “top attractions” below) is one of the prettiest you’ll find in the Highlands and this is the only hotel on the waterfront, looking onto a sheltered bay in Loch Carron. The 11 overnight accommodations include two that work as family rooms, and there’s a four-bedroom cottage annex nearby. All the units have en suite bathrooms, and a half dozen offer sea views. The hotel’s dining room and award-garnering pub are well known for fresh fish and seafood dishes.

See map p. 347. *Harbour Street.* ☎ **01599-544-274.** Fax: 01599-544-475. www.plocktonhotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £90 (\$167) double. AE, MC, V.



Polmaily House Hotel

\$\$\$ Near Drumnadrochit

For an Edwardian country house, Polmaily sure knows how to provide modern family friendly accommodations during the high season. The high-ceilinged bedrooms are large and elegant, and the hotel also features a heated indoor pool, video games, tennis courts, mountain bikes, and fishing. In the summer, parents will appreciate the supervised fun room, organized children’s activities, outdoor play areas, and large suites. In the mid- and low seasons, the business operates more as boutique hotel.

See map p. 347. *On the A831 toward Cannish.* ☎ **01456-450-343.** Fax: 01456-450-813. www.polmaily.co.uk. Rack rates: £140–£180 (\$259–\$333) double including dinner. MC, V. Closed Jan.



Scourie Hotel

\$\$ Scourie

This one-time coaching inn way up north in Sutherland is one those hotels that believes guests have better things to do than sit in their rooms and watch television. (There are no TVs here, by the way, although they’ll provide you with a radio if asked.) Rooms are quite homey and spacious. Some of them overlook Scourie Bay, while others have vistas towards the inland mountains, such as Ben Stack. It’s a top spot for fishing enthusiasts, too, with hotel boats available.

See map p. 347. *Scourie is about 69km (43 miles) north of Ullapool on the A894.* ☎ **01971-502-396.** Fax: 01971-502-423. www.scourie-hotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £64–£84 (\$118–\$155) double. MC, V.

Dining Locally

Your hotel is likely to have a restaurant, and most of those listed above also will serve meals to nonresidents who reserve a table in advance. But there are more options in the Highlands, and I list some of the better ones below.

Abstract

\$\$\$ Inverness FRENCH

Since being a patient — or should it be victim — of Chef Gordon Ramsay's reality TV makeover program, this restaurant in the Glenmoriston Town House Hotel (with **overnight rooms**), has turned its fortunes around. In addition to the a la carte menus, you can opt for an eight-course tasting menu — or go for the “chef's table” which takes place in the kitchen and where Chef Loic Lefebvre and staff can explain each dish.

See map 357. Ness Bank. ☎ 01463-223-777. www.abstractrestaurant.com. Main courses: £12–£22 (\$22–\$41). MC, V. Open: Tues–Sun 7 p.m.–9:30 p.m.



Applecross Inn

\$\$ Applecross FISH/SEAFOOD

This may not be the easiest place to reach, but many visitors feel the twists and turns of the road to Applecross are well worth it for a meal at the inn (which also has **overnight rooms**). This one-time fisherman's cottage sits right on the shores of the Inner Sound of Raasay, looking out toward the mountains on the Isle of Skye. Naturally, seafood dishes make up the majority of the menu, but you can expect local venison or sausages, too. The Applecross, with an excellent selection of real ale, is also rated one of Scotland's best country pubs.

See map p. 347. From the village of Lochcarron, take the A896 west, turning left on the country road to Applecross. ☎ 01520-744-262. Fax: 01520-744-440. www.applecross.uk.com. Reservations suggested. Main courses: £8–£16 (\$15–\$30). MC, V. Open: daily noon–9 p.m.

Café 1

\$\$–\$\$\$ Inverness INTERNATIONAL

The small, well-chosen menu here is often a delight, especially when it includes items such as Angus rump steak, sticky pork belly, or halibut fillet. The menu always has something for vegetarians, as well. The décor behind the stone exterior is simple and modern, and you'll find the service polite and professional.

See map p. 357. 75 Castle St. ☎ 01463-226-200. www.cafe1.net. Reservations recommended. Main courses: £8–£15 (\$15–\$28). MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat noon–2 p.m. and 6–9:30 p.m.

Crannog**\$\$\$ Fort William FISH/SEAFOOD**

Offering fine views, this restaurant sits on stilts out over the waters of Loch Linnhe — a location that led to severe storm damage a few years back. After repairs, the restaurant returned to its town pier location. The owners deploy their own fleet (and run a smokehouse, too), so expect the freshest of fish. A plate of langoustine with hot garlic butter is highly touted. By the way, *crannog* is the Gaelic word for an artificial island on the banks of a loch — how appropriate.

See map p. 347. *The Pier*. ☎ **01397-705-589**. www.oceanandoak.co.uk. *Reservations recommended for dinner. Main courses: £12–£16 (\$22–\$30). MC, V. Open: daily noon–2:30 p.m. and 6–9:30 p.m.*

The Fishmarket Restaurant**\$\$ Mallaig FISH/SEAFOOD**

Situated right on the harbor and serving dishes that incorporate freshly caught fish, this restaurant is a casual place for a meal. Main courses might include poached haddock with mussels, roasted whole sea bass with fennel and ginger, or traditional fish and chips. Prawns (shrimp) come in by the ton here at Mallaig and are thus one of the restaurant's specialties.

See map p. 347. *Station Road*. ☎ **01687-462-299**. Fax: 01687-460-040. *Reservations recommended. Main courses: £10–£15 (\$19–\$28). MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat noon–3 p.m. and 6–8:30 p.m., Sun 12:30–7 p.m.*

Nico's Bistro**\$\$–\$\$\$ Inverness SCOTTISH**

This upscale diner in the Glen Mhor hotel offers a relaxed place to dine. You can't really go wrong with a catch of the day, such as sea scallops or langoustines. The lounge is perfect for a predinner beer or an after-dinner cocktail, and outdoor seating is available.

See map p. 357. *9–12 Ness Bank*. ☎ **01463-234-308**. *Main courses: £8–£16 (\$15–\$30). AE, DC, MC, V. Open: daily 11:30 a.m.–10 p.m.*

Old Library Lodge**\$\$\$ Arisaig MODERN SCOTTISH**

Located in a 200-year-old stone building (formerly a library, hence the name) down the street from the Arisaig Hotel, this restaurant (which also has six **overnight rooms**) garners three stars from the Scottish tourist board. The evening menu might include pan-fried scallops with lime and dill, double loin lamb chops, or monkfish with tarragon and Pernod.

See map p. 347. ☎ **01687-450-651**. Fax: 01687-450-219. www.oldlibrary.co.uk. *Fixed-price 3-course dinner: £26 (\$48). MC, V. Open: daily 6–9 p.m. Closed Nov–Mar.*

Riva**\$\$ Inverness ITALIAN**

This bistro can be a lively spot for a meal, with fine wine, inventive Italian cuisine, and a location on the River Ness. The subtly flavored dishes can include braised loin of pork with cannellini beans or mixed seafood and shellfish tossed with linguini. You'll also find an ideal complement to the dinner in the smartly planned wine selection. The fixed-price lunches are a particular bargain.

See map p. 357. 4–6 Ness Walk, by the Ness Bridge. ☎ **01463-237-377**. www.riva-restaurant.co.uk. *Reservations recommended. Main courses: £9–£15 (\$17–\$28). MC, V. Open: daily 5 p.m.–10 p.m., Mon–Sat noon–2:30 p.m.*

The River Café and Restaurant**\$\$ Inverness SCOTTISH**

This small, simple venture by the water is a favorite among locals because of its good eats at even better prices. During the day, it acts very much like a cafe with croissant sandwiches or stuffed baked potatoes. In the evening, the candles come out and the cuisine is more formal with specialties such as filet of Scottish salmon or duck breast.

See map p. 357. 10 Bank St. ☎ **01463-714-884**. www.rivercafeandrestaurant.co.uk. *Main courses: £10–£17 (\$19–\$32). MC, V. Open: daily 10 a.m.–9:30 p.m.*

Rocpool**\$\$\$ Inverness MODERN SCOTTISH**

Since the last edition, Rocpool has expanded its franchise, with this flagship taking the more formal name of Rocpool Rendezvous, while a newer outlet called Rocpool Reserve offers a restaurant and **boutique hotel** a small distance across town. Either way, Rocpool remains the most ambitious, modern, and stylish (including unisex toilets) restaurant in the city of Inverness. The menu may range from mussels in Thai red curry to pistachio crusted goats cheese soufflé.

See map p. 357. 1 Ness Walk. ☎ **01463-717-274**. www.rocpool.com. *Main courses: £10–£18 (\$19–\$33). MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat noon–10:30 p.m., Sun 6–10 p.m. in summer.*

Exploring the Highlands

You can find plenty of tourist attractions between Inverness and Fort William, but please don't confine yourself to the well-known Loch Ness hot spots. In addition to those heavily touristed sites, you have a wide choice of things to see throughout the Highlands: ancient monuments, lovely lochs, picturesque villages, natural areas for hiking, sandy and unspoiled beaches, and a good number of excellent castles.

Guided tours

The Highlands lends itself to smartly operated theme tours, whether relating to the area's rich historic heritage or unique natural history. Refer to my suggestions in "Seeing Scotland by Bus" in Chapter 7 for a list of reputable guided tours setting off from Edinburgh or Glasgow. Here are a couple of the more interesting specialized tours to take, too.

- ✓ **Ecoventure** (☎ 01381-600-323; www.ecoventures.co.uk): This company takes you to see a local colony of bottlenose dolphins living off the Black Isle. As many as 130 live in one area of the Moray Firth, and they're generally friendly and unafraid to approach the boat. The tour also covers other sea life such as seals, porpoise, and even the occasional minke whale. Tours depart from Cromarty Harbor at the tip of the Black Isle, off the A832 at the junction of Bank Street and High Street in Cromarty. Tickets cost \$20 (\$37) per person, \$15 (\$28) for children 5 to 12 years old. The tour lasts about two hours.
- ✓ **Jacobite Cruises** (☎ 01463-233-999; www.jacobite.co.uk): Jacobite Cruises, which take visitors out on Loch Ness, are perhaps the most efficient and best organized tours of the loch. You can choose from a number of different excursions, such as the "Passion Cruise & Tour," a six-plus hour trip down the loch, through the Caledonian Canal, stopping at Urquhart (*irk-ett*) Castle and the Corrimony Cairns. Alternatively, the "Inspiration Cruise" takes only one hour on the loch. The company runs minibuses to the launch site from the Inverness Tourist Information Centre on Bridge Street. Alternatively, you can drive to the Clansman Harbour, 13km (8 miles) southwest of the city outskirts, off the A82. Tours operate year round, and fares start at \$8 (\$15).

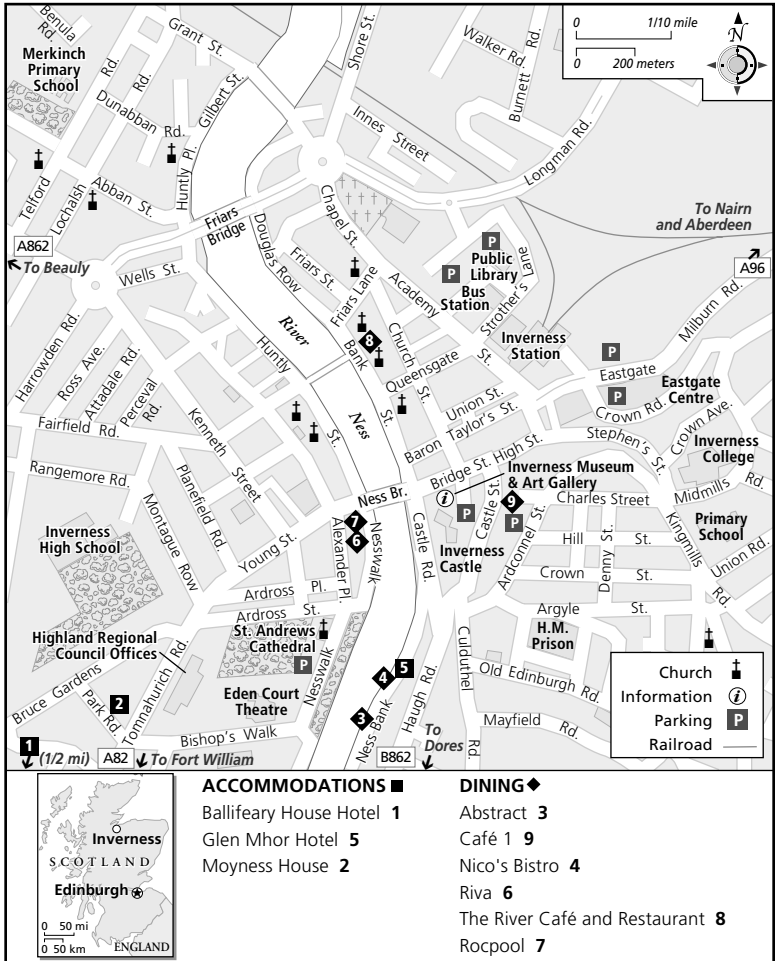
The top attractions

Abernethy Forest Reserve Loch Garten

Some 10km (6 miles) northeast of Aviemore in the Cairngorm Mountains, this aviary reserve on the shores of Loch Garten is operated by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). It offers an observation center to spy on the osprey, once thought to be extinct in Scotland. They still, horribly, remain targets of assorted idiots, but since the mid-1950s, the osprey have returned from Africa to nest here in the spring. The observation center deploys telescopes and video cameras to help visitors see the young birds of prey at play. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 347. Near Boat of Garten. ☎ 01479-831-476. www.rspb.org.uk. Admission: £3 (\$5.55) adults, £2 (\$3.70) seniors, 50p (\$1) children younger than 15, £6 (\$11) family. Open: Apr–Aug daily 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Inverness



Ardnamurchan Peninsula

One of the more easily reached but seemingly remote areas of the Highlands, the Ardnamurchan Peninsula is the most westerly point in the entire British mainland. One highlight is the ruins of Castle Tioram (see the listing later in this section), but the peninsula also has pretty beaches and tide pools, a natural history and visitor center near Glenmore, and lots of hiking trails. The lighthouse at the craggy Point of Ardnamurchan can feel like the end of the earth on a windy day. From Kilchoan on the peninsula, you can take a ferry to and from Tobermory on the Isle of Mull in the summer. Allow about 24 hours.

See map p. 347. West of Fort William. Take the A861 from the Road to the Isles (A830) at Lochailort or use the small ferry service to Corran a few kilometers north of Ballachulish (A82). www.ardnamurchan.com. Admission: free.



Balnaheil Craft Village Near Durness

This artist community, on the outskirts of Durness near Cape Wrath, has plenty of galleries selling local artwork. The craft village is housed in a former military communications installation with lots of flat-roofed institutional looking buildings. Still the place is friendly, communal, and, yes, vaguely hippy-esque. The cafe serves tasty natural foods, and the bookshop is well-stocked with local titles. If you've come this far, you may as well carry on to the end of the road to see the old ruins of a 17th century church and the lovely Balnaheil beach. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 347. Off the A838 (1km/½ mile west of Durness; 108km/67 miles north of Ullapool). www.durness.org. Admission: free.

Ben Nevis Near Fort William

At 1,344m (4,410 ft.), Ben Nevis is the tallest mountain in the United Kingdom, although it's difficult to see just how tall it is from the usual vantage points around Fort William. The round-trip hike to the summit is about 16km (10 miles) and takes around seven hours (four up and three down). You will need to wear good boots and have both warm- and cold-weather gear, because the temperature and weather can fluctuate unpredictably at certain heights. Don't attempt to transverse the summit without a proper map and compass and also don't start your ascent of Ben Nevis too late in the day. The tourist office in Fort William has trail maps if you're planning to make the big climb. Allow about seven hours.

See map p. 347. Path leaves from Glen Nevis Road, just outside Fort William. ☎ **01397-703-781**. www.visit-fortwilliam.co.uk. Admission: free.

Castle Tioram Near Blain on Loch Moidart

The impressive ruins of this classic medieval fortress (pronounced roughly *cheer-rum*) sit on a rocky spit of land extending into the picturesque waters of Loch Moidart. Once a key outpost for clan MacDonald for hundreds of years, a rich Scotsman has now bought the pile of stone and wants to fix it up and live here. Some historic authorities have other plans, however. Until a final decision is made, Castle Tioram, one of my favorite castles, remains a romantic site that is best accessed at low tide. Like so many castles in Scotland, Tioram was sacked and burned during Jacobite uprisings — in this instance apparently to keep it from falling into the hands of forces loyal to the Hanovers in London. There are good hiking trails near the castle, too.

See map p. 347. Off the A861 from Blain. Admission: free.

Cawdor Castle Near Nairn

Cawdor, with its dramatic drawbridge and medieval tower, is full of treasures, and particularly tapestries, from around the world. The gardens are pretty wonderful, too, with wildflowers, fountains, and a maze of holly bushes. Legend has it that the Thane of Cawdor (then spelled Calder) determined the location of the castle by giving instructions to build wherever his donkey decided to rest (as he had dreamed). The animal stopped in the shade of a mature thorn bush, and deep within the castle, its stump (carbon dated to about 1370) still stands today. Although Macbeth was Shakespeare's Thane of Cawdor, neither he nor his good lady could have resided here: The castle wasn't built yet. Allow about three hours.

See map p. 347. On the B9090, off the A96 between Inverness and Nairn. ☎ 01667-404-401. www.cawdorcastle.com. Admission: £7 (\$13) adults, £6 (\$11) seniors and students, £4.50 (\$8.30) children 5–15, £22 (\$41) family. Open: May–early Oct daily 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Closed mid-Oct to Apr.

Clava Cairns Culloden

If you're visiting the nearby Culloden Moor Battlefield (see the next listing), Clava Cairns — also known as the Balnuaran of Clava — is worth a brief visit. Basically a 4,000-year-old graveyard, the cairns are part of best preserved Bronze Age cemetery in Scotland. The large circular pits of rock and rubble, two of which are aligned on the winter solstice, are slightly eerie. Nearby are standing stones in a grove of trees and ruins of an ancient chapel. Allow about one hour.

See map p. 347. Off the B9091, just east of Culloden Battlefield. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. ☎ 01667-460-232. Admission: free. Open: daily 24 hours.

Culloden Moor Battlefield Culloden Moor

This marshy field is where the hopes of Bonnie Prince Charlie's Jacobite uprising of 1745 (begun at Glenfinnan, see "Glenfinnan Monument," later in this section) ended in complete defeat on April 16, 1746. The bloody battle (the last significant one fought on the British mainland) was over in about an hour, and Charlie was among the few Jacobites who escaped unharmed. After their defeat, Highland life was censored and restricted by a London administration tired of rebellion and its Scottish allies. The visitor center provides interesting details, with a museum and an excellent film about the battle. Take the time to walk through the battlefield, which has clan stones and cairns in memory of those who lost their lives. The terrain is kept the same as 260 years ago, when boggy conditions contributed to the Jacobites' defeat. Allow about 2½ hours.

See map p. 347. Off the B9006 (8km/5 miles east of Inverness). ☎ 01463-790-607. www.nts.org.uk. Admission: £5 (\$9.25) adults; £4 (\$7.40) seniors, students, and children younger than 16; £14 (\$26) family. Open: site year-round, daily; visitor center,

restaurant, and shop Apr–May and Sept–Oct daily 9 a.m.–5:30 p.m.; June–Aug daily 9 a.m.–6 p.m.; Feb–Mar and Nov–Dec daily 11 a.m.–4 p.m. Closed Jan.

Eilean Donan Castle **Dornie**

Grab your camera: Eilean Donan is certainly the most photographed stone pile in the Highlands. On an islet in Loch Duich, this quintessential castle (which lay in utter ruins for two centuries) is accessible by an arched bridge. Originally built in the early 1200s by Alexander II to deter Viking invaders, the castle was demolished at the hands of Hanoverian troops during the Jacobite uprising of 1719. In the early decades of the 20th century, it was essentially rebuilt. Highlights include walking the ramparts, the banqueting hall and billeting room, as well as Jacobite relics. B-movie fans will be excited by the fact that *Highlander* was filmed here. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 347. Dornie, Kyle of Lochalsh, on the A87. ☎ 01599-555-202. www.eilean-donancastle.com. Admission: £5 (\$9.25) adults; £4 (\$7.40) seniors, students, and children younger than 16. Open: Apr–Oct 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Closed Nov–Mar.

Glen Coe **Glencoe**

It's hard to believe that such a beautiful valley has such a bloody event tied to it. Glen Coe is where a historic massacre took place on February 6, 1692. On that fateful day, the Campbell Earl of Argyle's regiment — on orders approved by the king, William of Orange — slaughtered about 40 members of clan MacDonald, including some women and children. What makes their killings truly distressing is the fact that Campbell's troops had been staying as guests, albeit not welcomed ones. Thus, Glen Coe is right up there with Culloden when it comes to tragic bloodshed at the hands of troops loyal to the central government in England. In spite of the area's grim history, this spectacular valley extends about 16km (10 miles) from the king's house in the east to the shores of Loch Leven and the village of Glencoe in the west. The National Trust for Scotland's eco-friendly visitor center has area trail maps and audiovisual presentations of local geography. You can also see a monument of the massacre in Carnoch. Ranger-led walks take place throughout the summer. Allow about three hours.

See map p. 347. On the A82, just east of Ballachulish. ☎ 01855-811-307. www.nts.org.uk. Admission: £5 (\$9.25) adults; £4 (\$7.40) seniors, students, and children; £14 (\$26) family. Open: site daily year-round; visitor center daily Apr–Aug 9:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m., Sept–Oct 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Nov–Mar 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

Glenfinnan Monument **Glenfinnan**

This monument marks the hopeful start of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion led by Bonnie Prince Charlie, who was trying to reclaim the English and Scottish crowns for his Stuart family lineage. Be sure to take your camera;

this monument (and now slightly sacred historical ground) amid Highland scenery is a great spot for pictures, especially if you're lucky enough to see the steam train (see below) cross the arched viaduct behind the visitor center. (Fans of the *Harry Potter* films will recognize the setting.) The Jacobites allegedly left from this spot to successfully push all the way to Derby in England before turning back and being crushed at Culloden (see "Culloden Moor Battlefield" earlier in this section). The Jacobite cause has captured the Scots' collective imagination, and the National Trust of Scotland visitor center provides a good primer on the Jacobites and Prince Charlie. The monument can be vaguely magical, especially on one of my visits when a lone piper broke the silence of twilight with mournful playing from a heather-filled hillside. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 347. On A830, next to Loch Shiel (29km/18 miles west of Fort William). ☎ 01397-722-250. www.nts.org.uk. Admission: £3 (\$5.55) adults; £2 (\$3.70) seniors, students, and children. Open: site daily year-round; visitor center daily Apr–Jun and Sept–Oct 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; July–Aug 9:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.; Nov weekends only 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Closed Dec–Mar.



Inverewe Garden Near Poolewe

The most impressive garden in the Highlands is on the south-facing shores of Loch Ewe, about 10km (6 miles) northeast of the village of Gairloch. Because the North Atlantic drift carries warmer waters up from the Caribbean, the climate here is surprisingly temperate. The plants are a testament to the ideal growing conditions. In late summer, you can see cabbages the size of basketballs in the large vegetable patch within the walled garden. The sprawling 20 hectare (50-acre) garden, however, encompasses much more than just vegetables, including rhododendron and pine walks, a "bambooselem," two ponds, and a rock garden. Diverse planting means something is in bloom all year round, from azaleas in spring to Kaffir lilies in the autumn.

See map p. 347. On A832. ☎ 01455-781-200. Fax: 01455-781-497. www.nts.org.uk. Admission: £8 (\$15) adult, £5.25 (\$9.70) seniors and students, £20 (\$38) family. Open: Apr–Oct 9:30 a.m.–9 p.m.; Nov–Mar 9:30 a.m.–4 p.m.



Plockton: The prettiest Highland village?

Not far from Eilean Donan, Plockton (www.plockton.com) is arguably the prettiest village in the Highlands. The crescent-shaped, harborside main street, on the shores of Loch Carron, is lined with cute cottages, while the sidewalks are punctuated with palm trees that defy the northern latitudes. Plockton gained fame in the U.K. as the location for a BBC TV series, *Hamish Macbeth*, starring a then little-known Robert Carlyle as a laid-back, pot-smoking policeman. Today, Plockton features some good grub at the pubs in the Plockton Inn on Innes Street and the Plockton Hotel (see "Spending the Night"). Plockton is about 10km (6 miles) northeast of Kyle of Lochalsh, off the A87.

Ullapool: Happenings at the harbor

Ullapool, on the shores of Loch Broom, is the busiest fishing port on the northwest coast of Scotland. Established reasonably recently in 1788 as a planned village by the British Fisheries Society, the town has become a popular resort in its own right — the last outpost before the sparsely populated northwest. If you need to stock up at a supermarket, stop in Ullapool. It also has some good casual restaurants that feature freshly landed fish and seafood, like crabs, while the Ceilidh Place (see “Spending the Night”) is a hub of cultural activity with frequent music and dance events through the summer season. The Ullapool Museum, West Argyle Street (☎ 01854-612-987; www.ullapoolmuseum.co.uk), is open year-round; call for times.

The Jacobite Steam Train

Fort William and Mallaig railway stations

The 68km (42 mile) train ride between Fort William and the port town of Mallaig is one of the most picturesque rail journeys in Europe. As you chug along past mountains, skirting lochs and glens, you’ll pass the Glenfinnan Monument and miles and miles of dramatic, unspoiled scenery. It’s hard to believe that the rail line wasn’t built for the delight of visitors; rather, it was created to bring catches of fish inland. At the Glenfinnan station, a small train museum is worth a look, and you can take a break in the cafe located in an old train car. If you take the round-trip, the schedule allows you 1½ hours in Mallaig. Not every train on this route is the historic steam train, so confirm schedules if you want to ride the real thing. Allow about 5½ hours round-trip.

See map p. 347. *Fort William and Mallaig railway stations.* ☎ 01524-737-751. www.westcoastrailway.co.uk. Tickets: £27 (\$50) standard adult round-trip or £20 (\$38) one-way, £16 (\$30) standard children round-trip or £12 (\$22) one-way. Open: June to mid-Oct one round-trip Mon–Fri departing from Fort William at 10:20 a.m., returning from Mallaig at 2:10 p.m.; mid-summer also departs Sat–Sun. Closed mid-Oct to late May.

Loch Ness

Okay, this is it: The dark and deep (274m/900 ft. to be exact), mysterious, and legendary Loch Ness. In addition to looking for the elusive monster, you should seek out other local attractions, such as Urquhart Castle (see the listing later in this section for more information). Although the drive along the loch is good, the best way to experience it is by boat (see the listing under “Guided tours,” earlier in this chapter). As for the monster, little is known for certain. Although no one can confirm that it exists, it’s apparently against the law to kill it. Is it out there? I say no, but keep an eye out, just in case.

See map p. 347. *On the A82 or the B852 on the eastern shore. Admission: free. Open: year-round.*



Loch Ness 2000 Exhibition Drumnadrochit

Visiting this attraction is rather like reading *Loch Ness For Dummies* (if there were such a book). In other words, it covers the bases without burying you in details. Focusing mainly on monster myths and the technology of scientific monster hunting, Loch Ness 2000 offers a reasonably entertaining exhibit using laser lights and digital projection displays. And while the kids may marvel at the smoke and mirrors, you'll actually learn a couple things about the long history of sightings, research, and theories on the monster. Allow about one hour.

See map p. 347. Drumnadrochit, Loch Ness, off the A82. ☎ **01456-450-573**. www.loch-ness-scotland.com. Admission: £5.95 (\$11) adults, £4.50 (\$8.30) seniors and students, £3.50 (\$6.50) children younger than 16, £15 (\$28) family. Open: daily Easter–May 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m., Jun and Sept 9 a.m.–6 p.m., July–Aug 9 a.m.–8 p.m., Oct 9:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m., Nov–Easter 10 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

The Original Loch Ness Monster Visitor Centre Drumnadrochit

This is the “other” Loch Ness exhibit, the older and slightly less expensive one, compared to the flashier competition in town. The focus of the exhibit is on the loch, which has an interesting history, as well as the monster. A film covers the history of Nessie sightings and explains how many are actually of something else, such as sea otters. The exhibition is full of pictures, including other freaks of beast lore. Allow about one hour.

On the A82. ☎ **01456-450-342**. www.lochness-centre.com. Admission: £5 (\$9.25) adults, £3.50 (\$6.50) seniors, £3.75 (\$7) students, £3 (\$5.55) children younger than 16. Open: Mar–June and Sept–Oct 9:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m.; July–Aug 9 a.m.–7:30 p.m.; Nov–Feb 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

Sands of Morar Near Mallaig

Bonnie Prince Charlie apparently roamed these beautiful bleached beaches 250 years ago while fleeing his oppressors. Set against postcard-pretty seas, looking across at the islands Rhum and Eigg, Morar has become a popular locale for filmmakers intent on capturing the quintessential Scottish backdrop. *Highlander* and, to much better effect, *Local Hero* were filmed here. Unfortunately, the sands can get rather crowded — at least by local standards — with sun-seeking locals and tourists in the summer. Allow about one hour.

See map p. 347. Just off the A830, about a 1.5km (1 mile) south of Morar. Admission: free. Open: year-round.

Snow in the Highlands

Alas, it seems climate change has currently made snowfall increasingly rare in the Highlands, and some resorts have tottered on closure. In addition to the Nevis Range Gondola and Skiing (see “Other cool things to see and do”), the Highlands offer other legitimate ski resorts. **Glencoe** has moderately challenging slopes and some great views. The Glencoe Mountain Resort is near Kingshouse, off the A82 (☎ **0871-871-9929**; www.glencoemountain.com). The **Cairngorms** offer unpredictable weather, but when the snow base is good, the whole family can enjoy skiing or snowboarding, as well as other non-ski activities. CairnGorm Mountain resort (☎ **01479-861-261**; www.cairngormmountain.com) is located 14km (9 miles) from the town of Aviemore and operates a funicular railway to get you up the mountain.



Sandwood Estate and Bay Near Blairmore

Purchased in the early 1990s by the John Muir Trust, the Sandwood Estate has *the* beach that, by most accounts, is the most beautiful and unsullied on the entire mainland of Great Britain. Yes, getting there and back from the nearest road requires a 14km (9 miles) hike on a peat-and-stone trail. But then why do you think the dunes at Sandwood Bay are so pristine? The entire estate covers many thousands of acres and encompasses crofts and peat bogs as well as dunes and craggy coastline. From here, the ambitious can also hike to Cape Wrath. Allow about three hours.

See map p. 347. Take the B801 from the A838 to Blairmore (about 96km/60 miles north of Ullapool, via the A894). www.jmt.org. Admission: free. Open: year-round.

Urquhart Castle Loch Ness

Despite the impressive ruins, this large and significant castle (pronounced *irk-ett*) has no strong clan association. Because its location on Loch Ness was important for trade routes through the Highlands, the castle has changed hands many times since the 13th century. One of the last groups to occupy it (before the tourists invaded) was Cromwell’s army in the 1650s; later it was blown up to prevent Jacobite occupation. A recent addition to the visitor center is an audiovisual display of views and history that plays before you see the real thing. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 347. Near Drumnadrochit, on the A82. ☎ **01456-450-551**. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £6.50 (\$12) adults, £5 (\$9.25) seniors and students, £2.50 (\$4.65) children younger than 16. Open: daily Apr–Sept 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m., Oct–Mar 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Other cool things to see and do

- ✓ **Brodie Castle**, off the A96, about 11km (7 miles) east of Nairn (☎ **01309-641-371**; www.nts.org.uk). It may look a bit austere, but this 16th century tower house is a particularly good stop for art fans; the collection of paintings includes 17th century Dutch works, as well as the Scottish Colourists.
- ✓ **Storehouse of Foulis**, Evanton, off the A9 about 14km (9 miles) north of Inverness (☎ **01349-830-000**; www.clanland.com). The interactive displays here focus on local music, food, topography, and clan history. You can watch a video that's a tribute to the powerful Highland clan Munro. A small display focuses on seals that frequent the nearby beaches.
- ✓ **Dornoch Cathedral**, on the main square of Dornoch 13km (8 miles) south of Tain (☎ **01862-810-296**). This cathedral dates to 1224 and was the site of one of the last witch burnings in the 18th century. But another reason you might wish to visit is because this is where Madonna married Guy Ritchie.
- ✓ **Glenmore Forest Park**, off the B972 about 10km (6 miles) east of Aviemore (☎ **01479-861-220**; www.forestry.gov.uk). This woodland park isn't simply a place of fine scenery. The attractions include Loch Morlich and its sandy beach as well as a grove of ancient Caledonian Pinewood, one of the few remaining in Scotland. A visitor center has information.
- ✓ **Highland Folk Museum**, Duke Street, on the A86, Kingussie (☎ **01540-661-307**). The museum describes the last 400 years of Highland life with collections of everyday objects, furniture, machines, and more. In addition to this site, with its re-created historic Blackhouse, in Newtonmore, the Folk Museum offers a reconstructed 18th-century township and 1940s working farm.
- ✓ **Inverness Museum and Art Gallery**, Castle Wynd, off Bridge Street, Inverness (☎ **01463-237-114**; www.invernessmuseum.com). Closed in 2006 for renovation, but expected to reopen in early 2007, this museum's permanent collection includes period dress, old bagpipes, a cast of the death mask of Bonnie Prince Charlie, and prehistoric stones.
- ✓ **John Cobb Cairn**, between Drumnadrochit and Invermoriston. This memorial cairn (a pile of stones) is a place of pilgrimage for many who want to honor Cobb, who lost his life on Loch Ness in 1952 while making a second attempt at the world water-speed record.
- ✓ **Nevis Range Mountain Experience**, 10km (6 miles) north of Fort William (☎ **01397-705-825**; www.nevisrange.co.uk). The Nevis Range gondola takes you up Aonach Mor Mountain, offering panoramic views. In summer, you can hike paths around the area. In winter, you can ski or snowboard if snow conditions are good.



Shopping in the Highlands

The major shopping center in the Highlands is the **Eastgate Shopping Centre**, 11 Eastgate, off High Street, in Inverness (www.eastgate-centre.co.uk). This American-style mall doesn't cater to tourists, but it has major department stores. Eastgate is open from 9 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. most days, closing at 7 p.m. on Thursdays and 5 p.m. on Sundays. **Balnakeil Craft Village** (see the listing in "The top attractions") is a good place to find unique gifts, while Ullapool (see the sidebar "Ullapool") has some interesting small craft shops. Also consider

- ✓ **Edinburgh Woollen Mill**, 13 High St., Fort William (☎ 01397-703-064) and 60 High St., at Monzie Square, Fort William (☎ 01397-704-737). Typical of woollen mill shops, these sister shops offer plenty of variety in finely crafted woollen and tweed apparel. The best part is their excellent bargains. Call for hours.
- ✓ **Highland Stoneware Pottery**, Mill Street, Ullapool (☎ 01854-612-980; www.highlandstoneware.com) and Lochinver, north of Ullapool on the coast road (☎ 01571-844-376). Since its inception in 1974, Highland Stoneware has gained an international following. Visitors for its unique freehand-decorated pottery come to the two shops from all over the world. Open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturdays in season only (Easter–Oct) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. They're closed two weeks around Christmas and New Year's.
- ✓ **Moniack Castle Wines**, Beauly Road, on the A862, 11km (7 miles) from Inverness (☎ 01463-831-283; www.moniackcastle.co.uk). This popular winery and gourmet food shop makes six wines and three liqueurs from natural ingredients such as birch bark. You can also purchase top-quality marmalades, sauces, jams, and chutneys, all made here, like the wine, from local ingredients. Open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in summer and Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. in winter.
- ✓ **Riverside Gallery**, 11 Bank St., Inverness (☎ 01463-224-781). This two-floor gallery near the banks of the River Ness has a wide range of traditional and contemporary pieces by Scottish artists. Open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Doing the Pub Crawl

The Highlands have a good number of atmospheric, quintessentially Scottish pubs where you can relax and enjoy a bit of pub grub. Some of my favorites at country inns include the Arisaig Plockton and Scourie hotels. Listed below are a couple of additional favorites.

- ✓ **Blackfriars**, 93–95 Academy St., Inverness (☎ 01463-233-881). A solid traditional pub with Scottish real ales on tap, live music on

Saturday nights, and normally a couple of ceilidhs a week, too. Open Sunday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 1 a.m.

- ✔ **Claichaig Inn**, Glencoe, follow the sign from the A82 or walk across the footbridge from the visitor center (☎ **01855-811-252**). This rustic pub's wood-burning stove and the sunny disposition of the staff both warm the woody lounge and bar. Climbers, tourists, and locals come here for a wee rest stop and excellent ales on tap. Open Sunday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., Friday from 11 a.m. to midnight, and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.
- ✔ **G's**, 9–21 Castle St., Inverness (☎ **01463-233-322**; www.mr-gs.co.uk). A nightclub rather than a pub, G's is the best place for dancing in Inverness. Admission prices range from £3 to £6 (\$5.55–\$11). The club's hours vary a bit but doors usually open at around 9:30 p.m. and its late license keeps the place open until 3 a.m. on Friday and Saturday nights.

Fast Facts: The Highlands

Area Code

The area code for Aviemore is **01479**; Dornoch **01862**; Drumnadrochit **01456**; Fort William **01397**; Glencoe **01855**; Inverness **01463**; Nairn **01667**; and Ullapool **01854**. You need to dial the area code only if you're calling from outside the city you want to reach.

ATMs

ATMs are definitely few and far between in the Highlands, with the exception of Inverness and Fort William, where the most convenient ATMs may be at the Safeway (Morrisons) supermarkets.

Emergencies

Dial ☎ **999** for police, fire, or ambulance.

Hospitals

The main hospital in the area is Raigmore Hospital, Inshes Road, Inverness (☎ 01463-704-000).

Information

For general information on the region, contact the Highlands Information Centre, Grampian Road, Aviemore (☎ 01479-810-363; www.highlandfreedom.com). Other tourist offices include: Castle Wynd, just off Bridge Street, Inverness (☎ 01463-234-353); and Cameron Square, about half-way down the High Street, Fort William (☎ 01397-703-781). Summer offices are located at 62 King St., Nairn (☎ 01667-452-763) and 6 Argyle St., Ullapool (☎ 01854-612-135).

Internet Access

The best place to jump on the Web is the Electric Post Office, 93 High St., Nairn (☎ 01667-451-617). It's open daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., and the cost is £4 (\$7.40) per hour.

Mail

A central post office is located at 2 Greig St., Inverness (☎ 01463-233-610).

Chapter 19

Hebridean Islands

In This Chapter

- ▶ Using ferries to hop from island to island
- ▶ Finding the best sandy beaches and most picturesque ports
- ▶ Discovering historic standing stones, churches, and castles
- ▶ Getting to some of the smaller isles for just a day

The allure of the Hebridean (Heb-ri-dee-an) Islands isn't difficult to understand: The history and culture of the Scottish isles — combined with the beauty of the seascape — are utterly captivating. Getting to the islands is half the fun, and when you arrive, you can be almost guaranteed to have of a peaceful retreat from the mainland, particularly at places such as Iona or Eigg. If I had to pick my personal favorite region of Scotland — a hard choice, indeed — it would probably be the Hebrides.

Here are a few things you should know before you set out for these islands.



Similar to other remote regions of Scotland, on the islands, many businesses — including hotels, restaurants, and attractions — close in the off-season. I have done my best to indicate when things are open, but if you're traveling between mid-October and mid-April, please check in advance.



Also, due to rather devout Protestant beliefs, some towns and villages become virtual ghost towns on Sunday, particularly in parts of the outer Hebrides. The Western Islands, home to the majority of Gaelic-speaking people in Scotland, may have road signs posted only in Gaelic. Finally, the Hebridean Islands get some of the most dramatic weather in Scotland — in summer, sunshine can be followed by rain falling horizontally.

But none of that is any reason not to try to include at least a short stay on one of the many islands that you can visit, whether the ones hugging the mainland coast line, such as Skye and Mull, or those more far flung, such as Harris or Uist. There are no cities, per se, on any of the Hebridean Islands. The larger ports are Portree on Skye, Tobermory on Mull, and Stornoway on Lewis. These towns all have banks, shops, grocery stores, and other helpful amenities.

Although the Hebrides chain is made up of several islands, many of which are largely uninhabited, this chapter concentrates on the more notable ones. Also, remember that the southernmost Hebridean island of Islay is included in my chapter on “Ayrshire and Argyll.”

As long as you enjoy sailing on ferries, island hopping through the Hebrides can be a real blast, even if the trips can be time-consuming. Alternatively, you can take one-day excursions from the mainland to isles close to the coast for a taste of island life.

Getting to the Islands

One of the best things about any visit to the islands is the ferry ride. Indeed, unless you charter a boat, there is no other way (with the exception of Skye) to get to the Hebrides. A network of boats links the Outer and Inner Hebrides to the mainland and, in some cases, to one another. You'll probably want a car to explore the islands, but you can get around without one, by bus or bike.

- ✓ **By ferry:** The principal provider of ferry services is **Caledonian MacBrayne** or CalMac (☎ **08705-650-000** or 01475-650-100; www.calmac.co.uk). Travel times vary. The ferry from Mallaig to Armadale, Skye, takes only about 30 minutes. From Oban to Craignure on Mull means about 45 minutes on the ferry. The trip, however, from Ullapool to Stornoway, Lewis, clocks in at slightly more than 2½ hours. The larger ferries all have cafes and bars with lounges.



On a trip through the Hebrides, you can take advantage of CalMac's “Island Hopscotch” tickets. For example, you may jump between Skye, Uist, Harris, and Lewis, using the mainland ports of Mallaig and Ullapool. Tickets for that hopscotch are around £30 (\$56) per passenger and £150 (\$278) for a car.

CalMac offices in the region include Armadale, Skye (☎ **01471-844-248**); Craignure, Mull (☎ **01680-812-343**); and Stornoway, Lewis (☎ **01851-702-361**). You can find contact information for other local offices on the Web site.

You are not allowed to take a vehicle onto some of the smaller islands, such as Iona, for example.



- ✓ **By train:** **First ScotRail** (☎ **0845-748-4950**; www.firstscotrail.com) runs trains to the Kyle of Lochalsh (terminating near the Skye Bridge), Mallaig, and Oban. From the latter two, you can get connecting ferries to the islands. Regular passenger trains don't run on the islands. On Mull, however, a narrow gauge train runs the short trip from Craignure to Torosay Castle (☎ **01680-812-494**; www.mullrail.co.uk).
- ✓ **By bus:** From Glasgow, **Scottish Citylink** (☎ **0141-332-9644** or 0870-550-5050; www.citylink.co.uk) runs buses to ferry ports

such as Oban and Ullapool. After you reach the islands, buses are controlled by local authorities and by private companies. The service is not as good as it perhaps should be (or once was), but get a local timetable and you'll get by just fine by leaving the driving to someone else.

- ✓ **By car:** You can drive onto Skye over the bridge at the Kyle of Lochalsh, on the A87, which is the main road on the Isle of Skye, as well. On Mull, the main road is the A849, which links Tobermory to Fionnophort via the ferry port at Craignure. Otherwise, it is mostly one-lane (single-track) roads, many of which are twisting and turning. Take your time and exercise caution, especially as the locals will know the roads like their proverbial palms and will travel at speeds that you should not consider imitating. The smallest of the islands don't allow tourists in cars at all, making them all the more tranquil.
- ✓ **By plane:** The main airport is on Lewis (call Highlands & Islands Airports Ltd. at ☎ **01851-707-400**), about 6.4km (4 miles) east of Stornoway. You can arrange to fly there from Inverness, Edinburgh, or Glasgow. A nonstop flight from Glasgow typically is about one hour long. There are some interisland flight services connecting Barra, Benbecula (part of North Uist), and Stornoway — but it's not necessary to fly. Taking a ferry is part of the enjoyment of travel on the Hebrides.

Spending the Night

Because the islands have limited dining and drinking options, the accommodations listed in this section tend to include those where food and drink are part of the package. The larger islands offer more accommodations options; you should contact local tourist offices if you want to spend the night on a smaller island. Breakfast is included except where otherwise noted. See Chapter 8 for an explanation of the star ratings given by VisitScotland.com — also known as the Scottish Tourist Board — and for suggestions on self-catering cottages, which are a possible option on any island tour.



Remember that hotels, large and small, may open seasonally on the Hebrides, so always phone in advance if you're traveling between October and Easter. Better to confirm that they'll take you in rather than showing up unannounced.

Finally, have a look at “Dining locally,” where I have highlighted which restaurants also have overnight rooms.

Hebridean Islands





Ardhasaig House

\$\$-\$\$\$ Ardhasaig, Harris

This small, four-star hotel is fairly remote, but the reward for making it here is the view of the nearby bay and mountains. The building dates to 1904, but the bar lounge is surprisingly modern. Dining at Ardhasaig is usually a real treat; the menu changes pretty much daily, emphasizing what is fresh and locally available, such as pan-fried Harris scallops or fillet of venison. The six overnight rooms are comfortably if basically furnished (no TVs) and some include antique furniture, while all have views either of the hills or of the sea. In 2004, the old stone barn was converted into a self-contained suite with a king-size sleigh bed and sheepskin rugs.

See map p. 371. Off the A859, 5km (3 miles) northwest of Tarbert. ☎ **01859-502-066**. Fax: 01859-502-077. www.ardhasaig.co.uk. Rack rates: £110 (\$204) double. MC, V.

Ardvasar Hotel

\$\$-\$\$\$ Ardvasar, Skye

This lovely hotel (one of the oldest on Skye), pub, and restaurant is a good bet for a stay in the southern part of the island. Near the Armadale ferry terminal (sailings to/from Mallaig), the lodge sits on the edge of the Sound of Sleat. The comfortable ten rooms (three are spacious “superior” class) have lovely views of the water or the rugged landscape of the island’s interior. The food is about as good as it gets in the area, and the pub bustles with grinning locals: It has been described as the hub of the local community.

See map p. 373. Just off the A851. ☎ **01471-844-223**. Fax: 01471-844-495. www.ardvasarhotel.com. Rack rates: £100 (\$185) double; £150 (\$278) double with dinner. MC, V.

Argyll Hotel

\$\$-\$\$\$ Iona

This environmentally conscientious hotel, dedicated to minimizing its impact on the fragile small island ecology, was originally built in 1868 as the village inn. The outstanding and obliging hospitality more than compensates for some smallish overnight units. But why hang out in your bedroom when you can spend time exploring Iona or relaxing in the Argyll’s lounges, which face the water? The package that includes dinner is recommended — not least because the ingredients in your meal are actually grown in the hotel’s own organic garden. Bargain hunters can opt for a small double room with no en suite bathroom. For green tourists, the Argyll is a must, but even non-ecologically minded visitors will enjoy a stay here.

See map p. 371. 183m (600 ft.) from the pier. ☎ **01681-700-334**. Fax: 01681-700-510. www.argyllhoteliona.co.uk. Rack rates: £84–£152 (\$155–\$281) double including dinner (a minimum two night stay generally is required). MC, V.

The Isle of Skye



Cabarfeidh Hotel

\$\$\$ Stornoway, Lewis

On Lewis, this fine modern accommodation (built in the 1970s) is located in the middle of a 3.2-hectare (8-acre) garden just outside of Stornoway's town center. Despite its recent vintage, there have been several refurbishments to the Cabarfeidh, the latest in spring 2007. The rooms are large and well upholstered, and the service usually comes up trumps, too. The hotel's **Manor Restaurant** specializes in local seafood.

See map p. 373. Manor Park, Perceval Road South, north of the town center. ☎ **01851-702-604**. Fax: 01851-705-572. www.cabarfeidh-hotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £128 (\$237) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Cuillin Hills Hotel
\$\$\$ Portree, Skye

Just outside Portree, this 19th-century hunting lodge features excellent views of the bay below and Cuillin crags in the distance. The four-star hotel has about two-dozen rooms and is equally popular with hikers, birders, and sportsmen — the comfort and friendliness appeal to everyone. The conservatory is the place to relax, while the rooms are full of quality furniture and generally have large bathrooms. The hotel's restaurant earns praise for its seafood and Highland game dishes.

See map p. 373. Off the A855, just north of town, Portree. ☎ **01478-612-003**. Fax: 01478-613-092. www.cuillinhills-hotel-skye.co.uk. Rack rates: £120–£230 (\$222–\$426) double. AE, MC, V.

Dunollie Hotel
\$\$ Broadford, Skye

The Dunollie (part of the Swallow hotel chain that went belly up in summer 2006) sits on the old harbor wall in Broadford, with views across the Inner Sound of Raasay towards the Applecross hills of mainland Scotland. The 84-unit hotel, all en suite with TVs, serves as a good holiday base from which to explore the Isle of Skye. It's popular with organized bus tours, too.

See map p. 373. On the A87 (about 8km/5 miles east of the Skye Bridge). ☎ **01471-822-253**. Fax: 01471-822-060. www.british-trust-hotels.com. Rack rates: £95 (\$176) double. MC, V.

Harris Hotel
\$\$–\$\$\$ Tarbert, Harris

You can't find a much more convenient location on Harris than this 24-room hotel near the ferry terminal. The pretty, white-washed building, built in 1865, has modern décor, a comfortable selection of accommodations (including a pair of family rooms), a large garden, and a spacious resident's lounge. One guest, *Peter Pan* author J.M. Barrie, mischievously etched his initials in a dining room window.

See map p. 371. Near the Tarbert ferry terminal. ☎ **01859-502-154**. Fax: 01859-502-281. www.harrishotel.com. Rack rates: £80–£120 (\$148–\$222) double; £126–£168 (\$233–\$311) double including dinner. MC, V.

Hotel Eilean Iarmain
\$\$\$ Isleornsay, Skye

The Eilean Iarmain (also known as the Isle Ornsay Hotel) combines quintessential Highland hospitality with tranquility and beautiful surroundings.

Many of the century-old building's original antiques are intact, and the 12 rooms in the main building contain period furniture. The finest unit is perhaps *Te Bheag*, or "Whisky One," which contains a 19th-century canopy bed that apparently was once used in Armadale Castle. The views of the harbor from the lodge are picture-postcard perfect. Four suites have been added to the converted 19th-century stable blocks.

See map p. 373. Off the A8561. ☎ **01471-833-332**. Fax: 01471-833-275. www.eileaniarmain.co.uk. Rack rates: £120–£210 (\$222–\$389) double. AE, MC, V.

The Rosedale

\$\$–\$\$\$ Portree, Skye

This nice white set of former fishermen's houses near the water's edge in Skye's largest harbor is warmly decorated, giving the place a snug B&B feel. An eccentric layout of stairs and corridors connects lounges to the bar and restaurant. The main building has cozy rooms that are simply decorated while those in another wing are more individually decorated. Most of the units in either wing, however, overlook the harbor. Dinners normally reflect seasonal produce.

See map p. 373. On the harbor, Beaumont Crescent, Quay Brae, Portree. ☎ **01478-613-131**. Fax: 01478-612-531. www.rosedalehotelskye.co.uk. Rack rates: £60–£120 (\$110–\$222) double. AE, MC, V.

The Royal Hotel

\$\$ Portree, Skye

If only I had a \$5 note for every hotel named the Royal in Scotland. This one occupies an enviable spot just up the road from the pier. The 21 overnight rooms — recently upgraded — are comfortable: Many overlook the harbor, some have been specifically designed for families, and room service is provided. Another treat in this part of the world is the adjacent gym and sauna that's available to guests. In addition to the main Royal restaurant, the hotel is also home to the casual eatery, Well Plaid.

See map p. 373. Bank Street, Portree. ☎ **01478-612-525**. Fax: 01478-613-198. www.royal-hotel-skye.com. Rack rates: £91–£99 (\$168–\$183) double. MC, V.



St. Columba Hotel

\$\$ Argyll, Iona

Although it doesn't have the character and charm of the Argyll (see its listing earlier in this chapter), St. Columba's setting near Iona Abbey (see "The top attractions" later in this chapter) never leaves you at a loss for pretty views of the sea. A converted and expanded church manse dating from 1846, the community-owned hotel has some large and well-furnished rooms, including four for families (and, unusually, nine singles). Like the Argyll, it too has a vegetable and herb garden following organic standards, although the volume of guests and diners can quickly exhaust their supplies in the high season. Let them know when your ferry gets in and someone might come down and pick up your luggage.

See map p. 371. 0.5km (¼ mile) north of the pier. ☎ **01681-700-304**. Fax: 01681-700-688. www.stcolumba-hotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £122–£128 (\$226–\$237) double with dinner. MC, V.

Sligachan Hotel \$\$ Sligachan, Skye

This 22-room hotel was built in the 1830s and retains much of its original stonework, a classic look that complements the impressive location near the feet of the Cuillin Hills. Most of the rooms (recently refurbished and several with showers and bathtubs) have a view (choose between the loch and the hills), and four are suitable for families. Located in the middle of Skye, the Sligachan is convenient for visiting most parts of the island. The popular Seumas' Bar is an excellent place to enjoy Skye or Eagle ales, made at the microbrewery here.

See map p. 373. Off the A87 (14km/9 miles south of Portree). ☎ **01478-650-204**. Fax: 01478-650-207. www.sligachan.co.uk. Rack rates: £70–£100 (\$130–\$185) double. MC, V.



Tigh Dearg Hotel \$\$-\$\$\$ Lochmaddy, North Uist

Only open since September 2005, and receiving a coveted four-star small hotel rating (personally delivered by the head of Scotland's tourist board, no less) in spring 2006, Tigh Dearg Hotel offers rather luxurious accommodation in a place where you would not necessarily expect it. In addition to the designer overnight rooms with modern details and plush accessories, the hotel includes a restaurant, gym, sauna, and steam room. And it all overlooks Lochmaddy Bay. Honestly, I've not been yet, but this one is high on my list the next time I get to the Outer Hebrides.

See map p. 371. Off the A865 near Lochmaddy, North Uist. ☎ **01876-500-700**. www.tighdearghotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £90–£140 (\$167–\$259) double. AE, MC, V.



Tobermory Holidays \$-\$\$ Tobermory, Mull

This combination B&B and self-catering facility is up on the hill near the golf club, away from the harbor, but it suffers none for its quiet location in a residential area on the edge of the village. Situated behind an old stone home (Ach-na-Craoibh House), the converted barn has a host of apartments with kitchens, as well as two double rooms with en suite bathrooms. As long as you're not checking out at 7 a.m. (as I had to on my last visit), guests in the "garden rooms" can order breakfast the night before and have it delivered by one of the gracious owners. The grounds include a children's play area.

See map p. 371. Behind Ach-na-Craoibh House on Erray Rd (take Back Brae from the harbor, bearing right onto Erray Road, just past Police station). ☎ **01688-302-301**. Fax: 01688-723-122. Rack rates: £56 (\$104) double; self-catering weekly rates from £100 (\$185). Cash only.

Tobermory Hotel**\$\$-\$\$\$ Tobermory, Mull**

All the buildings at the harbor in Tobermory are brightly painted in pastel colors, and the soft pink Tobermory Hotel is no exception. These converted fishermen's cottages on the waterfront contain 15 overnight rooms (all en suite) and one double room with a separate bathroom. The hotel's "superior" double rooms all overlook Tobermory Bay and feature king-size beds. Its Water's Edge restaurant is gaining a reputation for highlighting excellent local produce, whether Isle of Mull cheese made just outside town (see "Shopping" later in this chapter), Glengorm lamb, or shellfish landed at the pier.

See map p. 371. 53 Main St., Tobermory. ☎ **01688-302-091**. Fax: 01688-302-254. www.thetobermoryhotel.com. Rack rates: £75-£110 (\$139-\$204) double. MC, V.

Western Isles Hotel**\$\$\$ Tobermory, Mull**

Fans of the great black-and-white movie *I Know Where I'm Going!* (see "Recommended movies" in Chapter 2) should recognize this hotel on the hill above Tobermory. A Victorian stone-front building overlooking the bay, it offers old-world charm, although it does get mixed reviews from guests and may be in need of upgrading. Nevertheless, the hotel occupies a desirable spot, and several rooms have vistas of the harbor below, though the best views are from the conservatory or summer veranda.

See map p. 371. Off Western Rd, above Tobermory harbor. ☎ **01688-302-012**. Fax: 01688-302-297. www.mullhotel.com. Rack rates: £106-£153 (\$196-\$283) double. MC, V.

Dining Locally

Few restaurants on the Hebridean Islands can thrive independently of a hotel (there often are not enough locals to keep them in business), so most of your dining options are likely to come from the previous section, such as at the Argyll Hotel on Iona or the Water's Edge in the Tobermory Hotel. However, a few other restaurants stand out — and I have also noted where they have overnight accommodations, too.



Although it isn't listed below, you might try the fish and chip van at Tobermory harbor — it produces possibly the best "fish suppers" in all of Scotland.

The Chandlery Seafood Restaurant**\$\$\$ Portree, Skye MODERN SCOTTISH/FRENCH**

One-time Scottish restaurant of the year, the Chandlery (in the Bosville Hotel) specializes in seafood and game dishes. Occupying a lovely spot overlooking Portree harbor, the place has an airy feel. Service is efficient

and professional, serving up treats from Chef John Kelly such as hand-dived scallops from Loch Silgachan or fresh langoustines landed at Portree harbor. Signature dishes include a smoked ham hock and Mallaig monkfish terrine or seared loin of Highland lamb.

See map p. 373. In the Bosville Hotel, Bosville Terrace. ☎ 01478-612-846. www.bosvillehotel.co.uk. Reservations required. Fixed price 3-course dinner: £40 (\$74). AE, MC, V. Open: daily Easter–Oct 6:30–9:30 p.m.



Creelers of Skye

\$\$ Broadford, Skye SEAFOOD/MEDITERRANEAN

This simply decorated bistro on the edge of the village of Broadford, not far from the Skye Bridge, is not interested in snobbery. However informal it may appear in looks and attitude, the food can be outstanding. In addition to the house specialty, Cajun seafood gumbo, there are Mediterranean-influenced meals and more-familiar Scottish dishes such as prawn cocktail, fried haddock, pan-roasted sea bass, or wild venison.

See map p. 373. Off the A87 (next to the Skye Serpentarium). ☎ 01471-822-281. www.skye-seafood-restaurant.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Main courses: £7–£15 (\$13–\$28). MC, V. Open: summers daily 1–10 p.m.

Gruline Home Farm

\$\$-\$\$\$ Gruline, Mull SCOTTISH

Dinners at this small five-star B&B in the middle of Mull have an excellent reputation. They're generally only served by prior arrangement if you're not staying here, so don't consider dropping in for a bite as I once foolishly did. Dishes, such as pan-fried scallop of venison or prawn tails in garlic cream sauce, are made from mostly local produce. If you desire wine, you must bring your own. No children younger than 16, either.

See map p. 371. Off the BB8035 (5km/3 miles southwest of Salen). ☎ 01680-300-581. www.gruline.com. Reservations required. Fixed-price dinner: £26 (\$48). MC, V. Open: call for availability.

Kinloch Lodge

\$\$\$ Sleat, Skye SCOTTISH

Kinloch is the home of the Macdonalds, and the current matriarch of the house, Lady Claire Macdonald, has become well-known in the Scottish culinary world. Expect dishes such as halibut with spinach gnocchi or Scotch beef filet steak with port peppercorn sauce. The lodge regularly hosts special cooking weekends when guests see demonstrations, do some cooking, and, of course, eat themselves silly. In addition to the restaurant, Kinloch has 14 **overnight rooms** in the 17th-century hunting lodge.

See map p. 373. By the A851 (5km/3 miles north of Isleornsay). ☎ 01471-833-333. www.kinloch-lodge.co.uk. Reservations required. Fixed-price dinner: £42 (\$78). AE, MC, V. Open: daily 12:15–2:15 p.m.; 7:30 p.m.–9 p.m.

Rodel Hotel**\$\$-\$\$\$ Rodel, Harris MODERN BRITISH**

The dining room at the small Rodel Hotel combines some excellent local produce (whether Hebridean lamb or shellfish) with a contemporary touch, which extends to the art on the walls. Near St. Clement's Church (see "The top attractions," later in this chapter) at the southern end of the Isle of Harris, the restaurant features dishes such as a salad of local prawns and crabmeat, Lewis mussels steamed in white wine, pave of Minch cod, or pan-fried sirloin steak with red wine jus. The Rodel has four **overnight rooms**.

See map p. 371. ☎ **01859-520-210**. www.rodelhotel.co.uk. *Main courses: £14-£17 (\$26-\$31)*. MC, V. *Open: daily noon-5 p.m. and 5:30-9:30 p.m.*

Three Chimneys Restaurant**\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ Colbost, Skye SCOTTISH**

This white-washed shoreside restaurant (with six luxury **overnight rooms**) is arguably the most popular on Skye — and probably the most famous in the Hebrides. Using superb Scottish produce, owners Eddie and Shirley Spear offer top-quality seafood and Highland game dishes from menus that change seasonally. Dishes might include brochette of scallops and monkfish wrapped in Ayrshire bacon or whole roast Skye lobster with lemon-thyme butter.

See map p. 373. *On the B884 (about 8km/5 miles west of Dunvegan Castle, north Skye)*. ☎ **01470-511-258**. www.threechimneys.co.uk. *Reservations required. Fixed-price 4-course dinner: £55 (\$102)*. MC, V. *Open: daily 6:30-9 p.m.; lunches Mon-Sat Apr-Oct 12:30-2 p.m.*

Exploring the Hebrides

From the spiritual mecca of Iona to the sandy beaches of Harris, not to mention the many ancient and royal attractions in between, the Hebridean Islands offer quite a lot, with no shortage of natural beauty. Indeed, the islands are attractions in themselves, but you'll find plenty to see besides the scenery.

The biggest island of the inner Hebrides is the Isle of Skye. Thanks to a controversial bridge (well, the toll was controversial at least), visitors can drive onto it at Kyle of Lochalsh. Your other option is to take a ferry from the mainland harbor of Mallaig, at the end of the road. Eighty-one kilometers (50 miles) long and 37km (23 miles) wide, Skye offers memorable landscapes, historic attractions, and a good deal of accommodation and dining options. Portree is the main town on Skye.

Closer to central Scotland, and thus perhaps more accessible, is the Isle of Mull, home to the picturesque port of Tobermory, a few castles, plenty of scenery, and the added value of little sister island Iona. Mull has a reputation for being the rainiest of the Hebridean Islands, but on my visits, I have not found it noticeably wetter. After you arrive in

Craignure (which has little to offer other than the nearby castles of Duart and Torosay), you can either head north to Tobermory or west toward Fionnphort to catch the ferry to the Isle of Iona. Give yourself an hour no matter which way you decide to go — the highway turns into a single-lane road in either direction. Tobermory, the largest town on Mull, is worth a visit. Brightly painted houses and storefronts in pastel shades of blue, red, and yellow give Tobermory the look of a little Copenhagen and the feel of an Italian fishing village.



To see Mull and Iona in a day, Bowman's Tours (ferry and coach) run from Oban from April through October. Fares are around £30 (\$56). Call ☎ **01631-566-809** or log on to www.bowmanstours.co.uk for more information.

Beyond Skye are the connected islands of Lewis and Harris (the latter being famous for its tweed), forming the largest island in the Outer Hebrides. You'll likely arrive either at the ferry terminals in Tarbert (a common name in western Scotland that essentially means isthmus) or further north in Stornoway, the administrative capital of the Western Isles. The southern coastal drive on Harris is an attraction in itself — a rocky and barren landscape transforms into a Gulf Stream miracle of bleached beaches and blue waters.

Some of the other islands — Barra, Coll, Eigg, Rhum, and North and South Uist — are smaller and sparsely populated, though a few can provide visitors with easy day-trip opportunities for a wee taste of island life.

The top attractions

Armada Castle Gardens & Museum of the Isles Armada, Skye

The Armada estate, on the sound of Sleat in southern Skye, covers more than 8,000 hectares (20,000 acres). It traditionally belonged to the clan Donald or Macdonald, known as the Lords of Isles, but now held in trust. The old castle is in ruins but it still occupies a magnificent spot with 19th-century woodland gardens, nature trails, and sea views. It isn't difficult to understand the allure of this place. The museum, opened in 2002, is full of information about the historically significant clan, at one time as powerful as Scottish royalty. The castle grounds are home to a large variety of different trees and plants, all flourishing thanks to the Gulf Stream's warming effects. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 373. Off the A851, just north of the ferry terminal. ☎ **01471-844-305**. www.clandonald.com. Admission: £4.90 (\$9.05) adults; £3.80 (\$7.05) seniors, students, and children younger than 16; £14 (\$26) family. Open: Apr–Oct daily 9:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Closed Nov–Feb, except the museum Wed Nov to mid-Dec 11 a.m.–3 p.m.

The Black House**Arnol, Lewis**

A Historic Scotland property, this attraction steps back a hundred years or so to depict traditional island living. Built in 1885 and occupied until 1964, the “black house” is a traditional Hebridean stone, turf, and thatched-roof structure, which served as both home and barn. Visitors are free to poke around and the information center gives more background on a lost way of life; the displays don’t paint a particularly pretty picture of what was rather rough living.



The peat fire has been known in the past to sometimes fill the house with smoke, but that’s the cost of authenticity. Allow about 1½ hours.

See map p. 371. Off the A858 (about 18km/11 miles northwest of Stornoway). ☎ **01851-710-395**. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £4.50 (\$8.30) adults, £3.50 (\$6.50) seniors and students, £2 (\$3.80) children. Open: daily Apr–Sept 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.; Oct–Mar 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Butt of Lewis**Lewis**

High cliffs overlooking the ocean are the principal reward for making it to the northern tip of Lewis. You see seabirds, seals, and spectacular wind-blown waves crashing against the rocks. The only significant building here is a proud lighthouse, constructed by the Stevenson family, which adds to the scene. Look for the large hole in the ground near the parking area; legend has it that the Vikings dug the hole in an attempt to drag the island back to Norway with them. Allow about one hour here.

See map p. 371. Follow the A857 to the end of the line.

Calanais Standing Stones**Lewis**

Sometimes known as the “Scottish Stonehenge,” this ancient cross-shaped formation of large stones is the most significant archaeological find of its kind in the region. There’s no charge to see the stones, which were erected sometime around 3000 B.C., but you may want to pay the modest fee to see the “Story of the Stones” exhibit within the visitor center. If you’re here during the summer solstice, you may find tents pitched near the monoliths — Calanais has become a popular spot for New Agers to celebrate the longest day of the year. Allow 1½ hours.

See map p. 371. Off the A858 (19km/12 miles west of Stornoway). ☎ **01851-621-422**. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk and www.calanaisvisitorcentre.co.uk. Admission: free. Open: stones year-round; visitor center Apr–Sept Mon–Sat 10 a.m.–6 p.m.; Oct–Mar Wed–Sat 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

Cuillin Hills

Near Broadford, Skye

These dark and massive hills — craggy enough to pass for mountains — are a point of pride for the residents of Skye. Considered some of the best climbing and hiking in Scotland, the 900-m (3,000-ft.) peaks rise in the center of the island.



You might consider spending an afternoon walking amid the spectacular scenery, but if you're inexperienced, inquire about professional guides at the tourist office in Portree. A private company called **Walkabout Scotland** organizes multiday guided hiking tours (call ☎ **0845 686 1344** or log on to www.walkaboutscotland.com). Allow three to six hours.

See map p. 373. South of the A87, between Broadford and Sligachan. Trails from Glen Brittle, south of Merkadale off the A863.

Doune Broch (Dun Carloway)

Carloway, Lewis

Up the road from the Calanais Standing Stones (see above), this intriguing stone ruin (a “broch” was a tower used for defensive purposes and/or as a home) from the Iron Age is in remarkably sound condition — good enough for you to walk into, at least. Properly called Dun Carloway, the broch provides some insight into prehistory. It wasn't all bad back then, either: Regardless of the weather outside, stepping into the broch provides surprisingly effective protection from the elements. Allow 1½ hours.

*See map p. 371. On the A858 (9km/6 miles north of Calanais). ☎ **01851-643-338**. Admission: free. Open: broch year-round; visitor center Apr–Sept Mon–Sat 10 a.m.–6 p.m.*

Duart Castle

Near Craignure, Mull

Fans of the entertaining 1945 film *I Know Where I'm Going!* (See “Recommended movies” in Chapter 2) should recognize the drawing room in this fine castle. Overlooking the Sound of Mull and clearly seen from the Oban ferry, Duart was abandoned in 1751. Thanks to the efforts of Fitzroy Maclean, it was completely restored from ruins in 1911. When you're inside, make your way up the narrow, twisting stairs and you can walk outside on the parapet at the top of the castle. As the ancestral home of the clan Maclean, one floor is devoted to clan history, with various references to the 17th-century battle cry: “Another for Hector!” Today, Duart Castle remains the home for the clan chief. There are no special gardens to tour, but visiting the grounds is free.



Note that at the time of writing, Duart's eccentric habit was to close Friday and Saturday (except Easter weekend). Allow 1½ hours.

*See map p. 371. Off the A849 (5km/3 miles southeast of Craignure). ☎ **01680-812-309**. www.duartcastle.com. Admission: £4.50 (\$8.30) adults, £4 (\$7.40) seniors and students, £2.25 (\$4.15) children, £11 (\$22) family. Open: Apr to mid-Oct Sun–Thurs 11 a.m.–4 p.m.*

Dunvegan Castle Dunvegan, Skye

The seat of the Macleod chiefs, this is said to be Scotland's oldest castle to be continually owned and occupied by the same family, going on 800 years now. In addition to antiques, oil paintings, rare books, and clan heirlooms — some dating to the Middle Ages — have a look at the legendary Fairy Flag, a relic thought to bring “miraculous powers” to the clan. Also displayed are personal items belonging to Bonnie Prince Charlie, plus there's a reasonably creepy dungeon. After you take in the castle and its impressive gardens — and especially if you have kids — take a short seal boat ride (separate admission). If you don't see a seal, they'll refund your money. Allow at least two hours.

See map p. 373. Off the A850, northwest Skye. ☎ **01470-521-206**. www.dunvegancastle.com. Admission: £5 (\$9.25) adults, £3.50 (\$6.50) seniors and students, £3 (\$5.55) children younger than 16. Open: daily mid-Mar to Oct 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Nov to mid-Mar 11 a.m.–4 p.m.

Eigg

The Isle of Eigg lies not far off west coast of Scotland and can be reached from either Mallaig or Arisaig. The latter offers summer cruises (on the *Sheerwater*), which often have the bonus of whale-sightings on the hour-long ride. In 1997, the inhabitants made history and set up a trust to buy the island. Visitors can take a variety of walks on the island, including the slightly strenuous hike up An Sgurr (the notch), the largest exposed piece of pitchstone in the U.K. The hike takes about two hours. An easier trek is to see chapel ruins on Kildonan Bay. A small tea room and place to rent bicycles are located at the small pier. Eigg is close enough to Arisaig that you can easily make a day trip of it and get a small dose of island life. For information on sailings from Arisaig, log on to www.arisaig.co.uk or call ☎ **01687-450-224**. Allow 6½ hours.

See map p. 371. West of Arisaig. www.isleofeigg.org.

Iona Abbey Iona

This spiritual landmark is a significant shrine to the early days of Christianity in Scotland. This settlement (of both historic and sacred value) was established on Iona by St. Columba, a Celtic pilgrim from Ireland. Columba almost single-handedly brought religion to a pagan land in the sixth century. The large abbey standing here today is in very good shape, having undergone several restorations since the 13th century. Crosses laid into the abbey floor mark the graves of several monks, while there are impressive medieval crosses on the grounds. The cemetery has graves of early Scottish royals and chiefs. Allow about 1½ hours.

You can see Iona in one day, although overnight stays are quite relaxing on this tiny island.



See map p. 371. 1km (1/2 mile) from ferry pier. ☎ **01681-700-512**. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £4 (\$7.40) adult, £3 (\$5.55) seniors and students, £2 (\$3.80) children. Open: Apr–Sept daily 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.; Oct–Mar daily 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.



North and South Uist

Although no single attraction on North and South Uist (pronounced *yewst*) necessarily stands out, these two islands, part of an archipelago, are worth a visit. Certainly consider it if you're on Lewis and Harris or even in north-west Skye (from where the ferry crossing out of Uig takes just under two hours). Devote at least a full day to cross the rural landscape and take in the scenery, landmarks, and fresh air. Be sure to get off the main road, too, at least occasionally, to explore the rural lanes that get closer to the sea. At the Balranald Nature Reserve, you can spot many types of wading birds and other sea life, while the Kildonan Museum and Heritage Centre covers local culture, history, and archaeological finds. You can drive through the Uists, via the isle of Benbecula, using the man-made causeways, but buses (Westen Isles Bus Services) also run the length of the islands. It is only about 82km (51 miles) from Lochmaddy south to Lochboisdale. Allow at least eight hours.

See map p. 371. South west of Harris. ☎ **01876-500-321**.

St. Clement's Church **Rodel, Harris**

Is it worth traveling to the southern tip of Harris to see this far-flung attraction? Aye, it pretty much is. At the end of an amazing coastal route full of white beaches and aqua-blue waters, you arrive at this small but well-preserved early 16th-century pre-Reformation church. It is certainly the best of its type in the Western Isles, following a cruciform plan with a square tower at one end. The most impressive feature, aside from the intact stone edifice itself, is the carved tomb of Alexander MacLeod of Dunvegan (aka Alasdair Crotach), who had it done well before he died in the late 1540s. Protected from the elements and literally built into the church, it is a remarkably well-preserved bit of medieval craftsmanship. There are other startling details elsewhere, including a carving of St. Clement and curiously naked woman. Allow one hour.

See map p. 371. On the A859, Rodel. Admission: free. Open: daily dawn–dusk.

Skye Museum of Island Life and Flora MacDonald's Grave **Kilmuir, Skye**

The place where Flora MacDonald was born is marked on South Uist. On Skye, if you follow a path from the Museum of Island Life to Kilmuir Cemetery, you can see the Victorian era memorial marking the grave of the legendary Flora. In case you don't know, she is credited with saving Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1746. The Young Pretender hid on Skye with her help after the battle of Culloden and escaped disguised as MacDonald's

maid. Poor Flora was later arrested as an accessory and held in the Tower of London. Later, she moved to North Carolina and finally back to Skye before she died. The locally run “museum” actually consists of a set of thatched croft (small-holding) houses, showing how people lived on Skye a century or more ago. The re-created crofts contain antique domestic items, agricultural tools, and photographs of island life. Allow one hour.

See map p. 373. On the A855, take the A87 north from Portree to Uig. ☎ **01470-552-206**. www.skyemuseum.co.uk. Admission: £1.75 (\$3.25) adults; £1 (\$1.85) seniors, students, and children younger than 16. Open: Apr–Oct generally Mon–Sat 9 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

Staffa and Fingal's Cave

Just a short boat trip from Mull, the uninhabited Isle of Staffa is an attraction worth seeing if you're spending time in the Mull-Iona area. Visitors enjoy watching the sea crash against the dramatic, vertical rock formations, especially the cathedral-like columns of Fingal's Cave. The cave is one of the natural wonders of the world and is famous for being the inspiration for Mendelssohn's *Hebridean Overture*. Birders, take note: Staffa is home to a large puffin colony. Unfortunately, in the midseason, some of the boats won't sail if they don't get enough reservations. Different services offer trips to Staffa: The MB *Iolaire* (☎ **01681-700-358**) departs from both Fionnphort (on Mull where the ferry for Iona sets off) and from Iona daily, allowing passengers one hour ashore; tickets are £18 (\$33) for adults and \$7.50 (\$14) for children. Turus Mara (☎ **0800-858-786** or 01688-400-242; www.turusmara.com) departs from Ulva Ferry, on the west coast of central Mull. Excursions are generally available from Easter through September and the Turus Mara Staffa trip costs about the same as sailing on the *Iolaire*.

See map p. 371.

Torosay Castle and Gardens Near Craignure, Mull

Compared to nearby Duart Castle, Torosay is a relatively modern house, built in the Victorian era. Access to the interiors here is more limited, too, because most of the building is still used as a private home. But whatever the restrictions indoors, the surrounding gardens are the real attraction for many visitors. The 4.8 hectares (12 acres) of well-manicured grounds abound with fine and unique flora, Romanesque statues, and ivy-covered walls. You're welcome to explore the greenhouse and are encouraged to stop and smell the roses; this stop is a treat for anyone with a green thumb. Photography buffs will appreciate the views of the Sound of Mull and background mountains, and children usually enjoy the small-scale train that runs to Torosay from Craignure. Allow 1½ hours.

See map p. 371. Off the A849 (about 1.5km/1 mile south of Craignure ferry terminal). ☎ **01680-812-421**. www.torosay.com. Admission: castle and gardens: £5.50 (\$10) adults, £5 (\$9.25) seniors and students, £2.25 (\$4.15), £14 (\$26) family. Open: Easter–Oct 10:30 a.m.–5 p.m. Gardens open 9 a.m.–7 p.m. in summer and during daylight hours in winter.



Western Isles Museum (Museum nan Eilean)
Stornoway, Lewis

This museum is home to exhibits on various aspects of island life, history, and archeology, deploying objects, photographs, prints, and paintings. The displays, often borrowed from other museums and collections around the islands and the Scottish mainland, are of excellent quality and significant historical importance. This museum is definitely worth a visit — and you can't beat the price. Allow 1½ hours.

See map p. 371. Francis Street, Stornoway. ☎ 01851-709-266. Admission: free. Open: Apr–Sept Mon–Sat 10 a.m.–5:30 p.m.; Oct–Mar Tues–Fri 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sat 10 a.m.–1 p.m.

Other cool things to see and do

- ✓ **Ardalanish Farm & Isle of Mull Weavers**, off the A849 near Bunessan, Mull (☎ 01681-700-265. www.isleofmullweavers.co.uk). This organic farm on the Ross of Mull doesn't mind visitors. In fact, you're welcome to see how a demonstration organic farm works. In addition to self-guided walks, the weavers offer bundled yarn and tweed by the yard.
- ✓ **Aros** (the Home of Culture and Hospitality), just south of Portree on the A87 (☎ 01478-613-649. www.aros.co.uk). This cultural center on the Isle of Skye has an art gallery, shops, cafe, and is a venue for music, drama, and films.
- ✓ **Aros Castle**, off the A848 (about 3km/2 miles north of Salen), Isle of Mull. The castle is a monumental pile of rocks in the shape of a ruined tower house, on a hill overlooking Salen Bay. But it was once a stronghold of the MacDougalls and the Lords of the Isles. The ruins, at least during my last visit, were not fenced off.
- ✓ **Mull Theatre**, Tobermory, Mull (☎ 01688-302-828; www.mulltheatre.com). This surprisingly accomplished dramatic company tours Scotland and performs at its own new facility opened in early 2007 outside Tobermory.
- ✓ **Skye Serpentarium**, on the A850 near Broadford, Skye (☎ 01471-822-209; www.skyeserpentarium.org.uk). This place is crazy about their collection of reptiles and amphibians, many of which were seized (while being smuggled into the country) by customs officials and sent to this serpentarium for the good life.
- ✓ **Talisker Distillery**, off the A863, Carbost, Skye (☎ 01478-614-308). As whisky distillery visits go, Talisker's tour is among the best. Enthusiastic guides expound on the virtues of their single malt whisky (the only one produced on Skye) and its production process.
- ✓ **Tobermory Distillery**, Tobermory, Mull (☎ 01688-302-645). The only distillery on Mull, Tobermory produces five different single malts with unpeated malted barley (not typical of island whisky). A visitor center is located on the premises.





- ✓ **Ulva** is the small isle located just across a narrow strait from the settlement of Ulva Ferry (off the B8073) in west-central Mull. During the Clearances from about 1840 to 1882, when thousands of Scots were evicted from their homes, Ulva's population went from about 850 to less than 60 — and the remaining residents were forced to live in one small corner near the ferry slip called Desolation Point. A cafe serving fresh oysters almost by itself merits the ferry ride to Ulva, but the isle is excellent for walking, too.

Shopping the Hebridean Islands

Despite their remoteness, the Hebridean Islands are home to a fair number of excellent craft and specialty shops.

- ✓ **Edinbane Pottery**, off the A850, between Portree and Dunvegan, Skye (☎ 01470-582-234; www.edinbane-pottery.co.uk). This workshop and gallery produces some unique and mostly hand-thrown salt-glazed ceramics. Open Easter to October daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- ✓ **Isle of Mull Cheese**, Sgriob-Ruadh Farm, near Tobermory, Mull (☎ 01688-302-235; www.isleofmullcheese.co.uk). This farm produces award-winning, artisan cheeses using only cow's and ewe's milk produced on the premises. Delicious. Open May to September daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- ✓ **Isle of Mull Silver & Goldsmiths**, Main Street, Tobermory, Mull (☎ 01688-302-345; www.mullsilver.co.uk). Part manufacturer, part retail shop, this little jewelry store makes pieces in-house and has an impressive selection from across Scotland. The shop is open Monday through Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 to 5 p.m. Hours may be extended in the summer.
- ✓ **Over the Rainbow**, Portree, Skye (☎ 01478-612-555; www.skye-knitwear.com). This shop is stocked with colorful knits of first-rate quality, whether sweaters, scarves, or blankets. The shop also sells designer jewelry and accessories. Open daily from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the summer and daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the off season.
- ✓ **Tobermory Handmade Chocolate**, Main Street, Tobermory, Mull (☎ 01688-302-526; www.tobchoc.co.uk). This chocolatier makes unique handmade confections locally, whether 71 percent pure dark-chocolate treats (such as a rum truffle) or after-dinner mints. Open March to October Monday through Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. in July and August.

Doing the Pub Crawl

Many of the inns and restaurants listed at the beginning of this chapter offer pub life, too. Below are a few more to consider. Call for the latest opening and closing times.

- ✓ **Isles Inn**, Somerled Square, Portree, Skye (☎ 01478-612-129). This cozy, friendly pub (with **overnight rooms**) in the center of Portree is a popular joint featuring traditional music most nights, especially in the summer.
- ✓ **Martyr's Bay**, near the pier, Iona (☎ 01681-700-382). This bar (and restaurant) has sea views and is named for the nearby inlet where some 68 monks were killed by Vikings in the 9th century.
- ✓ **Mishnish**, Main Street, Tobermory, Mull (☎ 01688-302-009). This quayside pub (with **overnight rooms**) is rather big for such a diminutive town. There are two main areas, with a warming fireplace, as well as “snugs” (small rooms) for a little more privacy.

Fast Facts: The Hebridean Islands

Area Code

The area codes for the main towns and islands in the Hebrides are: Portree, Skye **01478**; Tobermory, Mull **01688**; Iona **01681**; Stornoway, Lewis **01851**; Tarbert, Harris **01859**. You need to dial the area code only if you're calling from outside the city you want to reach.

Emergencies

Dial ☎ **999** for police, fire, or ambulance.

Hospitals

The main hospitals in the Hebrides are Gesto Hospital, Lower Edinbane, Portree, Skye (☎ 01470-582-262); and one in Salen, Mull (☎ 01680-300-392).

Information

The main tourist office is Western Isles Tourist Board, 26 Cromwell St., Stornoway,

Lewis (☎ 01851-703-088; Fax: 01851-705-244; www.visithebrides.com). Other tourist offices include: Bayfield House, just off Somerled Square, Portree, Skye (☎ 01478-612-137); Pier Road, Tarbert, Harris (☎ 01859-502-011); Pier Road, Lochmaddy, North Uist (☎ 01876-500-321); Pier Road, Lochboisdale, South Uist (☎ 01878-700-286); Main Street, Castlebay, Harris (☎ 01871-810-336); in the Caledonian MacBrayne ticket office at the far northern end of the harbor, Tobermory, Mull (☎ 01648-302-182); and opposite the quay, Craignure, Mull (☎ 01680-812-377).

Mail

You can find post offices at Gladstone Buildings, Quay Brae, Portree, Skye (☎ 01478-612-533), and 36 Main St., Tobermory, Mull (☎ 01688-302-058).

Chapter 20

Orkney and Shetland Islands

In This Chapter

- ▶ Uncovering accommodations and restaurants on the islands
 - ▶ Discovering prehistoric sites and settlements
-

Making the trip to the northern island groups of Orkney and Shetland can be rewarding but if you do plan to visit either archipelago, you should know that getting there does take some extra effort.

But should you reach these islands, you will discover that they abound with grand views, old ruins, and a heritage unlike the rest of Scotland. Given the long ribbon of history, they arguably have as much in common with Scandinavia as Scotland. The location is so far north that midsummer nights get no darker than twilight. As far as the weather's concerned, these islands can feel chilly with a steady breeze often blowing. Yet given how far north they are, these nearly flat isles should be a lot colder. Winter offers scant sunlight and often brings snow.

Visitors will find that accommodation, dining, shopping, and drinking options are more limited in such northern latitudes. In the off season, the quiet gets even quieter. Keep in mind that although the Orkney and Shetland islands offer an escape from the crowds, in many ways you're escaping conveniences, too.

Kirkwall is the main town in the Orkneys, where the ferries from Aberdeen arrive. To the east is **Stromness**, another key port village, where ferries arrive from the northern Scottish mainland city of Scrabster near Thurso. In Shetland, **Lerwick** is the administrative capital and largest port town, receiving ferries from Aberdeen, Kirkwall, and in summer from Bergen, Norway, too. Shetland is also today a major terminus for pipelines from the North Sea oil platforms.



Given the limited tourist offerings on the islands, I keep this chapter short and succinct, combing the accommodation and dining options into one section. For greater details, contact the local tourist information centers. For Orkney, call the Kirkwall center (☎ **01856-872-856**) or log

on to www.visitororkney.com. For Shetland, call the Lerwick center (☎ 08701-999-440) or go to the Web site www.visitshetland.com.

Getting There

For many travelers, the simplest way to see the islands is to join a tour that covers the major sights in the area. If you're not on a tour, you can get to both Orkney and Shetland by ferry or by airplane. The major islands of the groups have ferry services that connect them to one another.

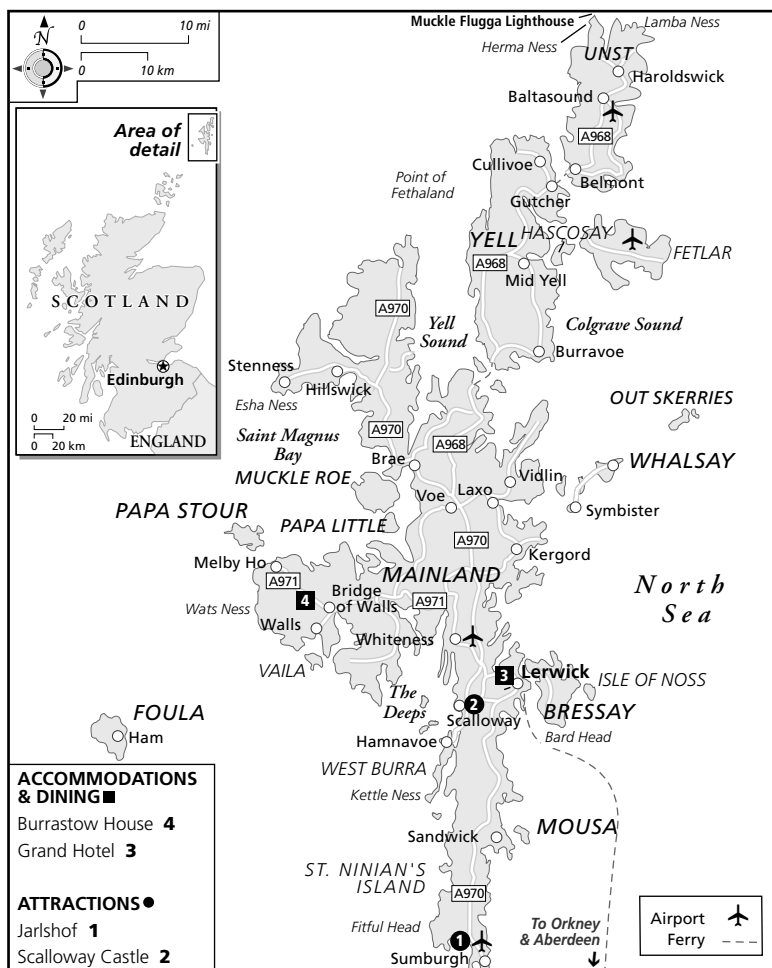
✓ **By ferry: NorthLink Ferries** (☎ 0845-600-0449; www.northlinkferries.co.uk) operates services from the mainland to Orkney and Shetland, either from Scrabster to Stromness or Aberdeen to Kirkwall. Typical fares range from around £13 (\$24) to £24 (\$44) per adult (plus vehicle fee), depending on the route and the time of year. The trip from Scrabster to Stromness in Orkney takes about 2¼ hours; the overnight journey from Aberdeen to Lerwick in Shetland takes 12½ hours.

Smaller companies also run boats to Orkney. Summer passenger-only ferries run by John O'Groats Ferries (☎ 01955-611-353; www.jogferry.co.uk) go from John O'Groats to Burwick (May–Sept, 40 minutes). Pentland Ferries (☎ 01856-831-226; www.pentlandferries.co.uk) travel from Gills Bay to St. Margaret's Hope (one hour).

✓ **By car:** If you've rented a car for your time in Scotland, you can take it with you when you visit Orkney by booking passage on one of the **NorthLink Ferries**. You can make arrangements with many car-rental agencies for free vehicle pick-up and delivery at ferry landings and airports in Scotland.

✓ **By plane: Kirkwall Airport** (☎ 01856-872-421) is about 5km (3 miles) from the center of Kirkwall, Orkney. **Sumburgh Airport** (☎ 01950-461-000) is 40km (25 miles) south of Lerwick on Shetland. Both airports are operated by Highlands and Islands Airports (☎ 01667-462-445; www.hial.co.uk). There is regular if not necessarily frequent nonstop service to Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Inverness; some flights from London go via a Scottish mainland airport. For example, a flight from Inverness to Kirkwall can take about 45 minutes and cost between £60 and £100 (\$111–\$185). A direct flight from London to Sumburgh takes about 1¾ hours and costs in the range of £100 to £220 (\$185–\$407).

The Shetland Islands



Spending the Night and Dining Locally

Your choices of accommodations and restaurants are more limited on Orkney and Shetland. I've tried to give you some of the better options in this section. Hotel room prices include full breakfast unless otherwise stated. You may well get a better deal than the advertised "rack" rates.



I have also tried to indicate when ventures are closed throughout or during a part of the off-season, but call in advance to confirm.

Ayre Hotel

\$\$ Kirkwall, Orkney

This renovated 18th-century three-star hotel overlooks Kirkwall harbor. In addition to the friendly service, the cozy, simply decorated rooms all have en suite bathrooms, TVs, and coffee-making equipment. The white-washed building is conveniently located near the town center as well as by the water. Ask for a room with a view of the sea.

See map p. 393. Ayre Road, Kirkwall, Orkney. ☎ **01856-873-001**. Fax: 01856-876-289. www.ayrehotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £100–£110 (\$185–\$204) double. AE, DC, MC, V.



Burrastow House

\$\$–\$\$\$\$ Near Walls, Shetland SCOTTISH

Talk about getting away from it all. Still, if you're planning to spend some time on Shetland, a weekend dinner reservation at Burrastow House might be in order. The menus feature local fish, lamb, beef, and pork — even the cucumbers and tomatoes in your salad are likely to be grown locally. While sheep graze on the grass outside, you'll be grazing on mussel stew, monkfish, and homemade soups. If you're looking to spend the night, Burrastow is a four-star guesthouse with five en suite rooms.

See map p. 391. Off the A971 (5km/3 miles from Walls, 43km/27 miles west of Lerwick). ☎ **01595-809-307**. www.users.zetnet.co.uk/burrastow-house-hotel. Reservations required. Main courses: £10–£20 (\$19–\$37). Open: 7:30–9 p.m.; weekends only for nonhotel residents. Rack rates: £140 (\$259) double including dinner. AE, MC, V. Closed Nov–Mar.

The Creel

\$\$\$ South Ronaldsay, Orkney FISH/SEAFOOD

This restaurant with rooms in St. Margaret's Hope is run by chef/owner Alan Craigie, who was named Scottish Restaurant Chef of the Year in 2006 by the country's Independent Chef's Association. For over 21 years, he and his staff have treated guests to dishes made almost exclusively with locally landed fish and shellfish — including some lesser seen varieties such as megrim and torsk. There is also grass-fed Orkney beef and lamb, which itself dines on seaweed. There are three overnight rooms, all with sea views.

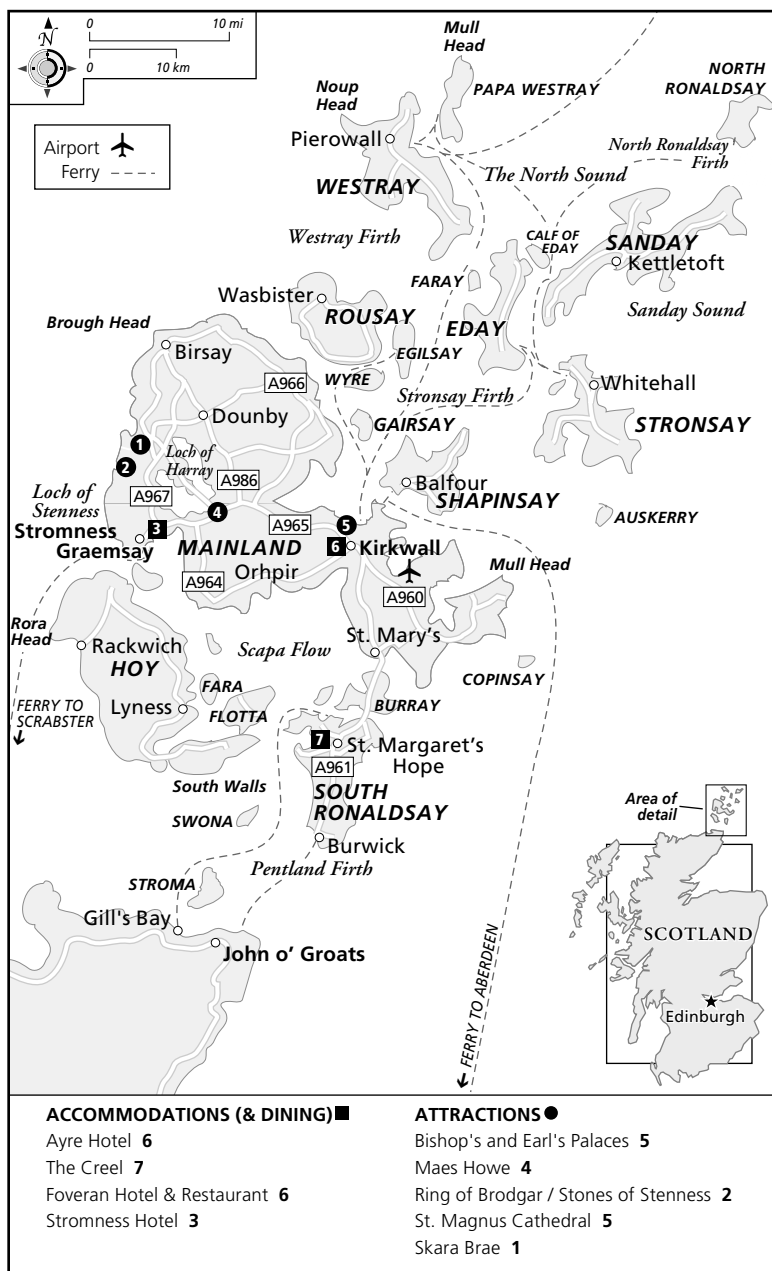
See map p. 393. Off the A961, Front Road, St. Margaret's Hope (21km/13 miles south of Kirkwall). ☎ **01856-831-311**. www.thecreel.co.uk. Reservations suggested. Main courses: £17 (\$30). Open: daily Apr–Oct; some weekends in winter (call first). Rack rates: £80 (\$148) double. MC, V.

Foveran Hotel & Restaurant

\$\$ Near Kirkwall, Orkney SCOTTISH

Overlooking the waters of Scapa Flow, this popular and highly regarded small three-star hotel is just a short trip from Kirkwall. Most rooms have sea views. If you decide to eat in-house, you'll likely get a fine Scottish meal

The Orkney Islands



with locally grown produce, Orkney beef and lamb, fresh seafood, and excellent desserts.

See map p. 393. Off the A964 (5km/3 miles southwest of Kirkwall). ☎ **01856-872-389**. Fax: 01856-876-430. www.foveranhotel.co.uk. Rack rates: £95–£99 (\$176–\$183) double. Main courses: £11–£18 (\$20–\$33). Open: Daily 7–9 p.m. Closed Jan. MC, V.

Grand Hotel **\$\$\$ Lerwick, Shetland**

Located in the heart of Lerwick, only one street away from the water, the Grand has an impressive castellated design with corbels, crow-stepped gables, and turrets. But this old-fashioned structure has been modernized inside. In addition to the bar and restaurant, the hotel has its own nightclub, **Posers**, the only one in Shetland. Boogie down into the wee hours at the weekend if you desire, but ask for a room away from the nightlife if you're early to bed.

See map p. 391. 149 Commercial St. ☎ **01595-692-826**. Fax: 01595-694-048. www.kgg-hotels.co.uk. Rack rates: £95–£130 (\$176–\$241) double. AE, DC, MC, V.



Stromness Hotel **\$\$ Stromness, Orkney**

Established in 1901, the 42-unit Stromness Hotel offers three-star accommodations, along with a choice of bars and an in-house restaurant. Some of the overnight rooms in this traditional stone building have bay windows that overlook the harbor and Scapa Flow. To give guests a sampling of Orkney culture, the hotel hosts live music and a few annual festivals, too. Children younger than 14 stay in parent's room for free.

See map p. 393. The Pierhead, Victoria Terrace, Stromness, Orkney. ☎ **01856-850-298**. Fax: 01856-850-610. www.stromnesshotel.com. Rack rates: £60–£96 (\$111–\$178) double. MC, V.

Exploring Orkney and Shetland

Attraction for attraction, Orkney, given its ancient landmarks with World Heritage Site status, has more going for it than the Shetlands. It is said that no other northern European location can equal Orkney's concentration of visible prehistoric monuments. The top sights are on the largest island in the group: What locals — or Orcadians — call the Mainland. Orkney also offers spectacular seascapes and plenty of unspoiled nature. The quaint town of **Stromness** has been a natural harbor since Viking times, and **Kirkwall** is the lovely capital of the island chain.

To see some of the smaller islands of Orkney, such as Hoy or Shapinsay, Orkney Ferries (☎ **01856-872-044**; www.orkneyferries.co.uk) offers sailings and mini cruises.

Of the more than 100 islands that make up the **Shetlands**, only about 15 are inhabited. Similar to Orkney, the main island is called the Mainland. The Norse gave the island chain to Scotland through a marriage dowry in 1469, but the legacy of its Scandinavian origins shows in the faces of the locals, the names of villages, and the architecture of the main town, **Lerwick**. Nature abounds in the beautiful scenery, from Shetland ponies that roam freely to seals and porpoises that live along the coasts. Like the people of Orkney, Shetland residents' identities are probably more strongly tied to their islands than to Scotland.



Be sure to stop at the tourist offices in Kirkwell (Orkney) and Lerwick (Shetland) and pick up the handy maps showing both large and small attractions.

Joining a guided tour

A guided tour can be a smart, convenient way to get around and see specific sights. Here are two to consider.

- ✓ **Wildabout Orkney Tours** (☎ 01856-851-011; www.wildabout-orkney.co.uk) offers excursions covering the island's prehistoric highlights, with guides also discussing the history, archeology, and ecology of Orkney. Those more interested in modern history can take a tour that highlights Orkney's role in 20th-century world wars, while a "stones to birds" tour focuses on wildlife as well as ancient history.
- ✓ **Shetland Wildlife** (☎ 01950-422-483; www.shetlandwildlife.co.uk) specializes in guided tours that show off Shetland's diverse wildlife. It offers a selection of multiday tours, such as the "Shetland experience," which combines sea cruises and overland journeys in search of puffins, whales, otters, and more.

The top attractions



Get an "Explorer's Pass" from Historic Scotland (☎ 0131-668-8797) for reduced admission prices to several attractions on Orkney.

Bishop's and Earl's Palaces Kirkwall, Orkney

The impressive ruins of the Bishop's Palace date to the 12th century, although most of what's standing today is about 400 years more recent. History says that King Haakon of Norway returned here to die after losing the battle of Largs (southwest of Glasgow) in 1263. The despotic Earl Patrick Stuart built the Earl's Palace next door in the 1600s. Stuart, son of a bastard step-brother to Mary Queen of Scots, treated the local subjects rottenly, though he was ultimately executed for treason. In its day, his palace (completed after his death) was among the finest examples of French Renaissance architecture in Scotland. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 393. Across Palace Road from St. Magnus Cathedral. ☎ **01856-871-918**. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £3 (\$5.55) adults, £2.30 (\$4.25) seniors and students, £1.30 (\$2.40) children. Open: daily Apr–Sept 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m. Closed Oct–Mar.

Jarlshof Near Sumburgh, Shetland

This prehistoric settlement was discovered after a particularly violent storm in 1897 washed away the sand that had covered it for millennia. Subsequent archaeological digs have further revealed settlements and remarkable artifacts from different civilizations, from the Stone Age to the Viking era. Highlights include an oval Bronze Age house, an Iron Age *broch* (stone house and fortification) and wheelhouses, a medieval farmstead, and the relatively modern 16th-century laird's house. As for the Norse sounding name, it comes courtesy of Sir Walter Scott's *The Pirate*. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 391. Off the A97, at Sumburgh Head (35km/22 miles south of Lerwick). ☎ **01950-460-112**. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £4 (\$7.40) adults, £3 (\$5.55) seniors and students, £1.60 (\$3) children. Open: daily Apr–Sept 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m. Closed Oct–Mar.

Maes Howe West Mainland, Orkney

This strange turf-covered mound dates to about 2750 B.C. and contains a burial cairn that is probably the finest Neolithic tomb in the U.K. By some estimates, as a prehistoric feat of engineering, it is only surpassed by the far more famous Stonehenge in England. You'll find a stone-built passage, a burial chamber, and smaller cells. Look for the inscriptions along the walls written by Vikings who pillaged the tomb's treasures in the 12th century. A bit of ancient Norse graffiti, if you like. Allow about 1½ hours.

See map p. 393. Off the A965 (14km/9 miles west of Kirkwall). ☎ **01856-761-606**. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: £4.50 (\$8.30) adults, £3.50 (\$6.50) seniors and students, £2 (\$3.70) children. Open: daily Apr–Sept 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.; Oct–Mar 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Ring of Brodgar and the Stones of Stenness West Mainland, Orkney

Not far from Maes Howe, these ceremonial sites of standing stones are certainly impressive: The tallest stone of the Stenness henge is about 6m (19 ft.) high, quite a bit more imposing than those in the Brodgar group. The two circles, part of the Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site, are within walking distance of each other. Twenty-seven of the 60 stones in the Ring of Brodgar remain standing, while only 4 of 12 at Stenness are still upright. When the fog rolls in, the rings are quite a sight, but on any day most visitors are moved by these monuments. Allow about 1½ hours.

See map p. 393. Off the A965 (18km/11 miles west of Kirkwall). ☎ **01856-841-815**. Admission: free. Open: year-round.

St. Magnus Cathedral **Kirkwall, Orkney**

Dominating the town of Kirkwall, this sandstone cathedral honors Magnus, a Norse earl killed in the 12th century by cousin Haakon, who then went on to become king. After Magnus was buried in Birsay, however, miracles began occurring and he was made a saint in 1135. Magnus's nephew, Earl Rognvald, after a bit of crusading (and perhaps some slave-trading, too) then initiated construction of this cathedral in 1137. Along with Glasgow's St. Mungo's, it is Scotland's only pre-Reformation cathedral substantially intact. It retains grand features, from huge sandstone columns to beautiful stained glass.

See map p. 393. Broad Street. ☎ **01856-874-894**. Admission: free. Open: daily Apr–Sept 9 a.m.–5 p.m.; Oct–Mar Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Scalloway Castle **Scalloway, Shetland**

These ruins date back to the time of Earl Patrick Stuart — not a popular figure in these parts thanks to his corruption and brutality — who built this castellated mansion in 1600. In fact, he used forced labor to do it. After he was executed, the building fell into disrepair, but it still makes for good photographs. To gain access Monday to Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., get the key from Shetland Woolen Company next door. On Sunday, get it from the nearby hotel. Allow about one hour.

See map p. 391. Off the A970 (about 10km/6 miles west of Lerwick). ☎ **01856-841-815**. www.historic-scotland.gov.uk. Admission: free.



Skara Brae **West Mainland, Orkney**

Along with Maes Howe and the standing stones detailed above, this pre-historic beachside village — the best of its type in northern Europe — completes the Stone Age extravaganza of Orkney. It was exposed to modern man only after a storm in 1850. Stone passages connect about a half-dozen rooms, where you can see beds, fireplaces, dressers, seats, and boxes for possessions, all carved of stone. A replica adjacent to the site recreates what life may have been like when Skara Brae was inhabited, while nearby Skaill House (closed in winter) offers a 17th century version of bourgeois island accommodations. Allow about two hours.

See map p. 393. B9056 off the A967 (about 31km/19 miles northwest of Kirkwall). ☎ **01856-841-815**. www.orkneyjar.com/history/skarabrae. Admission: £6.50 (\$12) adults, £5 (\$9.25) seniors and students, £2.50 (\$4.60) children. Open: daily Apr–Sept 9:30 a.m.–6:30 p.m.; Oct–Mar 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. (except Skaill House).

Other Cool Things to See and Do

- ✓ **Clickimin Broch**, near Lerwick, Stornoway. First inhabited from perhaps 700 to 500 B.C., this stone settlement includes the 2nd-century oval house, as well as the ruins of earlier prehistoric buildings and walls, which would have enclosed livestock.
- ✓ **Italian Chapel**, off the A961, Isle of Lambholm, Orkney. WWII Italian prisoners of war were brought to Orkney, and on this tiny island between East Mainland and Burray they converted one of the corrugated steel Quonset (or Nissen) huts into a place of worship with an elaborately painted interior. Today it is one of the most visited landmarks in Orkney.
- ✓ **The Longship**, 7–15 Broad St., Kirkwall, Orkney (☎ **01856-888-790**). This shop, founded over 150 years ago, features the jewelry designs of Ola Gorie, as well as showing off the talents of other Orcadian craftspeople, whether with fashion accessories, clothing, or food.
- ✓ **Mousa Broch**, Mousa Island, Shetland. This is considered the best surviving Iron Age broch, a tower of stone standing at over 13m (40 ft.) tall. Once there were some 120 of these dotted about Shetland. To get there, boats (☎ **01950 431-367**) leave from Sandwick on the A970, about 22km (14 miles) south of Lerwick
- ✓ **The Old Man of Hoy**, Hoy, Orkney. This 137-m-tall (450-ft.) stack of sandstone rises amid the cliffs along the western shores of Hoy. A real challenge to rock climbers, my advice is to see it from the cliff tops, from a touring cruise ship, or possibly from the ferry to Stromness.
- ✓ **Orkney Museum**, Tankerness House, Broad Street, Kirkwall, Orkney (☎ **01856-873-191**). Tankerness House has an interesting little museum that covers aspects of Orcadian life during the last 5,000 years. The building dates to 1574, when it was a residence for church officials. Admission is free.
- ✓ **Stromness Museum**, 52 Alfred St., Stromness, Orkney (☎ **01856-850-025**). This museum focuses on maritime history, including details about the WWI German fleet that roamed the Scapa Flow before being scuttled and the ships of the Hudson Bay Company, which took Orcadians to Canada.

Fast Facts: Orkney and Shetland

Area Code

The area code for Kirkwall and Stromness is **01856**; Lerwick is **01595**. You need to dial the area code only if you're calling from outside the city you want to reach.

Emergencies

Dial ☎ **999** for police, fire, or ambulance.

Hospitals

The main hospitals on the islands are Balfour Hospital (☎ 01856-873-166), New Scapa Road, Kirkwall, Orkney, and Gilbert Bain Hospital (☎ 01595-743-300), Scalloway Road, Lerwick, Shetland.

Information

You can get information on visiting the islands from Orkney Islands Tourist Board, 6 Broad St., Kirkwall, Orkney (☎ 01856-872-856; www.visitorkney.com), or

Shetland Islands Tourist Board, Market Cross, Lerwick, Shetland (☎ 01595-693-434; www.shetlandtourism.co.uk).

Mail

Post offices are at 15 Junction Rd., Kirkwall, Orkney (☎ 01856-872-974), and 46 Commercial St., Lerwick, Shetland (☎ 01595-693-201).

Part V

The Part of Tens

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Okay, we got one cherry lager with bitters and a pineapple slice, and one honey malt ale with cinnamon and an orange twist. You want these in pints or parfait glasses?"

In this part . . .

If you just want some quick listings of some of the best and most interesting spots in Scotland, you've come to the right place. Part V gives you the scoop on great Scottish golf courses, from the world-famous St. Andrews to some notable ones with which you may be less familiar. You can also find lists of the most evocative castles, engaging historic sites, and natural attractions that are likely to knock your proverbial socks off. If Scotland's famous and unique single malt whiskies interest you, check out the rundown of distinctive distilleries that you can tour. You may find that after you've visited these locales, they become your favorites, too.

Chapter 21

Ten Outstanding Golf Courses

In This Chapter

- ▶ Rubbing shoulders with the golf elite at St. Andrews
 - ▶ Hitting the links on the wind-swept west coast
-

It would be unfair to say *definitively* that the golf courses listed in this chapter are the ten best in Scotland. The country just has too many great courses. You would need to golf every day for nearly a year to hit all the courses. Each one in this chapter has its own special attraction. Some are more famous than others; some are more difficult than others. Remember, to play the championship courses, you need a bona fide and acceptable handicap.



For every course, call ahead for information about tee times and requirements to play (if any exist).

Carnoustie

Although golfers have been playing here since 1560, somehow Carnoustie has remained one of Scotland's lesser-known championship courses. It's increasingly popular, in part because it has been the site of recent British Open tournaments. The course has one of the toughest and longest finishes in the country.

Carnoustie, east of Dundee. Par 72. ☎ **01241-853-789**. www.carnoustiegolflinks.co.uk.

Gairloch Golf Club

It may be only 9 holes, but this course is still very much a challenging and tricky one. Combine this challenge with a location along a golden beach and overlooking Skye and the Hebrides and you have a great course.

Gairloch. Par 35. ☎ **01445-712-407**. www.gairlochgolfclub.com.

Muirfield

Muirfield is the best championship course near Edinburgh, and it's regularly a location for qualifying play before the British Open (which people here just call the "Open"). If you're not an expert, you'll be more comfortable playing on one of the other courses near Gullane.

Muirfield. Par 71. ☎ **01620-842-123**. www.muirfield.org.uk.

Prestwick

The original home of the Open, this course remains a monument to the early days of golf (1860s). It has bumpy fairways, deep bunkers, and many blind shots, but this old-school course is well worth the time and the challenge.

Prestwick. Par 71. ☎ **01292-477-404**. www.prestwickgc.co.uk.

Royal Dornoch Course

This course doesn't have a single bad hole, and its only downside is its location in the far north. You have plenty of room off the tee, but placing your drive depends greatly upon the wind and the pin positions. The course is challenging but accessible to nearly everyone.

Dornoch. Par 70. ☎ **01862-810-219**. www.royaldornoch.com.

Royal Troon

Despite popular belief, nonmembers (and women) aren't prohibited from playing this famous and fabulous course in Ayrshire on the Clyde Coast. The course has frequently played host to the Open, and each hole provides a challenge. The 8th hole, or "postage stamp," is the shortest in Open history. If you don't have the chops for Royal Troon, go to one of the excellent municipal courses nearby.

Troon. Par 71. ☎ **01292-311-555**. www.royaltroon.co.uk.

St. Andrews



The Old Course at St. Andrews is arguably the most famous golf course in the world. All the "greats" of the sport have played here, apparently even Mary Queen of Scots. This always challenging seaside links golf

course is the one in Scotland that most frequently hosts the Open. It's definitely the mecca of golf, if ever there was one.

St. Andrews. Par 72. ☎ **01334-466-666**. www.standrews.org.uk.

Traigh

This is perhaps the most picturesque 9-hole course in Scotland, and possibly in Europe. Just 3.2km (2 miles) up the road from Arisaig on the old highway, and set right along the country's most attractive shoreline, Traigh offers not only challenging golf (for a short course) but brilliant views, too.

Arisaig. Par 34. ☎ **01687-450-337**. www.traighgolf.co.uk.

Turnberry

The Ailsa Course at Turnberry is home to a fair amount of Open drama; golf heroes such as Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson, and Greg Norman have all competed for the top prize here. The links-style course that runs along the South Ayrshire seashore, against the backdrop of the grand Turnberry hotel, is one of the most picturesque in Scotland. Book a room at the hotel to be guaranteed a tee time.

Turnberry. Par 72. ☎ **01655-331-000**. www.turnberry.co.uk.

Western Gailes

With its unique layout of greens tucked away in hollows, the course here requires finesse, accuracy, and precision. This natural links-style course hugs the coastline less than an hour's drive from Glasgow and can be played practically all year round, because its sandy fairways and greens drain quickly and the weather is generally moderate (if typically windy).

Irvine. Par 72. ☎ **01294-311-649**. www.westerngailes.com.

Chapter 22

Ten Can't-Miss Castles and Historic Sites

In This Chapter

- ▶ Walking the grounds of great Scottish battles
 - ▶ Visiting the most impressive ecclesiastical buildings
 - ▶ Discovering the most fascinating castles and prehistoric sites
-

In a country with hundreds of ancient castles and ruins, choosing just ten of the best is certainly difficult. If you're a history buff or get a special charge out of walking in the footsteps of some of history's giants, put the attractions and locations in this chapter on your must-see list. But for each of these, you may prefer two others; remember, these are simply my own favorites.

Bannockburn

King Robert the Bruce beat Edward II's English troops here in a decisive battle that secured Scottish sovereignty after the freedom struggles associated with William "Braveheart" Wallace. See Chapter 16 for more on this historic area.

Near Stirling. ☎ 01786-812-664.

Calanais Standing Stones

The "Scottish Stonehenge" is one of the most significant archaeological finds of its kind in the entire U.K. (see Chapter 19). Much mystery surrounds the purpose and origin of these stones (whose arrangement dates back to 3000 B.C.), which remain an attraction to pilgrims who camp out here during the summer solstice.

Isle of Lewis. ☎ 01851-621-422.

Castle Tioram

The ruins of this ancient castle (pronounced *cheer-rum*) on Loch Moidart (see Chapter 18) have one of the most romantic — and remote — settings in the Western Highlands. Although access is limited, you can scale the small hill upon which the castle sits and let your imagination do the rest.

Near Blain, Ardnamurchan Peninsula.

Culloden Moor Battlefield

British forces loyal to the Hanoverian king in London defeated Bonnie Prince Charlie's Jacobite rebellion here in 1746, ending a valiant but ultimately unsuccessful movement for restoration of the Stuart crown. No other military movement followed Charlie after his loss here. A visitor center with museum provides the complete history of the battlefield. Flip to Chapter 18 for more on this historical site.

Near Inverness. ☎ **01463-790-607**.

Culzean Castle

A mansion more than a castle, Culzean remains a classic example of the work of Robert Adam, Scotland's preeminent architect in the Georgian era. In addition to the castle, Culzean offers lots of parkland and gardens to explore. You can find details on Culzean and its surroundings in Chapter 15.

South Ayrshire. ☎ **01655-884-455**.

Doone Castle

Made famous thanks to the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, Doone Castle is one of the best because it has been modestly restored, giving visitors a feel for what life in a medieval castle truly was like during the heyday of this classic keep. See Chapter 16 for more details on Doone.

Doone, near Stirling. ☎ **01786-841-742**.

Eilean Donan Castle

After Edinburgh Castle, Eilean Donan is probably the most photographed castle in Scotland. It has been restored and offers some interesting exhibits as well as a good bit of history, including defending the area

from Vikings and serving as a Jacobite stronghold. See Chapter 18 for more information on this castle.

Dornie, Kyle of Lochalsh. ☎ **01599-555-202**.

Glasgow Cathedral

Glasgow Cathedral is the oldest pre-Reformation cathedral still standing soundly on the Scottish mainland. (Orkney has another from the same era.) It marks the place where the earliest settlements of this industrial powerhouse were established. Flip to Chapter 12 for details.

Townhead, Glasgow. ☎ **0141-552-6891**.

Melrose Abbey

Of all the historic abbeys in the Borders region (see Chapter 14), the one in Melrose may be the most interesting. Built in the 12th century, it inspired Sir Walter Scott (who made sure it was secured) and it's also the place where the heart of King Robert the Bruce was buried.

Melrose, the Borders. ☎ **01896-822-562**.

Skara Brae

This prehistoric beachside village in West Mainland, Orkney, is the best of its type in northern Europe. Stone passages link several rooms, all furnished in stone: from the beds (upon which its Stone Age residents would lay straw) to fireplaces and even storage boxes. Go to Chapter 20 for details.

West Mainland, Orkney. ☎ **01856-841-815**.

Chapter 23

Ten Distinctive Distilleries

In This Chapter

- ▶ “Nosing” about for the good stuff
 - ▶ Taking tours of distilleries large and small
-

Whisky is undoubtedly Scotland’s best known export; a good deal of the distilleries across the country are open to the public, many with tours of their facilities that explain exactly how whisky is made (and how it’s different from American or Canadian whiskeys) and teach visitors how to “nose” Scotch properly. This chapter lists some of the best to visit.

Caol Ila

On the isle of Islay (pronounced *eye-la*), Caol Ila (pronounced *cull-ee-la*) has to have one of the best settings for an island whisky distillery, nestled at the base of a hill at the shore just across from the isle of Jura. While it produces single malts, it also distills spirit for Johnnie Walker’s premium blends.

Near Pork Askaig, Isle of Islay. ☎ **01496-302-760**.

Dalwhinnie

Originally called Strathspey distillery, Dalwhinnie has the distinction of being Scotland’s highest distillery, in elevation, at about 326m (1,073 ft.) above sea level. The tour of this distillery is good, too, but perhaps not on a par with either the dramatic setting, where you may see snow on surrounding hills in early summer, or the sparkling white buildings with their pagoda-type roofs.

Dalwhinnie. ☎ **01540-672-219**.

Edradour

Edradour is among the smallest distilleries in Scotland, putting out only 12 casks a week, and one of the last remaining so-called farm distilleries that used to be commonplace in Perthshire. Edradour is produced by a small staff, using traditional methods and seemingly antique equipment.

Near Pitlochry. ☎ **01796-472-095.**

Glenfiddich

Readers who haven't heard of Glenfiddich probably have little interest in this chapter. Glenfiddich is one of the three biggest selling whiskies in the world, which explains why some 125,000 visitors come here annually. It was the first distillery to recognize the potential of tourism and open a visitor center, and it's a good choice for those who want a well-organized tour of a large, modern distillery.

Near Dufftown. ☎ **01340-820-373.**

Glen Grant

Beautiful gardens are a highlight of a visit to this fine Morayshire distillery. After the tour, take your dram of whisky (apparently a favorite of Italians) outside and taste it cut with a drop or two of water from the burbling Glen Grant burn.

Rothes, near Elgin. ☎ **01542-783-318.**

Glenlivet

The Glenlivet is among the most popular single malts sold. The tours here have a reputation for being the most entertaining and informative of any in Scotland. Thus, if you're in the area and can only visit one distillery, you may want to make it this one.

Near Tomintoul. ☎ **01542-783-220.**

The Glenturret

By most accounts, this is the oldest distillery in Scotland. Illegal distilling at this site began as early as 1717. Because visitors can quite easily get

here and back in an afternoon drive from either Glasgow or Edinburgh, Glenturret is very popular, but the staff manages to handle the crowds adeptly.

Near Crieff. ☎ **01764-656-565**.

Laphroaig

For fans of peaty flavors, Laphroaig from the isle of Islay — Scotland's whisky island — is often a preference and is perhaps the best known of all island single malts. The taste of this whisky carries hints not only of the local peat but of the sea air as well.

Near Port Ellen, Islay. ☎ **01496-302-418**.

Strathisla

This fine Highland single malt is better known for being the main ingredient in Chivas Regal, one of the most popular blends in the world. The distillery tour here usually ends with an informative and unique “nosing” of different whiskies from the various regions of Scotland.

Keith. ☎ **01542-783-044**.

Talisker

The only distillery on the rather large island of Skye, the Talisker tour is among one of the best in the country. Talisker produces whisky with the peaty flavor of the island. In addition to producing its own distinctive brand, Talisker produces whisky used in popular blends such as Johnnie Walker.

Carbost, Skye. ☎ **01478-614-308**.

Chapter 24

Ten Stunning Natural Attractions

In This Chapter

- ▶ Hiking amidst beautiful mountains and glens
 - ▶ Seeing sea monsters (or maybe not) at moody lochs
 - ▶ Stretching out on a sandy beach next to blue seas
-

Yes, Scotland has a pair of vibrant cities, loads of historic monuments, numerous castles, and gobs of golf courses. But the country is also home to some of the prettiest countryside you could ever imagine. Whether you like to hike, watch birds, or just hunt for perfect photographic backdrops, take in as many of these top nature spots as you can.

Ardnamurchan Peninsula

Remote but reasonably easy to reach (in contrast to Knoydart, further north) this picturesque western Highland peninsula forms the most westerly region of the entire British mainland. There are wind-swept beaches and tide pools, with plenty of opportunities for hiking. Go to Chapter 18 for details.

West of Fort William.

Arthur's Seat and Holyrood Park

It's rare to find a hike of such natural beauty in any city. But Edinburgh is no ordinary metropolis. You can walk to the top of Arthur's Seat or cheat and drive to the park — either way, you find plenty to soak in, especially the views. Chapter 11 contains more information on this Edinburgh landmark.

At the foot of the Royal Mile, Edinburgh.

Cuillin Hills

These dark, brooding hills make a stunning backdrop on the Isle of Skye. However, you might want to also get out and hike around in a bit of the region, too. Some of the trails are easy, but don't attempt to climb the peaks unless you're an experienced hiker. You can find details on this area in Chapter 19.

Isle of Skye, the Hebrides.

Fingal's Cave

Near Mull, the rock formations and cathedral-like columns of Fingal's Cave on the Isle of Staffa were enough to inspire Mendelssohn's *Hebridean Overture*. In addition to the geological beauty, the puffin colony here is a bonus. Go to Chapter 19 for details on boat tours of Fingal's Cave.

Staffa, the Hebrides.

Glen Coe

This lovely Highland valley runs some 16km (10 miles) and is fairly breathtaking every bit of the way — even though it's best known as the site of a 17th-century massacre. You can climb Ossian's Ladder, a trail up the hillside, or other equally strenuous paths on your own — or opt for a more moderate ranger-led hike. See Chapter 18 for additional information on the valley.

Between King's House and Ballchulish, the Highlands.

Inverewe Garden

I'm cheating a bit with this recommendation, because Scotland's many marvelous gardens aren't exactly natural attractions so much as man-made wonders. But no matter how it came to be, Inverewe Garden is one of the loveliest gardens in the country, showing off some glories of nature: towering trees, flowering shrubs, and almost tropical species that survive thanks to the warming North Atlantic flow from the Gulf of Mexico. For a more complete description of this garden and for visitor information, check out Chapter 18.

Near Poolewe, Wester Ross, Western Highlands.

Loch Lomond

I list it largely because it is so accessible. Only a 45-minute drive north from Glasgow puts you at this excellent body of fresh water. The pretty scenery is best seen by a boat tour, but plenty of spots along its shores make for good picnic stops, as well. Coming here allows you to get a taste of the Highlands without straying too far from the big city. Flip to Chapter 16 for details.

Northwest of Glasgow, West Dumbartonshire.

Loch Ness

Monster hunting aside, this huge loch in the middle of Scotland is a lovely natural wonder. Deep, dark, and brooding, it's little wonder that people believe Loch Ness hides a legendary beast. The best way to see it is by boat. Find out more about them in Chapter 18.

Between Fort George and Inverness, Central Highlands.

Sands of Morar

Between Arisaig and Mallaig on Scotland's beautiful West Coast, the beaches of Morar are so spectacular that they've been used in several movies, most notably Bill Forsyth's *Local Hero*. The light is magical in the evenings, especially during summer when the sun slowly sets in the north-western skies. Find out more about the Sands of Morar in Chapter 18.

Road to the Isles, Western Highlands.

Sandwood Bay

Within the nature conservation area of the Sandwood Estate, this beach is the most pristine on the Scottish mainland. In part that's because you'll need to walk for about 90 minutes from the nearest road to reach it. See Chapter 18 for more details.

Near Blairmore, Sutherland, Northwest Highlands.

Appendix

Quick Concierge

Fast Facts

American Express

The AmEx offices in Edinburgh and Glasgow exchange money and traveler's checks as well as perform other services for cardholders. The Edinburgh office is at 69 George St., at Frederick Street (☎ 0131-718-2501; Bus: 13, 19, or 41). It's open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; on Wednesday, the office opens at 9:30 a.m. The Glasgow office is located at 115 Hope St. (☎ 0141-222-1401; Underground: St. Enoch) and is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (except Wed when it opens at 9:30 a.m.), and Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon.

ATMs

In Scotland, ATMs (automated teller machines) are called *cash points* or *cash machines*. In the cities as well as in many of the larger towns, ATMs now often connect to international systems such as Cirrus or PLUS. Many will give cash advances on major credit cards as well.

Business Hours

Most businesses are open Monday through Saturday from 9 or 9:30 a.m. to 5 or 5:30 p.m., with some exceptions. Many businesses and shops are closed Sunday, although many shops in the cities open on Sunday afternoons. Most cities also have extended shopping hours on Thursday until 8 p.m. Outside of Edinburgh and Glasgow,

businesses may close for lunch, generally from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

Banks are normally open from 9 a.m. or 10 a.m. until about 5 p.m. on weekdays. Banks are good places to exchange currency and get credit card cash advances.

Restaurants and pubs have different restrictions on hours of operation depending upon their licensing, which is controlled by local councils. Although some bars may not open until late afternoon, most serve drinks from noon to midnight and maybe later on weekends. Some pubs in residential and rural areas, however, close at 11 p.m. Many restaurants stop serving food at 2:30 p.m. and resume at 5:30 or 6 p.m. Nightclubs in cities and larger towns have late-night hours, staying open until between 1 and 3 a.m. — but doors may not open until 10 p.m.

Cameras and Film

Most pharmacies sell photo supplies and many have photo-developing services as well. One-hour film processing is available in larger cities. These services and products are more expensive abroad than in the U.S. If you have to buy photo supplies or film while you're in Scotland, go to a camera shop or department store. Never buy film from a souvenir stand near a tourist attraction, where the markup is high.

Credit Cards

The toll-free emergency numbers for major credit cards are: Visa ☎ 0800-891-725; MasterCard ☎ 0800-964-767; American Express ☎ 0800-700-700; and Diner's Club ☎ 702-797-5532 (members can call collect).

Currency Exchange

You can change money at any place with the sign BUREAU DE CHANGE. You find these signs at banks, which give you the best rates; major post office branches; and many hotels and travel agencies. (See Chapter 5 for more information on dealing with money in Scotland.)

Customs

U.K. Customs restricts the value of goods you can bring into Scotland to about £150 (\$277). U.S. citizens returning to Scotland after an absence of at least 48 hours are allowed to bring back, once every 30 days, \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free.

Driving

In Scotland, cars travel on the left side of the road. (See Chapter 7 for more details on driving in Scotland.)

Drugstores

Drugstores are called *pharmacies* or *chemists* in Scotland. The regulations for over-the-counter and prescription drugs differ from those in the U.S., so you may not find commercial pharmaceuticals or your preferred medicine. Consider bringing your own products from the U.S.

Electricity

The electric current in Scotland is 240 volts AC, which is different than the U.S. current, so most small appliances brought from the U.S., such as hair dryers and shavers, don't work (and the current could damage the appliance). If you're considering bringing your laptop or iron from home,

check the voltage first to see if it has a range between 110v and 240v. If the voltage doesn't have a range, the only option is to purchase an expensive converter. If the voltage does have a higher range, then you still need to buy an outlet adapter because your prongs won't fit in the Scottish sockets. You can buy an adapter for about \$10 at an appliance store or even at the airport.

Embassies and Consulates

Embassies are located in the capital of Great Britain, London. Edinburgh has consulates for Australia (69 George St.; ☎ 0131-624-3700), Canada (30 Lothian Rd.; ☎ 0131-245-6013), and the United States (3 Regents Terrace; ☎ 0131-556-8315).

Emergencies

For any emergency, contact the police or an ambulance by calling ☎ 999 from any phone. You can also call the National Health Service Helpline, ☎ 0800-22-4488, which offers health-related advice and assistance from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. (See Chapter 9 for details on accessing health care in Scotland.) Every city and regional chapter lists local hospitals. For emergencies, treatment is free, although you will be billed for long stays.

Internet Access

Many hotels offer Internet access (though it's usually rather expensive), and Internet cafes are popular, especially near central railway stations. See the major city and regional chapters for more information.

Language

English is the principal language spoken in Scotland, although heavy accents and local vernacular (especially words used by lowland Scots) can make it difficult to comprehend. Ask the natives to speak more slowly if you can't understand them.

Gaelic is spoken in the Highlands and islands, where signs are frequently in both Gaelic and English.

Liquor Laws

The minimum drinking age in Scotland is 18. Liquor stores, called *off-licenses* (or *off-sales*) sell spirits, beer, and wine and generally operate from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Maps

Decent street maps and city plans are sold at most tourist information centers and major newsstands. For detailed *ordinance survey* maps, try the major booksellers such as Waterstone's or Borders.

Police

For emergencies, dial ☎ **999**.

Post Office

Most branches of the post office are open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon. Smaller, rural branches may be open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2:15 to 5:30 p.m. as well as Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Many post offices close early on one day of the week, but how early and what day depends on the office.

Sending a postcard from Scotland to North America or Australia and New Zealand costs 47p (90¢). Letters (under 20 grams) cost 68p (\$1.35). Mail usually takes one week (sometimes less) to get to the United States. For information on mail services in Scotland and the U.K., call ☎ **08457-740-740** or visit www.royalmail.com. See the major city and regional chapters for more post office information.

Safety

Violent crime rates are low in Scotland. There are few guns in the country, and most police officers don't carry them,

either. As a tourist, the most important thing you can do is guard yourself against theft. Pickpockets look for people who seem to have the most money on them and who appear to know the least about where they are. Be extra careful on crowded trains in the big cities and when taking money from ATMs.

Smoking

In April 2006, a ban on smoking in all enclosed public spaces — including business offices, restaurants, and pubs — went into effect. Smoking was already prohibited on all trains and buses.

Taxes

A consumption tax of 17.5 percent is put on pretty much all goods and services. It's called VAT (value-added tax), and it works like local sales taxes do in the United States. But tourists are entitled to a partial refund (see Chapter 5 for more information). VAT is nonrefundable for services such as hotels, meals, and car rentals.

Telephones

The country code for Scotland is **44**. To make international calls from Scotland, dial 00 and then the country code, local code, and telephone number. The U.S. and Canadian country code is **1**, Australia is **61**, and New Zealand is **63**. If you can't find a number, a directory is available by dialing a variety of numbers (thanks to privatization of the service), including ☎ **118-811** or ☎ **118-800** for domestic numbers and ☎ **118-505** for international numbers.

Scotland has pay phones that accept coins and credit cards, although the use of cell-phones (called *mobiles*) means you see fewer pay phones. If you're interested in renting a cellphone to use during your visit, check out Chapter 10 for more information.

Time Zone

Scotland follows Greenwich Mean Time, which is five time zones ahead of eastern standard time in the United States (eight hours ahead of the Pacific Coast). So, when it's noon in New York, it's 5 p.m. in Glasgow. The clocks are set forward by one hour for British *summer time* in late March, which expires at the end of October. The high latitude blesses the country with long days in the summer, with

sunset as late as 10 or even 11 p.m. But the opposite is true in winter, when the sun sets as early as 3:30 or 4 p.m.

Weather Updates

For weather forecasts of the day and 24 hours in advance, and for severe road-condition warnings, call the Met Office at ☎ 0870-900-0100. An advisor offers forecasts for the entire region and beyond at your request.

Toll-Free Numbers and Web Sites

Major airlines serving Great Britain

Aer Lingus

☎ 800-474-7424 from U.S.
☎ 0845-084-4444 from U.K.
www.aerlingus.com

Air France

☎ 800-237-2747 from U.S.
☎ 0845-0845-111 from U.K.
www.airfrance.com

American Airlines

☎ 800-433-7300
www.aa.com

BMI

☎ 44-01332-854-854 from U.S.
☎ 0870-6070-555 (short haul) or
0870-6070-222 (long haul) from U.K.
www.flybmi.com

British Airways

☎ 800-247-9297 from U.S.
☎ 0870-850-9-850 from U.K.
www.britishairways.com

Continental Airlines

☎ 800-231-0856
www.continental.com

Delta Air Lines

☎ 800-241-4141 from U.S.
☎ 0800-414-767 from U.K.
www.delta.com

easyJet

☎ 44-870-6000-000 from U.S.
☎ 0871-244-2366 from U.K.
www.easyjet.com

Icelandair

☎ 800-223-5500 from U.S.
☎ 354-50-50-100 from Iceland
www.icelandair.is

KLM

☎ 800-374-7747 from U.S.
☎ 08705-074074 from U.K.
www.klm.com

Lufthansa

☎ 800-399-5838 from U.S.
☎ 44-0-870-8377-747 from U.K.
www.lufthansa.com

Northwest Airlines

☎ 800-225-2525
www.nwa.com

Ryanair

☎ 353-1-249-7700 from U.S.
☎ 0871-246-0000 from U.K.
www.ryanair.com

Scandinavian Airlines

☎ 800-221-2350 from U.S.
☎ 0870-60-727-727 from U.K.
www.scandinavian.net

United Airlines

☎ 800-538-2929 from U.S.
☎ 0845-8444-777 from U.K.
www.united.com

Virgin Atlantic Airways

☎ 800-862-8621 from U.S.
☎ 0870-380-2007 from U.K.
www.virgin-atlantic.com

Car-rental agencies serving Scotland

Auto Europe

☎ 888-223-5555 from U.S.
☎ 00-800-223-5555-5 from U.K.
www.autoeurope.com

Avis

☎ 800-230-4898 from U.S.
☎ 44-870-60-60-100 from U.K.
www.avis.com

Budget

☎ 800-527-0700 from U.S.
☎ 0-11-44-8701-565656 from U.K.
www.budget.com

Enterprise

☎ 800-261-7331 from U.S.
☎ 0870-350-3000 from U.K.
www.enterprise.com

Hertz

☎ 800-654-3131 from U.S.
☎ 08708-44-88-44 from U.K.
www.hertz.com

Thrifty

☎ 800-847-4389 from U.S.
☎ 1-918-669-2168 from U.K.
www.thrifty.com

Major hotel and motel chains in Scotland

Best Western International

☎ 800-780-7234 from U.S.
☎ 0800-39-31-30 from U.K.
www.bestwestern.com

Comfort Inns

☎ 800-654-6200 from U.S.
☎ 0800-44-44-44 from U.K.
www.hotelchoice.com

Days Inn

☎ 800-329-7466
www.daysinn.com

Hilton Hotels

☎ 800-445-8667 from U.S.
☎ 00-800-888-44-888 from U.K.
www.hilton.com

Holiday Inn

☎ 800-465-4329 from U.S.
☎ 0800-40-50-60 from U.K.
www.holiday-inn.com

Hyatt Hotels & Resorts

☎ 888-591-1234 from U.S.
☎ 0845-888-1234 from U.K.
www.hyatt.com

InterContinental Hotels & Resorts

☎ 800-327-0200 from U.S.
☎ 0800-028-9387 from U.K.
www.intercontinental.com

ITT Sheraton

☎ 888-625-5144
www.starwood.com

Marriott Hotels

☎ 888-236-2427 from U.S.
☎ 0800-221-222 from U.K.
www.marriott.com

Omni

☎ 800-843-6664
www.omnihotels.com

Quality Inns

☎ 877-424-6423 from U.S.
☎ 0800-44-44-44 from U.K.
www.qualityinns.com

Radisson Hotels International

☎ 888-201-1718 from U.S.
☎ 0800-374-411 from U.K.
www.radisson.com

Ritz Carlton

☎ 800-241-3333 from U.S.
☎ 0800-234-000 from U.K.
www.ritzcarlton.com

Westin Hotels & Resorts

☎ 800-228-3000 from U.S.
☎ 353-21-4279-200 from U.K.
www.westin.com

Sheraton Hotels & Resorts

☎ 800-325-3535 from U.S.
☎ 353-21-4279-200 from U.K.
www.sheraton.com

Where to Get More Information

If you're looking for more information on Scotland, start with the **Scottish Tourist Board** or, as it prefers to be called these days, **VisitScotland.com** (☎ 0845-225-5121; www.visitscotland.com). The Web site has information on accommodations, attractions, and general topics, and you can get details on special offers and promotions. You can also find recommended attractions as well as listings for hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs, self-catering lodging, caravan and camping sites, serviced apartments, and hostels. Keep in mind that hotels, restaurants, and attractions generally pay to be included in these listings, however, so they haven't necessarily been evaluated on any level.

Plenty of Web sites offer helpful and interesting information on Scotland; listed below are a few of the better ones. (Remember, though, that things can change quickly in cyberspace, so a site may have been transformed by the time you read this.)

- ✓ www.geo.ed.ac.uk/scotgaz/scotland.html: A one-stop shop for info on Scotland's shopping, recreation, attractions, weather, tours, and more. This site also has good interactive maps.
- ✓ www.travelscotland.co.uk: A great site for news, sports, history, attraction information, and Scotland travel chats. This site even has a clan-finder tool to help you locate the regions of your Scottish ancestors.
- ✓ www.geo.ed.ac.uk/home/scotland/scotland.html: A great place to get Scottish history, maps, and demographics. You can also search the encyclopedic reference guide on this Web site. **Warning:** Turn the sound off (or at least turn the volume down) on your computer before opening this site — a headache-inducing soundtrack of Scottish Muzak plays nonstop while the site is open.
- ✓ www.frommers.com/destinations/scotland: Offers complete and up-to-date information on Scotland as well as message boards and more.

Index

• A •

- AARP, 103
abbey. *See specific abbeys*
Abbotsford, 17, 274
Abbotsford Hotel, 286, 288
The Abbotsford's, 182
Aberdeen, 332, 333, 336, 338
Abernethy Forest Reserve, 356
ABode, 200
Abstract, 353
accommodations. *See also specific accommodations*
Ayrshire and Argyll, 286–293
budget plan, 64–65, 99–100
chain hotels, 419–420
cost-cutting tips, 67, 68, 69, 84
Edinburgh, 10–11, 129–138
family travel, 103
Fife and the Trossachs, 308–313
gay and lesbian travelers, 105
Glasgow, 11, 197–205
grading system, 94
Hebridean Islands, 370–377
the Highlands, 346–352
Orkney and Shetland islands, 391–394
pricing conventions, 3, 95
reservations, 99, 100
Southern Scotland, 268–272
Tayside/northeast Scotland, 333–337
top picks, 10–12
travelers with disabilities, 104
types, 96–99
typical costs, 66
Achamore Gardens, 297
agriculture festival, 48
A-Haven Townhouse, 137
air travel
to Ayrshire, 286
cost-cutting tips, 67, 68, 84
to Edinburgh, 120
family travel, 102
to Glasgow, 187–188
to Hebrides, 370
to the Highlands, 346
major carriers, 418–419
to Orkney islands, 390
to Scotland, 78–80
security, 114–115
to Tayside/northeast Scotland, 333
typical costs, 66
alcohol, 29–30, 417. *See also specific types*
Ambassador Hotel, 204
An Lochan, 11, 288, 293–294
The Anderson, 348
Andrew Carnegie Birthplace Museum, 318
Andrew Fairlie at Gleneagles, 13, 314
antique shopping, 241
Applecross Inn, 13, 353
The Arches, 245
architecture
Ayrshire sites, 304
day trips west of Glasgow, 264
Edinburgh sites, 161–162
Fife and the Trossachs, 318
Glasgow sites, 225, 229–230
Tayside/northeast Scotland sites, 341
West Lothian sites, 261
Ardalanish Farm & Isle of Mull Weavers, 386
Ardanaiseig Hotel, 11, 286
Ardhasaig House, 372
Ardnamurchan Peninsula, 9, 357–358, 412
Ardvasar Hotel, 372
Argyll. *See Ayrshire and Argyll*
Argyll Forest Park, 318
Argyll Hotel, 11, 204, 288, 290, 372
Argyll's Lodging, 318
Arisaig Hotel, 348
Armada Castle Gardens & Museum of the Isles, 380
Aros Castle, 386
Arran, 37, 296–297, 300
art
colonies, 279
festivals, 46, 47
schools, 224
shopping, 241
art gallery
Edinburgh, 158–159, 161, 162, 163
Fife and the Trossachs, 330
Glasgow, 222–223, 225–226, 227
the Highlands, 365, 366
Southern Scotland, 281
Tayside/northeast Scotland, 343
top picks, 15–16

- Arthur's Seat, 412
- ATM, 68, 73, 415
- Atrium, 12, 142
- attractions. *See also specific attractions*
 - Ayrshire and Argyll, 296–304
 - budget plan, 65
 - Clyde Valley, 263
 - cost-cutting tips, 67
 - East Lothian, 256–259
 - family travel tips, 102
 - Hebridean Islands, 379–387
 - the Highlands, 355–365
 - Orkney and Shetland islands, 394–398
 - Southern Scotland, 273–280
 - Tayside/northeast Scotland, 338–343
 - top picks, 14–19, 409–414
 - typical costs, 66
 - West Lothian, 261–262
- attractions, Edinburgh. *See also* Edinburgh
 - architectural sites, 161–162
 - castles, 155
 - churches, 163–164
 - galleries, 158–159, 161, 162, 163
 - gardens, 160
 - guided tours, 166–169
 - historic sites, 154, 155, 163
 - map, 156–157
 - museums, 158, 165, 167
 - observation sites, 166
 - overview, 153–154
 - parks, 165
 - underground close, 166
 - walking tour, 169, 170–173
 - zoos, 162
- attractions, Fife and the Trossachs. *See also* Fife and the Trossachs
 - abbeys, 322
 - architectural sites, 318
 - boat tour, 327
 - castles, 320, 327–328
 - cathedrals, 322, 326–327, 328–329
 - gardens, 322
 - golf, 324–325, 328
 - maps, 319, 321, 323
 - marine centers, 320
 - military sites, 329
 - museums, 318, 325
 - overview, 317
 - parks, 318, 325–326
 - university, 328
- attractions, Glasgow. *See also* Glasgow
 - architecture sites, 225, 229–230
 - art schools, 224
 - cathedrals, 224, 227–228
 - city hall, 229
 - galleries, 222–223, 225–226, 227
 - gardens, 222
 - guided tours, 232–233
 - historic sites, 231
 - map, 220–221
 - museums, 228–229, 230–232
 - overview, 219, 222
 - palaces, 227
 - parks, 229, 231
- Auchingarrich Wildlife Centre, 342
- Australian traveler, 108
- autumn, 42–43, 49–50
- Ayre Hotel, 392
- Ayrshire and Argyll
 - accommodations, 286–293
 - attractions, 296–304
 - map, 285, 287, 289
 - nightlife, 305–306
 - overview, 37, 283
 - restaurants, 293–296
 - shopping, 305
 - tourist information, 306
 - travel to, 284, 286, 303

• B •

- Babbity Bowster, 200, 249
- bagpipes, 31, 49
- Baked Potato Shop, 148
- Balbir's, 209
- Ballachulish House, 11, 348–349
- Ballifeary House Hotel, 349
- Balmoral Estate, 339
- Balmoral Hotel, 10, 133, 150
- Balnakeil Craft Village, 358
- Bamboo, 247
- bank, 70
- Bank Hotel, 137
- Bannockburn, 16, 406
- Bannockburn Heritage Centre, 320
- Bar 10, 249
- Barioja, 142
- Barnton Bar & Bistro, 314
- Barrie's Birthplace, 342
- Barrowland, 247–248
- bars. *See* pubs and bars
- beach, 302–303, 363, 364
- bed-and-breakfast (B&B), 97, 270
- beef, 25
- beer, 29

- Bell's Diner, 142–143
 Beltane Fire Festival, 46
 Ben Nevis, 358
 Benmore Botanic Garden, 303
 Bewley's Hotel, 204
 bicycle travel, 129, 197
 BiddingforTravel, 100
 Big Big Country festival, 47
 birding, 258, 259
 Bishop's and Earl's Palaces, 395–396
 Bistro du Sud, 212
 Black Bo's, 182
 The Black House, 381
 black pudding, 27
 Blackfriars, 249, 366–367
 Blair Castle, 14, 339
 BLOCK festival, 49
 blue bar café, 143–144
 boat tour
 Edinburgh, 167
 Fife and the Trossachs, 327
 Glasgow, 232
 the Highlands, 356
 Tayside/northeast Scotland, 342
 The Boathouse, 262
 Bon Accord, 249–250
 Bongo Club, 180
 The Bonham, 10, 133
 books
 Edinburgh shopping, 175
 festivals, 45, 48, 49, 170
 Glasgow shopping, 241
 literary tour, 167–168
 Scotland resources, 33–34, 106
 Southern Scotland attractions, 280
 The Borders, 37
 Botanic Gardens, 222
 Bow Bar, 182
 Braemar Gathering, 49
 Braemar Highland Games, 340
 Braemar Lodge Hotel, 334
 Braidwoods, 13, 294
 breakfast, 27, 95
 Brel, 250
 brewery, 29
 Brian Maule at Chardon d'Or, 209
 Brian Moore International Tours, 84
 bridie, 27
 British Golf Museum, 328
 Brodick Bar, 305
 Brodick Castle, 297
 Brodie Castle, 365
 Brodie's Close, 158
 Broomielaw (Glasgow), 192
 Brown, Dan (*The Da Vinci Code*), 260
 Brunswick Hotel, 11, 201
 Bruntsfield (Edinburgh), 124
 budget. *See also* discount
 accommodation tips, 99–100
 cost-cutting tips, 66–70
 emergency money, 67
 importance, 63
 planned costs, 64–66
 top restaurants, 13
 worksheet, 70
 Burns and A' That festival, 47
 Burns Cottage and Museum, 16, 297–298
 Burns House, 274
 Burns Monument and Gardens, 303
 Burns Night festival, 45
 Burns, Robert (poet)
 birthplace, 283
 festival, 47
 historic sites, 274
 literary sites, 167–168, 304
 memorial gardens, 303
 museum, 167, 280, 297–298
 overview, 299
 pubs, 281
 Burrastow House, 392
 The Burrell Collection, 15, 222–223
 Burts Hotel, 270
 bus tour, 92–93, 103, 167, 232
 bus travel
 to Ayrshire, 284
 in Edinburgh, 125, 128
 to Edinburgh, 121
 to Fife and the Trossachs, 308
 in Glasgow, 196
 to Glasgow, 188, 189
 to Hebrides, 369–370
 to the Highlands, 346
 overview, 92
 to Southern Scotland, 268
 to Tayside/northeast Scotland, 333
 business hours, 415
 Bute, 296–297, 301
 Butt of Lewis, 9, 381
 The Buttery, 209
 Byre Theatre, 328

• C •

- Caerlaverock Castle, 14, 274–275
- Cafe Gandolfi, 13, 210
- Café Mao, 210
- Café 1, 353
- Café Royal Circle Bar, 20, 182
- Café Royal Oyster Bar, 144
- Cairndale Hotel & Leisure Club, 270
- Calanais Standing Stones, 16, 381, 406
- Caledonian Hilton Edinburgh, 133–134
- Caledonian MacBrayne (CalMac), 93, 286
- calendar, events, 45–50
- Calistoga, 144
- Calton (Edinburgh), 124
- Calton Hill, 16
- Campbells, 272
- Canadian traveler, 108
- Caol Ila Distillery, 304, 409
- car rental
 - booking and pickup, 90
 - budget plan, 64
 - companies, 90–91, 419
 - cost-cutting tips, 68
 - Edinburgh travel, 128
 - family travel, 102
 - Glasgow travel, 197
 - important considerations, 88–89
 - options, 90
 - travelers with disabilities, 105
 - typical costs, 66
- car travel
 - to Ayrshire, 284
 - budget plan, 64
 - cost-cutting tips, 68
 - difficulties, 85
 - driving rules, 86–87, 88, 416
 - East Lothian day trip, 256
 - in Edinburgh, 128
 - to Edinburgh, 122
 - to Fife and the Trossachs, 308
 - gas costs, 87
 - in Glasgow, 196–197
 - to Glasgow, 189–190
 - to Hebrides, 370
 - to the Highlands, 346
 - mileage chart, 58–60
 - to Orkney and Shetland islands, 390
 - parking, 87–88
 - safety, 87
 - to Southern Scotland, 268
 - to Tayside/northeast Scotland, 333
 - terminology, 91
- Carling Academy, 248
- Carnoustie golf course, 403
- cash, 70–71, 73
- castle
 - Arran, 297
 - East Lothian, 256–257, 258
 - Edinburgh, 155
 - Fife and the Trossachs, 320, 327–328
 - Shetland islands, 397
 - Southern Scotland, 274–275, 276, 278
 - Tayside/northeast Scotland, 339, 340, 342
 - top picks, 14, 17, 406–408
 - west Glasgow day trip, 264
- castle, Ayrshire
 - Brodick Castle, 297
 - Inveraray Castle, 298–299
 - Kilchurn Castle, 304
 - Rothsay Castle, 300–301
- castle, Hebrides
 - Armada Castle Gardens, 380
 - Aros Castle, 386
 - Duart Castle, 382
 - Dunvegan Castle, 383
 - Torosay Castle and Gardens, 385
- castle, Highlands
 - Brodie Castle, 365
 - Castle Tioram, 14, 358, 407
 - Cawdor Castle, 14, 359
 - Eilean Donan Castle, 360
 - Urquhart Castle, 364
- Castle Tioram, 14, 358, 407
- cathedral. *See specific cathedrals*
- Cawdor Castle, 14, 359
- Ceilidh Culture, 46
- The Ceilidh Place, 349
- The Cellar, 314
- cellphone, 111–112
- Celtic Connections, 45
- cemetery, 359
- Central Bar, 330
- Centre for Contemporary Art, 223
- Champany Inn, 262
- Chandlery Seafood Restaurant, 377–378
- Channings, 134
- chapel, 260
- Chapters Bistro, 273
- cheese, 27, 143, 387
- children. *See family travel*
- China Buffet King, 212
- chocolate, 343, 387
- Christmas holiday, 50
- church. *See specific churches*

- CIE Tours International, 83, 84
 Citizens Theatre, 245
 City Centre (Glasgow), 19, 191
 City Chambers, 229
 City Inn, 204
 CityLink, 188, 189
 Claichaig Inn, 20, 367
 Clarinda's Tearoom, 150
 Clava Cairns, 359
 Clickimin Broch, 398
 Clive Ramsay Cafe and Restaurant, 314–315
 clothing, 175, 177, 241–242, 387
 clubs, 180, 246–248
 The Clyde Valley, 262–263
 comedy club, 180, 246–247
 comedy festival, 46
 Commercial Centre (Glasgow), 192, 219
 Common Riding Festivals, 47
 concert. *See* music
 Corn Exchange, 181
 Corriechoille Lodge, 349
 Cosmos, 83
 country and western music, 248
 Cowal Highland Gathering, 49
 crafts, 175–176, 305, 358
 Craigellachie Hotel, 334
 Crannog, 354
 Craw's Nest Hotel, 310
 Creagan House, 13, 315
 credit card, 2, 74, 76–77, 416
 The Creel, 392
 Creelers of Skye, 378
 Cromlix House, 310
 Crown Hotel, 270
 Cuillin Hills, 382, 413
 Cuillin Hills Hotel, 374
 cuisine
 food festivals, 49
 Glasgow restaurants, 205, 208
 specialties, 25–27
 top picks, 12–13
 cullen skink, 27
 Culloden Moor Battlefield, 16, 359, 407
 Culross, 18
 Culzean Castle and Country Park,
 17, 37, 298, 407
 currency, 63–64, 70–73, 415
 customs, 74–75, 415
 cycling, 127, 197
- **D** •
- The Da Vinci Code* (Brown), 260
 Dalry (Edinburgh), 124
 Dalwhinnie Distillery, 409
 dance. *See* performing arts
 dance club, 180, 247
 Darroch Learg, 12, 334
 Darvel Music Festival, 49
 David Bann's Vegetarian Restaurant, 144–145
 day trip, 254–264
 Dayticket, 125, 196
 De Vere Cameron House, 310
 Dean Gallery, 162
 Deans @ Let's Eat, 337
 Deep Sea World, 320
 deli, 143, 211
 department store, 176, 242
 The Dhabba, 13, 210–211
 dining. *See* restaurants
 Dirleton Castle, 256–257
 Dirleton village, 18, 256
 disability, traveler with, 104–105
 discount. *See also* budget
 airfare, 79–80
 car rental, 89
 cost-cutting tips, 66–70
 Edinburgh restaurants, 139
 family travel, 102
 Glasgow restaurants, 208
 Discovery Point, 342
 distillery. *See also* whiskey
 Ayrshire, 299–300, 304
 Hebrides, 386
 Tayside/northeast Scotland, 340–341
 top picks, 19, 409–411
 Dome Grill Room and Bar, 145
 Doors Open Days, 49
 Dornoch Cathedral, 365
 Doune Broch (Dun Carloway), 382
 Doune Castle, 14, 320, 407
 Dragon-i, 211
 driving. *See* car travel
 Drover's Inn, 20, 311
 Drum Castle and Gardens, 340
 Dryburgh Abbey, 275
 Duart Castle, 14, 382
 Dumfries, 37
 Dun Carloway (Doune Broch), 382
 Dunain Park Hotel, 349–350
 Dunbar, 258

Dundee, 332, 333, 337
Dunfermline Abbey and Palace, 15, 322
Dunollie Hotel, 374
Dunottar Castle, 342
Dunvegan Castle, 383
Dusit, 145

• E •

East Lothian, 254–260
Ecoventure, 356
Edinburgh. *See also* attractions, Edinburgh;
maps, Edinburgh; restaurants,
Edinburgh
accommodations, 10–11, 129–138
car rental, 91
famous residents, 129
history, 22–25
itinerary, 169–170
neighborhoods, 122–125, 126–127
nightlife, 178–183
overview, 36, 119–120
picnics, 143
shopping, 173–178
top picks, 9
tourist information, 125, 132, 183–185
travel in, 125, 128–129
travel to, 78–82, 120–122
Edinburgh Castle, 155
Edinburgh Christmas festival, 50
Edinburgh Festival, 48, 153
Edinburgh Festival Theatre, 179
Edinburgh Fringe festival, 48
Edinburgh Information Centre, 125
Edinburgh International Airport, 79, 120
Edinburgh International Jazz & Blues
Festival, 48
Edinburgh International Science
Festival, 46
Edinburgh Marriott, 132
Edinburgh New Town, 122, 123
Edinburgh Old Town, 9, 122, 123
Edinburgh Playhouse, 179
The Edinburgh Residence, 134
Edinburgh Zoo, 162
Ednam House Hotel, 271
Edradour Distillery, 19, 340, 410
Ee-usk, 294
Eilean Donan Castle, 14, 360, 407–408
Elderhostel, 103
electronic equipment, 113–114
ELTExpress, 80

e-mail, 112–113
embassy, 416
England, 22, 27–28, 70
Enterkine House, 294
escorted tour
companies, 83
considerations, 82–83
Edinburgh, 166–169
Glasgow, 232–233
the Highlands, 356
Orkney and Shetland islands, 395
overview, 82
étain, 212
ethnic cuisine. *See* cuisine
euro, 72
event calendar, 45–50
Explorer Pass, 67

• F •

Fairfield House Hotel, 290
Falkland Palace and Garden, 322
family travel
accommodations, 103
cost-cutting tips, 69
discounts, 102
Glasgow restaurants, 208, 212
itinerary, 55–56
tips for success, 101–102
tours, 102
travel to Scotland, 102
Fasganeoin Country House, 336
ferry
to Ayrshire and Argyll, 286
to Hebrides, 369
to the Highlands, 346
to Orkney islands, 390
overview, 93
to Southern Scotland, 268
to Tayside/northeast Scotland, 333
festival, 45–50, 170
Fife and the Trossachs. *See also* attractions,
Fife and the Trossachs
accommodations, 308–313
maps, 309, 319
nightlife, 330
overview, 38, 307–308
performing arts, 328
restaurants, 313–317
shopping, 329–330
tourist information, 331
travel to, 308

The Filmhouse, 183
 Fingal's Cave, 385, 413
 fire festival, 45, 50
 First Group, 196
 First ScotRail, 81, 82, 91
 fish supper, 27
 Fishers Bistro, 145–146
 fishing, 31
 The Fishmarket Restaurant, 354
 Floors Castle, 276
 folk music, 46–47, 180–181, 247
 food. *See* cuisine; restaurants
 football, 47
 forest reserve, 356
 Fort William
 accommodations, 350, 351
 attractions, 358, 362
 overview, 345
 restaurants, 354
 Forth Floor Restaurant, 12, 146
 Fouter's Bistro, 295
 Foveran Hotel & Restaurant, 392, 394
 Fratelli Sarti, 212–213
 Freedom Scotland Holidays, 84
 The Fringe, 170
 Fruitmarket Gallery, 163
 Fury Murry's, 247

• G •

Gaelic, 28, 368, 417
 Gairloch Golf Club, 403
 Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA), 15, 223
 Galloway, 37
 Gallowgate (Glasgow), 191–192
 Gamba, 213
 gardens
 Ayrshire, 297, 303
 day trips, 263–264
 Edinburgh, 160
 Fife and the Trossachs, 322
 Gigha, 297
 Glasgow, 222
 Hebrides, 380, 385
 the Highlands, 361
 Southern Scotland, 276–277
 Tayside/northeast Scotland, 340
 top picks, 17–18, 413
 Garnethill (Glasgow), 192
 gas, 64, 68, 87, 89
 gay and lesbian traveler
 book resources, 106
 festivals, 47, 50

Glasgow nightlife, 251
 tourist information, 105
 tours, 105–106
 genealogical data, 106
 geography, 21–22, 35–40
 The George Hotel, 137–138
 Georgian House, 163
 ghost tour, 168–169
 gift shop, 176, 243
 Gigha, 296–297, 302
 Gigha Hotel, 290
 Gladstone's Land, 16–17, 155
 Glamis Castle, 342
 Glasgow!, 50
 Glasgow. *See also* attractions, Glasgow; maps, Glasgow; restaurants, Glasgow
 accommodations, 11, 197–205
 car rental, 90
 itinerary, 233–235
 neighborhoods, 190–193, 195
 nightlife, 244–251
 overview, 37, 186–187
 picnics, 211
 shopping, 239–244
 top picks, 9
 tourist information, 194, 252–253
 travel in, 194, 196–197
 travel to, 78–82, 187–190
 Glasgow Art Fair, 46
 Glasgow Cathedral, 15, 191, 224, 408
 Glasgow City Centre, 9, 191
 Glasgow Comedy Festival, 46
 Glasgow Film Theatre, 251
 Glasgow Green, 229
 Glasgow International Airport, 79, 187–188
 Glasgow International Festival, 46
 Glasgow International Jazz Festival, 48
 Glasgow on Ice, 50
 Glasgow River Festival, 48
 Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, 245
 Glasgow School of Art, 17, 224
 The Glasshouse, 138
 glassworks, 281
 Glen Coe, 10, 360, 413
 Glen Grant Distillery, 410
 Glen Mhor Hotel, 350
 Glen Trool, 279
 Glenapp Castle, 12, 271
 Glenarn Garden, 263–264
 Gleneagles, 311
 Glenfiddich Distillery, 19, 340–341, 410
 Glenfinnan Monument, 17, 360–361
 Glengarry Castle Hotel, 12, 350

- The Glenlivet, 410
- Glenmore Forest Park, 365
- The Glenturret, 410–411
- Globe Inn, 281
- Globus, 83
- golf
 - annual events, 48
 - Ayrshire, 301–303, 404
 - East Lothian, 259
 - Fife and the Trossachs, 324–325, 328
 - overview, 31
 - St. Andrews, 324–325, 404–405
 - top courses, 19, 403–405
 - tours, 84
- GOMA (Gallery of Modern Art), 15, 223
- Gorbals (Glasgow), 193
- Govan (Glasgow), 193
- The Grain Store, 146
- Grand Hotel, 394
- Grand Ole Opry, 248
- Grassroots Café, 213
- gratuity, 29, 70, 139, 142, 208
- Greater Glasgow and Clyde Valley Tourist Board, 194
- Greencourt Guest House, 290–291
- Greyfriars Kirk, 163–164
- Greywalls, 259
- The Grosvenor, 252
- Groline Home Farm, 378
- G's, 367
- guided tour. *See* escorted tour
- Gullane Hill, 259

- **H** ●
- haggis, 25, 27
- Halcyon, 273
- Harbour Inn, 291
- Harris Hotel, 374
- Harry Potter* series (Rowling), 129
- Haymarket (Edinburgh), 124
- Heart of Scotland Tours, 93
- Hebridean Islands
 - accommodations, 370–377
 - attractions, 379–387
 - maps, 371, 373
 - nightlife, 388
 - overview, 10, 39, 368–369
 - restaurants, 377–379
 - shopping, 387
 - tourist information, 388
- Henderson's Salad Table, 146–147
- Heraghty's Free House, 250
- Hermann's, 315
- High Kirk of St. Giles, 15, 164
- Highland Clearances, 25
- Highland Folk Museum, 365
- the Highlands
 - accommodations, 346–352
 - attractions, 355–365
 - itinerary, 56–57
 - maps, 347
 - nightlife, 366–367
 - overview, 39, 345–346
 - restaurants, 353–355
 - shopping, 366
 - tourist information, 367
 - travel to, 346
- hiking
 - Fife and the Trossachs, 325, 326
 - the Highlands, 365
 - overview, 31
 - Southern Scotland, 279
 - top picks, 412, 413
- Hill House, 17, 264
- Hillhead (Glasgow), 193
- Hilton Glasgow Hotel, 201
- history
 - Ayrshire sites, 300, 303–304
 - Edinburgh sites, 154, 155, 163
 - Fife and the Trossachs sites, 328
 - genealogical data, 106
 - Glasgow sites, 231
 - Hebrides sites, 381, 382, 384–385
 - Highlands sites, 360–361, 365
 - language, 28
 - major events, 22–25, 26
 - Orkney and Shetland island sites, 395–397, 398
 - Scotland versus Britain, 22
 - Southern Scotland sites, 274, 278–279
 - Tayside/Northeast sites, 339
 - top attractions, 16–18, 406–408
- Ho Wong, 213–214
- Hogmanay, 50
- Holmwood House, 18, 225
- Holy Rude Church, 322
- Holy Trinity Church, 328–329
- Holyrood Park, 412
- The Honeycomb, 180
- Hopetoun House, 261
- The Horse Shoe, 20, 250
- horseback riding, 47
- hostel, 98–99
- hotel, 96

Hotel Eilean Iarmain, 374–375
 House for an Art Lover, 229–230
 The Howard, 134–135
 Howies, 147
 Hunterian Art Gallery, 15, 225–226
 Hunterian Museum, 230
 Hunting Lodge Hotel, 291

• I •

ice skating, 50
 The Inn at Kippen, 315
 Inn at Lathones, 311
 insurance, 82, 89, 109–110
 International Festival, 48
 International Story Telling Festival, 50
 Internet, 69, 100, 112–113, 416
 Inveraray, 37
 Inveraray Castle, 298–299
 Inveraray Jail, 303
 Inverewe Garden, 18, 361, 413
 Inverlochy Castle, 350
 Inverness
 accommodations, 349, 350, 351
 attractions, 365
 maps, 357
 overview, 45, 345
 pubs and bars, 366–367
 restaurants, 353, 355
 shopping, 366
 Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, 365
 Inverness Music Festival, 45
 Inverness/Dalcross Airport, 346
 Iona Abbey and Nunnery, 15, 383–384
 “Island Hopscotch” fare, 93, 286
 island travel. *See specific islands*
 Islay, 283, 304
 Isle of Eigg, 383
 Isle of Harris, 380
 Isle of Lewis, 380, 381, 382, 386
 Isle of Mull
 accommodations, 376, 377
 attractions, 386
 overview, 379
 restaurants, 378
 shopping, 387
 Isle of Skye
 accommodations, 372, 374–375, 376
 attractions, 380, 382, 383, 384–385
 maps, 373
 overview, 379
 restaurants, 378, 379

Isle of Staffa, 385
 Isles Inn, 388
 Italian Chapel, 398
 itinerary
 Edinburgh, 169–170
 family travel, 55–56
 Glasgow, 233–235
 Highlands tour, 56–57
 island tours, 57–58
 mileage chart, 58–60
 one-week vacation, 52–53
 overview, 51
 two-week vacation, 53–55
 Western Highlands, 57–58

• J •

Jacobite Cruises, 356
 Jacobite Steam Train, 362
 jail, 328
 Jarlshof, 396
 jazz music, 48, 181, 247–248
 Jedburgh Abbey, 15, 276
 jewelry, 175–176, 305, 387
 John Cobb Cairn memorial, 365
 John Knox House, 164
 Jongleurs Comedy Club, 180, 246
 Jute, 337

• K •

Keavil House Hotel, 311–312
 Kebab Mahal, 147
 Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum,
 16, 227
 Kelvingrove Hotel, 201
 Kilchurn Castle, 304
 Kilmartin House Museum, 17, 299
 Kilmichael Country House, 291
 kilt, 177–178, 243
 King Tut’s Wah-Wah Hut, 248
 Kings Theatre, 179, 245
 Kinloch Lodge, 378
 Kintyre Peninsula, 37, 283
 kipper, 27
 Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Gallery, 16, 325
 Kirkcudbright, 18, 279
 Kirkland House, 205
 Kirklee Hotel, 205
 Knockinaam Lodge, 12, 271

• L •

La Garrigue, 147–148
La Parmigiana, 214
La Potinière, 259–260
lamb, 25
Langs, 202
language
 car terms, 91
 common terms, 27–28
 culinary terms, 27
 England versus Scotland, 27–28
 Hebridean Islands, 368
 history, 28
 overview, 416–417
 place names, 38
Laphroaig Distillery, 19, 299–300, 411
Le Café St Honoré, 148
learning vacation, 102
Leith (Edinburgh), 123, 124–125
The Lighthouse, 230
Linlithgow Palace, 261
The Liquid Room, 182
Liquid Ship, 250–251
Lismore Lounge, 250
Little Sparta, 18, 276–277
Loch Fyne Hotel, 292
Loch Fyne Restaurant and Oyster Bar, 295
Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National
 Park, 325–326, 414
Loch Ness
 attractions, 362–363, 364
 overview, 10, 39, 414
Lochgreen House Hotel, 292
Lodge on the Loch, 351
Logan Botanic Garden, 18, 277
The Longship, 398
Loony Dook, 45
luggage, 110, 114–115

• M •

MacBackpackers, 93
MacCallums of Troon Oyster Bar, 295
Macdonald Roxburgh Hotel, 138
Macdonald's Restaurant & Guest House, 336
Mackintosh, Charles Rennie (architect), 226
Maes Howe, 396
magazine, travel, 103, 105
Magic Bus, 196
Malin Court Hotel, 292
Malmaison, 10, 11, 135, 202

Manor House Hotel, 292–293
maps
 Ayrshire and Argyll, 285, 289
 Fife and the Trossachs,
 309, 319, 321, 323
 Hebridean Islands, 371, 373
 the Highlands, 347
 Inverness, 357
 Orkney islands, 393
 purchase locations, 417
 Shetland islands, 391
 Southern Scotland, 269
 St. Andrews, 319
 Stirling, 321, 323
 Tayside/northeast Scotland, 335
maps, Edinburgh. *See also* Edinburgh
 accommodations, 130–131
 attractions, 156–157
 day trips, 255
 neighborhoods, 126–127
 restaurants, 140–141
maps, Glasgow. *See also* Glasgow
 accommodations, 198–199
 attractions, 220–221
 day trips, 257
 neighborhoods, 195
 restaurants, 206–207
Marchmont (Edinburgh), 124
Marcliffe Hotel and Spa, 336
marine center, 301, 320
Martyr's Bay, 388
Mary Queen of Scots House, 279
McCaig's Tower, 304
The Meadows, 165
medical problem, 109–111, 416
Melrose Abbey, 15, 277–278, 408
Mercat Tours, 169
Merchant City (Glasgow), 191, 219
Michael Caines @ ABode, 13, 214
midge, 57
military site, 329
Military Tattoo festival, 48, 170
Millennium Hotel Glasgow, 202–203
Mishnish, 20, 388
Moffat House Hotel, 271–272
Monachyle Mhor, 316
Mono, 214–215
Montague Guest House, 312
The Moorings Hotel, 351
Mother India, 215
Mount Stuart, 18, 300
Mountain Film Festival, 45
Mousa Broch, 398

movie

- Edinburgh theaters, 183
- festivals, 45, 48
- Glasgow theaters, 251–252
- Scotland resources, 32–33

Moyness House, 351

Muir, John (explorer), 258

Muirfield Golf Course, 19, 259, 404

Mull Theatre, 386

museum

- Ayrshire, 297–298, 299, 304
- Edinburgh, 158, 165, 167
- Fife and the Trossachs, 318, 325
- Glasgow, 228–229, 230–232
- Hebrides, 384–385, 386
- the Highlands, 365
- Orkney islands, 398
- Southern Scotland, 280
- Tayside/northeast Scotland, 343
- top picks, 16–17

Museum nan Eilean (Western Isles Museum), 386

Museum of Childhood, 165

Museum of Islay Life, 304

Museum of Scotland, 17, 158

Museum of Scottish Lighthouses, 343

Museum of Transport, 230–231

music. *See also specific types*

- Edinburgh nightlife, 180–182
- Edinburgh shopping, 177
- festival calendar, 45–50
- Glasgow nightlife, 245
- Glasgow shopping, 244
- overview, 30–31

Mussel Inn, 215

• **N** •

Namaste, 148–149

National Gallery of Scotland, 16, 158–159

National Wallace Monument, 329

neep, 27

Nevis Range Mountain Experience, 365

New Lanark, 263

New Territories festival, 45

New Town (Edinburgh), 122, 123

New Year's holiday, 45, 50, 173

New Zealander, 108

Newark Castle, 264

Newton Hotel, 351–352

Nice 'n' Sleazy, 248

Nico's Bistro, 354

nightlife

Ayrshire and Argyll, 305–306

budget plan, 66

Edinburgh, 178–183

Fife and the Trossachs, 330

Glasgow, 244–251

Hebrides, 388

the Highlands, 366–367

Southern Scotland, 281

Tayside/northeast Scotland, 343–344

1901, 216

No. Sixteen, 216

North and South Uist, 384

northeast Scotland. *See* Tayside/Northeast

Northlink Ferries, 93

Number One, 149

• **O** •

Oban, 37, 289, 306

Oban Inn, 306

Old Bridge House Museum, 280

Old Course Hotel, 312

Old Library Lodge, 354

Old Man of Hoy, 398

Old Town (Edinburgh), 9, 122, 123

Oloroso, 12, 149

One Devonshire Gardens, 11, 203

Opal Lounge, 183

Oran Mor, 247

Orbitz, 80, 100

organic farm, 386

Original Loch Ness Monster Visitor

Centre, 363

Orkney Folk Festival, 47

Orkney islands, 39, 47, 389–398

Orkney Museum, 398

Ostlers Close, 316

Our Dynamic Earth, 165

The Outhouse, 183

Outlook Tower and Camera Obscura, 166

• **P** •

package tour, 68, 83–84, 105–106

pagan festival, 46

Palace of Holyroodhouse, 17, 159–160

parade, 47

park

Ayrshire, 298

Edinburgh, 165

Fife and the Trossachs, 318, 325–326

park (*continued*)

Glasgow, 229, 231
the Highlands, 365
top picks, 412

parking, 87–88, 128

Parklands Hotel, 336

Partick (Glasgow), 193

passport, 77, 102, 107–108

Pavilion Theatre, 245–246

Peat Inn, 316

Peebles Hydro, 272

People's Palace, 227

performing arts

- Edinburgh, 178–179
- Fife and the Trossachs, 328
- Glasgow, 245–246
- Hebrides, 386
- Tayside/northeast Scotland, 341

Perth

- accommodations, 336–337
- attractions, 341
- festivals, 47
- overview, 332
- restaurants, 337–338
- travel to, 333

Perth Festival of the Arts, 47

phone, 69, 97, 111–112, 417

picnic, 143, 211

Piersland House Hotel, 293

Piping Live!, 49

Pitlochry Festival Theatre, 341

Plaisir du Chocolat, 150

Plockton, 18, 352, 361

Plockton Hotel, 352

Po Na Na, 180

Pollok Country Park, 231

Pollokshaws (Glasgow), 193

Polmailly House Hotel, 352

Polo Lounge, 251

The Portcullis, 312

Port-Na-Craig Inn, 338

Portpatrick, 19, 277

The Pot Still, 20, 251

pottery, 280, 366, 387

Prestonfield, 12, 135

Prestwick golf course, 404

Prestwick International Airport, 79, 188

Prince of Wales, 20

Princes Street Gardens, 160, 161

Provand's Lordship, 231

pubs and bars

- Ayrshire, 305–306
- Edinburgh, 182–183

- Fife and the Trossachs, 330
- Glasgow, 248–251
- gratuities, 29
- Hebrides, 388
- the Highlands, 366–367
- overview, 29–30
- Southern Scotland, 281
- Tayside/northeast Scotland, 343–344
- top picks, 13, 20

• Q •

Queen Elizabeth Forest Park, 326

• R •

Rab Ha's, 205

Rabbie's Bar, 306

Radisson SAS Hotel, 138, 203

rain, 40, 42

The Real Mary King's Close, 166

Rent-a-Bike Edinburgh, 129

reservation, 99, 100

Restaurant Martin Wishart, 12, 149–150

restaurants. *See also specific restaurants*

- Ayrshire and Argyll, 293–296
- budget plan, 65
- cost-cutting tips, 69–70
- East Lothian, 259–260
- Fife and the Trossachs, 313–317
- Glasgow, 13
- Hebridean Islands, 377–379
- the Highlands, 353–355
- pricing conventions, 3
- Southern Scotland, 272–273
- Tayside/northeast Scotland, 337–338
- top picks, 12–14
- typical costs, 66
- West Lothian, 262

restaurants, Edinburgh. *See also Edinburgh*

- late-night snacks, 181
- map, 140–141
- overview, 138–139
- pricing, 139, 142
- smoking policy, 142
- top picks, 12, 142–153

restaurants, Glasgow. *See also Glasgow*

- late-night snacks, 249
- map, 206–208
- overview, 205
- pricing, 208

smoking policy, 208
 top picks, 209–219
 Revolver Bar, 251
 RideaCard pass, 125
 Ring of Brodgar, 396–397
 Riva, 355
 River Café and Restaurant, 355
 Rob Roy and the Trossachs Visitor
 Centre, 329
 Robert Burns Centre, 280
 Rocpool, 355
 Rodel Hotel, 379
 Rogano, 216
 Roman Camp, 313
 The Rosedale, 375
 Rosslyn Chapel, 260
 Rothesay Castle, 300–301
 roundabout, 87
 Rowling, J.K. (*Harry Potter* series), 129
 Royal Botanic Garden, 18, 160
 Royal Dornoch Course, 404
 Royal Highland Show, 48
 The Royal Hotel, 375
 Royal Lyceum Theatre, 179
 Royal National Mod, 49–50
 The Royal Oak, 181
 Royal Troon Golf Club, 19, 302, 404
 Royal Yacht Britannia, 166–167
 Russian Tavern at the Port Royal Hotel,
 295–296

• S •

safety

airline security, 114–115
 ATMs, 73, 76
 car travel, 88
 credit cards, 74, 76–77
 Edinburgh, 185
 female traveler, 102
 Glasgow, 253
 hostels, 99
 overview, 76, 417
 Saltmarket (Glasgow), 192
 Salutation Hotel, 337
 Sands of Morar, 10, 363, 414
 Sandwood Bay, 10, 364, 414
 Sandy Bell's, 181
 Santini, 12, 150
 Scalloway Castle, 397
 science festival, 46
 science museum, 165, 228
 Scone Palace, 341, 342

Scotia Bar, 247
 Scotland Street School Museum, 232
 The Scotsman, 135–136
 Scottish Book Town Festival, 49
 Scottish Citylink, 92
 Scottish Cup Final, 47
 Scottish Cycle Safaris, 129
 Scottish Exhibition & Conference
 Centre, 248
 Scottish Fife, 308
 Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art,
 16, 161
 Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 16, 161
 Scottish Open, 48
 Scottish Parliament Building, 161–162
 Scottish Seabird Centre, 258
 Scottish Sealife Sanctuary, 301
 Scottish Tours, 83, 92–93
 Scourie Hotel, 352
 seafood, 25–26
 Seafood Cabin, 13–14, 296
 The Seafood Restaurant, 316–317
 season, 41–50, 67, 99
 self-catering cottage, 97–98
 senior traveler, 103
 Sheraton Grand Hotel, 11, 136
 Shetland Folk Festival, 46–47
 Shetland islands, 39, 389–398
 Shetland Wildlife, 395
 shopping
 Ayrshire and Argyll, 305
 budget plan, 65–66
 cost-cutting tips, 68, 70
 Edinburgh, 173–178
 Fife and the Trossachs, 329–330
 Glasgow, 239–244
 Hebridean Islands, 387
 the Highlands, 366
 Southern Scotland, 280–281
 tax refunds, 74–75
 Tayside/northeast Scotland, 343
 The Shore, 183
 The Shore Bar & Restaurant, 20, 150–151
 Silver Darling, 338
 Sir Walter Scott (author), 275
 63 Tay Street, 338
 Skara Brae, 17, 397, 408
 skiing, 364
 Skye Museum of Island Life and Flora
 MacDonald's Grave, 384–385
 Skye Serpentarium, 386
 Sligachan Hotel, 376

- smoking, 142, 208
 - Smugglers Inn, 313
 - soccer, 233
 - Souter Johnnie's Cottage, 304
 - Southern Scotland
 - accommodations, 268–272
 - attractions, 273–280
 - overview, 37, 267
 - pubs and bars, 281
 - restaurants, 272–273
 - shopping, 280–281
 - tourist information, 281–282
 - Southside (Glasgow), 193, 222
 - souvenir, 68
 - Spoon, 12, 151
 - spring season, 44, 46–47
 - SS Sir Walter Scott Steamship, 327
 - St. Andrews
 - cathedral, 326–327
 - golf, 324–325, 404–405
 - map, 319
 - overview, 38
 - shopping, 329
 - top picks, 19
 - university, 328
 - St. Andrew's Day, 50
 - St. Andrew's in the Square, 247
 - St. Clement's Church, 384
 - St. Columba Hotel, 375–376
 - St. Magnus Cathedral, 397
 - St. Magnus Festival, 47
 - St. Michael's Parish Church, 261–262
 - St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art, 231–232
 - St. Vincent Street Church, 15, 227–228
 - The Stand, 180, 246–247
 - Station Hotel, 272
 - steamship, 327
 - Stevenson, Robert Louis (author), 168
 - Stirling
 - attractions, 318, 322, 327–328
 - map, 321, 323
 - overview, 38, 317
 - shopping, 329
 - Stirling Castle, 14, 327–328
 - Stirling Highland Hotel, 313
 - Stirling Old Town Jail, 328
 - Stockbridge (Edinburgh), 123–124
 - stolen money/credit cards, 76–77
 - Stone of Destiny, 342
 - Stonehaven Fireball Festival, 50
 - Stonehenge, Scottish, 16, 381, 406
 - Stones of Stenness, 396–397
 - Storehouse of Foulis, 365
 - Strathclyde Passenger Transport, 194, 284
 - Strathisla, 411
 - Stravaigin, 13
 - Stravaigin Café Bar, 217
 - street name, 86
 - Stromness Hotel, 394
 - Stromness Museum, 398
 - subway, 194, 196
 - Sumburgh Airport, 390
 - summer, 41–42, 47–49, 170
 - Sweet Melindas, 151
 - Sweetheart Abbey, 278
- T •**
- T in the Park, 48
 - Talisker Distillery, 386, 411
 - Tall Ship at Glasgow Harbour, 232
 - Tantallon Castle, 258
 - tartan, 177–178, 243
 - Taste of Mull & Iona Food Festival, 49
 - tattie, 27
 - tax, 75–76, 208, 417
 - taxi, 128, 196
 - Tayside/Northeast
 - accommodations, 333–337
 - attractions, 338–343
 - maps, 335
 - nightlife, 343–344
 - overview, 38–39, 332
 - restaurants, 337–338
 - shopping, 343
 - tourist information, 344
 - travel to, 333
 - Tchai Ovna, 218
 - tea, 150, 218
 - television festival, 48
 - temperature, average, 41
 - Tenement House, 228–229
 - theater. *See* movie; performing arts
 - Theatre Royal, 246
 - Thistle Golf (Scotland) Limited, 84
 - Thomson, Alexander (architect), 225
 - Threave Castle, 14, 278
 - Three Chimneys Restaurant, 14, 379
 - Thrums Hotel, 138
 - Tigh Dearg Hotel, 376
 - Timberbush Tours, 93
 - Time 4 Thai, 151–152

tipping, 29, 70, 139, 142, 208
toastie, 27

Tobermory Distillery, 386

Tobermory Holidays, 376

Tobermory Hotel, 377

Tollcross (Edinburgh), 124

Torosay Castle and Gardens, 385

tour. *See specific types*

tourist information

Ayrshire and Argyll, 306

Edinburgh, 125, 132, 183–185

Fife and the Trossachs, 331

gay and lesbian travelers, 105

general info, 415–420

Glasgow, 194, 252–253

Hebridean Islands, 388

the Highlands, 367

Orkney and Shetland Islands, 398

Southern Scotland, 281–282

Tayside/northeast Scotland, 344

Town House, 11, 203–204

Traigh golf course, 405

train travel

to Ayrshire, 284, 303

Clyde Valley, 263

to Edinburgh, 121

to Fife and the Trossachs, 308

to Glasgow, 188–189

to Hebrides, 369

to the Highlands, 346

Highlands tours, 362

in Scotland, 91–92

to Scotland, 80–82

to Southern Scotland, 267–268

to Tayside/northeast Scotland, 333

West Lothian day trip, 260

Tramway, 246

Traquair House, 18, 278–279

travel agency, 80, 104

Travel Inn, 205

traveler's check, 74–75

Traverse Theatre, 179

Trimontium Exhibition, 280

Triptych festival, 46

Tron Theatre, 246

Troon, 302–303, 404

Trossachs. *See Fife and the Trossachs*

Turnberry, 303, 405

Turnberry Hotel Golf Courses, 19

• U •

Ubiquitous Chip, 217

UGC Renfrew Street, 252

Ullapool, 19, 362, 366

Ulva, 387

University of St. Andrews, 328

Up Helly Aa, 45

Urquhart Castle, 364

Usher Hall, 179

• V •

Valvonna & Crolla Caffe Bar, 148

The Vintners Rooms, 152

Vroni's Wine Bar, 251

Vue Edinburgh, 183

• W •

walking, 123, 129, 197

walking tour

Edinburgh, 169, 170–173

Glasgow, 233, 235–239

The Walton, 136–137

Wannaburger, 152

Waverley Excursions, 233

weather, 40–44, 364, 418

Wee Curry Shop, 13, 217–218

West End

Edinburgh, 122–123, 124

Glasgow, 192–193, 219, 235–239

West End Festival, 47

West Highland Way, 325, 326

West Lothian, 260–262

Western Ferry, 286

Western Gailes golf course, 405

Western Highlands, 39, 57–58

Western Isles Hotel, 377

Western Isles Museum (Museum nan Eilean), 386

The Westin Turnberry Resort, 293

Wheatshaf Restaurant with Rooms, 273

Where the Monkey Sleeps, 218

whiskey. *See also distillery*

Edinburgh shopping, 178

Islay, 304

terminology, 30

top attractions, 19

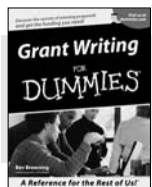
Whistlebinkies, 20, 330
Whuppity Scourie Festival, 46
Wigtown, 280
The Wild Bergamot, 13, 219
Wildabout Orkney Tours, 395
wildlife, 32, 342
Willow Tea Rooms, 218
wine, 366
winter, 43–44, 45, 50
Witchery by the Castle, 10, 137, 152–153

Witchery Tours, 168–169
women, 102
Woodlands (Glasgow), 192
wool, 305, 330, 366
World Pipe Championship, 49
The Writers' Museum, 167

• Z •

zoo, 162

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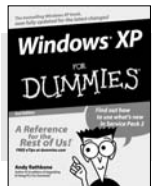
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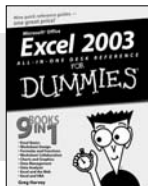
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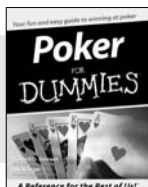
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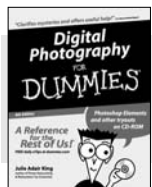
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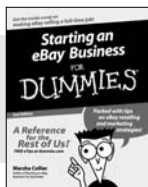
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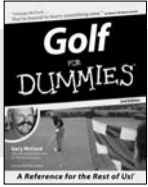
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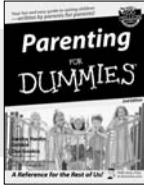
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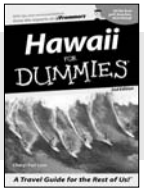


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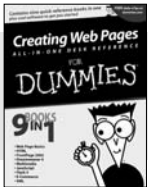


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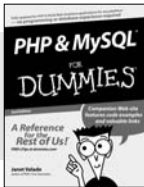
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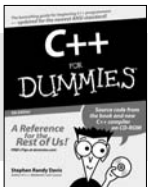


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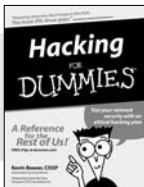
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