

Visitors guide to the City of Edinburgh

This short information guide to the city is meant to help you decide what to take in on your visit. We've compiled our top City Experiences outlining the best places to go, views to take in and the must-do city experiences

For those of you who are new to the city or just want to have a chance to find out some amazing places to visit in this beautiful town then read on. The history is mingled with a little information on the best places to visit in the capital and a chance to remember and look around you as you do.

Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland with a population of just under 500,000. Scotland's population as a country is approximately 5 million.

Best cocktails are to be found in Harvey Nichols 4th floor bar with amazing views of ST. Andrews Square Piazza and along George Street as well as views of the Firth of Forth and over to the Ancient Royal Kingdom of Fife. Look out for the statue in the gardens of St. Andrews Square. This is known as the Melville Monument and is 41 metres high and sitting centrally to St. Andrews Square dominates it and the views along George Street. It was erected in memory of Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville, an aristocrat 18th century politician but more importantly the King's Chancellor. The most powerful Scot of his day. Otherwise known as the uncrowned King of Scotland and even called King Henry the 9th at times. The statue is modelled on Trojan's column in Rome. He looks down onto George Street (named in honour of King George 111). The story that surrounds the monument is that Viscount Melville was continually arguing with William Pitt (Britain's youngest Prime Minister) in parliament. One day after a fierce and heated dispute he warned Pitt "one day I will look down on you Pitt, I am warning you" Today, indeed he looks down George Street to William Pitt's Bronze statue (1759-1806). See if you can find it. It sits at the junction of George Street & Frederick Street. You will need binoculars from the bar terrace of Harvey Nichols – one of the best seats in Edinburgh on a sunny day where you can order fabulous wines, champagnes or cocktails and admire the history and views of this city.



The interior of the Forth Floor Bar area in Harvey Nichols

Best Wine Stores in Edinburgh are 4th floor bar in Harvey Nichols. A fantastic selection of wines from across the world. You can also find superb food, chocolate and quirky pieces for your kitchen and home.

Friarwood Fine Wines, 16 Dock Street, Leith. While in Leith take a stroll along the shore and find some exceptional restaurants and pubs. A holiday Mediterranean atmosphere takes hold in this very picturesque part of the city. Walking further along to Dock Street you will come across Friarwood Wines. A fabulous family run independent wine merchant. The store pays homage to the area's traditional links with the wine producing region of Bordeaux, with the biggest range of classed growth Clarets in Scotland. However, there is a huge selection from all over the world offering good value as well as exclusivity. At the weekend you can sample their wines as well as chat to the well informed staff who are on hand to help you choose that special bottles. Free parking as well. Open Monday 10-5pm and Tuesday-Saturday 10-6pm closed Sunday.

www.friarwood.com

Edinburgh Wine Merchants, Raeburn Place, Stockbridge (a beautiful little part of the New Town of Edinburgh) well worth a visit for its Bohemian image. Lots of coffee shops to get away from the bustle of the city and a stone's throw from the beautiful walks along the Water of Leith. This is a fantastic shop full of great wine and very helpful and friendly staff.

Best food in town Harvey Nichols 4th floor restaurant. You can pick up the best cup of tea or coffee and superb scones as well as gourmet food in the main restaurant

Hip Bars (a little bus ride from the city)
The Cannyman, Morningside, Edinburgh

Not to be missed:

Rhubarb's Restaurant at Prestonfield House Hotel www.prestonfieldhouse.com
The Secret Garden at the Witchery, Castlehill Edinburgh www.thewitchery.com
Oloroso Restaurant, Castle Street (lovely views of the Castle)
The Wee Windies Restaurant, High Street (ancient building in historic setting)

Edinburgh has one of the most beautiful cityscapes in the world, making it the ideal city break destination. With Scotland's most famous castle dominating the city skyline, there is plenty to see and do with the perfect balance between all things traditional and contemporary.

Discover world-class museums and galleries, take a tour on an open-top bus or even visit the city's own zoo. From the world famous Festivals to top-class restaurants and bars, not to mention fabulous shopping, you'll be spoilt for choice.

With streets steeped in history and a thriving cultural scene, Edinburgh offers the perfect balance between all things traditional and contemporary.

The UNESCO World Heritage Site at the heart of the city combines the medieval Old Town, the Georgian New Town and award winning modern architecture. You'll see

views that make for perfect picture postcards, mysterious winding streets, elegant terraces and an abundance of shops, bars and restaurants.

The Lothians region consists of East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian where you can discover tales of Scotland's past. Stately homes, dramatic castles and medieval chapels all provide a sense of Scotland's impressive history.

The area has many historic towns and scenic villages, which are great for exploring. From award winning beaches, championship golf courses and some of Scotland's most impressive visitor attractions the Lothians offer plenty of things to see and do.

Our principal tutor is also a Tourist Guide of the City and is very happy to advise on everything connected to the city.

Long gone is its dour and unyielding image; these days it is brimming with seriously good restaurants, vibey bars and good hotels. One of the most stunning cities in Europe, it hosts the world's finest arts festival every summer. During this time, the city's atmosphere cranks up further, and its population swells like a well-fed python to double its normal size. You will find Wine in the City in the High Street in the famous Royal Mile. Our classes are small, friendly and fun with high quality wine and champagne.

Edinburgh has great classical links: like Rome, it is built on seven hills (unlike Rome's, its weather fronts tend to come from Siberia). It is also known as the Athens of the North, though this is a reference to the great thinkers of the 18th-century Enlightenment – so the comparison has more to do with David Hume, Adam Smith and Sophocles than the weather.

A more tangible link to Athens is, of course, the wonderful and remarkably incomplete replica of the Parthenon on Calton Hill, looking down over the Old and New Towns. This is a fine testament to a city that was thinking grand but had small pockets – and also to an age when no-one would have dreamt of plunging much of the nation's wealth into a bamboo-fronted cave to house the Scottish parliament.

Our first port of call, a few miles from the centre, is Rosslyn Chapel; it became a centre of 'literary' pilgrimage following the success of Dan Brown's thriller, *The Da Vinci Code*.

Rosslyn has ancient links to the Knights Templar and provides the final setting for Brown's tale. There are those who think the Holy Grail is buried here, and recently American tourists have been caught attempting to dig into the 14th-century vaults in their quest for the elusive treasure.

From here we make our way to the New Town, perhaps the greatest (and certainly the biggest) example of neo-classical Georgian architecture in Britain. After the North Loch was drained in the 18th century (it is now the site of Waverley Train Station), the way was paved for the city to expand, and it was to the New Town that Edinburgh's money decamped. Two great squares – Charlotte and St Andrew – are

linked by George Street, the wide boulevard that was the city's main thoroughfare before the less elegant Princes Street gained the upper hand.

We stroll through Royal Circus and Moray Place – still Auld Reekie's finest address – and down India Street, on the edge of Stockbridge. We pause at Kay's Bar, a lovely little pub in a converted wine merchant's shop where chef, barman and Hercule Poirot lookalike Fraser serves up some of the best beer in Edinburgh. Suitably refreshed, we head up Dundas Street to admire its wide views of the Firth of Forth.

You can walk everywhere in Edinburgh – even down to Leith, via the slightly shabby depths of Leith Walk. This seaside quarter is the city's latest triumph of gentrification – it has been transformed from a grubby port into one of Edinburgh's hottest nightspots. There's a riot of entertaining bars and some really good little restaurants. The gabled rooftops lining the old quay give the water's edge a truly Continental feel.

At the eastern end of Princes Street stands perhaps the city's most prominent monolith: the Balmoral Hotel. Constructed in Victorian times to serve as a railway hotel for toffs doing the Grand Tour of the Highlands, it has recently been restored to five-star glory. It is no great hardship for me to spend the night here, in a corner turret room overlooking the Old Town.

Two of the features which dominate the Edinburgh skyline are the Craggs, of which Arthur's Seat is the crowning geological glory, and the castle. From The Meadows, a great green lung just south of central Edinburgh, Arthur's Seat seems to rise over the city like Table Mountain above Cape Town, commanding the best views of the city. The castle sits at the end of the Royal Mile on the natural defences of an extinct (we hope) volcano. The last time the castle was involved in military action was in 1745 during the Jacobite Rising, when Bonnie Prince Charlie tried and failed to conquer the castle.

A couple of decades on from then, the city had ceased to justify the name of Auld Reekie (because the sewage had been drained from the loch) and was on its way to becoming the elegant Edinburgh we know today. For a city that was probably once the most revolting on the European landscape, cosmopolitan Edinburgh has certainly come a long way.