



Scotland

by Connie Wood

In the Fall of 2022, I had the pleasure of exploring the beautiful and rugged country of Scotland for two weeks. Unlike its more popular cousin, England, Scotland offers much of the same U.K. experience at a lower cost; and with the U.S. dollar being almost equal to the British pound nowadays, it's never been more economical to make the trip across the pond. Scotland is known for medieval

castles, bagpipes, tartans, haggis, seafood, gorgeous scenery, rain, Hogwarts, Outlander, and of course, Scotch Whisky. Because the U.K. has a reputation for bland food, I was pleasantly surprised to find that Scottish cuisine was very good. After all, you can't go wrong with braised meat, potatoes, and copious amounts of butter in every dish! On top of all that,

Rain and rainbows overlooking Edinburgh

the Scottish people are warm, gregarious, and make you feel like you're right at home. Here are some of Scotland's must see destinations.



Dolly the Sheep

The charming capital city of Scotland, Edinburgh is a hilly urban city filled with rich history and gothic architecture.

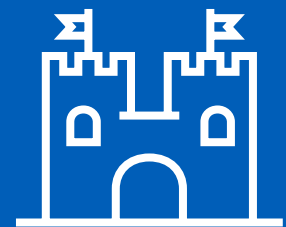
Most destinations are near the city center, so no public transportation or rental car is needed, just good walking shoes and the occasional black cab if visiting the outskirts. The Royal Mile is the obligatory tourist destination with roughly one mile of shops and restaurants starting at Holyrood Palace, the official Scottish residence of the King, and gradually leading uphill to end at Edinburgh Castle, a medieval fortress that once served as the residence of

Mary Queen of Scots, and the site of several historic sieges. A stone's throw away from Edinburgh Castle is The Scotch Whisky Experience, a must see tourist trap for whisky lovers complete with a corny whisky barrel ride, tastings, and tour of their massive 3,400 bottle collection. Potterheads will want to visit Greyfriars Kirkyard where J.K. Rowling famously got the inspiration for her characters from various gravemarkers. Around the corner you can pat the nose of Greyfriars Bobby, a bronze statue of a famous loyal pup. The National Museum of Scotland is a good in-door destination for rainy days and the home of Dolly the Sheep.

Edinburgh



The Royal Mile



Edinburgh Castle



Scotch Whisky Experience



Greyfriars Kirkyard



National Museum



Inverness



*3 hours north
of Edinburgh*



*Most populated
Highland city*



Inverness is located three hours north of Edinburgh, requiring a rental car to navigate the narrow winding roads of the scenic Scottish Highlands.

The Highlands have an eerie-lush, feral-beauty to them, shaped by volcanic activity millions of years ago with some areas now tamed with flocks of fluffy sheep.

Situated on the River Ness, Inverness is the most populated Highland city. It is moderately sized with a mix of commercial and small-town shops and restaurants, and is a good hub to take day trips to Culloden Battlefield, the bronze-age cemetery Clava Cairns, Urquhart Castle on Loch Ness, and Eilean Donan Castle.

◀ *The ruins of Urquhart Castle on Loch Ness*

Isle of Skye

Skye is located in the northwest corner of Scotland and known for, of course, its stunning sky-scapes. Its most populated hub is Portree, an inlet, seaside town with quaint locally operated shops and restaurants. The surrounding land looks like you've stepped into Middle Earth with misty mountains, overgrown forests, saturated marshes, twisted glens, and even a Fairy Glen and Fairy Pools – you can absolutely understand how these landscapes could've inspired medieval legends and fairytales. On the road south back to civilization in Glasgow, make sure to stop by Trossachs Woolen Mill to feed the adorably shaggy Highland Coos (cows with a Scottish accent!) for only £1.





Honey, the Highland Coo ►

◀▲ Fairy Glen



Glasgow



Modern Metropolis



Willow Tea Room



Kelvingrove Art Gallery
& Museum



Pubs & Breweries



Glasgow Cathedral



Glasgow Necropolis



Buchanan Street

Glasgow is a modern metropolis that in some areas feels exactly like downtown LA's Arts District. It's hip, it's progressive, and you won't have any trouble finding hardy pub food or vegan cuisine. Afternoon tea at the Mackintosh-themed Willow Tea Rooms is a must, located on Buchanan Street - a bustling, upscale shopping promenade. The Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum is another great rainy day destination which houses Dali's striking work, Christ of Saint John of the Cross. Whenever you need a place to rest your feet, you can always find a pub or brewery for a drink and eat to bite. Once you've recharged, you can visit the medieval, gothic-style Glasgow Cathedral; then walk uphill to the adjacent Glasgow Necropolis, a sprawling 37-acre Victorian cemetery overlooking the city.

TIPS



Driving is challenging as the roads are very narrow, and you'll have to operate a right-hand drive vehicle on the left side of the road while navigating numerous roundabouts in the pouring rain. You can stick with public transport or cabs in the cities, but make sure to rent an all-wheel drive vehicle to navigate the Highlands; or take a tour-bus.



You must bring an umbrella or rain-repellent hooded-coat, and comfortable walking shoes. Gore-tex waterproof sneakers are a great option.



Make sure you check your restaurant bills closely for added gratuity, sometimes it is added no matter how large your party is.



Cash is easily accessible at any bank ATM, such as the Bank of Scotland. They accept all major credit cards and are very big on using "tap to pay". Make sure to bring a credit card that does not charge 21 foreign transaction fees.