The capital of Scotland is a place full of history and culture. Its medieval historical heritage is recognized by UNESCO and its museums, galleries and university belong to the most renowned in the UK.

When you venture beyond the compact old town you will be amazed by the colorful diversity of the districts – from the Royal Mile, a showcase of history, to the busy shopping area of the West End or charming Leith, situated by the sea. Wherever you go, you will discover a unique combination of history, urban culture and contemporary innovations.

No trip to Edinburgh is complete without taking part in some festival as the city is often called the world's Festival City. The choice of festivities is amazing and the experience is memorable: the streets liven up with events, performances and spontaneous gatherings.

The local banks issue Scottish banknotes. They are valid in the rest of UK as well but some shops may not accept them, but they can be exchanged in UK banks for British Pounds, or if you want to make sure you receive British pound bills, withdraw your money with from an ATM run by a foreign bank.

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Electricity
The standard electricity supply in Scotland is 240 volt (50 Hz AC). You will probably need an adapter with three large rectangular pins arranged in a triangular pattern.

Languages
English is the main language though Scottish Gaelic is sometimes spoken here as well. Scots, a local dialect and accent, is quite different from what tourists are used to as ‘English’. Apart from the most touristic places, don’t expect people to have mastered any other languages.

Mobile Phones
Scotland uses the standard GSM mobile network. If coming from non-GSM country, you may need to check your phone for compatibility.

The mobile phone coverage of some rural parts of Scotland is still not satisfactory.

Internet
Free Wi-Fi hotspots and internet kiosks are readily available all around Edinburgh and Scotland’s other cities. Internet access in McDonalds, Starbucks and other chains is a sure thing.

Internet Resources
- Scotland Tourist Board (www.visitscotland.com)
- Edinburgh’s Official Internet Site (www.edinburgh.org)

HOLIDAYS
- January, 1 – New Year’s Day
- January, 2 – New Year Holiday
- Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- May Day (1st Monday in May)
- Spring Bank Holiday (last Monday in May)
- Summer Bank Holiday (1st Monday in August)
- November, 30 – St. Andrew’s Day
- December, 25 – Christmas Day
- December, 26 – Boxing Day

Opening Hours
The general opening hours are Monday to Saturday 9 AM to 5 PM. Many shops are open on Sundays, too. Some larger supermarkets are open 24/7. Post offices are open Monday to Friday 9 AM to 5 PM and banks operate from Monday to Thursday between 9.30 AM and 12.30 PM and again from 1.30 PM to 3.30 PM. Pubs usually close at 11 PM. The main museums are open daily from 10 AM to 5 PM. Almost all shops and institutions are closed on the main holidays, namely Easter Sunday, Easter Monday, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Eve. There are also regional holidays which vary from city to city but don’t usually affect opening times.
Public Transportation

Buses – the principal means of public transport in Edinburgh and, operated by Lothian Buses, is one of the most extensive transport systems in the UK. The First Edinburgh Company mostly runs buses connecting Edinburgh with surrounding towns. Though the companies share bus stops, tickets are not transferable and the tariff systems are different. Tickets can be purchased from the driver; you need to have the exact fare ready as drivers do not have access to cash and cannot give change.

- Lothian Buses:
  A single ticket valid for one journey regardless of distance or time is £1.40 (70p for children). A day ticket is £3.50 (£2 for children). The Night Ticket – unlimited travel throughout the night is £3, child fare not available.

Fares with First Edinburgh vary according to the destination – just tell the driver where you want to go.

Trains – Waverley station is the main transportation hub. Trains are handy for reaching the south western and south eastern suburbs and adjacent towns. Standard National Rail fares are valid on trains; you need to check before boarding.

- Edinburgh First (www.firstgroup.com)
- Lothian Buses (lothianbuses.com)
- National Rail (www.nationalrail.co.uk)

Taxis

The system is the same as in other British cities.

- Black Cabs – can be hailed from the street or at Taxi ranks.
- Minicabs – need to be booked in advance.
- All taxis have to be equipped with meters.

- Prices are calculated according to length of journey and distance, with a surcharge applicable at night and on national holidays.
- If you wish to travel beyond the City of Edinburgh area, you need to settle on the price in advance.
  +44 131 229 2468 (Central Radio Taxis – Black Cabs)
  +44 131 228 1211 (City Cabs – Black Cabs)
  +44 131 610 1234 (Edinburgh Taxi minicabs)

Regional Transportation

Trains – First ScotRail (www.scotrail.co.uk) and National Rail (www.nationalrail.co.uk) – operate the majority of Scottish train connections. Traveling by train is very comfortable but also a bit pricey.

Coaches – the slower but cheaper option. Main operators are: Megabus (www.megabus.com) and Citylink (www.citylink.co.uk) Note that when traveling from Edinburgh or Glasgow, the roads may be very congested and the journey delayed considerably.

Ferry – regular services operate between most of the islands. The main operator is Caledonian MacBrayne (www.calmac.co.uk)

Driving

The first thing to note is that you drive on the left. The major access roads to the main cities are likely to get congested during peak hours. Due to the mountainous terrain, the journey may take considerably longer than expected. Be aware that Scottish drivers tend to be less careful and respectful than those in England. Apart from in the Central Belt, road conditions are questionable and well below European standards.

Central Edinburgh is not very suitable for driving if you don’t know the city well – it is a labyrinth of one-way streets. Note that on-street parking in the center is forbidden unless you have a residents parking permit. This rule is enforced strictly and the fines are quite high.

- Speed limits:
  - Built-up areas: 30mph (48km/h)
  - Outside built-up areas: 60mph (96km/h)
  - Motorways: 70mph (112km/h)
  - Dual Carriageway and Motorway: 70mph (112km/h)
  - Blood alcohol limit: 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood

- Drive on the left.
- Children under 12 and 135cm must be seated in a child seat.
- It is illegal to use a mobile phone while driving.

Walkability

Edinburgh is definitely a walkable city, compact enough to be explored on foot. Many attractions are located around the Royal Mile and the majority of other sights are conveniently reachable as well.
■ **Specialties**
- Haggis – minced sheep pluck pudding (the national dish)
- Cullen skink – soup made of smoked haddock, potatoes and onions
- Scotch broth – thick soup with barley, lamb and root vegetables
- Kipper – salted, cold-smoked fish
- Rollmops – pickled herring fillets with onion filling
- Black pudding – blood sausage
- Forfar bridie – minced steak pastry
- Scotch pie – meat pie with minced mutton
- Cranachan – dessert made of whipped cream, whisky, honey, oatmeal and berries

■ **Drinks**
- Scotch Whisky
- Indian Pale Ale (IPA)
- Hot Toddy – a teaspoon-full of sugar and a teaspoon-full of honey, add a measure of scotch whisky and boiling water.

**Legal Age**
The legal age for purchasing and drinking alcohol is 18. Since 16, the alcohol can be consumed in licensed restaurants when purchased with the meal. Drinking in public is prohibited.

**February**
- Snowdrop Festival

**March**
- Ceilidh Culture Festival (www.ceilidhculture.co.uk)
- Meadows Marathon (www.meadowsmarathon.org.uk)

**April**
- Beltane Fire Festival (beltane.org)
- Dead by Dawn Horror Film Festival (www.deadbydawn.co.uk)
- Edinburgh International Science Festival (www.sciencefestival.co.uk)

**May**
- Children’s International Theatre Festival

**June**
- Edinburgh International Film Festival (www.edfilmfest.org.uk)
- Leith Festival (www.leithfestival.com)

**July**
- Edinburgh Art Festival (www.edinburghartfestival.com)
- Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival (www.edinburghjazzfestival.com)

**August**
- Edinburgh Fringe Festival (www.edfringe.com)
- Edinburgh International Book Festival (www.edbookfest.co.uk)

**October**
- Scottish International Storytelling Festival

**November**
- Edinburgh Fireworks Display

**December**
- Winter Festival
**THINGS TO DO**

**Free Things To Do**
- National Museum of Scotland – recently refurbished
- National Galleries of Scotland – both classical and modern art
- St Giles’ Cathedral, Greyfriars Kirk and other churches
- Scottish Writers’ Museum – dedicated to Robert Burns, Robert Louis Stevenson and Sir Walter Scott
- Surgeons’ Museum
- Museum of Childhood
- Royal Botanic Gardens
- East Lothian beaches
- Scottish Parliament – free tours, needs to be booked in advance
- Arthur’s Seat – the climb is well worth the amazing views

**Shopping**
Souvenirs: Whisky, tartan products, quaichs (traditional drinking vessels), decorated spurtle, tea, biscuits.

**DOS AND DO NOTS**
- **DO** try Haggis – it is a national dish, after all!
- **DO** visit at least one festival in Edinburgh – it is a festival city with so much going on.
- **DO** have a Scottish breakfast.
- **DON’T** forget to bring an umbrella or waterproof coat with you.
- **DON’T** jump a queue – the Scottish hate it.
- **DON’T** refer to the UK as England and don’t mix them up.

**Safety**
Scotland is a safe country with low crime rates and crime against tourists is rare. But it pays to follow common sense and always watch your belongings. There are some poor, run-down areas in Edinburgh which it is advisable to avoid at night – namely Niddrie, Craigmillar, Muirhouse or Sighthill. When traveling on night buses, it is advised to stay on the lower deck within the driver’s sight.

The tap water in Scotland is safe to drink.
Princes Street Gardens
The perfect place to rest after spending the day shopping at Princes Street. A good spot to view the Edinburgh Castle.
Princes Street, Edinburgh EH2 2AN, UK
GPS: N55.95065, W3.20151
Phone: +44 0131 225 6844
Opening hours:
Nov – Feb: 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. (closing from 4:15 p.m.)
Mar – Apr, Sep – Oct: 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. (closing from 6:15 p.m.)
May – Jun: 7 a.m. – 8 p.m. (closing from 7:15 p.m.)
Jul – Aug: 7 a.m. – 10 p.m. (closing from 9:15 p.m.)
Admission:
Admission to the gardens is free.

Edinburgh Castle
The most majestic sight in Edinburgh – a fortress dating back to the 12th century and home to the Scottish royal jewels.
17 Johnston Terrace, Edinburgh, City of Edinburgh EH1 2, UK
GPS: N55.94882, W3.19891
Phone: +44 0131 226 4657
Opening hours:
Apr 1 – Sep 30: daily: 9:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Oct 1 – Mar 31: daily: 9:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Last entry is one hour before closing time.
Admission:
Adults: £16
Seniors, unemployed: £12.80
Children (up to 15): £9.60
Children (under 5): free
**Princes Street**
If you are visiting the UK for shopping, this is the street. There are both common shops and high-class boutiques.

Princes St, Edinburgh, UK  
GPS: N55.95221, W3.19635

**Royal Scottish Academy**
Holding both the most famous masterpieces of classic paintings and contemporary Scottish art, the gallery is surely worth a visit.

The Mound, Edinburgh, EH2 2EL, UK  
GPS: N55.95190, W3.19646  
Phone: +44 0131 225 6671  
**Opening hours:**  
Mon – Sat: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
Sun: noon – 5 p.m.  
**Admission:**  
Admission to the exhibitions is free unless stated otherwise.

**National Gallery of Scotland**
The ultimate collection of both classic and modern art from various countries. An enchanting experience for any visitor.

The Mound, Edinburgh EH2 2EL, UK  
GPS: N55.95127, W3.19584  
Phone: +44 0131 624 6200  
**Opening hours:**  
Daily: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (7 p.m. on Thu)  
**Admission:**  
Admission to the gallery is free.  
A charge may be made for special exhibitions.

**The Scotch Whisky Experience**
The ultimate whisky attraction offering a journey through the distilling process. Includes a shop and a restaurant.

354 Castlehill, Royal Mile, Edinburgh, Scotland, EH1 2NE  
GPS: N55.94879, W3.19581  
Phone: +440 131 220 0441  
**Opening hours:**  
There are various tours available.  
The first tours usually start at 10:20 a.m. and the last ones start at 5 p.m., 5:15 p.m. or 5:45 p.m.  
Check the details on the official website.  
**Admission:**  
Prices of guided tours start at £12.75 per adult and go up to £52.

**Grassmarket**
Home to various clubs, restaurants and bars, this is the street to enjoy Edinburgh nightlife.

Grassmarket, Edinburgh EH1, UK  
GPS: N55.94751, W3.19634  
**Opening hours:**  
Shops are usually open from 10 a.m. and close at 5:30 p.m.
**Scott Monument**
A huge monument dedicated to Sir Walter Scott. You can climb up the stairs and view the city from above.

Princes Street Gardens, Princes Street, Edinburgh EH2 2EJ, UK
GPS: N55.95232, W3.19325

**Opening hours:**
Apr – Sep:
Mon – Sat: 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Sun: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Oct – Mar:
Mon – Sat: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Sun: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

**Admission:**
General admission: £4
Payment is by cash only.

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**Victoria Street**
One of the finest streets in Edinburgh with various boutiques, restaurants, bars and music clubs.

Victoria St, Edinburgh EH1, UK
GPS: N55.94876, W3.19335

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**Greyfriars Kirk**
A historical building that is part of the Church of Scotland. Surrounded by a cemetery which is famous for the dog Bobby.

86 Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh, Midlothian EH1 2QA, UK
GPS: N55.94665, W3.19220

Phone: +440 131 225 1900

**Opening hours:**
Open from Apr to Oct.
Mon – Fri: 10:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Sat: 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Sun: services are open to everybody

**Story of Greyfriars Museum and shop:**
Mon – Fri: 10:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Sat: 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

**Admission:**
Admission to the church and its museum is free.

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**The Edinburgh Dungeon**
The scariest place in Edinburgh will show you the city's darker side of history and entertain you with actor-led shows.

31 Market Street, Edinburgh, Midlothian EH1 1QB, UK
GPS: N55.95110, W3.19079

Phone: +440 131 240 1001

**Opening hours:**
The Dungeon usually opens at 10 a.m. and closes between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.
Check the official website for the full schedule.
Closed on Dec 25.

**Admission:**
Adults: £16.20
Students (with ID), seniors: £15
Children (up to 15): £12
Tickets bought online are significantly cheaper and you have timed priority entrance with them.
**Cockburn Street**  
A great place for alternative-style shopping, finding a restaurant or checking out the art galleries located here.  
Cockburn St, Edinburgh EH1, UK  
GPS: N55.95060, W3.18997

**3D Loch Ness Experience**  
A fabulous place dedicated to the famous Scottish monster. Photos and eye-witness accounts in smashing 3D.  
1 Parliament Square, Royal Mile, Edinburgh, EH1 1RE, UK  
GPS: N55.94993, W3.18987  
Phone: +44 0131 225 2290  
Opening hours: This attraction is closed.

**Royal Mile**  
A must-see – the fascinating heart of Edinburgh and the most beautiful street in the city with pubs, shops and more.  
Royal Mile, Edinburgh EH1 1PE, UK  
GPS: N55.94971, W3.19109  
Opening hours: Shops usually close at 5 p.m., some are closed on weekends. Check the exact opening hours of shops at the official website.

**St Giles’ Cathedral**  
A beautiful staple of historical architecture set in the heart of Edinburgh, a must-see for every visitor.  
Parliament Square, Edinburgh, Midlothian EH1 1RE, UK  
GPS: N55.94943, W3.19154  
Phone: +44 0131 225 9442  
Opening hours: Summer: Mon – Fri: 9 a.m. – 7 p.m.  
Sat: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
Sun: 1 p.m. – 5 p.m. and for services  
Winter: Mon – Sat: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
Sun: 1 p.m. – 5 p.m. and for services  
Closed on Dec 25 after 11:30 a.m. service, Dec 26, Jan 1 and Jan 2.  
Admission: Visitors are invited to make a donation of £3 per person.

**George IV Bridge**  
Surrounded by bars and restaurants, this elevated street makes for a very fine dining spot.  
Bank Street and Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh, UK  
GPS: N55.94775, W3.19165
National Museum of Scotland
A wonderful and educative experience for both adults and children. Features a wide variety of exhibits in seven floors.
Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF, UK
GPS: N55.94697, W3.19092
Phone: +440 300 123 6789
Opening hours:
Daily: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day open from noon till 5 p.m., 1 January
Admission:
Admission to the museum is free.
Donations are welcome.

Old Calton Cemetery
The resting place of notable Edinburgh citizens and a peaceful place north of busy Edinburgh.
Regent Road, Edinburgh EH12, UK
GPS: N55.95359, W3.18590
Opening hours:
Accessible 24 hours a day.

Museum of Childhood
The magical collection of dolls and other toys, spread across four floors, is guaranteed to keep all ages entertained.
42 High Street, Royal Mile, Edinburgh EH1 1TG, UK
GPS: N55.95041, W3.18511
Phone: +440 131 529 4142
Opening hours:
Mon – Sat: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Sun: noon – 5 p.m.
For opening times during Public Holidays, check the website.
Admission:
Admission to the museum is free.
Donations are welcome.

The Old City Observatory
Loosely based on Temple of the Winds in Athens, this classic building houses many of the original instruments used here.
Old Observatory House, 40 Calton Hill, Edinburgh EH7 5AA, UK
GPS: N55.95506, W3.18353
Opening hours:
The observatory is currently closed for redevelopment and visits are available by appointment only.

Calton Hill
A place to go for a stunning view right in the heart of Edinburgh. Various picturesque buildings can be seen on the top.
Calton Hill, Edinburgh EH1 3Bj, UK
GPS: N55.95478, W3.18255
Phone: +440 131 529 7061

The People’s Story Museum
This little gem aims to cover the ordinary lives of Edinburgh’s common folk. An interesting and educative experience.
163 Canongate, Edinburgh, Midlothian EH8 8BN, UK
GPS: N55.95143, W3.18046
Phone: +440 131 529 4057
Opening hours:
Mon – Sat: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Sun: noon – 5 p.m. (during the Edinburgh Festival only)
Admission:
Admission to the museum is free.
Donations are welcome.
**Museum of Edinburgh**
An excellent chance to learn about the city's history through various items like the National Covenant and the glassware.

142-146 Canongate, Edinburgh, Midlothian EH8 8DD, UK
GPS: N55.95142, W3.17949
Phone: +44 131 529 4143
Opening hours:
Mon – Sat: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Sun: noon – 5 p.m. (during August only)
Admission:
Admission to the museum is free. Donations are welcome.
Foundation Edinburgh – The story of a city:
Adults: £4
Concessions: £3
Children (5-16): £2

**The Scottish Parliament**
An exciting opportunity to experience the political life of Scotland, here in the heart of Old Town.

Horse Wynd, Edinburgh, Midlothian EH99 1SP, UK
GPS: N55.95265, W3.17468
Phone: +44 131 348 5200
Opening hours:
Mon, Fri, Sat and public holidays: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (last entry at 4:30 p.m.)
Tue – Thu: 9 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. (last entry at 6 p.m.)
Guided tours are available and are recommended to be booked in advance.
Admission:
Admission to the Parliament is free, as well as guided tours.

**Holyrood Palace**
Her Majesty the Queen's official Scotland residence – a must-see for the fans of the Royal Family. There's also an abbey and gardens.

Palace of HolyrooDhouse, Canongate, The Royal Mile, Edinburgh EH8 8DX
GPS: N55.95258, W3.17404
Phone: +44 131 556 5100
Opening hours:
Jan – Mar: daily: 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Apr – Oct: daily: 9:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Nov – Dec: 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Last admission an hour before closing time.
Closed on Dec 25 and 26.
Admission:
Adults: £11
Seniors (over 60), students: £10
Children (under 17): £6.65
Children (under 5): free

**Our Dynamic Earth**
A fascinating and educative experience in 14 interactive galleries, entertaining for both parents and children.

112-116 Holyrood Rd, Edinburgh, Midlothian EH8 8AS, UK
GPS: N55.95058, W3.17445
Phone: +44 131 550 7800
Opening hours:
Apr – Jun: daily: 10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Jul – Aug: daily: 1 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Sep – Oct: daily: 10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Nov – Feb: Wed – Sun: 10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Admission:
Adults: £11.50
Concessions: £9.75
Children (3 – 15): £7.50
Children (up to 3): free