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Edinburgh's Top 10

From its impressive castle and elegant Georgian architecture to its world-class museums and cutting-edge arts festival, here, at a glance, are the top attractions of the fascinating Scottish capital



▲ **Edinburgh Castle.** This imposing and impenetrable fortress defines Scottish history and is visible from every corner of the city. See page 24.



▲ **The Royal Mile.** A stunning stretch of cobblestones, medieval passageways, churches and museums leads down to the Palace of Holyroodhouse. See page 28.



▲ **The Festival.** The world descends on Edinburgh in August to take part in a vast celebration of the arts, with thousands of comedy, theatre and literary events. See page 60.

► **Literary Edinburgh.** Explore the city that spawned *Sherlock Holmes*, *Peter Pan*, *Treasure Island*, *Harry Potter* and *Trainspotting*. See page 42.





▲ **Calton Hill.** This volcanic outcrop crowned with monuments has panoramic views of the city, Holyrood Palace and the Firth of Forth. See page 67.



▲ **New Town architecture.** Designed between 1740 and 1850, the neoclassical city's crescents and terraces are a triumph of Georgian architecture. See page 72.

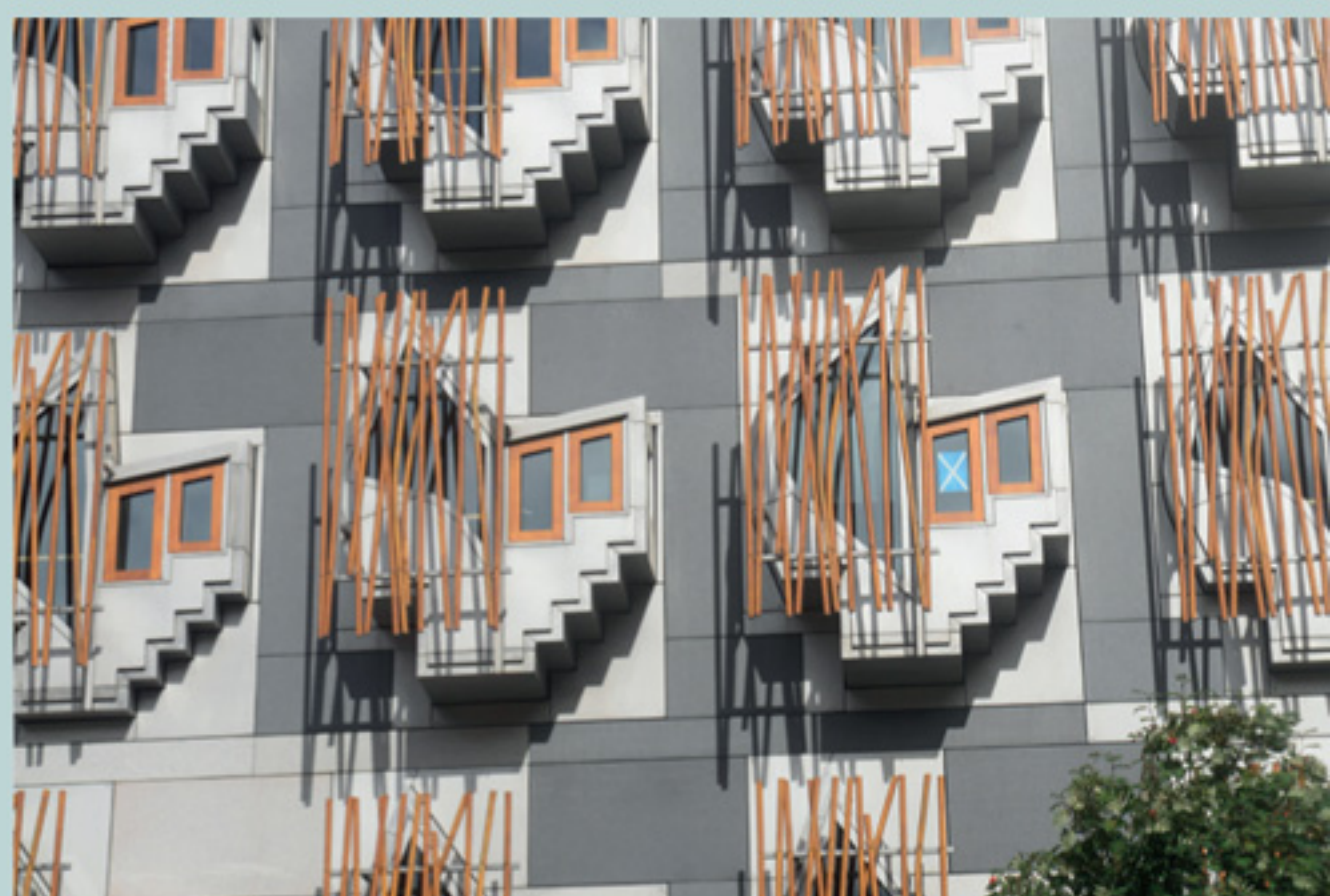


▲ **National Museum of Scotland.** Recounts Scottish history with national treasures and multimedia displays. See page 53.

▼ **City art.** Among an unprecedented 30 galleries in central Edinburgh are four housing the National Collection, in which pride of place must go to the Scottish National Gallery. See page 63.



▼ **The Scottish Parliament Building.** A complex yet stunning award-winning design that shocks and pleases in equal measure. See page 38.



▼ **Royal Botanic Garden.** This world-famous garden dates back to 1670 and houses a vast selection of beautiful, exotic plants. See page 86.



View of St Andrew's House from Calton Hill.



Overview

An Enlightened Capital

Far beyond its label as the host of Britain's biggest cultural festival, Edinburgh is also its most visually impressive city with a history and charm that few others can rival

Declared a Unesco World Heritage Site in 1995, the centre of Edinburgh is a fascinating juxtaposition of medieval confusion and classical architectural harmony. The higgledy-piggledy Old Town, built around the Castle on a

volcanic plug where the first defensive settlement was founded over 2,000 years ago, contrasts remarkably with the New Town – in fact now more than 200 years old – where order and harmony prevail within the largest area of Georgian architecture ever conceived. Today, the city is the capital of an ancient nation whose influence resonates around the globe. It has a proud history of artistic excellence, intellectual endeavour and scientific discovery that is reflected in its national confidence and devolved parliament. The Edinburgh Festival, tripling the city's half a million or so inhabitants each August, is its flagship event, but all year round a selection of great museums, beautiful parks, and vibrant entertainments make it one of Europe's most exciting destinations.





LANDSCAPE AND CLIMATE

Strategically situated inland from the southern shore of the Firth of Forth, an estuary of the North Sea on Scotland's east coast, the capital, like Rome, lies on seven hills. Rising above Princes Street, the main shopping thoroughfare, the castle rock is the start of the Royal Mile, the Old Town backbone. Stretching down to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, there is further dramatic scenery in the form of Arthur's Seat, another extinct volcano surrounded by rocky crags and lush parkland. To the north, between the castle and the Port of Leith on the Firth of Forth, sprawls the New Town, where in just one square mile (2.5 sq km) thousands of buildings are listed for their architectural merit.

The weather on Scotland's west coast is wetter than on the east, but Edinburgh is notorious for the seasonal North Sea 'haar', a mist that periodically settles over the city. When it does rain, a strong wind sometimes renders umbrellas useless. Generally summers

are moderately warm, and winters are cold but clear, with occasional light snowfall. For most of the year the climate makes for more of an indoor, than outdoor, existence, and locals, for the most part, tend to go about their

Café on St Andrew Square.



The People of Edinburgh

The citizens of Edinburgh have a reputation for being reserved and prim, no doubt as much due to the city's 19th-century banking and insurance boom (contrasting with Glasgow's heavy industry) as it was to its 17th-century adoption of Calvinist Protestantism. There's a saying that while 'breeding' in Glasgow is thought of as good fun, 'breeding' in Edinburgh is considered good form. A variant is the Glaswegian claim that Edinburgh women are 'all fur coats and nae drawers [no underwear]'. These jibes hold no truth and merely underline the two cities' lasting rivalry.

everyday lives immune to the weather. When the sun does come out, however, the city is transformed, the population taking full advantage of its many green spaces.

A RICH HISTORY

Edinburgh evolved from the 6th century onwards with the merging of Pictish and Celtic kingdoms, together with Saxon, Norman and even Viking influences. In 1124 David I became King of Scotland and set about building feudalism and Christian monasteries with support from his Norman friends. Within a few centuries, Edinburgh was well established as Scotland's capital with a burgeoning professional class. A harsh blow to the people's self-esteem was dealt in 1707 by the Act of Union – with monarch and parliament based 400 miles (644km) away in London – but Scotland retained its own Church, legislature and law (based unlike England on the Roman Law tradition), which helped to preserve a Scottish identity. Nonetheless, the feeling that Edinburgh had become a hollow capital persisted until the

end of the 20th century, when a Scottish parliament was elected.

The Scottish Enlightenment during the 18th and 19th centuries was Edinburgh's finest hour, drawing together many of the greatest minds in Europe. In a tavern off the Royal Mile, David Hume, who wrote a six-volume history of England, held court with the physician William Cullen, the chemist Joseph Black, the mathematician John Playfair, the dramatist John Home, the first sociologist Adam Ferguson, and the first capitalist economist Adam Smith – and by the end of this golden age Sir Walter Scott's novels had become European bestsellers. Painters such as Henry Raeburn, Allan Ramsay, Jr, and David Wilkie documented the age, while the Adam family dazzled the nation with architectural achievement. With the University of Edinburgh founded in 1583 and three more universities in the 20th century, the city has always been a centre of intellectual excellence, hosting a large student population.

One of Edinburgh's narrow wynds.





One of several excellent chocolate shops in the city.

Edinburgh is today a financial centre of international standing, founded on traditional virtues of prudence and propriety that were shaken in only a minor way by the 2008 government bailout of the Bank of Scotland, founded in 1695. This eminence shouldn't surprise: it was a Scotsman, after all (William Paterson), who founded the Bank of England, while Adam Smith's 1776 masterwork *The Wealth of Nations* championed the paradox of private gain yielding public good – something Edinburgh's lawyers and accountants took seriously, making fortunes from investment overseas.

FOOD AND DRINK

Edinburgh offers a vast range of food, from excellent Scottish fare to French, Italian, Thai or Indian. Scotland's fish and meat are among the best in the world, including wild salmon, sea bass and scallops, Aberdeen Angus beef, venison and game birds from Highland estates as well as regional cheeses. With some of the very best restaurants in Britain, most establishments concentrate on serving these wonderful ingredients with a modern, international accent.

The Scottish national dish, haggis, consists of lamb's heart and liver mixed with suet, oats and spices, and is traditionally boiled in the sheep's stomach lining (a vegetarian alternative is available). Generally eaten with mashed swede and potato ('neeps and tatties'), haggis is also sometimes incorporated into an entrée. Scottish breakfasts are a veritable feast, with eggs, bacon, sausages, porridge, Scottish-smoked kipper or haddock and black pudding.

That's how the day should start, and it should end with a nip of Scotch whisky or a pint of dark ale. In Edinburgh pubs, try the Caledonian 70- or 80-shilling ale from the local brewery.

As souvenirs to take home, high-quality Scottish products such as marmalade, oatcakes, shortbread and smoked salmon can be readily purchased at delicatessens, and the selection of finest single-malt Scotch whiskies is larger here than anywhere else in the world.

Find our recommended restaurants at the end of each tour. Below is a Price Guide to help you make your choice.

Eating Out Price Guide

Two-course meal for one person, including a glass of wine.

£££ = over £25

££ = £15–25

£ = under £15

Guide to Coloured Boxes

Eating

Fact

Green

Kids

Shopping

View

This guide is dotted with coloured boxes providing additional practical and cultural information to make the most of your visit. Here is a guide to the coding system.