



EDINBURGH
THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

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I. Fun facts and things to know about Edinburgh

Before we explore the city itself, here are a few fun facts you might not know about Edinburgh.

Edinburgh is built on extinct volcanoes

Edinburgh Castle is built on the plug of an ancient volcano. The other two volcano sites are Calton Hill at the end of Princes Street and the dramatic Arthur's Seat in Holyrood Park to the east of the city centre. But don't worry, they're fully extinct so you'll be safe and sound on your adventure around the city.



The Royal Mile's longer than a mile

The famous street's actually one mile and 107 yards (1.706km) long.

Edinburgh was the first city in the world to have a dedicated fire service

Founded in 1703, Edinburgh's fire service is the oldest municipal fire brigade.

J.K. Rowling wrote some of her Harry Potter novels in an Edinburgh café

The famous author of the bestselling series of books about a teen wizard did some of her work while enjoying coffee and cake at the Elephant House café. Why not pop in to see if you get inspired too?

Edinburgh is one of the UK's greenest cities

The Scottish capital boasts 112 parks and more trees per head of population than any other city in the United Kingdom.

St Margaret's Chapel is the city's oldest building

Located within Edinburgh Castle, the chapel was built in memory of Queen Margaret. The Romanesque building was constructed in the 1100s.

The National Monument on Calton Hill was never completed

Funding for the building modelled on the Parthenon ran out, so it was never completed. Locals nicknamed the monument "Edinburgh's Folly" or "Edinburgh's Shame."



2. Travel tips when visiting Edinburgh

If you're a first-time visitor to Edinburgh, use the following travel tips to make your stay smoother and more enjoyable.

Pre-book attractions and restaurants to avoid disappointment

Edinburgh attracts more than 3 million

visitors annually, so crowds and queues are a reality. Skip lines and avoid disappointment by booking tickets for attractions and other things to do in Edinburgh in advance online. If you want to dine at some of the city's most popular restaurants, make reservations a few weeks in advance.

Stay in the city centre

Most of the best attractions will be right on your doorstep.

Explore the city on foot

If you are able to, try to explore as much of Edinburgh as you can on foot. That way, you won't miss anything, and you can soak up the city's incredible atmosphere.

Enjoy Edinburgh's free attractions

Some of Edinburgh's best attractions are free. Visit the National Museum of Scotland, the Scottish Parliament, the Museum of Edinburgh, the Museum of Childhood, the Peoples' Story Museum, the Writers' Museum, the Botanical Gardens, and the Princes Street Gardens.

View the city from above

Enjoy panoramic views of Edinburgh from higher ground. The best vantage points include Calton Hill, the National Museum's rooftop terrace, the top of the Scott Monument, the St Giles Cathedral Rooftop, the Camera Obscura, and Arthur's Seat.

Dress for the weather

Edinburgh can go through all four seasons in a day, so make sure you bring clothing for hot, cold, wet, and windy weather. Expect the unexpected!

3. Best time to visit Edinburgh

The best time to visit Edinburgh is June through August, when the average high temperatures rise to a balmy 65 degrees Fahrenheit (18 degrees Celsius). However, this is also the city's busiest time for tourism, especially in August when festivals fill up the calendar, accommodation and spaces in restaurants are rare if you haven't booked in advance.

Other good times of year to visit the city include May-June and September-early October. The weather's usually relatively warm, and the days are long – it's light until between 9pm and 10pm.



4. Top things to do in Edinburgh for city lovers

There's plenty in Edinburgh to keep city lovers busy. Take a look at our pick of the top things to do in Edinburgh for city lovers.

Explore Edinburgh Castle

Perched over the city on an extinct volcano, Edinburgh Castle is a city icon. Explore the edifice's galleries, courtyards, and chapels, see the Scottish crown jewels and the Stone of Destiny, watch historical enactments, and enjoy tea with scones, jam, and clotted cream.



Shop until you drop

Swooping down from George IV Bridge to Grassmarket, Victoria Street boasts the city's best independent boutiques. And if you are in the New Town, stop by St James Quarter, to eat, drink, and shop at the largest galleria shopping centre in Edinburgh.

Enjoy local lager and laughs at the Stand

Iconic comedy venue the Stand attracts old hands and new talent. Taking in a show over a pint of locally brewed lager's a fun thing to do in Edinburgh when you're in the mood for a few good laughs.

Have a wander around Leith

Also known as the Shore, Leith is picturesque, cosmopolitan, and culturally significant. The port district offers waterfront seafood bistros and traditional pubs, music and plays at Leith Theatre, and the Pitt independent weekend market where you can enjoy craft beer, street food, and live music.

Get arty or party at Summerhall

A multi-arts and events venue, Summerhall offers plenty reasons to visit this former veterinary school. Check the calendar for exhibitions, performances, gigs, workshops, talks, and films. If you work up a thirst during your explorations, head to the venue's Barney's Beer microbrewery or the Summerhall Distillery, where Pickering's Gin is produced.

5. Top things to do in Edinburgh for romantics

Otherworldly architecture and the beauty of mother nature come together to create a city that looks like it was made for people who love to love. Discover the top things to do in Edinburgh for romantics.

Stroll along the Water of Leith Walkway

Flowers, trees, and exquisite birdlife are some of the highlights of strolling along the Water of Leith Walkway. Starting at Balerno, the 12-mile path follows the river through many places of interest all the way to Leith. Discover the route's hidden gems with your beloved.

Tour Old Town whisky distilleries

What's a trip to Scotland without sampling one of the country's most famous products? Take an interactive tour of the whisky distilleries in Edinburgh's Old Town, see how the spirit's made, and enjoy tutored nosing and tasting.

Picnic on Calton Hill

Enjoy a romantic picnic lunch with incredible views of the city from among the flowers and monuments on Calton Hill. You'll agree it's one of the best things to do in Edinburgh for couples.

Spend a few hours on Inchcolm Island

Take a boat trip to Inchcolm Island in the Firth of Forth and spend a few hours exploring this beautiful island, ancient monastic buildings,



beaches, a seabird colony, and an ammunition tunnel and gun emplacements from the First World War. Refuel with a picnic lunch before heading back to Edinburgh.

Enjoy quality time in the Royal Botanic Garden

Looking for a romantic setting in which to spend some quiet quality time with your beloved? Visit the Royal Botanic Garden. There are 13,302 specimens across collections such as Alpine plants, Chinese Hillside, orchids and cycads, and giant water lilies, so there's plenty to see.

6. Cool things to do in Edinburgh with the family

Planning a family holiday in the Scottish capital? Check out the top things to do in Edinburgh with kids.

Visit the National Museum of Scotland

Take a fascinating look at Scottish antiquities and culture, archaeological treasures, world cultures, natural history, science and technology, and much more at the National Museum of Scotland. Remember, entrance is free!

Be mesmerised by the Camera Obscura and World of Illusions

Enjoy a fun outing to the Camera Obscura and World of Illusions. The tower's five floors are filled with optical illusions, interactive exhibits, holograms, puzzles, a mirror maze, and a vortex tunnel. The highlight is the virtual tour of the city from the camera obscura at the top of the tower.





Follow the Potter Trail

If your kids are fans of Harry Potter, join a free walking tour of the Potter Trail. You'll see locations that inspired places in the books, discover where Voldemort is buried, explore the real Diagon Alley, peek into the café in which JK Rowling wrote the first novel in the series, and so much more.

Learn through immersion at Dynamic Earth

Scotland's largest interactive visitor attraction and science centre, Dynamic Earth offers an informative and highly entertaining journey through the history of life on earth. See a real iceberg, get all shook up in an earthquake simulation, and travel through the stages of development and evolution of life on earth in the Deep Time Machine, which

uses multimedia and 4D techniques for an immersive experience.

Tour a micro chocolate factory

If your kids love chocolate, give them the Willy Wonka experience by going on a tour of the Chocolatarium. They'll get to see and touch cacao pods, watch the chocolate-making process, taste chocolate samples from around the world, and make their very own bar of chocolate.

7. Exploring for the nature enthusiast

Mother nature's beauty is evident in the Scottish capital. Find out about some of the best things to do in Edinburgh for nature enthusiasts.

Hike Holyrood Park and Arthur's Seat

Located a stone's throw from the Royal Mile, Holyrood Park and Arthur's Seat is a wonderland of lochs, hills, and flora and fauna. The paths are perfect for short strolls and more strenuous hikes. Make your way to the top of Arthur's Seat for an incomparable view of Edinburgh.

Stroll through the Meadows

Spend a morning or afternoon strolling along the tree-lined walks of the Meadows, a large public park south of the city centre. If you're in Edinburgh in springtime, even better – the park is one of the best places to see cherry blossoms in all their grandeur.

Explore the Hermitage of Braid and Blackford Hill

A 60.3-hectare local nature reserve, the Hermitage of Braid and Blackford Hill is worth exploring. You'll see stunning flora and fauna as you walk the paths, follow the Braid Burn stream, and explore the woodland and Blackford Pond. The reserve's also home to the Royal Observatory.





8. Top cultural activities in Edinburgh

There's no shortage of awesome cultural activities to enjoy in this iconic Scottish city. Discover a few amazing things to do in Edinburgh for culture lovers.

Board the Royal Yacht Britannia

Properly known as Her Majesty's Yacht Britannia, this vessel is the former royal yacht of Queen Elizabeth II. The Britannia was in service from 1954 until 1997 and has been berthed permanently at Ocean Terminal since being decommissioned. Take an audio tour and see the bridge, royal bedrooms, state apartments, royal deck tearoom, sun lounge, the crew's quarters, and the engine room.

Join an Edinburgh Darkside Walking Tour

Get your goth on for a couple of hours by joining an Edinburgh Darkside Walking Tour. While visiting various weird and spooky sites such as Canongate Kirkyard and Old Calton Burial Ground, you'll hear real-life tales of body snatchers, cannibals, serial killers, and witch burnings. A Darkside tour is great at any time of year, but it's just the ticket if you're in the city in autumn or winter!

Watch the sunset from Portobello Beach

Spend a late afternoon at Portobello Beach. Apart from walking on the beach, you can enjoy traditional amusements or relax at a café or restaurant before watching the sunset.

Go rambling in the Pentland Hills

Take public transport to the Pentland Hills just south of the city and spend a day following the many signposted paths past exquisite lochs and through valleys blanketed with heather. The Pentland Hills are also a great spot for cycling.

Visit the Scottish National Gallery

Located on the Mound in central Edinburgh, the Scottish National Gallery is home to a stunning collection of local and international art that spans the centuries between the start of the Renaissance and the early 20th century. Exploring the gallery is one of the best arty things to do in Edinburgh. The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and the

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Scottish National Portrait Gallery are also run by the National Galleries public body.

Stroll through the Old Town

The oldest part of Edinburgh, the Old Town is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Stroll along the mediaeval cobbled streets and wander through the alleyways and marvel at the Reformation-era buildings. You'll enjoy grand views of Edinburgh Castle and Holyroodhouse Palace (the Queen's Scottish residence), stumble upon interesting shops and quirky cafes, and have an opportunity to see the ornate tombs and impressive ceiling of St Giles' Cathedral.

Tour the Real Mary King's Close

Step back into 17th-century Edinburgh when you tour the Real Mary King's Close. Now underground, this network of alleys and homes once was open to the sky. Actors in period costume will lead you along cobbled streets and into homes left in their original state while explaining the history of the site, sharing its myths and legends, and telling you about Mary King, a fabric trader and seamstress who lived and worked around the 1630s.



9. Top events in Edinburgh

Several annual events that take place in Edinburgh have earned a spot on the international calendar, and they attract scores of visitors from around the world. Attending these top events is something to consider if you're looking for incredible things to do in Edinburgh.

Edinburgh Fringe

The most famous event in Edinburgh, every year through August, the world's largest arts festival comes to the city. You'll find the city bustling with over 50,000 performances each year across well over 300 venues – there's comedy, music, performances of all kinds for everyone to enjoy. Grab your tickets for the biggest shows in advance, but you can also spend time exploring undiscovered talent in some of the smaller venues too.

Edinburgh Science Festival

Held over two weeks every April, the Edinburgh Science Festival offers something for everyone. There are gin distillery tours, cheese-making classes, pub quizzes for adults, and fun activities and workshops on a variety of interesting topics for children. Other events that take place during the festival include exhibitions, lectures, and live broadcasts.

Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo

Held every August, the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo is a series of military tattoos (parades and musical performances) performed by the British Armed Forces as well as Commonwealth and international military bands and artistic performance teams. The performances take place on the esplanade of Edinburgh Castle every weekday evening and twice on Saturdays through the month.

Edinburgh Christmas Markets

Held annually from mid-November until the beginning of January, the Edinburgh

Christmas Markets are a feast of festive fun. Shop for decorations, gifts, and Scottish seasonal treats at the Princes Street East and George Street markets, go ice skating, enjoy funfair amusements, take in holiday shows, sing Christmas carols, and immerse yourself in traditional and modern holiday vibes. Exploring the markets is one of the best things to do in Edinburgh at Christmas.

Edinburgh's Hogmanay

Usually held from 30 December until 1 January, Edinburgh's Hogmanay is one of the greatest New Year's Eve parties in the world. The three days of celebration include torchlight processions, performances by bands, street parties, a fancy-dress splash in the River Forth, candlelit concerts, and other events.





10. How to get to Edinburgh

There are a few different ways if you're flying into Edinburgh and not hiring a car at the airport.

Buses

Take the Airlink 100 Express Bus from the airport to the city centre. Being an express route, the bus stops only at Princes Street and Haymarket before terminating at Waverly Bridge. The journey to the city centre takes 25 minutes.

The fares are £4.50 single/£7.50 open return for adults and £2 single/£3 open return for children between the ages of 5 and 15.

Alternatively, take the Skylink 200 if you're travelling to North Edinburgh or the Skylink 300 if you're travelling to West Edinburgh.

Trams

Take a tram from the airport to the city centre. The tram stops along Princes Street before terminating at York Place. The fares are £6.50 for an adult's single ticket, £3.30 for a child's single ticket, £9 for an adult's return ticket, and £4.80 for a child's return ticket.

Taxis

Take a taxi from the airport to the city centre. The journey takes approximately 30 minutes, and the fare is around £20.

II. Getting around Edinburgh

Getting around Edinburgh is a pleasure, thanks to the city's efficient and well-connected transport links, as well as other options.

Bikes

Cycling around Edinburgh can be an exhilarating experience in summer, and thanks to several companies that hire out bicycles, it's an easy and affordable option. Be aware that the city is quite hilly, so cycling might need a few pitstops along the way.

Buses

Buses run 24 hours a day in Edinburgh. Lothian is the city's dominant operator, and it has a large fleet of buses on routes that cover the entire city. First is another important operator, although it has fewer buses, and its routes tend to focus on the city's outskirts.

Taxis

Black cabs and other taxis operate through the city centre. You can find taxis at one of the city's many ranks or you can flag one down in the street.

Trains

The city's two main stations are Edinburgh Waverly Train Station and Haymarket Train Stations. Trains are a good option if you're looking at taking a day trip out of the city.

Trams

Travelling by tram is a good option if you want to reach the newer parts of the city. The tram route connects York Place and the airport, and it has 15 stops along the way.

Walking

Almost all of Edinburgh's top attractions and sights are in the city centre, which is incredibly walkable. Travelling on foot is one of the best ways to not only see but also to experience the city.



12. Where to stay in Edinburgh

Located in an Old Town Victorian Heritage building just off the Royal Mile and a mere stone's throw from the Castle, Fraser Suites Edinburgh combines old world charm with contemporary interiors and modern conveniences. Whether you're travelling solo, as a couple, or as a family, you'll find something for everyone at our hotel.

When you are ready to book your break, be sure to take advantage of our [best offers and promotions](#) on our website. We can't wait to welcome you to the city soon!



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