

## Secrets of Scotland

Thirteen Day Tour ~ May 12-24, 2025

Highlights: Roundtrip, Nonstop Airfare Newark to Edinburgh • Three Cozy Nights at the Castle-like Muthu Newton Hotel, Nairn • Two Peaceful Nights among the Remoteness of the Kylesku Hotel, Lairg • Two Relaxing Nights inside the Onich Hotel Beach Pods, Fort William • Three Artsy Nights at the Boutique 24 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh • The Scenic Cairngorms • The Hermitage & Ossian's Hall of Mirrors • Falls of Truim • Bow Fiddle Rock • Fyvie Castle • Coastal Walk from Stonehaven to Dunnottar Castle • The Cairngorm Reindeer • Craigievar Castle • Cloutie Well of Munloch • Reelig Glen • Corrieshalloch Gorge • Ardvrek Castle • Wailing Widow Falls • The Heavenly Highlands • Stunning Hike to Sandwood Bay • Smoo Cave • Cape Wrath Tour • Balnakeil Church & Craft Village • Faraid Head Walk • Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve • Spectacular Shieldag • Applecross Beach Prehistoric Mounds • Incredible Bealach na Ba Pass • Sutherlands Grove • Isle of Kerrera • Gylen Castle • Historic Kilbride • Corryvreckan Whirlpool Boat Ride • Creag an Turic Walk in Balquhidder • BLISS Art Trail • Cairnpapple Hill • Water of Leith Walkway to Historic Dean Village • Isle of May Cruise • Dunino Den • Free Time to Explore Edinburgh • All Breakfasts • TBD Lunches • TBD Dinners • Fully Escorted

Alluring Scotland, a land filled with mystery, myths, legends, and history all wrapped up in incredible natural landscapes, has many secrets to reveal. Join our quest to seek out these secrets from towering mountains to tranquil glens among the Highlands to the Cairngorms and into the ancient town of Edinburgh. We'll escape into the wilds discovering rich history along the way, be lured by local stories and legends of age-old castles and lose ourselves among the magical countryside and vast openness of unending nature. We'll follow the path of the mysterious Picts and the Highland Clans with their tragic history through mountains and lochs where remnants of their lives remain scattered in the form of ancient castles, prehistoric cairns, and captivating cathedrals. We'll fall silent as our journey takes us past vast, unspoiled windswept coastlines, dense woodlands, and mysterious lakes shrouded in mist that have inspired creators of art, literature, and music for centuries. The rare charms of Edinburgh are waiting to be explored with its endless winding streets, treasured museum wonders, and quirky nooks with beautiful views. This is the kind of adventure where you can discover something new within yourself at every step. So why not leave the mundane behind because the best adventures await you off the beaten track. Always.

**Day 1.** Get comfortable and a few winks of sleep on our overnight flight where we wake up in Scotland!

**Day 2.** We immediately make our way north, there's no time to lose and so much to see! Our first stop is the tiny town of Dunkeld where we'll stop for an included snack and loads of caffeine to keep us going at the Chattan Tea Room. Let's get our energy flowing as we step into the magical Perthshire forest that was once the playground for the 18<sup>th</sup> century Duke of Atholl. Walk through the towering Douglas firs and breathe in their fresh scent along the river path and cascading waterfalls to the folly Ossian's Hall, an indescribable place decorated with mirrors, sliding panels, and paintings to complete the striking scenery. As we continue a scenic northerly drive into the amazing Cairngorms National Park, we'll take a break to walk a short narrow path to an arched bridge surrounded by pinewoods revealing the Falls of Truim, a long cascading set of rapids with dozens of potholes and pools carved out by centuries of erosion. Our drive ends at the seaside town of Nairn located on the Moray Firth where we check into the castle-like Muthu Newton Hotel set within 21 acres of parkland and gardens and a short walk from town. Enjoy a relaxing night and sleep tight!



**Bealach na Ba Pass**



**Craigievar Castle**

**Day 3.** Let's get exploring the amazing Aberdeenshire! A superb natural arch resembling a bow poised above a fiddle lies along the Moray's coast so get your camera ready for some scenic shots. Take a moment to listen as the sea lashes against the rocks then flows into and out of the small bay as if a tune was being played. Onto Fyvie Castle, an imposing 800-year-old fortress filled with antiquities, armor, and lavish oil paintings. Our guided tour will reveal the ghosts, legends, and folklore woven into the tapestry of the castle's history. Have a delightful, included lunch then wander the grounds with a picturesque lake and unusual glass roofed racquets court. Enjoy the relaxing ride to the beach town, Stonehaven, where a coastal path with stunning views along the cliffs and across the North Sea will lead us to the hidden treasure Dunnottar Castle. Perched atop a 160-foot rock cliff and surrounded on three sides by the North Sea, these dramatic and striking cliff top ruins were once an impregnable fortress of one of the most powerful families in Scotland. Take your time here to wander and feel its history beneath each footstep.

**Day 4.** A tame and friendly free-range herd of reindeer live right here in the Cairngorm mountains, so let's pay them a visit! Reindeer were once native to Scotland until hunted to extinction about 800 years ago. Lucky for us, this newly reintroduced herd is thriving and well in the sub-arctic environment the Cairngorms provide and today we have a chance to meet and interact with these gentle beauties. Our hill trip requires a 40-minute relaxed walk that will take us close to the grazing herd as we hear interesting stories about reindeer along the way. There will be a chance to hand feed the females if you desire, otherwise take in their beauty in their natural surroundings that will make you feel you stepped into the North Pole. After a stop for a quick included lunch nearby, we'll traverse the captivating Cairngorms with its dramatic and desolate beauty towards the spellbindingly beautiful fairy tale castle Craigievar. Pure enchantment awaits as the lustrous pink tower comes into view, an exterior that remains virtually unchanged since 1626. A guided tour will reveal all the castle's storied history as we're allured by the quirky blend of cozy interiors and rare antiquities within its ancient walls. Take some time to wander the grounds and get a feel for the surrounding landscape.

**Day 5.** North is our direction today where we uncover more secrets of the Highlands. In the gentle woodland at the Black Isle village of Munloch legend states that if you dip a piece of cloth, or clout into the natural healing well then tie it to a tree, as it disintegrates, an illness will fade or a wish will come true. Today we walk the woodland path to the mystical Cloutie Well and can participate in the centuries old healing tradition by tying a clout to a tree branch then witness the fascinating and somewhat eerie result. The magical woodlands continue at Reelig Glen, an ancient, secluded forest with enchanting glades and atmospheric waters. Follow the path through a bewitching mossy glen towered over by remarkable firs, cedars, and spruces, including some of Britain's tallest trees and say hello to the fairies as you pass by. We move deeper into the Highlands where the landscape becomes more vast and open and still. Let's take a break from our drive to immerse in the landscape at the Corrieshalloch Gorge, a mile long canyon through which the River Droma rushes. After an included lunch at the café, follow one of the series of walks that bring you to a Victorian suspension bridge where you can delight in the sights, sounds, and smells of the crashing waterfalls below. A marvelously scenic ruined fortress set under a brooding mountain backdrop is our next exploration. There's an otherworldly feel to Ardvreck Castle so it's no wonder that myths and legends cling to this enigmatic ruin that range from a pact with the devil to a tales of a mermaid and of course the ghostly presence of the MacLeods who still haunt its halls. Another legend leads us further north to Wailing Widow Falls where a short walk will unveil a 50-foot cascade spilling out over the cliff from Loch na Gainmich then crashing into the narrow canyon below. Now it's time to rest at our new home for the next two nights at the Kylesku Hotel located among a glorious loch and across from the iconic Kylesku Bridge. It's the perfect place to enjoy the peacefulness that emanates from the long sweeping remoteness surrounding us.

**Day 6.** Reputably the most beautiful beach in Britain and one of the most remote, the wild and spectacular Sandwood Bay is our adventure for the day. We'll make our way towards the most north westerly point in Britain to the hamlet of Blairmore where our trail awaits. There is no road access here, only an amazingly scenic, well-trodden path through exposed moorland past lovely lochs and chances to see local wildlife. Once we reach the unspoiled pinkish golden sand we can relax and take in the views while enjoying our included picnic lunch. Exploration will unveil large dunes that stretch to the freshwater Sandwood Loch, rocky cliffs, and the impressive sea stack of Am Buachaille. If you're not feeling up for the intriguing remote walk, spend the day at the lovely nearby Oldshoremore Beach where you can have a day of lounging and taking in the views. The rest of the evening will be spent at your leisure.

**Day 7.** We return to the north coast of Lairg to explore a walkway into a waterfall chamber at the spectacular Smoo Cave. If we're lucky and the weather cooperates, we'll be fascinated by the guided tour inside the cave that includes a boat ride into the inner chambers. Onto Cape Wrath, one of Britain's iconic cornerstones where the north and west coasts of Scotland meet. There is no land mass between here and the arctic giving a feel as if you're at the end of the earth. Gorgeous views of dramatic coastlines, the expansive Atlantic Ocean, vast moorland wilderness, and towering Clo Mor cliffs, the highest on the Scottish mainland await your senses. It will be an adventure as access to such a remote, lovely place is challenging. Enjoy the bumpy ride into beauty and history, a once in a lifetime experience. An included lunch at the Ozone Cafe will be part of our exploratory day. The adventures don't end here, we must take in more Highlands stunning scenery at Faraid Head. This hauntingly beautiful peninsula has a very special feel from its deserted, glittering sandy beaches to its large dunes that have uncovered remains of the past including bodies of Vikings as the sands shift and blow. To get here, we'll

pass by the 17<sup>th</sup> century ruins of Balnakeil Church with its murderous legend and the artsy Balnakeil Craft Village, displaying works from local artists.

**Day 8.** It's time to make our way south through more magical Highlands landscapes that lead to Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve where we can get out into the wonderfully wild nature. Choose from the Buzzard or Pine Cone trail to trapse through the ancient pinewoods for excellent views of rugged peaks and ridges. Our scenic drive then leads us towards tiny Shildaig village with a scattering of white-washed cottages along the shore of a lovely sea loch. Take in the views and quaintness and enjoy our included lunch at the local pub. Let's keep following the coastal road with all the views, and Highland Cows, straight to Applecross Sands lying along a remote peninsula where enormous sweeping sand merges with the sparkling blue sea. Our journey continues past Applecross village and onto our zig zagging drive along the stunningly gorgeous Bealach na Ba (pass of the cattle) past towering cliffs and tumbling waterfalls with breathtaking views around every hairpin turn. Once your breathing returns to normal, we'll continue our scenic trek passing viewpoints to stretch our legs including the brooding Eilean Donan Castle set apart on an island where three great sea lochs meet. The loch side Onich Hotel is our final destination where we can relax in a comfy beach pod room overlooking Loch Linnhe in which some of the finest views in Scotland continue.

**Day 9.** Soaring fir trees, a rocky gorge, waterfalls and stunning views are first on today's adventure as we venture out on the trails at Sutherland's Grove. Your senses will be awakened in this ancient forest where you can follow the secret trail to meet the troll who lives beside the footbridge. A short ferry ride will then take us across the Firth of Lorne to the beautiful isle of Kerrera where a splendid scenic trail leads to the quaint Tea Garden for a lovely, included lunch. Wander the island at your fancy past the wonderfully atmospheric remains of Gylen Castle with sweeping views of green and sea blue. More secrets lie within nearby Historic Kilbride, a site of Christian worship since the 6<sup>th</sup> century that emits an atmosphere of antiquity. Roam through history past the graves of fascinating characters like Johnie of the Two Hearts and the blacksmith's family. I bet you didn't know, but it's the Spring Tide, the absolute perfect time to experience the amazing Corryvreckan Whirlpool, the world's third largest! Hop aboard our open RIB Boat and hold on tight as we come close to this astonishing tidal phenomenon. If you're not up for the adventure, no worries, enjoy an included dinner nearby and we'll join you when we're done.

**Day 10.** As we make our way south towards Edinburgh, we'll make a stop in the charming hamlet of Balquhider whose lochs, river and glens are steeped in history. As we wander through the Balquhider Parish Churchyard, we'll pass the final resting place for legendary outlaw Rob Roy MacGregor, then follow the secret footpath leading to the magnificent viewpoint Creag an Tuirc. Lucky for us, we're right in the path of an eclectic mix of fun roadside art installations on the BLiSS Trail. Let's visit The Lookout, a mirrored box set in a scenic setting between two lochs that cleverly blends perfectly with the landscape. Look out for more quirky art along the way to our included lunch at the artsy Broche Café that is home to three more pieces on the BLiSS Trail. One more stop to explore an ancient sacred hilltop, Cairnpapple Hill, used as a burial and ceremonial site from about 3000 to 1400 BC. Now onto our Georgian Townhouse home in Edinburgh at 24 Royal Terrace. Get comfy and relax and explore as you please for the night is yours.

**Day 11.** Spend the morning at your leisure exploring all the wonders of Edinburgh that speak to you. From stunning architecture and endless winding streets to an awe-inspiring castle, art galleries, and museum treasures there's plenty here to discover. After lunch, we'll take a journey back in time as we step into Mary King's Close, a place shrouded in mystery and myths. As we step inside, we'll experience a warren of streets and passageways frozen in time that reveal stories of Edinburgh's dark past and the authentic truths about the people who lived, worked, and died here. After we're above ground, join us on an optional walking tour through the quaint Circus Lane, along the delightful Water of Leith Walkway to the beautiful oasis of Dean Village. Tonight we'll take an adults only, dark and eerie voyage through Edinburgh's Old Town sinister wynds and closes before descending into the haunted Blair Street Underground Vaults where true stories of treason and torture will be revealed.

**Day 12.** There's an optional outing today to the Isle of May, a magical mix of seabirds, seals, and smugglers anchored on the edge of the Firth of Forth. A ferry will take us out to this amazing natural spectacle where seabirds cram onto the ledges of the Isle's towering cliffs and puffins peek out from their grassy burrows. Explore the network of paths on your own and see what secrets the island unfolds! Or if you prefer, stay in wonderful Edinburgh for more exploration and relaxation.

**Day 13.** After one more full Scottish breakfast, we sadly say goodbye to Scotland but keep all its secrets in the forefront of our minds as we make our trek across the Atlantic back to home sweet home. © 2024 The Educated Wanderer

Air transportation is provided by United Airlines. A surcharge will apply if United Airlines increases the price of its airfare. One piece of luggage per person (baggage fee by United is included) and one small carry-on are permitted. **A valid, government-issued picture ID is required to board the plane.**

Monday, May 12: Flight # departs Newark at PM and arrives in Edinburgh at AM

Saturday, May 24: Flight # departs Edinburgh at PM and arrives in Newark at PM

**Price per person is \$ Twin & \$ Single.** No reservations accepted without a deposit of \$500 per person. Make checks payable to "Group Tours & Travel", and mail to our address above. Final payment is due February 15, 2024. There are no refunds if cancellation occurs after February 15, 2024. Group Tours is not responsible for any delays, cancellations, injuries or circumstances beyond its control and reserves the right to change the itinerary. All trip components are subject to change in accordance with Government, State and Local guidelines and/or mandates. Travel protection/cancellation coverage is available and highly recommended, but not included. This tour will run rain or shine. Visit [www.educatedwanderer.com](http://www.educatedwanderer.com) for additional tours and photos.

\*Due to the changes in airline booking policies, airfare will need to be booked before the cancellation date, Once flights are booked, we cannot refund that portion of the tour unless you'd like to pay an additional cost for refundable tickets.

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