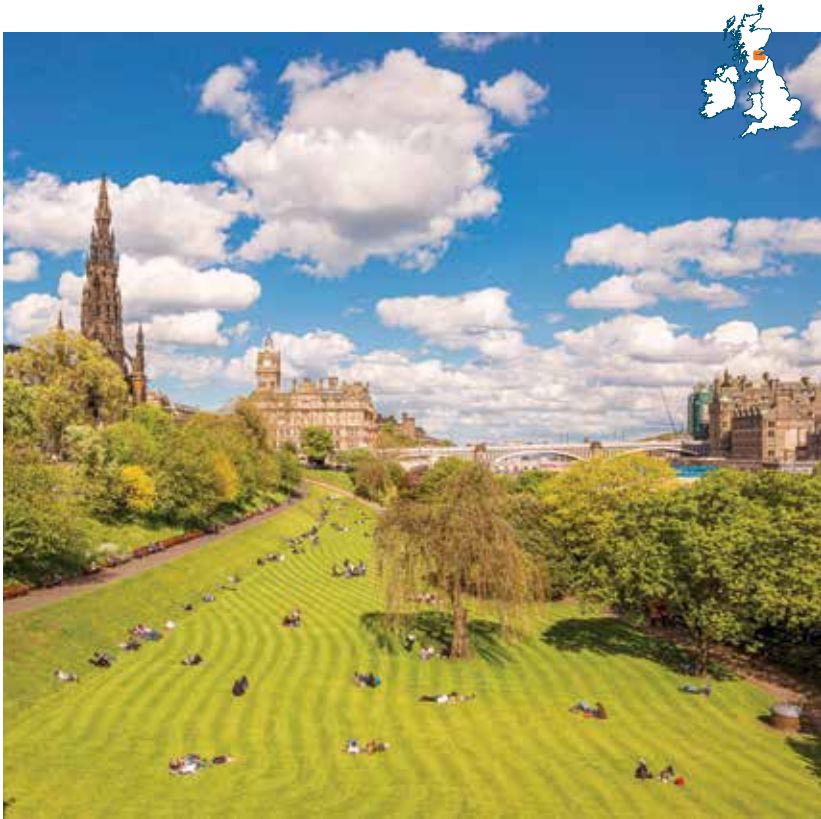


Chapter 3

EDINBURGH AND THE LOTHIANS

3

Updated by
Joseph Reaney



 Sights
★★★★★

 Restaurants
★★★★★

 Hotels
★★★★★

 Shopping
★★★★★

 Nightlife
★★★★★

WELCOME TO EDINBURGH AND THE LOTHIANS

TOP REASONS TO GO

★ **Culture:** From floor-stomping *ceilidhs* to avant-garde modern dance, the city's calendar of cultural festivals, including the remarkable Edinburgh Festival Fringe—the world's largest arts festival by a mile—is truly outstanding.

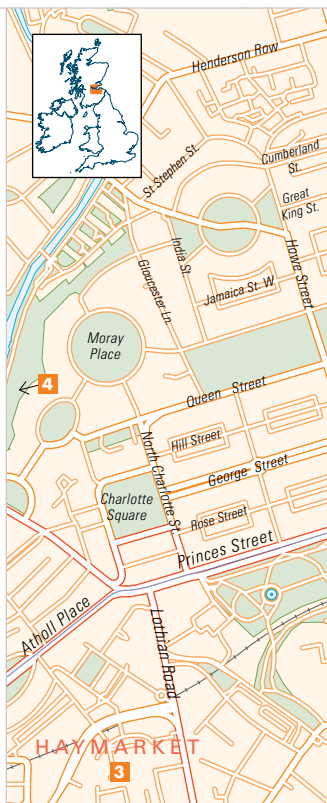
★ **The Royal Mile:** History plays out before your eyes in this centuries-old capital along the Royal Mile. Edinburgh Castle and the Palace of Holyroodhouse were the locations for some of the most important struggles between Scotland and England.

★ **Architecture:** From the Old Town's labyrinthine medieval streets to the neoclassical orderliness of the New Town to imaginative modern developments like the Scottish Parliament, the architecture of Auld Reekie spans the ages.

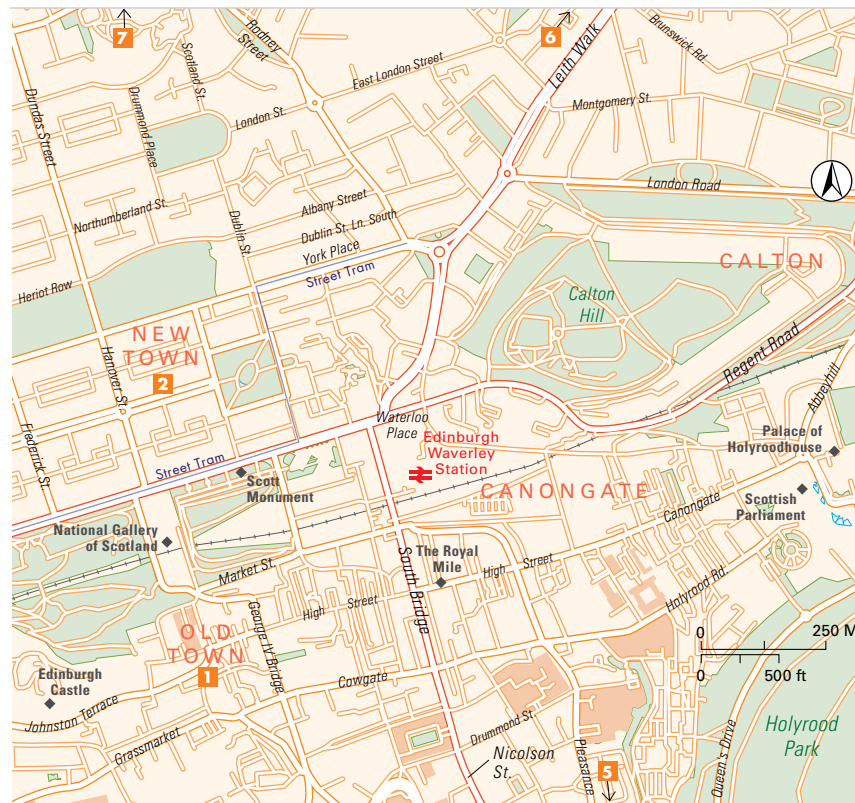
★ **Food:** The city's ever-expanding restaurant scene attracts celebrity chefs that serve up international dishes and genuine Scottish cuisine, like Cullen skink and haggis with neeps and tatties.

For all its steep roads and hidden alleyways, Edinburgh is not a difficult place to navigate. Most newcomers gravitate to two areas, the Old Town and the New Town. The former funnels down from the castle on either side of High Street, better known as the Royal Mile. Princes Street Gardens and Edinburgh Waverley station separate this side of the city from the stately New Town, known for its neoclassical architecture and verdant gardens. To the north the city sweeps down to the Firth of Forth. It is here you will find the port of Leith, replete with trendy pubs and fine-dining restaurants. The southern and western neighborhoods are mainly residential, but are home to a few attractions, such as Edinburgh Zoo.

1 Old Town. The focal point of Edinburgh for centuries, the Old Town is a picturesque jumble of medieval tenements. Here are prime attractions such as Edinburgh Castle and the newer symbol of power, the Scottish Parliament. You will also find everything from happening bars and nightclubs to ghostly alleyways and vaults.



2 New Town. Built in the 18th and 19th centuries to prevent the wealthier residents of overcrowded Old Town from decamping to London, the neoclassical sweep of the New Town is a masterpiece of city planning. Significant sights include the National Gallery of Scotland and Calton Hill, which offers some of the best views of the city from its summit.



3 Haymarket. West of the Old Town and south of the West End is Haymarket, a district with its own down-to-earth character and well-worn charm. It's close to Edinburgh's second train station.

4 West End. Edinburgh's commercial center has boutiques aplenty as well as the Edinburgh Zoo.

5 South Side. Mostly residential, the South Side makes a good base for budget-conscious travelers. It's where most of the city's students live.

6 Leith. On the southern shore of the Firth of Forth, Edinburgh's port of Leith is where you'll find the now-retired Royal Yacht *Britannia*, along with some of the city's smartest restaurants and bars.

7 West Lothian, the Forth Valley, Midlothian, and East Lothian. Known collectively as the Lothians, the areas of green countryside and seafront villages around Edinburgh are replete with historic houses, castles, museums, and world-renowned golf courses.

Edinburgh is “a city so beautiful it breaks the heart again and again,” as Alexander McCall Smith once wrote. One of the world’s stateliest cities and proudest capitals, it is—like Rome—built on seven hills, making it a striking backdrop for the ancient pageant of history.

In a skyline of sheer beauty, Edinburgh Castle looks out over the city, frowning down on Princes Street’s glamour and glitz. But despite its rich past, the city’s famous festivals, excellent museums and galleries, and the modernist Scottish Parliament are all reminders that Edinburgh has its feet firmly in the 21st century.

Nearly everywhere in Edinburgh (the *burgh* is always pronounced *burra* in Scotland) are spectacular buildings, whose Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian pillars add touches of neoclassical grandeur to the largely Presbyterian backdrop. Large gardens are a strong feature of central Edinburgh, while Arthur’s Seat, a craggy peak of bright green-and-yellow furze, rears up behind the spires of the Old Town. Even as Edinburgh moves through the 21st century, its tall guardian castle remains the focal point of the city and its venerable history.

Modern Edinburgh has become a cultural capital, staging the Edinburgh International Festival and the Festival Fringe in every possible venue each August. The stunning National Museum of Scotland complements the city’s wealth of galleries and artsy hangouts. Add Edinburgh’s growing reputation for food and nightlife and you have one of the world’s most beguiling cities.

Today, Edinburgh is the second-most-important financial center in the United Kingdom, and is widely renowned for its exceptional (and ever-expanding) dining and nightlife scenes—some of the reasons it regularly ranks near the top of quality-of-life surveys.

Edinburgh’s Old Town, which bears a great symbolic weight as the “heart of Scotland’s capital,” is a boon for lovers of atmosphere and history. In contrast, if you appreciate the unique architectural heritage of the city’s Enlightenment, then the New Town’s for you. If you belong to both categories, don’t worry—the Old and New Towns are only yards apart. Explore the city’s main thoroughfares—peopled by the spirits of Mary, Queen of Scots, Sir Walter Scott, and Robert Louis Stevenson—then get lost among the tiny *wynds* and *closes* (old medieval alleys that connect the winding streets). And remember: you haven’t earned your porridge until you’ve climbed Arthur’s Seat.

Head out of the city center and you’ll find smaller communities with an abundance of charm. Dean Village, with its cobbled streets and 19th-century water mills, has a character all its own. Duddingston, just southeast of Arthur’s Seat, has all the bucolic charm of a country village. Then there’s Edinburgh’s port, Leith, home to some of Scotland’s smartest

bars and restaurants. Visible beyond them all, across the Firth of Forth, is the patchwork of fields that is the county of Fife—a reminder, like the mountains to the northwest that can be glimpsed from Edinburgh’s highest points, that the rest of Scotland lies within easy reach.

Planning

When to Go

Scotland’s reliably unreliable weather means that you could visit at the height of summer and be forced to wear a winter coat. Conversely, conditions can be balmy in early spring and late autumn. You may choose to avoid the crowds (and hotel price hikes) of July and August, but you’d also miss some of the greatest festivals on Earth. May, June, and September are probably the most hassle-free months in which to visit, while still offering hope of good weather. Short days and grim conditions make winter less appealing, though there are few better New Year’s Eve celebrations than Edinburgh’s Hogmanay.

FESTIVALS

Walk around Edinburgh in late July and you’ll likely feel the first vibrations of the earthquake that is festival time, which shakes the city throughout August. You may hear reference to an “Edinburgh Festival,” but this is really an umbrella term for five separate festivals all taking place around the same time. For an overview, check out www.edinburgh-festivalcity.com.

Beltane Fire Festival

FESTIVALS | Held every year on April 30, this flame-filled Calton Hill extravaganza is inspired by an Iron Age Celtic festival, which was held to celebrate the return of summer. Expect drumbeat processions, bonfires, and fireworks, as costumed fire dancers reveal the fates of the May

Queen and the Green Man. [✉ Calton Hill](mailto:Calton Hill), [Calton](http://www.beltane.org) www.beltane.org.

★ Edinburgh Festival Fringe

ARTS FESTIVALS | **FAMILY** | During the world’s largest arts festival in August, most of the city center becomes one huge performance area, with fire eaters, sword swallowers, unicyclists, jugglers, string quartets, jazz groups, stand-up comedians, and magicians all thronging into High Street and Princes Street. Every available performance space—church halls, community centers, parks, sports fields, nightclubs, and more—is utilized for every kind of event, with something for all tastes. There are even family-friendly shows. Many events are free; others start at a few pounds and rise to £15 or £20. There’s so much happening in the three weeks of the festival that it’s possible to arrange your own entertainment program from early morning to after midnight.

■ **TIP** → Be aware that hotels get booked up months in advance during the Fringe and bargains are virtually impossible to come by, so plan your trip as far in advance as possible.

✉ *Edinburgh Festival Fringe Office*, 180 High St., Old Town [0131/226-0026](tel:01312260026) www.edfringe.com.

Edinburgh International Book Festival

FESTIVALS | **FAMILY** | This two-week-long event held every August pulls together a heady mix of authors from around the world, from Nobel laureates to best-selling fiction writers, and gets them talking about their work in a magnificent tent village. There are more than 750 events in total, with the workshops for would-be writers and children proving hugely popular. ✉ *Edinburgh International Book Festival Admin Office*, 5 Charlotte Sq., New Town [0131/718-5666](tel:01317185666) www.edbookfest.co.uk.

Edinburgh International Festival

ARTS FESTIVALS | **FAMILY** | Running throughout August, this flagship traditional arts festival attracts international performers and audiences to a celebration of music, dance, theater, opera, and art. Programs,



The Festival Fringe started in 1947 at the same time as the International Festival, when eight companies that were not invited to perform in the latter decided to attend anyway.

tickets, and reservations are available from the Hub, set within the impressive Victorian-Gothic Tolbooth Kirk. Tickets for the festival go on sale in April, and the big events sell out within the month. Nevertheless, you'll still be able to purchase tickets for some events during the festival; prices range from around £4 to £60. ☒ *The Hub, 348–350 Castlehill, Old Town* ☎ 0131/473–2015 🌐 www.eif.co.uk.

Edinburgh International Film Festival
FESTIVALS | One of Europe's foremost film festivals, promoting the best of global independent cinema since 1947, this event takes place from mid-June to early July each year. It's a great place for a first screening of a new film—movies from *Billy Elliot* to *Little Miss Sunshine* to *The Hurt Locker* have premiered here. ☒ *Edinburgh Film Festival Office, 88 Lothian Rd., West End* ☎ 0131/228–4051 🌐 www.edfilmfest.org.uk.

Edinburgh Science Festival
FESTIVALS | **FAMILY** | Held around Easter each year, the Edinburgh Science Festival is one of Europe's largest, and aims to

make science accessible, interesting, and fun for kids (and adults) through an extensive program of innovative exhibitions, workshops, performances, and screenings. ☒ *The Hub, 348–350 Castlehill, Old Town* ☎ 0131/553–0320 🌐 www.sciencefestival.co.uk.

Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival
FESTIVALS | Held over a week in late July, the Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival attracts world-renowned musicians playing everything from blues-rock to soul music, and brings local enthusiasts out of their living rooms and into the pubs, clubs, and Spiegeltents (pop-up performance spaces) around the city. ☒ *Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival, 89 Giles St., Leith* ☎ 0131/467–5200 🌐 www.edinburghjazzfestival.com.

★ **Edinburgh's Hogmanay**
FESTIVALS | Nowadays most capital cities put on decent New Year's celebrations, but Edinburgh's three-day-long Hogmanay festivities are on a whole other level. There's a reason this city is famous around the world as the best place to

ring in the New Year. Yes, it's winter and yes, it's chilly, but joining a crowd of 80,000 people in a monster street party, complete with big-name rock concerts, torchlight processions, ceilidh dancing, and incredible fireworks, is something you won't forget in a hurry. The headline city center events are ticketed (and can be pricey), but there are free parties happening all over the city. ☒ *Princes St., Old Town* 🌐 www.edinburghshogmanay.com 📄 From £20.

The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo
FESTIVALS | It may not be art, but The Tattoo (as it's commonly known) is at the very heart of Scottish cultural life. Taking place, like many of the city's festivals, during August, this celebration of martial music features international military bands, gymnastics, and stunt motorcycle teams on the castle esplanade. Each year 22,000 seats are made available, yet it's always a sellout, so book your place early. If you are lucky enough to get tickets, dress warmly for evening shows and always bring a raincoat; the show goes on in all weathers. ☒ *The Tattoo Box Office, 1–3 Cockburn St., Old Town* ☎ 0131/225–1188 🌐 www.edintattoo.co.uk.

Planning Your Time

One of Edinburgh's greatest virtues is its compact size, which means it's possible to pack a lot into even the briefest of visits. The two main areas of interest are the Old Town and the New Town, where you'll find Edinburgh Castle, the Scottish Parliament, Princes Street Gardens, and the National Gallery of Scotland. You can cover the major attractions in one day, but to give the big sights their due, you should allow at least two. Stay even longer and you'll have time to explore the Palace of Holyroodhouse, the Royal Botanic Garden, and the city's other important museums. You could also head down to leafy, village-like Stockbridge, then immerse yourself in the greenery along the Water

of Leith, visiting the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art along the way.

Getting out of town is also an option for longer stays. Hop on a bus out to Midlothian to see the magnificent Rosslyn Chapel (even if you're not a fan of *The Da Vinci Code*, it's still interesting), and Crichton Castle, parts of which date back to the 14th century. Head west along the Firth of Forth to explore South Queensferry, with its three Forth bridges (including the iconic red railway bridge) and palatial Hopetoun House, or head east for the beautiful beaches, bird-watching, and golf courses in and around North Berwick.

■ **TIP** → Some attractions have special hours during August, due to the large influx of festival-goers. If you want to see something special, be sure to check the hours ahead of time.

Getting Here and Around

AIR
Edinburgh Airport is 7 miles west of the city center. Flights bound for Edinburgh depart virtually every hour from London's Gatwick, Heathrow, and City airports.

Airlines serving Edinburgh, Scotland's busiest airport, include Air France, Aer Lingus, American Airlines, British Airways, Delta Virgin, easyJet, Iberia, Jet2, KLM, Lufthansa, and Ryanair.

Delta flies direct to Edinburgh from New York's JFK airport, while United flies direct from Newark. There are also direct, seasonal flights from Boston (Delta), Chicago and Washington D.C. (United), Philadelphia (American), and Orlando (Virgin Atlantic). Otherwise, your airline is likely to require a change somewhere in Europe. You could also fly into Glasgow Airport, 50 miles away, or the smaller Glasgow Prestwick, another 30 miles south, but these will add about an hour and a half to your journey.

There are no rail links to the city center, so the most efficient way to do the journey on public transport is by tram; the service runs every 8 to 12 minutes and takes about half an hour. Tickets cost £6.50 one-way and £9 for a round-trip. By bus or car you can usually make it to Edinburgh in a half hour, unless you hit the morning (7:30 to 9) or evening (4 to 6) rush hours. Lothian Buses runs an Air-link express service to Waverley railway station via Haymarket that usually takes around half an hour, depending on traffic. Buses run every 15 to 30 minutes; tickets cost £4.50 one way or £7.50 round-trip and can be purchased from the booth beside the bus. Local buses also run between Edinburgh Airport and the city center every 15 minutes or so from 9 to 5, and roughly every hour during off-peak hours; they are far cheaper—just £1.80 one-way—but can take twice as long.

You can arrange for a chauffeur-driven limousine to meet your flight at Edinburgh Airport through Transvercia Chauffeur Drive, Little's, or WL Sleigh Ltd, for upwards of £50.

Taxis are readily available outside the terminal. The trip takes 20 to 30 minutes to the city center, 15 minutes longer during rush hour. The fare is roughly £25. Note that airport taxis picking up fares from the terminal are any color, not the typical black cabs.

AIRPORT INFORMATION **Edinburgh**

Airport. ☎ Glasgow Rd., Ingleston
☎ 0844/448-8833 🌐 www.edinburghairport.com.

AIRPORT TRANSFER CONTACTS **Little's.**

☎ 1282 Paisley Rd. W, Glasgow
☎ 0131/883-2111 🌐 www.littles.co.uk.
Transvercia Chauffeur Drive. ☎ The Harland Bldg., Unit 6, Suite 19, Pilrig Heights, Leith ☎ 0131/334-5825 🌐 www.transvercia.co.uk. **WL Sleigh.** ☎ 1 The Roundal, Edinburgh ☎ 0131/339-9607 🌐 sleigh.co.uk.

BUS

National Express provides a coach service to and from London and other major towns and cities. The main terminal, Edinburgh Bus Station, is a short walk north of Edinburgh Waverley station, immediately east of St. Andrew Square. Long-distance coaches must be booked in advance online, by phone, or at the terminal. Edinburgh is approximately eight hours by bus from London.

Lothian Buses provides most of the services between Edinburgh and the Lothians and conducts day tours around and beyond the city. First Bus runs additional buses out of Edinburgh into the surrounding area. Megabus offers dirt-cheap fares to selected cities across Scotland.

Lothian Buses is also the main operator within Edinburgh. You can buy tickets from the driver on the bus, though you will need the exact fare (£1.80). A better option is to use a contactless card to pay for single journeys, safe in the knowledge that the price is automatically capped if you pass the threshold for a day (£4.50) or week (£20) ticket. A third option is to buy tickets in advance on your phone through the Lothian Buses M-Tickets app. Note that NightBus services are not included in a day ticket; you will pay £3 for a single journey.

■ **TIP** → Buses can be packed on Friday and Saturday nights, so you may want to consider a taxi instead.

BUS CONTACTS **First Bus.** ☎ 03451/646-0707 🌐 www.firstbus.co.uk. **Lothian Buses.** ☎ 0131/555-6363 🌐 www.lothian-buses.com. **Megabus.** ☎ 0900/160-0900 🌐 uk.megabus.com. **National Express.** ☎ 0371/781-8181 🌐 www.nationalexpress.com.

CAR

It's not necessary to have a car in Edinburgh, as the city is quite walkable and has an extensive and efficient public transport system. Driving in Edinburgh has its quirks and pitfalls—particularly at

the height of festival season. Metered parking in the city center is scarce and expensive, and the local traffic wardens are an unforgiving lot. Note that illegally parked cars are routinely towed away, and getting your car back will be expensive. After 6 pm, the parking situation improves considerably, and you may manage to find a space quite near your hotel, even downtown. If you park on a yellow line or in a resident's parking bay, be prepared to move your car by 8 the following morning. Parking lots are clearly signposted; overnight parking is expensive and not always permitted.

TAXI

Taxi stands can be found throughout the city, mostly in the New Town. The following are the most convenient: the west end of Princes Street, South Street, David Street, and North Street, Andrew Street (both just off St. Andrew Square), Waverley Mall, Waterloo Place, and Lauriston Place. Alternatively, hail any taxi displaying an illuminated "for hire" sign.

TRAIN

Edinburgh's main train hub, Edinburgh Waverley station, is downtown, below Waverley Bridge and around the corner from the unmistakable spire of the Scott Monument. Travel time from Edinburgh to London by train is as little as 4½ hours for the fastest service.

Edinburgh's other main station is Haymarket, about four minutes (by rail) west of Edinburgh Waverley. Most Glasgow and other western and northern services stop here.

TRAIN CONTACTS **National Rail Enquiries.**

☎ 08457/484950 🌐 www.nationalrail.co.uk. **ScotRail.** ☎ 0344/811-0141 🌐 www.scotrail.co.uk.

TRAM

Absent since 1956, trams returned to the streets of Edinburgh in 2014. The 8½-mile stretch of track currently runs between Edinburgh Airport in the west to York Place in the east, although work is under

way to extend it all the way to Newhaven (via Leith Walk, The Shore, and Ocean Terminal). This extension is scheduled for completion in early 2023. Useful stops for travelers include Haymarket, Princes Street, and St. Andrew Square (for Edinburgh Waverley station). Tickets are £1.80 for a single journey in the "City Zone" (which is every stop excluding the airport) or £6.50 for a single to/from the airport (£9 return). Day tickets, allowing unlimited travel, cost £4.50 in the City Zone and £10 including the airport.

TRAM CONTACT **Edinburgh Trams.**

☎ 0131/338-5780 🌐 www.edinburghtrams.com.

Restaurants

Edinburgh's eclectic restaurant scene has attracted a brigade of well-known chefs, including the award-winning trio of Martin Wishart, Tom Kitchin, and Paul Kitching, who have abandoned the tried-and-true recipes for more adventurous cuisine. Of course, you can always find traditional fare, which usually means the Scottish-French style that harks back to the historical "Auld Alliance" of the 13th century. The Scottish element is the preference for fresh and local produce; the French supplies the sauces. In Edinburgh you can sample anything from Malaysian *rendang* (a thick, coconut-milk stew) to Kurdish kebabs, while the long-established French, Italian, Chinese, Pakistani, and Indian communities ensure that the majority of the globe's most treasured cuisines are well represented. It's possible to eat well in Edinburgh without spending a fortune. Multicourse prix-fixe options are common, and almost always less expensive than ordering à la carte, while set lunch menus are increasingly widespread. Even at restaurants in the highest price category, you can easily spend less than £40 per person. People tend to eat later in Scotland than in England—around 8 pm on average—and then drink on in leisurely Scottish fashion.

Hotels

From stylish boutique hotels to homey bed-and-breakfasts, Edinburgh has a world-class array of accommodation options to suit every taste. Its status as one of Britain's most attractive and fascinating cities ensures a steady influx of visitors, but the wealth of overnight options means there's no need to compromise on where you stay. Grand old hotels are rightly renowned for their regal bearing and old-world charm, but if your tastes are a little more contemporary, the city's burgeoning contingent of chic design hotels offers an equally alluring alternative. For those on a tighter budget, the town's B&Bs are the most obvious choice—most proprietors provide front-door keys and very few impose curfews.

Space is at a premium in August and September, when the Edinburgh International Festival and the Festival Fringe take place, so reserve your room at least three months in advance. B&Bs may prove trickier to find in the winter months (with the exception of Christmas and New Year), as this is when many owners choose to close up shop and go on vacation themselves.

To save money and see how local residents live, stay in a B&B in one of the areas away from the city center, such as Leith to the north, Murrayfield to the west, or Mayfield to the south. Public buses can whisk you to the city center in 10 to 15 minutes.

Restaurant and hotel reviews have been shortened. For full information, visit Fodors.com. Restaurant prices are the average cost of a main course at dinner or, if dinner is not served, at lunch. Hotel prices are the lowest cost of a standard double room in high season, including 20% V.A.T.

WHAT IT COSTS in Pounds

\$	\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$
RESTAURANTS			
under £15	£15–£19	£20–£25	over £25
HOTELS			
under £125	£125–£200	£201–£300	over £300

Nightlife

The nightlife scene in Edinburgh is vibrant—whatever you're looking for, you'll find it here. There are traditional pubs, chic modern bars, and cutting-edge clubs. Live music pours out of many watering holes on weekends, particularly folk, blues, and jazz, while well-known artists perform at some of the larger venues.

Edinburgh has hundreds of pubs, and each is a study in itself. In the eastern and northern districts of the city, you can find some grim, inhospitable-looking places that proclaim that drinking is no laughing matter. But throughout Edinburgh, many pubs have deliberately traded in their old spit-and-sawdust vibe for atmospheric revivals of the warm, oak-paneled, leather-chaired *howffs* (meeting places). Most pubs and bars are open weekdays, while on weekends they're open from about 11 am to midnight (some until 2 am on Saturday).

The List and *The Skinny* carry the most up-to-date details about cultural events. *The List* is available at newsstands throughout the city, while *The Skinny* is free and can be picked up at a number of pubs, clubs, and shops around town. The *Herald* and *The Scotsman* newspapers are good for reviews and notices of upcoming events throughout the city and beyond.

Performing Arts

Think Edinburgh's arts scene consists of just the elegiac wail of a bagpipe and the twang of a fiddle? Think again. Edinburgh is one of the world's great performing arts cities. Live events take place throughout the city all year long, but things really come alive in August during the famed Edinburgh Festival Fringe and Edinburgh International Festival, which attract the best in music, dance, theater, circus, stand-up comedy, poetry, painting, and sculpture from all over the globe. *The Scotsman* and *Herald*, Scotland's leading daily newspapers, carry listings and reviews in their arts pages every day, with special editions during the festival. Tickets are generally sold in advance; in some cases they're also available from certain designated travel agents or at the door, although concerts by national orchestras often sell out long before the day of the performance.

Shopping

The New Town is considered Edinburgh's main shopping district yet its **Princes Street** disappoints some visitors with its dull modern architecture, average chain stores, and many fast-food outlets. However, head to its eastern end (on the corner of Leith Street) to find the recently refurbished **St James Quarter**, a vast, state-of-the-art shopping mall.

One block north of Princes Street lies pretty **Rose Street**. Partly pedestrianized, it's a pleasant place to stroll and browse a host of smaller specialty shops. Another block up is bustling **George Street**. The stores here tend to be fairly upscale, with posh London names like Jo Malone, Penhaligons, and Hawes & Curtis prominently featured, though some of the older independent stores continue to do good business.

The streets crossing George Street—Hanover, Frederick, and Castle—are also worth exploring. **Dundas Street**, the northern extension of Hanover Street beyond Queen Street Gardens, has several antiques shops. **Thistle Street**, originally George Street's "back lane," or service area, has several boutiques and even more antiques shops.

Walk to the west end of Princes Street and then along its continuation, Shandwick Place, to reach **Stafford Street** and the intersecting **William Street**. Together, they form a small, upscale shopping area in a gorgeous Georgian setting.

North of Princes Street, on the way to the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, is **Stockbridge**, an oddball shopping area of some charm, particularly on St. Stephen Street. To get here, walk north down Frederick Street and Howe Street, away from Princes Street, then turn left onto North West Circus Place.

Shopping in the Old Town is a little more limited. As may be expected, many shops along the **Royal Mile** sell what may be politely or euphemistically described as "touristware"—think whiskies, tartans, and tweeds. Careful exploration, however, will reveal some worthwhile establishments, including shops that cater to highly specialized interests and hobbies.

A street below the Royal Mile, just off George IV Bridge at the castle end, is **Victoria Street**, which has some popular specialty shops grouped in a small area. Follow the tiny West Bow to **Grassmarket** for more specialty stores.

Halfway down the Royal Mile, and off the other side, is one of Edinburgh's hippest shopping experiences: **The Arches**. Here you'll find a number of glass-fronted independent stores set within Victorian-era archways. It's on East Market Street, just to the southeast of Edinburgh Waverley train station.

Tours

ORIENTATION TOURS

One good way to get oriented in Edinburgh is to take a bus tour. If you want to get to know the area around Edinburgh, Rabbie's leads small groups on several different excursions.

Edinburgh Bus Tours

BUS TOURS | Explore every corner of Edinburgh with this company's range of bus tours. The most popular are the Edinburgh Tour, which mainly covers Old Town sights including Edinburgh Castle, the Royal Mile, and the Palace of Holyroodhouse; and the Majestic Tour, which explores the New Town and farther corners of the city, including the Royal Yacht *Britannia* at Leith and the Royal Botanic Garden. Buses depart from Waverley Bridge, with each tour lasting an hour.

■ **TIP** → If you plan more than one bus tour during a weekend, buy a money-saving Grand 48 ticket. ☎ *Waverley Bridge, New Town* ☎ 0131/475-0618 ☎ www.edinburghthortour.com 📄 From £8.

Rabbie's

BUS TOURS | Venture farther afield from Edinburgh on day trips run by this cheerful company. Its minibuses will take you a surprisingly long way and back in a day, with sights including Loch Ness, St. Andrews, Rosslyn Chapel, and Loch Lomond National Park. There are also multi-day trips available. Groups are kept to a guaranteed maximum of 16, giving these a less impersonal feel than some of the big enterprises. ☎ 6 *Waterloo Pl., Old Town* ☎ 0131/226-3133 ☎ www.rabbies.com 📄 From £34.

PERSONAL GUIDES

Scottish Tourist Guides Association

PRIVATE GUIDES | This organization can supply guides (in 19 languages) who are fully qualified and will meet clients at any point of entry into the United Kingdom or Scotland. Guides can also tailor tours to

your interests. ☎ 01786/447-784 ☎ www.stga.co.uk 📄 From £150.

WALKING AND CYCLING TOURS

The Cadies & Witchery Tours

WALKING TOURS | Spooky tours tracing Edinburgh's ghouls, murders, and other grisly happenings start outside the Witchery Restaurant. The Cadies & Witchery Tours has built an award-winning reputation for combining entertainment and historical accuracy in its lively and enthusiastic Murder & Mystery and (in summer only) Ghosts & Gore tours. Both take you through the narrow Old Town lanes and closes, with costumed guides and other theatrical characters popping up along the route. ☎ 84 *West Bow, Old Town* ☎ 0131/225-6745 ☎ www.witcherytours.com 📄 £10.

The Edinburgh Literary Pub Tour

WALKING TOURS | Professional actors invoke local literary characters while taking you around some of the city's most hallowed watering holes on these lively and informative tours. The experience is led by "Clart and McBrain"—one a bohemian, the other an intellectual—who regale you with witty tales of the literary past of Edinburgh's Old and New Towns. Tours run daily from May to September, Thursday through Sunday in April and October, Friday through Sunday in January to March, and Fridays in November and December; they meet outside the Beehive Inn. ☎ *The Beehive Inn, 18-20 Grassmarket, Edinburgh* ☎ 0800/169-7410 ☎ www.edinburghliterarypubtour.co.uk 📄 £14.

★ The Tartan Bicycle Company

BICYCLE TOURS | Cycling enthusiast and Edinburgh native Johann offers a range of guided and self-guided bike tours in and around the capital. Each half-day or full-day tour includes hotel pickup and your choice of standard or e-bikes. For a relaxed half-day introduction to Edinburgh, including some lesser-visited neighborhoods, opt for the Sky to Sea tour; it starts at leafy Union Canal,

passes by The Meadows and Arthur's Seat, visits Portobello Beach, The Shore, and the Water of Leith, and ends in the New Town. ☎ *Edinburgh* ☎ 0797/394-0924 ☎ www.tartanbiketours.co.uk 📄 From £45.

Visitor Information

The VisitScotland Edinburgh iCentre, located close to St. Giles' Cathedral on the Royal Mile, offers an accommodation-booking service, along with regular tourist information services.

VISITOR INFORMATION VisitScotland

Edinburgh iCentre. ☎ 249 *High St., Old Town* ☎ 0131/473-3820 ☎ www.visitscotland.com.

Activities

FOOTBALL

Like Glasgow, Edinburgh is mad for football (soccer in the United States), and there's an intense rivalry between the city's two professional teams.

Heart of Midlothian Football Club

SOCCER | Better known simply as "Hearts," the Heart of Midlothian Football Club plays in maroon and white and is based at Tynecastle. The club's crest is based on the Heart of Midlothian mosaic on the Royal Mile. ☎ *Tynecastle Stadium, McLeod St., Edinburgh* ☎ 0333/043-1874 ☎ www.heartsfc.co.uk.

Hibernian Football Club

SOCCER | Known to most as simply "Hibs," the green-and-white-bedecked Hibernian Club was founded in 1875—one year after Hearts—and plays its home matches at Easter Road Stadium in Leith. ☎ *Easter Road Stadium, 12 Albion Pl., Leith* ☎ 0131/661-2159 ☎ www.hibernianfc.co.uk.

GOLF

Edinburgh is widely considered to be the birthplace of modern golf, as its first official rules were developed at Leith Links. Naturally, there are a number of great courses in the city. For more information, the VisitScotland website has an extensive, searchable guide to Scottish courses.

Braid Hills

GOLF | This golf course is beautifully laid out over a rugged range of small hills in the southern suburbs of Edinburgh. The views in each direction—the Pentland Hills to the south, the city skyline and Firth of Forth to the north—are worth a visit in themselves. The city built this course at the turn of the 20th century after urban development forced golfers out of the city center. There's also a nine-hole "Wee Braids" course for beginners and younger players. Reservations are recommended for weekend play. ☎ 27 *Braids Hill Approach, Edinburgh* ☎ 0131/447-6666 ☎ www.edinburghleisure.co.uk 📄 *Braids: £29 weekday, £30 weekends; Wee Braids: £14.50. 📄 Braids: 18 holes, 5865 yards, par 71; Wee Braids: 9 holes, 2232 yards, par 31.*

Bruntsfield Links

GOLF | The British Seniors and several other championship tournaments are held at this prestigious Willie Park—designed course. It's located 3 miles west of Edinburgh, and should not be confused with Bruntsfield Links park in the city center. The course meanders among 155 acres of mature parkland and has fine views over the Firth of Forth. A strict dress code applies. Bruntsfield takes its name from one of the oldest golf links in Scotland, in the center of Edinburgh, where the club used to play—all that remains there is a nine-hole pitch-and-putt course.

■ **TIP** → Full-day tickets are available for just £20 more than the cost of a single round on weekends. ☎ 32 *Barnton Ave., Edinburgh* ☎ 0131/336-1479 ☎ www.bruntsfieldlinks.co.uk 📄 £90 weekdays,

£110 weekends Apr.–Sept.; £60 weekdays, £80 weekends Oct.; £45 Nov.–Mar.
 🏌️ 18 holes, 6437 yards, par 70.

Duddingston Golf Club

GOLF | Founded in 1895, this excellent public parkland course is 2 miles east of the city. The first hole is located in an idyllic deer park (watch out for four-legged spectators). Braid Burn—a stream that flows across the southern part of Edinburgh—also runs through the course, creating a perilous hazard on many holes. Prices drop sharply in the winter months for those willing to risk strong winds and rain. ☎ 135 Duddingston Rd. W, Duddingston ☎ 0131/661–7688 🌐 www.duddingstongolfclub.co.uk 📅 £65 May–Sept.; £40 Apr. and Oct.; £35 Mar. and Nov.; £25 Dec.–Feb. 🏌️ 18 holes, 6466 yards, par 72.

Royal Burgess Golfing Society

GOLF | Edinburgh's other Victorian courses are newcomers when compared to Royal Burgess, which opened in 1735. Its members originally played on Bruntsfield Links; now they and their guests play on elegantly manicured parkland in the city's northwestern suburbs. It's a challenging course with fine, beautifully maintained greens. Be aware that there's a strict, conservative dress code—tailored pants and collared shirts on the course and in the clubhouse (so no denim, T-shirts, or sweaters), and jackets and ties in the Members' Bar. ☎ 181 Whitehouse Rd., Barnton ☎ 0131/339–2075 🌐 www.royalburgess.co.uk 📅 £100 for 1 round; £150 day ticket 🏌️ 18 holes, 6511 yards, par 71.

RUGBY

Edinburgh is the home of Scottish rugby, with national stadium Murrayfield hosting regular international matches. It's also home to several amateur clubs and the professional club Edinburgh Rugby, who compete in the international Pro14 League.

★ Murrayfield Stadium

RUGBY | Home of the Scottish Rugby Union, Murrayfield Stadium hosts rugby matches in early spring and fall, as well as prestigious Six Nations tournament games in February and March. Crowds of good-humored rugby fans from all over the world add greatly to the sense of excitement in the streets of Edinburgh. Stick around after the game as there's often live music, food, and drinks to enjoy in the stadium grounds. Outside of the rugby season, you can still see Murrayfield with a stadium tour; tickets are £12 for adults. ☎ Roseburn St., Murrayfield ☎ 0131/346–5000 🌐 www.scottishrugby.org.

Edinburgh

Old Town

East of Edinburgh Castle, the historic castle esplanade becomes the street known as the Royal Mile, leading down through Old Town to the Palace of Holyroodhouse. The Mile, as it's known locally, is actually made up of one thoroughfare that bears, in consecutive sequence, different names—Castlehill, Lawnmarket, Parliament Square, High Street, and Canongate. This thoroughfare, and the streets and passages that wind off it on both sides, really *were* Edinburgh until the 18th century saw expansions to the south and north. Everybody lived here: the richer folk on the lower floors of houses; the less well-to-do families on the middle floors; and the poor highest up.

Time and progress (of a sort) have swept away some of the narrow closes and tall tenements of the Old Town, but enough survive for you to be able to imagine the original profile of Scotland's capital. There are many guided tours of the area, or you can simply stroll around at your leisure—often a better choice in summer when

tourists pack the area and large guided groups have trouble making their way through the crowds.

Sights

Arthur's Seat

VIEWPOINT | The high point of 640-acre Holyrood Park is this famously spectacular viewpoint. You'll have seen it before—countless photos have been snapped from this very spot. The “seat” in question is actually the 822-foot-high plateau of a small mountain. A ruined church—the 15th-century Chapel of St. Anthony—adds to its impossible picturesqueness. There are various starting points for the walk, but one of the most pleasant begins at the Scottish Parliament building. Cross the road from Parliament, skirt around the parking lot, cross a second road, and join the gently rising path to the left (rather than the steeper fork to the right). At a moderate pace, this climb takes around 45 minutes up and 30 minutes down, and is easy so long as you're reasonably fit. Even if you aren't, there are plenty of places to stop for a rest and to admire the views along the way. A faster—though less beautiful—way to reach the summit is to drive to the small parking area at Dunsapie Loch, on Queen's Road, then follow the footpath up the hill; this walk takes about 20 minutes. ☎ Queen's Dr., Old Town.

Camera Obscura and World of Illusions

OBSERVATORY | **FAMILY** | View Edinburgh like a Victorian at the city's 19th-century camera obscura. Head up Outlook Tower for the headline attraction—an optical instrument that affords live bird's-eye views of the city, illuminated onto a concave table. It's been wowing visitors since 1853, and yet it retains a magical quality that can captivate even the most cynical smartphone-toting teen. After you've seen the camera obscura and enjoyed the rooftop views, head down to explore five more floors of interactive optical illusions. They are guaranteed to

keep the kids entertained and educated for an hour or two. ☎ 549 Castlehill, Old Town ☎ 0131/226–3709 🌐 www.camera-obscura.co.uk 📅 £18.95.

Canongate

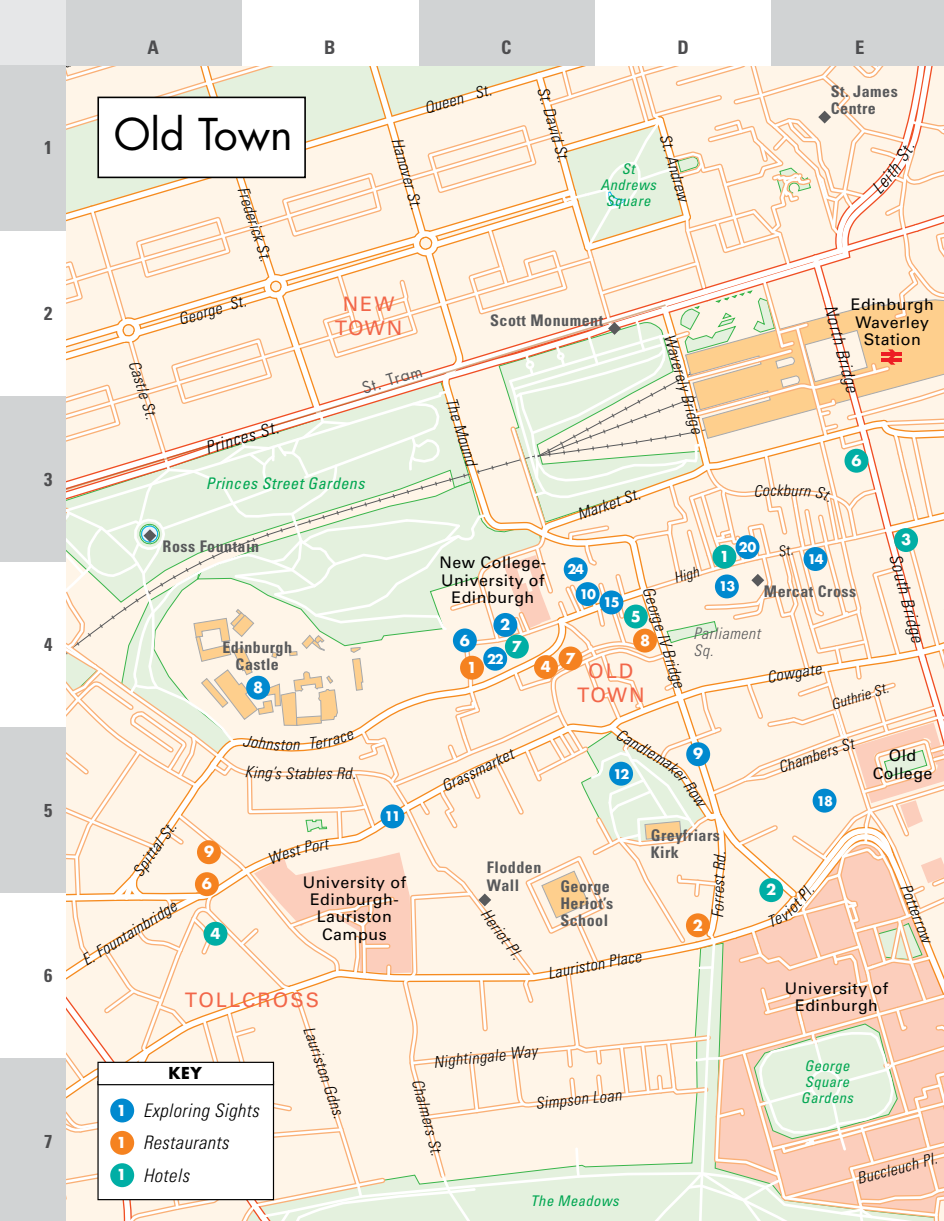
STREET | This section of the Royal Mile takes its name from the canons who once ran the abbey at Holyrood. Canongate—in Scots, *gate* means “street”—was originally an independent town, or *burgh*, another Scottish term used to refer to a community with trading rights granted by the monarch. In this area you'll find **Canongate Kirk** and its graveyard, **Canongate Tolbooth**, as well as the **Museum of Edinburgh**. ☎ Royal Mile, between High St. and Abbey Strand, Old Town.

Canongate Kirk

CEMETERY | This unadorned Church of Scotland building, built in 1688, is best known for its graveyard. It is the final resting place of several notable Scots, including economist Adam Smith (1723–90), author of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776); Dugald Stewart (1753–1828), the leading European philosopher of his time; and the undervalued Scottish poet Robert Fergusson (1750–74). The fact that Fergusson's grave is even distinguishable is due to the far more famous Robert Burns (1759–96), who commissioned a marker to be made. Incidentally, Robert Burns's literary lover Agnes Maclehoze (the “Clarinda” to his “Sylvander” as noted in a series of passionate letters) also has a memorial stone here. ☎ 153 Canongate, Old Town ☎ 0131/556–3515 🌐 canongatekirk.org.uk 📅 Closed Oct.–Apr.

Canongate Tolbooth and People's Story Museum

HISTORY MUSEUM | Nearly every city and town in Scotland once had a tolbooth. Originally a customhouse, where tolls were gathered, it soon came to mean town hall and later prison, as there were detention cells in the cellar. The building where Canongate's town council once met now has a museum, the People's Story Museum, which focuses on the



Sights

- 1 Arthur's Seat J5
- 2 Camera Obscura and World of Illusions C4
- 3 Canongate F3
- 4 Canongate Kirk G2
- 5 Canongate Tolbooth and People's Story Museum G3

- 6 Castlehill C4
- 7 Dynamic Earth I3
- 8 Edinburgh Castle B4
- 9 George IV Bridge D5
- 10 Gladstone's Land C4
- 11 Grassmarket B5
- 12 Greyfriars Kirkyard D5

- 13 High Kirk of St. Giles D4
- 14 High Street E3
- 15 Lawnmarket D4
- 16 Museum of Childhood F3
- 17 Museum of Edinburgh G3
- 18 National Museum of Scotland E5

- 19 Palace of Holyroodhouse I2
- 20 The Real Mary King's Close D3
- 21 The Scottish Parliament H2
- 22 The Scotch Whisky Experience C4



- 23 Scottish Storytelling Centre and John Knox House F3
- 24 Writers' Museum C4

Restaurants

- 1 Cannonball Restaurant C4
- 2 Civerinos D6
- 3 David Bann F4

- 4 Hanam's C4
- 5 La Garrigue F3
- 6 Lovecrums A5
- 7 Oink C4
- 8 Ondine D4
- 9 Timberyard A5
- 10 Wedgwood the Restaurant F3

Hotels

- 1 Cheval Old Town Chambers D3
- 2 Hotel du Vin E5
- 3 The Inn on the Mile E3
- 4 The Knight Residence A6
- 5 Radisson Collection Royal Mile Edinburgh D4
- 6 The Scotsman E3
- 7 The Witchery by the Castle C4

The History of Edinburgh Castle



Archaeological investigations have established that the rock on which Edinburgh Castle stands was inhabited as far back as 1,000 BC, in the latter part of the Bronze Age. There have been fortifications here since the mysterious tribal Picts first used it as a stronghold in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. Anglian invaders from northern England dislodged the Picts in AD 452, and for the next 1,300 years the site saw countless battles and skirmishes.

In the castle you'll hear the story of Randolph, Earl of Moray, the nephew of freedom fighter Robert the Bruce. He scaled the heights one dark night in 1313, surprised the English guard, and

recaptured the castle for the Scots. During this battle he destroyed every one of the castle's buildings except for St. Margaret's Chapel, dating from around 1076, so that successive Stewart kings had to rebuild the castle bit by bit.

The castle has been held over time by Scots and Englishmen, Catholics and Protestants, soldiers and royalty. In the 16th century Mary, Queen of Scots, gave birth here to the future James VI of Scotland (1566–1625), who was also to rule England as James I. In 1573 it was the last fortress to support Mary's claim as the rightful Catholic queen of Britain, causing the castle to be virtually destroyed by English artillery fire.



An emblem of the city's history, the rock where Edinburgh Castle stands has been inhabited as far back as 1,000 BC.

lives of everyday folk from the 18th century to today. Exhibits describe how Canongate once bustled with the activities of the tradespeople needed to supply life's essentials. There are also displays on the politics, health care, and leisure time (such as it was) in days of yore. Other exhibits leap forward in time to show, for example, a typical 1940s kitchen. ☒ 163 Canongate, Old Town ☎ 0131/529-4057 🌐 www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk.

Castlehill

STREET | This street, the upper portion of the Royal Mile, was where alleged witches were brought in the 16th century to be burned at the stake. The cannonball embedded in the west gable of Castlehill's Cannonball Restaurant was, according to legend, fired from the castle during the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, led by Bonnie Prince Charlie (1720–88)—though the truth is probably that it was installed there deliberately in 1681 as a height marker for Edinburgh's first piped water-supply system. Atop the Gothic

Tolbooth Kirk, built in 1844 for the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, stands the tallest spire in the city, at 240 feet. The church now houses the cheery Edinburgh Festival offices and a pleasant café known as the Hub. ☒ *East of Esplanade and west of Lawnmarket, Old Town.*

Dynamic Earth

HISTORY MUSEUM | FAMILY | Using state-of-the-art technology, the 11 theme galleries at this interactive science museum educate and entertain as they explore the wonders of the planet, from polar regions to tropical rain forests. Geological history, from the big bang to the unknown future, is also examined, all topped off with an eye-popping, 360-degree planetarium experience. ☒ Holyrood Rd., Old Town ☎ 0131/550-7800 🌐 www.dynaminearth.co.uk 🎫 £15.95 🕒 Closed Mon.–Wed. Nov.–Feb.

★ Edinburgh Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | FAMILY | The crowning glory of the Scottish capital, Edinburgh Castle is popular not only for its pivotal role in Scottish history, but also because

of the spectacular views from its battlements: on a clear day the vistas stretch all the way to Fife. You'll need at least three hours to see everything it has to offer (even longer if you're a military history buff), though if you're in a rush, its main highlights can just about be squeezed into an hour and a half.

You enter across the Esplanade, the huge forecourt built in the 18th century as a parade ground. The area comes alive with color and music each August when it's used for the Military Tattoo, a festival of magnificently outfitted marching bands and regiments. Head over the drawbridge and through the gatehouse, past the guards, and you'll find the rough stone walls of the Half-Moon Battery, where the one-o'clock gun is fired every day in an impressively anachronistic ceremony; these curving ramparts give Edinburgh Castle its distinctive silhouette. Climb up through a second gateway and you come to the oldest surviving building in the complex, the tiny 11th-century St. Margaret's Chapel, named in honor of

Saxon queen Margaret (circa 1045–93), who persuaded her husband, King Malcolm III (circa 1031–93), to move his court from Dunfermline to Edinburgh. The story goes that Edinburgh's environs—the Lothians—were occupied by Anglian settlers with whom the queen felt more at home, as opposed to the Celts who surrounded Dunfermline. The Crown Room, a must-see, contains the "Honours of Scotland"—the crown, scepter, and sword that once graced the Scottish monarch—as well as the Stone of Scone, upon which Scottish monarchs once sat to be crowned (it's still a feature of British coronation ceremonies today). In the section now called Queen Mary's Apartments, Mary, Queen of Scots, gave birth to James VI of Scotland. The Great Hall, which held Scottish Parliament meetings until 1840, displays arms and armor under an impressive vaulted, beamed ceiling.

Military features of interest include the Scottish National War Memorial, the Scottish United Services Museum, and

Grassmarket Gallows



Grassmarket's history is long and gory. The cobbled cross at the east end marks the site of the town gallows. Among those hanged here were many 17th-century Covenanters, members of the Church of Scotland who rose up against Charles I's efforts to enforce Anglican or "English" ideologies on the Scottish people. Judges were known to issue the death sentence for these religious reformers with

the words, "Let them glorify God in the Grassmarket." Two Grassmarket pubs have names that reference the local hangings: the Last Drop and Maggie Dickson's. The latter references a woman who was hanged and proclaimed dead, but when traveling for her burial, sprang back to life. She lived for another 40 years with the nickname Half-Hangit Maggie.

the famous 15th-century Belgian-made cannon Mons Meg. This enormous piece of artillery has been silent since 1682, when it exploded while firing a salute for the Duke of York; it now stands in an ancient hall behind the Half-Moon Battery. Contrary to what you may hear from locals, it's not Mons Meg but the battery's gun that goes off with a bang every weekday at 1 pm, frightening visitors and reminding Edinburghers to check their watches. ■ **TIP→ Avoid the queues and save some money by buying tickets in advance online. When you arrive, you can pick up your ticket from one of the automated collection points at the entrance.**

✉ *Castle Esplanade and Castlehill, Old Town* ☎ 0131/225-9846 🌐 www.edinburghcastle.scot 💷 £17.50.

George IV Bridge

BRIDGE | Here's a curiosity—a bridge that most of its users don't ever realize is a bridge. With buildings closely packed on both sides, George IV Bridge can feel to many like a regular Edinburgh street, but for those forewarned, the truth is plain to see. At the corner of the bridge stands one of the most photographed sculptures in Scotland, *Greyfriars Bobby*. This statue pays tribute to the legendarily loyal Skye terrier who kept vigil beside his master's grave for 14 years after he died in 1858. The 1961 Walt Disney film *Greyfriars Bobby* tells a

version of the heartrending tale. ✉ *Bank St. and Lawnmarket, Old Town.*

Gladstone's Land

HISTORIC HOME | This narrow, six-story tenement is one of the oldest buildings on the Royal Mile. Start on the third floor and work your way down through the centuries, with each room showcasing different time periods in the life of the building. You'll start in a traditional boarding house (early 1900s), move through a fashionable draper's shop (mid-1700s), and end in a plush apartment with a kitchen and stockroom (early 1600s). All rooms are decorated in authentic period furnishings, with visitors welcome to rummage through drawers, pick up ornaments, and even recline on the four-poster beds—which, incidentally, offer the best views of the magnificent hand-painted ceilings. The ground floor is home to a pleasant little coffeeshop and ice cream parlor. ✉ *477B Lawnmarket, Old Town* ☎ 0131/226-5856 🌐 www.nts.org.uk 💷 £7.50.

Grassmarket

PLAZA/SQUARE | For centuries an agricultural marketplace, Grassmarket is now the site of numerous shops, bars, and restaurants, making it a hive of activity at night. Sections of the Old Town wall can be traced on the north side by a series of steps that ascend from Grassmarket



The Greyfriars Kirkyard, part of the church Greyfriars Kirk, is allegedly one of the most haunted cemeteries in Europe.

to Johnston Terrace. The best-preserved section of the wall can be found by crossing to the south side and climbing the steps of the lane called the Vennel. Here the 16th-century **Flodden Wall** comes in from the east and turns south at Telfer's Wall, a 17th-century extension.

From the northeast corner of the Grassmarket, **Victoria Street**, a 19th-century addition to the Old Town, leads to the George IV Bridge. Shops here sell antiques, designer clothing, and souvenirs. ✉ *Grassmarket, Edinburgh.*

★ Greyfriars Kirkyard

CEMETERY | This sprawling, hillside graveyard, surely one of the most evocative in Europe (particularly at twilight), is a giddy mess of old, tottering tombstones that mark the graves of some of Scotland's most respected heroes and despised villains. Many of these inspired character names in the Harry Potter book series; fans can seek out Potters, McGonagalls, and Moodies, to name a few. Among the larger tombs arranged in avenues and the seemingly random assortment of grave

markers, lie two rare surviving *mortsafes*: iron cages erected around graves in the early 1800s to prevent the theft of corpses for sale to medical schools.

At the southern end of the graveyard stands Greyfriars Kirk, the 400-year-old church where the National Covenant—a document declaring the Presbyterian Church in Scotland independent of the monarchy, and so plunging Scotland into decades of civil war—was signed in 1638. Nearby, at the corner of George IV Bridge and Candlemaker Row, stands one of Scotland's most photographed sites: the statue of Greyfriars Bobby, a Skye terrier who supposedly spent 14 years guarding the grave of his departed owner. ✉ *26A Candlemaker Row, Old Town* ☎ 0131/225-1900 🌐 www.greyfriarskirk.com/visit/kirkyard.

High Kirk of St. Giles (St Giles' Cathedral) **RELIGIOUS BUILDING** | St. Giles, which lies about one-third of the way along the Royal Mile from Edinburgh Castle, is one of the city's principal churches. It may not quite rival Paris's Notre Dame or London's

Westminster Abbey—it's more like a large parish church than a great European cathedral—but it has a long and storied history. There has been a church here since AD 854, although most of the present structure dates from either 1120 or 1829, when the church was restored.

The tower, with its stone crown 161 feet above the ground, was completed between 1495 and 1500. Inside the church stands a life-size statue of the Scot whose spirit still dominates the place—the great religious reformer and preacher John Knox. But the most elaborate feature is the **Chapel of the Order of the Thistle**, built onto the southeast corner of the church in 1911 for the exclusive use of Scotland's only chivalric order, the Most Ancient and Noble Order of the Thistle. It bears the belligerent national motto "*nemo me impune lacessit*" ("No one provokes me with impunity"). Look out for the carved wooden angel playing bagpipes. ☒ *High St., Old Town* ☎ 0131/226-0677 🌐 www.stgilescathedral.org.uk 🆓 Free, but donations welcome.

High Street

STREET | The High Street (one of the five streets that make up the Royal Mile) is home to an array of impressive buildings and sights, including some hidden historic relics. Near Parliament Square, look on the west side for a **heart** mosaic set in cobbles. This marks the site of the vanished Old Tolbooth, the center of city life from the 15th century until the building's demolition in 1817. The ancient municipal building was used as a prison and a site of public execution, so you may witness a local spitting on the heart as one walks by—for good luck.

Just outside Parliament House lies the **Mercat Cross** (*mercat* means "market"), a great landmark of Old Town life. It was an old mercantile center, where royal proclamations were—and are still—read. Most of the present cross is comparatively modern, dating from the time of William Gladstone

(1809–98), the great Victorian prime minister and rival of Benjamin Disraeli (1804–81). Across High Street from the High Kirk of St. Giles stands the **City Chambers**, now the seat of local government. Built by John Fergus, who adapted a design of John Adam in 1753, the chambers were originally known as the Royal Exchange and intended to be where merchants and lawyers could conduct business. Note how the building drops 11 stories to Cockburn Street on its north side.

A *tron* is a weigh beam used in public weigh houses, and the **Tron Kirk** was named after a salt tron that used to stand nearby. The *kirk* (church) itself was built after 1633, when St. Giles's became an Episcopal cathedral for a brief time. In 1693 a minister here delivered an often-quoted prayer: "Lord, hae mercy on a' [all] fools and idiots, and particularly on the Magistrates of Edinburgh." ☒ *Between Lawnmarket and Canongate, Old Town.*

Lawnmarket

STREET | The second uppermost of the streets that make up the Royal Mile, this was formerly the site of the city's produce market, with a once-a-week special sale of wool and linen. Now it's home to historic Gladstone's Land and the Writers' Museum. At various times, the Lawnmarket Courts housed James Boswell, David Hume, and Robert Burns, while in the 1770s this area was home to the infamous Deacon Brodie, pillar of society by day and a murdering gang leader by night. Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–94) may well have used Brodie as the inspiration for his novella *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. ☒ *Between Castlehill and High St., Old Town.*

Museum of Childhood

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM | **FAMILY** | Even adults tend to enjoy this cheerfully noisy museum—a cacophony of childhood memorabilia, vintage toys, antique dolls, and fairground games. The museum claims to have been the first in the world devoted solely to the history of childhood. ☒ 42



The Grand Gallery of the National Museum of Scotland is reminiscent of a classic Victorian arcade mall.

High St., Old Town ☎ 0131/529-4142
🌐 www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk.

Museum of Edinburgh

HISTORY MUSEUM | A must-see if you're interested in the details of Old Town life, this bright yellow, 16th-century building is home to a fascinating museum of local history. It houses some of the most important artifacts in Scottish history—including the National Covenant, a document signed by Scotland's Presbyterian leadership in defiance of a reformed liturgy imposed by King Charles I of England that ignited decades of civil war—alongside Scottish pottery, silver, and glassware, as well as curios like Greyfriars Bobby's dog collar. ☒ 142–146 Canongate, Old Town ☎ 0131/529-4143
🌐 www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk.

★ National Museum of Scotland

HISTORY MUSEUM | **FAMILY** | This museum traces the country's fascinating story from the oldest fossils to the most recent popular culture, making it a must-see for first-time visitors to Scotland. Two of the most famous treasures are

the Lewis Chessmen, a set of intricately carved 12th-century ivory chess pieces found on one of Scotland's Western Isles, and Dolly the sheep, the world's first cloned mammal and biggest ovine celebrity. A dramatic, cryptlike entrance gives way to the light-filled, birdcage wonders of the Victorian grand hall and the upper galleries. Other exhibition highlights include the hanging hippo and sea creatures of the Wildlife Panorama, beautiful Viking brooches, Pictish stones, and Queen Mary's *clarsach* (harp). Take the elevator to the lovely rooftop terrace for spectacular views of Edinburgh Castle and the city below. ☒ *Chambers St., Old Town* ☎ 0300/123-6789 🌐 www.nms.ac.uk 🆓 Free.

★ Palace of Holyroodhouse

CASTLE/PALACE | The one-time haunt of Mary, Queen of Scots, the Palace of Holyroodhouse has a long history of gruesome murders, destructive fires, and power-hungry personalities. Today, it's Queen Elizabeth II's official residence in Scotland. A doughty, impressive palace



The Palace of Holyroodhouse is the Queen's official residence in Scotland.

standing at the foot of the Royal Mile, it's built around a graceful, lawned central court at the end of Canongate. And when royals are not in residence, you can take a tour. There's plenty to see here, so make sure you have at least two hours to tour the palace, gardens, and the ruins of the 12th-century abbey; pick up the free audio guide for the full experience.

Many monarchs, including Charles II, Queen Victoria, and George V, have left their mark on the rooms here, but it's Mary, Queen of Scots whose spirit looms largest. Perhaps the most memorable room is the chamber in which David Rizzio (1533–66), secretary to Mary, was stabbed more than 50 times by the henchmen of her second husband, Lord Darnley. Darnley himself was murdered the next year, clearing the way for the queen's marriage to her lover, the Earl of Bothwell.

The King James Tower is the oldest surviving section of the palace, containing Mary's rooms on the second floor, and Lord Darnley's rooms below. Though

much has been altered, there are fine fireplaces, paneling, tapestries, and 18th- and 19th-century furnishings throughout. At the south end of the palace front, you'll find the Royal Dining Room, and along the south side is the Throne Room, now used for social and ceremonial occasions.

At the back of the palace is the King's Bedchamber. The 150-foot-long Great Picture Gallery, on the north side, displays the portraits of 110 Scottish monarchs. These were commissioned by Charles II, who was eager to demonstrate his Scottish ancestry—but most of the people depicted are entirely fictional, and the likenesses of several others were invented and simply given the names of real people. The Queen's Gallery, in a former church and school at the entrance to the palace, holds rotating exhibits from the Royal Collection. There is a separate admission charge (£7.80).

Holyroodhouse has its origins in an Augustinian monastery founded by David I (1084–1153) in 1128. In the 15th and

16th centuries, Scottish royalty, preferring the comforts of the abbey to drafty Edinburgh Castle, settled into Holyroodhouse, expanding the buildings until the palace eclipsed the monastery. Nevertheless, you can still walk around some evocative abbey ruins.

After the Union of the Crowns in 1603, when the Scottish royal court packed its bags and decamped to England, the building began to fall into disrepair. It was Charles II (1630–85) who rebuilt Holyrood in the architectural style of Louis XIV (1638–1715), and this is the style you see today. Queen Victoria (1819–1901) and her grandson King George V (1865–1936) renewed interest in the palace, and the buildings were refurbished and again made suitable for royal residence. ☒ *Canongate, Old Town* ☎ 0131/123–7306 🌐 www.rct.uk 📞 £16.50; £21.90 with *Queen's Gallery* 🗓 Closed Tues.–Wed. 📞 Advance booking required.

The Real Mary King's Close

HISTORIC SIGHT | FAMILY | Buried beneath the City Chambers, this narrow, cobbled close (alleyway) provides a glimpse into a very different Edinburgh. It was once a busy open-air thoroughfare with hundreds of residents and a lively market, but in 1753 it was sealed off when the Royal Exchange (now the City Chambers) was built on top. Today costumed guides take you around the claustrophobic remains of the shops and houses, describing life here for the residents from plague and quarantine to rivers of sewage, as well as the odd murder mystery and ghost story. But for all the (somewhat over-the-top) theatricality, the real highlights here are historical; the sealed-in street is a truly fascinating insight into 17th-century Edinburgh. ☒ 2 *Warriston's Close, off High St., Old Town* ☎ 0131/225–0672 🌐 www.realmarykingsclose.com 📞 £18.95.

The Scottish Parliament

GOVERNMENT BUILDING | Scotland's now-iconic Parliament building is starkly modernist, with irregular curves and angles that mirror the twisting shapes of the surrounding landscape. Stylistically, it is about as far removed from Westminster as can be. Originally conceived by the late Catalan architect Enric Miralles, and completed by his widow Benedetta Tagliabue, the structure's artistry is most apparent when you step inside. The gentle slopes, the forest's worth of oak, the polished concrete and granite, and the walls of glass create an understated magnificence. Take a free guided tour to see the main hall and debating chamber, a committee room, and other areas of the building, or choose a specialist subject for your tour, from art to architecture. All tour reservations must be made online. Call well in advance to get a free ticket to view Parliament in action. ☒ *Horse Wynd, Old Town* ☎ 0131/348–5000 🌐 www.parliament.scot 🗓 Closed Sun.

The Scotch Whisky Experience

OTHER MUSEUM | Transforming malted barley and spring water into one of Scotland's most important exports—that's the subject of this popular Royal Mile attraction. An imaginative approach to the subject has guests riding in low-speed barrel cars and exploring Scotland's diverse whisky regions and their distinct flavors. Sniff the various aromas and decide whether you like fruity, sweet, or smoky, and afterward experts will help you select your perfect dram. Your guide will then take you into a vault containing the world's largest collection of Scotch whiskies. Opt for one of the premium tours (from £32 to £82) for extras ranging from additional tastings to a Scottish dining experience. ☒ 354 *Castlehill, Old Town* ☎ 0131/220–0441 🌐 www.scotch-whiskyexperience.co.uk 📞 From £19.

The Building of Edinburgh



Towering over the city, Edinburgh Castle was actually built over the plug of an ancient volcano. Many millennia ago, an eastward-grinding glacier encountered the tough basalt core of the volcano and swept around it, scouring steep cliffs and leaving a trail of matter. This material formed a ramp gently leading down from the rocky summit. On this *crag and tail* would grow the city of Edinburgh and its castle.

Castle, Walled Town, and Holyroodhouse

By the 12th century Edinburgh had become a walled town, still perched on the hill. Its shape was becoming clearer: like a fish with its head at the castle, its backbone running down the ridge, and its ribs leading briefly off on either side. The backbone gradually became the continuous thoroughfare now known as the Royal Mile, and the ribs became the closes (alleyways), some still surviving, that were the scene of many historic incidents.

By the early 15th century, Edinburgh had become the undisputed capital of Scotland. The bitter defeat of Scotland at Flodden in 1513, when Scotland aligned itself with France against England, caused a new defensive city wall to be built. Though the castle escaped destruction, the city was burned by the English Earl of Hertford under orders from King Henry VIII (1491–1547). This was during a time known as the “Rough Wooing,” when Henry was trying to coerce the Scots into allowing the young Mary, Queen of Scots (1542–87), to marry his son Edward. The plan failed and Mary

married Francis, the Dauphin of France.

By 1561, when Mary returned from France already widowed, the guest-house of the Abbey of Holyrood had grown to become the Palace of Holyroodhouse, replacing Edinburgh Castle as the main royal residence. Her legacy to the city included the destruction of most of the earliest buildings of Edinburgh Castle.

Enlightenment and the City

In the challenging decades after the union with England in 1707, many influential Scots, both in Edinburgh and elsewhere, went through an identity crisis. Out of the 18th-century difficulties, however, grew the Scottish Enlightenment, during which educated Scots made great strides in medicine, economics, and science.

Changes came to the cityscape, too. By the mid-18th century, it had become the custom for wealthy Scottish landowners to spend the winter in the Old Town of Edinburgh, in town houses huddled between the high Castle Rock and the Royal Palace below. Cross-fertilized in coffee-houses and taverns, intellectual notions flourished among a people determined to remain Scottish despite their Parliament being dissolved. One result was a campaign to expand and beautify the city, to give it a look worthy of its future nickname, the Athens of the North. Thus, the New Town of Edinburgh was built, with broad streets and gracious buildings creating a harmony that even today's throbbing traffic cannot obscure.

★ Scottish Storytelling Centre and John Knox House

ARTS CENTER | The stripped-down, low-fi, traditional art of storytelling has had something of a resurgence in Britain since the turn of the century, and there are few places better than this to experience a master storyteller in full flow. Housed in a modern building that manages to blend seamlessly with the historic structures on either side, the center hosts a year-round program of storytelling, theater, music, and literary events. A great little café serves lunch, tea, and home-baked cakes.

The center's storytellers also hold tours of John Knox House next door. It isn't certain that the religious reformer ever lived here, but there's evidence he died here in 1572. Mementos of his life are on view inside, and the distinctive dwelling gives you a glimpse of what Old Town life was like in the 16th century—projecting upper floors were once commonplace along the Royal Mile. ☎ 43–45 High St., Old Town ☎ 0131/556–9579 🌐 www.scottishstorytellingcentre.com 📺 Storytelling Centre free; John Knox House £6.

Writers' Museum

ART MUSEUM | Situated down a narrow close off Lawnmarket is Lady Stair's House, a fine example of 17th-century urban architecture. Inside, the Writers' Museum evokes Scotland's literary past with such exhibits as the letters, possessions, and original manuscripts of Sir Walter Scott, Robert Burns, and Robert Louis Stevenson. ☎ Lady Stair's Close, off Lawnmarket, Old Town ☎ 0131/529–4901 🌐 www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk.

🍴 Restaurants

The most historic part of the city houses some of its grander restaurants (though, curiously, none of its Michelin stars). It is also home to some of Edinburgh's oldest and most atmospheric pubs, which serve good, informal meals.

★ Cannonball Restaurant

\$\$\$ | **ITALIAN** | The name refers to one of the most delightful quirks of Edinburgh's Old Town—the cannonball embedded in the wall outside, said to have been fired at the castle while Bonnie Prince Charlie was in residence (not true, but a good story). The atmosphere in this three-story restaurant and whisky bar is casual and relaxed, despite the gorgeous art deco dining room with views of the castle esplanade. **Known for:** bread-crumbed haggis cannonballs; scrumptious Italian-Scottish cuisine; great views of the castle. ☎ Average main: £25 ☎ 356 Castlehill, Old Town ☎ 0131/225–1550 🌐 www.contini.com/cannonball ☺ Closed Sun.–Tues. No lunch Wed.–Fri.

Civerinos

\$ | **PIZZA** | With its primary color interiors, blaring 1980s hip-hop soundtrack, and brightly dressed waitstaff, this pizza diner may be Edinburgh's most upbeat dining option yet. Luckily, the food is equally joyful: take your pick from a dozen delicious pizza pies, from meaty feasts to vegan delights, or opt for a tasty pasta or salad instead. **Known for:** bingeable garlic crust bites; Edinburgh's best pizza pies; mood-liftingly bright decor. ☎ Average main: £14 ☎ 5 Hunter Sq., Old Town ☎ 0131/220–0851 🌐 www.civerinos.com.

David Bann

\$ | **VEGETARIAN** | This hip eatery, situated just off the Royal Mile, serves exclusively vegetarian and vegan favorites, and its inventive dishes and modern interior make it a popular place with young locals. The menu changes constantly, but the invariably creative, flavorful dishes often leave carnivores forgetting they're eating vegetarian. **Known for:** lovely setting; superb vegetarian and vegan cuisine; very affordable. ☎ Average main: £14 ☎ 56–58 St. Mary's St., Old Town ☎ 0131/556–5888 🌐 www.davidbann.co.uk.

Hanam's

\$ | **MIDDLE EASTERN** | Kurdish food may not be as well known as other Middle Eastern cuisines, but dishes like *bay-engaun surocau* (marinated slow-roasted eggplant) and lamb *tashreeb* (a flavorful casserole) are worth checking out. Hanam's proudly promotes Kurdish cuisine, but also serves more familiar and equally delicious Middle Eastern fare, from shish kebabs to falafel. **Known for:** hookah on heated terrace; traditional Kurdish cooking; BYOB policy. **Average main:** £14 **3 Johnston Terr., Old Town** ☎ 0131/225-1329 www.hanams.com ☺ No lunch Mon.-Thurs.

La Garrigue

\$\$\$ | **FRENCH** | Edinburgh is blessed with several excellent French bistros, and this is one of the best. Although the modern decor evokes Paris, the food has the rustic flavor of the southern Languedoc region. **Known for:** colorful crockery; rustic French cuisine; attentive service. **Average main:** £22 **31 Jeffrey St., Old Town** ☎ 0131/557-3032 www.lagarrigue.co.uk ☺ Closed Sun.-Mon.

Lovecrumbs

\$ | **CAFÉ** | A bakery-café with an inordinately sweet tooth, Lovecrumbs joyously, deliciously, and unashamedly focuses on what *really* matters in life: cake. It serves delectable confections of all kinds, from sumptuous Victoria sponges to heavenly peanut-butter brownies to mouthwatering lemon tarts. **Known for:** large crowds despite unpredictable opening times; extraordinary cakes galore; junk shop-esque decor. **Average main:** £4 **155 W. Port, Old Town** ☎ 0131/629-0626 www.lovecrumbs.co.uk.

Oink

\$ | **BRITISH** | For a quick, cheap bite while wandering the Royal Mile, you can't beat Oink—possibly the best hog roast (pulled pork) in Edinburgh. Located on Canon-gate (there are two other outlets, but this one is the best), it was founded by two farmers in 2008, and their high-quality,

hand-reared pork has proved a huge hit ever since. **Known for:** no options for vegetarians; unbelievable pulled pork; great-value lunch. **Average main:** £6 **82 Canongate, Old Town** ☎ 07584/637416 www.oinkhogroast.co.uk.

Ondine

\$\$\$\$ | **SEAFOOD** | This fabulous seafood restaurant just off the Royal Mile makes waves with its expertly prepared dishes from sustainable fishing sources. The menu is populated with Scottish seafood staples, from salmon and sea bream to lobster and langoustines, but these are often served in interesting and surprising ways. **Known for:** delicious fish dishes; lavish decor; best oysters in Edinburgh. **Average main:** £30 **2 George IV Bridge, Old Town** ☎ 0131/226-1888 www.ondinerestaurant.co.uk ☺ Closed Sun. and Mon.

Timberyard

\$\$ | **BRITISH** | There are few restaurants that feel so wonderfully, well, *Edinburgh* as this one. The freshest seasonal ingredients, mostly sourced from small local producers, go into creating delicious, inventive fare. **Known for:** pricey multicourse menus; exciting dishes; hip interior. **Average main:** £17 **10 Lady Lawson St., Old Town** ☎ 0131/221-1222 www.timberyard.co ☺ Closed Mon.-Wed. No lunch Thurs.

Wedgwood the Restaurant

\$\$\$ | **MODERN BRITISH** | Rejecting the idea that fine dining should be a stuffy affair, owners Paul Wedgwood and Lisa Channon are in charge at this Royal Mile gem. Local produce and some unusual foraged fronds enliven the taste buds on menus that radically change with the seasons; expect deliciously quirky pairings like scallops in a cauliflower korma or roe deer with buttermilk. **Known for:** great value lunch deals; unfussy fine dining; delicious sticky toffee pudding. **Average main:** £25 **267 Canongate, Old Town** ☎ 0131/558-8737 www.wedgwoodtherestaurant.co.uk ☺ Closed Mon.-Tues.

Hotels

The narrow *pends* (alleys), cobbled streets, and steep hills of the Old Town remind you that this is a city with many layers of history. From medieval to modernist, these hotels are within a stone's throw of the action.

★ Cheval Old Town Chambers

\$\$\$ | **APARTMENT** | Just a few steps down from the Royal Mile, Cheval Old Town Chambers offers all the space and flexibility of luxury apartments, but with hotel-style amenities like a 24-hour reception, a concierge desk, and a free on-site gym (with personal trainer). **Pros:** spacious apartments; spectacular three-bedroom penthouse suite; gorgeous artwork by local photographer. **Cons:** no on-site dining; no air-conditioning in older building; lots of steps. **Rooms from:** £300 **329 High St., Old Town** ☎ 0131/510-5499 www.chevalcollection.com ➔ 75 rooms **Free Breakfast.**

★ Hotel du Vin

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Leave it to one of the United Kingdom's most forward-thinking hotel chains to convert a Victorian-era asylum into this understated luxury property, which combines a real sense of history with contemporary decor and trappings. **Pros:** lively on-site dining and drinking; unique and historic building; trendy design. **Cons:** service can be hit-and-miss; neighborhood can be noisy; quarter-mile walk to nearest parking. **Rooms from:** £200 **11 Bristo Pl., Old Town** ☎ 0131/285-1479 www.hotelduvin.com ➔ 47 rooms **Free Breakfast.**

The Inn on the Mile

\$\$\$ | **B&B/INN** | This chic and welcoming boutique inn could hardly be more central—some rooms even overlook the Royal Mile. **Pros:** great design; views of the Royal Mile; excellent on-site bar. **Cons:** nearest parking at a public lot (three-minute walk); sometimes noisy; lots of steps and no elevator. **Rooms from:** £270 **82 High St., Old Town**

☎ 0131/556-9940 www.theinnonthemile.co.uk ➔ 9 rooms **Free Breakfast.**

The Knight Residence

\$\$ | **APARTMENT** | Situated just around the corner from Grassmarket, these spacious serviced apartments offer a great base for exploring the city center by foot. **Pros:** secure parking available (at a cost); ultra-convenient central location; spacious rooms with comfy beds. **Cons:** some areas need refurbishment; lots of street noise when windows are open; Wi-Fi could be stronger. **Rooms from:** £200 **12 Lauriston St., Old Town** ☎ 0800/304-7160 www.bymansley.com ➔ 28 apartments **Free Meals.**

Radisson Collection Royal Mile Edinburgh

\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | The bright primary colors, striking stenciled wallpapers, and bold, eclectic furnishings inside this über-trendy design hotel contrast with the Gothic surroundings of the Royal Mile—and yet, somehow, it works. **Pros:** complimentary gin-and-tonic on arrival; perfect location in the heart of the city; bold and fashionable decor. **Cons:** street noise can leak into rooms; expensive during high season; decor a little Austin Powers in places. **Rooms from:** £260 **1 George IV Bridge, Old Town** ☎ 0131/220-6666 www.radissonhotels.com ➔ 136 rooms **Free Breakfast.**

The Scotsman

\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | This magnificent turn-of-the-20th-century building, with its grand marble staircase and its fascinating history (it was once the headquarters of *The Scotsman* newspaper) now houses a modern luxury hotel. **Pros:** ideal Old Town location; gorgeous rooms and public areas; personalized service. **Cons:** not all rooms have air-conditioning; Grand Cafe dining is hit-or-miss; elevators are painfully slow. **Rooms from:** £270 **20 N. Bridge, Old Town** ☎ 0131/556-5565 scotsmanhotel.co.uk ➔ 69 rooms **Free Breakfast.**

The Witchery by the Castle

\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | For a giant helping of Gothic romance, you can't beat the indulgent suites at this gorgeously appointed Castlehill hotel. **Pros:** atmospheric dining; unique and truly romantic retreat; plush antique furnishings. **Cons:** very expensive; food is good but not top shelf; extravagant decor not for everybody. **Rooms from:** £695 **352 Castlehill, Old Town** ☎ 0131/225-5613 **www.thewitchery.com** ➔ 9 suites **Free Breakfast.**

Nightlife

BARS AND PUBS

The Canons' Gait

PUBS | In addition to a fine selection of local real ales and malts, The Canons' Gait has live jazz and blues performances, as well as edgy comedy shows in the cellar bar. **232 Canongate, Old Town** ☎ 0131/556-4481.

★ The Holyrood 9A

BARS | This warm, wood-paneled hipster hangout has a fine array of craft beers on tap, as well as an impressive whisky collection. It also serves some of Edinburgh's best gourmet burgers. **9A Holyrood Rd., Old Town** ☎ 0131/556-5044 **www.theholyrood.co.uk.**

The Last Drop

PUBS | There's plenty of atmosphere (and plenty of tourists) amid the nooks and crannies at The Last Drop. The name has a grim double meaning, as it was once the site of public hangings. **74-78 Grassmarket, Old Town** ☎ 0131/225-4851 **www.nicholsonspubs.co.uk.**

The Three Sisters

PUBS | This pub is a hive of activity during festival season, when the courtyard transforms into a beer garden with food stalls, and is packed wall-to-wall with revelers until the wee hours. Outside of the summer months, it remains a lively local favorite and the best place to watch live sports in Edinburgh. **139 Cowgate,**

Old Town ☎ 0131/622-6802 **www.thethreesistersbar.co.uk.**

Under the Stairs

COCKTAIL LOUNGES | As the name suggests, this shabby-chic cocktail bar-cum-bistro is tucked away below street level. A cozy, low-ceilinged place, full of quirky furniture and hip art exhibits, Under the Stairs serves specialty, seasonal cocktails—as well as superb bar food—to a mostly young crowd. **3A Merchant St., Old Town** ☎ 0131/466-8550 **www.underthestairs.org.**

★ Whisky Rooms

BARS | This venerable establishment offers one of Old Town's most enjoyable whisky tastings: an informative and interactive experience with an expert guide. The 90-minute Premium Whisky Tasting features five unusual drams you'll almost certainly not have tasted before. When you're finished, either browse the shop stacked high with tempting bottles or head into the bar for another dram. **4-7 N. Bank St., Old Town** ☎ 0131/225-7224 **www.whiskirooms.co.uk.**

LIVE MUSIC

You can still find folk and jazz musicians performing in pubs and clubs throughout the Old Town.

★ The Jazz Bar

LIVE MUSIC | This basement music venue delivers exactly what the name promises: jazz, in all its many weird and wonderful forms. Blues, funk, acoustic, electric—there's something new to discover every night of the week. There's usually a small cover charge (cash only), but this all goes to musicians, not the venue. **1A Chambers St., Old Town** ☎ 0131/220-4298 **www.thejazzbar.co.uk.**

The Royal Oak

LIVE MUSIC | With a piano in the corner, this cozy, friendly pub presents excellent live blues and folk music most nights—usually with no cover charge. **1 Infirmary St., Old Town** ☎ 0131/557-2976 **www.royal-oak-folk.com.**

Hogmanay: Hello, New Year



In Scotland New Year's Eve is called Hogmanay—and to call it a big deal is an understatement. All over Scotland there are huge parties on December 31, and celebrations continue the next day with customs such as “first-footing”—visiting your neighbors with gifts that include whisky to bring good fortune for the year ahead. In fact, Hogmanay is so important that January 2 as well as January 1 are holidays in Scotland, while the rest of the United Kingdom trudges back to work.

What to Expect

Edinburgh's Hogmanay celebrations extend over several days, with music, dance, and theater performances taking place throughout the city. The lineup changes every year, but always includes a number of free events. Festivities featuring fire add a dramatic motif; buildings may open for rare night tours; a ceilidh has everyone dancing outdoors to traditional music; and family concerts

and serious discussions during the day round out the agenda. At the heart of Hogmanay, though, is the evening street party on New Year's Eve, with different music stages, food and drink (and people do drink), and the cockle-warming sight of glowing fireworks over Edinburgh Castle. And it all ends with communal renditions of “Auld Lang Syne,” written by Scotland's own Robert Burns.

Planning Basics

Besides the £30+ you'll pay to get into the street party celebrations, expect to shell out extra for some related events. For example, the torchlight procession on December 30 costs around £15, while the big-name concert in the Princes Street Gardens on 30 will run you at least £70. Book rooms as far ahead as possible. Obvious but essential is warmth: extra fluffy hats and the bundled-up look are de rigueur. Check out **www.edinburghshogmanay.com** for full details.

Whistle Binkies

LIVE MUSIC | This atmospheric North Bridge bar, with its main entrance on Niddry Street (as it's *in* the bridge), presents rock, blues, and folk music every night of the week, with as many as six or seven acts on Saturday nights. **4-6 South Bridge, Old Town** ☎ 0131/557-5114 **whistlebinkies.com.**

NIGHTCLUBS

Cabaret Voltaire

DANCE CLUBS | The vaulted ceilings of this subterranean club reverberate with dance music most nights, with an ever-changing lineup of cutting-edge DJs on the decks. The club also hosts regular live gigs and, during the Fringe, stand-up comedy shows. **36-38 Blair St., Old Town** ☎ 0131/247-4704 **www.thecabaretvoltaire.com.**

The Liquid Room

DANCE CLUBS | Top indie bands and an eclectic mix of club nights (techno, hip-hop, and alternative, to name a few) have made the Liquid Room a favorite after-dark venue since 1997. **9C Victoria St., Old Town** ☎ 0131/225-2564 **www.liquidroom.com.**

Performing Arts

Festival Theatre

MUSIC | This popular theater hosts regular pop concerts, as well as musical theater, opera, and ballet productions. **13-29 Nicolson St., South Side** ☎ 0131/529-6000 **www.capitaltheatres.com.**

The Lyceum

THEATER | Traditional plays and contemporary works, including previews or tours of London West End productions, are presented here. ☎ 30b Grindlay St., West End ☎ 0131/248-4848 🌐 www.lyceum.org.uk.

Traverse Theatre

THEATER | With its specially designed space, the Traverse Theatre has developed a solid reputation for new, stimulating plays by Scottish dramatists, as well as innovative dance performances. ☎ 10 Cambridge St., West End ☎ 0131/228-1404 🌐 www.traverse.co.uk.

Usher Hall

MUSIC | Edinburgh's grandest concert venue, Usher Hall hosts a wide range of national and international performers, from Paul Weller and Paloma Faith to the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. ☎ Lothian Rd., West End ☎ 0131/228-1155 🌐 www.usherhall.co.uk.

Shopping

BOOKS AND STATIONERY

Armchair Books

BOOKS | Just a two-minute walk from Grassmarket, Armchair Books is a chaotic but characterful bookshop heaving with secondhand and antiquarian books. ☎ 72-74 W. Port, Old Town ☎ 0131/229-5927 🌐 www.armchairbooks.co.uk.

Main Point Books

BOOKS | This bibliophile's haven is stacked high with obscure first editions and bargain tomes. It also hosts regular literary events. ☎ 77 Bread St., Old Town ☎ 0131/228-4837 🌐 www.mainpoint-books.co.uk.

CLOTHING

Bill Baber

MIXED CLOTHING | One of the more imaginative Scottish knitwear designers, Bill Baber's creative and colorful pieces are a long way from the conservative pastel woolies sold at some of the large

mill shops. ☎ 66 Grassmarket, Old Town ☎ 0131/225-3249 🌐 www.billbaber.com.

Herman Brown

MIXED CLOTHING | This secondhand clothing store is where cashmere twin-sets and classic luxe labels are sought and found. ☎ 151 W. Port, West End ☎ 0131/228-2589 🌐 www.hermanbrown.co.uk.

Ragamuffin

MIXED CLOTHING | First established on the Isle of Skye, Ragamuffin's Edinburgh outlet sells some of the funkiest, brightest, and most elegant knitwear produced anywhere in Scotland. ☎ 278 Canongate, Old Town ☎ 0131/557-6007 🌐 www.ragamuffinstore.com.

JEWELRY

Clarksons of Edinburgh

JEWELRY & WATCHES | A family firm, Clarksons handcrafts a unique collection of jewelry, from Celtic to contemporary styles. The pieces here are made with silver, gold, platinum, and precious gems, with a particular emphasis on diamonds. ☎ 87 W. Bow, Old Town ☎ 0131/225-8141 🌐 www.clarksonsedinburgh.co.uk.

SCOTTISH SPECIALTIES

★ Cadenhead's Whisky Shop

WINE/SPIRITS | Edinburgh's most iconic Scotch shop, Cadenhead's has an incredible selection of whisky to purchase (including rare bottles from closed distilleries), and also offers tasting sessions. The friendly and knowledgeable staff can help you pick out the perfect whisky to suit your palate. ☎ 172 Canongate, Old Town ☎ 0131/556-5864 🌐 www.cadenhead.scot.

Geoffrey Tailor Kiltmakers

MEN'S CLOTHING | This shop can clothe you in full Highland dress, with high-quality kilts made in its own workshops. ☎ 57-59 High St., Old Town ☎ 0131/557-0256 🌐 www.geoffreykilts.co.uk.

New Town

It was not until the Scottish Enlightenment, a civilizing time of expansion in the 1700s, that the city's elite decided to break away from the Royal Mile's craggy slope and narrow closes to create a new neighborhood below the castle. This was to become the New Town, an area of elegant squares, classical facades, wide streets, and harmonious proportions.

Clearly, change had to come. At the dawn of the 18th century, Edinburgh's unsanitary conditions—primarily a result of overcrowded living quarters—were becoming notorious. The well-known Scottish fiddle tune “The Flooers (flowers) of Edinburgh” was only one of many ironic references to the capital's unpleasant environment.

To help remedy this sorry state of affairs, in 1767 James Drummond, the city's lord provost (the Scottish term for mayor), urged the town council to hold a competition to design a new district for Edinburgh. The winner was an unknown young architect named James Craig (1744-95). His plan called for a grid of three main east-west streets, balanced at either end by two grand squares. These streets survive today, though some of the buildings that line them have been altered by later development. Princes Street is the southernmost, with Queen Street to the north and George Street as the axis, punctuated by St. Andrew and Charlotte squares. A look at the map will reveal a geometric symmetry unusual in Britain. Even the Princes Street Gardens are balanced by the Queen Street Gardens, to the north. Princes Street was conceived as an exclusive residential address, with an open vista facing the castle. It has since been altered by the demands of business and shopping, but the vista remains.

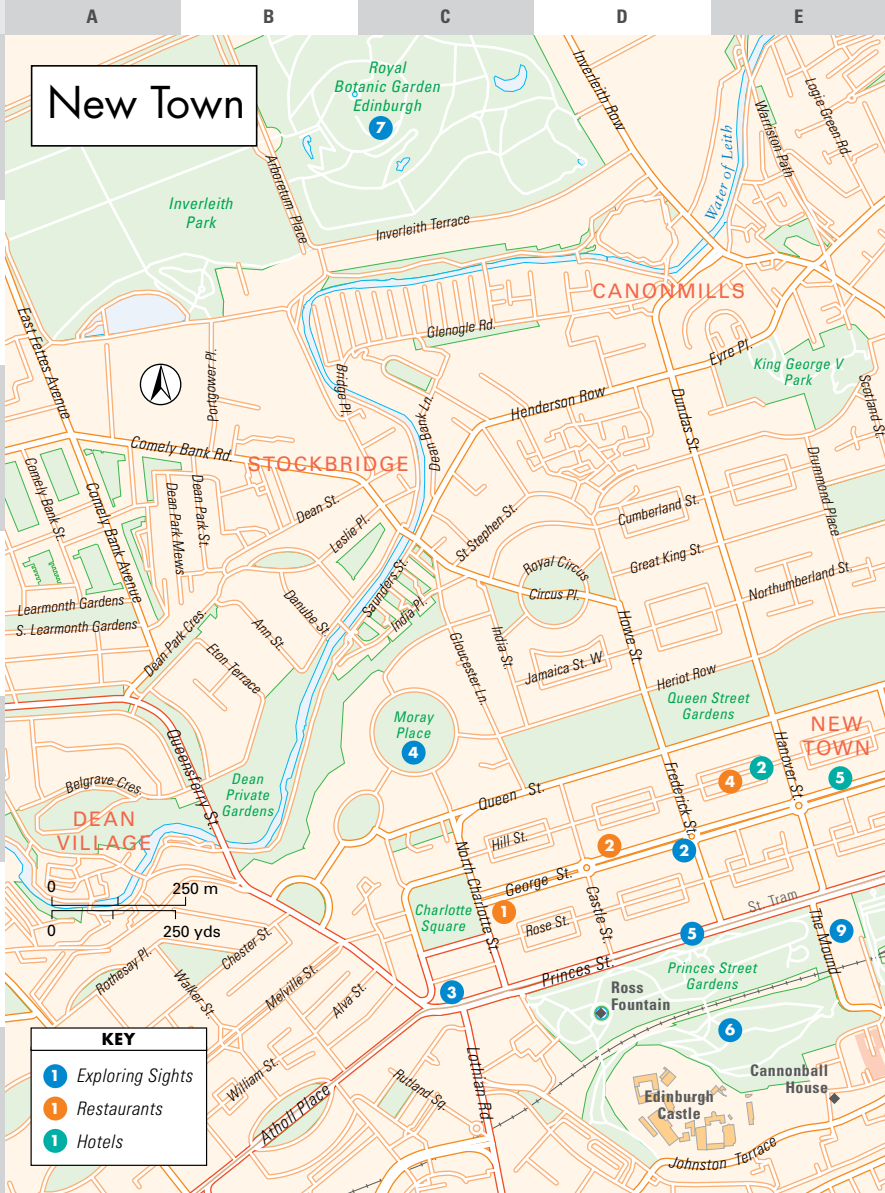
The New Town was expanded several times after Craig's death and now covers an area about three times larger than Craig envisioned. Indeed, some of the most elegant facades came later and can be found by strolling north of the Queen Street Gardens. Just north of the New Town lies the strollable shopping quarter of Stockbridge, as well as Inverleith, home to the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

Sights

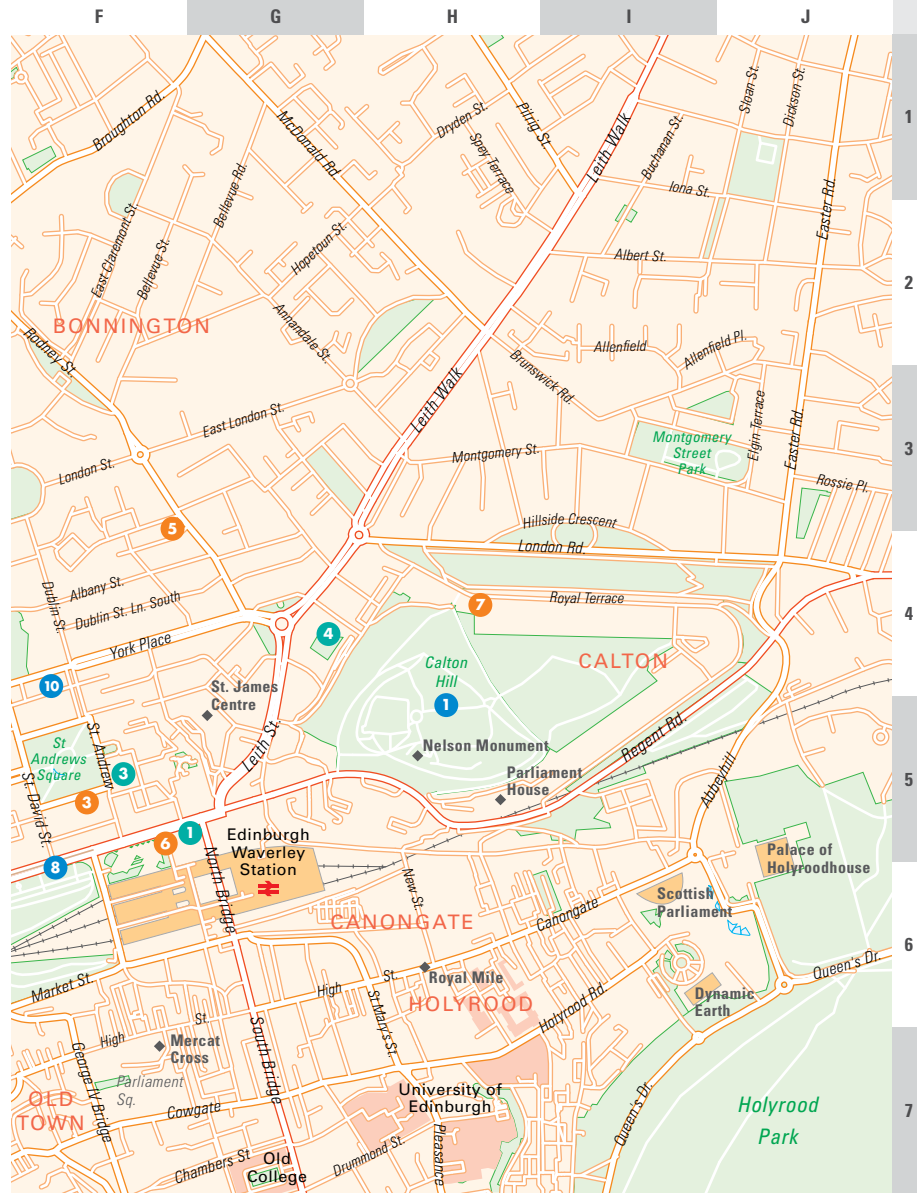
Calton Hill

VIEWPOINT | Robert Louis Stevenson's favorite view of his beloved city was from the top of this hill, and it's easy to see why. Located in the heart of the city, Calton Hill offers stunning vistas of the Old and New Towns and out to the Firth of Forth, making it a popular setting for picnicking and watching festival fireworks. Great views aside, the hill is also home to a number of impressive monuments. The most notable is the so-called **National Monument**, also known as “Scotland's Disgrace,” which was commissioned in 1822 and intended to mimic Athens's Parthenon. But after just 12 columns had been built, the money ran out, leaving the facade as a monument to high aspirations and poor fundraising. Nearby, the 100-foot-high **Nelson Monument**, completed in 1815 in honor of Britain's greatest naval hero, is topped with a “time ball” that is dropped at 1 pm every day. Other hillside monuments honor notable Scots ranging from mathematician John Playfair to philosopher Dugald Stewart.

The hill is also home to the **City Observatory**, which hosts regular contemporary art exhibitions, as well as upscale restaurant **The Lookout by Gardener's Cottage**. It also plays host to the **Beltane Fire Festival** every April 30. ☎ Bounded by Leith St. to the west and Regent Rd. to the south, New Town ☎ 🌐 www.edinburgh.gov.uk 🗨 Free; Nelson Monument £6.



Sights	Restaurants	Hotels
1 Calton Hill..... H5	1 Baba..... C6	1 The Balmoral..... G5
2 George Street..... D5	2 Contini George Street..... D5	2 Braid Apartments..... E5
3 Johnnie Walker Princes Street..... C6	3 Dishoom..... F5	3 Cheval The Edinburgh Grand... F5
4 Moray Place..... C5	4 Dusit..... E5	4 The Glasshouse..... G4
5 Princes Street..... D6	5 Fhior..... F3	
6 Princes Street Gardens..... E7		
7 Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh..... C1		
8 Scott Monument..... F6		
9 Scottish National Gallery..... E6		
10 Scottish National Portrait Gallery..... F4		



Hotels	Restaurants	Hotels
1 The Balmoral..... G5	1 Baba..... C6	1 The Balmoral..... G5
2 Braid Apartments..... E5	2 Contini George Street..... D5	2 Braid Apartments..... E5
3 Cheval The Edinburgh Grand... F5	3 Dishoom..... F5	3 Cheval The Edinburgh Grand... F5
4 The Glasshouse..... G4	4 Dusit..... E5	4 The Glasshouse..... G4
	5 Fhior..... F3	

Hotels	Restaurants	Hotels
5 InterContinental Edinburgh The George..... E5		5 InterContinental Edinburgh The George..... E5

George Street

STREET | With its high-end shops, upmarket bistros, and five-star hotels, all with handsome Georgian frontages, George Street is a more pleasant, less crowded thoroughfare for strolling than Princes Street. It also has a couple of points of interest. First, there's the statue of King George IV, at the intersection of George and Hanover streets, which recalls the visit of George IV to Scotland in 1822; he was the first British monarch to do so since King Charles II in the 17th century. Next, the Assembly Rooms, between Hanover and Frederick streets, are where Sir Walter Scott officially acknowledged having written the *Waverley* novels (the author had hitherto been a mystery, albeit a badly kept one). It's now a popular venue during the Fringe Festival. ☒ *Between Charlotte Sq. and St. Andrew Sq., New Town.*

★ Johnnie Walker Princes Street

OTHER ATTRACTION | Opened in late 2021, this state-of-the-art, interactive whisky experience is a dizzying sensory experience. The regular 90-minute Journey of Whisky tour uses impressive animation, immersive light and sound effects, and even live actors to tell the tale of Johnnie Walker whisky, from its humble grocer's shop origins to its current status as the world's best-selling Scotch. Visitors will enjoy a whisky highball—matched to their own flavor preferences after a quick quiz—at the start of the tour, as well as two more drams or cocktails at the end. The three drinks alone are worth the £25 admission. Real whisky connoisseurs can also visit the Whisky Makers' Cellar (£95) to taste drams straight from the cask. Not interested in a tour? Head straight up to the 1820 Rooftop Bar for a drink with a view. ☒ *145 Princes St., New Town* ☎ *0131/376-9494* 🌐 *www.johnniwalker.com* 💷 *£25.*

Moray Place

PLAZA/SQUARE | With its “pendants” of Ainslie Place and Randolph Crescent, Moray Place was laid out in 1822 by the Earl of Moray. From the start the homes were planned to be of particularly high quality, with lovely curving facades, imposing porticos, and a central secluded garden reserved for residents. ☒ *Between Charlotte Sq. and Water of Leith, New Town.*

Princes Street

STREET | The south side of this dominant New Town street is occupied by the well-kept Princes Street Gardens, which act as a wide green moat to the castle on its rock. The north side is now one long sequence of chain stores with mostly unappealing modern fronts, with one or two exceptions: most notably the handsome Victorian facade on the corner of South St. David Street. ☒ *Waterloo Pl. to Lothian Rd., New Town.*

Princes Street Gardens

CITY PARK | These beautifully manicured gardens, directly overlooked by Edinburgh Castle, are just a few steps and yet a whole world away from bustling Princes Street. The 38-acre park, divided into the East and West Gardens, was first laid out in the 1760s, on marshland created by the draining of a (long-since-vanished) loch. It has a host of attractions, including a functioning floral clock on the corner of Princes Street and The Mound, the Ross Fountain, a series of memorials, a children's play park, and a café. The gardens often host free concerts, and have a central role in the city's famed Hogmanay festivities. ☒ *Princes St., New Town.*

★ Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

GARDEN | **FAMILY** | Explore Britain's largest rhododendron and azalea gardens at this beautiful 70-acre botanical garden. Founded in 1670 as a physic garden, it now has a range of natural highlights such as soaring palms in the

glass-domed Temperate House and the steamy Tropical Palm House, an extensive Chinese garden, and a pretty rock garden and stream. There's a visitor center with exhibits on biodiversity, a fabulous gift shop selling plants, books, and gifts, and two cafeterias. The handsome 18th-century Inverleith House hosts art exhibitions.

It's free to roam the gardens, though it costs extra for greenhouse admission, and you can splash out even more for guided garden walks and private tours. It takes 20 minutes to walk to the garden from Princes Street, or you can take a bus. ☒ *Arboretum Pl., Inverleith* ☎ *0131/248-2909* 🌐 *www.rbge.org.uk* 🚶 *Free; Glasshouses £7.*

Scott Monument

MONUMENT | What appears to be a Gothic cathedral spire that's been chopped off and planted on Princes Street is in fact Scotland's tribute to one of its most famous sons, Sir Walter Scott. Built in 1844 and soaring to 200 feet, it remains the largest monument to a writer anywhere in the world. Climb the 287 steps to the top for a stunning view of the city and the hills and coast beyond. ☒ *E. Princes St. Gardens, New Town* ☎ *0131/529-4068* 🌐 *www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk* 💷 *£8 (cash only).*

★ Scottish National Gallery

ART MUSEUM | Opened to the public in 1859, the Scottish National Gallery presents a wide selection of paintings from the Renaissance to the Postimpressionist period within a grand Neoclassical building. Most famous are the Old Master paintings bequeathed by the Duke of Sutherland, including Titian's *Three Ages of Man*. Works by Velázquez, El Greco, Rembrandt, Goya, Poussin, Turner, Degas, Monet, and van Gogh, among others, complement a fine collection of Scottish art, including Sir Henry Raeburn's *Reverend Robert Walker Skating on Duddingston Loch* and other works by Ramsay, Raeburn, and Wilkie. The gallery

also has an information center, a quirky gift shop, and the excellent Scottish Cafe and Restaurant.

You can also hop on a shuttle bus (£1 donation requested) from here to the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, which has paintings and sculptures by Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Henri Matisse, and André Derain, among others. ☒ *The Mound, New Town* ☎ *0131/624-6200* 🌐 *www.nationalgalleries.org.*

Scottish National Portrait Gallery

ART MUSEUM | Set within a magnificent red-sandstone Gothic building from 1889, this gallery is an Edinburgh must-see. Conceived as a gift to the people of Scotland, it divides into five broad themes, from Reformation to Modernity, with special galleries for photography and contemporary art—all centered around the stunning Great Hall. It also plays host to regular temporary exhibitions, including the annual BP Portrait Award. ☒ *1 Queen St., New Town* ☎ *0131/624-6200* 🌐 *www.nationalgalleries.org* 🚶 *Free.*

🍴 Restaurants

The New Town, with its striking street plan, ambitious architecture, and professional crowd, has restaurants where you can get everything from a quick snack to a more formal dinner.

Baba

\$\$\$ | **MIDDLE EASTERN** | Set within the upmarket Kimpton Charlotte Square Hotel, Baba serves tasty Middle Eastern—specifically Levantine—fare in a colorful, shabby-chic setting. Dishes are designed for sharing so take your pick from the mezze and grills menu, where highlights include the baba ganoush (with pomegranate seed and mint) and the beef and bone marrow kofte. **Known for:** costs that quickly add up; inventive takes on Middle Eastern staples; delicious hummus with a zhug (Yemeni hot sauce) kick. ☎ *Average main: £22* ☒ *130 George St., New Town* ☎ *0131/527-4999* 🌐 *baba.restaurant.*

Contini George Street

\$\$\$ | **ITALIAN** | Set within a grand former banking hall on George Street, this superb restaurant serves light but satisfying Italian favorites divided into *primi*, *secondi*, and *dolci*, all within an airy setting of grand Corinthian columns, an open marble-topped bar, intricate wall hangings, and soft gray banquettes. The food choices are strictly seasonal, but regularly appearing favorites include the Scotch beef carpaccio and the homemade ravioli with ricotta and spinach. **Known for:** tasty Scotch beef carpaccio; deliciously light Italian cuisine; grand but relaxed setting. ☎ *Average main: £20* ☎ 103 George St., New Town ☎ 0131/225-1550 ☎ www.contini.com/contini-george-street ☺ Closed Sun.

Dishoom

\$ | **INDIAN** | The city's most inventive Indian restaurant, Dishoom serves up an all-sensory experience, from the smells that greet you (delicious whiffs of incense mixed with aromatic spices) to the sight and sounds of the interior (the decor is all distressed-wood panels and chandeliers, inspired by Bombay's 1920 Iranian cafés) to the taste of the food itself. A tapas-style menu of deliciously tender meat, seafood, and vegetarian dishes welcomes you, along with delicious desserts. **Known for:** unique Indian breakfast rolls; incredible lamb *salli boti*; great cocktail and mocktail menu. ☎ *Average main: £10* ☎ 3a St. Andrew Sq., Edinburgh ☎ 0131/202-6406 ☎ www.dishoom.com.

Dusit

\$\$ | **THAI** | Tucked down narrow Thistle Street, Dusit doesn't register on most travelers' radars, but it has been a local favorite since 2002. An authentic, contemporary Thai restaurant run by Bangkok-born Pom, the menu here delights with deliciously creamy curries, spicy stir-fries, and fragrant seafood specialties, all of which use a mix of fresh local produce and imported Thai vegetables. **Known**

for: good value lunch menu; award-winning Thai food; local haunt. ☎ *Average main: £17* ☎ 49A Thistle St., New Town ☎ 0131/220-6846 ☎ www.dusit.co.uk.

Fhior

\$\$\$\$ | **BRITISH** | Owner and chef Scott Smith, who previously ran the award-winning Norn, serves up seasonal, Scandinavian-inspired fare here with rare Scottish ingredients, from bere meal (an ancient form of barley) bread to sea buckthorn. Choose from seven to 10 courses for dinner (£65 to £90), with menus arriving sealed in envelopes; you're encouraged to trust the chef and leave them unopened until after dessert. **Known for:** multicourse menu options chosen by the chef; modernist decor; old-school Scottish dishes with a Scandinavian flair. ☎ *Average main: £35* ☎ 36 Broughton St., Edinburgh ☎ 0131/477-5000 ☎ www.fhior.com ☺ Closed Mon.–Wed.

Number One

\$\$\$\$ | **BRITISH** | Clublike but unstuffy, this outstanding basement restaurant, set within the Edwardian splendor of The Balmoral hotel, is made for intimate dining. The food is extraordinary, with a menu that highlights the best of Scottish seafood and meat in inventive fashion—from scallops and sturgeon to lamb and beef. **Known for:** very expensive; wonderfully intimate setting; inventive dishes. ☎ *Average main: £110* ☎ The Balmoral, 1 Princes St., New Town ☎ 0131/557-6727 ☎ www.rockfortehotels.com ☺ Closed Tues. and Wed. No lunch.

21212

\$\$\$\$ | **MODERN FRENCH** | Paul Kitching is one of Britain's most innovative chefs, and the theatrical dining experience at 21212 delivers surprises galore. Set within a Georgian town house, the fine dining restaurant is sumptuously appointed while, behind a large glass screen, a small army of chefs is busy assembling the delicious and intricate dishes. **Known for:** choice between two starters, two mains, and two desserts (with soup and

cheese in between, hence 21212); contemporary Franco-Anglo-Scottish cuisine; atmospheric and romantic. ☎ *Average main: £85* ☎ 3 Royal Terr., New Town ☎ 0131/523-1030 ☎ www.21212restaurant.co.uk ☺ Closed Sun.–Tues.

Hotels

Calton Hill, which offers some of the best views of the city from its summit, is just one of the reasons to base yourself in the New Town. Architecture fans will enjoy the gorgeous 18th- and 19th-century buildings, many of which are now grand accommodation options.

★ The Balmoral

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | The attention to detail in the elegantly appointed rooms and suites, where colors and patterns echo the country's heathers and moors, and the sheer Edwardian splendor of this grand, former railroad hotel make staying at The Balmoral a special introduction to Edinburgh. **Pros:** top-notch spa, restaurant, and whisky bar; big and beautiful Edwardian building; top-hatted doorman. **Cons:** some rooms are small; spa books up fast; small lap pool. ☎ *Rooms from: £490* ☎ 1 Princes St., New Town ☎ 0131/556-2414 ☎ www.rockfortehotels.com ➔ 187 rooms ☹ Free Breakfast.

Braid Apartments

\$\$ | **APARTMENT** | This collection of chic, comfortable, and spacious self-service apartments is tucked away on quiet Thistle Street, meaning that guests can enjoy being in the heart of the New Town and yet out of sight (and sound) of the crowds. **Pros:** friendly reception staff; good modern facilities; quiet central location. **Cons:** no accessible rooms (elevator starts on mezzanine floor); noisy water pumps; no on-site parking. ☎ *Rooms from: £175* ☎ 27 Thistle St., New Town ☎ 0800/304-7160 ☎ www.bymansley.com ➔ 20 apartments ☹ No Meals.

Cheval The Edinburgh Grand

\$\$\$\$ | **APARTMENT** | Despite all appearances—the classical Edinburgh exterior, the Corinthian-columned art deco lobby, the friendly and attentive concierges, and the in-house high-end restaurants—the Edinburgh Grand is not a swanky hotel, but rather a collection of grand and luxurious serviced apartments. **Pros:** all amenities included; beautiful apartments with supercomfy beds; ideal location for trams and trains. **Cons:** Register Club food disappointing and overpriced; no doors on some bathrooms; perilously dark corridors. ☎ *Rooms from: £320* ☎ 42 St. Andrew Sq., New Town ☎ 0131/230-0570 ☎ www.chevalcollection.com ➔ 50 apartments ☹ No Meals.

★ The Glasshouse

\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Glass walls extend from the 19th-century facade of a former church, foreshadowing the daring, modern interior of one of the city's original, and best, boutique hotels. **Pros:** near all the attractions; truly stunning rooftop garden; very modern and stylish. **Cons:** continental breakfast extra (hot breakfast even more); decor a little sterile for some; loud air-conditioning and toilet flushing. ☎ *Rooms from: £265* ☎ 2 Greenside Pl., New Town ☎ 0131/525-8200 ☎ www.theglasshousehotel.co.uk ➔ 77 rooms ☹ No Meals.

InterContinental Edinburgh The George

\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Built in 1775 for Edinburgh's elite, this row of five Georgian town houses in the heart of the New Town now hosts a luxury hotel. **Pros:** in-room treat boxes with chips and candy; excellent central location; stylish and comfortable bedrooms. **Cons:** breakfast is expensive; floors in older rooms are on a slight slope; regular wedding parties in reception area. ☎ *Rooms from: £250* ☎ 19–21 George St., New Town ☎ 0131/225-1251 ☎ edinburgh.intercontinental.com ➔ 240 rooms ☹ Free Breakfast.

Nightlife

BARS AND PUBS

The Basement

BARS | This funky, cheerful bar has something of the 1950s jet-setter vibe—which might explain its happy-go-lucky mash-up of cocktails, Mexican food, and Hawaiian-shirted bar staff. ☒ 10A–12A Broughton St., New Town ☎ 0131/557–0097 🌐 www.basement-bar-edinburgh.co.uk.

Bramble Bar & Lounge

COCKTAIL LOUNGES | This easily walked-by basement bar on Queen Street—take the stairs down to a clothing-alteration shop and you'll see a small sign—is one of Edinburgh's great hidden gems. Expect superb cocktails, eclectic music (DJs spin most nights), young crowds, and lots of nooks and crannies. ☒ 16A Queen St., New Town ☎ 0131/226–6343 🌐 www.bramblebar.co.uk.

★ Cafe Royal Circle Bar

BARS | Famed for its atmospheric Victorian interiors—think ornate stucco, etched mirrors, tiled murals, stained glass, and leather booths—the Cafe Royal Circle Bar has been drawing a cast of Edinburgh characters since it opened in 1863. Regulars and newcomers alike pack in for the drinks (a host of real ales and malt whiskies) and tasty bar food (everything from bar snacks and sandwiches to elaborate seafood platters). ☒ 19 W. Register St., New Town ☎ 0131/556–1884 🌐 www.caferoyaledinburgh.co.uk.

Cask and Barrel

PUBS | A spacious, traditional pub on trendy Broughton Street, the Cask and Barrel serves hand-pulled ales from a horseshoe-shaped bar, ringed by a collection of brewery mirrors. ☒ 115 Broughton St., New Town ☎ 0131/556–3132 🌐 www.caskandbarrelbroughton.co.uk.

★ Guildford Arms

PUBS | Like the Café Royal Circle Bar on the other corner of the same Victorian block, the Guildford Arms has a spectacular interior of intricate plasterwork, elaborate cornices, and wood paneling. The ornate ceiling alone is worth the visit. Stay for the range of excellent Scottish ales on tap. ☒ 1 W. Register St., New Town ☎ 0131/556–4312 🌐 www.guildfordarms.com.

Joseph Pearce's

BARS | FAMILY | One of eight Swedish bars and restaurants in Edinburgh owned by the Boda group, Joseph Pearce's has a distinctly northern European feel, despite its solidly Edwardian origins. Scandinavian-themed cocktails are popular here, as are the meatballs, open sandwiches, and other Swedish dishes. There's a children's corner with toys to keep the little ones occupied, and a sunny outdoor space in summer. ☒ 23 Elm Row, New Town ☎ 0131/556–4140 🌐 www.bodabar.com.

★ Juniper Edinburgh

COCKTAIL LOUNGES | Situated right opposite Edinburgh Waverley Station, Juniper cultivates an air of glamorous fun with its plant-filled interior and postcard-worthy views of the city and the castle. The wine list is good (if a little pricey), but it's the imaginative cocktails that really make this place, from Smoke on the Water (a combo of peaty whisky and peach iced tea) to Late Night Tough Guy Colada (a mix of pineapple rum, coconut, and white chocolate liqueur). ☒ 20 Princes St., New Town ☎ 0131/652–7370 🌐 www.juniperedinburgh.co.uk.

Kay's Bar

PUBS | Housed in a former Georgian coach house, this diminutive but friendly spot serves 50 single-malt whiskies, a range of guest ales, and decent bottled beers. Check out the cute little wood-paneled library room, with its tiny fireplace and shelves full of books. ☒ 39 Jamaica St., New Town ☎ 0131/225–1858 🌐 www.kaysbar.co.uk.

★ Panda and Sons

BARS | The very definition of a hidden gem, this Prohibition-style speakeasy is cunningly tucked away behind a barbershop exterior. Venture inside and downstairs to discover a quirky bar serving some seriously refined cocktails. And yes, we're baffled by the fictional bar-owning panda, too. ☒ 79 Queen St., New Town ☎ 0131/220–0443 🌐 www.pandaandsons.com.

Tonic

COCKTAIL LOUNGES | This stylish basement bar has bouncy stools, comfy sofas, and a long list of superb, throwback cocktails. Resident DJs play Thursday through Sunday. ☒ 34A N. Castle St., New Town ☎ 0131/225–6431 🌐 www.bar-tonic.co.uk.

COMEDY CLUBS

The Stand

COMEDY CLUBS | Laugh until your sides split at The Stand, a legendary basement comedy club that hosts both famous names and up-and-coming acts all throughout the year, though it's particularly popular during the Fringe. Most, but not all, shows are 18+. ☒ 5 York Pl., New Town ☎ 0131/558–7272 🌐 www.thestand.co.uk.

LGBTQ BARS

There's a large and ever-expanding LGBTQ scene in Edinburgh, and the city has many predominantly gay clubs, bars, and cafés. Nevertheless, don't expect the scene to be quite as varied as in London, New York, or even Glasgow. *The List* and *The Skinny* have sections that focus on gay and lesbian venues.

CC Blooms

DANCE CLUBS | Modern and colorful, CC Blooms is a club spread over two levels, playing a mix of musical styles and with regular cabaret nights. Open nightly, it's been a mainstay on the gay scene since the early '90s, and can now count several other gay-friendly bars and clubs as neighbors. ☒ 23–24 Greenside Pl., New Town ☎ 0131/556–9331 🌐 www.ccblooms.co.uk.

Regent Bar

BARS | Billing itself as “the best real ale gay pub in Edinburgh,” this popular drinking hole at the far east end of the New Town is warm, homey, and welcoming—and it's dog-friendly, too. As advertised, the real ales selection is great. ☒ 2 Montrose Terr., Abbeyhill ☎ 0131/661–8198 🌐 www.theregentbar.co.uk.

Performing Arts

Edinburgh Playhouse

THEATER | Big-ticket concerts and musicals, along with the occasional ballet and opera production, are staged at the popular Playhouse, with its enormous 3,000-seat auditorium. ☒ 18–22 Greenside La., East End ☎ 0844/871–7615 🌐 www.atgtickets.com.

Shopping

ANTIQUES

★ Unicorn Antiques

ANTIQUES & COLLECTIBLES | This Victorian basement is crammed with fascinating antiques, including artworks, ornaments, silverware, and other such curios. ☒ 65 Dundas St., New Town ☎ 0131/556–7176 🌐 www.unicornantiques.co.uk.

CLOTHING

Elaine's Vintage Clothing

MIXED CLOTHING | This wee boutique in trendy Stockbridge, northwest of the New Town, is crammed full of vintage threads for women and men. The finds span the 20th century, but most are from the '40s to the '70s. The friendly owner is happy to share her knowledge of the many elegant and quirky outfits on her rails. ☒ 55 St. Stephen St., New Town ☎ 0131/225–5783.

DEPARTMENT STORES

Harvey Nichols

DEPARTMENT STORE | Affectionately known as Harvey Nicks, this high-style British fashion chain has its Scottish outpost on St. Andrew Square, carrying the store's chic,

upscale style options. Feeling peckish? Enjoy a meal with a view at the excellent Forth Floor Brasserie and Bar. ☎ 30–34 St. Andrew Sq., New Town ☎ 0131/524–8388 🌐 www.harveynichols.com.

John Lewis

DEPARTMENT STORE | John Lewis specializes in furnishings and household goods, but also stocks designer clothes. It's part of the recently refurbished St. James Quarter. ☎ St James Quarter, Leith St., New Town ☎ 0131/556–9121 🌐 www.johnlewis.com.

JEWELRY

Hamilton & Inches

JEWELRY & WATCHES | Established in 1866, this jeweler is worth visiting not only for its gold and silver pieces, but also for its late-Georgian interior. Designed by David Bryce in 1834, it's all columns and elaborate plasterwork. ☎ 87 George St., New Town ☎ 0131/225–4898 🌐 www.hamiltonandinches.com.

Joseph Bonnar

JEWELRY & WATCHES | Tucked behind George Street, Joseph Bonnar stocks Scotland's largest collection of antique jewelry, including 19th-century agate jewels. ☎ 72 Thistle St., New Town ☎ 0131/226–2811 🌐 www.josephbonnar.com.

★ Sheila Fleet

JEWELRY & WATCHES | As much art gallery as jewelry shop, designer Sheila Fleet's store in Stockbridge displays a variety of stunning jewelry inspired by her native Orkney, from wind and waves to Celtic spirals to island wildlife. ☎ 18 St. Stephen St., Stockbridge ☎ 0131/225–5939 🌐 www.sheilafleet.com.

OUTDOOR SPORTS GEAR

Cotswold Outdoor

SPORTING GOODS | This specialist chain store sells outdoor clothing for all weather, as well as accessories, maps, guides, and more. The staff are invariably helpful and informed. ☎ Hanover Buildings, 72

Rose St., New Town ☎ 0131/341–2063 🌐 www.cotswoldoutdoor.com.

Haymarket

West of the Old Town and south of the West End is Haymarket, a district with its own down-to-earth character and well-worn charm. It offers varied shopping and dining options that become more upmarket as you inch toward the West End and Leith.

🍴 Restaurants

This area has many good restaurants that tend to be more affordable than those in the center of town.

First Coast

\$ | INTERNATIONAL | This laid-back bistro, just a few minutes from Haymarket Station, has a loyal following—and for good reason. Its multicultural menu combines Scottish classics with everything from Thai sweep potato soup to Italian affogato. **Known for:** relaxing interiors; great international fare with vegetarian options; big on flavor. ☎ Average main: £12 ☎ 97–101 Dalry Rd., Haymarket ☎ 0131/313–4404 🌐 www.first-coast.co.uk ☺ Closed Sun. and Mon.

🏨 Hotels

Close to one of Edinburgh's two main train stations, Haymarket—beyond the west end of Princes Street—can make a good, affordable base for exploring the city.

★ The Dunstane Houses

\$\$\$ | HOTEL | Set within two Victorian town houses that sit across the road from one another, with each offering a selection of beautifully appointed rooms and suites, this hotel is one of Edinburgh's most luxurious boutique options. **Pros:** quiet residential area; beautifully decorated; excellent food and service. **Cons:** some traffic noise from outside; a 20-minute

walk to Princes Street; no elevator (and stairs to climb). ☎ Rooms from: £300 ☎ 4 W. Coates, Haymarket ☎ 0131/337–6169 🌐 www.thedunstane.com ➡ 35 rooms 🌅 Free Breakfast.

The Victorian Town House

\$\$ | B&B/INN | This handsome B&B, situated in a quiet, leafy crescent but within walking distance of Princes Street, offers bright and spacious rooms with a quirky mix of Edwardian and modern furnishings. **Pros:** beautiful Water of Leith at your doorstep; serene surroundings; super friendly owner. **Cons:** a little way from the Old Town; lacking some modern touches like smart TVs; no parking nearby. ☎ Rooms from: £200 ☎ 14A Eglinton Terr., Haymarket ☎ 0131/337–7088 🌐 www.victoriantownhouse.co.uk ➡ 2 rooms 🌅 Free Breakfast.

West End

Handsome Georgian town houses give this neighborhood a dignified feel. People head here for the small boutiques and cafés, as well as the wide range of cultural venues.

👁 Sights

Edinburgh Zoo

ZOO | FAMILY | Home to star attractions Tian Tian and Yang Guang, the United Kingdom's only two giant pandas, Edinburgh's Zoo hosts more than 1,000 animals over 80 acres. Don't miss the famous Penguin Parade, which takes place every afternoon (as long as the penguins are willing), or the ever-popular Koala Territory, where you can get up close to the zoo's five koalas—including Kalari, born in 2019. Discounted tickets are available online. ☎ Royal Zoological

Society of Scotland, 134 Corstorphine Rd., Corstorphine ☎ 0131/334–9171 🌐 www.edinburghzoo.org.uk 🎫 £19.95.

★ Dean Village

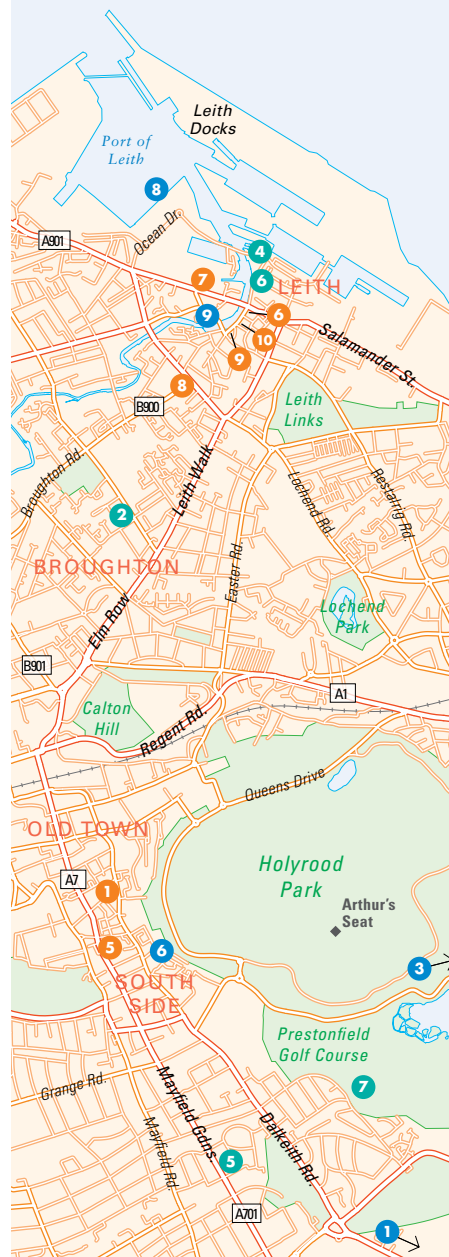
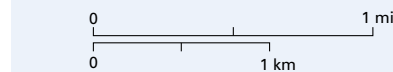
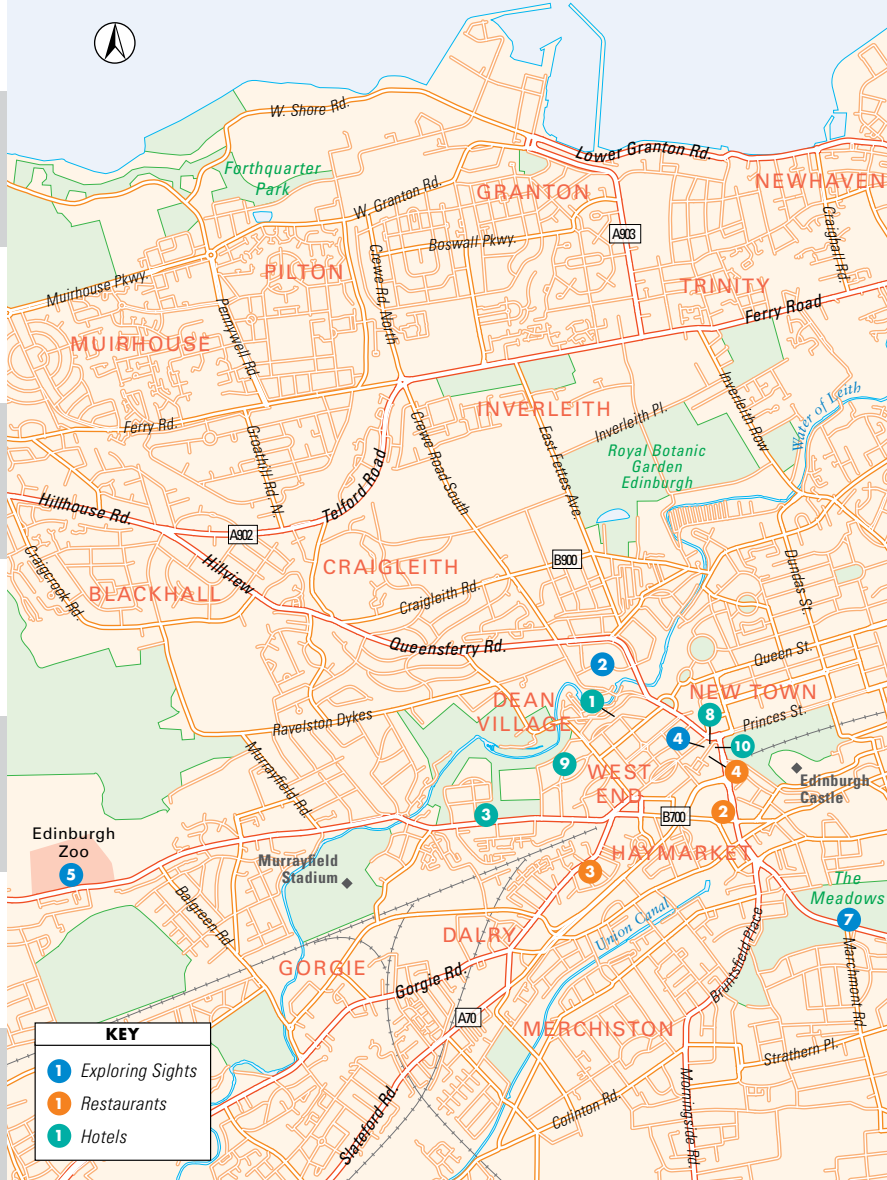
NEIGHBORHOOD | Founded as a milling community in the 12th century, this pretty residential area offers a pleasant respite from the noise and crowds of the city. Head down cobbled Bells Brae Street and you'll be met by a charming assortment of old mill buildings, stone bridges, and lush greenery, all lining the Water of Leith. Walk two minutes east for a dramatic view of an imposing, 19th-century viaduct (Dean Bridge) or a little farther west to visit the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art. ☎ Dean Path, Dean Village 🌐 history.business.site.

★ Edinburgh Gin Distillery

DISTILLERY | Whisky may be Scotland's most famous spirit, but gin also has a long and storied history here. Edinburgh Gin is a small distillery and visitor center just off Princes Street, offering tours and tastings that give a fascinating insight into craft gin production. You'll see two copper stills, Flora and Caledonia, which helped kick-start the now award-winning operation, and are still used to make some of their experimental, small-batch gins. (Note that the main range, including the navy-strength Cannonball Gin and the coastal botanical-infused Seaside Gin, are now produced at a larger facility in Leith). Choose between the Distillery Tasting Experience (£25) and the Gin Making Experience (£100), then head into the Heads & Tales bar to sample some Scottish gin cocktails. ☎ 1A Rutland Pl., West End ☎ 0131/656–2810 🌐 www.edinburghgin.com 🎫 £25 🐾 Tour reservations necessary.

Haymarket, West End, South Side, and Leith

Firth of Forth



Sights

- 1 Craigmillar Castle.....I9
- 2 Dean Village.....E6
- 3 Duddingston Village.....I7
- 4 Edinburgh Gin Distillery.....E7
- 5 Edinburgh Zoo.....A8
- 6 Holyrood Distillery.....G8
- 7 The Meadows.....F8
- 8 The Royal Yacht Britannia.....G3
- 9 Water of Leith Walkway.....H4

Restaurants

- 1 Bonsai.....G7
- 2 Bread Meats Bread.....E7
- 3 First Coast.....D8
- 4 Grazing by Mark Greenaway.....E7
- 5 Kalpna.....G8
- 6 The King's Wark.....H3
- 7 The Kitchen.....H3
- 8 The Little Chartroom.....H4
- 9 Mimi's Bakehouse—Leith.....H4
- 10 Restaurant Martin Wishart.....H4

Hotels

- 1 B+B Edinburgh.....D6
- 2 The Conifers.....G5
- 3 The Dunstane Houses.....D7
- 4 Fingal.....H3
- 5 Glenalmond House.....H9
- 6 Malmaison.....H3
- 7 Prestonfield House.....I8
- 8 Rutland Hotel.....E7
- 9 The Victorian Town House.....D7
- 10 Waldorf Astoria Edinburgh—The Caledonian.....E7

Restaurants

Even after business hours, the city's commercial center is a good place to find a variety of international restaurants.

★ Bread Meats Bread

\$\$\$ | **BURGER** | This family-run burger joint has gained a nationwide reputation for its unusual toppings such as beef brisket, pastrami, kimchi, and gochujang mayo. Take a seat inside the chic, reclaimed-wood interior and choose from a menu packed with amped-up burgers as well as chicken, veggie, and halal options.

Known for: smart and modern interior; the signature Wolf Burger; delicious garlic and parmesan fries. **☎ Average main:** £15 **📍** 92 Lothian Rd., West End **☎** 0131/225-3000 **🌐** www.breadmeatsbread.com.

Grazing by Mark Greenaway

\$\$\$ | **BRITISH** | Despite the name and the smattering of shared plates on offer, Grazing is mostly about traditional, hearty bistro fare done brilliantly. Set within a lavish yet unstuffy dining room, the restaurant's menu of seasonal dishes with inventive twists adds a real sense of fun to this consistently excellent dining experience. **Known for:** prices that can add up; fun and inventive dishes; attentive service. **☎ Average main:** £22 **📍** Waldorf Astoria Edinburgh—The Caledonian, Rutland St., West End **☎** 0131/222-8832 **🌐** www.markgreenaway.com **🕒** Closed Mon.-Wed. No lunch Thurs.-Sat.

Hotels

With easy access to some of the city's trendiest shops and cafés, the West End has many accommodation options that take advantage of the neighborhood's handsome Georgian-style townhouses.

B+B Edinburgh

\$\$\$ | **B&B/INN** | **FAMILY** | Standing out along an elegant and tranquil West End terrace, this excellent B&B is the Scottish outpost of supertrendy B+B Belgravia of London; the imposing Victorian mansion

combines grand public spaces with affordable modern accommodation. **Pros:** nice library and lounge bar; fascinating building in tranquil area; superb views.

Cons: basement rooms are dark; hint of previous institutional use; no night porter. **☎ Rooms from:** £230 **📍** 3 Rothesay Terr., West End **☎** 0131/225-5084 **🌐** www.bb-edinburgh.com **🛏** 27 rooms **🕒** Free Breakfast.

Rutland Hotel

\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Nominated for several style awards, this chic boutique hotel at the west end of Princes Street offers 12 guest rooms with flamboyant fabrics and classic furnishings, as well as nine stylish serviced apartments, a flexible option for a family or two couples traveling together. **Pros:** great bar and restaurant; friendly staff; casual and unpretentious.

Cons: no free on-site parking; no elevators to apartments; decor too loud and busy for some. **☎ Rooms from:** £200 **📍** 1-3 Rutland St., West End **☎** 0131/229-3402 **🌐** www.therutlandhotel.com **🛏** 21 rooms **🕒** Free Breakfast **📍** West End-Princes St.

Waldorf Astoria Edinburgh—The Caledonian

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | An imposing and ornate red-sandstone building situated at the west end of Princes Street Gardens, "The Caley" has dramatic Victorian decor, beautifully restored interiors, and more castle-view rooms than anywhere else in the city. **Pros:** outstanding and innovative restaurants; gorgeous public areas; impeccable service. **Cons:** gets very expensive in summer; understated rooms lack wow factor; expensive parking (£25 per night). **☎ Rooms from:** £315 **📍** Princes St., New Town **☎** 0131/222-8888 **🌐** www.hilton.com/en/waldorf-astoria **🛏** 241 rooms **🕒** Free Breakfast.

Nightlife

BARS AND PUBS

The Hanging Bat

PUBS | A favorite with beer-loving locals, this stylish modern bar of reclaimed wood and exposed brickwork has an extensive, regularly changing selection of craft beers from across the country on tap, from IPAs to saisons to porters. The food, cooked in the in-house smoker, is great, too (try the house-smoked ribs). **📍** 133 Lothian Rd., West End **☎** 0131/229-0759 **🌐** www.thehangingbat.com.

★ The Jolly Botanist

BARS | Gin lovers are spoiled for choice at this self-proclaimed "liquor emporium." Take a seat amid the quirky period furnishings and flick through a menu of 70-plus gins from around the world, which can be enjoyed with your choice of tonic or as part of an inventive gin cocktail. There's also good bar food available. **📍** 256-260 Morrison St., West End **☎** 0131/228-5596 **🌐** www.thejollybotanist.co.uk.

Performing Arts

Cameo Picturehouse

FILM | Cameo has one large and two small auditoriums, both of which are extremely comfortable, showing a good mix of mainstream and art-house films. There's also a bar serving snacks late into the evening. **📍** 38 Home St., Tollcross **☎** 0871/902-5747 **🌐** www.picturehouses.com.

★ Filmhouse

FILM | Widely considered to be among the best independent cinemas in Britain, the excellent three-screen Filmhouse is the go-to venue for modern, foreign-language, offbeat, and any other less-commercial films. It also holds frequent live events and mini-festivals for the discerning cinephile, and is the main hub for the International Film Festival each summer. The café and bar here are open late on weekends. **📍** 88 Lothian Rd., West End **☎** 0131/228-2688 **🌐** www.filmhousecinema.com.

King's Theatre

THEATER | Built in 1906 and adorned with vibrant murals by artist John Byrne, the art nouveau King's Theatre has a great program of contemporary dramatic works. **📍** 2 Leven St., Tollcross **☎** 0131/529-6000 **🌐** www.capitaltheatres.com.

South Side

This residential district, which includes the suburbs of Morningside, Marchmont, Newington, Mayfield, and Prestonfield (among others), offers a peek at the comings and goings of regular Edinburghers. Cost-conscious visitors can find lots of affordable restaurants and budget B&Bs here.

Sights

Craigmillar Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | This handsome medieval ruin, just 3 miles south of the city center, is the archetypal Scottish fortress: forbidding, powerful, and laden with atmosphere. It is best known for its association with Mary, Queen of Scots: during a stay here in 1563, her courtiers hatched the successful plot to murder her troublesome husband, Henry Stuart (possibly with Mary's approval). Today Craigmillar is one of the most impressive ruined castles in Scotland. Stroll its beautiful courtyard, enter the well-preserved great hall, or climb the 15th-century tower for a superb view across the city. Look out for the unusually ornate defensive arrow slits, shaped like inverted keyholes. **📍** Craigmillar Castle Rd., South Side **☎** 0131/661-4445 **🌐** www.historicenvironment.scot **🎟** £6.

Duddingston Village

TOWN | Tucked behind Arthur's Seat, and about a 45-minute walk through Holyrood Park, lies this small community, which still has the feel of a country village. The **Duddingston Kirk** has a Norman doorway

and a watchtower that was built to keep body snatchers out of the graveyard; it overlooks **Duddingston Loch**, popular with bird-watchers. Pathways meander down to the lochside **Dr Neil's Garden**, complete with the striking octagonal Thomson's Tower. Nearby, Edinburgh's oldest hostelry, the **Sheep Heid Inn**, serves a wide selection of beers and hearty food. It also has the oldest surviving *skittle* (bowling) alley in Scotland—once frequented (it's said) by Mary, Queen of Scots. ☒ *Duddingston Low Rd., Duddingston.*

★ Holyrood Distillery

DISTILLERY | Despite Edinburgh's long history of whisky production, there hadn't been a single malt distillery in the city for almost a century until this place opened in 2019. Today, Holyrood Distillery's state-of-the-art visitor center, set within an old railway station in the shadow of Salisbury Crag, plays host to entertaining and informative one-hour tours, including tastings of their Height of Arrows gin and new make spirit (the whisky is still busy maturing in barrels). Just a short walk from the Old Town, Holyrood attracts a younger and hipper crowd than most Scottish distilleries. ☒ *19 St Leonard's La., South Side* ☎ *0131/285-8977* 🌐 *www.holyrooddistillery.co.uk* 🚗 *Tour £15.50* ☺ *Closed Mon.*

★ The Meadows

CITY PARK | **FAMILY** | Edinburgh's most popular green space, The Meadows is the first port of call for nearby workers, students, and families when the sun is out (or even when it isn't). You'll find people making the most of the grass here: picnicking, barbecuing, playing soccer, throwing frisbees, and flying kites. More formal sports facilities include tennis courts, a small golf putting course, and the biggest kids' play area in Edinburgh. Come during one of the city's many cultural festivals and there's likely to be a show on, too. ☒ *Melville Dr., South Side* ☎ *0131/529-5151* 🌐 *www.themeadowsofedinburgh.co.uk.*

Restaurants

The presence of university professors and students means restaurants here are both affordable and interesting.

Bonsai

☎ | **JAPANESE** | The owners of Bonsai regularly visit Tokyo to research the casual dining scene, and their expertise is setting a high standard for Japanese cuisine in Edinburgh. The succulent *gyoza* (steamed dumplings) are pliant and tasty, while the wide variety of noodle, teriyaki, and sushi dishes balance sweet and sour deliciously. **Known for:** friendly and informal vibe; authentic sushi; great dragon *gaijin-zushi* (inside-out roll). ☎ *Average main: £8* ☒ *46 W. Richmond St., South Side* ☎ *0131/668-3847* 🌐 *www.bonsai-barbistro.co.uk* ☺ *Closed Mon. and Tues.*

★ Kalpna

☎ | **INDIAN** | Amid an ordinary row of shops, the facade of this vegan and vegetarian Indian restaurant may be unremarkable, but the food is exceptional and great value, too. You'll find south- and west-Indian specialties, including *dum aloo kashmiri* (a medium-spicy potato dish with a sauce made from honey, ginger, and almonds) and *baingan achari* (red-hot marinated eggplants). **Known for:** great lunchtime buffet; authentic veggie Indian fare; lively interior with exotic mosaics. ☎ *Average main: £10* ☒ *2-3 St. Patrick Sq., South Side* ☎ *0131/667-9890* 🌐 *www.kalpnarestaurant.com.*

Hotels

The B&Bs and guesthouses in this residential area offer comfortable, good value stays.

Glenalmond House

☎ | **B&B/INN** | Elegantly furnished rooms, a friendly atmosphere, and a hearty breakfast are three big factors that make this town-house B&B a popular budget stay. **Pros:** delicious breakfasts; friendly and knowledgeable owners; spacious

deluxe rooms with four-poster beds and garden terraces. **Cons:** street noise audible in front-facing rooms; some rooms are small; a 30-minute walk to the Royal Mile. ☎ *Rooms from: £120* ☒ *25 Mayfield Gardens, South Side* ☎ *0131/668-2392* 🌐 *www.glenalmondhouse.com* 🚗 *9 rooms* ☺ *Free Breakfast.*

★ Prestonfield House

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Baroque opulence reigns in this 1687 mansion, with rich velvet curtains, gold-framed portraits, and alabaster-sculpted busts adorning the grand and eccentric public rooms, and equally plush decorations in the guest rooms. **Pros:** extensive grounds; baroque grandeur; great restaurant. **Cons:** bit pretentious for some; brooding decor can look gloomy; underwhelming showers in some rooms. ☎ *Rooms from: £375* ☒ *Priestfield Rd., Prestonfield* ☎ *0131/225-7800* 🌐 *www.prestonfield.com* 🚗 *23 rooms* ☺ *Free Breakfast.*

Nightlife

BARS AND PUBS

Cloisters

BARS | Set within an old church parsonage, Cloisters now offers a very modern form of sanctuary: real ales, fine whisky, and good food at reasonable prices, with a total absence of music and game machines. ☒ *26 Brougham St., Tollcross* ☎ *0131/221-9997* 🌐 *www.cloistersbar.com.*

★ The Dagda Bar

PUBS | This charming little drinking hole is an interesting mix of the old and new. At first glance, it's a very traditional pub with a dark-wood bar, beautiful embossed ceiling, and beer mats decorating the walls. But look closer and you'll also find a great selection of craft beers, hip shabby-chic decor, and a surprisingly young clientele. ☒ *93-95 Buccleuch St., Newington* ☎ *0131/667-9773* 🌐 *www.facebook.com/thedagdabar.*

Leslie's Bar

BARS | Retaining its original mahogany island bar, the late-Victorian-era Leslie's Bar is renowned for its gorgeous interior and for serving a range of traditional Scottish ales and malt whiskies. ☒ *45-47 Ratcliffe Terr., South Side* ☎ *0131/667-7205.*

CEILIDHS AND SCOTTISH EVENINGS

★ Edinburgh Ceilidh Club

THEMED ENTERTAINMENT | One of Edinburgh's most popular ceilidhs, this traditional Scottish music and dance night is held every Tuesday at Summerhall. It's ideal for beginners, as a caller teaches the dance steps before the live band begins each song. The club also holds irregular nights at Assembly Roxy near South Bridge. ☒ *Summerhall, 1 Summerhall Pl., Newington* ☎ *0131/560-1580* 🌐 *www.edinburghceilidhclub.com.*



Performing Arts

Church Hill Theatre

THEATER | The intimate, 335-seat Church Hill Theatre, managed by the city council, hosts high-quality productions by local amateur dramatic societies. ☒ *Morningside Rd., Morningside* ☎ *0131/220-4348* 🌐 *www.churchhilltheatre.co.uk.*

The Queen's Hall

MUSIC | This intimate venue hosts a range of music events, from indie and rock concerts to jazz and classical music recitals. ☒ *85-89 Clerk St., Newington* ☎ *0131/668-2019* 🌐 *www.thequeenshall.net.*



Shopping

ANTIQUES

Courtyard Antiques

ANTIQUES & COLLECTIBLES | This lovely shop, tucked down a tiny alleyway, stocks a mixture of high-quality antiques, toys, and militaria. ☒ *108A Causewayside, Sciennes* ☎ *0131/662-9008* 🌐 *www.courtyardantiquesedinburgh.com.*

Leith

Just north of the city is Edinburgh's port, a place brimming with seafaring history and undergoing a supercharged revival after years of postwar neglect. It may not be as pristine as much of modern-day Edinburgh, but there are plenty of cobbled streets, dockside buildings, and bobbing boats to capture your imagination. Here along the lowest reaches of the Water of Leith (the river that flows through town), you'll find an ever-growing array of modish shops, pubs, and restaurants. Leith's major attraction is the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, moored outside the huge Ocean Terminal shopping mall. You can reach Leith from the center by walking down Leith Walk from the east end of Princes Street (20 to 30 minutes)—or, better yet, walk along the beautiful Water of Leith Walkway (a great way to forget you're in a capital city). Alternatively, you can hop on a bus.

Sights

The Royal Yacht Britannia

HISTORIC SIGHT | FAMILY | Moored on the waterfront at Leith is the Royal Yacht *Britannia*—launched in Scotland in 1953, retired in 1997, and now returned to her home country. A favorite of Queen Elizabeth II (she is reported to have shed a tear at its decommissioning ceremony), it is now open for the public to explore, from the royal apartments on the upper floors to the more functional engine room, bridge, galleys, and captain's cabin. The visitor center, based within the hulking, onshore Ocean Terminal shopping mall, has a variety of fascinating exhibits and photographs relating to the yacht's history. ☎ *Ocean Terminal, Ocean Dr., Leith* ☎ 0131/555-5566 🌐 www.royal-yachtbritannia.co.uk 📄 £17.

★ Water of Leith Walkway

TRAIL | The Water of Leith, Edinburgh's main river, rises in the Pentland Hills, skirts the edges of the city center, then heads out to the port at Leith, where it flows into the Firth of Forth. For a scenic stroll from the West End out to Leith, you can join this waterside walkway at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, follow it through pretty Dean Village and Stockbridge, and continue past the Royal Botanic Garden, before emerging at The Shore. It takes about 90 minutes at a leisurely pace—and with all the tree-lined paths, pretty stone bridges, colorful wildflowers, and stunning birdlife (including herons, kingfishers, and buzzards) to see, we do suggest taking your time. Keep an eye out, too, for Antony Gormley's "6 Times" artwork, a series of life-sized human sculptures dotted along the river. ☎ *Leith* 🌐 www.waterofleith.org.uk.

🍴 Restaurants

Seafood lovers are drawn to the old port of Leith to sample the freshest seafood amid the authentic seafaring setting. Some of Scotland's most renowned chefs have made Leith—and more specifically, The Shore, its upmarket waterfront—their home.

The King's Wark

\$\$ | **BRITISH** | This gastro-pub at The Shore in Leith combines a beautiful historic setting with great quality food and a wide selection of Scottish gins. At lunchtime, the dark-wood bar does a roaring trade in simple fare such as gourmet burgers, fish cakes, and haggis (traditional or vegetarian), but in the evening, the kitchen ups the ante with a chalkboard menu of locally caught seafood specialties, from hake to monkfish. **Known for:** Leith's best roast dinner; affordable quality cuisine; atmospheric setting. ☎ *Average main: £16* ☎ 36 *The Shore, Leith* ☎ 0131/554-9260 🌐 www.thekingswarkpub.com ☺ *Closed Mon.–Wed.*



Leith's most famous sight is the moored Royal Yacht, which once carried Queen Elizabeth and is now open to the public to explore.

The Kitchen

\$\$\$\$ | **FRENCH** | A perennially popular high-end dining option, Tom Kitchen's Michelin-starred venture packs in the crowds. Kitchen, who trained in France, runs a tight ship, and his passion for using seasonal and locally sourced produce to his own creative ends shows no sign of waning. **Known for:** very expensive dinners; nose-to-tail philosophy; lovely setting. ☎ *Average main: £35* ☎ 78 *Commercial Quay, Leith* ☎ 0131/555-1755 🌐 thekitchen.com ☺ *Closed Sun. and Mon.*

★ The Little Chartroom

\$\$\$\$ | **BRITISH** | For fine dining with a touch of theater, it's hard to beat this superb open-kitchen restaurant, where you can sit at the bar and watch the skilled chefs prepare and assemble each course. The à la carte menu is small—there's a choice of just three starters, three mains, and three desserts—but it's filled with innovative and exciting dishes, such as dressed crab with curry and smoked almonds or spatchcock partridge with haggis and celeriac. **Known**

for: cozy kitchenside seating; unique creations like sweetcorn custard; small but varied menu. ☎ *Average main: £30* ☎ 14 *Bonnington Rd., Leith* ☎ 0131/556-6600 🌐 www.thelittlechartroom.com ☺ *Closed Mon.–Wed. No lunch Thurs. and Fri.*

★ Mimi's Bakehouse—Leith

\$ | **BAKERY | FAMILY** | Despite its large interior with acres of seating, this bakery-café still regularly has lines out the door. The reason is simple: it bakes the best cakes in Edinburgh, using everything from Oreos to Reese's Pieces to strawberries and cream. **Known for:** fun and cheeky decor; delicious and creative cakes; delicious French toast and breakfast rolls. ☎ *Average main: £9* ☎ 63 *The Shore, Leith* ☎ 0131/555-5908 🌐 www.mimisbakehouse.com ☺ *No dinner.*

★ Restaurant Martin Wishart

\$\$\$\$ | **FRENCH** | Leith's premier dining experience, this high-end restaurant combines imaginative cuisine, luxuriously understated decor, and a lovely waterfront location. Renowned Michelin-starred chef Martin Wishart

woos diners with his inspired menu of artistically presented, French-influenced dishes. **Known for:** exceptional vegetarian options; impeccable cuisine; beautiful location and setting. **📍 Average main:** £43 **📍 54 The Shore, Leith** ☎ 0131/553-3557 **🌐** www.restaurantmartinwishart.co.uk **🕒 Closed Sun. and Mon.**

Hotels

Staying in Leith means you'll be away from the main Old and New Town sights, but near to the Royal Yacht *Britannia* and some of the city's best dining and drinking options.

The Conifers

\$ | B&B/INN | This small family-run guest-house in a red-sandstone townhouse offers simple, traditionally decorated rooms and warm hospitality. **Pros:** hearty breakfasts; nice mix of old and new; many original fittings. **Cons:** one bathroom not en suite; a bit of a walk to The Shore; a bit of a walk to the city center. **📍 Rooms from:** £100 **📍 56 Pilrig St., Leith** ☎ 0131/554-5162 **🌐** www.conifersguesthouse.com **🚗 4 rooms** **🕒 Free Breakfast.**

Fingal

\$\$\$ | HOTEL | For something completely different, step aboard this floating boutique hotel, permanently moored near the Royal Yacht *Britannia* in Leith. **Pros:** quiet and peaceful; out-of-the-ordinary luxury; close to Leith's best bars and restaurants. **Cons:** a little way out of the center; dinner is underwhelming and overpriced; no room service. **📍 Rooms from:** £300 **📍 Alexandra Dock, Leith** ☎ 0131/357-5000 **🌐** www.fingal.co.uk **🚗 23 rooms** **🕒 Free Breakfast.**

Malmaison

\$\$ | HOTEL | Once a seamen's hostel, this French-inspired boutique hotel, which is part of a pioneering U.K.-wide chain (there's another in Edinburgh's New Town), draws a refined clientele to its chic shorefront rooms. A dramatic

black-and-taupe color scheme prevails in the public areas, while the hip rooms are dominated by tartan designs and shades of heather, with bolder fabrics and brighter features in the suites. **Pros:** great waterfront location; impressive building; elegant interiors. **Cons:** a long way from the center of town; bar sometimes rowdy at night; price fluctuates wildly. **📍 Rooms from:** £135 **📍 1 Tower Pl., Leith** ☎ 0131/285-1478 **🌐** malmaison.com/edinburgh **🚗 100 rooms** **🕒 Free Breakfast.**

Nightlife

BARS AND PUBS

The Lioness of Leith

PUBS | This historic pub has always been a popular Leith Walk haunt for locals, but recent acclaim for their gourmet, gargantuan Lioness Burgers has brought them wider attention. **📍 21-25 Duke St., Leith** ☎ 0131/629-0580 **🌐** www.thelionessof-leith.co.uk.

Malt & Hops

PUBS | First opening its doors in 1749, Malt & Hops has a fine waterfront location and serves microbrewery cask ales—with a selection good enough to be endorsed by CAMRA (the Campaign for Real Ale). It also has a resident ghost. **📍 45 The Shore, Leith** ☎ 0131/555-0083 **🌐** www.facebook.com/realaleleith.

★ Teuchters Landing

PUBS | Tucked away down a side street near The Shore, Teuchters Landing is a perennially popular pub for its wide range of whiskies and beers, its excellent pub food (try the nachos with cheddar and haggis), and its pontoon for sunny days. It's also a great place for watching live sports. If you're feeling lucky, try the Hoop of Destiny game for your chance to land a vintage dram for a fraction of its usual price. **📍 1c Dock Pl., Leith** ☎ 0131/554-7427 **🌐** www.teuchtersbar.co.uk.

Shopping

SHOPPING CENTERS

Ocean Terminal

MALL | As well as being home to the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, this on-the-water mall also has an impressive range of big-name brand stores and independent craft shops, as well as bars, restaurants, and a cinema. **📍 74 Ocean Dr., Leith** ☎ 0131/555-8888 **🌐** www.oceanterminal.com.

OUTDOOR SPORTS GEAR

Tiso Edinburgh Outdoor Experience

SPORTING GOODS | This sizable store stocks outdoor clothing, boots, and jackets ideal for hiking in the Highlands. It also sells tents and camping accessories for the truly hardy. There's a good little café inside, too. **📍 41 Commercial St., Leith** ☎ 0131/554-0804 **🌐** www.tiso.com.

West Lothian and the Forth Valley

If you stand on an Edinburgh eminence—the castle ramparts, Arthur's Seat, Calton Hill—you can plan a few Lothian excursions without even the aid of a map. The Lothians is the collective name given to the swath of countryside south of the Firth of Forth and surrounding Edinburgh. Many courtly and aristocratic families lived here, and the region still has the castles and mansions to prove it. And with the rich came deer parks, gardens in the French style, and Lothian's fame as a seed plot for Lowland gentility.

West Lothian comprises a good bit of Scotland's central belt. The River Forth snakes across a widening floodplain on its descent from the Highlands, and by the time it reaches the western extremities of Edinburgh, it has already passed below the mighty Forth bridges and become a broad estuary. Castles and historic houses sprout thickly on

both sides of the Forth. You can explore a number of them, and the territory north of the River Forth, in a day or two, or you can just pick one excursion for a day trip from Edinburgh.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

BUS

First Bus and Lothian Buses link most of this area. If you're planning to see more than one sight in this region by bus, it's worth planning an itinerary in advance.

CAR

The Queensferry Road, also known as the A90, is the main thoroughfare connecting Edinburgh to this region. It ends just outside South Queensferry, at which point you can turn west on the A904 and M9 to Linlithgow—passing by Hopetoun House, the House of the Binns, and Blackness Castle—or join the M90 heading north across the Forth Bridge, with branches off to Culross (on the A985) and Dunfermline (on the A823).

TRAIN

Dalmeny (for South Queensferry), Linlithgow, and Dunfermline all have rail stations that can be reached from Edinburgh stations.

South Queensferry

7 miles west of Edinburgh.

This pleasant little waterside community, a former ferry port, is completely dominated by the Forth Bridges, three dramatic structures of contrasting architecture (dating from the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries) that span the Firth of Forth at this historic crossing point. South Queensferry is also near a number of historic and cultural sights.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

The Queensferry Road, also known as the A90, is the main artery west from Edinburgh to South Queensferry and around.

Sights

Dalmeny House

HISTORIC HOME | The first of the stately homes clustered on the western edge of Edinburgh, Dalmeny House is the residence of the Earl and Countess of Rosebery. This 1817 Tudor Gothic mansion displays among its sumptuous interiors the best of the family's famous collection of 18th-century French furniture. Highlights include the library, the Napoleon Room, the drawing room (with its tapestries and intricately wrought French furniture), and the Vincennes and Sevres porcelain collections. Admission is by guided tour in June and July only. There's a lovely three-mile shore walk from here to South Queensferry. ☎ *South Queensferry* 0131/331-1888 🌐 www.roseberystates.co.uk 📞 £10 ☺ Closed Aug.–May and Thurs.–Sat. in June and July.

Forth Bridge

BRIDGE | Opened in 1890, when it was hailed as the eighth wonder of the world, this iconic red cantilevered rail bridge is a UNESCO World Heritage site. The extraordinary, 1½-mile-long crossing expands by another yard or so on a hot summer's day. The famous 19th-century bridge has since been joined by two neighbors; the 20th-century Forth Road Bridge (opened 1964) and the 21st-century Queensferry Crossing (opened 2017). ☎ *South Queensferry* 🌐 www.theforthbridges.org.

Hopetoun House

HISTORIC HOME | The palatial premises of Hopetoun House are among Scotland's grandest courtly seats, and are now home to the Marquesses of Linlithgow. The enormous property was started in 1699 to the original plans of Sir William Bruce, then enlarged between 1721 and 1754 by William Adam and his sons Robert and John. The house has decorative work of the highest order and a notable painting collection, plus all the trappings to keep you entertained: a nature trail,

a restaurant in the former stables, a farm shop, and a museum. The estate also specializes in clay pigeon shooting; groups of six or more can book an expert-led introductory session, with prices starting at £45 per person. ☎ *South Queensferry* 0131/331-2451 🌐 www.hopetoun.co.uk 📞 £11.50; grounds only £5.50 ☺ Closed Oct.–Mar.

★ Inchcolm Island

ISLAND | Accessible by boat tour from South Queensferry, Inchcolm Island is home to a beautifully preserved 12th-century abbey, a World War I fortress, green cliffs, sandy beaches, and an abundance of wildlife, from playful gray seals to brightly colored puffins. Prepare to be dive-bombed by seagulls if you visit during nesting season. The island is run by Historic Scotland, which levies a landing fee of £6, and it will cost you £16 to get there with either Maid of the Forth or Forth Boat Tours. ☎ *Inchcolm Island, South Queensferry* 07836/265146 🌐 www.historicenvironment.scot 📞 £22 (boat tour plus island landing pass) ☺ Closed Nov.–Mar.

Restaurants

The Boat House

\$\$ | **MODERN BRITISH** | Scotland's natural larder is on display at this romantic restaurant on the banks of the Forth. Seafood is the star of the show, and chef Paul Steward is the man behind the imaginative yet unfussy recipes. **Known for:** freshly caught daily specials; spectacular views from the patio; delicious seafood. ☎ *Average main:* £16 ☎ 22 High St., *South Queensferry* 0131/331-5429 🌐 www.theboathouse.online.

Hotels

★ Parkhead House

\$\$ | **B&B/INN** | Set within a gorgeous, 300-year-old gamekeeper's cottage on the edge of a deer park, this charming B&B offers large, stylishly appointed



A quick day trip from Edinburgh, one of Inchcolm Island's most interesting sights is its 12th-century abbey.

suites with en suite bedrooms and separate living/dining rooms. **Pros:** overlooking parkland and Firth of Forth; large and beautifully decorated suites; great breakfasts. **Cons:** shower pressure a little low; a short drive into South Queensferry; tricky to find (ask for instructions). ☎ *Rooms from:* ££170 ☎ *Off Abercorn Rd., South Queensferry* 0131/331-4348 🌐 www.parkhead-house.com 📞 2 rooms 10! Free Breakfast.

Jupiter Artland

11 miles southwest of Edinburgh.

For anyone drawn to interesting art and beautiful open spaces, a visit to this open-air collection of sculptures by world-renowned artists is a must.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

To reach Jupiter Artland from Edinburgh, take the A71 southwest toward Kilmarnock. Just after Wilkieston, turn right onto the B7015. It's also easy to reach by

Sights

★ Jupiter Artland

ART MUSEUM | The beautiful grounds of a Jacobean manor house have been transformed by an art-loving couple, Robert and Nicky Wilson, into an impressive sculpture park. With the aid of a map you can explore the magical landscapes and encounter works by renowned artists including Anish Kapoor, Anya Gallaccio, Nathan Coley, Tania Kovats, and Ian Hamilton Finlay, among many others. A highlight is walking around Charles Jencks's *Cells of Life*, a series of shapely, grass-covered mounds. ☎ *Bonnington House Steadings, Wilkieston, Edinburgh* 01506/889900 🌐 www.jupiterartland.org 📞 £9 ☺ Closed Nov.–mid-May.

Linlithgow

18 miles west of Edinburgh.

Linlithgow is perhaps best known for its impressive palace, once the seat of the Stewart kings. The surrounding area also has some fascinating historical attractions.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

From Edinburgh, take the A90 westward, continuing onto the A904 and M9, to reach Linlithgow. You can also take a train from Edinburgh Waverley to Linlithgow station, which is just a short walk from the palace.

Sights

Blackness Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | Standing like a grounded ship on the very edge of the Forth, this curious 15th-century structure has had a varied career as a strategic fortress, state prison, powder magazine, and youth hostel. The countryside is gently green and cultivated, and open views extend across the blue Forth to the distant ramparts of the Ochil Hills. ☒ *Blackness, Linlithgow* ☎ 01506/834807 🌐 www.historicenvironment.scot 📞 £6 🕒 Closed Fri. and Sat.

House of the Binns

HISTORIC HOME | The 17th-century general “Bloody” Tam Dalyell (1615–1685) transformed a fortified stronghold into a gracious mansion, the House of the Binns. The name derives from *bynn*, the old Scottish word for hill. The present exterior dates from around 1810 and shows a remodeling into a kind of mock fort with crenellated battlements and turrets. Inside, see magnificent Elizabethan-style plaster ceilings. ☒ *Off A904, Linlithgow* ☎ 01786/812664 🌐 www.nts.org.uk 📞 £10.50 🕒 House closed Jan.–Mar.

Linlithgow Palace

CASTLE/PALACE | On the edge of Linlithgow Loch stands the splendid ruin of Linlithgow Palace, the birthplace of Mary, Queen of Scots. Burned, perhaps

accidentally, by Hanoverian troops during the last Jacobite rebellion in 1746, this impressive shell stands on a site of great antiquity, though an earlier fire in 1424 destroyed any hard evidence of medieval life here. The palace gatehouse was built in the early 16th century, and the central courtyard's elaborate fountain dates from around 1535. The halls and great rooms are cold, echoing stone husks now in the care of Historic Scotland. ☒ *Kirkgate, Linlithgow* ☎ 01506/842896 🌐 www.historicenvironment.scot 📞 £7.20 🕒 Closed Sun. and Mon.

Dunfermline

18 miles northwest of Edinburgh.

Oft-overlooked Dunfermline was once the world center for the production of damask linen, but the town is better known today as the birthplace of millionaire industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919). Undoubtedly Dunfermline's most famous son, Carnegie endowed the town with a library, fitness center, and, naturally, a Carnegie Hall, still the focus of the town's culture and entertainment.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

If you're driving, head west on the A90. After it diverts north over the Firth of Forth, you will turn west onto the A823, then follow Queensferry Road into town. You can also reach Dunfermline by train from Edinburgh in about 35 minutes.

Sights

Andrew Carnegie Birthplace Museum

HISTORIC HOME | Scottish-American industrialist and noted philanthropist Andrew Carnegie was born here in 1835. Don't be misled by the simple exterior of this 18th-century weaver's cottage—inside it opens into a larger hall, where documents, photographs, and artifacts relate his fascinating life story, from humble beginnings to the world's richest man.



There are also displays on the genus of Jurassic dinosaur named after Carnegie: *Diplodocus carnegii*. ☒ *Moodie St., Dunfermline* ☎ 01383/724302 🌐 www.carnegiebirthplace.com 📞 Free.

★ Dunfermline Abbey and Palace

RELIGIOUS BUILDING | This impressive complex, the literal and metaphorical centerpiece of Dunfermline, was founded in the 11th century as a Benedictine abbey by Queen Margaret, the English wife of Scottish king Malcolm III. The present church is a mishmash of medieval and Norman work, and a decorative brass tomb here is the final resting place of Robert the Bruce (1274–1329). A palace was also part of the complex here, and was the birthplace of Charles I (1600–49); its ruins lie beside the abbey. Dunfermline was the seat of the royal court of Scotland until the end of the 11th

century, and its central role in Scottish affairs is explored by means of display panels dotted around the drafty but hallowed buildings. ☒ *St. Margaret St., Dunfermline* ☎ 01383/739026 🌐 www.historicenvironment.scot 📞 £6 🕒 Closed Thurs. and Fri. Oct.–Mar.

Pittencreeff Park

CITY PARK | One of Andrew Carnegie's most generous gifts to his hometown was this sprawling green space west of Dunfermline Abbey and Palace. As well as being a lovely place for a stroll or a picnic, it also has historical significance as the original site of **Malcolm's Tower**, named after King Malcolm III (circa 1031–93) and effectively the main seat of royal power in Scotland during the Middle Ages. ☒ *Dunfermline*.



Due to its role as a living museum, the entire town of Culross is considered a National Trust sight.

Culross

24 miles northwest of Edinburgh.

With its mercat cross, cobbled streets, tol-booth, and narrow *wynds* (alleys), seaside Culross is a picturesque little town. It's also a living museum of 17th-century Scottish life, with preserved historic properties open to the public. Culross once had a thriving industry and export trade in coal and salt (the coal was used in the salt-panning process), but as local coal became exhausted, the impetus of the Industrial Revolution passed Culross by, while other parts of the Forth Valley prospered. Culross became a backwater town, and the merchants' houses of the 17th and 18th centuries were never replaced by Victorian developments or modern architecture.

In the 1930s the National Trust for Scotland started to buy up the decaying properties with a view to preservation. Today ordinary citizens live in many of these properties, but others are available to explore. Walking

tours of the town are available from Culross Palace for a small fee.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

To get here by car from Edinburgh, follow the A90 west then north over the Forth Bridge, before continuing westward on the A985. You can also get here by bus (No. 8) from Dunfermline, which in turn is easily reached by train from Edinburgh.



★ Culross Palace

MUSEUM VILLAGE | Don't let the name fool you: this 16th-century merchant's house was never a royal residence, and lacks the ostentatious grandeur of a palace. It is, however, a fascinating slice of social history—the owner was a pioneer in local coal mining and salt production—and its interiors of Baltic pine, Dutch floor tiles, and Staffordshire pottery was pretty flashy for its time. It was also visited by King James VI in 1617. Today it retains its period charms, including a garden that grows herbs and vegetables typical of

the period. ☒ *Culross Palace, Culross*
☎ 01383/880359 🌐 www.nts.org.uk
💷 £10.50 🕒 Closed Nov.–Mar.

Midlothian and East Lothian

Stretching east to the sea and south to the Lowlands from Edinburgh, the regions of Midlothian and East Lothian, and their many attractions, are all within an hour's reach of Edinburgh.

Despite its countless tourist draws, including Scotland's finest stone carvings at Rosslyn Chapel, associations with Sir Walter Scott, outstanding castles, and miles of rolling countryside, Midlothian (the area immediately south of Edinburgh) remained off the beaten path for years. Fortunately, things are starting to change, as visitors look beyond the capital and the well-manicured charm of East Lothian to explore the pretty working towns and suburbs of Midlothian.

East Lothian, on the other hand, has been a draw for decades. An upmarket stockbroker belt, East Lothian's biggest draws are its golf courses of world rank, most notably Muirfield, plus a scattering of stately homes and interesting hotels. Its photogenic villages, active fishing harbors, dramatic cliff-side castles, and vistas of pastoral Lowland Scotland seem a world away from bustling Edinburgh—yet excellent transport links mean they're quick and easy to reach.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND BUS

Buses from Edinburgh serve towns and villages throughout Midlothian and East Lothian. For details of all services, inquire at the Edinburgh Bus Station, immediately northeast of St. Andrew Square in Edinburgh.

CAR

A quick route to the Pentlands follows the A702 directly south. For Rosslyn Chapel, take the at-times parallel A701. For the National Mining Museum Scotland, head southwest on the A7 and continue two miles further for the turning to Crichton Castle. Heading east, the A1 passes Newhailes and Haddington enroute to Dunbar. Or detour onto the coast-hugging A198 to go via Gullane, North Berwick, and Tantallon Castle.

TRAIN

There is very limited train service in Midlothian, but buses will get you close enough to all the main sights. In East Lothian, there are train tracks running east along the coast with regular services to North Berwick and Dunbar. Destinations not served by train, such as Gullane and Haddington, have good bus connections.

The Pentlands

6 miles south of Edinburgh.

These unmistakable hills begin almost in the suburbs of Edinburgh, and they make for a very welcome escape from the city crowds. There are access points to the hills along the A702, but the best two are Snowsports Centre and Flotterstone. At each of these you can find a parking lot, a lovely pub, and quiet walking paths leading up into the hills.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

The easiest way to reach the Pentlands is by car; simply follow the A702 south. Bus 101 from Edinburgh town center also follows this route. Alternatively, you can cycle into the hills in under an hour.



The Steading

§ | **BRITISH** | This pleasant pub, set within a converted farm building on the roadside of the A702, serves traditional, freshly



Rosslyn Chapel is one of Scotland's most intact 15th-century churches.

prepared pub food, along with hearty snacks like sandwiches and baked potatoes. It is right by the parking lot for the Snowsports Centre, from which several Pentlands walking trails begin. **Known for:** great location; hearty pub grub; beautiful building. **📍 Average main:** £10 ☎ 118–120 Biggar Rd., Edinburgh ☎ 0131/445–1128 🌐 www.thesteadingedinburgh.co.uk.

Roslin

7 miles south of Edinburgh.

It may be best known for its extraordinary chapel, but Roslin itself is a pleasant place to while away some time. There are some lovely walks from the village along the North River Esk.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

By car take the A701 south from Edinburgh, turning off onto the B7006 just north of the town in Bilston. Lothian Buses also shuttle passengers from

Edinburgh: Bus 37 from Princes Street is the most direct way.

Sights

★ Rosslyn Chapel

RELIGIOUS BUILDING | This chapel has always beckoned curious visitors intrigued by the various legends surrounding its magnificent carvings, but today it pulses with tourists as never before. Much of this can be attributed to Dan Brown's best-selling 2003 mystery novel *The Da Vinci Code*, which featured the chapel heavily, claiming it has a secret sign that can lead you to the Holy Grail. Whether you're a fan of the book or not, this Episcopal chapel (services continue to be held here) remains an imperative stop on any traveler's itinerary. Originally conceived by Sir William Sinclair (circa 1404–80) and dedicated to St. Matthew in 1446, the chapel is outstanding for the quality and variety of the carving inside. Covering almost every square inch of stonework are human figures,

animals, and plants. The meaning of these remains subject to many theories; some depict symbols from the medieval order of the Knights Templar and from Freemasonry. The chapel's design called for a cruciform structure, but only the choir and parts of the east transept walls were fully completed. Free talks about the building's history are held daily. ☑ **Chapel Loan, Roslin** ☎ 0131/440–2159 🌐 www.rosslynchapel.com 🎟 £9.50.

🍴 Restaurants

The Original Rosslyn Inn

📍 **BRITISH** | This atmospheric inn, on the crossroads in the center of Roslin village, serves tasty and hearty pub grub, from fish-and-chips and burgers to good veggie options. The inn, which also has rooms, is very close to Rosslyn Chapel; walk past the car park for a few minutes and you'll see it on the other side of the main road. **Known for:** convenient location; traditional Scottish pub; great steak-and-ale pie. **📍 Average main:** £10 ☎ 2–4 Main St., Roslin, Roslin ☎ 0131/440–2384 🌐 www.theoriginalrosslynn.co.uk.

National Mining Museum Scotland

9 miles southeast of Edinburgh.

The museum provides visitors with a sobering look into the lives of coal miners and the difficult conditions they endured down Scotland's mines.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

To get here by car, head southeast on the A7—the museum is just after Newtongrange. You can also take a train from Edinburgh Waverley to Newtongrange (a six-minute walk away) or come by bus: 29 and X95 stop right outside the museum.

👁 Sights

National Mining Museum Scotland

MUSEUM VILLAGE | Located in Newtongrange, once Scotland's largest mining village, the National Mining Museum Scotland provides a good introduction to the history of the country's coal industry. The main walkaround exhibition is a little dry—expect more on the chemical composition of coal than the social history of Scottish mining—but the guided tours dig (ahem) a little deeper. You'll get to explore a replica coalface, see the colossal mining machinery up close, and hear tales about life deep under ground from the ex-miner guides. In particular, you'll learn about the mining company (and its abusive general manager Mungo Mackay), whose power over workers extended to owning all the houses, shops, and even the local pub. ☑ **Lady Victoria Colliery, off A7, Newtongrange** ☎ 0131/663–7519 🌐 www.nationalminningmuseum.com 🎟 £9.50 with guided tour.

Crichton Castle

14 miles southeast of Edinburgh.

Sitting on a terrace overlooking a beautiful river valley, this 14th-century structure with diamond-faceted facade was home to the Crichtons, and later the earls of Bothwell.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

From Edinburgh, head east on the A1 and A68, then take the turnoff south onto the B6372 just before Pathhead. You can also come via the National Mining Museum Scotland; continue south on the A7 for 2½ miles, joining the B6732 just after Arniston.

👁 Sights

Crichton Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | Standing amid rolling hills that are interrupted here and there by patches of woodland, Crichton was a Bothwell family castle. Mary, Queen of Scots, attended the wedding here of

Bothwell's sister, Lady Janet Hepburn, to Mary's brother, Lord John Stewart. The curious arcaded range reveals diamond rustication on the courtyard stonework; this particular geometric pattern is unique in Scotland and is thought to have been inspired by the Renaissance styles in Europe, particularly Italy. The oldest part of the structure is the 14th-century keep (square tower). Note that there are no toilets at the castle. ☒ Off B6372, Pathhead ☎ 01875/320017 🌐 www.historicenvironment.scot 🚗 £6 🕒 Closed Oct.–Mar.

Newhailes

5½ miles east of Edinburgh.

With sumptuous interiors and relaxing grounds, this neo-Palladian villa a few miles east of Edinburgh hosted many luminaries of the Scottish Enlightenment.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

To get here from Edinburgh, take the A1 east, then transfer to the A6095. You can also get here by Lothian Bus 30 from Princes Street. Newcraighall train station, with short and direct connections to Edinburgh Waverley, is a 20-minute walk from the villa.



Newhailes

CASTLE/PALACE | This fine late-17th-century house was designed by Scottish architect James Smith in 1686 as his own home. He later sold it to Lord Bellendon, and in 1707 it was bought by Sir David Dalrymple, first Baronet of Hailes, who improved and extended the house, adding one of the finest rococo interiors in Scotland. The library here played host to many famous figures from the Scottish Enlightenment, as well as inveterate Scot-basher Dr. Samuel Johnson, who dubbed the library “the most learned room in Europe.” Most of the original interiors and furnishings remain intact, and there are beautiful walks around the landscaped grounds and

through the surrounding woodland. ☒ Off Newhailes Rd., Musselburgh ☎ 0131/653-5599 🌐 www.nts.org.uk 🚗 £12 🕒 Closed Dec.–Apr., Mon. and Tues. year-round, and weekdays in Nov.

Haddington

18 miles east of Edinburgh.

One of the best-preserved medieval street plans in the country can be explored in Haddington. Among the many buildings of architectural and historical interest is the Town House, designed by William Adam in 1748 and enlarged in 1830. A wall plaque at the Sidegate recalls the great heights of floods from the River Tyne. Beyond is the medieval Nungate footbridge, with the Church of St. Mary a little way upstream.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

From Edinburgh, simply drive east on the A1. Alternatively, take the bus: East Coast Buses 104 and X7, as well as Borders Buses 253, will get you there.



Lennoxlove House

HISTORIC HOME | Majestic Lennoxlove House has been the grand ancestral home of the very grand dukes of Hamilton since 1947 and the Baird family before them. This turreted country house, with parts dating from the 15th century, is a cheerful mix of family life and Scottish history. The beautifully decorated rooms house portraits, furniture, porcelain, and items associated with Mary, Queen of Scots, including her supposed death mask. Sporting activities from falconry to fishing take place on the stunning grounds. Guided tours are available Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday afternoons. ☒ Estate Office, Haddington ☎ 01620/823720 🌐 www.lennoxlove.com 🚗 £10 🕒 Closed Nov.–Apr., Mon., Tues., Fri., and Sat.



Gullane

21 miles northeast of Edinburgh.

Follow the coastline on either side of Gullane and you're faced with golf course after golf course. Fairways are laid out wherever there is available links space along this stretch of East Lothian, with Muirfield just one of the courses here replete with players clad in expensive golfing sweaters. Apart from golf, visitors can enjoy restful summer-evening strolls along Gullane's sandy beach.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

From Edinburgh, drive east on the A1, then head north along the coast on the A198. The direct 124 bus leaves to and from the capital every 30 minutes.



Dirleton Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | In the center of tiny Dirleton, two miles east of Gullane, sits the impressive-looking 12th-century Dirleton Castle. It's now a ruin, but its high outer wall is relatively complete, and the grounds behind the walls feature a 17th-century bowling green, set in the shade of yew trees and surrounded by a herbaceous flower border that blazes with color in high summer. King Edward I of England occupied the castle in 1298 as part of his campaign for the continued subjugation of the unruly Scots. ☒ Dirleton Ave., Off A198, Gullane ☎ 01620/850330 🌐 www.historicenvironment.scot 🚗 £6.

Restaurants

★ The Bonnie Badger

\$\$\$ | **BRITISH** | A charming concoction of sandstone walls, rafted roofs, and roaring fireplaces, as well as a lovely garden area, this upmarket inn is the ideal spot for a pub lunch. Owned by star Edinburgh chef Tom Kitchin, the menu at first appears to be fairly by-the-numbers British pub fare—think fish-and-chips, steak pie, and sausage and mash—but with superior local produce and a dash of culinary imagination, classic dishes are transformed into something special. **Known for:** beautiful garden; pigs' ears as a pre-meal snack; delicious desserts. **☎ Average main:** £22 **☎ Main St., Gullane** ☎ 01620/621111 **🌐** www.bonniebadger.com.

Activities

Gullane Golf Club

GOLF | Often overshadowed by Muirfield, Gullane provides an equally authentic links experience, as well as a far-more-effusive welcome than its slightly snooty neighbor along the road. The three championship courses here crisscross Gullane Hill, and all command outstanding views of the Firth of Forth and particularly the beaches of Aberlady Bay. No. 1 is the toughest, but No. 2 and No. 3 offer up equally compelling sport and for significantly lower green fees. Day tickets can also be purchased, and for No. 3 it's little more than the price of a single round. **☎ W. Links Rd., Gullane** ☎ 01620/842255 **🌐** www.gullanegolfclub.co.uk **🚗** No. 1: £195 weekdays, £225 weekends; No. 2: £85 weekdays, £95 weekends; No. 3: £49 weekdays, £59 weekends **🏌️** No. 1 Course: 18 holes, 6583 yards, par 71; No. 2 Course: 18 holes, 6385 yards, par 71; No. 3 Course: 18 holes, 5259 yards, par 68.

Muirfield

GOLF | Home of the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers and the world's oldest golfing club, Muirfield has a pedigree that few other courses can match.

Although this course overlooking the Firth of Forth is considered one of golf's most challenging, players also talk about it being "fair," which means it has no hidden bunkers or sand traps. The club has a well-deserved reputation for being stuffy and traditional; you will be refused entry to the restaurant if you aren't wearing a jacket and tie. In addition, its first female members were only admitted in 2019, 275 years after it first opened (and this was only after threats of losing hosting rights to The Open). Visitors are permitted only on Tuesday and Thursday, and you must apply for a tee time well in advance. **☎ Duncur Rd., Gullane** ☎ 01620/842123 **🌐** www.muirfield.org.uk **🚗** £310 Apr.–Oct., £110 Nov.–Mar. **🏌️** 18 holes, 7245 yards, par 71.

North Berwick

24 miles northeast of Edinburgh.

The pleasant little seaside resort of North Berwick manages to retain its small-town charm even when it's crowded with city visitors on warm summer days. Eating ice cream, the city folk stroll on the beach and in the narrow streets or gaze at the sailing craft in the small harbor. The town is near a number of castles and other sights.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Travel east on the A1 and join the coast-skirting A198, or take one of the regular trains from Edinburgh Waverley.

Sights

★ Isle of May

ISLAND | This small island in the middle of the Firth of Forth is home to many interesting sights, from the ruins of a medieval priory to a Gothic lighthouse to a wartime signal station. But it's the seabirds that really bring in the visitors. The Isle of May is the largest puffin colony on the east coast of Britain and is home to a quarter of a million birds nesting on the cliffs during late spring and early summer, as

well as seals basking on the shore. To visit the island, you'll need to take a 12-seat RIB (rigid inflatable boat) across choppy waters, including a sail by Bass Rock—the world's largest colony of gannets. Tours start from the Scottish Seabird Centre and last four hours, including at least 2½ hours on the island. Book in advance online to avoid disappointment. **☎ North Berwick** **🌐** www.seabird.org **🚗** Tour £50 **🕒** Closed Oct.–Mar.

Scottish Seabird Centre

COLLEGE | **FAMILY** | An observation deck, exhibits, and films at this excellent family-friendly attraction provide a captivating introduction to the world of the gannets and puffsins that nest on the Firth of Forth islands. Live interactive cameras let you take an even closer look at the bird colonies and marine mammals. Kids will enjoy the "Flyway Tunnel," a 3-D multimedia exhibit that simulates walking through an underwater passage, learning all about local nesting birds and sea life along the way. There are plenty of family-focused activities, nature walks, and photography shows, as well as a great on-site café and gift shop. **☎ The Harbour, North Berwick** ☎ 01620/890202 **🌐** www.seabird.org **🚗** £11.95.

★ Tantallon Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | Travel east along the flat fields from North Berwick, and the imposing silhouette of Tantallon Castle, a substantial, semiruined medieval fortress, comes dramatically into view. Standing on a headland with the sea on three sides, the red-sandstone walls are being chipped away by time and sea spray, with the earliest surviving stonework dating from the late 14th century. The fortress was besieged in 1529 by the cannons of King James V and again (more damagingly) during the civil war of 1651. Despite significant damage, much of the curtain wall of this former Douglas stronghold survives and is now cared for by Historic Scotland. From the grounds you can see Bass Rock out to sea, which

looks gray during winter but bright white in summer. Look through the telescope here and you'll see why. **☎ Off A198, North Berwick** ☎ 01620/892727 **🌐** www.historicenvironment.scot **🚗** £6.

Restaurants

★ The Lobster Shack

\$\$ | **SEAFOOD** | North Berwick's most consistently popular dining option isn't a traditional restaurant, or even a restaurant at all—it's a shack. That's testament to the sheer quality of the seafood served at this take-out stand, where freshly caught lobster, crab, haddock, and mussels are cooked before your eyes and served in boxes with double-dipped chips, ready to eat in a fold-up chair, on a harbor wall, or while strolling along the beach. **Known for:** good value; amazing lobster and chips; beautiful harborside location. **☎ Average main:** £16 **☎ North Berwick Harbour, North Berwick** ☎ 07910/620480 **🌐** www.lobstershack.co.uk **🕒** Closed Oct.–Mar.

Hotels

The Glebe House

\$\$ | **B&B/INN** | This stately 18th-century building was once a *manse* (minister's house), but is now a delightful and luxurious B&B. **Pros:** sociable breakfast around a mahogany table; peaceful atmosphere; interesting antiques. **Cons:** expensive for the area; too precious for some; books up well in advance. **☎ Rooms from:** £150 **☎ Law Rd., North Berwick** ☎ 01620/892608 **🌐** www.glebehouse-nb.co.uk **🚗** 4 rooms **🍳** Free Breakfast.

Dunbar

30 miles east of Edinburgh.

In the days before tour companies started offering package deals to the Mediterranean, Dunbar was a popular holiday beach resort. Now a bit faded, the town is still lovely for its spacious


Georgian-style properties, characterized by the astragals, or fan-shaped windows, above the doors; the symmetry of the house fronts; and the parapeted rooflines. Though not the popular seaside playground it once was, Dunbar has an attractive beach and a picturesque harbor. It's also one end of the John Muir Way, a cross-Scotland hiking trail.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND



From Edinburgh, head east on the A1 to get to Dunbar. You can also take a direct train from Edinburgh Waverley.

Sights

John Muir Country Park

NATURE PRESERVE | Set on the estuary of the River Tyne, winding down from the Moorfoot Hills, the John Muir Country Park encompasses varied coastal scenery: rocky shoreline, golden sands, and the mixed woodlands of Tynninghame, teeming with wildlife. Dunbar-born conservationist John Muir (1838–1914), whose family moved to the United States when he was a child, helped found Yosemite and Sequoia national parks in California.  *Off A1087, Dunbar.*

St. Mary's Parish Church

RELIGIOUS BUILDING | In the village of Whitekirk, on the road from Dunbar to North Berwick, lies the unmistakable St. Mary's Parish Church, with its beautiful red-sandstone Norman tower. Occupied since the 6th century, the church was a place of pilgrimage in medieval times because of its healing well. Behind the kirk, in a field, is a tithe barn—the tithe is the portion of a farmer's produce that was given to the local church. Beside this stands a 16th-century tower house, once used to accommodate visiting pilgrims. In the 15th century, the church was visited by a young Italian nobleman, Enea Silvio Bartolomeo Piccolomini, after he was shipwrecked off the East Lothian coast; two decades later, Piccolomini became Pope Pius II.  *A198, Whitekirk*  *Free.*

Activities



GOLF

Dunbar Golf Club

GOLF | There's a lighthouse at the 9th hole of this championship course, first laid out in 1856. It's a good choice for experiencing a typical east coast links, including the unique challenges presented by coastal winds. Within easy reach of Edinburgh, Dunbar Golf Club has stunning views of the Firth of Forth and Bass Rock. The club is currently undergoing an expansion, including the addition of a clubhouse, nine-hole short course, and driving range.  *East Links, Golf House Rd., Dunbar*  *01368/862317*  *www.dunbargolfclub.com*  *Summer: £90 Mon.–Wed., £105 Fri., £115 weekends; Winter: £50*  *18 holes, 6597 yards, par 71*  *Closed Thurs. year-round and Fri.–Sun. in Nov.–Feb.*

HIKING

★ John Muir Way

HIKING & WALKING | This much-praised scenic hiking path stretches from Helensburgh, northwest of Glasgow, to Dunbar. The trail's terminus is outside John Muir's birthplace, on the town's High Street. The 130-mile coast-to-coast route passes through some spectacular scenery (especially at the Helensburgh end). It takes about a week to traverse completely, but the official website has maps covering all the various sections.  *The John Muir Way (East End), 125 High St., Dunbar*  *www.johnmuirway.org.*