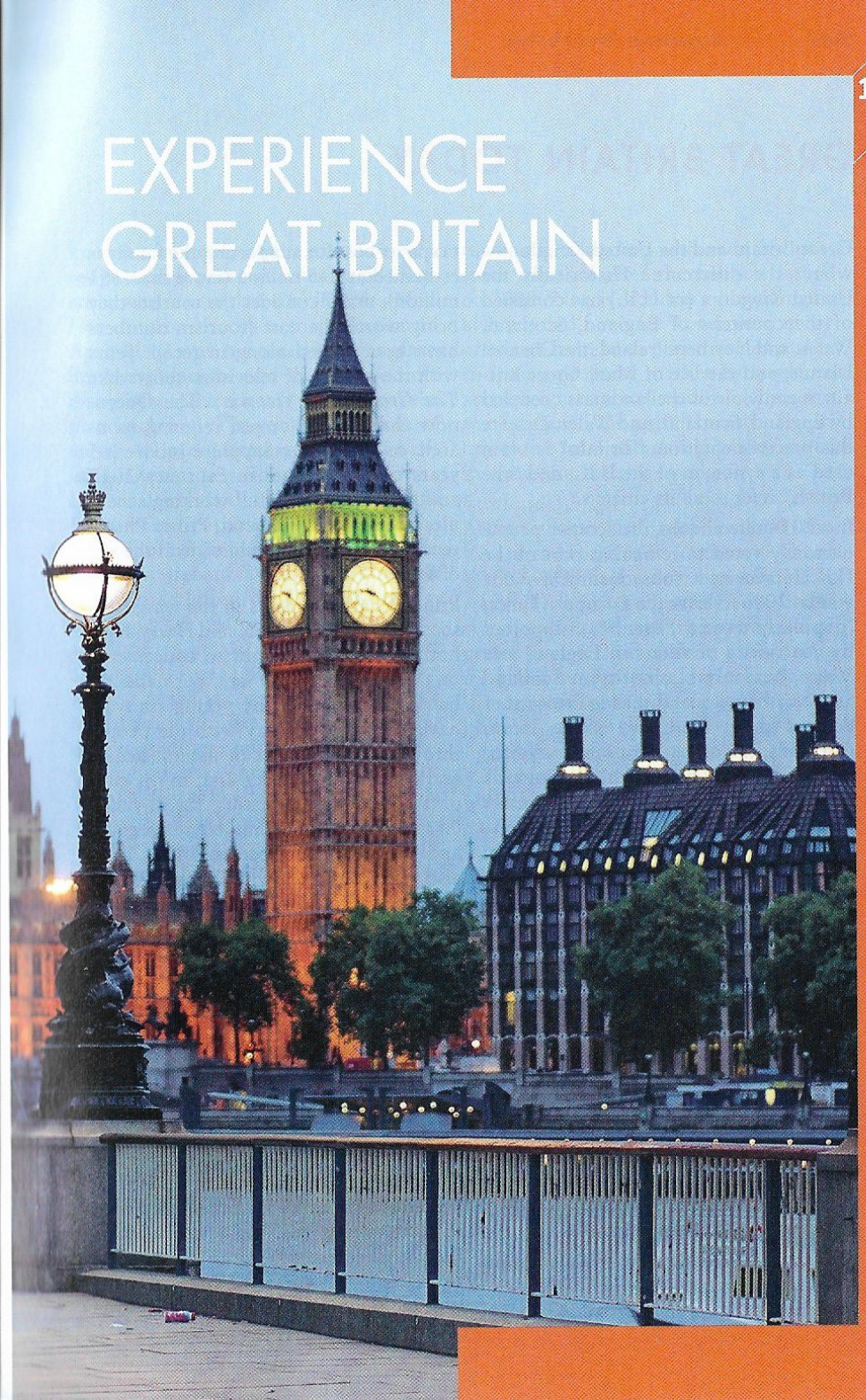


EXPERIENCE GREAT BRITAIN



GREAT BRITAIN TODAY

Great Britain and the United Kingdom—what’s the difference? Historically the United Kingdom (or U.K.) has consisted of the countries of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland; the Channel Islands; and the Isle of Man. Great Britain, meanwhile, is the landmass occupied by England, Scotland, and Wales. Despite this precise definition, “Britain” is often used as a synonym of the U.K., and “the British” refer to all its citizens.

In a 2014 referendum, the Scottish people narrowly voted to remain as part of the U.K. However, a subsequent U.K.-wide vote in 2016 to leave the European Union (popularly termed “Brexit”), supported by a majority of voters in England and Wales, but only a minority in Scotland and Northern Ireland, has led to further debates about the future of the union. Currently, the official exit is set to occur in March 2019, but much discussion is still necessary before the move finally happens.

It is important to note that neither Scotland nor Wales have ever been part of England, or vice versa, and each has their own unique heritage and culture. Get that wrong at your own peril—you haven’t seen angry until you’ve seen a Scot referred to as English. That being said, all three countries (and the rest of the U.K.) still pledge loyalty to the British Royal Family, and, despite each having selected devolved powers, are generally governed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom centered in London.

The Royal Family

Essentially a figurehead monarchy with a symbolic political role, the Royal Family and each member of its four generations continue to exercise the public’s fascination, both at home and abroad. Although

taxpayer cost for supporting the family is estimated at £45 million (more than \$61 million), many consider the tourists they bring worth the cost (tourism numbers have been helped along in recent years with the success of television shows like *The Crown* and *Victoria*). The Queen, now the world’s longest reigning monarch, celebrated her Sapphire Jubilee (65 years on the throne) in February 2017 and still maintains a full working schedule, although her husband, Prince Philip, recently retired from public life at the age of 96.

Prince Charles remains in the wings; his sons, the Princes William and Harry, have both given up their jobs to concentrate on royal duties and are permanently based in London. The younger royals have gained popularity with the people through their support of mental health and conservation issues and, in the case of Prince Harry, creating the Invictus Games for ill or wounded servicemen and -women. Their personal lives have also generated buzz, with William’s 2011 wedding to Kate Middleton (now known publicly as Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge) and the births of their first two children, future king Prince George and Princess Charlotte, celebrated by the public. Prince Harry’s wedding to American actress Meghan Markle in May 2018 and the April 2018 birth of third child Prince Louis to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge have also increased public interest.

Politics

Since the general election of 2015, the United Kingdom’s government has been in the hands of the Conservative Party. But the unexpected result of a June 2016 referendum, in which the country voted to leave the European Union (a decision

known commonly as Brexit), led to the resignation of prime minister David Cameron, who was replaced by Theresa May. Her decision to call a snap election in April 2017 was supposed to strengthen her party’s power and thereby ease the many issues in navigating Brexit, but the plan backfired. The result was a loss of an overall parliamentary majority by the Conservatives, a yield of 30 seats to the Labour Party (led by progressive hero Jeremy Corbyn), and a reliance on the support of parliament members from the Northern Ireland Democratic Unionist Party. In addition, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), a strong advocate of Brexit, lost public support and its only seat in parliament. However, Theresa May has continued to survive the machinations of Brexit, numerous cabinet resignations, tragic terrorist attacks in London and Manchester, the horrific Grenfell Tower fire disaster, and a crisis in the National Health Service (NHS). However, all these issues continue to be on the forefront of English minds and will be for the next several years.

London

Dynamic, complex, and cosmopolitan, London is undoubtedly a success story. Economically vibrant, it is Europe’s financial hub—although whether it will maintain this position post-Brexit remains to be seen. London also holds the nation’s greatest concentration of arts, contains some of its most iconic attractions, and boasts its most vibrant restaurant and theater scenes. Consequently, it’s also the U.K.’s top tourist draw, with ongoing debates about how to increase the capacity of its airports to meet visitor demand. However, London’s extraordinary success has often come at the expense of the rest of the country, with many cities and

towns still struggling with austerity measures imposed after the financial crash of 2008. Nor is London’s preeminence always good news for Londoners, many of whom have been priced out of a skyrocketing property market by investors and foreign buyers (London is, by quite some distance, the most expensive British city to live in). London is in a category of its own—for better or worse.

Scotland

At first glance, visitors to Scotland who have already been to its southern neighbor England will find much that is familiar. After all, the two countries have had a common history since their crowns were united in 1603 and their parliaments merged a hundred years later. Scotland’s distinctiveness soon becomes apparent, however, as does the country’s fiery pride in its own identity. It may only have 5.3 million people (to England’s 53 million), but in modern history Scotland has had an extraordinary global influence in everything from art and literature to science and engineering. Today, it continues to have some big ideas about where it’s headed socially, culturally, and economically.

This self-confidence is immediately evident in its thriving arts scene, with arts festivals proliferating and such companies as the National Theatre of Scotland continuing to enjoy international success. And it’s just as evident when talking to locals, who will proudly proclaim their landscapes, their castles, and their food and drink to be the best in the world. One visit to Scotland and it’s clear to see: this confidence is very well placed.

WHAT'S WHERE

1 London. Not only Britain's financial and governmental center but also one of the world's great cities, London has mammoth museums, posh palaces, double-decker buses, and iconic sights.

2 Canterbury and the Southeast. This compact green and pleasant region within day-trip distance of London takes in Canterbury and its cathedral, funky seaside Brighton, Dover's white cliffs, and gorgeous castles.

3 Stonehenge and the South. Hampshire, Dorset, and Wiltshire have quintessential English countryside. Explore the stone circles at Stonehenge and Avebury, take in Winchester and Salisbury, and discover Highclere Castle.

4 Cornwall and the West Country. Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall are sunnier and warmer than the rest of the country. Of the cities, Bristol is the largest and most vibrant; Wells and Exeter are attractive and compact.

5 Oxford and the Thames Valley. London's commuter belt takes in Windsor, where the Queen spends most weekends. Then there are the spires of Oxford, peaceful river towns such as Henley and Marlow, and stately homes like Blenheim Palace.



6 Bath, the Cotswolds, and Stratford-upon-Avon. The grand Georgian town of Bath is one of England's highlights with its Roman baths. Nearby, the Cotswolds region is justly famous for tranquil, stone-built villages. Stratford-upon-Avon is the place to see Shakespeare's birthplace and watch his plays.

7 Manchester, Liverpool, and the Peak District. Liverpool rides the Beatles' coattails but, like Manchester, has transformed its warehouses and docks into sleek hotels, restaurants, and shops. The surrounding Peak District has great opportunities for walking and visiting stately homes.

8 The Lake District. A popular national park, this is a startlingly beautiful area of craggy hills, wild moorland, stone cottages, and glittering silvery lakes. Among the literary high points are the homes of Wordsworth and Beatrix Potter.

9 Cambridge and East Anglia. The biggest lure in this green, flat, low-key region is Cambridge, with its medieval halls of learning. The countryside is dominated by time-warp towns such as Lavenham and coastal spots like Aldeburgh.



WHAT'S WHERE

10 Yorkshire and the Northeast. This wilder part of England has great appeal for lovers of the outdoors, but the ancient walled city of York is also a center of attention. In the Northeast, medieval Durham, Hadrian's Wall, and coastal castles are highlights.

11 Wales. Clinging to the western edge of England, Wales is green and ruggedly beautiful, with mountains, magnificent coastline, and stunning castles.

12 Edinburgh. Scotland's captivating capital is the country's most popular city, famous for its high-perched castle, Old Town and 18th-century New Town, and the most celebrated arts festival in the world, the International Festival.

13 Glasgow. The country's largest city has evolved from prosperous Victorian hub to depressed urban center to thriving modern city with a strong artistic, architectural, and culinary reputation.

14 The Borders and the Southwest. Scotland's southern gateway from England, the Borders, with its moors and gentle hills and river valleys, is rustic but historically rich.



15 The Central Highlands, Fife, and Angus. Convenient to both Edinburgh and Glasgow, this area encompasses some of Scotland's most beautiful terrain, including Loch Lomond and the Trossachs. In Fife, St. Andrews has world-famous golf courses.

16 Aberdeen and the Northeast. Malt-whisky buffs can use the prosperous port city of Aberdeen as a base for exploring the region's distilleries, including those on the Malt Whisky Trail. Aberdeen also makes a good starting point for touring Royal Deeside, with castles like Balmoral.

17 Argyll and the Isles. Remote and picturesque, this less visited region of the southwestern coastline has excellent gardens, religious sites, and distilleries.

18 Inverness, Skye, and the Northern Highlands. An awe-inspiring valley laced with rivers defines the Great Glen. Inverness, capital of the Highlands, is near Loch Ness. The beautiful Isle of Skye is a highlight for visitors, and the north's rugged highlands have wild moors.

NEED TO KNOW



AT A GLANCE

Capital: London
Population: 65,640,000
Currency: Pound
Money: ATMs are common; credit cards accepted widely
Language: English
Country Code: 44
Emergencies: 999
Driving: On the left
Electricity: 220-240v/50 cycles; electrical plugs have two or three square prongs

Time: Five hours ahead of New York

Documents: Six months with valid passport

Mobile Phones: GSM (900 and 1800 bands)

Major Mobile Companies: EE, 3, Vodafone, O2

WEBSITES

Official U.K. Tourism site:
 www.visitbritain.com

The National Trust:
 www.nationaltrust.org.uk

GETTING AROUND

Air Travel: The major airports are London Heathrow, London Gatwick, Manchester, Edinburgh, and Birmingham.

Bus Travel: An extensive network of long-distance buses offers such luxuries as sleeper seats on some routes.

Car Travel: Rent a car to explore at your own pace, but never in London. Gas can be expensive; also be sure to check regulations if you park in a town.

Train Travel: There are fast train links between major cities and slower trains to smaller towns. Fares can be high, particularly if booked at the last minute.

PLAN YOUR BUDGET

	HOTEL ROOM	MEAL	ATTRACTIONS
Low Budget	£100	£15	Tate Modern, free
Mid Budget	£200	£30	Tower of London ticket, £21.45
High Budget	£300	£100	West End Theatre premium ticket, £100

WAYS TO SAVE

Go for a fixed-price lunch. Many restaurants offer good prix-fixe lunch deals (Indian restaurants especially).

Book a Walsey Lodge. If you're touring the countryside, Walsey Lodges offer bed-and-breakfast rooms in comfortable private homes, some historic or with beautiful grounds, at reasonable prices. www.walseylodges.com

Buy a Visitor Oyster Card for London. This is the easiest and cheapest way to pay for public transport around the capital, as well as train services to and from Gatwick Airport. www.visitorshop.tfl.gov.uk

Go to a free museum. Many London museums—including the British Museum, the V&A, and the National Gallery—are free to visit, though donations are appreciated. Expect a charge for temporary exhibitions.

PLAN YOUR TIME

Hassle Factor Low. Flights to London are frequent, and links for onward travel are good.

3 days You can see some of London's historic sights and perhaps take a day trip out to Windsor Castle or Oxford.

1 week Combine a short trip to London with a one-day trip to Stonehenge and then travel on to Salisbury Cathedral and the grand estates of Stourhead and Longleat, or else head south to Jane Austen's house, the New Forest, and the Jurassic Coast.

2 weeks This gives you time for a stop in London plus excursions farther north to the beautiful Lake District, the wild moors of Brontë Country in Yorkshire, and even Scotland.

WHEN TO GO

High Season: You'll find good weather, sports events, and a busy music festival calendar from June through August. This is also the most expensive and popular time to visit Britain, though the natives tend to desert London in August.

Low Season: Rain and cold make winter the best time for airfares and hotel deals—and to escape the crowds. However, London is mobbed with Christmas shoppers in December.

Value Season: September has the most settled weather, plus saner airfares and the buzz of the new season's cultural events. The weather is still good in October, though temperatures start to drop in November. Late April and May is a great time to visit: fewer crowds, lower prices, and a glorious display of flowers. In March and early April, weather can be changeable and rainy.

BIG EVENTS

May: Meet leading writers at the huge Hay Festival in Wales's lovely Brecon Beacon National Park. www.hayfestival.com

July: Wimbledon starts at the beginning of the month and runs for 14 days. www.wimbledon.com

August: A galaxy of arts luminaries perform at the Edinburgh International Festival and Edinburgh Festival Fringe. www.edinburghfestivals.co.uk

September: The Open House Weekend is a rare chance to set foot inside many of London's most beautiful buildings for free. www.londonopenhouse.org

READ THIS

London: The Biography, Peter Ackroyd. A magisterial history of the city.

The English: A Portrait of a People, Jeremy Paxman. Longtime news anchor wryly examines his compatriots.

Notes from a Small Island, Bill Bryson. An American's look at his adopted home.

WATCH THIS

Notting Hill. A rose-color view of London.

Local Hero. A close-knit Scottish community tries to fend off developers.

Tamara Drewe. Comic modern reworking of Hardy's *Far from the Mad-ding Crowd*.

EAT THIS

Roast lamb with mint sauce: a traditional Sunday lunch

"Full English" breakfast: eggs, back bacon, sausages, mushrooms, grilled tomatoes, and toast

Shepherd's pie: minced lamb with vegetables under a mashed potato crust

Cheese: Cheddar, Blue Stilton, and Wensleydale are especially prized

Fish-and-chips: cod or haddock fried in a beer-batter crust with thick-cut fries

Days 9 and 10: The Lake District

In the area extending north beyond Kendal and Windermere, explore the English lakes and beautiful surrounding mountains on foot in the Lake District National Park. This area is jam-packed with hikers in summer and on weekends, so rent a car to seek out the more isolated routes. Take a cruise on Windermere or Coniston Water, or rent a boat for another classic Lakeland experience. If you have time for one Wordsworth-linked site, head to Dove Cottage; you can even have afternoon tea there.

Logistics: Take the train to Oxenholme with a change at Warrington Bank Quay. At Oxenholme you can switch to Windermere.

Day 11: York

This historic cathedral city is crammed with 15th- and 16th-century buildings, but don't miss York Minster, with its stunning stained glass, and the medieval streets of the Shambles. Take your pick of the city's museums or go shopping; have tea at Betty's or unwind at a pub. A walk along the top of the city walls is fun, too.

Logistics: By train from Oxenholme, switch at Manchester Piccadilly, or from Carlisle change at Newcastle or Leeds.

Day 12: Cambridge

Spend the afternoon touring King's College Chapel and the Backs—gardens and sprawling meadows—and refining your punting skills on the River Cam. The excellent Fitzwilliam Museum, full of art and antiquities, is another option, as is the Polar Museum. To relax, join the students for a pint at a pub.

Logistics: For train service, switch at Peterborough. Trains leave Cambridge for London frequently.

TIPS

■ Train travelers should keep in mind that regional "Rovers" and "Rangers" offer unlimited train travel in one-day, three-day, or weeklong increments. See www.nationalrail.co.uk for details. Also check out BritRail passes, which must be purchased before your trip.

■ Buses are time-consuming, but more scenic and cheaper than train travel. National Express offers discounts including fun fares—fares to and from London to various cities (including Cambridge) for as low as £5 if booked more than 24 hours in advance. Or check out low-cost Megabus.

■ To cut the tour short, consider skipping Chester and Shrewsbury and proceed to the Lake District from Stratford-upon-Avon on day eight. Likewise, you can consider passing up a visit to Cambridge if you opt for Oxford. You can add the time to your London stay or another place you want to linger.

■ It's easy to visit Stonehenge from Salisbury, as well as from Bath, whether you have a car or want a guided excursion.

■ Buy theater tickets well in advance for Stratford-upon-Avon.

GREAT ITINERARIES

HIGHLIGHTS OF SCOTLAND IN 10 DAYS

Scotland isn't large, but its most famous cities and most iconic landscapes take time to explore. This itinerary packs in many national icons: Edinburgh's enormous charm and Glasgow's excellent museums; a castle or two; lochs, mountains, and an island. It's a busy pace, but you'll still be able to fit in a whisky distillery visit and even a round of golf. You can do parts of this trip by public transportation, but beyond the cities, a car allows more flexibility.

Days 1 and 2: Edinburgh

The capital of Scotland is loaded with iconic sights in its Old Town and New Town. Visit **Edinburgh Castle** and the **National Gallery of Scotland**, and take tours of the **National Museum of Scotland** and the modern **Scottish Parliament** building. Walk along Old Town's **Royal Mile** and New Town's **George Street** for some fresh air and retail therapy. Later on, seek out a traditional pub with live music.

Logistics: Fly into Edinburgh Airport if you're flying via London. If you're flying directly into Glasgow from overseas, make your way from Glasgow Airport to Queen Street Station via taxi or bus. It takes an hour to travel from Glasgow to Edinburgh by car or bus, about 45 minutes to an hour by train. Explore on foot or by public transportation.

Day 3: Stirling to St. Andrews

Rent a car in Edinburgh and drive to the historic city of **Stirling**. Spend the day visiting **Stirling Castle** and the **National Wallace Monument**. If you're eager to tour a distillery, make time for a stop at the **Famous Grouse Experience** at the Glenturret Distillery in **Crieff**. For your overnight stay,

drive to the seaside town of St. Andrews, famous for golf.

Logistics: It's 35 miles or a one-hour drive to Stirling from Edinburgh, and 50 miles and 90 minutes from Stirling to St. Andrews. You can easily take a train or bus to these destinations.

Day 4: St. Andrews to Aviemore

Spend the morning exploring **St. Andrews**, known for its castle and the country's oldest university as well as its golf courses. If you've booked well in advance, play a round of golf. After lunch, drive to **Aviemore**. Along the way, stretch your legs at one of Scotland's notable sights, **Blair Castle** (just off the A9 and 10 miles north of **Pitlochry**). Head to Aviemore, gateway to the Cairngorm Mountains and Britain's largest national park, for two nights. The town is a center for outdoor activities and has many choices for accommodations, dining, and shopping, but you can also consider the more attractive surrounding villages and towns such as **Kingussie** for your stay.

Logistics: It's 120 miles from St. Andrews to Aviemore via the A9, a drive that will take 2½ hours. You can also take a train or bus.

Day 5: The Cairngorms

For anyone who enjoys outdoor pursuits or dramatic scenery, the arctic plateau of the Cairngorms is a must. Hiking, biking, and climbing are options (Glenmore Lodge is a renowned outdoor-sports center), but so is visiting attractions such as the **Cairngorm Reindeer Centre** and **Highland Folk Museum**.

Day 6: The Isle of Skye

Leave Aviemore early and head to Inverness, which has a busy center suited for a wander. **Inverness Castle** and the **Inverness Museum and Art Gallery** are worth

FLAVORS OF GREAT BRITAIN

The New Food Scene

Great Britain has never lacked a treasure store of nature's bounty: green pastures, fruitful orchards, and the encompassing sea. Over the past few decades, dowdy images of British cooking have been consigned to history. Today, a new focus on the land and a culinary confidence and expertise are exemplified by the popularity and influence of celebrity chefs such as Rick Stein, Heston Blumenthal, Gordon Ramsay, Jamie Oliver, and Mary Berry. And television programs on home baking like *The Great British Bake-off* have proved phenomenally popular.

The famous chefs and bakers are only one indicator of change: all over the country, artisanal food producers and talented cooks are indulging their passion for high-quality, locally sourced ingredients. Whether restaurants are riding the green wave or just following good food sense, they are trying their best to buy from local suppliers; many proudly advertise their support.

Food festivals, farmers' markets, and farm shops have sprung up in cities and towns across the country. Alongside the infiltration of supermarkets, much opposed by some people, comes a more discriminating attitude to food supplies. Outdoors-reared cows, sheep, and pigs; freshly caught fish; and seasonal fruits and vegetables provide a bedrock upon which traditional recipes are tempered with cosmopolitan influences. The contemporary British menu takes the best of Mediterranean and Asian cuisines and reinterprets them with new enthusiasm.

Natural Bounty

Craft beers and cask ales. The interest in the provenance of food extends to beer, with a recent boom in microbreweries

developing craft beers and real ales: beer that's unfiltered and unpasteurized, and that contains live brewer's yeast. Generally served by the pint (19.2 fluid ounces) from kegs, bottles, or casks, local brews range from easy-sipping pale ales to rich, dark stouts and porters.

Dairy produce. The stalwart Cheddar, Cheshire, Double Gloucester, and Stilton cheeses are complemented by traditional and experimental cheeses from small, local producers. Some cheeses come wrapped in nettles or vine leaves, others stuffed with apricots, cranberries, or herbs. British dairies also produce delicious sheep and goat cheeses, yogurts, and ice creams.

Game. In the fall and winter, pheasant, grouse, partridge, and venison are prominent on restaurant menus, served either roasted, in rich casseroles, or in pies. Duck (particularly the Gressingham and Aylesbury breeds) and rabbit are available all year round.

Meat. Peacefully grazing cattle, including Aberdeen Angus, Herefordshire, and Welsh Black varieties, are an iconic symbol of the countryside. When hung and dry-aged for up to 28 days, British beef is at its most flavorful. Spring lamb is succulent, and salt-marsh lamb from Wales and the Lake District, fed on wild grasses and herbs, makes for a unique taste. Outdoors-reared and rare breeds of pig, such as Gloucester Old Spot, often provide the breakfast bacon.

Seafood. The traditional trio of cod, haddock, and plaice is still in evidence, but declining fishing stocks have brought other varieties to prominence. Hake, bream, freshwater trout, wild salmon, sardines, pilchards, and mackerel are on the restaurant table, along with crab, mussels,

and oysters. The east and Cornish coasts are favored fishing grounds in England.

Some of the most coveted fish and seafood in the world live in the rivers and lakes, as well as off the coasts, of Scotland. Smoked fish (most notably, haddock, salmon, and trout) is the national specialty—so much so that the process of both hot and cold smoking has developed to a fine art. Scots often eat smoked fish for breakfast and lunch, and as an appetizer with their evening meal. The fish is commonly served with a squeeze of lemon and a sprinkle of cracked pepper, and accompanied by thin slices of hearty bread or oat crackers. Places like Arbroath as well as the isles of North Uist and Skye have won international praise for their delicious, locally smoked haddock, salmon, and trout.

Whiskies

"Uisge-beatha," translated from Scottish Gaelic, means "water of life," and in Scotland it most certainly is. Whisky helps weave together the country's essence, capturing the aromas of earth, water, and air in a single sip.

Whiskies differ greatly between single malts and blends. This has to do with the ingredients, specialized distillation processes, and type of oak cask. Whisky is made predominantly from malted barley that, in the case of blended whiskies, can be combined with grains and cereals like wheat or corn. Malts or single malts can come only from malted barley.

The five main whisky regions in Scotland produce distinctive tastes, though there are variations even within a region: the Lowlands (lighter in taste), Speyside (sweet, with flower scents), the Highlands (fragrant, smooth, and smoky), Campbeltown (full-bodied and slightly salty), andIslay (strong peat flavor). Do sample these

unique flavors; distillery tours are a good place to begin.

Traditional Dishes

Good international fare is available, and you shouldn't miss the Indian food in England. But do try some classics.

Black pudding. This dish, most commonly associated with Scotland but also a local favorite in the English regions of Lancashire, Yorkshire, and the Midlands, consists of onions, pork fat, oatmeal, herbs, and spices blended with the blood from a pig (or, on occasion, from a sheep or goat). At its best, this dish has a delicate, crumbly texture and can be served at breakfast or as a starter to a meal.

Fish-and-chips. This number-one seaside favorite not only turns up in every coastal resort, but in fish-and-chip shops and restaurants throughout the land. Fish, usually cod, haddock, or plaice, is deep-fried in a crispy batter and served with thick-cut french fries (chips) and, if eaten out, wrapped up in paper. The liberal sprinkling of salt and vinegar as well as "mushy" (mashed) peas are optional.

Haggis. Food in Scotland is steeped in history, and a rich story lies behind many traditional dishes. Once the food of peasants, haggis—a mixture of sheep's heart, lungs, and liver cooked with onions, oats, and spices, and then boiled in a sheep's stomach—has made a big comeback in more formal Scottish restaurants. If the dish's ingredients turn you off, there's often an equally flavorful vegetarian option. You'll find "neeps and tatties" alongside haggis; the three are inseparable. Neeps are yellow turnips, potatoes are the tatties, and both are boiled and then mashed.

Meat pies and pasties. Pies and pasties make a filling lunch. Perhaps the most popular is steak-and-kidney pie, combining

chunks of lean beef and kidneys mixed with braised onions and mushrooms in a thick gravy, topped with a light puff- or short-pastry crust. Other combinations are chicken with mushrooms or leek and beef slow-cooked in ale (often Guinness). Cornish pasties are filled with beef, potato, rutabaga, and onions, all enveloped in a circle of pastry folded in half.

Sausages. “Bangers and mash” are sausages, commonly made with pork, beef, or lamb, served with mashed potatoes and onion gravy. Lincolnshire sausage consists of pork flavored with sage. Cumberland sausage comes in a long coil and has a peppery taste.

Shepherd’s and cottage pie. These classic pub dishes have a lightly browned mashed-potato topping over stewed minced meat and onions in a rich gravy. Shepherd’s pie uses lamb, cottage pie beef.

Tempting Baked Goods

The British love their cakes, biscuits, breads, and pies. There’s always something sweet and most likely crumbly to indulge in, whether after a meal or with a nice cup of tea. Bakeries are the perfect places to sample fresh goodies. Some of the local favorites range from conventional butter-based shortbreads and Victoria sponge (a light sponge cake filled with softly whipped cream and jam, and sprinkled with castor sugar) to mince pies (small pies filled with brandy, stewed dried fruits, and nuts), and fluffy fruit scones. Treacle tarts, gingerbread, butterscotch apple pie, and oatcakes (more a savory cracker than a sweet cake) with local cheese are also popular as late-morning or early afternoon temptations.

Meals Not to Be Missed

Full English breakfast. The “full English” is a three-course affair. Starting with orange juice, cereals, porridge, yogurt, or stewed fruit, it’s followed by any combination of sausages, eggs, bacon, tomatoes, mushrooms, black pudding, baked beans, and fried bread. The feast finishes with toast and marmalade and tea or coffee. Alternatives to the fry-up are kippers, smoked haddock, or boiled or poached eggs. Many cafés and pubs serve an all-day breakfast.

Ploughman’s lunch. Crusty bread, English cheese (perhaps farmhouse Cheddar, blue Stilton, crumbly Cheshire, or waxy red Leicester), and tangy pickles with a side-salad garnish make up a delicious light lunch, found in all good pubs.

Roast dinners. On Sunday, the traditional roast dinner is still popular. The meat, either beef, pork, lamb, or chicken, is served with roast potatoes, carrots, seasonal green vegetables, and Yorkshire pudding, a savory batter baked in the oven until crisp, and then topped with a rich, dark, meaty gravy. Horseradish sauce and English mustard are on hand for beef; a mint sauce accompanies lamb; and an apple sauce enhances pork.

Afternoon tea. Tea, ideally served in a country garden on a summer afternoon, ranks high on the list of Britain’s must-do experiences. You may simply have a scone with your tea, or you can opt for a more ample feast: dainty sandwiches with the crusts cut off; scones with jam and clotted cream; and an array of homemade cakes. You can also choose from a variety of teas; Earl Grey is an afternoon favorite that you can take with either milk or lemon.

BEST FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

Spring

St. David’s Day. Leeks and daffodils are ubiquitous on Wales’ national day on March 1, with carnivals and processions in Cardiff and other places.

RHS Chelsea Flower Show. This five-day floral extravaganza in May is also a society event, held in London’s upmarket Chelsea neighborhood. www.rhs.org.uk/chelsea.

Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations. In late April, the Bard is celebrated with full pageantry and drama in his hometown of Stratford-upon-Avon. www.shakespearecelebrations.com.

Summer

Edinburgh Festival. Taking over Scotland’s capital every August, this cultural cornucopia is an amalgam of festivals running concurrently. Most prominent are the Edinburgh International Festival, featuring everything from opera to cutting-edge theater, and the rowdier Edinburgh Fringe, which highlights comedy and cabaret. www.eif.co.uk and www.edfringe.com.

Eisteddfod. The International Musical Eisteddfod is a gathering of choirs and dancers from around the world in the Welsh town of Llangollen in July. The National Eisteddfod of Wales in August focuses on Welsh culture, alternating between venues in north and south Wales. www.international-eisteddfod.co.uk and www.eisteddfod.org.uk.

Glastonbury Festival. Iconic and idiosyncratic, this not-quite-annual music event sprawls across Somerset farmland and features hundreds of big-name bands over three days in late June or early July. www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk.

Highland Games. This annual shindig takes place in Highland locations between May and September, and includes hammer-throwing, caber-tossing, and traditional dancing. www.shga.co.uk.

Notting Hill Carnival. West London’s Caribbean community takes to the streets at the end of August, with spectacular floats, costumes, and steel bands.

The Proms. The main venue for this distinguished July–September series of classical music concerts is in London’s Royal Albert Hall. www.bbc.co.uk/proms.

Royal Henley Regatta. High society lines the banks of the Thames River to cheer on rowers from around the world during this five-day event in early July. www.hrr.co.uk.

Trooping the Colour. Queen Elizabeth’s official birthday is marked in majestic style in mid-June in London’s Horse Guard Parade. www.royal.uk/trooping-colour.

Fall

Guy Fawkes Day. A foiled attempt in 1605 to blow up Parliament is remembered every November 5, when fireworks are set off all over the country. Lewes and York stage some of the biggest festivities.

Winter

Burns Night. Ceremonial dinners are held throughout Scotland to celebrate poet Robert Burns on his birthday, January 25.

Celtic Connections. During the last two weeks of January, musicians gather in Glasgow to play Celtic-inspired music. www.celticconnections.com.

Hogmanay. Scotland’s ancient, still-thriving New Year’s bash extends over three days, with celebrations that are especially exuberant in Edinburgh. www.edinburghshogmanay.com.

PLAYING GOLF IN SCOTLAND

There are some 550 golf courses in Scotland and only 5.3 million residents, so the country has probably the highest ratio of courses to people anywhere in the world. If you're visiting Scotland, you'll probably want to play the "famous names" sometime in your career.

So by all means play the championship courses such as the Old Course at St. Andrews, but remember they *are* championship courses. You may enjoy the game itself much more at a less challenging course. Remember, too, that everyone else wants to play the big names, so booking can be a problem at peak times in summer. Reserving three to four months ahead is not too far for the famous courses, although it's possible to get a time up to a month (or even a week) in advance if you are relaxed about your timing. If you're staying in a hotel attached to a course, get the concierge to book a tee time for you.

Happily, golf has always had a peculiar classlessness in Scotland. It's a game for everyone, and for centuries Scottish towns and cities have maintained courses for the enjoyment of their citizens. Admittedly, a few clubs have always been noted for their exclusive air, and some newer golf courses are losing touch with the game's inclusive origins, but these are exceptions to the tradition of recreation for all. Golf here is usually a democratic game, played by ordinary folk as well as the wealthy.

Tips About Playing

Golf courses are everywhere in Scotland. Most courses welcome visitors with a minimum of formalities, and some at a surprisingly low cost. Other courses are very expensive, but a lot of great golf can be played for between about £30 to £100 a round. Online booking at many courses has made arranging a golf tour easier, too.

Be aware of the topography of a course. Scotland is where the distinction between "links" and "parkland" courses was first made. Links courses are by the sea and are subject to the attendant sea breezes—some quite bracing—and mists, which can make them trickier to play. The natural topography of sand dunes and long, coarse grasses can add to the challenge. A parkland course is in a wooded area and its terrain is more obviously landscaped. A "moorland" course is found in an upland area.

Here are three pieces of advice, particularly for North Americans: (1) in Scotland the game is usually played fairly quickly, so don't dawdle if others are waiting; (2) caddy carts are hand-pulled carts for your clubs and driven golf carts are rarely available; and (3) when they say "rough," they really mean "rough."

Unless specified otherwise, hours are generally sunrise to sundown, which in June can be as late as 10 pm. Note that some courses advertise the SSS, "standard scratch score," instead of par (which may be different). This is the score a scratch golfer could achieve under perfect conditions. Rental clubs, balls, and other gear are generally available from clubhouses, except at the most basic municipal courses. Don't get caught by the dress codes enforced at many establishments: in general, untailored shorts, round-neck shirts, jeans, and sneakers are frowned upon.

The prestigious courses may ask for evidence of your golf skills by way of a handicap certificate; check in advance and carry this with you.

Costs and Courses

Many courses lower their rates before and after peak season—at the end of September, for example. It's worth asking about this. ■ **TIP**→ Some areas offer regional golf passes that save you money. Check with the local tourist board.

For a complete list of courses, contact local tourist offices or VisitScotland's official and comprehensive golf website, golf.visitscotland.com. It has information about the country's golf courses, special golf trails, regional passes, special events, and tour operators, as well as on conveniently located accommodations. U.K. Golf Guide (www.uk-golfguide.com) has user-generated reviews. For information about regional courses, also see individual chapters.

Best Bets Around Scotland

If your idea of heaven is teeing off on a windswept links, then Scotland is for you. Dramatic courses, many of them set on sandy dunes alongside the ocean, are just one of the types you'll encounter. Highland courses that take you through the heather and moorland courses surrounded by craggy mountains have their own challenges.

Boat of Garten Golf Club, Inverness-shire. With the Cairn Gorm Mountain as a backdrop, this beautiful course has rugged terrain that requires even seasoned players to bring their A game. As an added bonus, a steam railway runs alongside the course.

Carnoustie Golf Links, Angus. Challenging golfers for nearly 500 years, Carnoustie is on many golfers' must-do list. The iconic Championship Course has tested many of the world's top players, while the Burnside and Buddon courses attract budding Players and Watsons.

Castle Stuart Golf Links, Inverness-shire. A more recent addition to Scotland's world-class courses offers cliff-top hazards, sprawling bunkers, and rolling fairways overlooking the Moray Firth.

Cruden Bay Golf Club, Aberdeenshire. This challenging and enjoyable links course was built by the Great North of Scotland Railway Company in 1894. Its remote location beside a set of towering dunes makes it irresistible.

Dunbar Golf Club, East Lothian. This classic and challenging links course has dramatic weather and scenery, with a backdrop of the Firth of Forth, Bass Rock, and a lighthouse.

Gleneagles, Perthshire. Host of the 2014 Ryder Cup championship, Gleneagles has three 18-hole courses that challenge the pros and a 9-hole course that provides a more laid-back game. It's also home to the PGA National Golf Academy.

Machrihanish Golf Club, Argyll. A dramatic location on the Mull of Kintyre and some exciting match play make these links well worth a journey.

Royal Dornoch Golf Club, Sutherland. Extending across a coastal shelf, Royal Dornoch has fast greens, pristine beaches, and mountain views. In spring yellow gorse sets the green hills ablaze.

St. Andrews Links, Fife. To approach the iconic 18th hole in the place where the game was invented remains the holy grail of golfers worldwide.

Western Gailes Golf Club, near Glasgow. This splendid links course is a final qualifying course for the British Open. Sculpted by Mother Nature, it's the country's finest natural links course.

GREAT ITINERARIES

HIGHLIGHTS OF ENGLAND: 12 DAYS

Day 1: London

The capital is just the jumping-off point for this trip, so choose a few highlights that grab your interest. If it's the Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace, check the time to be sure you catch the pageantry. If Westminster Abbey appeals to your sense of history, arrive as early as you can. Pick a museum (many are free, so you needn't linger if you don't want to), whether it's the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, the British Museum in Bloomsbury, or the Tate Modern on the South Bank. Stroll Hyde Park or take a boat ride on the Thames before you find a pub or Indian restaurant for dinner. End with a play; the experience of theatergoing may be as interesting as whatever work you see.

Day 2: Windsor

Resplendent with centuries of treasures, Windsor Castle is favored by the Queen, and has been by rulers for centuries. Tour it to appreciate the history and wealth of the monarchy. The State Apartments are open if the Queen isn't in residence, and 10 kings and queens are buried in magnificent St. George's Chapel. Time permitting, take a walk in the adjacent Great Park. If you can splurge for a luxurious stay (versus making Windsor a day trip from London), head up the valley to Cliveden, the Thames Valley's most spectacular hotel.

Logistics: Trains from Paddington and Waterloo stations leave about twice hourly and take less than one hour. Green Line buses depart from the Colonades opposite London's Victoria Coach Station.

Day 3: Salisbury and Stourhead

Visible for miles around, Salisbury Cathedral's soaring spire is an unforgettable image of rural England. See the Magna Carta in the cathedral's Chapter House as you explore this marvel of medieval engineering, and walk the town path to get the view John Constable painted. Pay an afternoon visit to Stourhead to experience the finest example of the naturalistic 18th-century landscaping for which England is famous; the grand Palladian mansion here is a bonus.

Logistics: For trains to Salisbury from Windsor and Eton Riverside, head back to London's Waterloo to catch a train on the West of England line.

Day 4: Bath and Stonehenge

Bath's immaculately preserved, goldenstone Georgian architecture helps you recapture the late 18th century. Take time to stroll; don't miss the Royal Crescent (you can explore the period interior of No. 1), and sip the Pump Room's (some say vile-tasting) water as Jane Austen's characters might have. The Roman baths are an amazing remnant of the ancient empire, and today you can do as the Romans did as you relax in the warm mineral waters at the Thermae Bath Spa. There's plenty to do in Bath (museums, shopping, theater), but you might make an excursion to Stonehenge (by car or tour bus). Entry is by timed ticket, so make sure to book in advance to guarantee seeing this most popular and enigmatic site. It's usually at its least crowded early or late in the day.

Logistics: Trains and buses leave hourly from Salisbury to Bath.

Day 5: The Cotswolds

Antiques-shop in fairy-tale Stow-on-the-Wold and feed the ducks at the brook in Lower Slaughter for a taste of the mellow stone villages and dreamy green landscapes for which the area is beloved. Choose a rainy or off-season day to visit Broadway or risk jams of tourist traffic. Another great experience is a walk on the Cotswold Way or any local path.

Logistics: Drive to make the best of the beautiful scenery. Alternatively, opt for a guided tour bus.

Day 6: Oxford and Blenheim Palace

Join a guided tour of Oxford's glorious quadrangles, chapels, and gardens to get the best access to these centuries-old academic treasures. This leaves time for a jaunt to Blenheim, a unique combination of baroque opulence (inside and out) and naturalistic parkland, the work of the great 18th-century landscape designer Capability Brown. For classic Oxford experiences, rent a punt or join students and go pub crawling around town.

Logistics: Hourly trains depart from Bath for Oxford. Buses frequently depart from Oxford's Gloucester Green for Blenheim Palace.

Day 7: Stratford-upon-Avon

Skip this stop if you don't care about you-know-who. Fans of Shakespeare can see his birthplace and Anne Hathaway's Cottage (walking there is a delight), and then finish with a memorable performance at the Royal Shakespeare Company's magnificently renovated main stage. Start the day early and be prepared for crowds.

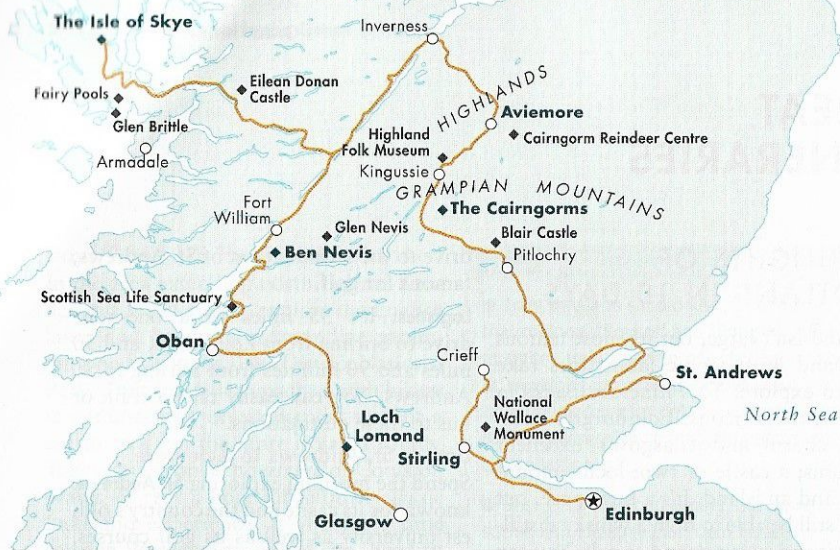
Logistics: From Oxford, trains involve one or two changes; there is a less frequent Stagecoach bus service.

Day 8: Shrewsbury to Chester

Head north to see the half-timber buildings of Shrewsbury, one of the best preserved of England's Tudor towns. Strolling is the best way to experience it. In Chester the architecture is more or less the same (though not always authentic), but the Rows, a series of two-story shops with medieval crypts beneath, and the fine city walls are sights you can't pass by. You can walk part or all of the city walls for views of the town and surrounding area.

Logistics: For Shrewsbury, change trains at Birmingham. The train ride to Chester is less than an hour.





seeing. The drive southwest to Skye is peaceful, full of raw landscapes and big, open horizons. Stop at **Eilean Donan Castle** on the way. Set on an island among three lochs, the castle is the stuff postcards are made of from the outside, although the interiors are comically underwhelming. Explore Skye: **Glen Brittle** is the perfect place to enjoy mountain scenery including the crystal-clear **Fairy Pools** at the foot of the Black Cuillins; and **Armadale** is a good place to go crafts shopping. End up in Portree for dinner and the night.

Logistics: It's 30 miles (a 40-minute drive) via the A9 from Aviemore to Inverness, and then it's 80 miles (a two-hour drive) from Inverness to Skye. Public transportation is possible but a car is best.

Day 7: Oban via Ben Nevis

Leave Skye no later than 9 am and head for **Fort William**. The town isn't worth stopping for, but the view of Britain's highest mountain, the 4,406-foot Ben Nevis, is. If time permits, take a hike in **Glen Nevis**. Continue on to **Oban**, a traditional Scottish resort town on the water, to overnight. Outside Oban, stop by the **Scottish Sea Life Sanctuary**. At night, feast on fish-and-chips in a local pub.

Logistics: It's nearly 100 miles from Skye to Oban; the drive is 3½ hours

without stopping. Public transportation is challenging.

Days 8 and 9: Loch Lomond and Glasgow

Enjoy a waterfront stroll in Oban. Mid-morning, set off for **Glasgow** via **Loch Lomond**. Arrive in Glasgow in time for dinner; take in a play or concert, or just relax in a pub on the first of your two nights in this rejuvenated city. Spend the next day visiting the sights: **Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum**, Charles Rennie Mackintosh's iconic buildings, and the **Riverside Museum** are a few highlights.

Logistics: It's 127 miles (a three-hour drive) from Oban to Glasgow via Balloch. Traveling by train is a possibility, but you won't be able to go via Balloch. Return your rental car in Glasgow.

Day 10: Glasgow and Home

On your final day, stow your suitcases at your hotel and hit Buchanan and Sauchiehall streets for some of Britain's best shopping. Clothes, whisky, and tartan items are good things to look for.

Logistics: It's less than 10 miles (15 minutes) by taxi to Glasgow's international airport in Paisley but more than 30 miles (40 minutes) to the international airport in Prestwick.



LONDON

Visit Fodors.com for advice, updates, and bookings