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## The Best of Scotland

Scotland is permeated with legend and romance. Its ruined castles standing amid fields of heather and bracken bespeak a past of heroic struggle. Its two great cities—the ancient seat of Scottish royalty, Edinburgh, and even more ancient Glasgow, boasting Victorian splendor—are among Europe’s most dynamic centers. And equally alluring is the picturesque countryside, with Highlands, mountains, lochs, salmon-filled rivers, incomparable golf courses, and so much more.

### 1 The Best Travel Experiences

- **Checking Out the Local Pub:** You’re in a Scottish pub, talking to the bartender and choosing from a dizzying array of single-malt whiskies. Perhaps the wind is blowing fitfully outside, causing the wooden sign to creak above the battered door, and a fire is flickering against the blackened bricks of the old fireplace. As the evening wanes and you’ve established common ground with the locals, you’ll realize you’re having one of your most authentic Scottish experiences. We list our favorite pubs in the destination chapters that follow.
- **Visiting Edinburgh at Festival Time:** The Edinburgh International Festival has become one of Europe’s most prestigious arts festivals. From mid-August to early September, a host of singers, dancers, musicians, and actors descends on the city, infusing it with a kind of manic creative energy. If you’re planning to sample the many offerings, get your tickets well in advance, and make your hotel and flight reservations early. Call ☎ **0131/473-2000** or go to [www.eif.co.uk](http://www.eif.co.uk). See p. 122.
- **Haunting the Castles:** The land of Macbeth contains more castles than anywhere else in the world. Many are in ruins, but dozens of the foreboding royal dwellings are intact and open to the public. Some, such as **Culzean** (p. 211), built by Robert Adam, are architectural masterpieces filled with paintings and antiques. Travelers who can’t get enough of Scotland’s castles should consider staying in one of the many relics that have been converted into comfortable, though sometimes drafty, hotels.
- **Horseback Riding Through the Highlands & Argyll:** There’s nothing like an equestrian excursion through the Highlands’ fragrant heather and over its lichen-covered rocks. One of Scotland’s biggest stables is the **Highland Riding Centre**, Drumnadrochit (☎ **01456/450-220**). See p. 336. For scenic rides across the moors, Highlands, and headlands of the Argyll, try the **Ardfern Riding Centre**, Loch Gilphead (☎ **01852/500-632**). See p. 221.
- **Cruising Along the Caledonian Canal:** In 1822, a group of enterprising Scots connected three of the Highlands’ longest lakes (lochs Ness, Lochy, and Oich) with a canal linking Britain’s east and west coasts. Since

then, barges have hauled everything from grain to building supplies without having to negotiate the wild storms off Scotland's northernmost tips. Now cabin cruisers tote a different kind of cargo along the Caledonian Canal: people seeking a spectacular waterborne view of the countryside that was tamed centuries ago by the Camerons, the Stewarts, and the MacDonalDs. **Caley Cruisers**, based in Inverness (© 01463/236-328; www.caleycruisers.co.uk), rents out skippered-boats by the week. See p. 337.

- **Attending a Highland Game:** Unlike any other sporting event, a Highland Game emphasizes clannish traditions rather than athletic dexterity, and the centerpiece is usually an exhibition of brute strength (tossing logs and the like). Most visitors show up for the men in kilts, the bagpipe playing, the pomp and circumstance, and the general celebration of all things Scottish. The best known (and most widely televised) of the events is Braemar's **Royal Highland Gathering**, held near Balmoral Castle in late August or early September. For details, call the **Braemar Tourist Office** (© 01339/741-600). See p. 313.
- **Ferrying to the Isle of Iona:** It's an otherworldly rock, one of Europe's most evocative holy places, anchored solidly among the Hebrides off Scotland's west coast. St. Columba established Iona as a Christian center in A.D. 563, and used it as a base for converting Scotland. You'll find a ruined Benedictine nunnery and a fully

restored cathedral where 50 Scottish kings were buried during the early Middle Ages. Hundreds of Celtic crosses once adorned Iona; today, only three of the originals remain. Now part of the National Trust, the island is home to an ecumenical group dedicated to the perpetuation of Christian ideals. Reaching Iona requires a 10-minute ferry ride from the hamlet of Fionnphort, on the nearby island of Mull. See p. 388.

- **Exploring the Orkneys:** Archaeologists say the Orkneys, an archipelago comprising some 70 islands, hold the richest trove of prehistoric monuments in the British Isles—an average of three sites per square mile. Ornithologists claim that about 16% of all winged animals in the United Kingdom reside here, and linguists have documented an ancient dialect that still uses Viking terms. Northwest of the Scottish mainland, closer to Oslo than to faraway London, these islands are on the same latitude as St. Petersburg but much more exposed to the raging gales of the North Sea. The late-spring sunsets and the aurora borealis have been called mystical, and in midsummer the sun remains above the horizon for 18 hours a day. An equivalent twilight—and even total darkness—envelops the islands in winter. Only 19 of the Orkneys are inhabited; the others, often drenched with rain, seem to float above primordial seas. See “The Orkney Islands: An Archaeological Garden” in chapter 13.

## 2 The Best Golf

For full details about golfing in Scotland, see “Teeing Off: Golfing in Scotland” in chapter 3.

- **Turnberry Hotel Golf Courses** (Ayrshire; © 01655/334-032): Established in 1903, the Ailsa is one of the world's

preeminent courses. It's not, however, for the faint of heart—although the links are verdant, many are marked by bunkers, salt-resistant rough grasses, and powerful winds blasting in from the nearby ocean. See p. 211.





- **Royal Troon Golf Club** (Ayrshire; © 01292/311-555): Laid out along lines paralleling the Firth of Clyde, this club fills a flat lowland terrain whose fairways are almost breathtakingly green despite their foundations on sandy soil. This is lowland Scotland at its most seductive, a 7,097-yard course (one of Scotland's longest), with a par of 71. See p. 213.
- **Old Course** (St. Andrews; © 01334/466-666): Sometime during the late 14th century, a group of bored aristocrats started hitting a ball around the nearby meadows. By the time their activities were officially recorded in 1552, the bylaws of the game were well on their way to being part of Scotland's lore. Old Course is indeed a golf shrine, one whose difficulty is shaped not only by nature but by the erstwhile paths of grazing sheep. See p. 254.
- **Carnoustie Golf Links** (Tayside; © 01241/802-270): Site of six British Opens, Carnoustie is considerably more difficult than most players anticipate at first glance. U.S. champions Tom Watson and Gary Player have referred to it as their favorite, and much of the town of Carnoustie was built because of the stream of world-class golfers who migrated here. See p. 57.
- **Royal Dornoch Golf Club** (Sutherland; © 01862/810-219): Located only 6° south of the Arctic Circle, this is the most northerly of the world's great golf courses. Despite its location, Royal Dornoch enjoys a microclimate more akin to the fens around Norfolk, England, than to the Arctic. See p. 353.

### 3 The Best Fishing

For more details about fishing in Scotland, see "Fishing" in chapter 3.

- **The Borders & Galloway Regions:** Sea fishing is pure heaven in the Solway Firth, especially near Port William and Portpatrick villages, in the vicinity of Loch Ryan, and also along the shore of the Isle of Whithorn. The elusive salmon is best pursued along the River Tweed, and the lesser-known hill lochans are ideal for trout fishermen. Local tourist offices distribute two helpful guides: *A Comprehensive Guide to Scottish Borders Angling* and *Castabout Anglers Guide to Dumfries and Galloway*. See chapter 6.
- **Argyll & the Southern Hebrides:** This much-visited area in western Scotland is split in two by the long peninsula of Kintyre. The topography is decidedly northern Atlantic, distinguished by open sea and loch, and the Firth of Clyde separates the region from the Inner Hebrides. Along with about 50 prime freshwater-angling sites, Argyll and the Southern Hebrides contain some two dozen villages with fantastic sea fishing. See chapter 8.
- **Tayside:** The northeast section of Scotland is filled not only with major rivers—the Don, Dee, Ythan, and Deveron—but with smaller ones, too, like the Ugie, all ideal for salmon fishing. Besides the rivers, numerous estuaries and lochs make this one of the country's best areas for game fishing. Local tourist offices keep abreast of the details about boat rentals and permit prices, and some country hotels offer fishing packages. See chapter 10.
- **The Great Glen:** Anglers from all over the world flock to the Great Glen, with its many lochs and rivers, to cast their flies in search of Scottish trout and salmon. Sea fishing from boat or shore is also permitted.

Salmon season runs from February to September; brown trout season is mid-March to early October. Anglers can catch rainbow trout here year-round. See chapter 11.

- **Sutherland & Northern Highlands:** Sutherland's myriad lochs provide endless possibilities for anglers. Trout fishing is the big lure, and local tourist offices will tell you all about boats and permits. Not only is the fishing superb, but your hotel cook may also prepare your catch for you. See chapter 11.

- **The Orkney Islands:** These northern islands are major fishing grounds. At least seven outfitters offer charters, and you can rent equipment. Loch fishing is also a popular pastime in the Orkneys, especially in Loch of Stenness and Loch of Harray, where hopeful anglers go after salmon, trout, sea trout, and salmon trout, although porbeagle shark, cod, halibut, bass, hake, skate, and turbot also turn up. See chapter 13.

## 4 The Best Countryside Drives

- **The Valley of the Tweed:** The waters originate in Scotland, define the border with England for part of their length, and are noted for some of Britain's top salmon fishing. Ruins of once-wealthy abbeys dot the landscape like beacons of long-lost power and prestige. Most travelers begin in Kelso and move west through Dryburgh, Selkirk, Melrose, Innerleithen, and Peebles. Although the total distance is less than 81km (50 miles), with a bit of backtracking en route, the many historic sites call for at least a full day's exploration. See chapter 6.
- **The Isle of Arran:** Situated off Scotland's southwestern edge, Arran combines radically different climates and topographies in a relatively small space. Lush, temperate vegetation grows in its southern tier—which is warmed by the Gulf Stream—while the moors and hills of its northern edge are as wild and craggy as the Highlands. You'll find prehistoric monuments, a red-sandstone pile beloved by medievalists, and sweeping vistas of Northern Ireland. Allow half a day, not including stopover times, for the 90km (56-mile) circumnavigation of the island's coastal road. See "The Isle of Arran: Scotland in Miniature" in chapter 8.
- **The Lochs & Mountains South of Oban:** In this solitary but dramatic area are Scotland's longest freshwater lake (Loch Awe), one of its longest saltwater fjords (Loch Fyne), some of its most historic buildings (Kilchurn Castle, Carnasserie Castle, and the Kilmartin Church), and one of its most notorious battlefields (the slopes of Ben Cruachan). Locals refer to it as the Hinterlands near Oban, though the 140km (87-mile) route follows an excellent network of highways along the jagged coast. Major towns through which it passes are Dalmally, Inveraray, Lochgilphead, and Oban. See chapter 8.
- **The Trossachs:** Located at the narrowest point of the mainland, just north of Glasgow, the Trossachs have been famous for their scenery since Queen Victoria called them lovely in 1869. Mystery seems to shroud the waters of lochs Lomond and Katrine. According to legend, the region's highest mountain, Ben Venue, is the traditional meeting point for Scotland's goblins. Ruled for generations by the MacGregor clan, this is the setting of Sir Walter Scott's *Rob Roy* and *The Lady of the Lake*. A tour through the region, beginning at

Callander and meandering through Aberfoyle, Stronachlachar, and Inversnaid, should take about half a day. In summer, expect lots of traffic, often from tour buses. See chapter 9.

- **The Road to the Isles (Hwy. A830):** It begins in Fort William, western terminus of the Caledonian Canal, and ends at Mallaig, the departure point for ferries servicing several offshore islands, including Mull, 74km

(46 miles) northwest. Along the way, it passes both the highest mountains in Britain and one of the Victorian Age's engineering triumphs—Neptune's Staircase, a network of eight lochs that raise the level of the canal 19m (64 ft.) in a span of less than 455m (1,500 ft.). Although summer traffic can be heavy, services en route are scarce, so start with a full tank of gas. See chapters 11 and 12.

## 5 The Best Bike Rides

For details on biking around the country, see “Biking, Walking & Other Outdoor Pursuits” in chapter 3.

- **The Galloway Region:** Southwestern Scotland doesn't draw the most visitors, but its beauty is unrivaled. A land of fields, verdant forests, and mist-shrouded hills, Galloway offers endless biking possibilities. All tourist offices in the area carry *Cycling in Dumfries and Galloway*, which describes the best routes. A free leaflet published by the Scottish Forest Enterprise gives trail routes through the various forests. See chapter 6.
- **The Isle of Arran:** The largest of the Clyde Islands, Arran has been called “Scotland in miniature.” And indeed, if you don't have time to see the whole country, you can get a preview of its various regions by biking this island. The northern part is mountainous like the Highlands, while the south, with scenery akin to the Borders, resembles the Lowlands. The full circuit around the island takes about 9 hours. The tourist office distributes the free *Cycling on Arran*, which indicates the best routes. See “Exploring the Island” in chapter 8.

- **The Trossachs:** Scotland's most scenic stretch for biking (not to mention for driving and bucolic walks) is the Trossachs, famed as Rob Roy MacGregor country. The ideal biking spot is along Loch Katrine, 16km (10 miles) long and 3km (2 miles) at its widest. See chapter 9.
- **Glencoe:** Site of a famous 1692 massacre, Glencoe features stark and grandiose mountain scenery. Rent a bike in the village and embark on an adventure, though you're likely to get rained on, as some 100 inches of rain a year are recorded. But as one local said, “Biking through Glencoe in the rain is when it's at its most mystical—we Scots have done that for years.” See “Glencoe: Scenery & Sorrow” in chapter 11.
- **The Isle of Skye:** Part of the Hebrides, Skye is the land of the Cuillins, a brooding mountain range you see at every turn as you pedal along. The most unusual place to bike is the 32km (20-mile) Trotternish Peninsula. It's known for its odd rock formations, and its coastal road passes an area of beautiful but often rocky seascapes, opening onto Loch Snizort and the Sound of Raasay. See chapter 12.

## 6 The Best Hikes

- **The Southern Upland Way:** Rivaling the West Highland Way (see below), this is the second of Scotland's great walks. The footpath begins at Portpatrick and runs 341km (212 miles) along the southwest coast to Cockburnspath, on the east coast. It passes through some of the most dramatic scenery in the Borders, including Gallop Forest Park. Contact the **Edinburgh & Scotland Information Centre**, Princes Mall, 3 Princes St., Edinburgh (☎ 0131/473-3800). See chapter 6.
- **East Neuk:** Directly south of St. Andrews lie some of Scotland's loveliest fishing villages, collectively known as East Neuk. The most enchanting walk is between the villages of Pittenweem and Anstruther. It's often breezy here, with wind from the sea, so dress accordingly. The path begins at the bottom of West Braes, a cul-de-sac off the main road in Anstruther. See chapter 9.
- **The Trossachs:** The Trossachs Trail extends from Loch Lomond, in the west, to Callander, in the east, and also from Doune to Aberfoyle and the Lord Ard Forest, to the south. In the north, it's bounded by the Crianlarich Hills and Balquhider, the site of Rob Roy's grave. Ever since Sir Walter Scott published *The Lady of the Lake* and *Rob Roy*, the area has attracted hikers in search of unspoiled natural beauty. Our favorite start for walks is the village of Brig o' Turk, between lochs Achray and Venachar, at the foot of Glen Finglas. From here you can set out in any direction, including one signposted toward the Achray Forest. There's also the Glen Finglas circular walk, and many hikers leave Brig o' Turk heading for Balquhider via Glen Finglas. See "Callander & a Trio of Lochs" in chapter 9.
- **The West Highland Way:** Unquestionably one of Scotland's great walks, the West Highland Way begins north of Glasgow, in Milngavie. The footpath stretches 153km (95 miles) northward along Loch Lomond, going through Glencoe to Fort William and eventually to Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain. Even if you only want to walk part of this path, you need to make plans in advance. Contact the **Edinburgh & Scotland Information Centre**, Princes Mall, 3 Princes St., Edinburgh (☎ 0131/473-3800). See p. 206.
- **Ben Nevis:** Six kilometers (4 miles) southeast of the town of Fort William looms Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain. At 1,342m (4,406 ft.), the snow-capped granite mass dominates this entire region of Scotland. This trip can be done in a day, but you'll need to massage your feet in the evening at a local pub. See chapter 11.

## 7 The Best Castles & Palaces

- **Edinburgh Castle** (Edinburgh): Few other buildings symbolize the grandeur of an independent Scotland as clearly as this one. Begun around A.D. 1000 on a hilltop high above the rest of Edinburgh, it witnessed some of the bloodiest and most treacherous events in Scottish history, including a doomed 1573 defense by Kirkcaldy of Grange in the name of Mary Queen of Scots. See p. 102.
- **Palace of Holyroodhouse** (Edinburgh): Throughout the clan battles for independence from England, this palace served as a pawn between opposing forces. In its changing

fortunes, it has housed a strange assortment of monarchs involved in traumatic events: Mary Queen of Scots, Bonnie Prince Charlie, James VII (before his ascendancy to the throne), and French King Charles X (on his forced abdication after an 1830 revolution). The building's present form dates from the late 1600s, when it was rebuilt in a dignified neo-Palladian style. Today, Holyroodhouse is one of Queen Elizabeth's official residences. See p. 107.

- **Drumlanrig Castle** (Dumfries): Begun in 1679, this castle took 12 years to build and so much money that its patron, the third earl and first duke of Queensbury, complained that he deeply resented its existence. Later, it was embroiled in dynastic inheritance scandals worthy of a Gothic novel. One of the most prestigious buildings in Scotland, it houses the antiques and artwork of four illustrious families. See p. 157.
- **Culzean Castle** (near Maybole): Designed for comfort and prestige, this castle was built in the late 1700s by Scotland's most celebrated architect, Robert Adam, as a replacement for a dark, dank tower that had stood for longer than anyone could remember. Culzean was donated to the National Trust for Scotland just after World War II. A suite was granted to General Eisenhower for his lifetime use, in gratitude for his role in staving off a foreign invasion of Britain. See p. 211.
- **Stirling Castle** (Stirling): Stirling is a triumph of Renaissance ornamentation, a startling contrast to the severe bulk of many other Scottish castles. Despite its beauty, after its completion in 1540 the castle was one of the most impregnable fortresses in the British Isles, thanks partly to its position on a rocky crag. See p. 262.
- **Scone Palace** (Scone): As early as A.D. 900, Scottish kings were crowned

here on a lump of granite so imbued with ancient magic that, in the 13th century, the English hauled it off to Westminster Abbey. (The Stone of Scone was returned to Scotland in 1996 and is now found in Edinburgh Castle.) The palace you see today was rebuilt in 1802 from ruins that incorporated a 1580 structure with stones laid during the dim early days of Scottish and Pictish union. See p. 295.

- **Glamis Castle** (Glamis): This castle's core was built for defense against rival clans during the 1400s, but over the centuries it evolved into a luxurious dwelling. The seat of the same family since 1372, Glamis is said to be haunted by the ghost of Lady Glamis, a former owner, whom James V had burnt as a witch when she resisted his annexation of her castle. It also figured into the ambitions of Macbeth, thane of Glamis. See p. 307.
- **Crathes Castle & Gardens** (Grampian): Crathes evokes the luxury of a 15th- and 16th-century Scottish laird. The style focuses on high heraldry, with frequent references to the persistent Scottish hope of an enduring independence. The gardens' massive yew hedges were originally planted in 1702. See p. 290.
- **Balmoral Castle** (Ballater): Scotland offers far greater castles to explore, but Balmoral, the rebuilt castle of Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, draws hordes of visitors, who no doubt hope to glimpse Prince William. That's because it's still the Scottish residence of the queen. Although inside you can visit only the ballroom, the sprawling manicured grounds and gardens also await you. See p. 310.
- **Braemar Castle** (Grampian): Built by the earl of Mar in 1628 as a hunting lodge, Braemar was burned to the ground, and then rebuilt by Farquharson of Invercauld, an ancestor

of the present owner. It's often photographed as a symbol of Scottish grandeur and the well-upholstered aristocratic life. See p. 313.

- **Cawdor Castle** (Cawdor): From its heavily fortified origins in the 1300s,

Cawdor evolved into the Campbell clan's luxurious seat. According to legend and Shakespearean plot lines, three witches promised this castle to Macbeth to tempt him into the deeds that led to his destruction. See p. 348.

## 8 The Best Cathedrals

- **Melrose Abbey** (the Borders): If it weren't for the abbey's location in the frequently devastated Borders, this would be one of the world's most spectacular ecclesiastical complexes. Founded in the 1100s, Melrose acquired vast wealth and was the target of its covetous enemies; it was burned and rebuilt several times before the Protestant takeover of Scotland. Today, it's one of the world's most beautiful ruins, a site immortalized by Robert Burns, who advised people to visit it only by moonlight. See p. 145.
- **Cathedral of St. Kentigern** (Glasgow): In the 7th century, St. Mungo built a wooden structure here, intending it to be his headquarters and eventual tomb. It burned down but was rebuilt in the 1300s. St. Kentigern is mainland Scotland's only complete medieval cathedral, with a form based extensively on the pointed arch. In the 1600s, the Calvinists stripped it of anything hinting at papist idolatry, though a remarkable set of sculptures atop its stone nave screen, said to be unique in Scotland, still represent the seven deadly sins. See p. 195.
- **Dunfermline Abbey and Palace** (Fife): During the 1100s, in its role as

Scotland's Westminster Abbey, Dunfermline became one of Europe's wealthiest churches. Three kings of Scotland were born here, and 22 members of the Scottish royal family were buried here. In the early 1800s, its ruined premises were partially restored to what you see today. Several years later, Andrew Carnegie, a markedly different kind of benefactor, was born within the cathedral's shadow. See p. 243.

- **Dunblane Cathedral** (Fife): Partly because the site had been holy since the days of the Celts, David I founded a church here in 1150. Despite later alterations and additions, Dunblane is still one of the country's best examples of Gothic architecture from the 1200s. See p. 267.
- **St. Magnus Cathedral** (the Orkney Islands): The most spectacular medieval building in the Orkneys, St. Magnus features an odd imposition of the Norman Gothic style on a territory administered during the time of its construction (the 1100s) by the Norwegians. The bodies of St. Magnus, patron saint of the Orkneys, and his nephew Earl Rognvald, the church's builder, are buried inside. See p. 405.

## 9 The Best Ruins

- **Linlithgow Palace** (Lothian): These ruins brood over an island in a loch, an unhappy vestige of what was the most glamorous royal residence during Scotland's golden age of independence, in

the early 1500s. Mary Queen of Scots was born here, but tragedy seemed to permeate the palace, as roofs collapsed from lack of maintenance, and early deaths in the royal family hastened an

inevitable union of Scotland with England. In 1745, after Linlithgow was occupied by Bonnie Prince Charlie and his troops, a mysterious fire swept over the palace. See p. 126.

- **Dryburgh Abbey** (the Borders): Begun in 1150 along a meandering curve of the River Tweed, Dryburgh was once home to thousands of monks who transformed the surrounding forests into arable fields, and drained many local swamps. The abbey's location, astride the much-troubled border with England, resulted in its destruction in three episodes (1322, 1385, and 1544), the last of which included the burning of the nearby village (Dryburgh). Today, the red-sandstone rocks are dim reminders of a long-ago monastic age. See p. 143.
- **Elgin Cathedral** (Grampian): This cathedral was built during the 1100s,

and although many other churches were erected in Scotland at the time, Elgin was reputedly the most beautiful. Burned and rebuilt twice (in 1290 and 1370), it—along with many other Catholic churches—deteriorated after the Reformation; the belfry collapsed in 1711, shattering most of the roof and some of the walls. Efforts were undertaken to repair the damage, yet the place remains an evocative ruin. See p. 321.

- **Skara Brae** (the Orkney Islands): Last occupied around 2500 B.C., and far humbler than the feudal castles you'll find on the Scottish mainland, this cluster of fortified stone buildings is the best-preserved Neolithic village in northwestern Europe. Buried beneath sand for thousands of years, Skara Brae was uncovered by a storm in 1850. See p. 409.

## 10 The Best Museums

- **National Gallery of Scotland** (Edinburgh): This museum boasts a small but choice collection whose presence in Edinburgh is firmly entwined with the city's self-image as the cultural capital of Scotland. (Glaswegians, however, will happily dispute that idea.) Gallery highlights include works by Velázquez, Zurbarán, Verrocchio, del Sarto, and Cézanne. See p. 109.
- **National Museum of Scotland** (Edinburgh): In 1998, the collections of the Royal Museum of Scotland and the National Museum of Antiquities were united into a coherent whole. Here you'll find everything you ever wanted to know about Scotland, from prehistory to the Industrial Age. Among its myriad items, the museum has a milk bottle once carried by Sean Connery and a 2.9-billion-year-old rock from the Isle of South Uist. See p. 110.
- **The Burrell Collection** (Glasgow): Sir William Burrell (1861–1958), a wealthy industrialist who devoted much of his life to accumulating art, is responsible for this collection. Set in a postmodern building in a suburb of Glasgow, it's one of Scotland's most admired museums, with a strong focus on medieval art, 19th-century French paintings, and Chinese ceramics. See p. 191.
- **Hunterian Art Gallery** (Glasgow): This museum owns much of the artistic estate of James McNeill Whistler, as well as a re-creation of the home of Scotland's most famous designer, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. On display are grand oils by Whistler, Rubens, and Rembrandt, not to mention one of the country's best collections of 19th-century Scottish paintings. See p. 194.
- **Aberdeen Art Gallery** (Aberdeen): A treasure-trove of art from all over the

world, this prestigious gallery has exhibits ranging from the 1700s to the present, from Hogarth to Reynolds to

Picasso. The museum is also home to the most important temporary exhibits in northeast Scotland. See p. 282.

## 11 The Best Luxury Hotels

- **The Howard** (Edinburgh; ☎ 0131/557-3500; [www.thehoward.com](http://www.thehoward.com)): Three adjacent Georgian-style town houses in an upscale neighborhood have undergone millions of pounds' worth of renovations, creating the most alluring accommodations in a city filled with fine hotels. A restaurant in one of the cellars serves meals inspired by Scottish traditions. See p. 85.
- **Holyrood Hotel** (Edinburgh; ☎ 0131/550-4500; [www.holyrood-hotel.com](http://www.holyrood-hotel.com)): This deluxe charmer launched itself into the millennium when it was designated "Hotel of the Year in Scotland" by the Automobile Association. Located near the new Scottish Parliament, the Holyrood is a bastion of comfort with luxury furnishings. See p. 91.
- **The Malmaison** (Leith, outside Edinburgh; ☎ 0131/468-5000; [www.malmaison.com](http://www.malmaison.com)): Malmaison is at the port of Leith, about a 15-minute ride northeast of Edinburgh's center. Named after Joséphine's mansion outside Paris, it celebrates the Auld Alliance of France and Scotland, and was created from a 1900 Victorian building. Malmaison once housed indigent seamen, but today it's an oasis of chic. See p. 93.
- **Greywalls Hotel** (East Lothian; ☎ 01620/842-144; [www.greywalls.co.uk](http://www.greywalls.co.uk)): Although Sir Edward Lutens designed dozens of opulent Edwardian homes throughout Britain, this is one of the few that's been converted into a hotel. Built in 1901 in what architects praise as perfect harmony with its setting, Greywalls features walled gardens designed by the doyenne of eccentric turn-of-the-20th-century landscape architects, Gertrude Jekyll. This national treasure, representing the Empire's most ostentatious days, is eccentric but eminently comfortable. See p. 129.
- **Knockinaam Lodge** (Portpatrick; ☎ 01776/810-471; [www.knockinaam-lodge.com](http://www.knockinaam-lodge.com)): Memories of Winston Churchill's clandestine meetings with General Eisenhower, a beacon of hope during the darkest days of World War II, pervade the Knockinaam. Today, the late-Victorian country house is as well upholstered and wryly sedate as you'd expect from a top-notch hotel with such a pedigree. Its restaurant is always included on critics' lists of the best of Scotland. See p. 165.
- **Hotel du Vin** (Glasgow; ☎ 0141/339-2001; [www.onedevonshiregardens.com](http://www.onedevonshiregardens.com)): This is the best-groomed building in a neighborhood filled with similar sandstone-fronted town houses. Ring the doorbell and an Edwardian-costumed maid will answer, curtsy, and usher you inside as if you're an extra in a Merchant-Ivory film. This re-creation of a high-bourgeois Scottish home from the early 1900s boasts antique furnishings and discreetly concealed modern comforts. See p. 180.
- **Fairmont St. Andrews Bay Golf Resort & Spa** (St. Andrews; ☎ 01334/837-000; [www.fairmont.com](http://www.fairmont.com)): This is the premier government-rated five-star hotel of eastern Scotland, lying right outside "the home of golf," as the town of St. Andrews is so often called. Boasting two championship golf courses, the finest rooms and cuisine in the area,

and a to-die-for spa and health club, the resort is the creation of two entrepreneurs from the southern U.S. state of Georgia. Did we mention that Prince William is a member of the health club? See p. 256.

- **The Gleneagles Hotel** (Auchterarder; ☎ 01764/662-231; www.gleneagles.com): This is Britain's greatest golf hotel, a government-rated five-star resort that also offers such extras as a deluxe spa and hunting excursions. Better than ever after major renovations and expansion, it is also a gourmet citadel with one of Scotland's most awarded chefs, Andrew Fairlie, overseeing those pots and pans. See p. 297.
- **Kinnaird Estate** (Dunkeld; ☎ 01796/482-440; www.kinnairdestate.com): An 18th-century hunting lodge for the duke of Atholl, Kinnaird dominates an enormous estate—3,646 hectares (9,000 acres) of moor, mountain, and forest. You'll find all the accouterments of a British country house in high-Edwardian style. The supremely comfortable interiors contrast dramatically with the tempests of the great outdoors, and the dining room is among the finest in Scotland. See p. 300.
- **Inverloch Castle** (near Fort William; ☎ 01397/702-177; www.inverlochycastlehotel.com): This castle

was built in 1863 by Lord Abinger in a style that set into stone the most high-blown hopes of Scottish Romantics. Today, lovers can follow in the footsteps of Queen Victoria amid the frescoed walls of this Scottish baronial hideaway. See p. 329.

- **Culloden House** (Inverness; ☎ 01463/790-461; www.cullodenhouse.co.uk): If you'd like to sleep where Bonnie Prince Charlie did, head for this Adam-style Georgian mansion on 16 hectares (40 acres) of parkland. Scottish tradition appears at every turn, from the grand lounge to the sound of a bagpiper on the grounds. Dinner in the Adam Room is an elegant affair, with French culinary skills applied to the finest Scottish produce. See p. 342.
- **Carnegie Club at Skibo Castle** (Dornoch; ☎ 01862/894-600; www.carnegieclub.co.uk): Andrew Carnegie called his glorious Highland castle and estate Heaven on Earth, and so it is. A private residential golf-and-sporting club, it stands on a 2,835-hectare (7,000-acre) estate in one of Europe's last great wilderness areas. It was owned by the Carnegie family until the early 1980s, and is one of the few places left where you can see how the privileged of the Gilded Age lived. See p. 354.

## 12 The Best Moderately Priced Hotels

- **Brasserie Malmaison** (Glasgow; ☎ 0141/572-1000; www.malmaison.com): Linked to a hotel with the same name in Edinburgh (see above), this Malmaison dates from the 1830s, when it was built as a Greek Orthodox church. Now converted into one of the best of Glasgow's moderately priced hotels (though its prices are creeping up into the expensive range),

it welcomes visitors with a distinct Scottish hospitality. See p. 186.

- **Inn at Lathones** (St. Andrews; ☎ 01334/840-494; www.theinn.co.uk): Located in the golf capital of Scotland, this 2-century-old manor has been lovingly restored with excellent accommodations. Scottish hospitality and tradition permeate the

place, also known for its “Taste of Scotland” menu. See p. 259.

- **Polmaily House Hotel** (Drumadrochit; ☎ 01456/450-343; www.polmaily.co.uk): While you search for Nessie, the Loch Ness Monster, you can lodge comfortably at this inn. The building dates from the 18th century and offers tasteful Edwardian-style living on a farm of mixed gardens and woodland.

- **The Cuillin Hills Hotel** (Portree, Isle of Skye; ☎ 01478/612-003; www.cuillinhills.demon.co.uk): Built in the 1820s as a hunting lodge for the MacDonald clan, this manor house has been skillfully converted into a small hotel. It attracts nature lovers to its nearby hills of heath and heather, and offers lovely rooms and great food that uses some of the best Highland produce. See p. 371.

### 13 The Best Restaurants

- **The Tower** (Edinburgh; ☎ 0131/225-3003): The town’s hot dining ticket lies on the top floor of the Museum of Scotland, an unlikely venue for one of Edinburgh’s best restaurants. Featuring fresh seafood and an innovative modern British cuisine, The Tower serves some of the city’s tastiest fare, made with the freshest ingredients. See p. 98.
- **Martin Wishart** (Edinburgh; ☎ 0131/553-3557): Many food critics hail this dining room as the best restaurant in Scotland. If it’s not that, it ranks among the top five. Out in Leith, Greater Edinburgh’s port-bordering town, it serves a modern French cuisine—dishes composed with quality products and filled with flavor. See p. 101.
- **Ostlers Close** (Cupar, near St. Andrews; ☎ 01334/655-574): Chef Jimmy Graham is one of the finest in the St. Andrews area, and he’s known to pick his own wild mushrooms. Golfers with discriminating palates flock to this modestly appointed

place, which makes the best use of fish and seafood from the Fife Coast, as well as ducks from a local free-range supplier. Everything is delectable. See p. 260.

- **The Cross** (Kingussie; ☎ 01540/661-166): Housed in a cleverly converted 19th-century tweed mill, The Cross is a lot more chic than you’d imagine. The menu items are a celebration of Scottish ingredients, prepared with modern international palates in mind. An example is the West Coast seafood salad with ultra-fresh monkfish, scallops, prawns, and asparagus. See p. 320.
- **Inverlochy Castle** (near Fort William; ☎ 01397/702-177): Cherubs cavort across frescoed ceilings, and chandeliers drip with Venetian crystal in a dining room created in the 1870s for a mogul. A Relais & Châteaux member, Inverlochy is likely to draw aristocrats and movie stars with a cuisine focusing on flavorful and natural interpretations of Scottish delicacies. See p. 331.

### 14 The Best Pubs

- **Café Royal Circle Bar** (Edinburgh; ☎ 0131/556-1884): The Café Royal Circle stands out in a city famous for its pubs. This longtime favorite, boasting lots of atmosphere and Victorian

trappings, attracts a sea of drinkers, locals as well as visitors. See p. 124.

- **Deacon Brodie’s Tavern** (Edinburgh; ☎ 0131/225-6531): This is the best spot for a wee dram or a pint

- along Edinburgh's Royal Mile. It perpetuates the memory of Deacon Brodie, good citizen by day and robber by night, the prototype for Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. It's been around since 1806 and has a cocktail-lounge bar and a large, rowdy tavern. See p. 124.
- **Globe Inn** (Dumfries; ☎ 01387/252-335): Located in the Borders, this was Robert Burns's favorite *houff* (small, cozy room). Today, you can imbibe as he did in a pub that's been in business since 1610. He liked the place so much that he had a child with the barmaid. A small museum is devoted to Burns. See p. 159.
  - **Corn Exchange** (Glasgow; ☎ 0141/248-5380): There was a time when it took a bit of courage or a foolish heart to enter a Glasgow pub. Those bad old days are long forgotten at this reliable pub in the city center. In the mid-1800s, the Corn Exchange was here (hence the name), but today it's a watering hole with good drinks and modestly priced bar platters. See p. 205.
  - **Rabbie's Bar** (Ayr; ☎ 01292/262-112): Robert Burns didn't confine his drinking to Dumfries. Ayr was also one of his hangouts, and this favorite pub is a nostalgic reminder of another era. Bits of pithy verse by Burns adorn the walls, and the collection of imported beers is the best in the area. See "Side Trips from Glasgow: The Best of the Strathclyde Region" (p. 209).
  - **Dreel Tavern** (Anstruther; ☎ 01333/310-727): This 16th-century wood-and-stone coaching inn is now a pub where old salts from the harbor and other locals gather to unwind on windy nights. Try the Orkney Dark Island, on hand pump. Anstruther, 74km (46 miles) northeast of Edinburgh, is a gem of a Scottish seaside town. See "East Neuk's Scenic Fishing Villages" in chapter 9.
  - **Ship Inn** (Elie; ☎ 01333/330-246): Down at the harbor in this little port town is the Ship Inn, one of the best places along the east coast for a pint. The building dates from 1778, and the pub from 1830. In summer, you can enjoy your pint outside with a view over the water, but on blustery winter days, the blazing fireplace is the attraction. Stick around for dinner—the menu ranges from pheasant to venison to fresh seafood, not your typical pub grub. See "East Neuk's Scenic Fishing Villages" in chapter 9.
  - **Prince of Wales** (Aberdeen; ☎ 01224/640-597): Furnished with church pews and antiques, the Prince of Wales features the city's longest bar counter. Oilmen from the North Sea join the regulars to ask for tap beers like Courage Directors and sample the chef's Guinness pie. You'll find real flavor and authentic atmosphere; it's a good place to mingle with the locals in a mellow setting. See "Aberdeen: The Castle Country" (p. 290).

## 15 The Best Shopping

- **Celtic Jewelry:** Modern reproductions of Celtic jewelry are one of Scotland's most creative craft forms. Some pieces reflect early Christian themes, like the Gaelic cross so often displayed in Presbyterian churches. Others are pure pagan, and sometimes Nordic, rich with symbols like dragons, intertwined ovals, and geometrics that would gladden the heart of a Celtic lord. Another common theme commemorates the yearnings for a politically independent country (Luckenbooths, entwined hearts

surmounted by a monarch's crown). Clan brooches, kilt pins, and other jewelry are often adorned with the Highland thistle and sometimes rendered in fine gold, silver, or platinum.

- **Sheepskins:** In some of Scotland's rocky districts, sheep are more numerous than people. Tanned sheepskins are for sale in hundreds of shops, usually accompanied by advice from the sales staff on what to do with them once you return home. *Note:* Black sheepskins are much rarer than white ones.
- **Sweaters, Tartans & Fabrics:** Sweaters come in every style and design, from bulky fishermen's pullovers to silky cashmere cardigans. Some factories pride themselves on

duplicating the tartans of every Scottish clan; others stick to 50 or so of the more popular designs. A meter of fine tartan fabric sells for around £35 (\$67). For a more authentic experience, buy your garment directly from whoever sewed or knitted it. You'll find ample opportunities at crofts and crafts shops around the countryside.

- **Liquor:** One of the most famous liquors in the world is named after the country that produces it: Scotch whisky (spelled without the "e") is distilled and aged throughout the country. Use your trip to Scotland as an opportunity to try new single malts (Laphroaig and MacCallan are our favorites), and bring a bottle or two home.