

# The ultimate guide for your trip to Scotland

Would you like to visit Scotland? Stop Looking! In my blog you can read everything you need to know about this interesting country. Have fun!



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## 1. Where is Scotland?

Scotland is a part of Great Britain as well as England and Wales. GB is located in northwest Europe in the Atlantic Ocean and is the largest island state on our continent. GB and Northern Ireland form the United Kingdom (UK).



The flag of the United Kingdom

The government of the UK sits in London with Queen Elizabeth II. as head of state.



Queen Elizabeth II.

## 2. The flag of Scotland

The flag of Scotland is one of the oldest flags of the world. The flag consists of a white saltire on a blue background. Locals call the flag "The Saltire".



The saltire refers to St. Andrews who was crucified on a saltire by the Romans in Greece.



According to legend the night before an important battle King Angus dreamed of St. Andrews who promised him victory. At the next morning he saw in the sky a saltire made of clouds against a blue sky. This encouraged his army so much that they won the battle. Since that day St. Andrews is the patron saint of Scotland.

Even today the Scottish flag is a symbol of courage and will to fight for freedom and independence.



### 3. The Scottish Government

Scotland has been an own kingdom for a long time. But in 1603 the King of England died. The Scottish King Jacob inherited the english throne and became king of both kingdoms. A hundred years later the countries got a joint government and parliament. That is how the Kingdom of GB was born. In Scotland laws and customs often remained Scottish. Since 1999 Scotland has had its own parliament and government that is responsible for Scotland's domestic policy. The seat of the Scottish parliament is St. Andrews House in Edinburgh.



On September 18, 2014 Scottish citizens were allowed to vote on whether Scotland should become an independent state or remain part of the UK. The majority voted against secession. Alexander Salmond then resigned as First Minister. Nicola Sturgeon has been First Minister since November 19, 2014.



Nicola Sturgeon

## 4. The languages spoken in Scotland

In Scotland three languages are spoken. Almost all Scots speak **English**.

About 30% of the population also speaks fluent **Lowland Scots** also known as Lallans. Scots is a mixture of Middle English, Scandinavian influences ("kirk" for "church") and Gaelic. The most famous song in Scots - For Auld Lang Syne ('For old times') - is sung in English-speaking countries around the world on New Year's Eve.

If you ask me whether the song is beautiful or not - just listen and enjoy on your own.

Check this out → [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acxnmaVTIZA&ab\\_channel=NoPrivacy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acxnmaVTIZA&ab_channel=NoPrivacy)

The Scottish Parliament recognizes English and Lowland Scots as official languages, although English has a higher value.

Only a little more than 1% of the Scots are native speakers of **Scottish Gaelic**.

The Scottish Gaelic language is one of the Celtic languages and was introduced by Irish immigrants in the 2nd century in the west of Scotland. From there Gaelic spread throughout Scotland and was also spoken at the Scottish court in the 11th century.

Today Gaelic is spoken in the Inner and Outer Hebrides, in the west of Scottish Highlands and in Glasgow. You can find Gaelic all over the country for example on street signs and in the theatre.



In addition the Gaelic community of Scotland has provided many of the country's national symbols, including the kilt, tartan pattern, bagpipes, Highland Games and whiskey.

You probably don't know it, but you do speak a bit of Gaelic!

WHISKY - Short for whiskeybae, derived from uisge-beatha (Gaelic for "water of life")

Have a look of the days of the week and the numbers one to ten.

Days of the week	Numbers one to ten
Diluain - Monday	Aon - one
Dimàirt - Tuesday	Dhà - two
Diciadain - Wednesday	Tri - three
Diardaoin - Thursday	Cèithir - four
Dihaoine - Friday	Còig - five
Disathairne - Saturday	Sìs - six
Didòmhnaich - Sunday	Seachd - seven
	Ochd - eight
	Naoi - nine
	Deich - ten



## 5. The Scottish population

Scotland has a population of about 5.1 million people and the population density in Scotland is 65 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. For comparison the population density of Germany is 233 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>.

The Central Lowlands of Scotland have the highest population density. Almost three quarters of the total population of Scotland live there while in the Highlands sometimes only 8 adults per km<sup>2</sup> live. Two thirds of the population live in cities. The largest city in Scotland is Glasgow with about 620,000 inhabitants. The most important cities of Scotland are the capital Edinburgh with about 465,000 inhabitants, Aberdeen with 211,000 inhabitants, Dundee with 150,000 inhabitants and Inverness with 65,000 inhabitants.



Many great personalities in all fields of knowledge were born in Scotland. Many of them have influenced the world through their innovations.

I would like to introduce three of them briefly.

John Mc Adam (1756-1838) introduced the gravel surface for roads.

Charles Mackintosh (1766-1843) developed a waterproof rubber/fabric mixture which was later used to make raincoats.

John Logie Baird (1888-1946) invented television and the optical fibers used today in data technology.



John McAdam



Charles Mackintosh



John Logie Baird

## 6 Edinburgh-The hilly capital of Scotland

The second largest city with a population of about 465,000 has been Scotland's capital since 1492. Since 1999 the seat of the Scottish parliament is in Edinburgh.

Edinburgh is located on the east coast of Scotland. The most famous buildings are Edinburgh Castle, Holyrood Palace and the National Galleries. Traditionally Edinburgh is an important commercial center and one of the major university cities in Great Britain.

Edinburgh offers many sights. High above the picturesque old town stands Edinburgh Castle. Soldiers in kilts take visitors around and tell them the castle's story.



Edinburgh Castle

Along the Royal Mile to Holyrood Palace you can admire many ancient buildings. There you will also find Holyroodhouse—the Queen's home when she comes to Edinburgh. It is three hundred years old.



Holyroodhouse

Of course you can also do great shopping in Edinburgh, on the Royal Mile or on Princes Street in the New Town.

Many of the sights are located in the city center and are easy to explore. Edinburgh is a hilly city but you can easily visit it on foot.

All in all the city is worth a visit.

## 7. Some Scottish traditions

What is typically Scottish?

I think first of all of men who wear skirts.

This skirt is called **kilt** because it is artfully pleated at the man's hip (kilted) and fastened with a belt. For a "real" kilt the following items should not be missing:

a sporran - a small pocket that is worn around the hips and over the kilt

a kilt pin - it holds the two pieces together at the front

a sgian dubh (pronounced like skie-an-dub) - a small knife that is stuck in one of the stockings

The kilt is still often worn today at weddings, at Highland Games by athletes and spectators and at ceilidhs by the dancers and the band.



The **tartan** is also typically Scottish. It is a fabric consisting of horizontal and vertical stripes in different colors on a colorful background. Thereby the typical check pattern also called tartan is created.

Tartan was originally developed in the Highlands and was first mentioned in 1538. Tartan is used to make a kilt.





Another Scottish tradition is the **bagpipe**. The bagpipes were originally developed during the 1st century in India. They are a classical shepherd's instrument. Traditionally Scottish armies went to war with the sounds of the bagpipes. The bagpipes are considered to be the Scottish national instrument.



You will definitely find bagpipes and kilts at the **Highland Games**. These take place in many places throughout the summer. Highland Games have been part of Scottish culture for hundreds of years. Today they are as popular as ever because at all Highland Games you can experience the feeling of community, tradition and celebration. Traditional Highland sports are log tossing, tug of war and hammer throwing. But Highland dances, music and entertainment for the whole family are also part of it.



Also because of all these traditions Scotland has fascinated me very much.

## 8. Haggis-the Scottish national dish

At first I thought, oh dear, this can't taste good. But once you have enjoyed freshly prepared haggis you know it is very delicious. You probably won't believe me when I tell you what haggis is made of. But please be brave and try it.

### What is Haggis made of?

The Scottish speciality is a sheep's stomach filled with giblets and onions. It is spicy and served with mashed turnips and potatoes, seasoned with a small sip of whiskey. Served with "neeps, tatties and rips" as they say in Scotland.



### When and where can you eat haggis?

You can eat haggis in any restaurant or pub. I have eaten the best haggis in Edinburgh in the Arcade Pub. Check this out → <https://arcadepub.co.uk/>

Haggis is also an important part of Burns Supper. Burns Supper is a festival in honor of the great Scottish poet Robert Burns. The festival takes place annually on his birthday on January, 25th. The poem "address to a haggis" which is dedicated to haggis is read. The meal is accompanied by bagpipes and whiskey.





## 9. Scotland's beautiful islands

Now I would like to introduce you to the Scottish islands. If you ask me this is the most beautiful side of Scotland.

There are 790 big and small islands. Only 130 of them are populated. Some of them are very famous but there are also lots of small and unknown islands. I would like to tell you something more about three of these islands.

### Vatersay—the most beautiful island

Vatersay is the southern-most inhabited island in the Outer Hebrides and one of the most scenic in the archipelago.



You can enjoy white beaches and turquoise water. For me the time on this island is still unforgettable. You have a great view of the now uninhabited islands Sandray, Pabbay and Mingulay. Furthermore Vatersay is home to some of the largest colonies of seabirds like gannet or puffin.

Vatersay is not very big—about six kilometers wide and five kilometers long. There is also a mountain that rises to 190 meters: The Heisebhal.



## Lewis and Harris-the biggest Scottish island

Lewis and Harris is one of the outer Hebrides and the largest island of Scotland. Lewis is in the north of the island and very flat. Harris is in the south and characterized by up to 300 meters of „high“ mountain peaks.

On the island the Gaelic culture is more pronounced than in almost any other place in Scotland. The Gaelic language is not only found on the road signs but is used by a large part of the islanders in everyday life.

What you need to know if you want to visit the island:

Lewis and Harris is strongly influenced by the Protestant conservative free churches. This means that on Sundays attractions and supermarkets are closed as well as most restaurants and cafes.

The cultural highlight are the Standing Stones of Callanish. The stones were created at about the same time as those of Stonehenge and equally impressive. The stones form geometric shapes with a large rock in the center. Today around 40'000 visitors come here every year.



Standing Stones of Callanish

## Orkney - every Scottish tourist knows it

The Orkneys are an archipelago of 62 islands and are located directly above the northern tip of mainland Scotland.

This is where the waters of the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean meet and grind large and small islands out of the soft red sandstone. Above each of them lies a carpet of lush green.

The Orkney archipelago has rather flat islands only Hoy offers some serious hills.

Orkney is also characterized by fertile plains with heath and grass which often drop steeply towards the sea. This creates rugged beauties like the cliffs of Yesnaby.

But Orkney is famous for its historical heritage. With the Ring of Brodgar and the Stone Age village of Skara Brae the North Islands provide important and great evidence of the architecture of the Neolithic peoples.

Due to its outstanding historical significance Skara Brae was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1999.



Skara Brae

No less impressive are the palaces and cathedrals that the Vikings and later the Norwegians have created here.

To sum up a visit to the Orkneys is very worthwhile, because there you will find thousands of years of history combined with a beautiful landscape.



## 10. Three places you should visit

### Highlands

The Highlands are located in the northwestern part of Scotland.

The Highlands are a beautiful mountainous landscape with majestic mountains and breathtaking views. You can watch the dolphins off the coast of Moray or admire the spectacular lake scenery of the northern Highlands. Of course you can also simply walk in the shade of the highest peak in Britain.

If you are in Scotland a visit to the Highlands is a must.



### Loch Ness

Loch Ness is a beautiful lake in the Highlands. You can walk idyllically along the shore of Loch Ness, have a picnic or just enjoy the beauty of nature.

Loch Ness became famous in 1933 when the first photo of Nessie was published. Since then there is the legend that a monster lives in Loch Ness. Every year about 1 million tourists visit Loch Ness to discover the monster.





## Ben Nevis

Ben Nevis is the highest mountain in the British Isles and is affectionately called "the ben". The mountain is 1345m high and about 400 million years old. Ben Nevis is located in the Scottish Highlands in the Grampian Mountains. Ben Nevis is a popular destination for mountain hikers and climbers and attracts 125000 hikers every year.

So if you like hiking you should climb the Ben Nevis. It is worth it!



Now you should have all the necessary information for your trip to Scotland. I hope you've enjoyed my blog about Scotland and it inspired you to visit this wonderful country. If you have any questions feel free to contact me. Have a good trip!