



POCKET ROUGH GUIDE **EDINBURGH**

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Edinburgh

Scotland's capital is a city of contrasts, where ancient history meets dynamic contemporary culture. From the medieval streets of the Old Town to the elegant Georgian New Town, Edinburgh is brimming with architectural wonders, world-class attractions and stunning green spaces. Famous for its vibrant festivals, including the Edinburgh Fringe, the city offers entertainment year-round, from theatre and comedy to live music and literary events. With dramatic views, winding closes and a thriving food scene, you'll find something to discover around every corner. Regular TransPennine Express services into Edinburgh from Manchester and the north and north-east of England make it an easy destination to travel to by train. Find out more about visiting Edinburgh by **TransPennine Express**.

Edinburgh Castle

Castlehill, Edinburgh, EH1 2NG

📍 edinburghcastle.scot. **Charge**

Perched on Castle Rock, Edinburgh Castle is Scotland's most famous fortress, offering breathtaking views over the city. Inside, visitors can explore the Crown Jewels of Scotland and St Margaret's Chapel, the oldest surviving building in Edinburgh. The castle's museums and exhibitions tell the story of Scotland's military history, while the daily firing of the One O'Clock Gun remains a beloved tradition. The Great Hall, dating back to the sixteenth century, showcases medieval weapons and suits of armour, giving visitors a glimpse into Scotland's royal and military past. Special events, including reenactments and seasonal celebrations, make each visit different to the last.

The Royal Mile

Edinburgh, EH1 📍 edinburgh.org. **Free**

Stretching from Edinburgh Castle to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, the Royal Mile is the city's historic heart. Lined with medieval buildings, historic landmarks and lively street performers, it offers a fascinating journey through

Scotland's past and present.

Underground vaults are there to be explored, while attractions such as St Giles' Cathedral and the Museum of Edinburgh are located here. The Mile is also home to traditional whisky bars, independent shops and bustling cafés, making it the perfect place to soak up Edinburgh's buzzy atmosphere. With regular markets and street performances, the Royal Mile is always full of energy and surprises.

Holyrood Park

Queen's Dr, Edinburgh, EH8 8HG

📍 historicenvironment.scot. **Free**

Comprising a dazzling array of landscapes – hills, crags, moorland, marshes, glens, lochs and fields – packed into 650 acres, Holyrood Park is Scotland in miniature. Once a royal hunting estate, it was given park status in the sixteenth century by King James V. While old photographs of the park show crops growing and sheep grazing, it's now used mostly by outdoor enthusiasts. A single tarred road, Queen's Drive, loops through the park, perfect for a circular cycle route. The park's information centre is a good starting point for a hike; as well as



Grassmarket view to Edinburgh Castle
Forever Edinburgh

details on the park's geology and flora, you can pick up a map of suggested routes up Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags.

National Galleries of Scotland: National

The Mound, Edinburgh, EH2 2EL

📍 nationalgalleries.org. Free

Art lovers will find plenty to admire in Scotland's national art museum, home to an impressive collection of European masterpieces. Works by Titian, Rembrandt and Van Gogh are displayed alongside Scottish artists such as Sir Henry Raeburn. The gallery regularly hosts temporary exhibitions (charge) and events, making it a dynamic cultural stop. Set in a neoclassical building on The Mound, it also offers spectacular views of Princes Street Gardens and the Old Town skyline. The café and shop provide the perfect place to relax and pick up unique souvenirs inspired by its world-class collection.

The Scotch Whisky Experience

354 Castlehill, Edinburgh, EH1 2NE

📍 scotchwhiskyexperience.co.uk. Charge

No visit to Edinburgh is complete without sampling Scotland's national drink. The Scotch Whisky Experience takes visitors on a guided journey through the whisky-making process, featuring sensory tasting sessions and one of the world's largest whisky collections. Whether you're a connoisseur or a curious beginner, expert guides provide insight into Scotland's diverse whisky regions and their distinctive flavours. Visitors can also learn about whisky pairing and the history of distillation, making this a must-visit attraction for anyone wanting to appreciate Scotland's famous spirit.

The Grassmarket and Victoria Street

Edinburgh, EH1 📍 edinburgh.org. Free

One of Edinburgh's most photogenic areas, the Grassmarket is a lively historic square lined with pubs, independent shops and restaurants. Nearby Victoria Street, with its colourful, curved façade, is said to have inspired Harry Potter's Diagon Alley. The area is a hub of



activity, with regular markets and live performances creating a lively atmosphere. Whether shopping for unique souvenirs or enjoying a traditional Scottish meal, the Grassmarket is a great place to experience Edinburgh's charm. Many historic pubs here also have fascinating pasts, offering visitors a taste of the city's storytelling tradition.

Dynamic Earth

112 Holyrood Rd, Edinburgh, EH8 8AS

🌐 dynamicearth.co.uk. Charge

Offering an interactive journey through the history of our planet, Dynamic Earth is one of Edinburgh's leading science attractions. Visitors can experience simulated earthquakes, journey through the ice age and explore space in the cutting-edge planetarium. As a sustainability-focused attraction, it does a great job of promoting environmental awareness and conservation through its exhibits. The centre's renewable energy initiatives and focus on climate science make it an inspiring visit for those passionate

about the future of the planet. A great choice for families as well as those interested in climate science, Dynamic Earth provides a fascinating and educational experience for all ages.

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

Arboretum Pl, Edinburgh, EH3 5NZ

🌐 rbge.org.uk. Free (glasshouses chargeable)

A green oasis just a short walk from the city centre, the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is one of the world's leading botanical collections. Covering 70 acres, it features diverse plant species from across the globe, tranquil landscaped gardens and spectacular glasshouses. Visitors can enjoy a peaceful stroll through themed gardens, including the Rock Garden, the Chinese Hillside and the Woodland Garden. The Botanic Garden is also committed to conservation and sustainability, playing a key role in protecting endangered plant species worldwide. Regular events, workshops and exhibitions make it a vibrant and ever-evolving attraction.

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

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Shops

W. Armstrong & Son

83 Grassmarket, EH1 2HJ

📞 armstrongsvintage.co.uk

A paradise for vintage lovers, Armstrong's is packed with retro fashion, from tweed jackets to 1970s dresses. As well as their Grassmarket store, they have stores on Cockburn Street, Teviot Place and Clerk Street. Whether looking for timeless classics or something quirky, this iconic shop is a must-visit for fashion enthusiasts.

The Scottish Textiles Showcase

20 St Mary's St, EH1 1SU

📞 scottishtextileshowcase.com

Celebrating Scotland's rich textile heritage, this boutique offers high-quality cashmere, tweed and wool pieces crafted by local designers. From cosy scarves to stylish accessories, everything is made using traditional techniques. A great place to pick up an authentic Scottish gift or a beautifully made keepsake from Edinburgh.

Restaurants and cafés

Amber

354 Castlehill, EH1 2NE

📞 scotchwhiskeyexperience.co.uk

Connected to The Scotch Whisky Experience, this restaurant offers national specialities on a "Taste of Scotland" menu, featuring a trio of starters and mains including haggis bonbons, and roast loin of venison with whisky sauce. There's also a whisky sommelier on hand to suggest accompanying drams for each course.

The Edinburgh Larder

15 Blackfriars St 📞 edinburghlarder.co.uk

Just off the Royal Mile, this popular café dishes up top-quality

breakfasts, cream teas and lunches if you can get a seat. Care is taken to ensure ingredients are in season and sourced from local producers. Begin with the veggie breakfast with vegetarian haggis, homemade beans, blistered tomatoes, roasted mushroom and egg and return later for a soup and sandwich combo.

Forage and Chatter

1A Alva St, EH2 4PH

📞 forageandchatter.com

Showcasing the best produce sourced within a 25-mile radius, this concept restaurant garners more accolades than any other in town. Be it foraged, farmed or fished, it's all about the ingredients; Scotland's larder brought to bear on Scots-French cuisine with accomplished plates like pumpkin croquette, goat-cheese curd and honey pumpkin puree, and lamb rump with Jerusalem artichoke and potato terrine.

Ostara

52 Coburg St, EH6 6HJ 📞 0131 261 5441

Brunch specialists serving some of the city's most vibrant plates of food. There are lots of healthy options, including smashed avocado on sourdough and fruity porridge, while anyone in need of an umami hit should target the potato bravas, mushroom salt, smoky ketchup, halloumi and fried egg.

Restaurant Martin Wishart

54 The Shore, EH6 6RA

📞 restaurantmartinwishart.co.uk

The eponymous chef is one of the leading lights of the Scottish culinary scene and was the first Michelin star holder in Edinburgh. Expect highly accomplished and exquisitely presented dishes featuring Scottish-sourced fish and meat, for example, roast saddle of rabbit, and Scrabster turbot with truffle jus. A handful of different menus, including a vegetarian and a market one.



W. Armstrong & Son
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Wedgwood the Restaurant

267 Canongate, EH8 8BQ

📍 wedgwoodtherestaurant.co.uk

This small, award-winning fine-dining restaurant, complete with in-house forager, creatively plates all the best of Scotland's land, rivers and seas. There's so much choice on the à la carte menu that they offer "deciding time" – canapés and champagne – while you peruse the menu, which might include the likes of Avon valley roe deer loin. Seasonal freshness guaranteed.

Pubs and bars

Bow Bar

80 West Bow, EH12HH 📍 thebowbar.co.uk

Wonderful old wood-panelled bar that is one of the most pleasant, convivial drinking spots in the city centre. Choose from among nearly 150 whiskies or a changing selection of first-rate Scottish and English cask and keg beers.

Cumberland Bar

1–3 Cumberland St 📍 cumberlandbar.co.uk

This lovely old pub is just far enough off the beaten track to remain off the

radar of the weekend's pub-crawling masses – a bonus when you're after its Sunday roast. Its other great assets are its willow-shaded beer garden, fantastic assortment of cask ales and dog-friendly attitude.

Kays Bar

39 Jamaica St, EH3 6HF 📍 kaysbar.co.uk

Tucked away in a New Town side street, this former Georgian coaching house was remodelled in the Victorian era as a wine and spirit merchant. Thankfully, it has retained its Victorian charm and now operates as a cosy little pub serving real ale and plenty of whiskies.

Paradise Palms

41 Lothian St, EH1 1HB

📍 theparadisepalms.com

In a location that has seen countless bars come and go over the decades, *Paradise Palms* has firmly established itself as perhaps the capital's hippest outpost. In this tropical-thriftstore-cum-cabaret-lounge, vegan and veggie takes on Deep South soul food and even a vinyl store and electronica-oriented record label are all part of the appeal. DJs Fri & Sat evenings plus occasional live gigs.