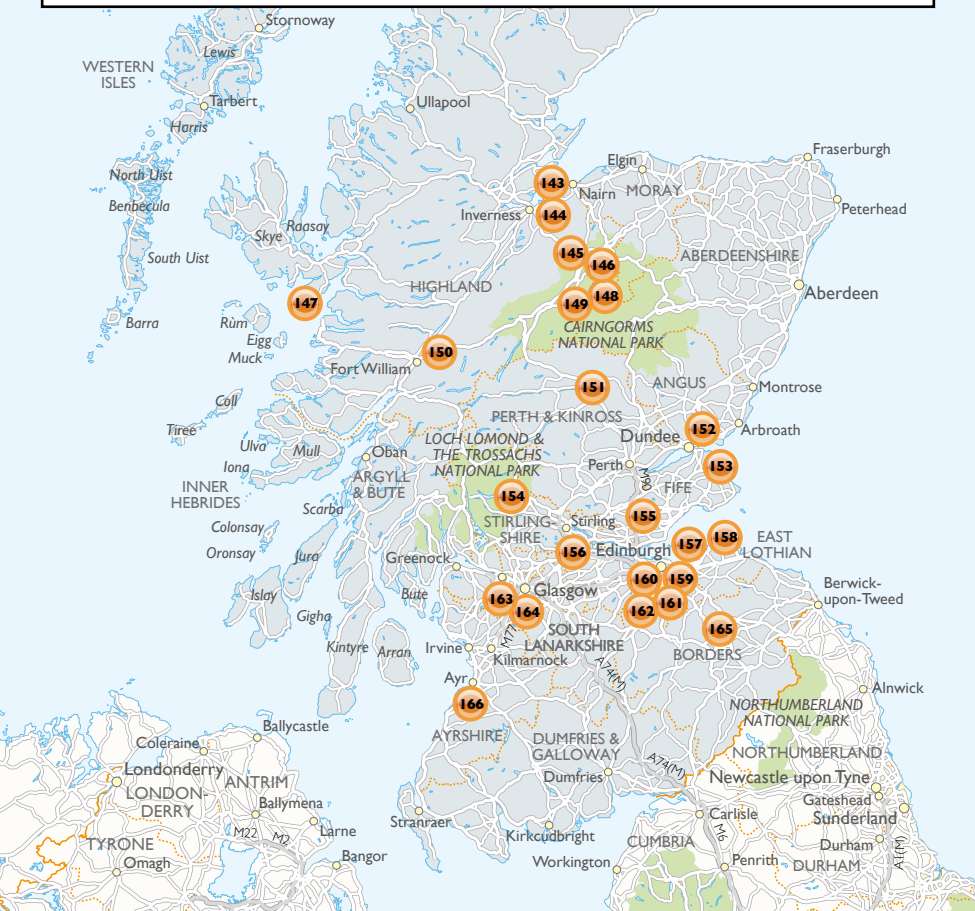


# Scotland

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## 143 Fort George, Inverness-shire

**Address:** Ardersier, Inverness-shire IV2 7TD **Web:** [www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/fort-george](http://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/fort-george) **Tel:** 01667 460232 **Hours:** daily: Apr–Sept 9.30am–5.30pm, Oct–Mar 10am–4pm; last entry 1hr before closing **Dates:** closed 1–2 Jan & 25–26 Dec; site may close at short notice in adverse weather **Entry:** [D]£10 [C]free [A]£10 [7–15s]£6 [Seniors, 60+]£8



Built on the orders of King George II in the wake of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, Fort George is still in use as an army barracks today. It is one of the largest and best-preserved forts in Europe, a spectacular complex of fortifications and garrison buildings set on a spit of land jutting into the Moray Firth. After parking, you approach the fort along a path that takes you through sandstone tunnels and over white wooden bridges that span the ditches. Once there, you're rewarded with magnificent coastal views from the ramparts – sometimes you can even spot dolphins in the sea from here.

A short (12min) film recounting the Fort George story is a good starting point for a tour, and a ninety-minute multilingual audio tour is available to guide you around the extensive site. The Historic Barrack Rooms vividly recreate the living conditions of the eighteenth-century soldiers who lived here. Other highlights include: the Grand Magazine, which once held thousands of gunpowder barrels and now stores a vast collection of eighteenth-century arms; the Garrison Chapel; a dog cemetery (which is not accessible); and the Camp Cinema with its short film about the history of the Black Watch regiment. There's a special quiz sheet for children and summertime family events –



though the shiny weapons, imposing buildings and vast space to run around in will provide ample enjoyment for younger visitors.

Though built to be impregnable, the fort is very accessible today. From the car park, where there are four accessible bays, it's around two hundred yards to the visitor centre and main entrance, mostly across level ground, but with two short stretches of cobbles to cross. You can borrow mobility scooters at the visitor centre, as well as some manual wheelchairs; these are available on a first come, first served basis. The site is largely wheelchair accessible, though assistance may be needed up one of the six grassy ramps (twenty degrees) onto the ramparts or up the slight step into the Barrack Rooms. The Regimental Museum has chairlift access to the first floor only; the second floor can only be reached via a staircase. There are two sets of accessible toilets: one in the main garrison area, the other in the café. An induction loop is available in the audio-visual theatre and in the shop and main reception area, and ear defenders are also available.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ The *Fort George Café* sells homemade, organic food such as soup and sandwich lunches, and has level access and accessible toilets.

## 144 Culloden Battlefield Visitor Centre, Inverness-shire

**Address:** Culloden Moor, Inverness IV2 5EU **Web:** [www.nts.org.uk/culloden](http://www.nts.org.uk/culloden) **Tel:** 01463 796090

**Hours:** daily: Jan–Feb & Nov–Dec 10am–4pm; Mar–May & Sept–Oct 9am–6pm; June–Aug 9am–7pm

**Dates:** closed 24–26 Dec & 31 Dec–2 Jan **Entry:** [D]£11 [C]free [A]£11 [under 18s]£9.50 [under 5]free [Con]£9.50 [Fam]£25



The sixteenth of April 1746 was a decisive day in British history – the date of the last battle fought on British soil, when seven thousand Government troops swiftly and bloodily defeated Bonnie Prince Charlie's Jacobites. The Culloden Battlefield centre is a must-do – it's one of the most fascinating attractions in the Highlands and accessible to all.

The centre's natural building materials and sympathetic architecture ensure it blends in with its environment. The well-crafted displays are presented through vocal and tactile description, as well as by traditional glass-case presentation. The staff are very helpful, doling out advice and directions, and some give historical talks in period costume. Hand-held electronic guides (included in ticket price) enhance the experience, particularly while touring the battlefield outside. Don't miss the Cumberland Stone – the giant boulder that's supposed to mark the spot where the Duke of Cumberland took up his position to direct the battle (although if he did stand here he would have needed binoculars!).

There are thirteen Blue Badge spaces, and it's just a short stroll or push to the entrance of the centre, which has level access throughout. Both the rooftop walkway – which has the best view of the grounds and is accessed via a ramp, which is not too steep (1:21) – and battlefield paths are wheelchair accessible, though during wet weather the latter can

become muddy and tricky to use, so assistance may be required. Accessible toilets are just inside the visitor centre entrance, and wheelchairs and mobility scooters are available to borrow; you're advised to book these in advance. There are hearing induction loops throughout the visitor centre, while the text in the exhibition centre is available in large print.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ The on-site café-restaurant, which has level access throughout, serves good food in a light and spacious dining room with a patio and fine countryside views.

## 145 Landmark Forest Adventure Park, Inverness-shire

**Address:** Carrbridge, Inverness-shire, Scotland PH23 3AJ **Web:** [www.landmarkpark.co.uk](http://www.landmarkpark.co.uk) **Tel:** 01479 841613 **Hours:** hours and times vary, call or check website for details **Dates:** closed 1 Jan & 25 Dec; some attractions close late Oct to late Mar; occasional closures in bad weather, so call to check **Entry:** prices change regularly, so check the website; weekly and annual tickets available. Note: disabled visitors and carers need official documentation to qualify for reduced rate or free entry



Set in a beautiful pine forest in the Cairngorms National Park, Landmark Forest Adventure Park is a paradise for active kids, who'll have loads of fun exploring, running, climbing and hurtling around the park's numerous activities and rides, many of which are surprisingly accessible. Highlights include: Ant City, a two-storey climbing-running-sliding structure; Pinnacle, a 30ft-high climbing wall; and the Fire Tower, a 70ft-high timber structure whose 105 steps can be scaled to reveal breathtaking 360-degree views above the treetops.

Adrenaline junkies will make a beeline for Ropeworx, the challenging high-wire adventure course, or the 50ft Skydive jump, which uses stuntmen-style descenders – continuing, no doubt, to the thrilling Wild Water Coaster rides. Gentler pleasures are on hand on the fully accessible Ancient Forest Adventure Treetop Trail through the forest canopy, where you've got a good chance of spotting rare red squirrels and beautiful forest birds, or in the Butterfly House, home to hundreds of brightly coloured butterflies. Finally, mention must be made of the indoor Bamboozeleum, whose morphing machines, special effects, holograms and "capture-your-shadow" wall are certain to intrigue and delight. Dinosaur Kingdom, features 22 moving, roaring and life-size dinosaurs, including a 6m T-Rex. The park's latest attraction is NetworkX, Scotland's first ever aerial net challenge, where visitors can ascend the trees as they make their way around a series of bouncy nets.

Blue Badge holders can park in the disabled bays a few yards from the park entrance. All the trails through the park are wheelchair accessible – though take care not to get your wheels jammed between the boardwalks on the Ancient Forest Adventure Treetop Trail. There are a few wheelchairs available to borrow at the main reception. All the toilets in the park include a spacious, fully accessible toilet with grab bars.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ The on-site *Foresters' Café* offers a decent choice of locally sourced food, such as fish and chips, homemade soup and kids' meals. Alternatively, the *Pinewood Grill* snack bar serves burgers, hot dogs, salads and the like.

## 146 RSPB Loch Garten Nature Centre, Highlands

**Address:** Loch Garten Nature Centre, Nethy Bridge PH25 3HA; off the B970, 10 miles from Aviemore (follow Loch Garten Nature Centre tourist signs) **Web:** [www.rspb.org.uk/lochgarten](http://www.rspb.org.uk/lochgarten) **Tel:** 01479 831476  
**Hours:** daily Apr–Oct 10am–6pm (last entry 5pm); check website for event details **Dates:** closed Nov–Mar  
**Entry:** [D]£3 [C]free [A]£5 [under 16s]£2 [Con]£3.50 [Fam]£10



The RSPB's Nature Centre – nestling in mature pine forest, near the spot where ospreys returned to breed after a period of extinction in the 1950s – is a mecca for nature lovers the world over. Small and well-appointed, and newly refurbished in 2021, it teems with windows into the forest, viewing slots and equipment, with some binoculars and telescopes set low for children and wheelchair users. You get great views of the osprey nest through these, as well as opportunities to spot myriad small birds coming to feeders nearby, including siskins, greater spotted woodpeckers and, if you're lucky, crested tits. Red squirrels are also frequent visitors, as are bank voles and wood mice. While the centre doesn't have dedicated facilities for those with sensory disabilities, enthusiastic staff are happy to describe the action, and there are audio and video feeds from the osprey nest. Further afield, in the surrounding Abernethy Forest, you may see crossbills, deer, lizards and wood ants.

The centre is extremely well signposted from the A9. There are three disabled parking spaces near the reception and toilet block, and those with limited mobility are permitted to drive the last 330 yards to the door, and park right outside the centre – otherwise visitors can follow a gently undulating and well-compacted path. A gentle decking ramp takes you inside, where all is on one level and fully wheelchair accessible. There is a Changing Places facility at the car park and a fully accessible toilet at the Nature Centre itself. There is one standard wheelchair, as well as an off-road assisted wheelchair for the trails, available to borrow, which you can reserve in advance. Any other queries can be answered by the staff, all of whom have received disability awareness training. The centre was awarded the Visit Scotland Gold Award for Green Tourism in 2013, and it deserves it – the sights, sounds and smells of the wilderness will stay with you long after your visit.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ You can get hot drinks, sandwiches and snacks at the centre shop, but for something more substantial pop to Nethy Bridge or Boat of Garten, where you'll find village shops and cafés.

## 147 Islands Coast Scenic Drive



**Driving distance:** 86 miles **Approx driving time without stops:** 3 hours 15 minutes

Scotland's northwest Highlands is an untamed land of mountains, glens, lochs, wind-swept islands and unforgettable beauty – nowhere more so than the mesmerising Isle of Skye and neighbouring mainland.

The little ferry port of Armadale, in the south, makes a good introduction to Skye; it's reached by a half-hour boat trip (0800 0665000, [www.calmac.co.uk](http://www.calmac.co.uk)) from Mallaig. A short distance from the ferry terminal stand the imposing ruins of Armadale Castle (01471 844305, [www.armadalecastle.com](http://www.armadalecastle.com)), a nineteenth-century manor house whose

beautiful grounds are the site of the Museum of the Isles, which explores the history of the region from the perspective of the powerful Clan Donald. Fully accessible and with a range of facilities (including three dedicated parking bays, accessible toilets in both the museum and the café, and two mobility scooters to borrow, which are best booked in advance). The main routes through the gardens are wheelchair accessible..

From here, head north towards Harrapool then loop south to Elgol fishing village, where you'll be rewarded with sensational views across Loch Scavaig to the Cullin Ridge. Those who want to get closer can take a boat trip with Misty Isle Boat Trips, whose staff are keen to help anyone on board, but it's worth noting that the lower the tide, the longer the route to the boat down the slipway (phone in advance on 01471 866288).

From Elgol, retrace your route to Harrapool and take the A87 over the toll-free Skye Bridge to the mainland for stunning views of the Kyle of Lochalsh. Take either of two left-hand turns for a pretty detour to the charming village of Plockton, where you can take a stroll along the shore of Loch Carron and watch picturesque sailing boats bob in the sea. There's disabled parking and toilets by the harbour, and a good supply of shore-front pubs and restaurants. Otherwise, follow the road east to Eilean Donan Castle (www.eileandonancastle.com). Perched on a small island at the junction of three lochs, this is a truly magical place. Sadly, the castle itself has no disabled access, but the adjacent visitor centre – which is 20 yards from the disabled car parking spaces – has full access and offers two on-screen virtual tours (as well as a coffee shop, gift shop and accessible toilets). Continue on to Shiel Bridge to end your trip with fabulous views of Loch Duich and the Five Sisters of Kintail.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ On the Isle of Skye, try the restaurant at the friendly, accessible *Coruisk House* (01471 866330, www.coruiskhouse.com) in Elgol. Plockton has great seafood restaurants; the *Plockton Inn* (01599 544222, https://plocktoninn.co.uk) is a good bet, although, being in a heritage building, it doesn't have an accessible toilet. Take a look at www.visitplockton.com for more ideas.



## 148 Glenmore Forest Park, Inverness-shire

**Address:** Glenmore Forest, near Aviemore PH22 1QU **Web:** [www.forestryandland.gov.scot](http://www.forestryandland.gov.scot) **Tel:** 0300 067 6100 **Hours:** visitor centre/café daily 9.30am–4pm (10am–3.30pm in winter) **Dates:** closed 1 Jan & 25–26 Dec **Entry:** free; pay-and-display car park; free parking for Blue Badge holders



Sitting in the heart of the Cairngorm Mountains, around six miles east of Aviemore, Glenmore Forest Park boasts one of Scotland's few remaining tracts of ancient Caledonian pine forest. It is also the site of the gorgeous Loch Morlich, whose long, golden beach is the highest in Britain.

A good place to start is the visitor centre, where you can pick up trail maps and find out more about the park's landscape, wildlife and history on information panels; although the visitor centre is not always manned, rangers are often on hand to help out on the nearby trails. The park has two accessible trails, both starting from the visitor centre. The longer one is the 3.5-mile long Loch Morlich Trail (with red waymarks) which takes you along the shores of the Loch, although both can get very muddy after heavy rain. The shorter 1.5-mile long Beach Trail (with yellow waymarks) takes you along the edge of the Loch and up the riverside past the visitor centre. This latter one is easily managed with a mobility scooter or electric wheelchair. Manual wheelchair users, however, will probably need assistance on a couple of the steeper sections.

There are two wide-bay disabled spaces in the car park, close to the visitor centre, which has a step-free entrance. Once inside accessibility is good, with everything on one level – including access to the café – and plenty of space to manoeuvre. The information boards have large print. There's a spacious, accessible toilet at the visitor centre, fitted with grab rails.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ Fabulous views and tasty hot and cold food (including a kids' menu) are on offer at the pleasant visitor centre café, which has indoor and outdoor seating.

## 149 Highland Wildlife Park, Inverness-shire

**Address:** Kincaig, Kingussie, Inverness-shire PH21 1NL **Web:** [www.highlandwildlifepark.org](http://www.highlandwildlifepark.org) **Tel:** 01540 651270 **Hours:** daily: Apr–Oct 10am–5pm; July–Aug 10am–6pm; Nov–Mar 10am–4pm; last entry 1hr before closing **Dates:** closed 25 Dec and in bad weather; phone in advance to check **Entry:** [D]£15 [C]free [A]£18.50 [3–15s]£13.50 [under 3s]free [Con]£15; discounted tickets available online



Set in the stunning Cairngorms National Park, the two-hundred-acre park offers breathtaking mountain and loch views with the chance to see a range of native animals like the Scottish wildcat, as well as species from around the world including snow leopards and Scotland's youngest polar bear.

Entering the park, you will drive through the entrance reserve where a herd of Bactrian camels and yak roam free. White-lipped deer and Mishmi takin can also be seen in this reserve. It takes about half an hour to drive (slowly) around the drive-through

reserve, where you'll see many hoofed animals, including elk, deer, vicuna, bison and Przewalski's horses. Don't worry if you miss something: you can go round as many times as you like. From the car park, trails lead to more exotic animals such as Amur tigers, snow monkeys, wolves, arctic foxes and the polar bears. Native Scottish wildlife is also represented, with red deer, Scottish wildcats and red squirrels, among others, while children will enjoy the excellent Go Wild adventure playground.

Blue Badge parking is available within a few yards of the accessible visitor centre, which houses a café and a shop. Trails through the park are mostly wheelchair-friendly, particularly the wooden walkways to the tigers. Some are surfaced with compressed earth or hard-packed gravel; a few are steep in places, but manageable, though you may need assistance. Rest seats are provided at various points. The shop staff are helpful and can provide a map and advice about trails and surfaces. There are a limited number of manual wheelchairs available for free hire from the shop and accessible toilets located in blocks by the car park and in the visitor centre.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ The park has a range of cafés and food trucks serving an excellent range of hot and cold snacks and drinks. In the visitor centre, *Antlers* café offers spectacular views of the Spey Valley and the Japanese snow monkey tribe. There are also several food trucks and kiosks dotted around the site.

## 150 Nevis Range Mountain Experience (Aonach Mor Gondola), Inverness-shire

**Address:** Nevis Range, Torlundy, Inverness-shire PH33 6SQ **Web:** [www.nevisrange.co.uk](http://www.nevisrange.co.uk) **Tel:** 01397 705825 **Hours:** gondola summer daily 9.30am–5pm (9.30am–late in July and Aug); winter daily 9.30am–4pm; see website for details of other activities **Dates:** closed mid-Nov to mid-Dec **Entry:** [D]£14 [C]free [A]£24.95 [5–17s]£13 [under 4s]free [Con]£20.95 [Fam]£59.95–67.95



Aonach Mor – just two summits away from the peak of Ben Nevis, towering above the Great Glen – is the location of Britain's only mountain gondola. The wheelchair-accessible gondola is open year-round, and transports visitors up 2,150ft to Scotland's highest snow-sports area and, of course, dramatic, unbeatable views over the mountains and lochs of Scotland's west coast. In winter, the slopes are abuzz with skiers and boarders, and offer options for both beginners and experts.

The site is the base for Disability Snowsport UK, so it's a great place to have a go. An adaptive ski instructor can be booked in advance, and a junior sit-ski suitable for children aged up to fourteen (depending on height) is available. Downhill mountain bike trails are open in summer, but while bike rental is possible, there are no adapted bikes available. At the bottom of the mountain – around the base station – are miles of forest trails, open year-round. Some are passable by the adventurous disabled visitor, including those in wheelchairs, if they're not too muddy. Blue Badge parking is provided next to the gondola entrance. The café at the base station and the *Snowgoose* restaurant at the top both have easy access and accessible toilets. The gondolas are able to accommodate wheelchairs up to 60cm wide, but if yours doesn't fit, transfer onto the gondola seat is quite easy. They also have a narrow chair, which can be wheeled up the ramp, into



the gondola by the helpful staff (your own chair can go up with you). The restaurant is accessible by a steep ramp from the outside of the building, just fifty yards from the gondola arrival point, though in winter this may mean a short journey through snow. Its balcony-cum-viewing deck is accessible, too. The upper chairlifts above the gondola don't operate in summer, to protect the sensitive vegetation.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ The *Snowgoose* restaurant is right at the top, with panoramic views. Alternatively, the *Pinemarten* café and bar at the bottom serves locally sourced hot and cold meals and snacks in a light and airy building. It has step-free access, movable seating and an accessible toilet.

## 151 Pitlochry Festival Theatre and Explorers Garden, Perthshire

**Address:** Port-na-Craig, Pitlochry PH16 5DR **Web:** [www.pitlochryfestivaltheatre.com](http://www.pitlochryfestivaltheatre.com) **Tel:** 01796 484600; box office 01796 484626 **Hours:** performance dates & times vary; theatre & box office daily year-round 10am–5pm (in summer box office closes at 8pm & theatre after the evening performance); garden daily 1 Apr–31 Oct 10am–5pm (last entry at 4.15pm) **Entry:** tickets vary depending on performance & seat; gallery free; garden [A]£5 [Fam]£9; season tickets and concessions are available, see website



The Pitlochry Festival Theatre presents productions of all kinds, year-round, including musicals, plays, concerts, workshops, talks, festivals and tours. But even if you don't see a performance, you can spend a few hours here looking around the beautiful Explorers Gardens, taking a backstage tour, browsing in the gift shop or simply admiring the beautiful setting from the panoramic lounge.

Adjacent to the theatre, the famous Explorers Garden will delight horticulturalists. On the banks of the River Tummel, the extensive garden and woodlands tell the story of the Scottish plant hunters who travelled the globe in search of new plants and trees. The gardens have a network of tarmac paths, steeply graded in places, but mostly step-free – you can arrange to be dropped at the garden's entrance pavilion, and meander downhill back to the car park. If you want to learn more about the trees and plants, book ahead to join one of the garden tours (90min); with notice, staff will try to accommodate individual access needs.

The modern theatre is a short walk – just less than a mile – across a suspension footbridge from the attractive centre of Pitlochry town. This is a step-free route, albeit steep in places. If you'd prefer to avoid the hills, it's better to drive to the theatre, where disabled parking is available by the entrance – with striking views across the valley. The venue welcomes disabled visitors: there's good access into the building and four wheelchair spaces in the auditorium, and six spaces in the Studio, as well as automatic doors to enter the building. Tours of the backstage area, including the Green Room, are available upon request (though this is not suitable for wheelchair users due to the stairs), and can be conducted as a touch tour that even covers the set. Assistance dogs are welcome with prior notice; the theatre is also fitted with a hearing loop and IR system. Captioned, relaxed, dementia-friendly, audio-described and BSL-interpreted performances are also staged here.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ The theatre's café bar serves light meals and snacks and a wide selection of drinks, all accompanied by glorious views.

## 152 V&A Dundee

**Address:** 1 Riverside Esplanade, Dundee DD1 4EZ **Web:** [www.vam.ac.uk/dundee](http://www.vam.ac.uk/dundee) **Tel:** 01382 411611

**Hours:** summer daily; winter Wed–Mon 10am–5pm **Dates:** closed 25–26 Dec, 1 Jan **Entry:** free; charge for select exhibitions



Dundee is undergoing a dazzling transformation. In the middle of a thirty-year £1-billion redevelopment programme to transform five miles of land along its waterfront, a surge of new bars, restaurants and attractions are breathing new life into the city. V&A Dundee opened in 2018 in a prime location on the banks of the River Tay and is the jewel in Dundee's crown.

The waterfront V&A Dundee is Scotland's first design museum. Japanese architect Kengo Kuma drew inspiration from the cliffs along Scotland's east coast for the building; its curving walls clad in rough stone rise from the Tay to create the impression of a plunging cliff-face. Inside the state-of-the-art building you'll discover the Scottish Design Galleries (free), showcasing the history of Scottish design from fashion to furniture, architecture to healthcare; highlights include an Alexander Campbell eighteenth-century pistol and a winged tiara encrusted with 2,500 diamonds. Other galleries feature the work of emerging designers and artists and compelling temporary exhibitions, while the V&A's range of workshops, tours, talks and events make for an engaging calendar. The museum also has a learning centre, auditorium, restaurant, café bar, gift shop and an outdoor terrace offering beautiful views of the River Tay.

While there is no dedicated car park at the V&A Dundee, six accessible bays can be found just across from the museum in the public car park. Smooth paths run along the waterfront to the step-free entrance via automatic doors. A lowered wheelchair-accessible information desk (with an induction loop) welcomes you to the museum. You can pick up leaflets, borrow a wheelchair or buy tickets here. There's lift access to all galleries, where exhibits are spread out with interactive displays and plenty of hands-on learning. These areas can often get crowded, but there's a quiet room available for some time out. Seating areas are located around the museum, and there's space outside on the terrace to admire the lovely views. Spacious accessible toilets feature on each level, as well as a Changing Places facility on level 1, with an adult-sized changing bench, ceiling track hoist and plenty of space to manoeuvre; ask staff for an access code. For more information about V&A Dundee's access provision and programme, please contact: [access@vandadundee.org](mailto:access@vandadundee.org). Concession tickets are available for disabled visitors and carers receive free admission to paid exhibitions.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ The *Tatha Bar and Kitchen* serves sit-down meals, snacks and take-aways, cakes and drinks. For those who'd rather bring their own, you can eat at the tables downstairs by the large window. An affiliated pop-up food van, *Heather Street Food*, is located outside, by the South Crichton Street car park, which serves coffee and fresh doughnuts and bagels.

## 153 St Andrews, Fife



The beautiful little town of St Andrews, set on the east coast of Fife, is widely known as the home of golf – though these days it's just as likely to conjure up thoughts of Prince William and Kate Middleton, who famously met while studying at the town's university.

Having already celebrated its six-hundredth anniversary, the university is the oldest in Scotland and a major presence in the old town centre. Take a wander into St Mary's College, on South Street, to admire the stunning sixteenth-century architecture and expansive quad within – there's level access through the main gate, though the cobbles may be a little bumpy. Another university building worth visiting is St Salvador's Chapel, on North Street, home to the exquisitely carved medieval tomb of Bishop Kennedy and some striking stained-glass windows. There are steps up to the entrance, but if you call ahead (01334 462866) staff will put a ramp in place.

To many visitors, however, St Andrews is all about golf ([www.standrews.com](http://www.standrews.com)): as well as being the base of the R&A (the sport's governing body, and organiser of the Open Championship), the town is home to some world-famous golf courses, including the revered Old Course, on the northwest edge of town. On Sundays, the Old Course is open to the public (unless a big competition is taking place) – it's quite a sight to see people pushing prams and walking dogs on some of golf's most hallowed turf. A good place to satisfy your golf interest is the R&A World Golf Museum, on Bruce Embankment (01334 460046, [www.worldgolfmuseum.com](http://www.worldgolfmuseum.com)), which charts the history of the game with a series of engaging exhibits and multimedia displays. The museum is fully accessible, with four disabled spaces in its car park (there's also a drop off point right outside the museum), a ramped entrance, level access inside, a lift between the two floors, and an accessible toilet.

A short distance from the museum, glorious West Sands Beach stretches north up the coastline. There's plenty of free parking along the coast road, and while the beach itself isn't easily accessed in a wheelchair, the grassy area running alongside it is a great spot for a picnic, sandwiched between the sea dunes and the Old Course. There are a couple of public accessible toilets along here, and a RADAR key-accessible toilet at Bruce Embankment, near the edge of town, which also has a Changing Places facility. There's also another handy, RADAR key-accessible toilet in the town centre at Church Square. In terms of getting around, St Andrews is fairly flat and straightforward to navigate in a wheelchair – and there's not too much ground to cover. There's also a good provision of on-street Blue Badge parking around town.

## 154 Steamship Sir Walter Scott, Perthshire

**Address:** Trossachs Pier, Loch Katrine, by Callander FK17 8HZ **Web:** [www.lochkatrine.com](http://www.lochkatrine.com) **Tel:** 01877 332000 or 376315 **Hours:** Mar–Nov daily cruises of 1 or 2 hours, departing Trossachs Pier 10.30am, 1pm & 2.30pm, June–Sept also at 4pm; check website for exact timetable and details of Santa and New Year cruises in Dec & Jan **Dates:** no cruises Feb **Entry:** 2-hour return trip from Trossachs Pier to Stronachlachar [D]£30 [C]free (for two carers) [A]£30 [5–16s]£15 [Con]£27; 1-hour cruise from Trossachs Pier [D]£20 [C]free (for two carers) [A]£20 [5–16s]£11.50 [Con]£19; [under 5s]£1 [dogs]£2 [bikes]£2.50





Turn the clock back to the days when Victoria was on the throne by boarding this delightful little ship and marvelling at the stunning scenery of Loch Katrine and the surrounding peaks. It's an opportunity for a short cruise aboard a piece of maritime history – and you can enjoy a glass of something, or a cappuccino, as you drink in some of Scotland's finest scenery.

Set amid the stunning lochs and mountains of the Trossachs, and only an hour from Glasgow, the SS *Sir Walter Scott* now carries tourists the five-mile length of Loch Katrine – which has been the source of Glasgow's drinking water since 1900 – from its home port of Trossachs Pier in the east to Stronachlachar in the west. Built at Dumbarton, and named after the writer Sir Walter Scott (whose poem *The Lady of the Lake* was set around the loch), the ship was then dismantled and transported overland to the loch – a serious feat of logistics in 1900. Another character intrinsically linked to both Scott and Loch Katrine is Rob Roy MacGregor, born on the shores of the loch and elevated to legendary status by Scott's writings. If you're a fan of machinery, check out the engine room, visible from windows on deck level. No longer coal-fired, the ship now runs on biodiesel, plying the same route today that it has chugged over for more than a century.

There are nine disabled parking spaces by the toilet block, near the booking kiosk and ship and, on the other side, the lift-accessed Steamship Café, which has an accessible toilet, too. The *Sir Walter Scott* is accessible to both wheelchairs and mobility scooters, though booking should be made in advance as space is at a premium; access to the ship is via a ramp. Once on board, the forward lounge and bar are accessible, as is the accessible toilet on the main deck. There are live commentaries on all sailings and audio stories on the pier walkway, and a large print version of the commentary text is available on request. If you disembark at Stronachlachar, there's an accessible café and conservatory at the pier with toilet facilities. If you'd like to extend your trip overnight,

Loch Katrine Eco Camp has one wheelchair-accessible lodge called Loch Arklet (full details on the loch website).

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ Sandwiches, soft drinks and ice cream are available from *Katrine Café* at the booking kiosk. On board, drinks and light snacks are available. On shore, *The Steamship Café* has a good range of hot food, plus an outside terrace with great views; it's accessed by lift and has an accessible toilet.

## 155 Gliding with Walking on Air, Kinross-shire

**Address:** Scottish Gliding Centre, Portmoak Airfield, Scotlandwell near Kinross KY13 9JJ

**Web:** <https://walkingonair.org.uk>; [www.scottishglidingcentre.co.uk](http://www.scottishglidingcentre.co.uk) **Tel:** bookings 0780 8152785

**Hours:** flying day is Fri, other dates possible by prior arrangement **Dates:** April–Nov **Entry:** £60 for a 15- to 30-minute trial flight, plus 3-months' trial membership allowing flights in that period for £11 launch and 25p per minute in the air



Walking on Air is a charity set up to allow people with access needs a sense of adventure by soaring the thermals using a modified glider. The club uses the Gliding Centre facilities (operated by the Scottish Gliding Union) at Portmoak Airfield, and the clubhouse has panoramic views of the airfield.

The Chairman of Walking on Air, Dave Tuttle (a wheelchair user himself), is passionate about flying and the opportunities it offers for integration – the club has a growing membership from all walks of life. Go along for a trial flight and experience the adrenaline rush of the launch and landing, the almost spiritual experience of being up



Walking on Air

high as you soar quietly above the mountains, and the mesmerising views of the peaks and lochs far below. Gliding seems to make everyone a bit poetic. Even if you're not sure about flying yourself, you're welcome to come and meet the enthusiastic members, watch others fly and enjoy a relaxing day out. For flying, they have a two-seater K21 training glider, known as "WA1", with hand controls fitted front and back. The Scottish Gliding Union supports Walking on Air, with disabled parking adjacent to the clubhouse and ramped access into the clubhouse. Inside, there's ample seating space, overnight accommodation (accessible though not specifically adapted) and an accessible toilet and shower.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ Self-service drinks and snacks are available at the clubhouse café: the full breakfast should set you up for a flight.

## 156 Falkirk Wheel, Falkirk

**Address:** Lime Rd, Tamfourhill FK1 4RS **Web:** [www.scottishcanals.co.uk/visit/canals/visit-the-forth-clyde-canal/attractions/the-falkirk-wheel](http://www.scottishcanals.co.uk/visit/canals/visit-the-forth-clyde-canal/attractions/the-falkirk-wheel) **Tel:** 0300 373 0868 **Hours:** Varies throughout the year but peak season daily 9.45am–6pm; boat trips every 40mins **Entry:** [D]£14.50 [C]free [A]£17.40 [5–15s]£9.60 [seniors, 60+]£15.40



One of the most remarkable pieces of modern engineering in Britain, this fascinating contraption lifts boats 100ft between the Union and Forth and Clyde canals.

Looking more like a giant metal claw than a wheel, it was designed to solve the problem of the 115ft gap between the two canals. To solve the problem, engineers designed the giant lift, which scoops a boat in one claw and an equal weight of water in the other. It's the only structure of its kind anywhere in the world. Boat tours – aboard either *Archimedes* or *Antonine* – take you from the visitor centre on a one-hour journey from the lower basin into the wheel, along the Union Canal for a short distance through a reinforced concrete tunnel, then back down to the basin again via the wheel. On a clear day the views from the upper canal are stupendous. The boat trip isn't essential if you just want to see the wheel in action, which can be done by walking around the basin and adjoining towpaths. There's much more besides, especially if you've got kids, including splash and activity zones, bumper and paddle boats, and a water-themed mini-golf.

There are a limited number of car park spaces dedicated for Blue Badge holders, which are available on a first come, first served basis, and which are located about 20 yards from the entrance to the visitor centre. The ground is paved and has little or no incline. Facilities on-site can be used with ease, and a wheelchair or mobility scooter can also be taken onboard the boat trip, but this should be mentioned when booking as capacity has to be reduced slightly in order to accommodate a chair. There is one disabled toilet facility inside the visitor centre, located next to the gift shop desk. Otherwise, the staff here – some of whom have BSL and disability awareness training – are unfailingly helpful.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ The lovely, bright café in the visitor centre serves reasonably priced hot and cold food, with level access throughout. There are plenty of picnic tables with wheelchair accessible spaces.

## 157 The Royal Yacht Britannia, Edinburgh

**Address:** Ocean Terminal Shopping Centre, Ocean Drive, Edinburgh EH6 6JJ **Web:** www.royalyachtbritannia.co.uk **Tel:** 0131 5555566 **Hours:** Nov–Mar 10am–5pm; Apr–Aug 9.30am–6pm; Sept & Oct 10am–6pm **Dates:** closed 25 Dec & 1 Jan **Entry:** [D]£19.50 [C]free [A]£19.50 [5–17s]£9.25 [under 5s]free [Cons]seniors & students with ID £13.50; armed forces with ID £9.25 [Fam]2 adults & 3 children £50



Berthed at the Ocean Terminal Shopping Centre, The Royal Yacht *Britannia* provides an intimate glimpse into how the royal family lived on their floating home. With little off-limits from bow to stern and keel to bridge, it also gives a rare insight into how a naval ship was run and staffed. It's unlikely that there will be another royal yacht, so *Britannia* is a unique attraction which naval buffs, ardent monarchists and fans of engineering can all enjoy. Plush but not ostentatious, the interior is filled with one-of-a-kind artefacts and photographs of the Royal Family – it's a fascinating snapshot of an interesting period of history. Design students will marvel at how much can be shoehorned into a small space, while would-be sailors can imagine being in command on the bridge, taking port in the Officer's Wardroom or being an engineer down below.

All entrances to the yacht are accessible, with visitors accessing each level of the yacht by onshore lift – this means exiting and re-entering *Britannia* several times, which sounds tiresome but is well organised and quite seamless. The floor surfaces between the lift and on board vary from vinyl floors to wooden decking, metal ramps, on-board ramps with hard-wearing surfaces and occasional rubberised mats. The tour route is well-signed, and generally accessible independently, although they specify a maximum width of 670mm, so larger electric wheelchairs will struggle in some of the narrower areas; however, wheelchairs can be hired from the visitor centre. There's a spacious, well-maintained accessible toilet with grab rails immediately prior to boarding, plus similar toilets on four levels on board. Some 80 Blue Badge spaces are available on levels E and C of the Ocean Terminal Shopping Centre car park; all are adjacent to lifts, with level E (18 spaces) giving level access to the *Britannia* visitor centre. There's a hearing loop in the spacious shop, and a large-print guide and tablets that give a BSL video tour of the yacht are available. Sensory packs are also available. Staff are looking at improving facilities for visitors on the autism spectrum; in the meantime, as it's a busy and popular attraction, call to discuss any special needs and check when a quieter time is to visit.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ The *Royal Deck Tearoom* on the top deck has high glass walls with fantastic views across the Firth of Forth; it serves soups, sandwiches, cakes and scones, all made on board (gluten-free options are available). If you can't manage the stairs, access is via the original internal lift, and staff can help open the heavy doors.

## 158 Scottish Seabird Centre, East Lothian

**Address:** The Harbour, North Berwick EH39 4SS **Web:** www.seabird.org **Tel:** 01620 890202 **Hours:** daily from 10am, closing varies between 4pm and 6pm, see website for details; last admission 45 mins before closing **Dates:** closed 25 Dec **Entry:** [D]£11.95 [C]free [A]£11.95 [3–15s]£7.95 [Con]£9.95 [Fam]£34



On the shoreline of ancient North Berwick, the Scottish Seabird Centre offers unrivalled views out to the Firth of Forth and North Sea. The vista is dominated by the Bass Rock – a steep-sided extinct volcanic plug, two and a half miles out to sea, and home (at peak times) to more than 150,000 gannets.

The bright and airy visitor centre commands centre stage on the end of the town's old harbour wall. The ground floor houses a gift shop and café, but downstairs is where the treasure lies: simultaneously fun and educational, the Discovery Experience allows visitors to learn more about Scotland's incredible marine environment, brought to life through interactive exhibits and games, 3D films, wildlife trails and Virtual Reality experiences. There are numerous live interactive cameras that are easy to operate, even for children and visitors with all but the most limited hand function. In summer, close-ups of Bass Rock gannetry and puffin colonies on nearby islands are stunning, and in autumn and winter there is the chance to see seal mothers suckling their pups on the shore. The Flyway Tunnel simulator lets you experience the feeling of bird take-off and migration, using sound effects and strong fans to imitate the buffeting of the wind. However, the incline, which helps to give the impression of lift, may be too steep for some wheelchair users.

This is an excellent and fully accessible place to visit. Indeed, its very popularity can create the only barriers to a visit, as it can get crowded with visitors, especially during school holidays. There's accessible parking for Blue Badge holders adjacent to the centre and in the Seabird Centre car park, though these do fill up quickly at peak times. The helpful staff have experience with those on the autism spectrum and, if you call ahead, they can advise on quieter times to visit. The visitor centre has a push-button automatic door and in the Discovery Experience displays are low-set to suit wheelchair users;





## Ideas ▶▶ Birds

**Abbotsbury Swannery** (Dorset DT3 4JG; [www.abbotsbury-tourism.co.uk](http://www.abbotsbury-tourism.co.uk)) A great visit all year round, but the fluffy cygnets you're likely to see in May and June are a real treat. There are two accessible, packed-gravel paths around the site.

**RSPB Ribble Discovery Centre** (Lancashire FY8 1BD; [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)) Less than seven miles from Blackpool, this is an oasis of calm on the Fylde Peninsula, and the most important estuary site in England. A hard-surfaced path around the lake and an accessible boat trip make visiting a treat.

there are also wheelchairs for hire. A lift operates between the two floors and there are accessible toilets on the ground floor. A 55-seat catamaran offers boat trips from the centre, but cannot accommodate wheelchair users.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ The glass-fronted café serves fish and chips, pasta and baked potatoes at reasonable prices – check the specials board too. The children's menu features all the usual suspects: nuggets, sausages, chips, etc.

## 159 Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh

**Address:** Holyrood Road EH8 8AS **Web:** [www.dynaminearth.co.uk](http://www.dynaminearth.co.uk) **Tel:** 0131 5507800 **Hours:** Apr–June, Sept–Oct daily 10am–5.30pm; Nov–Mar Wed–Sun 10am–5.30pm; July–Aug daily 10am–6pm (last entry 90 mins before closing) **Dates:** check website for seasonal closures and variations to opening times **Entry:** [D]£19.50 [C]free [A]£19.50 [4–17s]£12 [under 3s]free [Con]£13



The shadow of the long extinct volcano of Arthur's Seat is an apt setting for a venue offering a potted history of the planet. At Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh, complex and varied scientific subjects are explained with ease and enthusiasm.

With clever use of video and sound, the Edinburgh Science Centre & Planetarium provides a compelling, immersive experience about how the universe came to be, the evolution of Earth, and the wonders of our world. The fully accessible centre allows you to travel back to the Big Bang, experience a shaking floor to simulate an earthquake, be bathed in the rich redness of a volcanic eruption before cooling down with a real iceberg that you can touch. You also get to experience the bottom of the ocean in a marine-themed gallery and be immersed in the tropical wonders of a simulated rainforest. The centre also has a state-of-the-art, accessible planetarium that features a wide range of shows and films about Space, Climate, and Oceans.

Dynamic Earth's glass-fronted, marquee-style, Millennium Dome-inspired construction stands out from the Old Town buildings nearby and contrasts with the futuristic Scottish Parliament building – it's well signposted and easy to find. The underground car park has numerous disabled bays and lift access to the entrance. Wheelchair users and their friends and family can stay together throughout – seeing and touching the exhibits from the same angles. Ear defenders are available. There's a sensory map and access details on the website. This is an inclusive, multi-sensory, seamless experience – a triumph of accessibility.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ The bright, clean and spacious *Food Chain Café* serves a decent selection of meals at different times of the day, from excellent coffees and muffins to meatballs and chips; daily specials and meal deals are available in the café section.

## 160 Scottish National Gallery and Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh

**Address:** SNG, 1 The Mound EH2 2EL; SNPG, 1 Queen Street EH2 1JD **Web:** [www.nationalgalleries.org](http://www.nationalgalleries.org)  
**Tel:** 0131 6246200 **Hours:** both daily 10am–5pm **Dates:** closed 25–26 Dec **Entry:** free, except for some major exhibitions (see website)



Right in the heart of Edinburgh, just off Princes Street, lies the Scottish National Gallery, home to the national collection of fine art, one that, for its size, equals any other gallery in the world.

Masterpieces from Raphael, Titian, El Greco, Velázquez, Rembrandt and Rubens vie for attention with Impressionist works by the likes of Monet, Cézanne and Degas, and Post-Impressionists including van Gogh and Gauguin – all superbly displayed in an impressive Neoclassical building. The gallery also houses Antonio Canova's stunning sculpture *The Three Graces*, although this work splits its time between here and the V&A. And above all, there's a comprehensive display of Scottish art, with works by all the major names, including Allan Ramsay, David Wilkie and William McTaggart. Perhaps the best-known painting is Sir Henry Raeburn's *The Reverend Robert Walker Skating on Duddingston Loch*, popularly known as *The Skating Minister*.



Scottish National Portrait Gallery

There is no car park at the gallery, but there is a drop-off point on the mound precinct, which is the large, paved area just off the mound in front of the National Gallery building. There is parking close by, including for those with a Blue Badge. The National is fully accessible over all levels. There is a partial Changing Places toilet on level 3, and a key is not required; this facility has all the required facilities and floorspace, but as it's in a listed building, it is a few inches too narrow to be a full Changing Places toilet. The room width is 1.9m at the narrowest point. Pre-recorded Sensory-friendly, Audio-described and British Sign Language introductions to the gallery are available to help plan a visit. There is an audio-described tour and a BSL tour available, as well as a sensory map.

Just around the corner, on Queen Street, is the excellent Scottish National Portrait Gallery. Fully accessible throughout, the gallery houses an outstanding chronology of portraiture from the Reformation through to the present day, taking in subjects as diverse as Robert Burns, Robbie Coltrane and Sir Alex Ferguson. The gallery's cathedral-like vaulted ceilings and Gothic windows provide a stunning backdrop to the collection, particularly in the Main Hall, the site of an extraordinary frieze depicting famous figures of Scottish history. The closest Blue Badge parking is currently on the south side of St Andrew's Square and George Street. A pre-recorded sensory-friendly introduction to the gallery is available to help plan a visit. There is a sensory map available as well as an audio-described tour.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ The Scottish National Gallery's *Scottish Café & Restaurant* serves delicious snacks, full meals and afternoon teas sourced from Scottish suppliers, with indoor and outdoor seating overlooking Princes Street Gardens. There is also a café, *Espresso*, at the entrance to the Scottish National Gallery. Over in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, there's a fully accessible café on the ground floor.

## 161 Scottish Parliament Buildings, Edinburgh

**Address:** The Royal Mile, Edinburgh EH99 1SP **Web:** [www.parliament.scot](http://www.parliament.scot) **Tel:** public information 0131 3485000 or freephone 0800 0927500 **Hours:** Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, last entry 4.30pm **Dates:** check the website for closure details **Entry:** free



Opening in 2004, the new Scottish Parliament building, at the bottom of the Royal Mile, has become a fixture on the Edinburgh tourist list partly due to its award-winning design by architect Enric Miralles, who died before its completion, and the political and financial drama that surrounded its creation. These controversies – selecting a Spanish architect, swollen project costs (it went ten times over budget) and polarising design – did nothing to dampen the spirit of the Scottish Parliament, which creates legislation in devolved matters from this building.

There are a range of exhibitions and events on offer here, including a free tour on the architecture, history of the building and institution, and how the Parliament works. Committee hearings and debates can also be attended as part of a visit. Friendly and knowledgeable staff are on hand throughout the building, which was constructed with inclusion in mind. One of the themes of the original design was transparency: there is

a lot of natural light and stunning views from the many windows. When parliament is sitting it can get very busy; people with sensory or hidden disabilities who find crowds and noise a challenge may want to avoid these periods.

There is no dedicated disabled parking for the Scottish Parliament, but there are Blue Badge spaces in Horse Wynd; Blue Badge holders can also park on the single yellows on the surrounding streets. There's an accessible entrance, and once inside the building, everyone must go through the airport-style security check (an online video shows what this involves). During busy periods there may be queues to get in, but staff, who receive ASC training, are there to help; contact visitor services before your trip to get the most directed support. If you choose to go on a tour (which can be pre-arranged with a BSL interpreter), there's quite a lot of distance to cover, but there's ample seating throughout, and wheelchairs can be reserved in advance. It pays to remember that this is a working building; bells and Tannoy announcements occur throughout the day, although there's a quiet area for people with sensory or hidden disabilities in need of some time out. Because this is a secure building, visitors are given a pass and escorted by a member of staff for the tour, taking the pressure off carers, who won't need to worry about choosing routes, locating lifts and so on. Each committee room has space for wheelchairs in the public gallery, as does the parliamentary chamber public gallery. Hearing loops are found in key visitor areas and videos in the exhibition have subtitles and BSL interpretation, while all main signs have Braille. Assistance dogs are welcome, too. Accessible toilets are found throughout the building, and there's a Changing Places toilet on the ground floor with a hoist, changing bed and plenty of space to move around.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ The accessible on-site café serves a selection of sandwiches and hot dishes, but you'll find more atmospheric options by venturing into Edinburgh.



Debating chamber in the Scottish Parliament

# 162 Edinburgh International Festival and Edinburgh Festival Fringe

Edinburgh International Festival: **Address:** Café, tickets & Hub: The Hub, Castlehill EH1 2NE

**Web:** [www.eif.co.uk](http://www.eif.co.uk) **Tel:** ticket office 0131 4732000; access line 0131 4732056 **Email:** [access@eif.co.uk](mailto:access@eif.co.uk)

**Hours:** Aug; performance dates vary **Entry:** prices vary by performance



Edinburgh Festival Fringe: **Address:** Box office & shop: 180 High Street EH1 1QS **Web:** [www.edfringe.com](http://www.edfringe.com)

**Tel:** main office 0131 2260026; ticket office (June–Aug) 0131 2260000; access tickets 0131 2260002

**Email:** [accessbookings@edfringe.com](mailto:accessbookings@edfringe.com) **Hours:** Aug; performance dates vary **Entry:** prices vary by performance



For all its appeal as an attractive capital, Edinburgh is perhaps best known for its incredible annual festival, which takes place each August and transforms the city into an overwhelming mass of cultural activity. “Edinburgh Festival” is an umbrella term that encompasses several different festivals, but the principal events are the Edinburgh International Festival and the much larger Edinburgh Festival Fringe. With thousands of performances – including dance, opera, music and theatre – the majority of the International Festival takes place in permanent traditional theatre-style settings, while the Fringe transforms the city streets into a stage for live acts. From chess to ballet, pole-dancing acrobatics to children’s comedy, both festivals offer unbelievable shows from around the world.

The sheer volume of the Festival’s output can be bewildering, and choosing what to see can feel like the biggest challenge. If you enjoy the dynamism of a festival (and are comfortable with crowds), you can catch some of the Fringe street performances, busking and live statues. Dates, venues, names, star acts, happening bars and burning issues change from one year to the next – this unpredictability is one of the Festival’s greatest charms. Another is that many of the performances take place against the backdrop of Edinburgh’s medieval streets, reformation-era and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings. Visitors who want something quieter, away from the hustle and bustle of the Fringe, can opt for the calmer events of Edinburgh Art Festival and Edinburgh International Book Festival, also gracing the city in August.

Both Edinburgh International Festival and Edinburgh Festival Fringe have made significant strides towards becoming more inclusive in recent years. Inevitably, the city swells in August and the streets around the Festival venues become crowded. While it is high energy and atmospheric, the Fringe itself is chaotic, unpredictable and risks causing a sensory information overload. To make the experience easier, the Fringe has prepared a downloadable Social Story, with a video about street events, and sensory backpacks can be borrowed from various points around the city (holding a fidget toy, stress reliever, water bottle and ear defenders). Signed, audio-described and captioned performances are available, too; see the Fringe Festival website for accessible performance listings. A Disabled Access Day is run ahead of the Fringe in July for people wanting to familiarise themselves with the surroundings.

Edinburgh is a historic city, and the crowds, hills and cobbles can be hard to navigate for those with reduced mobility – your best bet is a powered wheelchair. Accessibility varies from venue to venue, so careful planning is essential. The International Festival provides a useful Access Guide (available in Braille, large print and downloadable audio file/CD format), detailing the main access points for each venue, and puts on additional access events as part of their programme. With a range of permanent and established venues, the International Festival can feel more predictable than the Fringe, and all theatres have accessible toilets. A new Access Pass offers a dedicated booking experience for disabled audience members, with online booking for wheelchair spaces, free essential companion seats, access discounts, the best views for BSL interpreted performances and Touch Tours. The International Festival also runs its own Deaf Theatre Club, a deaf-led initiative aimed at offering deaf audiences a more inclusive experience. Staff working across both festivals receive basic disability-awareness and attitude training, and are clear and considerate communicators.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ There are dozens of places to enjoy some refreshments on or just off the Royal Mile; for starters, try *The Wall Coffee* and *Design House*, with coffee served from copper espresso machines and a fine menu chalked up on a board.

## 163 Riverside Museum, Glasgow

**Address:** 100 Pointhouse Place G3 8RS **Web:** [www.glasgowlife.org.uk/museums](http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/museums) **Tel:** 0141 2872729

**Hours:** daily 10am–5pm, except Fri & Sun 11am–5pm **Dates:** closed 1–2 Jan & 24–26, & 31 Dec

**Entry:** free; parking free for Blue Badge holders



Housed in a contemporary, landmark building on the banks of the River Clyde, the Riverside Museum – subtitled “Scotland’s Museum of Transport and Travel” – is a vibrant celebration of Glasgow’s importance as a transport innovator.

Inside, you’ll find a vast and glorious collection of vintage and modern vehicles, including trams, buses, locomotives, subway carriages, taxis, cars and motorbikes, as well as numerous models of Clyde-built ships such as the *Queen Mary* and *QE2*. There’s an emphasis on social history, too, with atmospheric re-creations such as a Victorian subway station, complete with rolling stock and a 1900s street where you can visit various shops, including an Edwardian photography studio and a 1930s café.

Much thought has been given to access. There are a total of eighteen designated disabled car-parking spaces, and there’s also a disabled drop-off point at the entrance. With a front door you could drive a bus through, there’s no problem getting inside. The reception desk has a lowered section and – like all customer service points – is fitted with a hearing loop. There are two accessible lifts in the exhibits, one in the Caledonian 123 and one in the South African locomotive, and virtually the whole attraction is barrier-free. Many exhibits have accompanying audio or video displays, with subtitles on all video displays, while the ones with green information screens have BSL interpretation. Many of the exhibits are there to be touched, to help enhance the experience. There are three fully accessible toilets on the ground floor and two on the first floor. There are a couple of autism-friendly kits, containing ear defenders and gadgets to help



engage children on the autism spectrum, and there are autism-friendly early opening sessions (contact the venue for details). With these families in mind, the museum does not have any background music playing. The museum also has a Changing Places facility on the ground floor, with a hoist, shower and adjustable bench and washbasin among its amenities.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ An upstairs coffee bar gives great views of the river and serves very fine coffee. Downstairs, hot food is served in the spacious café, which has table service.

## 164 House for an Art Lover, Glasgow

**Address:** Bellahouston Park, 10 Dumbreck Road G41 5BW **Web:** [www.houseforanartlover.co.uk](http://www.houseforanartlover.co.uk) **Tel:** 0141 4831600 **Hours:** check website or call, as the house is often closed for functions **Entry:** [D]£9 [C]free [A]£9 [children 10+]£7.50 [under 10s]free [Con]£7.50 [Fam]£24



Legendary Scottish architect and artist Charles Rennie Mackintosh drew up plans for the House for an Art Lover in 1901, but it wasn't built until the 1990s; consequently, this elegant house boasts all the hallmarks of a Mackintosh creation with the accessibility of a modern building.

The architects charged with its construction worked closely from the original designs. Mackintosh pioneered the Art Nouveau movement in the UK, and the building is emblematic of his desire to make the functional beautiful. Inside, all his signature

designs are present – the high-backed chairs with their robust right angles, the softly tinted stained glass and, of course, the iconic Mackintosh rose. The grand Main Hall was designed for entertaining, and all the other main rooms radiate from it. The rose motif is evident throughout the intimate Dining Room, but it's the bright Music Room that really dazzles – bathed in natural light from the huge windows that lead onto the terrace, and featuring an ornate baby grand piano, the room is breathtaking. The souvenir shop is a great place to pick up gifts – you can buy Mackintosh-styled jewellery, as well as prints of his original work.

Only two levels of the four-storey building are open to the public – outside there's a ramp up to the house and one down to the café, as well as a lift between floors inside. To save the effort of going uphill, enter via the café and leave from the upper floor. There are four disabled parking spaces available in the staff car-parking area, and accessible toilets on the ground floor. The house has been designed with access in mind – some rooms are less spacious than others, but all surfaces are smooth. Staff are available if you need assistance. The excellent multilingual audio sets are induction-loop compatible. Carers go free but paperwork must be provided. Only yards away from the house are the tranquil Victorian Walled Gardens – particularly worth a look in high summer when the sweet peas are in bloom.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ The ground-floor *Art Lover's Café* has a lovely, accessible terrace, and serves breakfasts, lunches, coffee and cakes, as well as a sumptuous afternoon tea – the food is truly sublime.

## 165 Abbotsford, Roxburghshire

**Address:** Abbotsford, Melrose, Roxburghshire TD6 9BQ **Web:** [www.scottsassbotsford.com](http://www.scottsassbotsford.com) **Tel:** 01896 752043 **Hours:** daily: house, chapel & gardens Mar, Nov–Dec 10am–4pm, Apr–Oct 10am–5pm; visitor centre & café Apr–Oct 10am–5pm, Nov–Mar 10am–4pm (Jan–Feb only open Wed–Sun) **Dates:** house, chapel & gardens closed Jan–Feb; visitor centre & café closed 25–26 Dec & 1–2 Jan **Entry:** check website for prices; [C]free



The home of world-renowned author Sir Walter Scott, Abbotsford is where much of his best-known work was written. Situated by the banks of the Tweed in the Scottish Borders, this Baronial pile is essentially unchanged since Scott lived here, some two hundred years ago. You can visit the rooms where the author, poet and judge created world-famous literature, view artefacts and works belonging to him, and take in the views of the river and the Eildon hills beyond. This atmospheric building is as impressive inside as its imposing facade, from the dark entrance hall, lined with arms and militaria, to the study housing Scott's writing desk, the library, the well-preserved Chinese drawing room and the dining room, where, crippled by debt and poor health, Scott breathed his last.

There's step-free level access into the ultra-modern, accessible visitor centre, with a spacious foyer, shop and exhibition area. Here, audio-visual displays recount the house's history. There's also a 3D tactile model of the house and gardens, and an outline map of the site with a raised key that shows the phases of Abbotsford's development.



A hearing loop in the visitor centre and large-print guides are available, but there's no BSL provision. There are spacious, spotless accessible toilets on the ground and upper floors of the visitor centre. If the lift in the visitor centre can't be used, there's alternative level access outside to the upper floor. The house itself is some 300 yards from the visitor centre, along a wide tarmac path that slopes gently downhill. There's step-free level access through a heavy glass door (assistance may be needed) into the dark entrance hall, which has low lighting to protect the unique artefacts within. Guides offer tours (pre-booking required), or audio tours with a small handset that you point at sensors in each room to get the commentary. Most rooms have level access, except one step in the private chapel, and there's respite seating around the house. After the house tour, you can explore the walled garden and extensive grounds, along smooth paths, though some woodland paths have a loose, hardcore surface that may require assistance. Six Blue Badge spaces are available in the car park, roughly 100 yards from the visitor centre via a tarmac path sloping gently upwards. If getting between the centre and the house is problematic, direct vehicle access to the house car park can be arranged (it's best to book this in advance). Staff don't have specific autism training but are helpful and can advise about the quietest times to visit. There are wheelchairs available for use in both the visitor centre and at the house.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ Upstairs at the visitor centre, the spacious, bright and airy *Ochiltree's* café serves drinks, great home-baking, snacks and meals, using local produce where possible; mains £8–12, sandwiches £7.50–9, cakes and pastries around £3. A takeaway service is offered year-round from here.

## 166 Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, Ayrshire

**Address:** Murdoch's Lone, Alloway, Ayr KA7 4PQ **Web:** [www.burnsmuseum.org.uk](http://www.burnsmuseum.org.uk) **Tel:** 01292 443700

**Hours:** daily 10am–5pm; last entry 1hr before closing **Dates:** closed 25–26 Dec & 1–2 Jan

**Entry:** [D]£11.50 [C]free [6–17s]£11.50 [A]£10.50 [Con]£8.50 [Fam]£22–27; NTS members free



Occupying a striking stone, glass and timber structure surrounded by stunning gardens, the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum exuberantly celebrates the life and prodigious talent of Scotland's most cherished poet.

The main museum – a modern, spacious and barrier-free building – houses the world's largest collection of Burns' manuscripts, along with many of the poet's personal possessions, from his desk, chair and writing set through to his pistols and waistcoat buttons. Listening posts play evocative recordings of his most popular works, and there's even a jukebox where you can select Burns' songs, categorised by styles such as "punk", "tear-jerkers" and "power ballads". Displays also give a flavour of Burns' colourful private life – a glance at his family tree reveals he'd fathered thirteen children by five different women by the time he died, aged 37. Outside, wheelchair users can easily navigate Poet's Path through the lovely grounds to reach the modest Burns Cottage (Apr–Oct daily 11am–4pm; Nov–Mar 11am–3.30pm), where Burns was born in 1759. However, some of the neighbouring sites – which feature in the poet's work – are less accessible, such as the Auld Kirk (which has a few steps) and Brig o' Doon, which is cobbled.



Access to the main museum, however, is good, starting with the six disabled parking spaces near the front door, which is opened by a touch-pad control. Inside, the large reception desk is a good height for wheelchair users and is fitted with an induction loop. There's a large and spotless accessible toilet in the foyer, with another one at Burns Cottage. There are two wheelchairs available to borrow, and the museum is on one level throughout. The main exhibition area is quite dimly lit – necessary to preserve the manuscripts – which may be an issue for some sight-impaired visitors, although large print versions of the labels are available. On the first Tuesday of each month (3–5pm), the museum and cottage hold accessible sessions, when the sounds are reduced, lights turned up and interactive displays switched off for those with visual, hearing and sensory conditions; see website for details.

**FOOD & DRINK** ▶▶ The on-site café/restaurant has a great choice of cakes, pastries and sandwiches made to order, as well as a good selection of hot food, all locally sourced where possible – a delightful space to enjoy lunch.