

EDINBURGH AND THE TURBULENT BORDERS

This tour includes Edinburgh Castle, the most imposing of all Scotland's castles, as well as castles in East Lothian, the romantic Border abbeys and even a working corn-mill in Dumfries and Galloway.

Duration: We suggest you allocate 7 days for the full tour or 4 days for Edinburgh and the Borders and 3 days for Dumfries and Galloway.

Edinburgh Castle, the most famous of Scotland's castles, includes a new Prisons of War exhibition, St. Margaret's Chapel, the Great Hall, Mons Meg, the One o' Clock Gun, the Honours of Scotland (the Scottish crown jewels) and the Stone of Destiny - a wealth of treasures (visit: 2-3 hours).



Craigmillar Castle (2.5m SE from Edinburgh Castle, off the A68), dating from the 15th century and much loved by Mary, Queen of Scots. From here there are magnificent views over the city (visit: 1 hour).



Dirleton Castle and Gardens (22m E of Edinburgh, 3m W of North Berwick on the A198), a picturesque ruined castle with the world's longest herbaceous border (visit: 1 hour).

Tantallon Castle (E of North Berwick off the A198, 6m E of Dirleton) perched on a cliff-top, dating from the 14th century. Formerly home to the Douglas family. Magnificent views (visit: 1 hour).

Smailholm Tower (6m W of Kelso on the B6937 then B6404, 55m SW of North Berwick and 40m from Edinburgh). A tower on a rocky outcrop, with a collection of costumed figures relating to the stories of Sir Walter Scott, the famous novelist who lived in the Borders (visit: 45 minutes).



Nearby are the extensive ruins of three medieval abbeys:

Dryburgh (7m SE of Melrose, near St. Boswells, on the B6356 off the B6404, 6m from Smailholm) set high above the River Tweed and surrounded by trees, the burial place of Sir Walter Scott (visit: 45 minutes).

Melrose Abbey (in Melrose, off the A7 or A68, 8m from Dryburgh) the most famous of all Scottish abbeys. Founded in the 12th century and said to be the burial place of the heart of Robert the Bruce (visit: 45 minutes).

Jedburgh Abbey (in Jedburgh on the A68, 16m south of Melrose) founded in the 12th century; it is remarkably complete and has an award-winning visitor centre (visit: 1 hour).

Hermitage Castle (5.5m NE of Newcastleton off the B6399, 35m SW of Jedburgh), an eerie ruin dating from the 14th/15th centuries, associated with the rebellious Douglas family and Mary, Queen of Scots (visit: 45 minutes).

Caerlaverock Castle (to the west, 54m W of Hermitage, 8m SE of Dumfries on the B725). One of the finest castles in Scotland, ideal for children, with an adventure park and nature trail (visit: 1.5 hours).



New Abbey Corn Mill (in New Abbey, 7m SW of Dumfries on the A710, 24m from Caerlaverock) a renovated water-powered mill in working order, with demonstrations during the summer (visit: 45 minutes).

Sweetheart Abbey (in New Abbey) a beautiful red-sandstone abbey church dating from the 13th century (visit: 30 minutes).

Threave Castle (3m W of Castle Douglas on the A75, 25m W of New Abbey) is an island stronghold on the River Dee, a massive tower built in the 14th century, reached by a small boat (visit: 1 hour).

Whithorn Priory and Museum (in Whithorn on the A746, south of Newton Stewart, 47m from Castle Douglas) is one of the earliest Christian sites in Scotland, founded by Ninian in the 5th/6th century (visit: 1 hour).

Glenluce Abbey (2m NW of Glenluce, off the A75, 24m N of Whithorn) is a Cistercian abbey founded in the 12th century, set in a tranquil valley (visit: 45 minutes).

If you plan to visit only the Borders or only Dumfries and Galloway, then you have the option of buying either the Borders Explorer Pass or the Dumfries and Galloway Explorer Pass. Ask for more details at any of the properties listed above.

Normal cost of entry - £68

Savings with 7 day Explorer Pass - £41