

## Scotland Itinerary Days 1 – 4

Edinburgh - National Museum of Scotland - Rosslyn Chapel - Mary King's Close - Stirling Castle - Eilean Donan Castle - Isle of Skye

### Day One

The tour will begin with participants meeting at our Edinburgh hotel for a get-together and orientation followed by our Group welcome dinner.

### Day Two

In the morning we will visit the National Museum of Scotland to view the Scottish Archaeology and History collections. The "Early People" gallery explores how people lived from 8000BC to 1100AD and includes some of its most famous pieces - the beautiful Pictish Hilton of Cadboil stone; the head of a bronze and brass Celtic trumpet the Iron Age Carynx; and a stunning collection of Celtic gold torcs. The "Kingdom of the Scots" gallery follows Scottish history from 1100AD and includes the beautiful Monymusk reliquary as well as the famous Lewis chessmen of Norse origin made of walrus ivory found on a beach on the Isle of Lewis and probably the most well known of Scotland's archaeological finds.

After lunch at the Museum, we will spend the afternoon at Rosslyn Chapel. Already well known for its exquisite beauty, the Chapel achieved world fame by

featuring in the book and film "The Da Vinci Code". The Chapel was founded in 1446 by the St Clair family, direct descendants of the Viking, Rognvald the Mighty, whose son Rollo was the first Duke of Normandy.

The Chapel is the family's place of worship to this day and is renowned for its stunningly ornate and beautiful stonework (including more than 100 carvings of the Green Man), mysterious symbolism and its association with many myths and legends. A visit to Scotland would not be complete without experiencing a visit to Rosslyn Chapel.

Following an early dinner, we will take a tour of Mary King's Close now underground but whose narrow streets were once at ground level. The complex is shrouded with myths and urban legends including ghostly tales.

Day  
Three

In the morning we leave Edinburgh and begin our journey to the Highlands. We will visit magnificent Stirling Castle, one of the largest and most important castles in Scotland. Once the site of an Iron Age hillfort, it is located on top of a high volcanic crag with extensive and beautiful views to the plains below. It is surrounded on three sides by steep cliffs giving it a strong defensive position. Its strategic location meant that "he who holds Stirling holds Scotland" and it survived eight sieges over the centuries. Home to many Kings and Queens of Scotland from the 12th century, it contains an exceptional group of 16th century buildings. The highlights of a visit to the castle include the Great Hall, the Chapel Royal, the Royal Lodgings and the Queen Anne Garden. The Royal Lodgings have recently been renovated giving visitors a full appreciation of their rich decoration and furnishings including exquisite tapestries and wall and ceiling paintings.

After lunch at the Castle, we will drive through magnificent scenery to the Western Highlands and spend the night at a pretty coastal village, Plockton.

Day  
Four

From Plockton, we will make our way to Portree on the Isle of Skye. On our way to Portree, we will spend the morning at the iconic Eilean Donan Castle. Regarded by many as the most beautiful castle in Scotland, it is situated on an island where three great sea lochs meet and is set in spectacular scenery. Inhabited since the 6th century, the first fortification was built on the island in the early 13th century to protect against Viking raids and became a stronghold of the Clan Mackenzie and their allies the Clan Macrae. In the early 18th century the Mackenzies and other Jacobites were planning a rebellion against the English and had stocked the castle with large supplies of gunpowder. However, the English learned of the plot and, using the gunpowder, blew up the castle after overpowering its defenders. The castle lay in ruins for two centuries until restored to its former glory and completed in 1932.

Upon arriving in Portree, we will have a free afternoon.