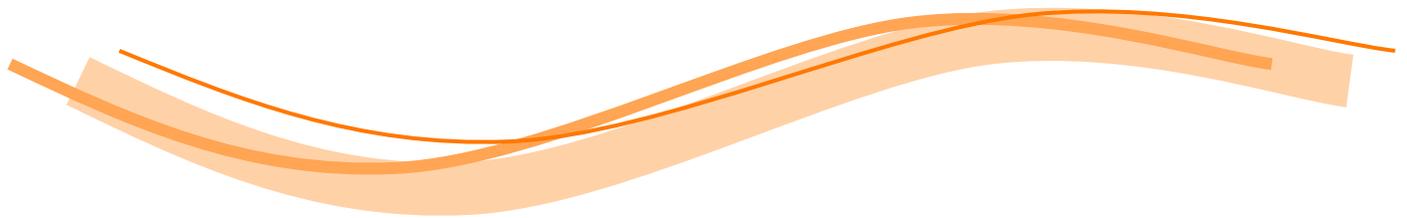




SCOTLAND & GLASGOW with TRANSAT





<p>SCOTLAND</p>	<p>Fly with Transat across the Atlantic Ocean to a European country that boasts stunning scenery, fascinating history and a brave and enduring culture. And, as we will discover in these notes – delicious food and drink also await you when you visit. It’s dear to the heart of many Canadians, who may even be able to trace their roots back to this magnificent country. Come to Scotland and explore its largest city of Glasgow with all its vibrant, must-see attractions too!</p> <p>These notes are organized in three sections:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scotland 2. Glasgow 3. Transat
<p>Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design 2016</p>	<p>Innovation</p> <p>Scotland has been changing the world as we know it for centuries, one innovation at a time. From the wheels on your car and the tarmac they drive on, to the telephone, television and much more - all this was possible thanks to Scottish ingenuity.</p> <p>In the Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design 2016, Scotland celebrates awe-inspiring innovation, breathtaking architecture and brave, bold designs through new and exciting experiences and events.</p> <p>The list of Scots inventions, designs and buildings that have influenced the way we think and carry out our daily lives are just too many to mention. What's more, Scotland and its people continue to make a huge impact on our modern world. Scotland has given the world many wonderful things, including the steam engine, anaesthesia, penicillin, the pedal bicycle and the decimal point!</p> <p>So visit Scotland and see for yourself! Be inspired by the ground-breaking designs of their buildings; from the chic art nouveau buildings and interior design of Charles Rennie Mackintosh to the truly stunning Kelpies sculptures. Or, find out more about Sir William Arrol who constructed the Forth Rail Bridge when you visit the brand new UNESCO World Heritage site near Edinburgh.</p> <p>With an array of events to experience and attractions to visit, your curiosity will struggle to be contained when you discover more about Scotland's keenest and most brilliant minds.</p> <p>Design and Fashion</p> <p>The Scottish people like to do things with a bit of flair and pizzazz, and</p>

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you'll see this reflected when it comes to design and creativity. From the iconic contrasting orange and blue of the Irn Bru packaging, to the intricate designs and natural shades of luxurious Harris Tweed, making things inspiring, bold and beautiful is very much their thing.

- Dundee is a creative hub and was named the UK's first UNESCO City of Design.
- Discover the story of Scottish fashion, design and decorative art in new galleries due to open this summer at the National Museum of Scotland.
- See traditional wool spinning in action at working and heritage looms in the Outer Hebrides and Scottish Borders.
- Get outdoors and explore creative spaces such as Jupiter Artland or Crawick Multiverse.
- Find talent in the towns - Kirkcudbright in Dumfries & Galloway is Scotland's Artists' Town, while West Kilbride in Ayrshire is known as the official Craft Town.
- And look out for special events throughout the year which celebrate Scotland's textiles and designers.

Festival of Architecture

The Festival of Architecture is an international celebration of design, set to boost the appreciation of Scotland's built environment.

The Festival of Architecture will be an international celebration of design, set to boost the appreciation of Scotland's built environment, with over 400 exciting events and exhibitions taking place the length and breadth of Scotland throughout 2016, managed by the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland.

Directed by the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland and working with a wide range of partners, the Festival of Architecture 2016 is designed to be an engaging, inclusive and Scotland-wide celebration. The Festival is a key part of the 2016 Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design.

Across Scotland, there will be hundreds of exhibitions, workshops, film screenings, musical celebrations and other events, involving many thousands of participants from home and abroad. The Festival is a partnership of over one hundred organisations, a nationwide event that will show how architecture touches everyone's lives. This truly global Festival is designed to reach out to the broadest audience – local, national and international. It will improve our appreciation and understanding. It will also be fun!

The headline programme is available here: <https://www.foa2016.com/>

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NEW in 2016

NEW routes and trails

Virgin Train London - Stirling direct rail service (launches Dec 2015)
Flybe Liverpool - Edinburgh flight (launched October 2015)
British Airways - new daily flights from Heathrow to Inverness, gateway to the Highlands and Islands. The new year-round service will start on 3rd May 2016, connecting Inverness directly with Heathrow's T5.

Smugglers Trail – the new trail is set to launch along the Berwickshire Coastal Path. As a result of research conducted by historian/curator Derek Janes, more is now known about incidents that took place along this coastline that really represent how rife smuggling was in this part of Scotland. The route will have interpretation of smuggling stories along the way, and will stop at various viewpoints where known incidents took place. Gunsgreen House will be at the centre of this trail, and displays will be upgraded over this winter to show more of the Smugglers' Trail stories

New Cairngorms 'Scenic Route' – set to be launched in 2016 is an outstanding scenic route along the eastern side of the Cairngorms National Park, from Glenshee to Grantown-on-Spey. The trail is set to feature an installation by a young recently qualified architect to enhance the route, following a nationwide competition to find the winning designer. Combining stunning Scottish design alongside the outstanding natural beauty of the Cairngorms the new route is expected to encourage more people to experience and enjoy the breath-taking landscapes of the Cairngorms.

NEW activities, attractions and exhibitions

Historic Scotland's Conservation Centre, The Engine Shed, Stirling - the Engine Shed is an ambitious project to create Scotland's first dedicated building conservation centre. It will be open to the public with family friendly activities, craft demonstrations and training courses to entertain and challenge.

National Museum of Flight in East Lothian will be complete its refurbishment in Spring 2016 following a £3.6 million project. Work is underway to restore two nationally significant Second World War hangars at the National Museum of Flight in East Fortune, and create vibrant exhibitions within them. The National Museum of Flight is located on the UK's best-preserved Second World War airfield and is home to one of the best aviation collections in Europe. Visitors to the museum can explore the history of aviation from the First World War to

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the present day.

Pitlochry Dam visitor centre - SSE has unveiled plans to open a new state-of-the-art £4m visitor centre in September 2016 at Pitlochry dam to showcase the role played by the engineers and builders who first brought hydro power to Scotland back in 1951. Visitors will also discover the secrets of the incredible annual journey made by salmon on their return to their native Perthshire rivers to spawn. The new visitor centre will open in September 2016 and will house a 60 seat café, retail area, and a multi-space area for educational use.

Falkirk Distillery – this brand new distillery adds to Scotland’s thriving whisky trails and will offer a facility housing a world class leading retail, restaurant and business complex.

Wilderness Scotland is offering a range of new self-drive tours along impossibly quiet roads through some of the most stunning scenery of Scotland has to offer. The new tours include the North Coast 500, Scotland’s answer to Route 66, luxury adventure in Skye and the North West Highlands, as well as Edinburgh to Highland Perthshire.

The Flying Scotsman locomotive - will return to Scotland in May for the first time in 16 years after a major restoration. The train will run from York to Edinburgh and then travel over the the World Heritage Site The Forth Bridge as part of a four-day tour from 14th -17th May.

Celts: art and identity comes to the National Museum Scotland from 10th March – 25th September 2016. This exhibition will tell the story of the different peoples who have used or been given the name ‘Celts’ through the stunning art objects that they made, including intricately decorated jewellery, highly stylised objects of religious devotion, and the decorative arts of the late 19th century which were inspired by the past. Organised with the British Museum, this is the first major British exhibition in 40 years to tell the story of the Celts. It will showcase stunning and rare artworks lent from 16 UK institutions and ten international lenders.

Dark Sky Rangers – the Dark Sky Park in Galloway, which became the UK’s first Dark Sky Park in the UK in 2009, has recently trained four Biosphere Dark Sky Rangers to communicate about the wonders of the night sky and the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere. The self-employed Biosphere Dark Sky Rangers have a variety of skills and specialisms and will work with businesses such as hotels, B&B’s and campsites to run events and tailor-make experiences for visitors.

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The Roxburghe Estates - is investing in new garden features in the famous Victorian kitchen garden to create Scotland's finest walled garden experience. Access to new areas of the garden will be provided including some of the wonderful greenhouses producing soft fruit and spectacular house plants. Plants such as streptocarpus are grown under glass and displayed at Floors Castle and always provide a beautiful show of colour.

The Scottish Poetry Library reopened towards the end of 2015 on 29th October 2015 following an extensive renovation.

At a time when libraries are seen to be under threat, the Scottish Poetry Library has taken the characteristically bold step of expanding its space and facilities. The development provides:

- More space for books. With over 45,000 items, the SPL holds the largest open-access collection of Scottish poetry in the world, together with work by international writers.
- A new, soundproofed space so that sound and silence can co-exist in the Library.
- A space for recording. Poetry is spoken as well as written.
- More places to work and read comfortably. More armchairs! A sofa in a child-friendly area. Plus a terrace for events, conversation and reading outdoors.
- The Sound Lounge – for listening to recorded poetry.

Augmented Reality app brings Glasgow Art Scene to life for Turner Prize - art venues across Glasgow are offering an interactive touring experience that lets anyone access the hidden story of artworks through their smartphone via an app called the "Visual Arts Glasgow Tour". The tour lets users access the story of an artwork, in the form of a 60 second video, simply by pointing their phone at select artwork in the five participating venues. The interactive tour will run until 17th January to coincide with the 3 month Turner Prize Exhibition Period in Glasgow. Venues where you can enjoy the ActivCanvas experience include: The Hunterian, Glasgow School of Art, the Centre for Contemporary Arts, Street Level Photoworks, and Glasgow Print Studios. Pick up ActivCanvas enabled postcards with more details at each of the participating venues.

Anniversaries in 2016

20th Anniversary of the 'birth' of Dolly the Sheep - Dolly (5 July 1996 – 14 February 2003) was a female domestic sheep, and the first animal to be cloned from an adult somatic cell, using the process of nuclear transfer. She was cloned by Ian Wilmut, Keith Campbell and

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colleagues at the Roslin Institute, part of the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, and the biotechnology company PPL Therapeutics, based near Edinburgh. Visitors will be able to go and see Dolly the Sheep at the National Museum of Scotland from summer 2016.

20th anniversary of the Coronation Stone of Scone being returned to Scotland - the rough-hewn block of gray sandstone was the coronation seat of Scottish kings until it was carried away as war booty by King Edward I in 1296. In 1996, the British Conservative Government decided that the Stone should be kept in Scotland when not in use at coronations. On 3 July 1996, it was announced in the House of Commons that the Stone would be returned to Scotland, and on 15 November 1996, after a handover ceremony at the border between representatives of the Home Office and of the Scottish Office, it was transported to Edinburgh Castle.

150 year anniversary of the National Museum of Scotland – a £14.1 million project will lead to the creation of ten new galleries showcasing over 3000 objects from National Museums Scotland's internationally significant collections of science and technology, decorative art, design and fashion. Display space for these exhibits will increase by over 40%, with three-quarters of them not having previously been on permanent display for generations. The new galleries will open to the public summer 2016, in the 150th anniversary year of the opening of the outstanding Victorian building in 1866. Exhibits will range from Dolly the sheep to a Picasso glass sculpture, a 2.5 tonne copper cavity from CERN to shoes by Alexander McQueen and from Charles Rennie Mackintosh furniture to the prototype for the MRI scanner. Admission Free.

The Queen's 90th birthday will be celebrated by **Royal Yacht Britannia** (Edinburgh) which is planning a series of exciting events to celebrate the in April 2016.

Fashioning a Reign: 90 Years of Style from The Queen's Wardrobe - three special exhibitions will be held in celebration of The Queen's 90th birthday and will be staged across each of Her Majesty's official residences during 2016.

Constituting the largest display of The Queen's dress ever mounted, they will open at the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh for Her Majesty's birthday on 21 April 2016, at the Summer Opening of the State Rooms at Buckingham Palace in August 2016 and at Windsor Castle in September 2016. The exhibition at the Palace of Holyroodhouse will highlight the use of tartan in royal dress.

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10 year anniversary of The National Theatre of Scotland is being celebrated with a recently announced January to July birthday programme. The tour will see the Company travelling widely throughout Scotland, as well as presenting world-class Scottish theatre on stages in London, England, North America, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea.

40th anniversary of St Magnus International Festival - one of the best known arts festivals in the world is hosting an extended 10 day festival in celebration from 17th – 26th June featuring newly commissioned music, poetry and sculpture. It takes place over midsummer each year in Orkney, when audiences enjoy broad daylight when leaving events at 11 o'clock at night. Venues include one of Scotland's finest medieval, working Cathedrals, St Magnus in Kirkwall, and interesting historic venues such as the Italian Chapel built by Italian Prisoners of War and new for next year, the Ness Battery, overlooking Stromness out to sea.

Festivals and events

Glasgow International: Festival of Visual Art - this major biennial festival of visual art will be the first in the city since hosting the Turner Prize in late 2015. Offering more exhibitions and events than ever, Glasgow International will show works by Glasgow-based artists in renowned museum and gallery spaces, off-site spaces, and other cultural organisations.

Celtic Connections will see 2,500 musicians from around the world gather in Glasgow for 18 days (15 – 31 January) of concerts, ceilidhs, talks, art exhibitions, workshops, free events, late night sessions and a host of special one-off musical collaborations. The Opening Concert will be celebrating 50 years of the Traditional Music & Song Association of Scotland with musical director Siobhan Miller at the helm. Cupar Arts Festival is set to return after three years. Running from 18th – 25th June 2016 this cutting edge curated exhibition provides contemporary art in a rural setting. Making the most of the market town of Cupar's public buildings and outdoor spaces, the series of free exhibitions and art works.

Scottish Design Expo at Edinburgh Airport - as part of the official programme for Scotland's Year of Innovation, Design and Architecture 2016, Scottish Design Expo at Edinburgh Airport is a pop-up design exhibition that will celebrate and showcase the excellence of Scottish design through a world-class display and intrinsically embedded events

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programme. EXPO will be located in Edinburgh Airport's new plaza which links the tram system to the arrivals hall. The Scottish Design EXPO and accompanying design events programme will take place during the 2016 EIF making it accessible to an unprecedented audience.

Weekend celebration of Scotland's Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design at **The National Wallace Monument** – the weekend of themed events will run from 24th – 26th June 2016 and will be hosted by the Victorian masterpiece, The National Wallace Monument. 24th June also marks the 155th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone for the Monument. During the event visitors will be able to experience the excitement of 1861 as Scotland starts to build a monument to commemorate William Wallace and the design of architect J. T. Rothead becomes a reality. Costumed actors will depict Charles Rogers and William Burns the men responsible for building the Monument in a new live performance.

The Battle of Stirling Bridge at The National Wallace Monument – on 10th and 11th September, to commemorate Wallace's greatest victory the atmosphere of 1297 will be recreated with medieval weaponry displays, live performances and themed events.

St Kilda Yacht Race – The first ever St Kilda Challenge yacht race will take place Thursday to Saturday, June 9-11 2016. The fleet of racing yachts will berth at Lochmaddy Marina on North Uist where a spectacular parade of sail to the start line in the Sound of Harris will take place. Beginning with the arrival of the fleet on June 9, the programme opens with shore-side cultural treats in North Uist's main settlement of Lochmaddy. On 10th June the main race will take place covering a total of approximately 100 nautical miles in 24 hours, sailing out to the remote archipelago, using the islands as a turning point before returning to the finish line.

Accommodation news

Inglewood House and Spa – located in Alloa, just 10 minutes from the historic city of Stirling and 40 minutes from both Edinburgh and Glasgow, the Grade A listed Jacobean mansion in Alloa, has been restored to its former glory as part of its transformation into a luxury boutique hotel and Spa. From 2016 self-catering woodland lodges will be available in addition to the luxury hotel accommodation. The Lodge on Loch Goil - recently won Most Stylish Hotel in Scotland at the Scottish Style Awards. The 5* Exclusive Use Venue is the only hotel

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	<p>in the West Coast of Scotland in this category. Originally built in 1864, The Lodge on Loch Goil is a William Leiper House with a fantastic collection of Arts & Crafts Furniture and is one of the top locations for Fashion Shoots in the UK. A family run business, The Lodge on Loch Goil prides itself on sourcing the freshest produce and ingredients from the surrounding areas and in selecting vegetables and herbs from the Victorian Greenhouse situated in the grounds.</p> <p>Glasgow Apex Hotel - the group's first in Glasgow opened in 2015 after £10.5 million fitting out process. The centrally located hotel has 104 bedrooms, including five duplex suites with striking city views and aims to offer affordable luxury to the leisure and corporate markets, with features including free, high-speed wi-fi and local phone calls, as well as Sky TV in every bedroom.</p>
Location	<p>Larger than Nova Scotia, Scotland is two-thirds the size of England and Wales - the other two countries that constitute the kingdom of Great Britain – with a tenth of the total population. It is surrounded by sea on three sides: to the west and north by the Atlantic Ocean and on the east by the North Sea. Its only land border runs for approximately 96 km along the line of the Cheviot Hills in the north of England.</p>
Geography	<p>Scotland divides into three regions: the Islands and Highlands in the north, the Central Lowlands in the middle and the Southern Uplands to the south. Rising to 1,344 metres above sea level, Scotland's highest point is the summit of Ben Nevis, in Lochaber, while Scotland's longest river, the River Tay, flows for a distance of 190 kilometres. The land area of Scotland is 78,772 km² roughly 30% of the area of the United Kingdom. The mainland of Scotland has nearly 10,000 kms of coastline.</p>
Name	<p>Scotland is derived from the Latin Scoti, the term applied to Gaels, people from what is now Scotland and Ireland, and the Dál Riata who lived on the islands and lands on either side of the the Irish Sea. By the 11th century at the latest, Scotia was being used to refer to Gaelic speaking Scotland north of the river Forth, alongside Albania or Albany, both derived from the Gaelic Alba. The use of the words Scots and Scotland to encompass all of what is now Scotland became common in the Late Middle Ages.</p>
Population	<p>There are 5.2 million Scots living in Scotland, but many more around the world, particularly in Canada, trace their roots back to the country. There are 1.8 million Ontarians with Scottish ancestry and over 150,000 in Quebec too. In total, there are over 4 million Canadians whose families originated in Scotland.</p>
Language	<p>English Despite a revival, the Gaelic (a Celtic language) is considered a “vernacular” spoken only by 3% of Scots. There is, however, a rich colloquial vocabulary in common usage. Examples are: bairn (child),</p>

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	loch (lake), lassie (girl), wee (small), ken (to know/to have knowledge), ceilidh (gathering, usually with traditional music), ben (mountain), and dram (shot of whisky).
Currency	The British Pound is the local currency, even though some of the bank notes are very Scottish – it's still the same currency! Currently the Canadian Dollar is at 0.53 against the Pound (as at March 2016)
Tipping	There are no definite rules for tipping. If you feel that you have received good service then you may wish to leave a tip. This is most common in restaurants, where it is normal to leave 10% of the total bill but you should check to see if a service charge has already been included. Tipping in hotels is also at your discretion. It is not normal to tip bar staff.
Government	Scotland has partial self-government within the United Kingdom as well as representation in the UK Parliament. Executive and legislative powers have been devolved to, respectively, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood in Edinburgh. The United Kingdom Parliament retains power over a set list of areas, including, for example, levels of UK taxes, social security, defense, international relations and broadcasting. The Scottish Parliament has legislative authority for all other areas relating to Scotland, as well as limited power to vary income tax. The Scottish people have recently voted against independence from Britain in a nationwide referendum.
Documentation	Passports are required for Canadians visiting Scotland.
Time zone	Scotland is 5 hours ahead of EST, Ontario and Quebec.
Health	Good medical care is widely available. Visitors who become ill while in Scotland are eligible for free emergency treatment at National Health Service Accident and Emergency hospital departments. Don't forget travel insurance for all trips outside your home province.
Safety tips	Scotland is one of the safest countries in the world even at night, when people may walk alone with confidence.

CLIMATE	
General climate	<p>Scottish weather isn't always the best and is extremely variable, but give it time and the sun will soon be shining. You might come across the odd 'dreich' day, where the weather is wet and overcast, but soon enough you'll be able to see the bright blue skies of Scotland and the sun sits proudly in the sky.</p> <p>July and August are normally the warmest months with average temperatures of 15-19°C. The days are very long in summer as Scotland is significantly further north than Toronto and Montreal. The driest months in Scotland tend to be between April and June, when temperatures average around 15° C, they even reach 28C at their peak</p>
Today's weather	Edinburgh has sun and clouds today (19 th March 2016) and a temperature of 14C.
Best time to visit	Scotland has a milder climate in winter than Eastern Canada due to the

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	warming effects of the Gulf Stream, so you can visit any time of year. The summer months are the warmest and the most popular, but spring and autumn are often glorious times to visit Scotland too.
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GETTING AROUND	
Getting There	<p>Transat flies to Glasgow year round from Toronto and - new for 2016 - from March to October from Montreal.</p> <p>There are also seasonal flights to Glasgow from both Calgary and Vancouver.</p> <p>Flight time from Toronto is approximately 7 hours.</p> <p>Flights depart Toronto for Glasgow five times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays in high season.</p> <p>Flights depart Montreal for Glasgow four times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays in high season.</p> <p>To book, see your local travel agent or call 1-877-TRANSAT or go to their website at www.Transat.com</p>
Cities	<p>Edinburgh: has been referred to as Europe's prettiest city; the capital, it is so steeped in tradition and venerable in age it is listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Built on seven hills like Rome, its topography adds an extra beauty to the architecture, divided chronologically between the ancient streets and the looming castle of the Old Town, and the elegant, classical buildings of the New Town (which, in spite of its name, dates back to the golden age of the late 18th Century). Its population is 584,000.</p> <p>Glasgow: Scotland's largest city with a population of 1.2 million, Glasgow leapt to prominence in the 19th Century when it became one of the greatest commercial hubs in Britain, feeding the furnaces of the sprawling Empire. Today the city has reclaimed its fame as a centre of style and Britain's finest Victorian city, through stunning architecture, a thumping cultural pulse, and a sizzling restaurant scene. Glasgow has earned bragging rights as the UK's coolest city.</p>
Distances	Edinburgh to Glasgow: 72 km; Glasgow to Fort William: 173 kms, to Thurso: 469 km; to London: 650 km.
Ferries	Regular ferry services operate between the Scottish mainland and island communities. These services are mostly run by Caledonian MacBrayne, but some are operated by local councils. Other ferry routes, served by multiple companies, connect to Northern Ireland, Belgium, Norway, the Faroe Islands and also Iceland.
Cruises	Cruising Along the Caledonian Canal: In 1822, a group of enterprising Scots connected three of the Highlands' longest lakes (lochs Ness, Lochy, and Oich) with a canal linking Britain's east and west coasts. Since then, barges have hauled everything from grain to building supplies without having to negotiate the wild storms off

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	<p>Scotland's northernmost tips. Now cabin cruisers tote a different kind of cargo along the Caledonian Canal: people seeking a spectacular waterborne view of the countryside that was tamed centuries ago by the Camerons, the Stewarts, and the MacDonalDs. Caley Cruisers, based in Inverness www.caleycruisers.co.uk , rents out skippered boats by the week.</p>
<p>Trains</p>	<p>Scotland's rail network is managed by Transport Scotland. The East Coast and West Coast Main Railway lines and the Cross Country Line connect the major cities and towns of Scotland with each other and with the rail network in England. Domestic rail services within Scotland are operated by First ScotRail. Furthermore, Glasgow has a small integrated subway system since 1896. Currently, 15 stations serve a daily ridership of just under 40,000.</p> <p>The East Coast Main Line includes that section of the network that crosses the Firth of Forth via the Forth Bridge. Completed in 1890, this cantilever bridge has been described as "the one internationally recognised Scottish landmark" and has just been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site.</p> <p>The cost of rail travel in Scotland is often quite low, and trains are generally punctual. Timetables are available at all stations, with free timetables covering only certain regions available at various stations For information on rail travel in Scotland, contact First ScotRail, www.firstgroup.com .</p> <p>The Royal Scotsman www.royalscotsman.com is one of the most luxurious trains in the world. The train passes by ancient mountains and mysterious lochs, through glens and across villages as you live in sumptuous surroundings. It's like being the guest at a private party. The train carries a maximum of 36 guests, each passenger enjoying plenty of space. Plush beds and opulent bathrooms are the order of the day. The classic tour calls for 4 nights aboard, and goes from the panoramic Southern Highlands to the more rugged grandeur of the Western Highlands. Superb cuisine and a long list of fine wines and choice malt whiskies are more reasons to hop aboard.</p> <p>The Borders Railway</p> <p>From mining to movies, literature to landscapes, bicycling to butterflies and wool to watermills, the Borders Railway will open up some of the most remarkable regions in Europe to the world as services begin this weekend. Scotland's newest scenic Railway opened in Sept 2015 and takes local, national and international visitors on a journey into new landscapes, to discover iconic attractions, such as Rosslyn Chapel, Abbotsford House, the National Mining Museum Scotland, Melrose Abbey and more. The Borders Railway will take passengers on a 50 km,</p>

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	55 minute journey from Edinburgh through Midlothian to Tweedbank in the Scottish Borders - three distinct regions, each with their own story to tell.
Car Rental	All major international car rental companies are available. Driving is on the left, remember!
Buses	<p>The cheapest means of transport from London to Scotland is the bus and it's also the least expensive way to travel within Scotland. All major towns have a local bus service, and every tourist office can provide details about half- or full-day bus excursions to scenic highlights. If you want to explore a particular area, you can often avail yourself of an economical bus pass.</p> <p>Many adventurous travelers like to explore the country on one of the postal buses, which carry not only mail but also a limited number of passengers to rural areas. Ask at any local post office for details. A general timetable is available at the head post office in Edinburgh.</p> <p>Scottish Citylink Coaches are a good bet. They link the major cities (Glasgow and Edinburgh) with the two most popular tourist centres, Inverness and Aviemore. Travel is fast and prices are low. For example, it takes only 3 hours to reach Aviemore from Edinburgh, and Inverness is just 3.5 hours from Edinburgh. A direct Scottish Citylink overnight coach makes the run from London to Aviemore and Inverness at reasonable fares.</p> <p>Coaches offer many other popular runs, including links between Glasgow and Fort William, Inverness and Ullapool, and Glasgow and Oban. For details, contact Rapsons www.rapsons.co.uk , or Scottish Citylink www.citylink.co.uk</p>
Passes	<p>The Scottish Freedom Pass provides unlimited transportation on trains and most ferries throughout Scotland and discounts for bus travel. It includes access to obscure bus routes to almost forgotten hamlets, free rides on ferries operated by Caledonian MacBrayne, and discounted fares with P&O Scottish Lines. The ferries connect to the Western Islands, the islands of the Clyde, and the Orkneys. The Freedom Pass covers the entire Scottish rail network and is usable from Carlisle, England (near the western Scotland-England border), and from Berwick-upon-Tweed, England (near the eastern Scotland-England border). In addition, if you have to fly into London and want to go straight to Scotland from there, a reduced rate is available for a round-trip ticket between London and Edinburgh or Glasgow for Travelpass holders.</p> <p>The Freedom Pass is available for 4 days' travel over an 8-day period and 8 days' travel over a 15-day period.</p> <p>BritRail Passes allow unlimited travel in England, Scotland, and Wales on any British Rail scheduled train over the whole of the network during</p>

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	<p>the validity of the pass without restrictions. BritRail Consecutive Pass allows you to travel for a consecutive number of days for a flat rate. Seniors (60 and over) qualify for discounts in first-class travel. Passengers 25 and under qualify for a 2nd Class Youth Pass. One child (under age 15) can travel free with each adult or senior pass by requesting the BritRail Family Pass when buying the adult pass. Additional children pay half the regular adult fare. BritRail Passes and vacation packages can be found at www.britrail.com Note that Eurailpass is not valid on trains in Great Britain.</p>
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<p>ACCOMMODATION TYPES</p>	<p>Bed and Breakfasts: These are ideal for connecting with the locals and are very good value. Castle Hotels: e.g. Glenapp Castle, Ballantrae, Girvan, Ayrshire The castle is a spectacular example of the 'Scottish Baronial' style of architecture, set in magnificent private gardens and grounds high on a hill looking out over the Irish Sea to Arran, Ailsa Craig and the Mull of Kintyre.</p>
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<p>LIFESTYLES</p>	
<p>Kids & Teens</p>	<p>Children generally delight in exploring spooky old castles, heading up to the Highlands - where there are all those bagpipe players - and looking for the Loch Ness Monster near Inverness. So here are some ideas: Start at Edinburgh Castle at the beginning of the Royal Mile in the Old Town. Kids may be a bit bored with the State Apartments where Mary Queen of Scots once lived, but they will delight in the spooky 18th century prisons and the batteries of cannons that used to protect the fortress. Kids also enjoy the nearby Outlook Tower and Camera Obscura. At the Scott Monument, it's fun for the whole family to climb the 287 steps for the most panoramic view of the city. Before the afternoon ends, spend at least an hour and a half taking in Our Dynamic Earth, whose exhibits have been compared to an interpretation by Walt Disney. Kids push buttons to simulate everything from earthquakes to meteor showers. Take your kids aboard the luxury yacht Britannia, once used by Queen Elizabeth II herself. After that, a visit to Edinburgh Zoo, with its more than 1,500 animals, including some endangered species is recommended. End the day by wandering through The Real Mary King's Close, which stays open until 9pm in summer. This was the once-thriving underground part of the Old Town, where the "deepest secrets" are hidden in the warren of almost buried streets, or "closes." Kids seem to expect Robert Louis Stevenson's "Mr. Hyde" to emerge at any minute. Deep Sea World is Scotland's most comprehensive and dramatic menagerie of water creatures, including its most ferocious sharks. Allow</p>

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	<p>90 minutes for this attraction, which is 19km west of Edinburgh's centre. Stirling, an ancient town, lying between the rivers Forth and Clyde, is famed for its castle. Here the attraction is Stirling Castle, where Mary Queen of Scots lived as an infant monarch. Children especially enjoy going through the on-site Museum of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, with all the pipe banners and other paraphernalia. Visit Bannockburn nearby, where Robert the Bruce once summoned his "Braveheart" army to defeat Edward II in 1314. Kids find the audiovisual presentation of this violent story at the Bannockburn Heritage Centre as fascinating as Mel Gibson's own Braveheart movie.</p> <p>In Glasgow, the Waverley, the world's last seagoing paddle steamer, will carry you to scenic places along the Firth of Clyde. You can have lunch aboard. Back in Glasgow visit the Glasgow Science Centre, a kid-friendly favorite complete with a Space Theatre and plenty of hands-on activities for children. The Museum of Transport has lots of ship models which intrigue kids.</p> <p>Further north, drive through the hauntingly beautiful Glencoe, scene of the famous massacre of 1692, when the Campbells did in the MacDonalds. Kids are fascinated by the audiovisual presentation shown at the Glencoe Visitor Centre.</p> <p>And then there's Loch Ness: stop at the little village of Drumnadrochit to see the official Loch Ness Monster Exhibition. With its lasers and visual effects, this exhibition is definitely a kid pleaser. After you've seen the exhibition, it's great fun for families to explore the ruins of Urquhart Castle, which overlooks the loch. It is from here that most sightings of the Loch Ness Monster are reported.</p> <p>You can explore the Culloden Battlefield, where Bonnie Prince Charlie and his Jacobite army were crushed by the English. Kids also like to walk the ramparts, a distance of 1.6km, found at the Fort George and Queen's Own Highlanders Regimental Museum in Inverness.</p>
Romance	<p>Stay in a castle, cruise gently along a Highlands loch, take a picnic lunch on a hike over the heathered moors, take in a sunset over a Western Isle, ride a deserted Scottish beach or skip barefoot across the sands...there's so many ways to kindle romance in Scotland!</p>
Genealogy	<p>If you hail from Scotland - trace your roots. Don't just learn about your Scottish heritage - live it! Experience first-hand the places your ancestors lived and worked. Try on the kilt of your clan, touch the walls of your family castle and see the very documents that chronicle their lives.</p> <p>Scotland has an unrivalled range, depth, quality and accessibility of ancestral archives and historical resources across the country. Visit one of the local family history centres, registrars offices or historical buildings to access their records. You'll receive a friendly welcome from one of the local experts and you can ask them any questions you might</p>

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	<p>have. The main centre you can visit in Edinburgh - ScotlandsPeople – which has one of the largest online sources of original genealogical information; with almost 80 million records to access there is every chance that you will be able to connect with your own Scottish ancestry. Check out www.Scotlandspeople.gov.uk to start your search.</p> <p>The www.Ancestralscotland.com website is the official ancestral tourism website of VisitScotland - this unique online resource provides a wealth of information for those wishing to make that trip 'home' to walk in the footsteps of their ancestors. Start planning your own personal ancestral trip now with the clan surname search and clan touring itineraries.</p> <p>Other useful genealogy websites are: www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk www.nls.uk/maps www.abdn.ac.uk/emigration/methodology.html</p>
Zoomers	<p>Independent or guided touring – you have a choice here. If you prefer the latter, try Insight, Trafalgar or Globus. There are lots of discounts available to older visitors too, from rail and bus passes to entry into many of the big attractions. Just make sure you have the appropriate identification available.</p>
UNIQUES	<p>The Falkirk Wheel The Falkirk Wheel was opened in May 2002. Nothing like it has ever been built before anywhere in the world. Boat lifts are nothing new, though the last built in the UK was in 1875. But a rotating boat lift? The result is awe-inspiring and beautiful: the largest piece of functional sculpture you will ever see.</p> <p>Boats approaching from the higher Union Canal now use a new length of waterway before descending through two locks. They then progress through a new 168m long tunnel that emerges at the start of a 104m concrete aqueduct. The far end of this opens directly into the upper of the two "gondolas" of the Falkirk Wheel.</p> <p>The wheel then rotates, and having descended, what is now the lower gondola opens out into a 100m circular basin whose landscaping carefully conceals its origins as an open cast pit. On one side of this is the beautifully curved structure of the visitor centre. One final lock at the far end of the basin lowers boats to the level of the Forth and Clyde Canal.</p> <p>https://www.scottishcanals.co.uk/falkirk-wheel/</p>

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<p>Surprising</p>	<p>Rosslyn Chapel: Admittedly, you may have to extend your stay for this one as the fantastic stone carvings of this richly decorated late- Gothic church have defied convincing explanation for more than 500 years. The church's close associations with Freemasonry and the Knights Templars have spawned a raft of conspiracy theories that claim that the carvings hold the key to the whereabouts of various legendary objects stored at Rosslyn including the Holy Grail. The chapel featured in the blockbuster novel, The Da Vinci Code and its popularity as a major pilgrimage site for the curious has soared.</p>
<p>History</p>	<p>Wherever you travel in Scotland, from the cities to the remotest corners, the country's unusually dramatic history lies waiting to be discovered just beneath the surface of the present. Dating back to 2000 BC, the standing stones at Callanish hint at early appreciation of astrology. Living on the western Isle of Skye, the chief of the MacLeod clan traces a direct ancestral link back to the Vikings who settled here in the 9th Century. Every New Year's Day, the ball game of Ba' rages through the streets of Kirkwall in the Orkneys as it has for countless centuries. And Cawdor Castle, where Macbeth carried out his bloody ambitions in the 11th Century, remains one of the most romantic and best preserved fortresses.</p> <p>No visit to Edinburgh is complete without a stroll through the polished halls of Holyrood Palace, where Mary Queen of Scots witnessed the murder of her trusted secretary by her jealous husband Lord Darnley in 1556. Nearby, the Writer's Museum displays the desk at which Robert Burns wrote his evocative poetry, and the pipe smoked by Walter Scott as he brought Ivanhoe to life. The Golf Museum at St. Andrews gives context to the game once outlawed in the 17th Century because its popularity was causing soldiers to neglect archery practice. At another royal retreat, Balmoral, Queen Victoria grieved the loss of her husband Albert, walking the heather-tinted Highlands in the company of her groom, Mr. Brown.</p> <p>The nearness of the past that permeates the whole Scottish experience is perhaps best summarized by the Stone of Destiny. In 1292, the Scots' coronation emblem was taken from Scone Abbey by the invading Edward I of England and held in Westminster Abbey in London. After 700 years of effort, it was finally returned in 1996. Three years later, in 1999, the Scottish Parliament was re-established in Edinburgh, 292 years after it was abolished by Earl of Seafield on May 1, 1707. Although the British Parliament in Westminster, London, still has governance over national issues, the Scottish body has authority over Scotland's affairs.</p>
<p>Books</p>	<p>Lonely Planet's Scotland guide is my recommended go-to guide to planning the perfect trip here: http://shop.lonelyplanet.com/scotland/scotland-travel-guide-8/</p>

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<p>1000 Places to See Before You Die</p>	<p>Scottish golf; The Castle Trail, Grampians; The Hebrides; Isle of Skye; Scotch Whiskey Trail; Highland Games; Loch Ness; I Inverlochy Castle (hotel); Edinburgh Castle; Hogmanay; Edinburgh Festival; The Royal Scotsman; The Mackintosh Trail, Glasgow; The Trossachs</p>
<p>Must Sees</p>	<p>There are six UNESCO World Heritage sites in Scotland:</p> <p>The Forth Bridge, the world's first major steel edifice, remains a potent symbol of Britain's industrial, scientific, architectural and transport heritage and, in particular, Scotland's engineering pedigree and ingenuity. Nevertheless, it remains a working estuary crossing, busier than ever. The distinctive red bridge carries around 200 local and intercity trains across the Forth every day and forms a key part of the national East Coast Main Line.</p> <p>St. Kilda is a small, out-lying archipelago of Hebridean islands which was inscribed as a "natural" site in 1986. In 2004, the site was extended to include a large amount of the surrounding marine features as well as the islands themselves. In July 2005 it became one of the few World Heritage Sites to hold joint status for its natural and cultural qualities. The islands were bequeathed to the National Trust for Scotland in 1957. They are also a Biosphere Reserve and a National Scenic Area.</p> <p>Edinburgh Old and New Towns were together inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1996. The former includes the medieval Royal Mile which runs from Edinburgh Castle to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, and is bordered to the north by the neo-classical 18th century "New Town" which includes Princes Street. It is managed by the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust.</p> <p>The Heart of Neolithic Orkney includes Maeshowe, the Ring of Brodgar, Skara Brae, the Standing Stones of Stenness and other nearby sites. It was inscribed in 1999 and is managed by Historic Scotland.</p> <p>New Lanark was inscribed in 2001. It is a restored 18th century industrial cotton mill village in South Lanarkshire constructed by Robert</p>

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	<p>Owen as an experiment in utopian socialism. Restoration was organised by the New Lanark Conservation Trust.</p> <p>The Antonine Wall was inscribed in July 2008. It is an extension to a wider series of sites in Austria, Germany and Slovakia entitled "Frontiers of the Roman Empire". The Wall is the remains of a defensive line made of turf circa 20 feet high, with nineteen forts. It was constructed after 139 AD and extended for 37 miles between the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Clyde. The wall was over-run and abandoned soon after 160 AD, then occupied again for a brief period after 197 AD.</p>
<p>SPORTS ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>Sport is an important element in Scottish culture, with the country hosting many of its own national sporting competitions. It enjoys independent representation at many international sporting events including the FIFA World Cup, the Rugby Union World Cup, the Rugby League World Cup, the Cricket World Cup and the Commonwealth Games.</p>
<p>Shinty</p>	<p>Shinty is a team game played with sticks and a ball. Shinty is now played mainly in the Scottish Highlands, and amongst Highland migrants to the big cities of Scotland, but it was formerly more widespread, being once competitively played on a widespread basis in England and other areas in the world where Scottish Highlanders migrated.</p> <p>While comparisons are often made with field hockey, the two games have several important differences. In shinty, a player is allowed to play the ball in the air and is allowed to use both sides of the stick, called a caman which is wooden and slanted on both sides. The stick may also be used to block and to tackle, although a player may not come down on an opponent's stick, a practice called hacking. Players may also tackle using the body as long as it is shoulder-to-shoulder.</p> <p>The game was derived from the same root as the Irish game of hurling but has developed different rules and features. These rules are governed by the Camanachd Association.</p> <p>Shinty is also one of the forebears of ice hockey: in 1800, Scottish immigrants to Nova Scotia played a game on ice at Windsor. In Canada, informal hockey games are still called shinny.</p>
<p>Golf</p>	<p>The Fife town of St. Andrews is known internationally as the Home of golf and to many golfers the Old Course, an ancient links course dating to before 1574, is considered to be a site of pilgrimage. There are many other famous golf courses in Scotland, including Carnoustie, Gleneagles, Muirfield, and Royal Troon</p>
<p>Fishing</p>	<p>Scotland is best known in fishing circles for its Atlantic Salmon; fly fishing for these elusive and beautiful fish was a life-long passion of my father, especially on the River Tweed. Here are some suggestions:</p>

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	<p>The Borders & Galloway Regions: Sea fishing is pure heaven in the Solway Firth, especially near Port William and Portpatrick villages, in the vicinity of Loch Ryan, and also along the shore of the Isle of Whithorn. The elusive salmon is best pursued along the River Tweed, and the lesser-known hill lochans are ideal for trout fishermen. Local tourist offices distribute two helpful guides: A Comprehensive Guide to Scottish Borders Angling and Castabout Anglers Guide to Dumfries and Galloway.</p> <p>Argyll & the Southern Hebrides: This much-visited area in western Scotland is split in two by the long peninsula of Kintyre. The topography is decidedly northern Atlantic, distinguished by open sea and loch, and the Firth of Clyde separates the region from the Inner Hebrides. Along with about 50 prime freshwater-angling sites, Argyll and the Southern Hebrides contain some two dozen villages with fantastic sea fishing.</p> <p>Tayside: The northeast section of Scotland is filled not only with major rivers - the Don, Dee, Ythan, and Deverson - but with smaller ones, too, such as the Ugie, all ideal for salmon fishing. Besides the rivers, numerous estuaries and lochs make this one of the country's best areas for game fishing. Local tourist offices keep abreast of the details about boat rentals and permit prices, and some country hotels offer fishing packages.</p> <p>Sutherland & Northern Highlands: Sutherland's myriad lochs provide endless possibilities for anglers. Trout fishing is the big lure, and local tourist offices will tell you all about boats and permits. Not only is the fishing superb, but your hotel cook may also prepare your catch for you.</p>
<p>Horse riding</p>	<p>Horseback riding through the Highlands & Argyll... There's nothing like an equestrian excursion through the Highlands' fragrant heather and over its lichen-covered rocks. One of Scotland's biggest stables is the Highland Riding Centre, Drumnadrochit www.borlum.co.uk . For scenic rides across the moors, Highlands, and headlands of the Argyll, try the Ardfern Riding Centre, Loch Gilphead (tel. 01852/500-632).</p>
<p>Hiking</p>	<p>Scotland's Great Trails are distinctively waymarked, easily accessible and allow you to discover Scotland's beautiful natural landscapes. From mountains, lochs and forests to coastal paths and riverside walks as well as historical sites and Scotland's fantastic wildlife, there are plenty of stunning natural sights to behold. Take the family and tick off a bite-sized chunk of one of the routes, do a bit each weekend or tackle the whole route in one go.</p> <p>If you wish to see some of Scotland's best dramatic mountain and loch scenery, the Great Glen Way, Southern Upland Way, the Three</p>

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	<p>Lochs Way and the West Highland Way traverse some of the most beautiful places in Scotland.</p> <p>Follow some of Scotland's iconic rivers from source to sea, on routes such as the Speyside Way which runs from Spey Bay in the Moray Firth, upriver to Aviemore, in the heart of the Cairngorms National Park. Follow some other great river trails like the Annandale Way, the Clyde Walkway or the River Ayr Way.</p> <p>Explore some of Scotland's long coastline. Embark on the 187 kms of the spectacular Fife Coastal Path. You will discover fascinating wildlife, sandy beaches and quaint fishing villages. The Ayrshire Coastal Path, John Muir Way, Kintyre Way, Moray Coast Trail and West Island Way or new addition, the Berwickshire Coastal Path, also offer stunning coastal scenery.</p> <p>Uncover Scotland's rich and fascinating history on an historical trail. Follow in the footsteps of St Cuthbert on the St Cuthbert's Way or discover ancient abbeys on the Borders Abbeys Way, perfect for exploring the beautiful countryside of the Scottish Borders. Or why not follow in the footsteps of marauding medieval cattle thieves on the Cateran Trail or Scotland's most famous outlaw Rob Roy on the Rob Roy Way?</p> <p>If you are interested in transport and travel, discover canal towpaths, The Falkirk Wheel and old railway lines on some of the fantastic canal and railway routes, such as the Forth and Clyde Canal Towpath, the Dava Way and the Formartine and Buchan Way.</p> <p>The Munros: The highest mountains in Scotland are known as Munros, named after Sir Hugh T. Munro who in 1891 surveyed all the country's mountains above 3000 feet (914 metres) and produced his Tables which catalogued 236 peaks that he deemed to be individual mountains with 'sufficient separation' between each other. Over the years and with advances in surveying, there have been several revisions to Munro's original listing, the latest being in 1997. Currently, there are 284 recognized Munros.</p> <p>Frommer's Best Walking Trips in Scotland covers 57 walks all over Scotland, together with information on where to eat and stay.</p>
<p>Cycling</p>	<p>North Coast 500</p> <p>A potentially iconic route to rival the likes of the USA's Route 66, the North Coast 500 (NC500) is the brand name of the project designed to bring together the best of the North Highlands in one iconic touring route round the coastal edges.</p> <p>The route has been launched by the North Highland Initiative (NHI) and aims to showcase and promote the brilliant moments to be experienced in the area, with a particular focus on food and drink, accommodation,</p>

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	<p>culture, landscapes, heritage and outdoor and adventure based activities.</p> <p>The NC500 route is just over 500 miles or 800 kms and begins in the capital of the Highlands, Inverness. From Inverness, it follows the A835 towards the west coast, and snakes along the coastline upwards through the North West Highlands, across the north edge of mainland Britain and finally down the east coast on the A9 from Britain's most northerly town; John O'Groats, completing the loop in Inverness. Perfect for cyclists, the route is arguably one of the most scenic in Scotland. Key 'stop and take a picture' locations along the route include: Spectacular beaches such as Achmelvich and Dornoch Stunning mountain ranges such as Ben Hope and Suilven Mesmerising castles such as the fairytale Dunrobin and the striking ruins of Ardvreck www.northcoast500.com</p>
<p>Sailing & Watersports</p>	<p>Wherever you travel in Scotland, you're never far from the water. Windsurfing, canoeing, water-skiing, and sailing are just some of the activities available at a number of sailing centres and holiday parks. You'll find it easy to rent boats and equipment at any of the major resorts along Scotland's famous lakes.</p>

<p>CULTURE</p>	
<p>Arts</p>	<p>Scotland has a long and lively literary culture, which consists of the romantic poems of Robert Burns, the classic adventures of Robert Louis Stevenson and the fantasies of JM Barrie, as well as the literary work of many more authors.</p> <p>Scotland is renowned for its art, alongside its music and dance. Having garnered a strong reputation throughout the years thanks to pieces including Allan Ramsay's 18th century portraits and Douglas Gordon's modern video footage, the variety of art on show is vast.</p> <p>National and international artwork is on show in Edinburgh in the National Galleries of Scotland that feature timeless pieces. The capital is also home to doggerfisher, which alongside Sorcha Dallas and Transmission in Glasgow and Dundee's DCA, showcases Scotland's thriving art scene of the present day.</p>
<p>Music</p>	<p>Scottish music often gets underestimated with bagpipes thought to be all the country has to offer, but this is far from the case. Scottish music goes far beyond the cèol beag, or 'little music', of Scotland's national instrument and you can listen to much more than just the sound of the pipes.</p> <p>Rock music has come to the fore in Scotland's music scene in recent years, with the T in the Park Music Festival being one example. Having now been put on for more than a decade, it is an opportunity for music fans to see the best talent produced by Scotland, including Paolo Nutini,</p>

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	<p>Calvin Harris and Belle and Sebastian, as well as acts from around the world.</p> <p>It isn't just festivals where toe-tapping music can be found either, with pubs across the country hosting regular sessions. You'll soon become familiar with Scottish music and have it stuck in your head; something that won't bother you one jot!</p> <p>The home of Scottish Opera is Glasgow's Theatre Royal, which is near the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. The theatre hosts a number of classic productions for which they've won awards, including The Ring Cycle, Madame Butterfly and Der Rosenkavalier. They have even toured their productions across the Scottish countryside, with Orkney and Shetland just two areas to be graced with their presence. The performance of Die Fledermaus has even been tweaked to make it into a contemporary show and open it up to a whole new audience.</p>
<p>Films</p>	<p>Scotland has long been immortalised on the silver screen. But the only way to really appreciate the magic is to see it for yourself!</p> <p>The spectacular hills, landscapes, castles and wildlife have inspired film makers the world over, most recently the team at Disney•Pixar for their animated movie Brave.</p> <p>The dramatic hills of Glen Nevis and Glen Coe were the setting for Braveheart, the portrayal of one of the Scotland's most iconic figures, William Wallace. The majestic Eilean Donan Castle is also recognisable for its appearance in Highlander, starring Christopher Lambert and Sean Connery, and the James Bond movie, The World Is Not Enough.</p> <p>The breathtaking train chase scene from Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets features the Hogwarts Express crossing the historic Glenfinnan Viaduct. Experience the same magical journey with a trip on The Jacobite steam train between Fort William and Mallaig.</p> <p>Many Harry Potter scenes were shot in Scotland, and in Glen Coe you can enjoy Hagrid's views of the Torren Lochan.</p> <p>Scotland's sparkling coastline can be seen in Chariots of Fire, filmed on the West Sands beach at St Andrews. More recently, Oscar-winning biopic The Queen was filmed at the Balmoral Estate in Royal Deeside while The Da Vinci Code showcased Rosslyn Chapel, just outside of Edinburgh.</p> <p>Scotland's capital city is the backdrop for the animation film The Illusionist, which brings 1950s Edinburgh to life, while the adaptation of David Nicholls' best-selling novel One Day, starring Anne Hathaway and Jim Sturgess, features iconic locations such as Calton Hill.</p> <p>Film enthusiasts also shouldn't miss the Glasgow Film Festival in February and the Edinburgh International Film Festival in June.</p>
<p>Museums</p>	<p>The National Galleries of Scotland</p> <p>The National Galleries of Scotland in Edinburgh comprise the five</p>

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	<p>galleries, the original National Gallery itself, joined by the Weston Link to the Royal Scottish Academy, which creates an elegant, neo-classical presence at the foot of the Mound. Renaissance Masters, Post-Impressionist works, and the most extensive collection of Scottish paintings in the world are found here. A few minutes away is the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, with the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and the impressive Dada-based, Dean Gallery well worth an excursion north-west of Princes Street. If you don't feel like walking, take the free bus which operates between the five galleries.</p> <p>National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh Visit the 16 stunning new galleries dedicated to the natural world, cultures of the world, art and design and science and technology, exhibiting a range of artifacts from dinosaur bones to designer chairs and mummies to motor cars. The Grand Gallery has been revitalized following recent refurbishment, with a 'Window on the World' display of more than 800 objects rising over four floors. Each one tells its own tale about everyday Scots and their lives, and together they paint a vivid picture of the nation from earliest days to future aspirations.</p> <p>Fossil Grove is Glasgow's most ancient attraction. A unique treasure, situated in beautiful Victoria Park in the west of the city, the fossil trees and surrounding rocks are the remains of an ancient forest, more than 330 million years old. Scottish National Heritage has designated the grove a site of Special Scientific Interest. These fossilised tree stumps were discovered in 1887 when an old quarry was being landscaped during the creation of the park. Careful excavation of the site uncovered the fossil remains and a building was erected to protect them from the elements.</p> <p>The University of Glasgow's Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery is home to one of the top five collections in Scotland, with over a million items ranging from meteorites to mummies. Explore dinosaurs, early man, Roman legionnaires and much more at the Museum. Just opposite, visit the Mackintosh House and displays including Rembrandt, Whistler and Scottish Painting in the Art Gallery.</p>
<p>Festivals</p>	<p>Scotland is home to a number of great festivals every year but it's the Edinburgh Festival (Aug 5 – 29, 2016) that really steals the limelight. This festival actually consists of a number of different festivals, including the Edinburgh International Festival, the Military Tattoo, the International Book and Film Festivals and the renowned and highly popular Festival Fringe. Edinburgh also hosts the UK's Mela Festival, a multicultural event that stops off in the Scottish capital before moving onto Glasgow for its tour of Britain. http://www.eif.co.uk/</p>

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	<p>Other than those three weeks in August, there's still plenty of activity across Scotland to check out. In February there's the Aye Write! Literary festival that takes place in Glasgow. Scotland's second city is also home to the biennial International Arts Festival, a new event that sees Glasgow host top notch contemporary art every other April.</p> <p>If you're after a musical experience you can either relax at Glasgow's Celtic Connections, where the traditional sounds of Scotland come to the fore, or you can join 69,000 other fans of pop music in a Perthshire field for T in the Park.</p> <p>Highland Games take place right across Scotland throughout the summer. You can see events from June until September, with the Braemar Gathering being one of the most renowned occasions; it's even attended by royalty. Every aspect of the rich Highland culture will be celebrated by a range of traditional and contemporary events.</p> <p>Winter is just as busy a time across Scotland, with winter festivals taking place in most towns and cities. Edinburgh's Winter Wonderland is one of the most famous, which sees the year brought to an end in style with a four-day Hogmanay celebration, a truly unique New Year's Eve party.</p> <p>Edinburgh is the world's favourite festival city, welcoming some 25,000 performers and thinkers, with over four million attendees each year. The Scottish capital is where huge talents such as Emma Thompson, Mike Myers, Hugh Laurie and Alan Cumming learned their craft; these and many more stars are warmly welcomed back to critical acclaim. Come along to enjoy the line-up of world class talent, as well as plenty of emerging entertainment waiting to be discovered.</p> <p>In August alone, seven festivals take over the city with something for everyone: from the stirring sounds of the massed pipes and drums at the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, to the big opera and dance productions invited by the Edinburgh International Festival. With comedy, dance and theatre populating the Edinburgh Festival Fringe with over 1,000 performances a day and the crème de la crème of bestselling authors appearing at the Edinburgh International Book Festival.</p>
<p>Quirky Scottish Events and Activities 2016</p>	<p>Scotland has its own take on special events! Here are some interesting ones for 2016:</p> <p>World Stone Skimming Championships Easdale Island, Argyll - Sunday 25 September 2016 www.stoneskimming.com Easdale Island is the smallest permanently inhabited island of the Inner Hebrides. It was once the centre of a thriving Scottish slate mining</p>

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industry, and one of the disused quarries forms a perfect arena for the World Stone Skimming Championships. The championships are held every year on the last Sunday in September. Anyone of any age and any level of skill can enter. Each competitor is allowed 3 skims using specially selected Easdale slate skimming stones. For a skim to qualify the stone must bounce at least three times in the water - it is then judged on the distance achieved before it sinks.

Scottish & British Gold Panning Championships

Museum of Lead Mining, Wanlockhead, Dumfries and Galloway - 28-29 May 2016

www.leadminingmuseum.co.uk

Because of its long association with gold, Wanlockhead is the preferred venue for the championships, which are organised each year by the British Gold Panning Association. Gold can be found in many areas of Scotland and particularly in the Lowther Hills around Wanlockhead and Leadhills where gold panning has been popular for centuries. Gold is found in the sands and gravels in the burns which act as a natural means of concentrating the gold. The Gold Panning Championships are annual and open for all ages and experiences.

The Golden Spurtle World Porridge Making Championships

Carrbridge, Highlands – dates for 2016 TBD

www.goldenspurtle.com

The World Porridge Making Championships take place annually at the Village Hall in Carrbridge. The title of 'World Porridge Making Champion' is awarded to the chef deemed to have made the best traditional porridge using oatmeal, water and salt. The day's events include a host of activities, including rides for children, music, baking competitions, tasting stands, food, craft stalls and a Chain Saw Carving Competition.

The Festival of the Horse and The Boys Ploughing Match

South Ronaldsay, Orkney - 20th August 2016

<http://calendarcustoms.com/articles/boys-ploughing-match-festival-of-the-horse/>

On the third Saturday in August each year, the small island of South Ronaldsay in Orkney plays host to a unique and spectacular event which takes place in the village of St Margaret's Hope and a nearby beach, usually The Sands O'Wright - The Boys Ploughing Match. The tradition of boys having a ploughing competition using miniature ploughs has taken place on the island for over 100 years. Today this has been developed into an outstanding event with the 'horses' having beautiful and elaborate costumes, and the ploughing match prizes are

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keenly competed for - neatest ends, straightest ploughing, best starts and best finishes being some of them.

Up Helly Aa

Lerwick, Shetland – 26 January 2016

www.uphellyaa.org/up-helly-aa-2016

On the last Tuesday of January every year, the menfolk of Lerwick put on horned helmets, light flaming torches and stride through the streets to set fire to a longship. Up Helly Aa, Europe's biggest fire festival, draws crowds from around the world keen to witness a seemingly authentic Viking celebration in this most Scandinavian part of the UK (Shetland was part of Norway until the fifteenth century). In fact, Up Helly Aa has no direct Viking roots, having developed in the late 19th century as a sort of novelty New Year party. This relatively recent provenance doesn't prevent thousands of tourists from descending on Lerwick to see the day-long celebrations, which begin in the morning with a march and end with 900 burning torches being launched into a replica Viking ship, followed by a ceilidh.

Up Helly Aa is held every year on the last Tuesday of January.

Fireball Whirling

Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire - every year on 31 December

<http://stonehavenfireballs.co.uk/history>

Scots are renowned for their gusty celebrations over New Year, or Hogmanay as it's known in Scotland. Few celebrate more enthusiastically than the inhabitants of Stonehaven, a small fishing town in the North East of the country. Braving the bitter cold just before midnight on the last day of the year, more than 30 Stonehaven residents parade through the streets twirling enormous balls of fire about their heads, accompanied by a local band of bagpipers. At the end of the parade the fireballs are hurled into the North Sea and the people begin to 'first foot' their neighbours, rushing from house to house for a dram of whisky.

The fireballs, made from combustibles such as coal, wood and fir cones, are big enough to mean that years ago bystanders had to dodge the flying flames, although now crowds are kept well back. Organisers are proud of the fact that the event has only been cancelled twice – during the First World War – and has never been defeated by the notorious Scottish weather.

ATTRACTIONS	
Beaches	With a coastline estimated at 13,115 km long, there is plenty of room for Scottish beaches! The east coast has plenty of unspoilt stretches of sands, with places like Dunbar, St Andrews, Montrose, Aberdeen,

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	<p>Fraserburgh, Lossiemouth, Nairn, and Dornoch just some of the towns and cities close to superb stretches of beach.</p> <p>The more rugged north and west coasts likewise have beautiful sands, often as smaller coves set amongst magnificent cliff scenery, while the dazzling white beaches of the Hebrides – look for the Gaelic word ‘traigh’ on maps – are an essential element of the island experience and a real highlight of a visit to, for example, Harris or Islay. The Big Strand on Islay, for example, is at least 12 km long.</p> <p>Some beaches have an association with a particular leisure pursuit – Thurso (Dunnet Bay) for surfing, for instance; beaches on Tiree for wind surfing; St Andrews for kite-surfing – but all of these are practiced at a variety of Scottish beaches.</p> <p>Scotland’s beaches are also leisurely places for beachcombing – lobster buoys from Maine, coconuts from the Caribbean and pumice from Icelandic volcanoes may add a touch of the exotic!</p> <p>More than 60 of Scotland’s beaches hold Seaside Awards – but the Scottish beach, especially in the Highlands, can still be an off-the-beaten-track location, unspoilt and hardly visited.</p>
<p>Wildlife</p>	<p>Scotland's wildlife is typical of the north west of Europe, although several of the larger mammals such as the Lynx, Brown Bear, Wolf, Elk and Walrus were hunted to extinction in historic times. There are important populations of seals and internationally significant nesting grounds for a variety of seabirds such as Gannets. The Golden Eagle is something of a national icon.</p> <p>On the high mountain tops species including Ptarmigan, Mountain Hare and Stoat can be seen in their white colour phase during winter months. Remnants of the native Scots Pine forest exist and within these areas the Scottish Crossbill, the UK's only endemic bird species and vertebrate, can be found alongside Capercaillie, Wildcat, Red Squirrel and Pine Marten. In recent years various animals have been re-introduced, including the White-tailed Sea Eagle in 1975, the Red Kite in the 1980s, and more recently there have been experimental projects involving the Beaver and Wild Boar.</p>
<p>Parks</p>	<p>Scotland has two national parks: Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, created in 2002, and the Cairngorms National Park, created in 2003. These were designated as such under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 which was an early piece of legislation passed by the Scottish Parliament not long after its creation in 1999. It was a Scot, John Muir, who had initiated the first national park in the world, at Yosemite in the United States.</p>
<p>Islands</p>	<p>Scotland has 790 islands, of which 130 are inhabited, including Orkney, Shetland, Outer Hebrides, Skye, Mull, Iona, Arran, Islay, and Jura. Here are two on my ‘bucket list’:</p>

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	<p>Iona: It's an otherworldly rock, one of Europe's most evocative holy places, anchored solidly among the Hebrides off Scotland's west coast. St. Columba established Iona as a Christian center in A.D. 563, and used it as a base for converting Scotland. You'll find a ruined Benedictine nunnery and a fully restored cathedral where 50 Scottish kings were buried during the early Middle Ages. Hundreds of Celtic crosses once adorned Iona; today, only three of the originals remain. Now part of the National Trust, the island is home to an ecumenical group dedicated to the perpetuation of Christian ideals. Reaching Iona requires a 10-minute ferry ride from the hamlet of Fionnphort, on the nearby island of Mull.</p> <p>Orkneys: Archaeologists say the Orkneys, an archipelago comprising some 70 islands, hold the richest trove of prehistoric monuments in the British Isles - an average of three sites per square mile. Ornithologists claim that about 16% of all winged animals in the United Kingdom reside here, and linguists have documented an ancient dialect that still uses Viking terms. Northwest of the Scottish mainland, closer to Oslo than to faraway London, these islands are on the same latitude as St. Petersburg but much more exposed to the raging gales of the North Sea. The late-spring sunsets and the aurora borealis have been called mystical, and in midsummer the sun remains above the horizon for 18 hours a day. An equivalent twilight envelops the islands in winter. Only 19 of the Orkneys are inhabited; the others, often drenched with rain, seem to float above primordial seas.</p>
<p>Gardens</p>	<p>Scotland has over 200 gardens and nurseries each containing thousands of plant varieties.</p> <p>The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh was established in 1670 and during the twentieth century acquired three Regional Gardens - the mountainous Benmore in Argyll; Dawyck in the wooded hills of the Scottish Borders and Logan on the Gulf Stream-warmed southern peninsula of Dumfries & Galloway.</p> <p>Comprising 70 acres of stunning scenery, just a stone's throw from the city centre, the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) captures the imagination of everyone who visits: from the knowledgeable gardener to the curious sightseer.</p> <p>Reflecting the international research and conservation work of RBGE, the Garden is home to the largest collection of wild-origin Chinese plants outside China. See, too, the Scottish Heath Garden, recreating the plantings and landscape of the Scottish highlands; the world-famous Rock Garden, which is home to over 5,000 alpine plants and the stunning 165m-long Herbaceous Border, backed by an outstanding century-old Beech Hedge.</p>

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	<p>Opened in the summer of 2006 is the Queen Mother's Memorial Garden, a fitting tribute to a much-loved royal, which has been imaginatively planted to present something for visitors of all tastes - in every season.</p> <p>Among the Garden's many thousands of trees and shrubs are several groups in which its scientists have special interest, such as the conifers, rhododendrons and other shrubs of the Ericaceae family. Further highlights include the Sierra redwoods (<i>Sequoiadendron giganteum</i>) of North America and numerous other species of botanical interest, including beeches (<i>Fagus</i>), maples (<i>Acer</i>), and colourful rowans (<i>Sorbus</i>)</p> <p>At the North East corner of the Garden stands its magnificent Victorian Temperate Palm House - the tallest of its kind in Britain - the glorious entrance to Windows on the World, a glasshouse experience offering visitors the opportunity to explore ten distinct climatic zones holding around one percent of all known flowering plants, cycads and ferns. These range from the economically important species - including banana and rubber - to household favourites and the world's largest collection of tender vireya rhododendron, originating from the mountains of New Guinea and Borneo.</p>
<p>Historical Sites - Castles</p>	<p>Edinburgh Castle (Edinburgh): Few other buildings symbolize the grandeur of an independent Scotland as clearly as this one. Begun around A.D. 1000, on a hilltop high above the rest of Edinburgh, it witnessed some of the bloodiest and most treacherous events in Scottish history, including a doomed 1573 defense by Kirkcaldy of Grange in the name of Mary Queen of Scots.</p> <p>Palace of Holyroodhouse (Edinburgh): Throughout the clan battles for independence from England, this palace served as a pawn between opposing forces. In its changing fortunes, it has housed a strange assortment of monarchs involved in traumatic events: Mary Queen of Scots, Bonnie Prince Charlie, James VII (before his ascendancy to the throne), and French King Charles X (on his forced abdication after an 1830 revolution). The building's present form dates from the late 1600s, when it was rebuilt in a dignified neo-Palladian style. Today, Holyroodhouse is one of Queen Elizabeth's official residences.</p> <p>Drumlanrig Castle (Dumfries): Begun in 1679, this castle took 12 years to build and so much money that its patron, the third earl and first duke of Queensbury, complained that he deeply resented its existence. Later, it was embroiled in dynastic inheritance scandals worthy of a Gothic novel. One of the most prestigious buildings in Scotland, it houses the antiques and artwork of four illustrious families.</p>

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Culzean Castle (near Maybole): Designed for comfort and prestige, this castle was built in the late 1700s by Scotland's most celebrated architect, Robert Adam, as a replacement for a dark, dank tower that had stood for longer than anyone could remember. Culzean was donated to the National Trust for Scotland just after World War II. A suite was granted to General Eisenhower for his lifetime use, in gratitude for his role in staving off a foreign invasion of Britain.

Stirling Castle (Stirling): Stirling is a triumph of Renaissance ornamentation, a startling contrast to the severe bulk of many other Scottish castles. Despite its beauty, after its completion in 1540 the castle was one of the most impregnable fortresses in the British Isles, thanks partly to its position on a rocky crag.

Scone Palace (Scone): As early as A.D. 900, Scottish kings were crowned here on a lump of granite so imbued with ancient magic that, in the 13th century, the English hauled it off to Westminster Abbey. (The Stone of Scone was returned to Scotland in 1996 and is now found in Edinburgh Castle.) The palace you see today was rebuilt in 1802 from ruins that incorporated a 1580 structure with stones laid during the dim early days of Scottish and Pictish union.

Glamis Castle (Glamis): This castle's core was built for defense against rival clans during the 1400s, but over the centuries it evolved into a luxurious dwelling. The seat of the same family since 1372, Glamis is said to be haunted by the ghost of Lady Glamis, a former owner, whom James V had burned as a witch when she resisted his annexation of her castle. It also figured into the ambitions of Macbeth, thane of Glamis.

Crathes Castle & Gardens (Grampian): Crathes evokes the luxury of a 15th- and 16th-century Scottish laird. The style focuses on high heraldry, with frequent references to the persistent Scottish hope of an enduring independence. The gardens' massive yew hedges were originally planted in 1702.

Balmoral Castle (Ballater): Scotland offers far greater castles to explore, but Balmoral, the rebuilt castle of Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, draws hordes of visitors, who no doubt hope to glimpse Prince William. That's because it's still the Scottish residence of the queen. Although inside you can visit only the ballroom, the sprawling manicured grounds and gardens also await you.

Braemar Castle (Grampian): Built by the earl of Mar in 1628 as a hunting lodge, Braemar was burned to the ground, and then rebuilt by Farquharson of Invercauld, an ancestor of the present owner. It's often

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	<p>photographed as a symbol of Scottish grandeur and the well-upholstered aristocratic life.</p> <p>Cawdor Castle (Cawdor): From its heavily fortified origins in the 1300s, Cawdor evolved into the Campbell clan's luxurious seat. According to legend and Shakespearean plot lines, three witches promised this castle to Macbeth to tempt him into the deeds that led to his destruction.</p>
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<p>OTHER ACTIVITIES</p> <p>Shopping</p>	<p>The shopping experience in Scotland is very varied. Though the cities have the 'High Street' names, plus some very stylish and exclusive brands, rural areas have plenty of surprises. Here you'll discover potters and jewellers, knitwear designers, weavers, silversmiths and kiltmakers to name but a few.</p> <p>Scottish textiles, especially the tartan variety, are popular and worth buying. Everything from a travelling rug to your own kilt outfit. Shops up and down the country, and especially in Edinburgh and Inverness, can tell which clan your family belongs to and make you a kilt in that particular tartan. For the full outfit, including kilt, sporran, jacket, shoes and skeann dhu dagger, expect to pay in the region of £600, or more if you want more elaborate accessories.</p> <p>There are mill shops making tweeds and cloths in many parts of Scotland. Most are in the Borders, though it is not necessarily cheaper to buy at source. Harris Tweed is also a good buy and you can watch your cloth being woven on the Hebridean islands of Harris and Lewis.</p> <p>Knitwear is also good value and sold throughout Scotland, though the cashmere industry in the Borders is suffering from high trade tariffs. Shetland is a good place to find high-quality wool products. Note that Aran jumpers are not from the island of Arran, but from Aran (with one 'r') in Ireland.</p> <p>Jewellery is another popular souvenir and there are many excellent craft shops throughout the Highlands and Islands making beautiful jewellery with Celtic designs.</p> <p>Glassware is also popular, particularly Edinburgh crystal and Caithness glass, as well as pottery.</p> <p>Food is another good souvenir and not just the ubiquitous shortbread sold in tartan tins. If you haven't far to travel home, smoked salmon, or any other smoked product, is good value. One of the best places for food products is the island of Arran, where you can buy their delicious local mustards and preserves, smoked fish and game, and cheeses. And, of course, there's whisky. Most distilleries will refund the cost of their guided tour in the form of a discount voucher on a bottle of their brand whisky.</p>
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<p>Markets</p>	<p>The Barras Market is Glasgow is an historic marketplace with great character and an eclectic mix of covered and open stalls selling a huge range of goods.</p> <p>Perth Farmers' Market takes place on the 1st Saturday of the month in King Edward Street and St John's Place, Perth, from 9am to 2pm. There are between 35 and 40 stalls selling a variety of quality local and Scottish produce throughout the year. The Producers themselves run their own stalls so you can come and speak directly with them, ask them questions about their produce and purchase fresh quality products. Visit the Information Point at Perth Farmers' Market and pick up a variety of free leaflets. There's plenty to see and do: watch the cooking demonstration, sample the food, enjoy the atmosphere and purchase some of the finest produce in Scotland.</p>
<p>Nightlife</p>	<p>Glasgow has one of the most active dance club scenes in the UK. Listed below are just a few selected venues. In local parlance, "venues" are distinct from the actual "clubs" - such as Optimo (electro-clash), Manga (drum and bass), or Pressure (house and techno) - which are associated with a specific style, DJ, or team of DJs. They can move around to different venues. It all makes perfect sense to those in the know.</p> <p>Glasgow also has the reputation as an unsurpassed spawning ground in Scotland for pop and rock groups, such as Franz Ferdinand or Belle and Sebastian. Barrowland, a former ballroom, has to be one of the best venues in all of Britain for seeing live contemporary music. Recently, the company that runs the well-known Brixton Academy converted an old movie house into the Academy on the city's Southside, while in the city centre another former cinema, ABC, was redeveloped into a good music venue in 2005. Plus, two bars, King Tut's Wah Wah Hut (where the band Oasis was apparently "discovered") and Nice 'n' Sleazy, give Glasgow a pair of small venues with performance spaces that would rival those typical of Manhattan's East Village.</p>
<p>Hogmanay</p>	<p>There are many festivities happening across the country to celebrate Hogmanay. Choose from an array of ceilidhs, dinner dances, hoolies and balls.</p> <p>Join Glasgow's biggest party of the year as 25,000 revellers descend on George Square to see in the New Year;</p> <p>Stonehaven Fireball Festival: One of the few remaining mid-winter fire festivals on the Scottish East Coast. Local people celebrate the arrival of the New Year in this traditional way - swinging fireballs around as they walk up and down the old town High Street;</p> <p>The Hogmanay bonfire in the Borders town off Biggar (pop 2000), dates back to the pagan times when fire was worshipped and believed to ward off evil spirits for the New Year. It has continued at Biggar for hundreds of years and there is no other town in the world that</p>

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	<p>celebrates the coming of the New Year like Biggar.</p> <p>Edinburgh's Hogmanay: The world's best New Year celebrations - four fabulous days and nights of amazing events throughout the city. Nobody celebrates New Year better than the Scots so come and join the 100,000 other revellers who pack Edinburgh's Princes Street for a wild night of full-on partying that pauses only for the breathtaking fireworks display from the ramparts of Edinburgh Castle at midnight. The pyrotechnics also signal the start of the biggest kiss-athon you'll ever take part in and you'll never make so many friends so quickly as you do then!</p> <p>Hogmanay Traditions: Traditionally, the Scots were a superstitious race at the best of times and for an event as significant as the dawning of a new year, customs, rituals and traditions inevitably arose around the country. Many of these have now disappeared but others have carried on down through the years and some have even become essential ingredients of today's celebrations.</p> <p>Cleaning the House The last day of the year was traditionally regarded as a time of preparation: business would be concluded to let the new year start afresh and houses were thoroughly cleaned (known as 'redding'). Fireplaces in particular had to be swept out and in a variation on reading tea-leaves, the ashes of the last fire of the old year were believed to show what lay ahead in the new year.</p> <p>First Footing One of the major Hogmanay customs was 'first footing'. Shortly after 'the bells' - the stroke of midnight when public clocks would chime to signal the start of the new year - neighbours would visit one another's houses to wish each other a good new year. This visiting was known as 'first footing', and the luckiest first-foot into any house was a tall, dark and handsome man - perhaps as a reward to the woman who traditionally had spent the previous day scrubbing her house (another Hogmanay ritual). Women or red heads, however, were always considered bad luck as first-foots. First-foots brought symbolic gifts to 'handsel' the house: coal for the fire, to ensure that the house would be warm and safe, and shortbread or black bun (a type of fruit cake) to symbolise that the household would never go hungry that year.</p>
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<p>CUISINE</p>	<p>Top food and drink experiences in Scotland</p> <p>Follow the Scotch Malt Whisky Trail Follow the world-famous Malt Whisky Trail through Speyside to seven working distilleries, including a fascinating cooperage and a historic</p>
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distillery. From Benromach to Dallas Dhu, a perfect time capsule of whisky-making; from Glen Moray to Strathisla, home and heart of Chivas Regal; from the Glen Grant distillery to the Speyside Cooperage where real coopers work with incredible speed and skill; from Glenfiddich to The Glenlivet and the Cardhu distillery, Scotland's whisky trail signposts lead you through the picturesque lush countryside of Speyside.

www.maltwhiskytrail.com

Make the Pilgrimage to the Three Chimneys

Eddie and Shirley Spear's restaurant in the north-west corner of Skye is hardly short of accolades. Recently mentioned by the Sunday Times as one of the top 50 restaurants in the UK and serving the freshest local produce in a cosy lochside setting, this is one of the most scenic places in Scotland to dine. Stay in a bedroom suite here and you'll awake to a view stretching to the Outer Hebrides. It's the ultimate foodie pilgrimage.

www.threechimneys.co.uk

Eat a Smokie in Arbroath

Watch your haddock being traditionally smoked over a barrel. Get them at a farmers' market from Iain Spink, of RR Spink & Sons then eat them warm from the newspaper on the beach in Arbroath. If the weather turns, the But 'n' Ben at Auchmithie (the real home of the smokie) always has some super fresh ones on the menu.

www.arbroathsmokies.net

Dine in Style on Scotland's Orient Express

Visitors are spoilt rotten on board this luxury train. They savour delicious, seasonal food while wending the way through some of the most beautiful scenery in Scotland.

www.royalscotsman.com

Follow the Scottish Seafood Trail

The Loch Fyne Oyster Bar at Cairndow has been an established favourite for years. Political careers have apparently been decided over an oyster or two there. But it's just one stop on the stunning Scottish Seafood Trail that winds its way through the West coast of Scotland taking in fine dining restaurants and chilled out eateries all with one thing in common: the freshest Scottish seafood possible.

<http://www.visitscotland.com/see-do/itineraries/food-drink/seafood-trail>

Pick your own

Scotland (especially Fife, Angus and Perthshire) is renowned for its berries; and the best way to experience the best of them is to get out

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	<p>there and pick them yourself. Everyone munches as they pick, but there are often great strawberry teas for those with room left. Increasingly, farm shops with adventure playgrounds and mazes made of maize are springing up to keep everyone in the family happy. http://www.pickyourownfarms.org.uk/scotland_py0.php</p> <p>Nibble your way through Scotland’s Farmers’ Markets There are over 70 regular farmers’ markets across Scotland and they’re great places to find local specialities like Arbroath Smokies, heather honey, porridge bars (brown sugar, cream, whisky and honey), live shellfish and venison pies. www.scottishfarmersmarkets.co.uk</p> <p>Taste some traditional smoked products Set in an 18th-century inn by the River Teviot, this Borders smokery produces smoked salmon, trout, duck, homemade smoked pâté and cheese. Just as impressive is its beautiful riverside garden where you can watch out for otters, who are also fans of the fish! www.teviotgamefaresmokery.co.uk</p> <p>Introduce yourself to Cheese Heaven Visit Iain Mellis' emporiums for a mouth-watering selection of farmhouse cheeses. There are four shops in Edinburgh, one in Glasgow and one in St Andrews and you shouldn't have any trouble finding them – you can smell them before you can see them! The cheeses are specially ripened so you'll only get cheese when it's at its best. Alternatively, you could visit the cheese makers direct on the Scottish Cheese Trail. www.ijmellisceesemonger.com www.scottishfoodguide.com/scottishcheesetrail</p>
<p>Food</p>	<p>Find out why Scotland is renowned for its unique produce from Stornoway Black Pudding to Arbroath Smokies. Scotland's food and drink comes from unspoilt habitats and varied weather, which are perfect for producing a wide variety of high quality fresh fruit and vegetables, fish, meat and much more.</p> <p>Breakfast There is everything from cold starters, including an assortment of juices, yoghurts, fresh fruits, preserves and cereals, to a steaming bowl of porridge, crispy toast, a full Scottish breakfast and a cup of tea or coffee.</p> <p>Full Scottish breakfast A full breakfast usually consists of a link sausage, bacon, eggs, tattie scone (potato scone), fried mushrooms, grilled tomatoes, baked beans,</p>

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buttered toast and the Scottish favourite - black pudding. It certainly is a very complete meal, which will leave you feeling rather full when you finish your last bite. Served typically at breakfast time, but it is also common to feature on the menus as an 'all day' dish.

Porridge

No Scottish breakfast would be complete without the ubiquitous dish of porridge. Traditionally made with oatmeal and water and cooked with a touch of salt, it's stirred with a wooden spurtle, which prevents the porridge from congealing, and served hot in a bowl. It is also popular to add a little milk and toss in some dried fruits as well as sweeten it with a generous sprinkle of light brown sugar.

Kippers

You may also come across strongly flavoured kippers (cold smoked herring) served for breakfast. Once the quintessential British breakfast food in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, kippers are now enjoying a revival. Split in butterfly fashion, from tail to head, they are salted in brine and smoked over smouldering woodchips, and with only 125 calories per fillet and packed with protein, they provide a healthy way to start a day. Find out more about Scottish seafood.

Main Dishes

Black pudding

Essentially, black pudding is a mixture of suet, oats, blood, barley and a special blend of spices stuffed in a length of protein casing. You'll often find it in a Scottish breakfast served in B&Bs up and down the country, but it has recently become popular on the menus of top-class restaurants. It combines very well with pork, chicken, game and seafood as well as fruit such as pears, apple and rhubarb. Such is its importance that Stornoway Black Pudding has been awarded special protected status.

Haggis

Scotland's national dish is another type of savoury pudding and has been immortalised by Robert Burns' famous poem, 'Address to a Haggis.' Its origins are similar to that of the black pudding, with the main ingredients consisting of minced offal of a sheep, pig or cow mixed with suet, onions, oatmeal, spices and seasoning. Traditionally it was boiled in the stomach of the slaughtered animal but today synthetic casings are more widely used. Slightly spicy with an oaty texture, it is traditionally eaten with neeps and tatties (swede and potato) but it appears in Scottish restaurants and pubs in many other forms, from

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burgers to bon bons. Sometimes it'll come as part of a Scottish breakfast, or often you can pick up a haggis supper from a chip shop. Find out more about haggis.

Stovies

The basic ingredients of this winter warmer are meat, onions and potatoes. This stew was traditionally made from the leftovers of a Sunday roast dinner but you'll find it very easy to make from scratch. Recipes can vary, using chicken, beef, lamb or even tinned corned beef as the meat, and some versions include diced up carrot or swede. Often it is served up with oatcakes and pickled beetroot on the side.

Lorne sausage

Lorne sausage is sometimes referred to as sliced or square sausage for obvious reasons; sausage meat, either pork or beef, is set into a square shape and thinly sliced into portions. Grilled or fried, it is usually eaten in the morning as part of a full Scottish breakfast or in a soft roll.

Scotch pie

This savoury snack is a small, double-crust meat pie filled with minced meat. This traditional Scottish pie has an outer shell of hard crust pastry allowing you to hold the pie while eating it which makes it popular with take-away restaurants, bakeries, and at outdoor events such as football matches. The type, quantity and quality of the ingredients used by an individual piemaker are a closely guarded secret. This gives the scotch pie its distinctive individual character that separates it from a scotch pie made by another producer.

Bridie

A bridie or Forfar bridie is a type of meat pastry or pie, originally from the town of Forfar. The filling consists of minced beef, onions and seasoning. Forfar bakers traditionally use shortcrust pastry but similar products on flaky pastry or puff pastry are occasionally found.

Fish and chips

Fish and chips are one of the nation's most popular takeaway dishes. The dish consists of battered cod or haddock deep-fried and served with chips. You will find chip shops or 'chippies' in almost every town across the country, the best often found in coastal towns within sight of the fishing boats tied up in harbour. Made before your eyes, fresh and hot in your hands, it's an incomparable takeaway feast.

Desserts

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	<p>Cranachan This simple Scottish dessert comprises of fresh raspberries, whipped cream, honey and toasted oats. For an added punch, a dram of whisky can be added. Top chefs such as Delia Smith and Nigel Slater have put forward their own recipes of how this traditional dish should be prepared and served while Jamie Oliver and Heston Blumenthal have even suggested cranachan sundae recipes.</p> <p>Atholl Brose In recent years Atholl Brose has become another name for the popular dessert cranachan. Alternatively, it can be a traditional Scottish cocktail. The drink, named after the 1st Earl of Atholl, shares many of the same ingredients as cranachan such as honey, cream, whisky and oatmeal brose - oatmeal water.</p> <p>Tablet Tablet is a traditional Scottish sweet made from sugar, condensed milk and butter. This sugary confection is similar to fudge but with a harder, grainy texture. It is often flavoured with vanilla, and sometimes has nut pieces in it.</p> <p>Shortbread Scottish shortbread is a luxurious biscuit that you can really sink your teeth into. It is made using a generous amount of butter which gives it a crumbly, melt-in-the-mouth texture. They are traditionally baked in a round, flat shape, pricked with a fork and sprinkled with caster sugar.</p> <p>Cloutie dumpling A cloutie dumpling is a rich fruit pudding made with flour, breadcrumbs, dried fruit (sultanas and currants), suet, sugar, spice, with some milk and sometimes golden syrup to bind it. This classic Scottish dessert is best served with a drizzle of cream and a dram of whisky.</p>
<p>Drink - Whisky</p>	<p>Scotland should be proud of its whisky, and it is. After 500 years of practice, uisge beatha (from the Gaelic, meaning 'water of life') was first mentioned in written record in 1494; the Scots have whisky distilling down to a fine art. The tastes change with the landscape as well. In the rolling pastoral Lowlands you'll find grassy and malt flavours, while heathery whisky is the norm in the Highlands. It's different once again in the low hills of Speyside where a mellow sweetness is found, while the rough and salty smokiness of the Western Isles whisky perfectly matches the terrain.</p> <p>Scottish people love whisky so much that pubs are dedicated to the drink; head to Leslie's Bar in Edinburgh, or The Grill in Aberdeen, where more than 400 varieties of whiskies will keep you quiet for the evening.</p>

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	<p>Fellow drinkers and friendly barmen will be only too happy to give you a guide of Scotland's national drink and one of its finest exports. Among the famous Highland malts are Glen Grant, Macallan, Glenfarclas, Knockando, Cardhu, Glenfiddich, Strathisla and Tamnavullin. Of course there are also island malts which have their own special appeal. These include Highland Park and Scapa on Orkney, Talisker from the misty Isle of Skye, Jura and the Islay malts which include Laphroig, Bowmore and Bruichladdich.</p> <p>Edinburgh Gin It's not just whisky that comes from Scotland. This distillery in the heart of Edinburgh produces award-winning gin to suit a variety of tastes – including the powerful Cannonball Gin which I can personally attest will make your head explode! They also features several tours such as: Gin Discovery Tour £10 (per person) 45 Minute Discovery Tour for Groups of up to 8 people Learn the story behind Edinburgh's spectacular gin and discover how it is distilled. Witness their exhibition area firsthand and take an intimate tour of the distillery; getting sneak peeks at what they usually keep hidden from watchful eyes... Included in the tour is a free sample or a miniature bottle of Edinburgh Gin to take home. http://www.edinburghgindistillery.co.uk/</p>
<p>Restaurants</p>	<p>Edinburgh Restaurants</p> <p>The Witchery A world-renowned restaurant housed in sixteenth century building by the gates of the Castle. Expertly prepared Scottish produce in rich surroundings makes dining here a magical experience.</p> <p>Restaurant Martin Wishart Award-winning modern French cuisine impressively cooked to Michelin-star standards, set right in the middle of the historic Port of Leith.</p> <p>Oloroso The views from this luxurious restaurant are astounding. Take in panoramic views of Edinburgh and the Lothians. All the while enjoying surprising Pacific Rim flavors.</p> <p>David Bann Taking the blandness out of vegetarian and vegan food once and for all, David Bann will impress vegetarians and carnivores alike with its slick environment and colorful menu.</p>

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Vermillion

Set in the heart of The Scotsman Hotel, the richly Scottish menu and opulent surroundings of Vermillion set high standards.

Tower Restaurant

Spectacular views of Edinburgh's Castle and city skyline feature on the menu of James Thomson's stunning rooftop restaurant, perched above the landmark Museum of Scotland.

The Kitchin Restaurant

Situated in the picturesque port of Leith, Michelin-starred Tom Kitchin's style is a unique marriage of seasonal Scottish produce with the classical French technique he has mastered working alongside some of the world's greatest chefs.

Blue Bar Café

Clean, contemporary and simple are the keywords when talking about both the stylish interior and internationally influenced menu of this popular café. And it is perfectly situated nearby Edinburgh's main theatres.

Villager

A hip and elegantly retro hangout in the city centre – with a menu to match – who could resist vodka martini mussels? All matched with an eclectic cocktail list and a background soundtrack of the coolest funk.

Dragonfly

Voted 'Most Stylish Bar' in the 2006 Scottish Style Awards – you mingle with the beautiful people and, from the balcony, watch the bartenders make drinks like the Glenfiddich Cavalcade or the aptly named Edinburgh Rocks.

Glasgow Restaurants

étain

The popular 'Epicurean Menu' offered by Terence Conran's only UK outpost outside of London is a tasting menu with each course matched perfectly with a different wine. Epicureans will feel truly in heaven in Conran's sleek but subtle penthouse restaurant.

No.Sixteen

Tiny, unpretentious, and ever so slightly off the beaten track – although still pretty close to the throng of the bohemian West End – No.Sixteen is one of Glasgow's favorite restaurants. So good, that it has become one

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of Edinburgh's favorite restaurants too!

Ubiquitous Chip

Perhaps the most fabulously named restaurant in Glasgow, 'The Chip' as it is affectionately known is renowned for its strong Scottish flavors, and a refined coziness that Glaswegians have grown to love over its thirty-year tenure.

Uisge Beatha

A unique 'old-style' pub in the stylish West End, you'll find over 125 single malt whiskies to choose from, served by men in kilts!

Rab Ha's

A triumph of individuality over uniformity and of soul over empty style comprising boutique hotel, enticing restaurant and traditional Scottish bar, Rab Ha's is found within the Merchant City.

Babbity Bowser's

Housed in an original Tobacco Merchant's house attributed to Robert Adam in the Merchant City. Fraser and his team are a local institution and look forward to welcoming you to this bar, restaurant and small hotel. The restaurant offers a selection of freshly prepared Scottish meals or snacks, daily billboard specials and real ales with live music every Saturday night.

Café Gandolfi

The Tim Stead-designed wooden furniture in this Merchant City institution have become almost as much of a draw as Gandolfi's simple but incredibly enticing menu.

The Lansdowne

Through a leafy West End close, you will stumble across The Lansdowne, which after renovations in 2005, emerged as one of the neighborhood's favorites – with a stylish bar, and well-prepared but uncomplicated dishes.

Mother India

Glasgow isn't called the Curry Capital for nothing, and there are many first-class Indian restaurants – with Mother India being one of the most authentic, and one of the best – absolutely bursting with fresh ginger, spices and herbs.

Liquid Ship

Taking its name from a misspelled letter addressed to 'Ubiquitous Chip'

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	<p>(see above) – Liquid Ship is brought to the West End bar by the same family that owns the remarkable Chip. This ambient little bar is home to fantastic acoustic music, accompanied by a great selection of beers and wonderful tapas dishes.</p> <p>Brutti Ma Buoni Translating as ‘ugly but good,’ this unpretentiously hip bar and restaurant on the ground floor of the achingly trendy Brunswick Hotel in the Merchant City is always full of Glasgow’s cutting edge artists and trendsetters, and their new basement level is the perfect pre-club spot.</p>
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MORE INFO	
Brochures	<p>Discover everything that Scotland has to offer by downloading their online visitor brochures. Here you’ll find everything you need to make the most of Scotland’s great outdoors, from interactive maps to music and video clips to give you a taste of what’s on offer.</p> <p>http://www.visitscotland.com/en-ca/e-brochures/</p>
Contacts	<p>Website: www.VisitScotland.com Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/visitscotland Twitter: https://twitter.com/visitscotland Flickr: https://www.flickr.com/photos/visitscotland/ www.ancestralscotland.com for tracing your roots And new in 2016, try this site for some beautiful short video clips: https://www.visitscotland.com/about/uniquely-scottish/scotspirit/</p>

GLASGOW	<p>There is a reason that Glasgow has been recognised as a must visit destination for 2016 by a plethora of international publications. Anyone who knew Glasgow even 10 years ago would be amazed at the change – Glasgow is one of Europe’s most vibrant, dynamic and stylish cities. It’s a transformation that began in the 1990’s and which represents much that is new, merged with a hugely successful reclaiming of the past.</p> <p>The city has a rich heritage of fantastic Victorian architecture. For instance, on the east side of George Square stands one of the city’s most important and prestigious buildings - the City Chambers. This is recognized as one of the most beautiful Victorian buildings in the whole of the UK. The City Chambers is the focal point of George Square and a great symbol of Glasgow’s political strength and historical wealth. Completed in 1888, the City Chambers has been the headquarters of Glasgow City Council for over 100 years. Free tours are conducted twice every weekday.</p>
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	<p>But the city didn't stand still and Glasgow is also well known for the Art Nouveau splendour of Charles Rennie Mackintosh - Glasgow born architect, designer and artist. Mackintosh created the "Glasgow Style" movement and is celebrated around the world as one of the most creative figures of the early 20th century. The Glasgow School of Art is considered by many to be his architectural masterpiece and was recently voted by consumers on TripAdvisor as the number one attraction in Glasgow. The Mackintosh trail is the perfect way to explore in the works of Glasgow's most celebrated architect. You can buy a great value ticket for £10 to see the key Mackintosh buildings in the Greater Glasgow area.</p> <p>Glasgow offers visitors a rich array of activities and attractions. The city has over 20 museums and galleries, most with free entry, and there are over 1 million objects in the Glasgow Museums' collections! It is also a UNESCO City of Music, further reflecting the strong cultural life of the city.</p> <p>Glasgow is the biggest retail centre in the UK outside London's West End. The "style mile" refers to the square mile in the very centre of Glasgow which houses a great variety of shops - from unique designer boutiques to flagship stores for British and international retailers. And though you are unlikely to run out of things to do in Glasgow, it is a wonderful base from which to explore a bit more of Scotland. There are over 90 golf courses within easy reach of Glasgow.</p> <p>Glasgow's location on the West coast means that Scotland's breathtaking landscapes, historic castles and world-renowned food and drink are all within reach. Less than an hour's drive North West from Glasgow is the splendour of the "bonnie banks" of Loch Lomond. Less than an hour's drive South West from Glasgow you find yourself in Ayrshire, known for its natural beauty, 140 kms of wonderful coastline and its close associations with poet Robert Burns. And with the Forth & Clyde Canal, Edinburgh, Stirling, the Campsie Fells and the West Highland Way to add to your list – you are going to have to book an even longer stay in Glasgow to make the most of it!</p>
<p>Location</p>	<p>Glasgow is located on the banks of the River Clyde, in West Central Scotland.</p> <p>Larger than Nova Scotia, Scotland is two-thirds the size of England and Wales - the other two countries that constitute the kingdom of Great Britain – with a tenth of the total population. It is surrounded by sea on three sides: to the west and north by the Atlantic Ocean and on the east by the North Sea. Its only land border runs for approximately 96 km</p>

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	along the line of the Cheviot Hills in the north of England.
Geography	Glasgow is built around two rivers, the Clyde and the Kelvin, where they meet the Firth of Clyde.
Name	The Gaelic translation of Glasgow, Glaschu, literally means Dear Green Place - a very appropriate name for a city which boasts over 90 parks and gardens within its city boundaries. Glasgow's parks and gardens offer residents and visitors a chance to relax in natural and tranquil surroundings and enjoy some peace and quiet away from the hustle and bustle of city life. Take a walk around Kibble Palace in the Botanic Gardens, visit the Highland Cattle at Pollok Country Park or simply enjoy a stroll along the banks of the River Kelvin in Kelvingrove
Population	Glasgow has around 600,000 and 2.5 million in the city region. There are 5.2 million Scots living in Scotland, but many more around the world, particularly in Canada, trace their roots back to the country. There are 1.8 million Ontarians with Scottish ancestry and over 150,000 in Quebec too. In total, there are over 4 million Canadians whose families originated in Scotland.
Language	English Despite a revival, the Gaelic (a Celtic language) is considered a "vernacular" spoken only by 3% of Scots. There is, however, a rich colloquial vocabulary in common usage. Examples are: bairn (child), loch (lake), lassie (girl), wee (small), ken (to know/to have knowledge), ceilidh (gathering, usually with traditional music), ben (mountain), and dram (shot of whisky).
Currency	The British Pound is the local currency, even though some of the bank notes are very Scottish – it's still the same currency! Currently the Canadian Dollar is at 0.53 against the Pound (as at March 2016)
Tipping	There are no definite rules for tipping. If you feel that you have received good service then you may wish to leave a tip. This is most common in restaurants, where it is normal to leave 10% of the total bill but you should check to see if a service charge has already been included. Tipping in hotels is also at your discretion. It is not normal to tip bar staff.
Government	Scotland has partial self-government within the United Kingdom as well as representation in the UK Parliament. Executive and legislative powers have been devolved to, respectively, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood in Edinburgh. The United Kingdom Parliament retains power over a set list of areas, including, for example, levels of UK taxes, social security, defense, international relations and broadcasting. The Scottish Parliament has legislative authority for all other areas relating to Scotland, as well as limited power to vary income tax. In a recent referendum, the Scots voted against independence from the rest of the UK.
Documentation	Passports are required for Canadians visiting Scotland.
Time zone	Glasgow is 5 hours ahead of EST, Ontario and Quebec.

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Health	Good medical care is widely available. Visitors who become ill while in Scotland are eligible for free emergency treatment at National Health Service Accident and Emergency hospital departments. Don't forget travel insurance for all trips outside your home province.
Safety tips	Glasgow is one of the safest cities in Europe even at night, when people may walk alone with confidence.

CLIMATE	
General climate	<p>Scottish weather isn't always the best and is extremely variable, but give it time and the sun will soon be shining. You might come across the odd 'dreich' day, where the weather is wet and overcast, but soon enough you'll be able to see the bright blue skies of Scotland and the sun sits proudly in the sky.</p> <p>July and August are normally the warmest months with average temperatures of 15-19°C. The days are very long in summer as Scotland is significantly further north than Toronto and Montreal. The driest months in Scotland tend to be between April and June, when temperatures average around 15° C, they even reach 28C at their peak</p>
Today's weather	Glasgow has sun and clouds today (March 19 th 2016) and a temperature of 12C.
Best time to visit	Scotland has a milder climate in winter than Eastern Canada due to the warming effects of the Gulf Stream, so you can visit any time of year. The summer months are the warmest and the most popular, but spring and autumn are often glorious times to visit Scotland too.

GETTING AROUND	
Getting There	<p>Transat flies to Glasgow year round from Toronto and from March to October from Montreal. There are also seasonal flights to Glasgow from both Calgary and Vancouver.</p> <p>Flight time from Toronto is approximately 7 hours.</p> <p>Flights depart Toronto for Glasgow five times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays in high season.</p> <p>Flights depart Montreal for Glasgow four times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays in high season.</p> <p>To book, see your local travel agent or call 1-877-TRANSAT or go to their website at www.Transat.com</p>
Distances	<p>Glasgow to Edinburgh: 72 km; Glasgow to Fort William: 173 km; Glasgow to Thurso: 469 km; Glasgow to London: 650 km.</p>
Ferries	Regular ferry services operate between the Scottish mainland and island communities. These services are mostly run by Caledonian MacBrayne, but some are operated by local councils. Other ferry routes, served by multiple companies, connect to Northern Ireland, Belgium,

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	Norway, the Faroe Islands and also Iceland.
Cruises	<p>Cruising Along the Caledonian Canal: In 1822, a group of enterprising Scots connected three of the Highlands' longest lakes (lochs Ness, Lochy, and Oich) with a canal linking Britain's east and west coasts. Since then, barges have hauled everything from grain to building supplies without having to negotiate the wild storms off Scotland's northernmost tips. Now cabin cruisers tote a different kind of cargo along the Caledonian Canal: people seeking a spectacular waterborne view of the countryside that was tamed centuries ago by the Camerons, the Stewarts, and the MacDonalds. Caley Cruisers, based in Inverness www.caleycruisers.co.uk , rents out skippered boats by the week.</p>
Trains	<p>Scotland's rail network is managed by Transport Scotland. The East Coast and West Coast Main Railway lines and the Cross Country Line connect the major cities and towns of Scotland with each other and with the rail network in England. Domestic rail services within Scotland are operated by First ScotRail. Furthermore, Glasgow has a small integrated subway system since 1896. Currently, 15 stations serve a daily ridership of just under 40,000. There are plans to extend the subway system in time for the 2014 Commonwealth Games. The East Coast Main Line includes that section of the network that crosses the Firth of Forth via the Forth Bridge. Completed in 1890, this cantilever bridge has been described as "the one internationally recognised Scottish landmark".</p> <p>The cost of rail travel in Scotland is often quite low, and trains are generally punctual. Timetables are available at all stations, with free timetables covering only certain regions available at various stations For information on rail travel in Scotland, contact First ScotRail, www.firstgroup.com .</p> <p>The Royal Scotsman www.royalscotsman.com is one of the most luxurious trains in the world. The train passes by ancient mountains and mysterious lochs, through glens and across villages as you live in sumptuous surroundings. It's like being the guest at a private party. The train carries a maximum of 36 guests, each passenger enjoying plenty of space. Plush beds and opulent bathrooms are the order of the day. The classic tour calls for 4 nights aboard, and goes from the panoramic Southern Highlands to the more rugged grandeur of the Western Highlands. Superb cuisine and a long list of fine wines and choice malt whiskies are more reasons to hop aboard.</p>
Car Rental	<p>All major international car rental companies are available. Driving is on the left, remember!</p>
Buses	<p>The cheapest means of transport from London to Scotland is the bus and it's also the least expensive way to travel within Scotland. All major towns have a local bus service, and every tourist office can</p>

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	<p>provide details about half- or full-day bus excursions to scenic highlights. If you want to explore a particular area, you can often avail yourself of an economical bus pass.</p> <p>Many adventurous travelers like to explore the country on one of the postal buses, which carry not only mail but also a limited number of passengers to rural areas. Ask at any local post office for details. A general timetable is available at the head post office in Edinburgh.</p> <p>Scottish Citylink Coaches are a good bet. They link the major cities (Glasgow and Edinburgh) with the two most popular tourist centres, Inverness and Aviemore. Travel is fast and prices are low. For example, it takes only 3 hours to reach Aviemore from Edinburgh, and Inverness is just 3.5 hours from Edinburgh. A direct Scottish Citylink overnight coach makes the run from London to Aviemore and Inverness at reasonable fares.</p> <p>Coaches offer many other popular runs, including links between Glasgow and Fort William, Inverness and Ullapool, and Glasgow and Oban. For details, contact Rapsons www.rapsons.co.uk , or Scottish Citylink www.citylink.co.uk</p>
<p>Passes</p>	<p>The Scottish Freedom Pass provides unlimited transportation on trains and most ferries throughout Scotland and discounts for bus travel. It includes access to obscure bus routes to almost forgotten hamlets, free rides on ferries operated by Caledonian MacBrayne, and discounted fares with P&O Scottish Lines. The ferries connect to the Western Islands, the islands of the Clyde, and the Orkneys. The Freedom Pass covers the entire Scottish rail network and is usable from Carlisle, England (near the western Scotland-England border), and from Berwick-upon-Tweed, England (near the eastern Scotland-England border). In addition, if you have to fly into London and want to go straight to Scotland from there, a reduced rate is available for a round-trip ticket between London and Edinburgh or Glasgow for Travelpass holders.</p> <p>http://www.britrail.net/passes/britrail-freedom-of-scotland</p> <p>BritRail Passes allow unlimited travel in England, Scotland, and Wales on any British Rail scheduled train over the whole of the network during the validity of the pass without restrictions. BritRail Consecutive Pass allows you to travel for a consecutive number of days for a flat rate. Seniors (60 and over) qualify for discounts in first-class travel. Passengers 25 and under qualify for a 2nd Class Youth Pass. One child (under age 15) can travel free with each adult or senior pass by requesting the BritRail Family Pass when buying the adult pass. Additional children pay half the regular adult fare.</p> <p>BritRail Passes and vacation packages can be found at www.britrail.com</p>

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ACCOMMODATION

Visitors to Glasgow are spoilt for choice when it comes to places to stay. Whether you're looking for a luxury hotel or a quirky boutique, there's something to appeal to all tastes and budgets. Take a look below for an overview of some of the best places in Glasgow to get a great night's sleep.

A Luxury Retreat

Blythwood Square

Blythwood Square is an award-winning 5 star spa hotel in a prime central location for anyone that wants a luxurious stay in Glasgow. The 100 stunning guest rooms from standard right up to The Blythwood Suite (complete with its own pool table!), will ensure you have the most luxurious of stays in Glasgow.

www.townhousecompany.com/blythwoodsquare/

Hotel du Vin

Hotel Du Vin at One Devonshire Gardens is a flagship branch of the hotel group that's renowned for its quality and indulgent luxury, so this is one for visitors looking to experience the finer things in life. The stunning boutique hotel is oozing with elegant and understated sophistication, with a great location in the West End.

<http://www.hotelduvin.com/locations/glasgow/>

Radisson Blu Hotel

Smooth, sleek and sophisticated, the Radisson Blu has won a number of awards for its stunning architecture and is perfect for a weekend break in style. Located deep in the heart of the city, you're never too far from the hotspots.

www.radissonblu.co.uk/hotel-glasgow

A Stylish Stay

Malmaison

This former Episcopal Church has been transformed into one of Glasgow's most striking hotels. With stylish rooms and a quality selection of wines in the bar, this is a great boutique hotel to stay at on a trip to the city.

www.malmaison.com/locations/glasgow/

Hotel Indigo

Housed in the striking façade of a former Scottish Power station from the 19th century, Hotel Indigo is one for fans of art. With a style

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reflecting the rich heritage and modern design of the city, culture aficionados will feel right at home here. Portraits of local artists adorning the walls might inspire you to get a bit arty yourself.

www.hotelindigoglasgow.com

15 Glasgow

One of Glasgow's latest luxury boutique bed and breakfasts, 15 Glasgow is nestled in the trendy West End, making it a superb spot for any trendsetter to get some shut-eye. The restored A-listed Victorian townhouse is a perfect combination of classic and modern design.

www.15glasgow.com/

Arthouse

Designed to provide a home-away-from-home for visitors, the Arthouse reflects the renaissance of Glasgow, with striking traditional architecture combined with contemporary design.

www.thearthouseglasgow.co.uk/

Grasshoppers Hotel

Perfectly situated next to Glasgow Central Station, the Grasshoppers is an ideal location for a stay in the thick of the action. Every room is individually styled, complete with furniture designed for the hotel, making this a truly unique experience. With a wide choice of bars and theatres close by, a top-class night out is only minutes away.

www.grasshoppersglasgow.com/

Park Inn by Radisson

Based in the heart of Glasgow's city centre, this hotel is a perfect retreat after exploring everything the city has to offer. Sleep well and wake energised in one of the 91 modern guest rooms each equipped with power shower, coffee and tea provisions and free wireless high-speed internet access.

www.parkinn.co.uk/hotel-glasgow

Hotels with History

Grand Central Hotel

You can't get much more central than the aptly-named Grand Central Hotel, with it placed right next to the city's rail station. A winner of 7 awards at the Scottish Hotel Awards last year, it's a much-loved icon in the city that has recently undergone a \$32.2m refurbishment to bring it bang up-to-date.

www.thegrandcentralhotel.co.uk

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Sherbrooke Castle Hotel

With its distinctive red sandstone exterior and wonderful landscaped gardens, Sherbrooke Castle Hotel is located in the leafy suburb of Pollokshields in the Southside of Glasgow. Enjoy the serenity of the location and unwind a little in tranquillity.

www.sherbrookecastlehotel.com/

The Pipers' Tryst Hotel

This small hotel based at The National Piping Centre is a great place to stay to enjoy local hospitality. With simple rooms and a great restaurant to sample the best of Scotland's cuisine.

www.thepipingcentre.co.uk/hotel-restaurant/hotel/

Budget Boutique

Citizen M

Revel in award-winning, yet affordable, luxury with Citizen M, right in the heart of Glasgow. With cutting-edge modern interior design and a whole range of facilities, you might be surprised at how low the price is.

www.citizenm.com/glasgow/

Z Hotels

Boutique hotel chain Z Hotels has opened its first Scottish property in Glasgow, with a designer conversion of the Old Printworks bringing a touch of luxury to the heart of the city. Located near George Square, Z Glasgow offers guests short stay accommodation of the highest quality at an affordable price, boasting bespoke modern interior design and all the creature comforts needed for a good night's rest. The Z Café completes the package with an imaginative menu of freshly made food served in relaxed surroundings.

www.thezhotels.com

A Home from Home

Fraser Suites

If you fancy a more independent stay in Glasgow, the Fraser Suites are sure to be top of your list. The collection of serviced apartments mean you can enjoy the privacy of your own space, all located in the vibrant Merchant City.

www.glasgow.frasershospitality.com/

Glasgow Lofts

These deluxe city centre apartments have won awards for their design and interior. With hardwood floors, wall to wall, floor to ceiling windows,

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	<p>flat screen TVs and Jacuzzis, Glasgow Lofts would be perfect for a luxurious independent stay. www.glasgowlofts.com</p> <p>A Scenic Sojourn</p> <p>Whilst Glasgow has more than enough to offer visitors, sometimes you just want to get away from it all and enjoy some peace and quiet in the countryside. The city is surrounded by some truly beautiful scenery, as well as some equally beautiful locations to get some shut eye.</p> <p>Cameron House Situated on the picturesque banks of Loch Lomond, Cameron House offers the perfect location to soak in the majestic glens of the Highlands. With cosy rooms and legendary hospitality, it's also located just minutes away from championship standard golf and spa breaks. http://www.devere-hotels.co.uk/hotel-lodges/locations/cameron-house.html</p> <p>Mar Hall Located just 10 minutes from Glasgow International Airport, this tranquil 240 acre woodland estate is perfect for a luxury relaxing break. Mar Hall is set in an Edwardian Scottish mansion with 53 individually designed bedrooms, a championship golf course, Decleor Spa and offers both fine dining and casual dining restaurants. www.marhall.com</p>
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<p>LIFESTYLES</p> <p>Kids & Teens</p>	<p>In Glasgow, the Waverley, the world's last seagoing paddle steamer, will carry you to scenic places along the Firth of Clyde. You can have lunch aboard. Back in Glasgow visit the Glasgow Science Centre, a kid-friendly favorite complete with a Space Theatre and plenty of hands-on activities for children. The Museum of Transport has lots of ship models which intrigue kids.</p> <p>Further north, drive through the hauntingly beautiful Glencoe, scene of the famous massacre of 1692, when the Campbells did in the MacDonalds. Kids are fascinated by the audiovisual presentation shown at the Glencoe Visitor Centre.</p> <p>And then there's Loch Ness: stop at the little village of Drumnadrochit to see the official Loch Ness Monster Exhibition. With its lasers and visual effects, this exhibition is definitely a kid pleaser. After you've seen the exhibition, it's great fun for families to explore the ruins of Urquhart Castle, which overlooks the loch. It is from here that most sightings of the Loch Ness Monster are reported.</p>
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	<p>You can explore the Culloden Battlefield, where Bonnie Prince Charlie and his Jacobite army were crushed by the English. Kids also like to walk the ramparts, a distance of 1.6km, found at the Fort George and Queen's Own Highlanders Regimental Museum in Inverness.</p>
Romance	<p>Stay in a castle, cruise gently along a Highlands loch, take a picnic lunch on a hike over the heathered moors, take in a sunset over a Western Isle, ride a deserted Scottish beach or skip barefoot across the sands...there's so many ways to kindle romance in Scotland!</p>
Genealogy	<p>If you hail from Scotland - trace your roots. Don't just learn about your Scottish heritage - live it! Experience first-hand the places your ancestors lived and worked. Try on the kilt of your clan, touch the walls of your family castle and see the very documents that chronicle their lives.</p> <p>Scotland has an unrivalled range, depth, quality and accessibility of ancestral archives and historical resources across the country. Visit one of the local family history centres, registrars offices or historical buildings to access their records. You'll receive a friendly welcome from one of the local experts and you can ask them any questions you might have.</p> <p>The main centre you can visit in Edinburgh - ScotlandsPeople – which has one of the largest online sources of original genealogical information; with almost 80 million records to access there is every chance that you will be able to connect with your own Scottish ancestry. Check out www.Scotlandspeople.gov.uk to start your search.</p> <p>The www.Ancestralscotland.com website is the official ancestral tourism website of VisitScotland - this unique online resource provides a wealth of information for those wishing to make that trip 'home' to walk in the footsteps of their ancestors. Start planning your own personal ancestral trip now with the clan surname search and clan touring itineraries.</p> <p>Other useful genealogy websites are: www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk www.nls.uk/maps www.abdn.ac.uk/emigration/methodology.html</p>
Zoomers	<p>Independent or guided touring – you have a choice here. If you prefer the latter, try Transat's Scottish excursions. There are lots of discounts available to older visitors too, from rail and bus passes to entry into many of the big attractions. Just make sure you have the appropriate identification available.</p>

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UNIQUES	
Surprising	Glasgow has over 20 museums and galleries, most with free entry; there are over 1 million objects in the Glasgow Museums' collections!
History	<p>Glasgow's Time Line</p> <p>6th Century; Early settlement founded by St Mungo (also known as Saint Kentigern) on the River Clyde.</p> <p>1175 Bishop Jocelyn secures a charter from King William making Glasgow a Burgh.</p> <p>c.1690 The city begins to rise out of its mediaeval slumber.</p> <p>1707 Treaty of Union with England allows increased trade with colonies.</p> <p>1720 Glasgow now a major port, overtaking Liverpool, Bristol and Whitehaven in importance through the success in the tobacco trade with Virginia.</p> <p>1723 Daniel Defoe describes Glasgow as 'the beautifullest little city I have seen in Britain.'</p> <p>1770 Dredging of the River Clyde establishes Glasgow as a deep water port. Shipbuilding established helping the city to survive the threat of the American War of Independence and the subsequent collapse of the tobacco trade.</p> <p>1780 The creation of the textile and chemical industries signals the start of the Industrial Revolution</p> <p>19th Century</p> <p>1811 Glasgow becomes the second city of the British Empire. It is now larger than any other city in Britain outside London.</p> <p>1842 Creation of the Botanic Gardens in Glasgow's rapidly expanding West End.</p> <p>1850 Water from Loch Katrine in the Trossachs provides Glasgow with the best water supply in Great Britain.</p> <p>1870 Glasgow University moves to its present site on Gilmorehill.</p> <p>1888 The International Exhibition at Kelvingrove Park.</p> <p>1896 Opening of the Glasgow Underground.</p> <p>20th Century</p> <p>1900 Glasgow reaches its peak of industrial production.</p> <p>1901 The International Exhibition and opening of the Glasgow Museum and Art Gallery in Kelvingrove Park.</p> <p>1938 Empire Exhibition in Bellahouston Park.</p> <p>1983 Opening of the world famous Burrell Collection in its purpose built gallery in Pollok Country Park.</p> <p>1985 Opening of the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre.</p> <p>1987 Opening of Princes Square shopping centre.</p> <p>1988 Glasgow hosts the National Garden Festival attracts 4.3 million visitors.</p>

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	<p>1990 Glasgow marks its reign as Cultural Capital of Europe with a yearlong festival of over 3,000 events and the opening of Glasgow Royal Concert Hall.</p> <p>1993 Opening of the new St Mungo's Museum- the UK's only Museum of Religion - sited appropriately on Cathedral Square next to the city's finest historic 13th century cathedral.</p> <p>1996 Glasgow puts together a sustained city-wide Festival of Architecture and Design</p> <p>21st Century</p> <p>2000 The IMAX Theatre at Glasgow Science Centre opens.</p> <p>2001 New Lanark Village is awarded World Heritage Status.</p> <p>2014 Hosts the 20th Commonwealth Games</p>
<p>Books</p>	<p>Lonely Planet's Scotland guide is my recommended go-to guide to planning the perfect trip here: http://shop.lonelyplanet.com/scotland/scotland-travel-guide-8/</p>
<p>1000 Places to See Before You Die</p>	<p>Scottish golf; The Castle Trail, Grampians; The Hebrides; Isle of Skye; Scotch Whiskey Trail; Highland Games; Loch Ness; Inverlochy Castle (hotel); Edinburgh Castle; Hogmanay; Edinburgh Festival; The Royal Scotsman; The Mackintosh Trail, Glasgow; The Trossachs</p>
<p>Must Sees</p>	<p>There are six UNESCO World Heritage sites in Scotland:</p> <p>The Forth Bridge, the world's first major steel edifice, remains a potent symbol of Britain's industrial, scientific, architectural and transport heritage and, in particular, Scotland's engineering pedigree and ingenuity. Nevertheless, it remains a working estuary crossing, busier than ever. The distinctive red bridge carries around 200 local and intercity trains across the Forth every day and forms a key part of the national East Coast Main Line.</p> <p>St. Kilda is a small, out-lying archipelago of Hebridean islands which was inscribed as a "natural" site in 1986. In 2004, the site was extended to include a large amount of the surrounding marine features as well as the islands themselves. In July 2005 it became one of the few World Heritage Sites to hold joint status for its natural and cultural qualities. The islands were bequeathed to the National Trust for Scotland in 1957. They are also a Biosphere Reserve and a National Scenic Area.</p>

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	<p>Edinburgh Old and New Towns were together inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1996. The former includes the medieval Royal Mile which runs from Edinburgh Castle to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, and is bordered to the north by the neo-classical 18th century "New Town" which includes Princes Street. It is managed by the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust.</p> <p>The Heart of Neolithic Orkney includes Maeshowe, the Ring of Brodgar, Skara Brae, the Standing Stones of Stenness and other nearby sites. It was inscribed in 1999 and is managed by Historic Scotland.</p> <p>New Lanark was inscribed in 2001. It is a restored 18th century industrial cotton mill village in South Lanarkshire constructed by Robert Owen as an experiment in utopian socialism. Restoration was organised by the New Lanark Conservation Trust.</p> <p>The Antonine Wall was inscribed in July 2008. It is an extension to a wider series of sites in Austria, Germany and Slovakia entitled "Frontiers of the Roman Empire". The Wall is the remains of a defensive line made of turf circa 20 feet high, with nineteen forts. It was constructed after 139 AD and extended for over 60 kms between the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Clyde. The wall was over-run and abandoned soon after 160 AD, then occupied again for a brief period after 197 AD.</p>
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SPORTS ACTIVITIES	
Shinty	<p>Shinty is a team game played with sticks and a ball. Shinty is now played mainly in the Scottish Highlands, and amongst Highland migrants to the big cities of Scotland, but it was formerly more widespread, being once competitively played on a widespread basis in England and other areas in the world where Scottish Highlanders migrated.</p> <p>While comparisons are often made with field hockey, the two games have several important differences. In shinty, a player is allowed to play the ball in the air and is allowed to use both sides of the stick, called a caman which is wooden and slanted on both sides. The stick may also be used to block and to tackle, although a player may not come down on an opponent's stick, a practice called hacking. Players may also tackle using the body as long as it is shoulder-to-shoulder.</p> <p>The game was derived from the same root as the Irish game of hurling but has developed different rules and features. These rules are governed by the Camanachd Association.</p>

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	<p>Shinty is also one of the forebears of ice hockey: in 1800, Scottish immigrants to Nova Scotia played a game on ice at Windsor. In Canada, informal hockey games are still called shinny.</p>
<p>Golf</p>	<p>Playing two rounds a day it would take almost seven weeks to complete the grand tour of Greater Glasgow's many and varied courses! There are an estimated 94 courses, underlining why Glasgow is known as the 'dear green place', given the huge swathes of land given over to the Royal & Ancient game.</p> <p>Few large cities can claim to have a golf course almost bang in its centre, but Haggs Castle is barely a 4km drive from the very heart of Scotland's largest city, with the M74 motorway bordering the picturesque setting where visitors are very welcome on weekdays. A lush parkland course with tree-lined fairways, Haggs has a thriving membership and is of a standard that was considered good enough to host the Glasgow Classic in the early to mid-1980s and the first of the Scottish Opens after an absence of 13 years, in 1986.</p> <p>The price of a round of golf in Glasgow varies from £12 at one of the city council run municipal courses such as Knightswood, a nine-hole track, to three-figures with the majority of venues having a 'pay and play' facility with visitor packages available at several leading clubs.</p> <p>Glasgow Golf Club, situated at Killermont on the north bank of the River Kelvin, and just five miles from the city centre, is the ninth oldest golf club in the world, having been founded in 1787.</p> <p>A members club generally referred to as Killermont, the parkland course follows the original line of play to the green sites laid out by Old Tom Morris in 1903 and the venue has hosted many prestigious tournaments. It costs £95 per round weekdays and £100 at weekends. A day ticket (two rounds) is £115 and a four ball costs £215.</p> <p>Interestingly, the Glasgow Golf Club also owns and runs Glasgow Gailes Links, which is situated south of Irvine and north of Troon on the Ayrshire coast, approximately a 40 minute drive from the city. Gailes also offers visitor packages and is the sole Scottish links to be appointed by the R&A to host final Open Championship qualifying for four years from 2014.</p> <p>Glasgow's golf clubs and courses are many and varied and cover all points of the city, from the quaintly named Rouken Glen to Ruchill; Cathcart Castle to Cowglen and Kings Park to Linn Park.</p> <p>Listing each would quickly exhaust the confines of space, but it is worth noting at least some of finest real estate to be found at the home of golf. Cathcart Castle established in 1895 - and where visitors are welcome all year round - is situated in suburban Clarkston and is a James Braid-designed undulating parkland course offering panoramic views of the city and towards the north-west and Loch Lomond. Braid, a five-time Open champion, also designed the East Renfrewshire course, a</p>

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par-70, 6,100 yard track a short hop from Cathcart Castle. A challenging mix of short par-4s and testing par-3s, the setting allows the visitor to peer over the mighty metropolis that is Glasgow to the north, with the southern Highlands providing a scenic backdrop, while to the west the Firth of Clyde reaches out to the open sea.

Cawder Golf Club, located in Bishopbriggs, just 15 minutes from the city centre, has two outstanding Braid-designed courses, namely The Cawder and The Keir, and an A-listed clubhouse. Both courses are home to a wide variety of wildlife, including deer and buzzards, and the greens are renowned for their speed and true running.

Pollok Golf Club is situated in the spectacular setting of Pollok Country Park, which also houses the world-renowned Burrell Collection and beautiful Pollok House on Glasgow's south side, just a short drive from the city centre. Laid out by Dr Alister McKenzie, who also designed Augusta National, a round at the par-71 parkland course costs £50 weekdays and £60 weekends, but beware the 70 bunkers!

Crow Wood formed in 1925, is yet another Braid-designed parkland track offering a relatively inexpensive round of golf just 10 minutes from the city centre heading east.

Stretching just a few miles beyond the city boundary sits **Mar Hall Golf & Spa Resort**. Once the home of the Earl of Mar, the scenic course has undoubtedly one of the most stunning settings in the area. Designed by Dave Thomas, this attractive stay & play venue, which is also open to visiting green fee players, is located directly along the banks of the River Clyde, with the towering Erskine Bridge at one end of the course. The course with a scattering of 250 year old chestnut and beech trees has a 'links' feel and each of its nine-hole loops has three riverside holes.

Designed by the great Seve Ballesteros and Dave Thomas, the 18-hole golf course at the **Westerwood Hotel & Golf Resort** is one of Scotland's best kept secrets. Overlooking the Campsie and Kilsyth Hills, this spectacular course meanders through silver birches and wild heather offering a challenge to golfers of all abilities.

Just a short drive or train journey from the heart of Glasgow is the Ayrshire coast and its many splendid courses including world-renowned **Turnberry, Royal Troon and Prestwick** on one of Scotland's most picturesque coastlines.

The three clubs have, between them, hosted the Open Championship nearly 40 times and are a must-visit for the game's historians, given that they form as famous a golfing terrain as any in the world.

Turnberry is a mere 80kms from Glasgow while Royal Troon and Prestwick are less than an hour's drive away.

Royal Troon is a private members club with limited access but Turnberry and Prestwick welcome visitors with a respectable handicap.

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	<p>It was at Turnberry in 1977 that Tom Watson and Jack Nicklaus fought out their iconic Duel in the Sun when the breathtakingly beautiful links with stunning views hosted the first of its four Opens.</p> <p>The views are breathtaking and include the rocky outcrop of Ailsa Craig, the imposing 220 acre island that lies 10 miles from the mainland. Colloquially known as “Paddy’s Milestone” because of its location between the Firth of Clyde and the Irish Sea, the island was formed from the volcanic plug of an extinct volcano.</p> <p>Prestwick, one of the most natural links courses, was the birthplace of the world’s oldest major championship, hosting the first 12 Open Championships from 1860.</p> <p>Loch Lomond is only 35 minutes from the centre of Glasgow and is the city’s scenic playground. The Carrick at the stunning Cameron House Hotel is a par-71 heathland course that weaves through an area of outstanding natural beauty, straddling the imposing Scottish Lowlands and the majestic Highlands. Yet, it’s possible to sample the Carrick experience from as little as £29.</p> <p>Loch Lomond Golf Club, approximately 60Kms from Glasgow and exclusively a members club, was the venue for the Scottish Open for 15 years from 1996. Loch Lomond is one of the true jewels in Scotland’s golfing crown and undoubtedly figures on the wish-list of those who “collect” famous golf clubs!</p> <p>And if you are planning to sample all 94 of Greater Glasgow’s courses before venturing further afield, allow yourself a couple of months to enjoy the golfing experience of a lifetime.</p> <p>It is worth also noting that the host of the 2014 Ryder Cup Gleneagles - with its three championship golf courses - is open to visitors year round and is easily and quickly accessible by train and car from the centre of Glasgow.</p>
<p>Fishing</p>	<p>Scotland is best known in fishing circles for its Atlantic Salmon; fly fishing for these elusive and beautiful fish was a life-long passion of my father, especially on the River Tweed. Here are some suggestions:</p> <p>The Borders & Galloway Regions: Sea fishing is pure heaven in the Solway Firth, especially near Port William and Portpatrick villages, in the vicinity of Loch Ryan, and also along the shore of the Isle of Whithorn. The elusive salmon is best pursued along the River Tweed, and the lesser-known hill lochs are ideal for trout fishermen. Local tourist offices distribute two helpful guides: A Comprehensive Guide to Scottish Borders Angling and Castabout Anglers Guide to Dumfries and Galloway.</p> <p>Argyll & the Southern Hebrides: This much-visited area in western Scotland is split in two by the long peninsula of Kintyre. The topography</p>

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	<p>is decidedly northern Atlantic, distinguished by open sea and loch, and the Firth of Clyde separates the region from the Inner Hebrides. Along with about 50 prime freshwater-angling sites, Argyll and the Southern Hebrides contain some two dozen villages with fantastic sea fishing.</p> <p>Tayside: The northeast section of Scotland is filled not only with major rivers -- the Don, Dee, Ythan, and Deverdon -- but with smaller ones, too, such as the Ugie, all ideal for salmon fishing. Besides the rivers, numerous estuaries and lochs make this one of the country's best areas for game fishing. Local tourist offices keep abreast of the details about boat rentals and permit prices, and some country hotels offer fishing packages.</p> <p>Sutherland & Northern Highlands: Sutherland's myriad lochs provide endless possibilities for anglers. Trout fishing is the big lure, and local tourist offices will tell you all about boats and permits. Not only is the fishing superb, but your hotel cook may also prepare your catch for you.</p>
<p>Horse riding</p>	<p>Horseback riding through the Highlands & Argyll... There's nothing like an equestrian excursion through the Highlands' fragrant heather and over its lichen-covered rocks. One of Scotland's biggest stables is the Highland Riding Centre, Drumnadrochit www.borlum.co.uk . For scenic rides across the moors, Highlands, and headlands of the Argyll, try the Ardfern Riding Centre, Loch Gilphead (tel. 01852/500-632).</p>
<p>Hiking</p>	<p>Scotland's Great Trails are distinctively waymarked, easily accessible and allow you to discover Scotland's beautiful natural landscapes. From mountains, lochs and forests to coastal paths and riverside walks as well as historical sites and Scotland's fantastic wildlife, there are plenty of stunning natural sights to behold. Take the family and tick off a bite-sized chunk of one of the routes, do a bit each weekend or tackle the whole route in one go.</p> <p>If you wish to see some of Scotland's best dramatic mountain and loch scenery, the Great Glen Way, Southern Upland Way, the Three Lochs Way and the West Highland Way traverse some of the most beautiful places in Scotland.</p> <p>Follow some of Scotland's iconic rivers from source to sea, on routes such as the Speyside Way which runs from Spey Bay in the Moray Firth, upriver to Aviemore, in the heart of the Cairngorms National Park. Follow some other great river trails like the Annandale Way, the Clyde Walkway or the River Ayr Way.</p> <p>Explore some of Scotland's long coastline. Embark on the 117 miles of the spectacular Fife Coastal Path. You will discover fascinating wildlife, sandy beaches and quaint fishing villages. The Ayrshire Coastal Path, John Muir Way, Kintyre Way, Moray Coast Trail and West Island Way or new addition, the Berwickshire Coastal Path, also offer</p>

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	<p>stunning coastal scenery. Uncover Scotland's rich and fascinating history on an historical trail. Follow in the footsteps of St Cuthbert on the St Cuthbert's Way or discover ancient abbeys on the Borders Abbeys Way, perfect for exploring the beautiful countryside of the Scottish Borders. Or why not follow in the footsteps of marauding medieval cattle thieves on the Cateran Trail or Scotland's most famous outlaw Rob Roy on the Rob Roy Way?</p> <p>If you are interested in transport and travel, discover canal towpaths, The Falkirk Wheel and old railway lines on some of the fantastic canal and railway routes, such as the Forth and Clyde Canal Towpath, the Dava Way and the Formartine and Buchan Way.</p> <p>The Munros: The highest mountains in Scotland are known as Munros, named after Sir Hugh T. Munro who in 1891 surveyed all the country's mountains above 3000 feet (914 meters) and produced his Tables which catalogued 236 peaks that he deemed to be individual mountains with 'sufficient separation' between each other. Over the years and with advances in surveying, there have been several revisions to Munro's original listing, the latest being in 1997. Currently, there are 284 Munros.</p> <p>Frommer's Best Walking Trips in Scotland covers 57 walks all over Scotland, together with information on where to eat and stay.</p>
<p>Cycling</p>	<p>Emirates Arena and Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome The state-of-the-art Emirates Arena opened in Glasgow in October 2012 as one of the most versatile and innovative purpose built structures of its type in Europe. It was the showcase venue of Glasgow's hosting of the 2014 Commonwealth Games and is already home to a world-class sporting events programme. The Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome was designed by Ralph Schuermann, the internationally renowned designer of the 2008 Olympic Games Velodrome in Beijing. If you are feeling adventurous you can book an introductory cycling session on the 250m Velodrome track. www.emiratesarena.co.uk</p> <p>Ciclismo Classico has a Bike Across Scotland tour package. What better way to see Scotland's breathtaking scenery than riding along its beautiful seaside coasts and lochs, through its verdant hills, dramatic Munros and bucolic villages? There are two options for eight-day rides, departing from Inverness in the Highlands covering 400kms before ending in the coastal village of Gairloch. Package highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight-days of cycling • Accommodations at three- and four-star country inns

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rides through majestic countryside, along lochs, islands, forests, and dramatic mountains, including the highest pass in the UK! • Opportunities to view local wildlife, ranging from dolphins to osprey • A tour of the 13th century Urquhart Castle along the banks of Loch Ness • A taste of Scotland with locally-sourced and seasonal dining experiences • A whisky tasting at one of Scotland's oldest distilleries in Glen Ord
Sailing & Watersports	<p>Wherever you travel in Scotland, you're never far from the water. Windsurfing, canoeing, water-skiing, and sailing are just some of the activities available at a number of sailing centres and holiday parks. You'll find it easy to rent boats and equipment at any of the major resorts along Scotland's famous lakes.</p>

CULTURE	<p>The SSE Hydro Glasgow's skyline now includes an iconic new structure, The SSE Hydro. With a total capacity of 12,000, The SSE Hydro will play host to around 140 events every year (from national and international music mega stars to global entertainment and sporting events). It's the biggest of its kind in the country and has rocketed into 2nd place in the Pollstar "Top 100 Worldwide Arena Venues" rankings. www.thessehydro.com</p>
Arts	<p>Scotland has a long and lively literary culture, which consists of the romantic poems of Robert Burns, the classic adventures of Robert Louis Stevenson and the fantasies of JM Barrie, as well as the literary work of many more authors.</p> <p>And when it comes to art, Glasgow seems to be especially blessed. The 2015 Turner prize will be presented in Glasgow: specifically, in the southside arts centre, Tramway. It will be only the fourth time that the prize has migrated outside London and its traditional home of Tate Britain. But for some reason - perhaps a tribute to that incredibly vibrant arts scene in the city - an incredible number of Glaswegian artists have been nominated for this prestigious arts prize.</p> <p>The City of Glasgow boasts one of the finest art collections in Europe. The Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum is a good place to start your pilgrimage. The displays are extensive and wide-ranging, including: Dutch Old Masters and French Impressionists ; Scottish Art including galleries dedicated to the Glasgow Boys and Scottish Colourists and Salvador Dali's Christ of St John of the Cross. And because you cannot escape his influence anywhere in Glasgow – of course you will find exhibits devoted to Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Glasgow Style.</p> <p>In the heart of Pollok Country Park, The Burrell Collection is housed in</p>

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	<p>an award-winning building and offers a unique collection of art in a beautiful woodland setting. Displays range from work by major artists including Rodin, Degas and Cézanne, to important examples of late medieval art, Chinese and Islamic art, Ancient Civilizations and much more. The Burrell regularly hosts temporary exhibitions, and runs an extensive programme of events and activities for both adults and families with children.</p> <p>The Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art is found in an iconic building in the heart of Glasgow, which it shares with the city centre library, GoMA plays an important part in the city's rich heritage. For over 100 years the building was a centre for business and commercial exchange where information and goods were traded. GoMA continues that philosophy of exchange by being a centre for people to gather, discuss and learn, inspired by the art it collects and shows.</p> <p>The award-winning St Mungo Museum is a haven of tranquillity in a bustling city. This museum is named after Glasgow's patron saint. The building was built in 1989 in Scottish baronial style by Ian Begg. It was designed to reflect the architecture of the Bishops' Castle, the site of which is occupied by the museum. Its galleries are full of displays, artefacts and stunning works of art. They explore the importance of religion in peoples' lives across the world and across time.</p>
<p>Music</p>	<p>Glasgow is a city of music. A UNESCO City of music no less – and the second Scottish city to join the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, Glasgow is one of only 5 international Cities of Music including Seville, Bolonga, Ghent and Botoga. Glasgow is the home base of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and did you know that the Musical Director of the RSNO is Peter Oundjian, who is also Musical Director of the Toronto Symphony?</p> <p>But Glasgow's musical roots are as broad as they are deep. This is the city that gave us (amongst many others) Lulu, Lonnie Donnegan and Marmalade in the 60's, Plus many others including Simple Minds, The Vaseline, Wet Wet Wet, Franz Ferdinand, Belle & Sebastian, Chvrches and Texas up to recent times.</p> <p>Glasgow's legendary music scene stretches across the whole spectrum from contemporary and classical to Celtic and Country. Its venues are equally varied and the city hosts an average 130 music events each week, more than any other Scottish city. Musical Ambassadors for Glasgow include Alex Kapranos, the lead singer and the guitarist of the Glasgow band Franz Ferdinand and Billy Connolly CBE - before he became a performer, Billy was as a welder in the Glasgow shipyards, giving it up to be a folk singer with his group, the Humblebums.</p>

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<p>Films</p>	<p>Scotland has long been immortalised on the silver screen. But the only way to really appreciate the magic is to see it for yourself! The spectacular hills, landscapes, castles and wildlife have inspired film makers the world over, as with the team at Disney Pixar for their animated movie Brave.</p> <p>The dramatic hills of Glen Nevis and Glen Coe were the setting for Braveheart, the portrayal of one of the Scotland's most iconic figures, William Wallace. The majestic Eilean Donan Castle is also recognisable for its appearance in Highlander, starring Christopher Lambert and Sean Connery, and the James Bond movie, The World Is Not Enough.</p> <p>The breathtaking train chase scene from Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets features the Hogwarts Express crossing the historic Glenfinnan Viaduct. Experience the same magical journey with a trip on The Jacobite steam train between Fort William and Mallaig. Many Harry Potter scenes were shot in Scotland, and in Glen Coe you can enjoy Hagrid's views of the Torren Lochan.</p> <p>Scotland's sparkling coastline can be seen in Chariots of Fire, filmed on the West Sands beach at St Andrews. More recently, Oscar-winning biopic The Queen was filmed at the Balmoral Estate in Royal Deeside while The Da Vinci Code showcased Rosslyn Chapel, just outside of Edinburgh.</p> <p>Scotland's capital city is the backdrop for the animation film The Illusionist, which brings 1950s Edinburgh to life, while the adaptation of David Nicholls' best-selling novel One Day, starring Anne Hathaway and Jim Sturgess, features iconic locations such as Calton Hill. Film enthusiasts also shouldn't miss the Glasgow Film Festival in February and the Edinburgh International Film Festival in June.</p> <p>Outlander Outlander is an original series adapted from Diana Gabaldon's bestselling books. The series has experienced huge success in North America. Outlander follows the story of Claire Randall, a married combat nurse from 1945 who is mysteriously swept back in time to 1743, where she is immediately thrown into an unknown world where her life is threatened. www.starz.com/originals/outlander</p> <p>The 12th annual Glasgow Film Festival will take place in 2016 from 17th February to 28th February www.glasgowfilm.org/festival.</p>
<p>Museums</p>	<p>Glasgow has over 20 museums that allow the visitor to learn about the history of Glasgow and the story of its people. And the great news is</p>

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that most of these are free to visit! Also the buildings that house Glasgow's museums and art galleries are often worth a visit in themselves – from the iconic modern Riverside Museum on the banks of the River Clyde to the oldest house in Glasgow that dates back to 1471.

Take in the Art Nouveau flair of Charles Rennie Mackintosh in the building that now houses the Scotland Street Museum. Or the **Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum** which was built in the late 1890's in grand Spanish Baroque style. A major art gallery as well as a museum, the Kelvingrove is a monument to the insatiable curiosity of mankind. Amongst its most popular museum exhibits are Sir Roger the Asian elephant who died in 1900, a spitfire plane from World War 2, Kelvingrove's very own beehive and the remains of a medieval satchel. Kelvingrove is situated in a beautiful park that was originally created in 1852 by noted English gardener Sir Joseph Paxton, Head Gardener at Chatsworth House, whose other works included The Crystal Palace in London.

Riverside Museum is not just housed in an award winning building – this multi-award winning museum was voted European Museum of the year in 2013. The Riverside Museum is home to over 3,000 objects that detail Glasgow's rich past from its days as maritime powerhouse to a glimpse into daily Glasgow life in the early to mid-20th Century.

Riverside Museum is recognised as Glasgow's museum of transport - amongst the objects on display are everything from skateboards to locomotives, motorbikes to prams, velocipedes to vintage cars and old trams to fire engines. There are also 250 model ships, remembering Glasgow's heyday as a shipbuilding powerhouse. Visitors can get a real feel for vintage public transport by accessing four locomotive footplates, three trams, two subway cars, one train carriage and a bus!

At Riverside Museum you can also see the world's second oldest Rolls-Royce - a very rare survivor - gifted to the Royal Scottish Automobile Club and currently on loan to Riverside. And a recent addition is one of the largest locomotives on display anywhere in Britain - a huge export South African locomotive designed and made in Glasgow. This museum is on the site of the former Inglis Shipyard, which also enables The Tall Ship Glenlee, to berth alongside the museum. She is a three mast former Victorian cargo carrier that hosts interesting nautical exhibitions.

One really fun aspect of the Riverside Museum is the three interactive

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	<p>streets with access to "shops" dating from 1895 right through to the 1980s. These 'shops' include an Edwardian photography studio, a 1930s' Italian Café and a 1960s' garage.</p> <p>The People's Palace, set in historic Glasgow Green, tells the story of the people and city of Glasgow from 1750 to the end of the 20th century. Visitors explore the city's social history through a wealth of historic artefacts, paintings, prints and photographs, film and interactive computer displays. It gives a wonderful insight into how Glaswegians lived, worked and played in years gone by.</p> <p>Provand's Lordship is the oldest house in Glasgow and it was built in 1471 as part of a hospital in the cathedral precinct. It is one of only four surviving medieval buildings in Glasgow. Beautifully preserved, the "auld hoose" is furnished with a fine selection of 17th-century Scottish furniture donated by Sir William Burrell, and a series of historic royal portraits. Room settings give a flavour of interiors around 1500 and 1700, so you can immerse yourself in medieval Glasgow.</p> <p>The Mackintosh House is a meticulous re-assemblage of the principal interiors from the Mackintoshes' Glasgow home. The couple lived at 78 Southpark Avenue (originally 6 Florentine Terrace) from 1906 to 1914. Substantial alterations were made in 1906 as Mackintosh remodelled the proportions and natural lighting of the Victorian end-of-terrace house. The principal interiors were decorated in his distinctive style, remarkable then, and now, for the disciplined austerity of the furnishings and decoration.</p>
<p>Architecture</p>	<p>The Magic of Mackintosh Barcelona has Gaudí, Chicago has Frank Lloyd Wright – Glasgow has the Art Nouveau magic of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Mackintosh (1868 – 1928) was born in Glasgow and went on to be one of the most creative figures of the 20th century and a leading figure in the European Art Nouveau movement. An architect, designer and artist, he left a legacy of magnificent work and is revered as the founding father of the 'Glasgow Style'. This distinctive and eclectic style was developed and championed by Mackintosh and a group of local creatives who went by the moniker of 'The Glasgow Four'. Along with Mackintosh 'The Four' comprised of James Herbert McNair, Margaret Macdonald, whom Mackintosh would later marry, and her sister Frances Macdonald. The influence of Mackintosh continues to be felt and his work is celebrated by fans all over the world. One such fan is actor Brad Pitt, a design and architecture enthusiast, he has visited a number of Mackintosh attractions while in Glasgow and also cited the influence of</p>

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Mackintosh's 'Glasgow Rose' in his first furniture collection which was unveiled late in 2012.

Glasgow houses the pre-eminent collection of Mackintosh buildings, drawings and designs and today visitors to the city can explore the magic of Mackintosh at attractions throughout the city including:

The Glasgow School of Art,

167 Renfrew St, Glasgow G3 6RQ, www.gsa.ac.uk

The internationally lauded Glasgow School of Art is considered Mackintosh's masterpiece and was voted by the Royal Institute of British Architects as the finest building designed by a British architect in the last 175 years.

The Glasgow School of Art (GSA) has produced a number of award winning artists including Turner Prize winners Douglas Gordon and Martin Creed. Other notable alumni include Dr Who's Peter Capaldi, Harry Potter favourite Robbie Coltrane, Alex Kapranos of Franz Ferdinand and legendary fashion designer and musician Pam Hogg. In May 2014 a fire damaged the west wing of the Mackintosh building and as such there is currently no visitor access to the interior of the Mackintosh building whilst restoration gets underway. However, there is still plenty for visitors to do and see at The Glasgow School of Art, including GSA's brand new 'Window on Mackintosh' visitor centre and shop in the recently completed, state of the art Reid building, with dynamic tours of the local area and the wider city departing daily.

www.gsa.ac.uk/visit-gsa/tours

The Hunterian Art Gallery and Mackintosh House, 82 Hillhead Street, University of Glasgow, G12 8QQ, www.gla.ac.uk/hunterian

The Hunterian Art Gallery houses one of the most important collections of the work of Mackintosh and his artist-wife, Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh.

The Mackintosh House is a meticulous reassemblage of the principal interiors from the Mackintoshes' Glasgow home. The principal interiors were decorated in his distinctive style, remarkable then, and now, for the disciplined austerity of the furnishings and decoration.

The house was demolished in the early 1960s but the original fixtures were preserved and reassembled, complete with the contents, as an integral part of the Hunterian Art Gallery.

The Hunterian Art Gallery is currently displaying the Mackintosh Architecture exhibition. It is the first substantial exhibition devoted to Mackintosh's architecture, with over 80 architectural drawings, many never exhibited before, rarely seen archival material, and specially commissioned films and models.

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	<p>Mackintosh and the Glasgow Style Gallery at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Argyle St, Glasgow G3 8AG, www.glasgowlife.org.uk/museums</p> <p>Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum is home to the Mackintosh and the Glasgow Style Gallery, the largest permanent display of work in the world by the key names in the Glasgow Style movement. The City owns an incredible collection of objects from this internationally important period of design and the decorative arts, and the gallery showcases the techniques used – from exquisite stained glass, enamels and metalwork to ceramics, gesso, furniture and tearoom interiors.</p> <p>The Willow Tea Rooms, 217 Sauchiehall St, Glasgow G2 3EX, www.willowtearooms.co.uk</p> <p>The original Willow Tea Rooms in Sauchiehall Street was designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh for Kate Cranston in 1903. An avid enthusiast of attention to detail, Mackintosh not only designed the exterior and interior but also designed the cutlery and waitresses dresses.</p> <p>The Room de Luxe is one of the most precious interiors which Mackintosh ever designed. The room today still has the original pair of stained glass doors along with the leaded mirror frieze with purple pannelling below and windows with panels of leaded mirror, the furniture is silver with high back chairs with nine inserts of purple glass.</p>
Festivals	<p>Merchant City Festival returns on 30 July until 7 August 2016. There will be nine days filled with free events in Glasgow's cultural quarter including street arts, dance, live music, markets, fashion and design, comedy, family events, tours, heritage walks, talks, food and drink and much more. They will be announcing their full programme over the next few months so check out the website for a preview of what's to come: www.merchantcityfestival.com</p> <p>Piping Live! (August) Make sure you are part of a week-long piping event that makes Glasgow the centre of the world stage for piping brilliance. It's exciting and challenging, traditional and contemporary and very much alive. www.pipinglive.co.uk</p> <p>Glasgow Doors Open Day (September) Glasgow Doors Open Day is an annual, city wide event. Buildings open their doors and allow access to the public. As part of Doors Open Day there are also walks, tours, talks and special events, to learn about Glasgow's unique building heritage. All events are free. www.glasgowdoorsopenday.com/</p>

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	<p>Creative Mackintosh Festival (October) The Creative Mackintosh Festival – an annual festival celebrating the life and works of Glasgow architect, artist and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh takes place in Mackintosh venues and other Glasgow locations and includes exhibitions, tours, talks and drama performances. www.glasgowmackintosh.com</p> <p>Bank of Scotland Great Scottish Run (October) Giving people of all ages and abilities the chance to participate, the Bank of Scotland Great Scottish Run combines a half marathon and 10k senior races on Sunday, with a full programme of mini, junior and toddler races on Saturday 4 in and around George Square and the city centre. www.greatscottishrun.com</p> <p>Sonica Festival (November) Sonica is a programme dedicated to world-class sonic arts, presenting emerging British talent alongside exceptional international artists in collaboration with renowned co-producers and venues. Curated by Cathie Boyd, Patrick Dickie and Graham McKenzie and produced by Cryptic in Glasgow, Sonica gives a UK platform to performances of exceptional and rarely seen work. http://sonic-a.co.uk/sonica</p> <p>Glasgow Loves Christmas (Nov – Dec) Nowhere captures the magic of the festive season quite like Glasgow. With fun and frolics for young and old, Christmas 2015 is sure to be bigger than ever! To find out more information please go to – www.glasgowloveschristmas.com</p>
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ATTRACTIONS	
Beaches	<p>With a coastline estimated at 13,115 km long, there is plenty of room for Scottish beaches! The east coast has plenty of unspoilt stretches of sands, with places like Dunbar, St Andrews, Montrose, Aberdeen, Fraserburgh, Lossiemouth, Nairn, and Dornoch just some of the towns and cities close to superb stretches of beach.</p> <p>The more rugged north and west coasts likewise have beautiful sands, often as smaller coves set amongst magnificent cliff scenery, while the dazzling white beaches of the Hebrides – look for the Gaelic word ‘traigh’ on maps – are an essential element of the island experience and a real highlight of a visit to, for example, Harris or Islay. The Big Strand on Islay, for example, is at least 12 km long.</p> <p>Some beaches have an association with a particular leisure pursuit – Thurso (Dunnet Bay) for surfing, for instance; beaches on Tiree for wind surfing; St Andrews for kite-surfing – but all of these are practiced at a variety of Scottish beaches.</p>

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	<p>Scotland's beaches are also leisurely places for beachcombing – lobster buoys from Maine, coconuts from the Caribbean and pumice from Icelandic volcanoes may add a touch of the exotic!</p> <p>More than 60 of Scotland's beaches hold Seaside Awards – but the Scottish beach, especially in the Highlands, can still be an off-the-beaten-track location, unspoilt and hardly visited.</p>
<p>Wildlife</p>	<p>Scotland's wildlife is typical of the north west of Europe, although several of the larger mammals such as the Lynx, Brown Bear, Wolf, Elk and Walrus were hunted to extinction in historic times. There are important populations of seals and internationally significant nesting grounds for a variety of seabirds such as Gannets. The Golden Eagle is something of a national icon.</p> <p>On the high mountain tops species including Ptarmigan, Mountain Hare and Stoat can be seen in their white colour phase during winter months. Remnants of the native Scots Pine forest exist and within these areas the Scottish Crossbill, the UK's only endemic bird species and vertebrate, can be found alongside Capercaillie, Wildcat, Red Squirrel and Pine Marten. In recent years various animals have been re-introduced, including the White-tailed Sea Eagle in 1975, the Red Kite in the 1980s, and more recently there have been experimental projects involving the Beaver and Wild Boar.</p>
<p>Parks</p>	<p>Glasgow's 90+ parks and gardens offer residents and visitors a chance to relax in natural and tranquil surroundings and enjoy some peace and quiet away from the hustle and bustle of city life. Below is just a selection of what's on offer.</p> <p>http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/Residents/Parks_Outdoors/Parks_gardens/</p> <p>Glasgow Green Glasgow Green is by far the city's oldest park. The People's Palace and Winter Gardens are situated within its grounds, with the latter displaying a variety of exotic palms and plants. Glasgow Green is also one of the city's key spaces for outdoor events. The World Pipe Band Championships, Great Scottish Run and numerous concerts take place on the Green every year.</p> <p>Kelvingrove Park Kelvingrove Park is one of the city's most popular green spaces. Along with the world famous Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, the park also includes five bowling greens, four tennis courts, an orienteering course, herbaceous borders, outstanding riverside walks, a skateboard park and popular café, An Clachan. Kelvingrove Park is also home to a diverse range of wildlife and habitats. The River Kelvin, which passes through Kelvingrove Park, is an important "wildlife</p>

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corridor" containing Brown Trout, Salmon and Sea Trout. Other wildlife to be found in the park includes the Grey Heron, Kingfisher, Mallard and Red Fox

Pollok Country Park

Pollok Park is not only Glasgow's largest park; it is also the only Country Park within the city. As well as being home to The Burrell Collection, Pollok House and numerous Highland Cows, the park boasts a wealth of outdoor activities including woodland walks, wildlife gardens and of course mountain biking at the purpose built Glasgow Mountain Bike Circuit. The Park also has a rich history, in the past it was part of the Old Pollok Estate and the ancestral home to the Maxwell Family.

Tollcross Park

This park is renowned for its unique Rose Garden and impressive Winter Gardens. It has many hidden gems including the Glen Nature Walk, the Courtyard Visitor Centre, which aims to educate and inform children about nature, and a Children's Farm which is home to a variety of farmyard favourites, including sheep, pigs and chickens.

Victoria Park

Victoria Park was named for Queen Victoria's golden jubilee in 1887 and is one of Glasgow's most scenic parks.

The park is home to the Ancient Fossil Grove which contains the remains of an ancient forest. Fossil Grove is one of the most famous in-situ Carboniferous forest examples in the world. The Fossil Grove contains 300 million year old tree stumps which were growing when Glasgow lay near the equator!

Local Nature Reserves & Nature Trails - Glasgow is also home to seven Local Nature Reserves, including:

Garscadden Wood

This is one of the oldest semi-natural woods in Glasgow, with a range of rare and interesting species including the Purple Hairstreak Butterfly. Red foxes and Song Thrushes can also be found on the reserve along with 200 species of plant.

Dawsholm Park

Dawsholm Park, located on high ground above the Forth and Clyde Canal, offers attractive views over the canal to the west of the city. The park covers 34 hectares and has become a firm favourite for bird watchers.

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	<p>Hogganfield Park This nature reserve is an ideal place to watch wildlife. 115 species of bird have been spotted at the park, including over thirty species of ducks, geese and other waterfowl. The wooded island also supports many small birds and a family of foxes.</p>
Gardens	<p>Botanic Gardens Located in the heart of the West End, the Botanic Gardens are internationally renowned. Kibble Palace lies in the grounds of the gardens and houses extensive tropical and temperate plant collections from around the world. Out with the glass houses there are a variety of fascinating flower and herb gardens – in fact a number of local chefs use ingredients foraged from the Botanic Gardens in their restaurants. The Botanic Gardens Tea Rooms have also opened offering visitors an idyllic space to enjoy a cup of tea. The Botanic Gardens has a busy events calendar packed full of exhibitions, concerts, theatre, arts and crafts fairs and guided walks. You can even partake in a spot of stargazing on specially organised Stars Over the Botanic evenings. http://www.glasgowbotanicgardens.com/</p>
Historical Sites	<p>Oldest House in Glasgow. Provand's Lordship, which was built in 1471 as part of a hospital in the cathedral precinct, is one of only four surviving medieval buildings in Glasgow. Beautifully preserved, the "auld hoose" is furnished with a fine selection of 17th-century Scottish furniture donated by Sir William Burrell, and a series of historic royal portraits. Room settings give a flavour of interiors around 1500 and 1700, so immerse yourself in medieval Glasgow with a visit to this fascinating building.</p>

OTHER ACTIVITIES	
Shopping	<p>Glasgow is the largest retail centre in the UK outside of London's west end. Shoppers can happily immerse themselves in a plethora of cool vintage shops, designer boutiques and a range of shopping malls. Adding to its impressive retail offering Glasgow has recently welcomed new shopping development the Buchanan Quarter to its city centre. www.glasgowstylemile.com</p> <p>The shopping experience in Glasgow is very varied. Though the city has the 'High Street' names, plus some very stylish and exclusive brands, rural areas have plenty of surprises. Here you'll discover potters and jewellers, knitwear designers, weavers, silversmiths and kiltmakers to name but a few. Scottish textiles, especially the tartan variety, are popular and worth buying. Everything from a travelling rug to your own kilt outfit. Shops up and down the country, and especially in Edinburgh and Inverness, can</p>

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	<p>tell which clan your family belongs to and make you a kilt in that particular tartan. For the full outfit, including kilt, sporran, jacket, shoes and skeann dhu dagger, expect to pay in the region of £600, or more if you want more elaborate accessories.</p> <p>There are mill shops making tweeds and cloths in many parts of Scotland. Most are in the Borders, though it is not necessarily cheaper to buy at source. Harris Tweed is also a good buy and you can watch your cloth being woven on the Hebridean islands of Harris and Lewis. Knitwear is also good value and sold throughout Scotland, though the cashmere industry in the Borders is suffering from high trade tariffs. Shetland is a good place to find high-quality wool products. Note that Aran jumpers are not from the island of Arran, but from Aran (with one 'r') in Ireland.</p> <p>Jewellery is another popular souvenir and there are many excellent craft shops throughout the Highlands and Islands making beautiful jewellery with Celtic designs.</p> <p>Glassware is also popular, particularly Edinburgh crystal and Caithness glass, as well as pottery.</p> <p>Food is another good souvenir and not just the ubiquitous shortbread sold in tartan tins. If you haven't far to travel home, smoked salmon, or any other smoked product, is good value. One of the best places for food products is the island of Arran, where you can buy their delicious local mustards and preserves, smoked fish and game, and cheeses. And, of course, there's whisky. Most distilleries will refund the cost of their guided tour in the form of a discount voucher on a bottle of their brand whisky.</p>
<p>Markets</p>	<p>The Barras Market in Glasgow is an historic marketplace with great character and an eclectic mix of covered and open stalls selling a huge range of goods.</p>
<p>Nightlife</p>	<p>Glasgow has one of the most active dance club scenes in the UK. Listed below are just a few selected venues. In local parlance, "venues" are distinct from the actual "clubs" - such as Optimo (electro-clash), Manga (drum and bass), or Pressure (house and techno) - which are associated with a specific style, DJ, or team of DJs. They can move around to different venues. It all makes perfect sense to those in the know.</p> <p>Glasgow also has the reputation as an unsurpassed spawning ground in Scotland for pop and rock groups, such as Franz Ferdinand or Belle and Sebastian. Barrowland, a former ballroom, has to be one of the best venues in all of Britain for seeing live contemporary music. Recently, the company that runs the well-known Brixton Academy converted an old movie house into the Academy on the city's Southside, while in the city centre another former cinema, ABC, was redeveloped into a good music venue in 2005. Plus, two bars, King Tut's Wah Wah Hut (where</p>

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	<p>the band Oasis was apparently "discovered") and Nice 'n' Sleazy, give Glasgow a pair of small venues with performance spaces that would rival those typical of Manhattan's East Village.</p>
<p>Hogmanay</p>	<p>There are many festivities happening across the country to celebrate Hogmanay. Choose from an array of ceilidhs, dinner dances, hoolies and balls.</p> <p>Join Glasgow's biggest party of the year as 25,000 revellers descend on George Square to see in the New Year;</p> <p>Stonehaven Fireball Festival: One of the few remaining mid-winter fire festivals on the Scottish East Coast. Local people celebrate the arrival of the New Year in this traditional way - swinging fireballs around as they walk up and down the old town High Street;</p> <p>The Hogmanay bonfire in the Borders town off Biggar (pop 2000), dates back to the pagan times when fire was worshipped and believed to ward off evil spirits for the New Year. It has continued at Biggar for hundreds of years and there is no other town in the world that celebrates the coming of the New Year like Biggar.</p> <p>Hogmanay Traditions: Traditionally, the Scots were a superstitious race at the best of times and for an event as significant as the dawning of a new year, customs, rituals and traditions inevitably arose around the country. Many of these have now disappeared but others have carried on down through the years and some have even become essential ingredients of today's celebrations.</p> <p>Cleaning the House The last day of the year was traditionally regarded as a time of preparation: business would be concluded to let the new year start afresh and houses were thoroughly cleaned (known as 'redding'). Fireplaces in particular had to be swept out and in a variation on reading tea-leaves, the ashes of the last fire of the old year were believed to show what lay ahead in the new year.</p> <p>First Footing One of the major Hogmanay customs was 'first footing'. Shortly after 'the bells' - the stroke of midnight when public clocks would chime to signal the start of the new year - neighbours would visit one another's houses to wish each other a good new year. This visiting was known as 'first footing', and the luckiest first-foot into any house was a tall, dark and handsome man - perhaps as a reward to the woman who traditionally had spent the previous day scrubbing her house (another Hogmanay ritual). Women or red heads, however, were always considered bad luck as first-foots. First-foots brought symbolic gifts to 'handsel' the house: coal for the fire, to ensure that the house would be warm and safe, and shortbread or black bun (a type of fruit cake) to</p>

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	symbolise that the household would never go hungry that year.
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CUISINE	<p>Burns Supper: What is a Burns Supper?</p> <p>The format can be whatever the organiser wishes. As for the poems used, the Address to the Haggis is essential – verses 1, 2, 3 and 8. The other poems used reflect the kind of personnel attending the Supper. Some functions have guest orators who might offer Tam o’ Shanter, Holy Willie’s Prayer (with actions) or The Cottar’s Saturday Night. Some Burns Clubs do indulge in guest orators as they feel Robert Burns’ poems were meant to be read aloud if necessary but not acted. The menu may be as you please but traditionally, it is as follows: Soup such as Cock a Leekie or Scotch Broth; Haggis, Champit Tatties (mashed potatoes) and Neeps (mashed turnip). A main course of beef or steak. Bannocks an’ Kebbuck – cheese – such as the hard cheeses of Mull, Galloway or Orkney, biscuits and oatcakes</p>
Food	<p>When you first look at a menu serving traditional Scottish grub you might get a little bit lost, what with the Arbroath Smokies, Champit Tatties, Cullen Skink, Cranachan, Roastit Bubbly Jock and much more unusual sounding food that will leave you somewhat confused. The names might be complex but the method of traditional Scottish cooking isn’t, as Scottish food is simply hearty and tasty fare. Home-cooking and making use of good, local produce have always been important in Scotland and that’s no different today as Scottish restaurants make the most of the ingredients they have around them. Scottish smoked salmon is just one example, which has a luxurious delicate taste. The country is also home to cheeses like the Lanark Blue, known as the ‘Scottish Roquefort’, while Scottish meat including everything from Aberdeen Angus beef to wild venison are bursting full of flavour.</p> <p>Many Scottish eateries will serve up these treats, using classic recipes and giving them a modern twist. When you’re in Scotland you really should try the national dish, haggis, which caused Burns to write a special ode for it. Enjoying resurgence in restaurants across the country, including Café Gandolfi and Stravaigin in Glasgow, make sure you wash down your haggis with a wee dram!</p>
Drink - Whisky	<p>Scotland should be proud of its whisky, and it is. After 500 years of practice, uisge beatha (from the Gaelic, meaning 'water of life') was first mentioned in written record in 1494; the Scots have whisky distilling down to a fine art. The tastes change with the landscape as well. In the rolling pastoral Lowlands you’ll find grassy and malt flavours, while heathery whisky is the norm in the Highlands. It’s different once again in the low hills of Speyside where a mellow sweetness is found, while the rough and salty smokiness of the Western Isles whisky perfectly matches the terrain.</p>

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	<p>Scottish people love whisky so much that pubs are dedicated to the drink; head to Leslie's Bar in Edinburgh, or The Grill in Aberdeen, where more than 400 varieties of whiskies will keep you quiet for the evening. Fellow drinkers and friendly barmen will be only too happy to give you a guide of Scotland's national drink and one of its finest exports.</p> <p>Among the famous Highland malts are Glen Grant, Macallan, Glenfarclas, Knockando, Cardhu, Glenfiddich, Strathisla and Tamnavullin. Of course there are also island malts which have their own special appeal. These include Highland Park and Scapa on Orkney, Talisker from the misty Isle of Skye, Jura and the Islay malts which include Laphroig, Bowmore and Bruichladdich.</p> <p>Glengoyne Distillery: Glengoyne is very attractive and eminently visitable, being less than 20kms from the centre of Glasgow. The distillery itself is like a picture postcard of Scotland. Not only that, but its proximity to Loch Lomond, one of Scotlands most celebrated landmarks, gives it a familiarity for an international audience.</p> <p>Unlike most other single malts Glengoyne has been preserving the essence of its flavour for decades by using air-dried barley rather than barley dried using harsh peat smoke. The result is a more subtle, complex whisky in which all of the delicate flavours are freely allowed to express themselves.</p> <p>You can visit 'Scotland's Most Beautiful Distillery' year round to see the production process and learn how Glengoyne Single Highland Malt Whisky is made. www.glengoyne.com</p>
<p>Restaurants</p>	<p>From Dear Green Coffee Roasters and Nucoco Chocolate to Fantoosh Fish, Delizique, Cottonrake, Tapa and Brewhaha, Glasgow is home to a range of local producers and specialist delicatessens that offer a delicious taste of Glasgow.</p> <p>Here are some recommendations in Glasgow:</p> <p>étain The popular 'Epicurean Menu' offered by Terence Conran's only UK outpost outside of London is a tasting menu with each course matched perfectly with a different wine. Epicureans will feel truly in heaven in Conran's sleek but subtle penthouse restaurant.</p> <p>No.Sixteen Tiny, unpretentious, and ever so slightly off the beaten track – although still pretty close to the throng of the bohemian West End – No.Sixteen is</p>

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one of Glasgow's favorite restaurants. So good, that it has become one of Edinburgh's favorite restaurants too!

Ubiquitous Chip

Perhaps the most fabulously named restaurant in Glasgow, 'The Chip' as it is affectionately known is renowned for its strong Scottish flavors, and a refined coziness that Glaswegians have grown to love over its thirty-year tenure.

Uisge Beatha

A unique 'old-style' pub in the stylish West End, you'll find over 125 single malt whiskies to choose from, served by men in kilts!

Rab Ha's

A triumph of individuality over uniformity and of soul over empty style comprising boutique hotel, enticing restaurant and traditional Scottish bar, Rab Ha's is found within the Merchant City.

Babbity Bowser's

Housed in an original Tobacco Merchant's house attributed to Robert Adam in the Merchant City. Fraser and his team are a local institution and look forward to welcoming you to this bar, restaurant and small hotel. The restaurant offers a selection of freshly prepared Scottish meals or snacks, daily billboard specials and real ales with live music every Saturday night.

Café Gandolfi

The Tim Stead-designed wooden furniture in this Merchant City institution have become almost as much of a draw as Gandolfi's simple but incredibly enticing menu.

The Lansdowne

Through a leafy West End close, you will stumble across The Lansdowne, which is one of the neighborhood's favorites – with a stylish bar, and well-prepared but uncomplicated dishes.

Mother India

Glasgow isn't called the Curry Capital for nothing, and there are many first-class Indian restaurants – with Mother India being one of the most authentic, and one of the best – absolutely bursting with fresh ginger, spices and herbs.

Liquid Ship

Taking its name from a misspelled letter addressed to 'Ubiquitous Chip'

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	<p>(see above) – Liquid Ship is brought to the West End bar by the same family that owns the remarkable Chip. This ambient little bar is home to fantastic acoustic music, accompanied by a great selection of beers and wonderful tapas dishes.</p> <p>Brutti Ma Buoni Translating as ‘ugly but good,’ this unpretentiously hip bar and restaurant on the ground floor of the achingly trendy Brunswick Hotel in the Merchant City is always full of Glasgow’s cutting edge artists and trendsetters, and their new basement level is the perfect pre-club spot.</p>
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MORE INFO	
Connect with Glasgow	Website: www.peoplemakeglasgow.ca Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/PeopleMakeGlasgow Twitter: https://twitter.com/PeopleMakeGLA

TRANSAT TO GLASGOW AND SCOTLAND	<p>Transat offers frequent direct flights to Glasgow in the summer.</p> <p>Air Transat flies to Glasgow year round from Toronto and from March to October from Montreal. There are also seasonal flights to Glasgow from both Calgary and Vancouver.</p> <p>Flight time from Toronto is approximately 7 hours.</p> <p>Flights depart Toronto for Glasgow five times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays in high season.</p> <p>Flights depart Montreal for Glasgow four times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays in high season.</p> <p>To book, see your local travel agent or call 1-877-TRANSAT or go to their website at www.Transat.com</p>
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Transat Hotels in Scotland	<p>Transat has a range of hotels for you to book along you’re your flight in both the major cities of Scotland:</p> <p>Edinburgh</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Jurys Inn Edinburgh</td> <td style="text-align: right;">3 star</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parliament House Hotel</td> <td style="text-align: right;">3 star</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Frederick House Hotel</td> <td style="text-align: right;">4 star</td> </tr> </table> <p>Glasgow</p>	Jurys Inn Edinburgh	3 star	Parliament House Hotel	3 star	Frederick House Hotel	4 star
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	<p>Menzies Glasgow 4 star Jurys Inn Glasgow 3 star</p>
<p>Transat Excursions in Scotland</p>	<p>You can buy a package with Transat that includes flights on Air Transat plus travel in Scotland once you arrive: check out http://www.transat.com/en/Glasgow/Glasgow-Excursions</p> <p>EXCURSION 1 Loch Lomond, Loch Awe, Oban & Inveraray (1 day)</p> <p>EXCURSION 2 Loch Ness, Inverness & The Highlands (2 days)</p> <p>EXCURSION 3 Isle of Skye, Loch Ness & Eilean Donan Castle (3 days)</p> <p>EXCURSION 4 North West Highlands, Skye, Eilean Donan Castle & Jacobite Steam Train (5 days)</p>
<p>Transat Background</p>	<p>For nearly 30 years, Transat has been offering a large selection of vacation options in Europe, Florida and the South, as well as cruises sailing the seven seas. In addition to hundreds of south hotels available in the form of all-inclusive packages, Transat also offers a wide range of flights, packages, tours and à la carte holidays. Their packages are flexible and tailored to stays of varying lengths.</p> <p>Transat Tours Canada is the leader in Canada’s holiday travel industry. The group includes Transat Holidays, Nolitours, Tours Mont Royal, Transat Discoveries, Air Transat and many travel agencies across the country, including Marlin Travel. This integration enables Transat to offer vacationers the best possible service, from the airport all the way to their travel destination, where a team of more than 250 destination representatives offer onsite assistance on a 24/7 basis.</p> <p>Air Transat, the group’s airline, offers a vast selection of flights to nearly 60 destinations in 25 countries aboard its fleet of Airbus wide-body jets. Families benefit from numerous privileges, such as a dedicated check-in counter and Kids Club advantages. Upgrade to Club Class for a touch of luxury or choose Option Plus and obtain an additional baggage allowance of 10 kg, among other perks.</p>
<p>What Transat is All About</p>	<p>Transat offers quality vacation packages to a wide variety of destinations. Each season, the company presents a wide selection of quality products, in order to meet the diversified needs of Canadian travellers. In keeping with their mission, their employees aim to exceed</p>

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	<p>vacationers' expectations in order to maintain their position as a market leader. They see their role, ultimately, to turn holiday dreams into reality: making the vacation experience one of the most memorable ever.</p>
<p>Vacation Types</p>	<p>Transat has it all: packages, cruises, hotels, flights, tours, car rentals & train travel. With a choice of over 300 hotels located in more than 50 destinations and a complete line of itineraries offered in partnership with the most prestigious cruise lines, all products offered by Transat are subject to a rigorous standard review.</p>
<p>Transat Collections</p>	<p>Choosing the right resort for your vacation needs is all important and to help you select the right hotel Transat have created 6 different Collections: Luxury, Distinction, Adults, Family, Solo and Sun Savvy.</p> <p>What defines a Collection?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The vacation packages in a Collection match the type of experience you are looking for. Everything from the details of the Air Transat flights to the resort and its facilities suit the needs of a specific type of traveller. <p>Luxury Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designed to cater to your every whim, our prestigious Luxury Collection is the gold standard in upscale travel... with VIP inclusions for a dream vacation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Free access to VIP Lounge at airports o Free upgrade to OPTION PLUS on board Air Transat o Private roundtrip transfers o Unlimited À La Carte gourmet dining o Free WIFI in room and public area <p>Solo Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With this new collection Transat put together a group of resorts that people who like to travel alone will enjoy thanks to advantages such as a communal table for sharing meals and no single supplement. And the big news is – no Single Supplement! - Solo Collection Advantages include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o No Single Supplement o Communal table for sharing meals o Weekly Happy Hour welcoming all Transat clients o Free room service and free WI-FI <p>Sun Savvy Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transat thinks everyone should be able to enjoy the sun, and they pride themselves on providing you with the quality you want at the prices you love. Hence their new Sun Savvy Collection.

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	<p>Adults Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The 18+ crowd will have access to top of the line accommodations, unlimited à la carte dining and free WiFi. <p>Family Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Their Family Collection delivers a safe, exciting time for kids - and a relaxing holiday for parents. There are a variety of activities, facilities and promotions that suit the needs of different types of family. These range from resorts perfect for families with very young children to resorts perfect for teens and big families. And then there are also Transat's new Multigenerational and Single Parent categories. <p>And lastly – there is the Distinction Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distinction Collection offers exclusive perks that range from direct transfers, additional à la carte dinner reservations and complimentary WiFi access - Distinction inclusions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Direct roundtrip transfers between the airport and the resort o Additional guaranteed à la carte restaurant reservations o Free WIFI in the lobby o Mini-bar restocked daily o Unlimited select international drinks o Free in-room safe <p>You will also enjoy, for example, bottle of wine or local specialty in the room upon arrival, turn-down service plus lots more.</p>
Awards	<p>Agent's Choice Awards: For the fifth consecutive year, Transat Holidays was named Wholesaler of the Year by travel agents Air Transat was voted -#1 Leisure Airline in North America for three years in a row and 2nd in the World! They were also voted best Family Airline.</p>
Current Brochures	<p>Transat brochures are available at your local travel agent and cover vacations through to October 2016.</p>
Air Transat's New Comfort Zone	<p>With so many new comfort features, you're on vacation the minute you take your seat. Air Transat has given their fleet a full makeover. For a glimpse of what it looks like: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBse6WOCd70</p>
Air Transat Kids Club	<p>To ensure that your family vacations are fun and unforgettable from beginning to end, Air Transat has created Kids Club so that young passengers can really enjoy themselves whilst onboard an Air Transat flight. It is designed to make air travel a fun experience for young travellers (and for their parents!). Even before the doors of the plane are closed following boarding, every child receives a small bag containing all sorts of surprises and games. The more fun they have, the easier the</p>

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	<p>flight. Furthermore, children who are members of Air Transat Kids Club enjoy certain exclusive privileges.</p> <p>Members of the Air Transat Kids Club will enjoy several benefits that the whole family can share. You can check in at a special "Air Transat Kids Club Members" counter. Thanks to these special counters located in major Canadian airports where Air Transat flies, checking-in is quicker than before. At check-in, special tags will be placed on your baggage; as a result, your baggage gets priority treatment.</p>
<p>Transat Club Class</p>	<p>Enjoy exclusive privileges such as complimentary seat selection, wider, more comfortable leather seats, a choice of gourmet meals and fine wines, priority check-in, baggage service and boarding.</p> <p>Club Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated Club attendants • Attentive, personalized service • Exclusive, spacious Club cabin <p>Drinks & Snacks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome cocktails • Complimentary non-alcoholic drinks, snacks and bar service <p>Club Privileges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased baggage allowance • 40 kg checked/15 kg carry-on • Exclusive, rapid check-in counter in most airports • Priority boarding • Practical travel items (on Europe flights) • Free headsets • Canadian newspapers <p>Comfort & Refinement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider, more comfortable leather seats • More leg room • Complimentary Seat Selection: call 1-877-872-6728 • Choice of gourmet meals • Choice of wine and more
<p>Option Plus</p>	<p>This Economy class option includes many priority privileges and services including priority check-in, priority baggage handling, an extra 10kg baggage allowance and even champagne. Here's what you get:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance seat selection on roundtrip flights • Priority check-in at a dedicated counter • Priority baggage handling • Priority boarding • Complete Air Transat travel kit on flights to European destinations • Snacks from the On Board Bistro selection • Alcoholic beverages during drinks service 200ml bottle of champagne (Sun and Europe) • Supplementary baggage allowance up to 10 kg per flight segment

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wine or beer with the meal • Headsets <p>The cost is \$79-\$119 for southbound destinations and \$99-\$209 for European destinations as at March 2016.</p>
<p>Option Flex</p>	<p>Life doesn't always go exactly according to plan. When you book your dream vacation, you want to make sure you enjoy the ultimate level of flexibility should something unexpected happen. Option Flex with Transat gives you just that. Option Flex lets you:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - change your departure date, destination or hotel, up to 3 hours before departure - transfer your vacation package to a friend or family member, up to 7 days before departure - cancel your trip and get a full refund - and you won't be charged any additional fuel or currency surcharges once you've booked. <p>Benefit from these advantages for only \$49 + taxes at time of booking.</p>
<p>Transat and Sustainable Tourism</p>	<p>Transat recognizes the prime importance of the environment, host communities, cultural diversity, and their relationships with their employees, customers and partners. Tourism has become one of the world's leading industries. Society and communities reap the benefits, and, each year, hundreds of millions of travellers discover new countries and cultures. Transat is firmly committed to the responsible development of the tourism industry, and has adopted the following definition of sustainable tourism:</p> <p><i>"Sustainable tourism entails respect for nature, as well as for host communities and their values; it combines positive socio-economic benefits for local populations with an enriching experience for travellers."</i></p> <p>The issue of the environment, as far as Transat's own facilities are concerned, is a clear and basic target. Their environment committees have implemented concrete initiatives with regard to recycling, conservation of resources, the disposal of obsolete electronic equipment, and raising employee awareness.</p> <p>Air Transat has begun developing an environmental management system that could lead to an ISO 14001 certification in the future. To find out more, consult the Transat and the Environment sections at their website:</p> <p>http://www.airtransat.ca/en/Info/the-environment-its-everyones-business.aspx?ExitID=69&ContentType=voyageur</p> <p>Eco-responsible certified hotels</p> <p>Transat urges its hotelier partners to excel in social and environmental responsibility, and formally recognizes the efforts of accommodations that commit to certification in this area. Certified establishments must</p>

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	<p>maintain performance levels to continue using such labels. The indicators used vary depending on the certification scheme, but many certification organizations have begun aligning their benchmarks with the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria.</p> <p>To help you make an informed choice when you take your next vacation, Transat list six certifications for hotels and beaches. You can also find certified hotels by searching by destination.</p> <p>Certifications for hotels Biosphere Responsible Tourism Green Globe Green Key ISO 14001 Travelife</p> <p>Certification for beaches Blue Flag</p>
<p>Gift Certificates</p>	<p>Here's your chance to make a loved one's dream come true. With Transat gift certificates you can offer the beauty, excitement, and wonders of the world: the South with its heavenly beaches and endless sunshine, or just a rental car. Transat gift certificates are valid on all Air Transat, Nolitours, or Transat Holidays products in their brochures. They can be redeemed at a travel agent's office at the time of reservation. To order your gift certificates call 1-800-322-6649.</p>
<p>Groups</p>	<p>Group rates are available – as few as 10 adults make up a group. Talk to your travel agent to check the current details of Transat's group deals.</p>
<p>Hurricane Policy</p>	<p>Nolitours and Transat Holidays provide you with true peace of mind. Vacationers can travel secure in the knowledge that you will be protected should a hurricane affect your destination city in Florida, Mexico, the Caribbean or Central America. This Nolitours/Transat Holidays policy covers reservations for departures between June 1 and November 30 each year and is likely to be renewed in 2016 – check the website. If the conditions stipulated in the policy are met, you may choose one of these four options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Travel at a later date 2. Travel to another destination city 3. Travel to the booked destination city 4. Cancel with a full refund
<p>Websites & Social Media</p>	<p>Website: www.Transat.com Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/AirTransat Twitter: https://twitter.com/AirTransat You Tube: https://www.youtube.com/user/AirTransatEng</p>

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