Scotland: Royal Residences and Retreats

Specially Designed
By
Dream Escape

2019
Day One: Arrival in Edinburgh

On arrival into Edinburgh Airport, you will be met and welcomed by your experienced chauffeur-guide who will provide a safe and comfortable transfer into the city centre.

Edinburgh, sometimes referred to as the “Athens of the North”, is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. It has two distinct areas: the Old Town, dominated by a medieval fortress; and the neoclassical New Town, dating from the 18th century. The harmonious connection of these two contrasting historic areas, each with many important buildings, is what gives the city its unique character and what saw it be awarded World Heritage Site status by UNESCO in 1995.

Check-in to your first luxury accommodation. Situated in a stunning Victorian building with Scottish baronial influences, it is a luxury hotel in the true sense of the word. While many Edinburgh hotels claim to have the city’s landmarks on their doorstep, few can say their own doorstep is a landmark.

Spend the rest of the day at leisure, resting and relaxing following your international flight.
Day Two: Edinburgh Highlights
This morning, an early start is required for your pre-opening, privately guided tour of Edinburgh Castle in the Old Town. From its volcanic rock, it towers over the city, every inch a mighty fortress and defender of the nation. Highlights start as soon as you find yourself on the Esplanade. Step inside the ancient walls and learn of the royalty who lived and died there, the battles fought over it and the struggles for control of the nation.

See beautiful and small St Margaret’s Chapel, its oldest part dating back to the 13th century, and the Stone of Destiny, a powerful and ancient symbol of Scottish monarchy. Of course, no visit would be complete without seeing the Honours of Scotland, the Scottish Crown Jewels. Made up of the Crown, Sceptre and the Sword, these, three pieces were used in the Coronation of Mary, Queen of Scots in 1543 and are the oldest Crown Jewels in the United Kingdom.

History hangs so thick in Edinburgh’s Old Town air, you can almost feel it. It is like leafing through the pages of a dusty novel, as each era unfolds with its own legends and characters. Perhaps, this is no more apparent than on the Royal Mile, arguably one of the most famous streets in the world. It is, in fact a stretch of four streets that formed the main thoroughfare of medieval Edinburgh, linking two iconic sites, Edinburgh Castle to the Palace of Holyroodhouse.

Confined by the city walls, the Old Town grew upwards. The Royal Mile is overlooked by tenements, between which cobbled closes and narrow stairways interlock to create a secret underground world, dating back centuries.

On to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, the Official Residence of HM, The Queen and The Royal Family in Scotland. This baroque Palace stands against the spectacular backdrop of Arthur’s Seat and is closely associated with Scotland's rich history. It is perhaps best known as the home of Mary, Queen of Scots and the setting for many of the dramatic episodes in her turbulent reign. Mary was married at Holyroodhouse and witnessed the brutal killing of her secretary Rizzio by her jealous second husband, Lord Darnley, in her private apartments. The Palace briefly served as the headquarters of Bonnie Prince Charlie during the 1745 Uprising.

There are 14 magnificent historic and State Apartments to view, many of which are renowned for their stunning plasterwork ceilings and unrivalled collection of tapestries. One of the most popular rooms in the Palace is the Great Gallery, hung with Jacob de Wet’s portraits of the real and legendary kings of Scotland.
Enjoy the balance of your day at leisure before departing your hotel early evening with your Private Guide by private car.

Opened exclusively, your VIP experience aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia commences with a “quayside arrival” and from here, you will see the ship in all her splendour.

Board via a red carpet on the Royal Brow, a practice previously reserved for members of the Royal Family and visiting dignitaries.

A personal guide will bring Britannia to life - she served HM, The Queen and the Royal Family for over 40 years. Furnished to HM, The Queen’s personal taste, each room was filled with photographs of her children, treasured family heirlooms, much-loved personal possessions and gifts from across the globe.

Royal children loved spending time aboard Britannia. There were endless games, treasure hunts, picnics and water fights. Royal children had their chores to do on Britannia too, including cleaning life rafts and occasionally helping to steer the Royal Yacht. In the Royal Galley, they also helped stir the ship's enormous Christmas pudding!

This was the ship that, even with its full complement of around 300 Royal Yachtsmen and Royal Household staff, HM, the Queen named as the one place where she could truly relax.
Day Three: The Scottish Borders

This morning, travel with your chauffeur-guide into the Scottish Borders, an area often missed by visitors, which lies north of the dividing line with England and covers a swathe of Scottish Uplands.

Your first visit is to Floors Castle, Scotland’s largest inhabited castle which was built for the 1st Duke of Roxburghe in 1721. He commissioned William Adam to create a “plain, but symmetrical neo-classical Georgian country house”.

Over the generations, each Duke made their own personal mark by adding extensions, east and west wings and more elaborate interiors. It was the sixth duke in the late 1830s who invited the celebrated architect of the day, William Playfair, to remodel the Castle.

This was a major commission and he was determined to create something rather flamboyant and dramatic to complement the breath-taking setting of the beautiful estate sweeping down to the River Tweed. His vision was a romantic fairy tale castle with pepperpot towers and turrets, battlements and parapets, as well as a window for every day of the year.

It is now the home to the 10th Duke and Duchess of Roxburghe and it makes a wonderful visit. Highlights include the Sitting Room, showing the early Georgian design, the Drawing Room with its distinctive 17th century “Brussels” tapestries and the Ballroom – the largest room in the Castle, with magnificent bay windows offering stunning views across the Estate.
Following lunch at leisure at The Courtyard Café, travel on to Mellerstain House, listed as one of Britain’s finest Stately Homes. A Private Guide is on hand to show you around the house.

This outstanding Georgian mansion is one of Robert Adam’s finest works. The interior decoration is stunning, the ceilings are especially worthy of note, having been preserved in the original Adam colours. The Library is a masterpiece of Classical decoration and colour, fine detailed plasterwork incorporating marble busts by Roubiliac.

The art collection includes paintings by Van Dyck, Ruysdael, Gainsborough, Ramsay and other Old Masters.

Afterwards, wander through the gardens before returning to Edinburgh with your chauffeur-guide.

Your evening is at leisure.
Day Four: Broomhall House and Scone Palace
Start your journey north this morning with your chauffeur-guide. Your first stop is Broomhall House. For the first time since it was built more than 300 years ago, Broomhall House, the ancestral seat of the Earls of Elgin and the Fife home of the family of King Robert the Bruce has opened its doors.

A private guided tour conducted by Lord Bruce, the heir of the 11th Earl of Elgin, will showcase this remarkable and fascinating property plus bring his extraordinary family history to life.

The Bruce family has been at the heart of Scotland’s story for centuries; perhaps the most legendary family member is King Robert the Bruce who successfully defended Scottish independence in 1314.

As you enter the hall, some say it rivals walking into the British Museum with casts of the Elgin marbles lining the wall and a Roman sarcophagus standing by the fireplace.

To follow, admire the stately drawing room with its magnificent 18th century French mirrors before continuing to the dining room complete with an oversized fireplace, reputedly made from the marital bed of James VI of Scotland.

The property also has a wonderful collection of books which include a first edition of “A Geneva Bible” c. 1560 which belonged to one of Scotland's greatest Protestant reformers, Rev. Robert Bruce.
From Broomhall House, travel on to Scone Palace, the seat of the Earl and Countess of Mansfield, whose family have lived there for over 400 years. Over the centuries it has been the capital of the Pictish Kingdom, the home of Parliaments, the crowning place of kings and immortalised in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*.

Highlights on your Privately Guided Tour include the State Dining Room and State Drawing Room with their walls clad in 19th century Chinese silks, and the magnificent Long Gallery, dating back to 1580. In the Lennox Room, see the bed hanging that Mary Queen of Scots made while she was held prisoner here on the orders of her own cousin!

You may also like to visit the grounds where beautiful blue, green and albino peacocks roam freely. Walk through what was once the abbey, as well as the site of the old village of Scone, where all that remains is the market cross.

Your accommodation for two evenings is Fonab Castle Hotel & Spa. This family-owned property was first built in 1892 and has been impeccably restored to combine its historic past with contemporary design to create a unique and luxurious retreat.

Situated in the heart of Highland Perthshire, the property benefits from a beautiful location just a short walk from the charming town of Pitlochry and surrounded by woodland with views overlooking Loch Faskally and Ben Vrackie.

This evening you may wish to dine in Sandeman’s Restaurant, the property’s fine dining restaurant which holds no less than 3 AA rosettes (*note: closed Sunday/Monday*). Alternatively, The Fonab Brasserie offers a more informal dining experience. Floor-to-ceiling windows provide stunning views of Loch Faskally and over to Ben Vrackie, while the menu draws on Scotland’s unrivalled natural larder to offer an array of delicious dishes.
Day Five: Glamis Castle
This morning, visit the magnificent Glamis Castle, which is famed for its connections to the British royal family and many myths and legends in British history and literature.

As you enter through the Queen Mother Memorial Gates, the stunning castle and its beautiful pepper pot turrets will come into view; few could remain unmoved in the face of such splendour. At the end of the mile-long drive, the castle piper will provide a special welcome. On arrival, enjoy refreshments in the 16th century chambers before your specialist private guide takes you on a tour of the castle.

Glamis Castle has been the family home of the Earls of Strathmore and Kinghorne since 1372, when Sir John Lyon was granted the land of Glamis by King Robert II. In 1376, Sir John married the King’s daughter, Princess Joanna. Since then Glamis has been visited and lived in by many members of the Scottish and British royal families. It was the childhood home of HM Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother and the birthplace of HRH The Princess Margaret.

Inside, each room is steeped in its own history and secrets; a highlight for many is Duncan’s Hall, one of the oldest parts of the castle, which features in William Shakespeare’s Macbeth as the setting for the slaying of King Duncan by Macbeth.

Afterwards, your chauffeur-guide returns you to Fonab Castle. The balance of the day is free to enjoy at your own leisure. You may wish to walk into the picturesque town of Pitlochry. Two notable visitors helped it grow from tiny settlement to bustling and attractive town. The first was General Wade who, in the early 1700s, built one of his main military routes north through what is now the town. The second was Queen Victoria in 1842. Her favourable comments marked the start of Pitlochry’s real growth as a popular tourist destination.

In 1863, the arrival of a third visitor, the railway, confirmed it as one of the premier mountain resorts in the country.
Day Six: The Scottish Highlands and Ballindalloch Castle

Travel north today, pausing briefly at the House of Bruar otherwise known as the ‘Harrods of the North’ should you be in need of a little retail therapy.

Afterwards, travel up through the Cairngorms National Park to Ballindalloch. Known as ‘The Pearl of the North’ the castle is considered to be one of the finest remaining examples of a classic Scottish baronial castle.

On arrival you will be met by the owner, Guy Macpherson-Grant, whose family have lived in the castle since the sixteenth century. As well as guiding you around the Castle, Guy will host lunch for you.

Originally a fortified tower house that was erected circa 1546, Ballindalloch underwent a significant period of renovation and extension during the Victorian era which transformed it into the sumptuous country retreat that stands today.

In spite of its history and grandeur, Ballindalloch remains first and foremost a beloved family residence and there are plenty of personal heirlooms and memorabilia belonging to the current occupants scattered amongst the general finery.

Your home for two evenings is located in Nairn, on the Moray Coast, near Inverness.

Once described as “the most beautiful Regency House in Scotland”, Boath House is set on 20 acres of well-tended lawns, walled gardens, woodland and streams. A series of well-kept paths connect with the house, enabling guests to explore the gardens and rest and relax in secluded seating areas or on sunny terraces. The fine dining offers fabulous views over the lawn to the lake. The hotel’s kitchen gardens provide much of the organic fruit, herbs and vegetables; the focus is on creating dishes combining these with produce of local, artisan growers, breeders, producers and foragers.
Day Seven: The Scottish Highlands

Following a leisurely breakfast, begin your day with a privately guided walk on the windswept battlefields at Culloden, site of the infamous 1746 battle where, in less than 60 minutes, the heavily outnumbered Jacobites of Scotland lost to the Duke of Cumberland’s government troops.

In the aftermath of this harrowing battle, the British government ruthlessly set about dismantling Highland culture, depriving clan chiefs of their legal powers and clansmen of their weapons. Jacobite estates were seized, speaking the native Gaelic became a hanging offence and the kilt and tartan were banned.

Following your walk, you may like to spend some time in the Visitor Centre which stands beside the battlefield. Here, view artefacts from the battle and interactive displays that reveal the background to the conflict. It stands as a testament to this crucial day in Scottish history.

Afterwards, enjoy a privately guided tour of Cawdor Castle with the Dowager Countess. The earliest presence of a fortress here can be traced to 1179, but by the 1300s any trace of this had disappeared, and a new site was chosen for the castle as it stands today. The imposing, rectangular tower-house consists of four storeys and a garret with one entrance to the outside world set at upper first floor level; the perfect design to keep out unwelcome visitors.

The castle’s most unique feature is perhaps the living holly tree it was built around. Tradition has it that the Thane of Cawdor, received instructions in a dream to load a coffer of gold onto the back of a donkey and let it roam the district for a day – wherever the donkey lay to rest for the evening would be where the new castle would be sited. The donkey chose the holly tree and the castle was built around it.

Return to Boath House late afternoon.
Day Eight: Loch Ness
This morning, travel to the shores of Scotland’s most famous stretch of water: Loch Ness. Extending 23 miles, the loch provides spectacular views - the scenery is breath-taking regardless of the time of year.

There can be no better way to see the water than from aboard a luxury motor cruiser which, with a capacity for just eight guests, is reserved for you exclusively.

Sumptuous platters of Scottish delicacies are served as you sit back and admire your surroundings, including impressive Urquhart Castle, which dates back to the 13th century. Once one of Scotland’s mightiest strongholds, it is now nothing more than atmospheric ruins overlooking dark waters.

The loch is steeped in legend and folklore; the most famous claim being that it is home to the Loch Ness Monster, affectionately known as Nessie. It is said that the first sighting of the monster was in the 6th century by St. Columba, and sporadic sightings have been reported ever since.

Disembark at Fort Augustus where your chauffeur-guide meets you and transfers you to Inverlochy Castle, your home for two nights.

Inverlochy Castle nestles in the foothills of Ben Nevis, Scotland’s highest mountain. This renowned Relais et Chateaux property was built in 1863. In 1873, Queen Victoria visited the area, spending a week sketching and painting. She wrote in her diaries, 'I never saw a lovelier or more romantic spot'.
Day Nine: Jacobite Steam Train
A very special and scenic day lies ahead as you board the Jacobite Steam Train to experience what has been described as one of the world’s great train journeys.

From Fort William, travel along the Road to the Isles, experiencing some of Scotland’s most stunning sea and landscapes. Your journey will take you over the 21 arches of the Glenfinnan Viaduct, which are perhaps now best known from the *Harry Potter* films.

The area has a history that is close to the hearts of many Scots, with Loch Shiel being the place where Prince Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie), raised his standard at the start of the Jacobite Rising in 1745. The Glenfinnan Monument is a poignant reminder of the final Jacobite Rising. This 18m monument depicting a lone kilted Highlander commemorates those who rose in support of him, standing in memory of a way of life which was cruelly extinguished.

Your route continues along a beautiful stretch of Highland coast where, on a clear day, the enchanting Small Isles of Muick, Eigg and Rhum are visible. Framed by a dramatic rocky backdrop, the Atlantic Ocean tumbles crystal-clear on to sparkling beaches.

At Mallaig, re-unite with your chauffeur-guide and make the return journey via road. It is equally as scenic as via train and allows more “stop offs” to explore the area. Perhaps pause at Arisaig, which lies at the southern end of The Silver Sands of Morar. The coastline is sublime.

Return to Inverlochy Castle late afternoon.
Day Ten: Glencoe and Inveraray Castle

Travel south today and explore Glencoe, Scotland’s most famous glen. It lies in the heart of an ancient volcano; glaciers and fiery explosions carved out the rugged and forbidding mountain peaks.

It is often considered one of the most spectacular and beautiful places in the country and certainly one of the most dramatic; thundering waterfalls tumble down the sides of mountains into sparkling lochs.

Scenery and geology aside, the glen has its place firmly in the history books due to its savage history. It was the site of the infamous massacre of Clan Macdonald of Glencoe by government troops in 1692. On a wintery dawn morning, in a terrible breach of trust, the soldiers attacked their hosts.

Reserved privately, a local guide will take you on a guided walk.

Afterwards, travel onto Inveraray Castle for a special visit. It enjoys a glorious setting, situated on the shores of Loch Fyne, surrounded by rugged Highland scenery. Since the 15th century this towered and turreted castle and its plainer predecessor have been the seat of the Campbells, one of Scotland’s most powerful families. To this day, it is the ancestral seat of the Dukes of Argyll, Chiefs of Clan Campbell.

Its fairy-tale façade houses an enchanting interior. A specialist private guide will take you on a tour of the castle. Noted highlights include the Armoury Hall, which contains some 1300 pieces, including swords preserved from the Battle of Culloden. The fine State Dining Room and Tapestry Drawing Room contain magnificent French tapestries woven specially for the Castle, fabulous examples of Scottish, English and French furniture and countless other precious artworks.
Continue to the world-renowned Gleneagles resort. When Gleneagles first opened its doors in 1924, it was quickly dubbed the Playground of the Gods. Today, its claim to that title is undiminished: experience for yourself the divine setting, dining and facilities of the hotel. As the saying goes, “There are many beautiful places in the world. There are many great hotels. There are many famous golf courses and resorts. There is only one Gleneagles”.

Gleneagles offers an excellent collection of dining options to suit the preference of every guest. Perhaps savour a two Michelin-starred dining experience in Restaurant Andrew Fairlie or enjoy silver service and fine dining in the sophisticated Strathearn Restaurant.

In the Dormy Clubhouse, choose from the Dormy Restaurant which offers a relaxed atmosphere and comfort food favourites; or Auchterarder 70, the newcomer to the Gleneagles dining scene where you can dine on delightful small plates and explore an extensive range of craft beers.
Day Eleven: Day at leisure

Today is your own to do as much or as little as you please.

Gleneagles is renowned for offering some of the best country pursuits and leisure activities in the country, and there is something to suit every preference and interest.

Perhaps tee off on one of Gleneagles’ iconic courses, take aim at the shooting school, retreat to the trout loch for a spot of fishing, or enjoy the thrill of off-road driving in the Perthshire hills.

For animal lovers, perhaps experience falconry – the sport of kings – or put Gleneagles’ delightful Labradors through their paces at the Gundog School. The Equestrian School provides expert instruction for beginners, while experienced riders may wish to enjoy a trail ride in the peaceful surrounding countryside.

Or, simply relax and head to The Spa at Gleneagles, as Scotland’s pre-eminent destination spa, it offers an extensive menu of traditional therapies as well as complementary and alternative wellness treatments.

Please note that activities offered at Gleneagles are at an additional cost, and are highly popular; as a result, it is strongly recommended that they are booked in advance as early as possible. Height, weight and age restrictions apply.
Day Twelve: Onward Travel – *Edinburgh Airport*
Your chauffeur-guide will transfer you to Edinburgh Airport for onward travel.