

SCOTLAND HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS

August 8, 2023 – 19 Days

Edinburgh Tattoo, Orkney Islands & Skye

Scotland is renowned for its rich heritage, its passionate people, and its contribution to the world past and present. Scottish culture has spread across the globe through emigration, and about 40 million people world-wide identify themselves as Scottish. Those whose ancestry reaches back to the land of Robert the Bruce, Sir Walter Scott, and Sir Sean Connery hold strong to the traditions and characteristics of the people. There are so many recognizable Scottish icons: Gaelic, tartans, kilts, whisky, thistle, bag pipes, Robbie Burns, St. Andrews, and the Stone of Destiny. Far and wide, most Scots are fiercely proud to claim these as their own. Wells Gray Tours is excited to offer this in-depth but leisurely journey, our 5th tour to Scotland, that delves into the diverse land, history, and personalities of this remarkable country.

Activity Level: 2



TOUR
25

35 Meals Included:

17 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 1 tea, 12 dinners

Fares per person:

\$10,725 double/twin; \$12,425 single

Please add 0.3% GST.

Early Bookers:

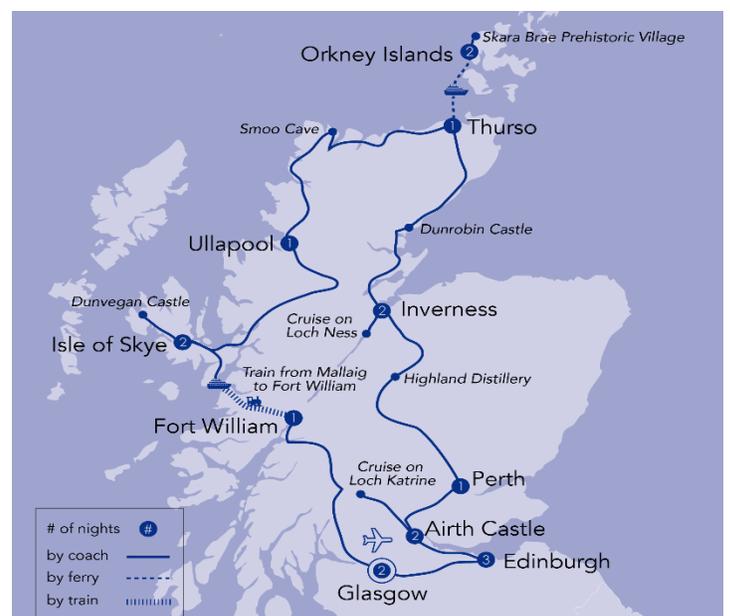
\$300 discount on first 8 seats; \$150 on next 6

Experience Points:

Earn 190 points on this tour.

Redeem 190 points if you book by May 4, 2023.

Departure from: Lower Mainland



ITINERARY

Day 1: Tuesday, August 8

Meet the BC Interior and Victoria travellers at Vancouver Airport. Our flight to Europe leaves in late afternoon. Flight details (airline, connecting city) will be available in early October.

Day 2: Wednesday, August 9

We arrive in Glasgow in late afternoon. **Welcome to Scotland!** Our Scottish guide and driver meet us at the airport, then we drive about an hour east to Edinburgh for a three-night stay.

Meals included: Dinner

Accommodation: Voco Edinburgh Haymarket Hotel

Day 3: Thursday, August 10

A local guide is with us today for an extended tour of **Edinburgh**. Its magnificent architecture ranges from the lofty buildings of its medieval Old Town along the Royal Mile, to the graceful houses of the Georgian New Town. Overlooking it all, **Edinburgh Castle** dominates the city skyline. Built in the 12th century, it has been a royal residence and central to many historic conflicts right up to the Jacobite Rising in 1745. We take a tour through the castle which includes three military museums and St. Margaret's Chapel.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Voco Edinburgh Haymarket Hotel

Day 4: Friday, August 11

We board the *Royal Yacht Britannia*, now permanently moored in Edinburgh after decades of service to Queen Elizabeth and the Royal family. Veteran of 968 official voyages, *Britannia* sailed over 1½ million km and accompanied the Royals on many of their most memorable state tours. The afternoon is leisure time. Tonight, we return to Edinburgh Castle where we have reserved seats at the renowned **Edinburgh Military Tattoo**. It is ranked as one of the most spectacular shows in the world, featuring 1,000 performers in a whirling, colourful, and breathtaking kaleidoscope of music, dance, and display. The haunting tunes of *Skye Boat Song* and *All the Blue Bonnets* are played against the backdrop of the castle ramparts and the twilight, truly a memorable experience for our Scotland tour.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Voco Edinburgh Haymarket Hotel

Day 5: Saturday, August 12

We journey west from Edinburgh with a stop at the giant **Kelpies Sculpture** of two horse heads. Nearby, we take a cruise on the Forth & Clyde Canal using the unique **Falkirk Wheel**. This engineering marvel is the only rotating boatlift in the world, and raises vessels 24 metres to the Union Canal. We continue to **Bannockburn Battlefield** where, in 1314, King Robert the Bruce routed the forces of King Edward II to win freedom for the Scots from English domination. We stay two nights at Airth Castle Hotel which dates to the 14th century and was once owned by the family of Robert the Bruce. Rooms could be in the castle or the modern hotel wing.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Airth Castle Hotel



Day 6: Sunday, August 13

This morning, we explore **Stirling Castle**, one of Scotland's grandest due to its imposing hilltop location and impressive architecture. Construction started in the 14th century and it has been important to Scottish history since then, enduring 16 sieges and presiding over three major battles. Next, we visit the **National Wallace Monument**, a tower standing atop Abbey Craig with a panoramic view over the Ochil Hills and the Forth Valley. It commemorates Sir William Wallace, a 13th-century Scottish hero. The 67-metre tower was completed in 1869 and there is a spiral staircase with 246 steps to reach the viewing gallery.

Meals included: Breakfast

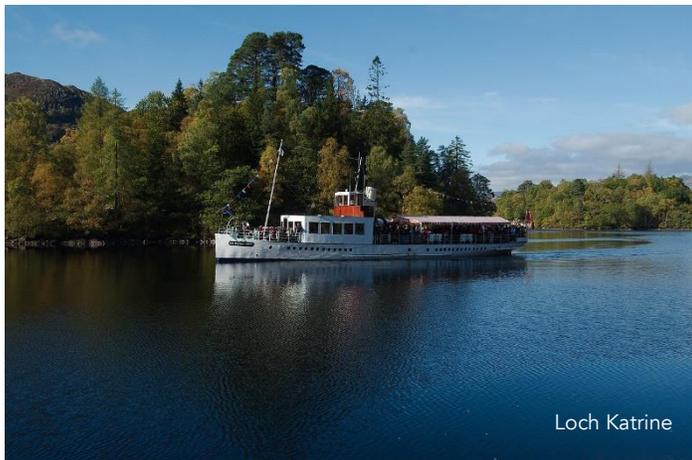
Accommodation: Airth Castle Hotel

Day 7: Monday, August 14

Today is devoted to **Trossachs National Park** where the magnificent landscape has fired the imagination of writers and artists for centuries. It embraces the deep waters of Loch Lomond and Loch Katrine, the wild glens of the Trossachs, and the Breadalbane Hills. Relax during a cruise on **Loch Katrine** which was the fictional setting of Sir Walter Scott's poem *The Lady of the Lake* and the Rossini opera, *La Donna del Lago*. Near Perth, we visit **Scone Palace** (pronounced *Scoon*) which was built in the 12th century as an abbey, then expanded and renovated in the early 19th century. It has been the home of the Earls of Mansfield for over 400 years. Since at least the 9th century, Scone has been the crowning-place of the Kings of Scots and home to the **Stone of Scone**, also called the Stone of Destiny. We stay overnight in the Perth, Pitlochry or Dundee area.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: TBA



Day 8: Tuesday, August 15

We travel through the Grampian Mountains in **Cairngorms National Park** with a stop at Highland Folk Museum. Founded in 1935, the collection preserves the living and working conditions of the Highlands people. Afterwards, taste the superb whisky at a **Highlands distillery** and buy a bottle directly from the producer. We stay two nights in Inverness.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: River Ness Hotel

Day 9: Wednesday, August 16

We start the day with a visit to Culloden Moor which was the scene of the last major battle fought in Britain, an iconic site in Scotland. The **Culloden Battle of 1746** ended the Jacobite chances of restoring the exiled Stuart dynasty to the throne of Britain. Government forces led by the Duke of Cumberland crushed the army of Prince Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie) in an hour. No trip to Scotland would be complete without a cruise on legendary **Loch Ness**, home of the famous inhabitant Nessie. Learn all about the sightings and speculation as we watch the sonar and cruise this mysterious lake. At 37 km long, 1½ km wide, and 220 metres deep, Loch Ness contains enough water to fill every lake and river in England. The cruise travels from Dochgarroch at the outlet of Loch Ness to **Urquhart Castle**. It was built on the lakeshore starting in the 13th century and much of it was destroyed in 1692. There is time to stroll around the ruins, then we return to Inverness by coach.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: River Ness Hotel



Day 10: Thursday, August 17

Heading north, we cross Moray Firth, then travel along Cromarty Firth and Dornoch Firth. We tour **Dunrobin Castle** which dates to the 14th century and has a magnificent setting with a view across the North Sea. With 189 rooms, it is the largest house in the Highlands. We stay overnight in **Thurso**, a village on Scotland's north coast.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Muthu Royal Hotel



Dunrobin Castle

Day 11: Friday, August 18

We ride the ferry from Thurso for 1½ hours to Stromness on the **Orkney Islands**. Over 70 islands make up the archipelago of the Orkneys. The climate is mild, the soil is fertile, and the people have a fondness for folklore. Orkney contains some of the oldest and best-preserved Neolithic sites in Europe, and the heart of the main island is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today, we explore these fascinating islands with a local guide, and visit some of the most famous sites such as the Standing Stones of Stenness, the burial chamber at **Maes Howe** dating to 2800 BC, the dramatic white beach of the Bay of Skail, and the Ring of Brodgar. **Skara Brae** is over 5,000 years old and the best preserved Neolithic village in northern Europe; it was exposed by a storm in 1850 and is still being excavated.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Stromness Hotel Payman Club



Standing Stones

Day 12: Saturday, August 19

We spend the morning in Kirkwall seeing the Churchill Barriers, the Italian Chapel, and the adjacent **Bishop's and Earl's Palaces**, both in ruins. Kirkwall is on the shore of Scapa Flow, one of the world's greatest natural harbours, which was a strategic naval base during World War I and II.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Stromness Hotel Payman Club

Day 13: Sunday, August 20

We ride the ferry back to the mainland and drive the scenic winding road along the north coast of Scotland. **Smoo Cave** was formed by the eroding action of the ocean and a river, and we take a walk through several large chambers. The museum in Ullapool has exhibits about crofting, fishing, the "klondykers", the ship *Hector*, and the Melville pistols.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Gairloch Hotel Ullapool

Day 14: Monday, August 21

We admire stunning scenery during the drive along the rugged west coast through a remote section of the Scottish Highlands. **Inverewe Gardens** was created from barren land in 1862 by Osgood Mackenzie and, over the next 60 years, he collected exotic plants from all over the world to nurture in this remarkable botanical garden. We continue to **Eilean Donan Castle**, built on a small island in the 13th century and extensively restored 100 years ago. We stay two nights in Balmacara on the shore of Lochalsh with views across the water to the Isle of Skye.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Balmacara Hotel



Isle of Skye

Day 15: Tuesday, August 22

True romantics pack their bags and head 'Over the Sea to Skye' according to the poem, often said to be the most enchanting region of Scotland. After crossing the bridge at Kyle of Lochalsh, we tour the **Isle of Skye**, through the imposing Cuillin Hills, among pastures where Highland cows graze, to the small fishing town of Portree with its pastel-coloured houses lining the harbour. Marvel at Kilt Rock where 70-metre high cliffs are marked in an almost tartan-like pattern by the rock strata and a waterfall tumbles to the

pebbled shore below. A highlight is **Dunvegan Castle**, perched on a seaside rock and still in the same family after 850 years.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner
Accommodation: Balmacara Hotel

Day 16: Wednesday, August 23

At the south end of Skye, we stroll through the lovely **Armadale Gardens** which are still maintained even though the adjacent Armadale Castle is in ruins. We say farewell to Skye as we ride the ferry to Mallaig on the mainland. One of the icons of Scotland is the **Jacobite Steam Train**, an exciting and awesome two-hour excursion from Mallaig to Fort William, passing Loch Eil and Loch Morar. The Jacobite's engine and several carriages became the **Hogwarts Express** in the Harry Potter films and we even cross the 21-arch Glenfinnan Viaduct.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner
Accommodation: Ben Nevis Hotel



Day 17: Thursday, August 24

Dominating Fort William is **Ben Nevis**, the highest mountain in Britain at 1,335 metres. Today, we travel through the grandeur of **Glencoe**, hearing the tale of the 1692 Massacre of Glencoe. Myths, mysteries, and movies are all now part of the fabric of this magical valley. This afternoon, we stop at **Inveraray Castle** on the shore of Loch

Fyne. Construction started in 1743 when it was one of the earliest examples of Gothic Revival architecture and it has been the seat of the Dukes of Argyll since then. Heading into Glasgow, we drive along the "**bonnie bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond.**"

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch
Accommodation: Best Western Argyle Hotel



Day 18: Friday, August 25

Glasgow is Scotland's largest city and has a strong industrial past, but is noted for its reinvention and transformation. The historic city sees its future in the service industries such as tourism and conventions. Glasgow has received many prestigious awards, including the impressive title of UK City of Architecture and Design. We visit some highlights of Glasgow such as St Mungo's Cathedral and Kelvingrove Art Gallery. Then step aboard the enchanting Red Bus Bistro and savour a **delicious afternoon tea** including traditional scones with fresh whipped cream and jam, finger sandwiches, mini wraps and quiches, and petit fours and cakes, all during a drive around Glasgow. Our farewell dinner is a chance to reminisce about all the amazing sights we have seen during our journey around Scotland.

Meals included: Breakfast, Tea, Dinner
Accommodation: Best Western Argyle Hotel

Day 19: Saturday, August 26

We fly from Glasgow to Vancouver.

Meals included: Breakfast

TOUR NOTES

Tour director & guides: A Wells Gray tour director accompanies you throughout the tour. A Scottish guide is with you for 16 days in Scotland. Local guides are hired for some cities to provide in-depth commentary and a regional insight.

Passport is required for this tour and must be valid until your return to Canada according to the Government of Canada website (CIBT Visas, a private company, says it must be valid for 6 months after your return). A Canadian citizen does not require a visa to enter the United Kingdom.

Itinerary and Fare Changes: As the world emerges from the pandemic, many of our suppliers such as hotels, restaurants, attractions, and transportation providers are struggling with shortage of staff, inflated costs, and supply line challenges. Sometimes we are notified about changes to the itinerary prior to departure and sometimes during the tour. We do our best to substitute a similar service if something cancels, but occasionally the only alternative is to provide a refund for the missed activity. Please note that if we are forced to cancel a component of an extensive tour due to an issue beyond our control, the current penalties still apply if you choose to cancel the entire tour. Fuel surcharges and changes to taxes, foreign currency exchange rates, or other tour costs can occur at any time, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up to departure.

Currency & Expenses: The currency in Scotland is the British Pound and, as of July 2022, a Canadian dollar is worth about £0.65 (or a British Pound will cost you about \$1.57). You should order pounds from your bank 2-3 weeks before departure, or plan to use ATMs in Scotland, or exchange funds after arrival. Credit cards are accepted almost everywhere. Costs for meals and attractions you choose yourself are generally higher than in Canada.

Flights between Vancouver and Glasgow cannot be booked until early October 2022. After that, we can advise you of the airline and flight schedule. You can also request an upgrade to premium economy or business class, and we can quote those fares. If you prefer to stay longer and return independently, please book your own flight and take our option of "No Flight" for a discount of \$1,600 per person. We are unable to take requests for window or aisle seating on the planes. The airline will not accept them, as group seating is assigned as a block. If this is important to you, we suggest you book your own flight which allows seat selection.

Gratuities: The customary gratuities to the Scottish guide, local guides, and coach drivers are included in the tour fare. The gratuities to the Wells Gray tour director and Canadian drivers are not included and are left to your discretion.

Hotels: Luxury hotels are limited in Scotland. Hotels in Edinburgh, Inverness, and Glasgow, and Airth Castle are rated 4 stars, but all others are rated 3 stars and you should expect basic accommodations.

Important Tour Information: This document is provided at final payment and includes many helpful details about your tour.



Sampling Scotch whisky at a distillery



This is a Tour 25 departure, meaning the tour is limited to 25 participants, offering a more intimate travel experience.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Flight from Vancouver to Glasgow, Scotland
- Current air tax, security fees & fuel surcharge
- Coach transportation in Scotland for 16 days
- 17 nights of accommodation and hotel taxes
- Scottish tour guide for 16 days
- Transfer Glasgow Airport to Edinburgh hotel
- Locally-guided tour in Edinburgh
- Edinburgh Castle
- St. Margaret's Chapel
- Royal Yacht Britannia
- Ticket to the Edinburgh Military Tattoo
- Kelpies Horse Heads Sculpture
- Canal cruise with the Falkirk Wheel
- Bannockburn Battlefield site
- Stirling Castle
- National Wallace Monument
- Trossachs National Park
- Cruise on Loch Katrine
- Scone Palace
- Stone of Scone (Stone of Destiny) replica
- Highland Folk Museum
- Whisky Distillery tour with sampling
- Culloden Battlefield site
- Cruise on Loch Ness
- Urquhart Castle
- Dunrobin Castle
- Ferry to/from Orkney Islands
- Local guide for full-day tour of the Orkneys
- Archeological sites Skara Brae and Maes Howe
- Standing Stones of Stenness
- Italian Chapel
- Bishop's and Earl's Palaces
- Smoo Cave
- Ullapool Museum
- Inverewe Gardens
- Eilean Donan Castle
- Tour of the Isle of Skye
- Dunvegan Castle
- Armadale Gardens and castle ruins
- Jacobite Steam Train, Mallaig to Fort William
- Glencoe Visitor Centre
- Inveraray Castle
- St. Mungo's Cathedral
- Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum
- Afternoon tea on board Red Bus in Glasgow
- Transfer from Glasgow hotel to airport
- Flight from Glasgow to Vancouver
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
- Luggage handling at hotels
- Road and bridge tolls
- Gratuities to Scottish guide, local guides, and Scottish coach drivers
- **35 meals:** 17 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 1 tea, 12 dinners



Activity Level 2: Due to the historic nature of some attractions, it may be necessary to climb stairs, walk on uneven surfaces, and walk up to a kilometre at a time. Rooms in some hotels may be reached by some stairs after riding the elevator. Sometimes the coach cannot drive all the way to an attraction. There can be longer walks in the airports, so you should request a cart or wheelchair in advance or at check-in if this could be an issue for you. There are many stops during this tour and you must be able to get on and off the coach by yourself without delaying your fellow travellers. The coaches cannot carry a scooter or motorized wheelchair. If Activity Level 2 could be challenging, you are urged to bring a companion to assist you. The tour director, Scottish guides, and drivers have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. Please consider all these mobility challenges prior to booking this tour. Seeing everything mentioned in this itinerary requires participation at Activity Level 2. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or require frequent assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some tour days. In extreme situations, you may be required to leave the tour and travel home at your own expense; travel insurance will probably not cover you.

TOUR POLICIES

Payments: A deposit of \$1,000 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due May 4, 2023. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

Discounts: Early bookers receive \$300 discount on first 8 seats and \$150 on next 6 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after May 4, 2023.

Cancellation Policy: Up to April 4, 2023, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$100 per person. From April 5 to May 4, the cancellation charge is \$400 per person. From May 5 to June 2, the cancellation charge is 40% of the tour fare. From June 3 to July 4, the cancellation charge is 80% of the tour fare. After July 4, there is no refund.

Travel Insurance: A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause for medical and cancellation claims, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

Food Allergies: You must notify us no later than at final payment if you have a food allergy. Some restaurants are in remote areas of Scotland and may not be able to satisfy all food allergies. As restaurants recover from two years of pandemic restrictions, many facing severe labour shortages, we have been informed that food allergies should be honoured, but it is impossible to handle everybody's requests for food preferences. (An allergy causes medical distress, a preference does not.) For some allergies, please consider bringing your own snacks or food items so you are not dependent on what restaurants are able to serve.

Home pickups are available within Greater Vancouver for an additional charge of \$50 per person round trip. Transfer is to and from YVR. Please request no later than at final payment.

Photo Credits: Wikimedia Commons (Edinburgh Tattoo, Dunvegan Castle, Loch Katrine, Dunrobin Castle, Steam Train, Glencoe, whisky), Wikipedia (Falkirk Wheel), Visit Scotland (Loch Ness), Adobe Photoshop (Standing Stones), Wikimedia Commons photo by Klaus with K (Skye)

Experience Points: This tour earns 190 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until May 4, 2023.

Consumer Protection BC Licences: Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842

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