



## Scotland: History & Heritage

Castles and landscapes, great cities and the Highlands

**8–17 May 2026 (MM 952)**

£6,810 • 10 days

Speaker: David Forsyth

**18–27 September 2026 (MM 170)**

£6,810 • 10 days

Speaker: David Forsyth

Sweeping exploration by boat and train of the landmarks of Scottish history, includes two nights on the Isle of Skye.

Historic figures, real and romantic, with an emphasis on events that led to mass emigrations to the New World.

A celebration of Scotland's uniquely close relationship with the British Royal Family.

Scotland is a small country (its current population of 5.5 million is less than that of the US state of Minnesota) but it has always punched above its weight on the world stage. This is certainly due to the pre-eminent achievements of Scottish thinkers, scientists, writers and explorers over the centuries. But the mass migrations of Scots fleeing hardship and seeking a better life in far-flung corners of the globe has also played its part. Emigration from Scotland to North America began in the early 1700s. The defeat of the Jacobites at the Battle of Culloden in 1746 sounded the death knell of the traditional clan society.

In the following centuries, between the 1820s and 1914, over two million people emigrated from Scotland settling in North America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Whether they left as a result of the so-called Highland Clearances, or from Scotland's rapidly growing Lowland towns and cities a Scottish diaspora was formed. The descendants of those who emigrated is now estimated to number many millions. In new homelands they remain proud of their Scottish roots and derive a strong sense of identity from their ancestral homeland.

This tour explores and celebrates the touchstones of Scottishness, from the battlefield at Bannockburn, where the Scots under Robert the Bruce routed their 'auld enemy' the English in 1314, to a Scotch whisky distillery. Castles, both picturesquely ruined and baronially grand, feature prominently, as do magnificent sweeps of Highland scenery that are unmatched anywhere in Europe.

Mary, Queen of Scots is a frequent

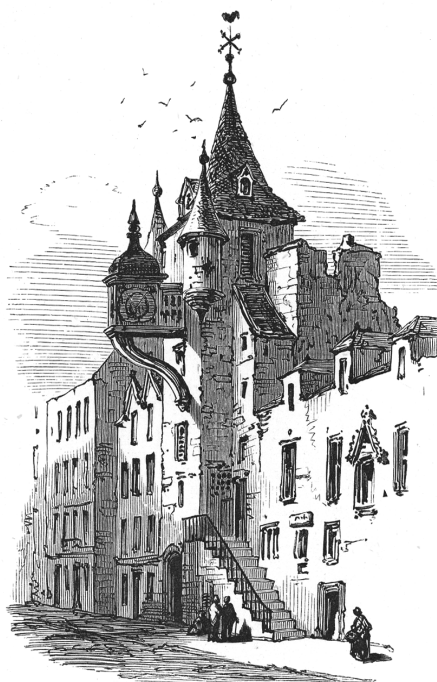
ghostly presence and we celebrate the close and enduring Scottish links of the present-day British monarchy. Through it all, from Edinburgh to Glasgow by way of the wilds of Highland Scotland, we thread the story of those who left but never forgot.

### Itinerary

**Day 1: Edinburgh.** Leave the hotel on foot at 2.00pm for an orientation walk of Edinburgh. In the heart of the capital city the forbidding ramparts of Edinburgh Castle rise spectacularly from a volcanic plug. Fortifications date back to the 12th century. Despite its apparently impregnable position the castle changed hands frequently between the Scots and the English during the Wars of Independence. It is home to the Stone of Scone, used in the coronation of Scottish (and later English and British) monarchs.

**Day 2: Edinburgh.** The National Museum of Scotland celebrates Scottish history and culture through thousands of exhibits including Celtic brooches, the 'Scottish Maiden' (a prototype guillotine) and the exquisite Mary, Queen of Scots Silver Casket, made by a French silversmith in the early 16th century. Mary also features in the National Portrait Gallery alongside likenesses of Robert Burns, Bonnie Prince Charlie and contemporary figures such as the actress Tilda Swinton. The Palace of Holyroodhouse, at the opposite end of the Royal Mile from Edinburgh Castle, is the day's final visit. This predominantly 17th-century palace is the official residence of the British monarch in Scotland. A 16th-century tower houses the private apartments of Mary, Queen of Scots.

**Day 3: St Andrews.** Stirling Castle, Mary's childhood home, is one of the biggest and most significant sites in Scottish history. It sits atop another volcanic outcrop. Monarchs were crowned here and sieges endured. The painstakingly restored Renaissance palace of James V is considered one of the finest historic buildings in Scotland. On the outskirts of Stirling, the site of the Battle of Bannockburn marks a landmark in Scottish history. Here it was that in 1314 forces commanded by Robert the Bruce defeated the English army under Edward II and Scotland entered a period of independence from England. The precise location of the battle is disputed but films and exhibits recreate the event and explain its significance.



Edinburgh, Canongate Tolbooth, late-19th-century wood engraving.

**Day 4: St Andrews.** Now a ruin on a rocky promontory by the sea, St Andrews Castle is famous for its 'bottle dungeon' – a grim medieval prison – and two tunnels (a mine and counter mine) that represent a fascinating relic of medieval siegecraft. The 14th-century St Andrews Cathedral, once the centre of Scottish Catholicism, was ransacked during the Reformation and its stone re-used. The surviving walls and the impressive St Rule's Tower indicate its once-colossal proportions, which would have been visible for many miles out to sea. Glamis Castle, the home of the Earls of Strathmore since 1372, is known from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and as the Queen Mother's childhood home. It dates mainly from the 16th and 17th centuries, with Victorian-era additions, and is built in a traditionally Scottish, turreted style. The gardens feature soaring Douglas firs.

**Day 5: Inverness. May 2026:** near the Highland village of Crathie, the baronial Balmoral Castle was known as the favourite royal residence of Queen Elizabeth II and it was here that she died in September 2022. It has served as the Royal Family's summer retreat since Prince Albert had it built for Queen Victoria in the mid-19th

Scotland: History & Heritage  
continued

century. **September 2026:** Craigievar Castle, begun around 1576 and virtually untouched since 1626, is among the best preserved and loveliest of the Scottish tower houses which are crowned with 'baronial' turrets and bartisans. **May & September 2026:** At Culloden in 1746, the last pitched battle on British soil, the claim of Stuart kings to the British throne was finally put down amid bloody slaughter.

**Day 6: Skye.** Fort George on the Moray Firth was built in the wake of Culloden for the army of George II and it's still a British Army base. Within its massive ramparts, the Highlanders Museum is dedicated to the history of the Highland Regiments of the British Army. The picturesque tidal island of Eilean Donan and its reconstructed castle (the original was destroyed in the early 18th century during the Jacobite Risings), at the meeting of three sea lochs, is one of the most photographed places in Scotland. It also features in films such as Highlander.

**Day 7: Skye.** The ruined Armadale Castle overlooking the Sound of Sleat was formerly the home of the Macdonalds of Sleat, part of the Clan Donald. The museum there commemorates these 'Lords of the Isles' with a focus on the clansmen who started new lives in North America and Australia and their modern-day descendants. The Talisker distillery on Skye has been making distinctive single malt whiskies for nearly 200 years.

**Day 8: Glasgow.** Morning ferry from Skye to Mallaig before boarding the iconic Jacobite steam train to Fort William, taking in breathtaking Highlands scenery en route. Coach to Glasgow. First of two nights in Glasgow.

**Day 9: Glasgow.** Based on the Glasgow University campus, the Hunterian is the oldest public museum in Scotland. The main Museum and Art Gallery feature unrivalled collections while the Mackintosh House is a recreation of the interior of world-renowned architect/designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh's Glasgow home.

**Day 10: Glasgow.** The tour ends after breakfast.

## Lecturer

**David Forsyth.** David worked for National Museums Scotland in various curatorial roles within the Scottish History collections for a quarter of a century. He retired in 2022 after acting as Keeper (Head) of both the Scottish History & Archaeology and Art & Design Departments. The mainstay of his research and exhibition interest was the Scottish Diaspora, and more generally the juxtaposition of history and material culture. He has exhibited and published in both journals and books on topics as diverse as Scottish emigration to North America, the Scottish global military diaspora, Mary, Queen of Scots, and the Jacobites. He now enjoys a post-retirement career as a freelance historian and historical guide.

## Practicalities

**Price. Two sharing:** £6,810. **Single occupancy:** £8,190.

**Included:** travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 1 lunch and 8 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions and donations for sites visited; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

*Transport to Edinburgh and from Glasgow is not included in the price of the tour.*

**Accommodation in May. Intercontinental The George, Edinburgh ([ihg.com](http://ihg.com)):** excellently located in George Street. **Hotel du Vin, St Andrews ([hotelduvin.com](http://hotelduvin.com)):** central location on The Scores. **Ness Walk, Inverness ([nesswalk.com](http://nesswalk.com)):** 15 minutes on foot from the centre, opened in 2019 in a Victorian villa beside the River Ness. **Skeabost House Hotel, Skye ([sonascollection.com/our-hotels/skeabost/](http://sonascollection.com/our-hotels/skeabost/)):** on the shoreline of Loch Lizart on Skye. **Kimpton Blythswood Square, Glasgow ([kimptonblythswoodsquare.com/](http://kimptonblythswoodsquare.com/)):** overlooking Blythswood Square, one of the city's only five-star hotels. *Single occupancy rooms are doubles for sole use.*

**Accommodation in September. Intercontinental The George, Edinburgh ([ihg.com](http://ihg.com)):** excellently located in George Street. **Old Course Hotel, St Andrews ([oldcoursehotel.co.uk](http://oldcoursehotel.co.uk)):** one of Scotland's most prestigious hotels. **Kingsmills Hotel, Inverness ([kingsmillshotel.com](http://kingsmillshotel.com)):** 20 minutes on foot from the centre, in a historic building on the banks of the River Ness and with extensive gardens. **Skeabost House Hotel, Skye ([sonascollection.com/our-hotels/skeabost/](http://sonascollection.com/our-hotels/skeabost/)):** on the shoreline of Loch Lizart on Skye. **Radisson Blu Hotel, Glasgow ([radissonhotels.com](http://radissonhotels.com)):** a smart, 4-star hotel in the city centre. *Single occupancy rooms are doubles for sole use.*

**How strenuous?** There is a lot of walking on this tour, and a good level of fitness is essential. Some of the sites visited are large and on sloping ground, and there is often an additional walk from coach park to site. Unless you enjoy unimpaired mobility, cope with everyday walking and stair-climbing without difficulty, this tour is not for you. Some days involve a lot of driving – average distance by coach per day: 70 miles.

**Group size:** between 10 and 22 participants.